

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION
May 23, 2017

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, May 23, 2017 at 3:06 P.M., with the following members present: Chairman Greg Minton, Vice Chairman Gary D. Blevins, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner David Gambill, and Commissioner Eddie Settle.

Also present were John Yates, County Manager; Jerry Shepherd, Finance Director; Chris Huffman, Assistant Finance Officer; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Greg Minton welcomed everyone and called the Work Session to order.

Chairman Minton provided a short re-cap of the changes to the proposed budget from the May 15, 2017 work session. The Board briefly went over a handout prepared by Jerry Shepherd Finance Director that included a summary of those changes based on the Consensus of the Board at the work session. This included a Fund Balance Appropriation with changes in the amount of \$2,009,284.00. Chairman Minton said last year property tax growth when compared to the actual budget was about 3% and sales tax was 4%. Mr. Shepherd added that is correct when compared to the actual budget and these total approximately \$700,000. He added the biggest surprise is the motor vehicles taxes that were collected.

The Board briefly discussed the next scheduled County Tax Re-evaluation in 2019 that will be effective for fiscal year 2019-2020.

Chairman Minton next recognized the elected officials in attendance Sheriff Chris Shew and Register of Deeds Misty Smithey. Also in attendance and recognized was Eric Morrison, EMS Director and Logan Kerr with the Sheriff's Department.

REGISTER OF DEEDS – MISTY SMITHEY – Mrs. Smithey addressed the Board on behalf of her staff and herself and asked for 12% raises as requested in her budget. She stated these are much deserved and long overdue. The request was discussed in detail by the Board and Mrs. Smithey. The total cost of this request is \$22,341.00.

SHERIFF – CHRIS SHEW – Mr. Shew addressed the Board on behalf of the Sheriff's Office, Jail and Communication's Center. He stated these are listed in three separate budgets and he is asking for a raise for all of his employees in the budget. This will help address many issues with regards to their pay and the compression with the long term employees' vs the new hires. The request was discussed in detail by the Board, Sheriff Shew, and Logan Kerr. The total cost of this request is \$447,049.00. It was later discussed and explained by Mr. Kerr that if the Board agreed to implement step one which is approximately ½ of the request, this would cost \$238,000.00.

The Board discussed potential options to address the pay and compression for all county employees in addition to the Register of Deeds and Sheriff's Department. The Board discussed the pay study that was completed in 2008 in which only step one was implemented at that time, which increased the starting pay for new hires. There were two more steps of the study that was not approved to be implemented due to the economic downturn that followed. It was estimated at that time to cost \$1 million to implement the final two steps of the study. The Board mentioned the revenues for the county are still not back to the 2009 levels. The Board also discussed the value of the benefits that the county employees have that include medical, dental, vision and prescription insurance coverage, retirement, longevity pay, along with paid time off.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS & NON-PROFIT AGENCIES – The Board asked Eddie Barnes, Wilkes Planning Director, to provide a brief update on the Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor since he serves as a Board Member. Mr. Barnes stated the Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that began in 2005-2006 as a regional marketing and tourism arm for Wilkes, Yadkin, Surry and Caldwell Counties. He said originally they worked to design and put up signs at many of the county lines for the 4 counties. Most recently they have promoted tourism with bill boards, and magazine ads, as well as brochures and they also have a website. They promote the Blue Ridge Parkway, W. Kerr Scott, Over Mountain Victory Trail, Stone Mountain, and the local Wineries in the 4 county area, he added. Mr. Barnes said each county contributes 25% of the \$30K annual budget. He stated Wilkes is the only county that contributes directly, the others come from their occupancy tax that Wilkes County does not collect at this time. Mr. Barnes said they have also provided match funds for grants to help some of the local trail associations to qualify for grants.

The Board discussed that Wilkes EDC, Wilkes Chamber, and Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor all provide marketing, magazine ads, and promote tourism and there is overlap in these agencies for the marketing and tourism area. The Board mentioned they could revisit the occupancy tax in the county if it is the best way to control and use the revenue it would bring in to promote tourism in all of Wilkes County. After further discussion the Board consensus was to reduce the Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor appropriation from \$7,500 to \$2,500 and reduce Wilkes Chamber of Commerce appropriation from \$25,000 to \$20,000, this \$10,000 will be used to increase Yadkin River Greenway Council and Elkin Valley Trails Association \$2,500 each for a total appropriation of \$6,100 each; and to increase Catherine H. Barber Homeless Shelter \$5,000 for a total of \$7,000.00.

After a lengthy discussion the Board consensus was to make no addition changes to the proposed budget. They Board stated this year the priority was a K-12 school system funding increase and the estimated appropriation increase will be just over \$1 million, which was their goal. The Board said at this time they could not single out one or two departments for salary increases because it is needed across the entire county and for all employees. They mentioned they have already approved an additional 1% salary increase for all current full-time employees which will result in a total of a 2% increase for employees, this is in addition to the 1% lump sum that will be paid out on June 30th. The Board stated the salaries for all Wilkes County employees will be the goal for the 2018-2019 budget, they would like to see a comparison of Wilkes salaries vs. the

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surrounding counties. They would also like to see a comprehension plan to address compression and pay increases for all departments for next budget year.

ADJOURN - Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the Budget Work Session of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 4:53 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gregory A. Minton, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: