

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION
May 28, 2019

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 at 5:34 P.M., with the following members present: Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, Commissioner David Gambill, and Commissioner Brian Minton.

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

Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the Work Session to order.

INVOCATION – Commissioner David Gambill led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Elmore stated they have a few items to discuss and asked Mr. Yates to go through the list and the Board can discuss them one at a time. He added he is happy for anyone to speak regarding an item, but asked them to please hold it to a couple of minutes and please state their name.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

TAX RATE 66¢ vs. 67¢ – Mr. Yates stated a revenue neutral rate was recommended at 66¢ and it has been mentioned leaving the tax rate at 67¢.

After some discussion the Board consensus was no change to the revenue neutral tax rate of 66¢ as recommended in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

K-12 FUNDING REQUESTING AN ADDITIONAL \$100,000 – Mr. Rudy Holbrook stated last year they had a large teacher raise and this year they are assuming there will be another 4.5% increase that they have to cover all the insurance and retirement for the raises expected this year. He added they are losing \$140K to CTE programs this year as well. The vocational programs are very important. Mr. Holbrook said if they get \$100K more they will have \$1million or 8% on their fund balance. This is what they are required to have, but it is not mandatory. He added this money is not to add to their fund balance, they need it for expenses.

After some discussion the Board consensus was to increase the Wilkes County Schools K-12 funding by \$100,000 in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

CATHERINE H. BARBER MEMORIAL SHELTER, INC. – Mr. Carmen Decker thanked the Board and stated he is joined by Board Members Bud Smith, Derick Bell, and Cheryl Jacobs. He thanked the Board for their support last year in operating funds. Mr. Decker stated he is here to once again ask the Board to seriously consider the request they heard from Dan Huffman of a one-time contribution of \$100K to build the \$500K shelter. He added many folks have a reluctance to donate funds via social media or other outlets. Mr. Decker stated the folks in the county view the Commissioners as leaders and it offers credibility they can't get on their own. He added just as \$100K can help build the shelter it can also help them receive other contributions. Mr. Decker asked the Board to seriously consider their request that is so important to them and thanked the Board for the time. He added they are in the process of purchasing land and should have that by July.

Chairman Elmore stated he would like to clarify that in the currently proposed 2019-2020 Budget the Catherine H. Barber Homeless Shelter was increased by \$3K for a total of \$10,000, and the Hospitality House Crisis Center was added as a new item in the amount of \$4,750. Chairman Elmore said the \$100K will not be decided in this budget, they have talked about and discussed this and appreciate what they are doing. Mr. Decker stated they need their involvement and if it makes more sense to spread this over 2 to 3 budget years, that is fine. They can't build until at least 2020. He asked if they spread the \$100K over 3 budget years it is still of great importance to them. Mr. Decker said they seek their thoughts on considering their request in this manner if it is a better way to fund this request.

After some discussion the Board said this is a legal question on how this can be structured with checks and balances over a few years, they are not shutting the door on the request. Chairman Elmore added they will be in communication with them throughout the year. The Board stated they support what they are doing.

EMS – Mr. Yates said they have talked about many different options with EMS over the past few months and it is recommended in the current proposed 2019-2020 Budget to hire 4 additional full-time employees and give them the ability to go to a 24-hour crew at Millers Creek and 24-hours in Mountain View once a decision has been made on a location. This is included in the proposed budget at this time. Commissioner Gambill stated adding only 4 EMS does not add up to 24-hour coverage at both bases. Mr. Yates replied Millers Creek is 12-hours currently and Mr. Pennington feels they can supplement the rest with part-time with the addition of 4 full time. They could go to 24-hours immediately at Millers Creek with two. He added they can do this now and hire the other two once a Mountain View location is ready

After some discussion the Board consensus was no change in adding the 4 full-time EMS positions already included and recommended in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

LINCOLN HEIGHTS FUNDING – Mr. Yates stated it has been mentioned funding Lincoln Heights. He added they currently fund Mt. View, Roaring River, Austin, Temple Hill, and Boomer Community Centers at \$2K each. It has been mentioned to give Lincoln Heights the same amount as the others. Commissioner Blevins stated they recently attended a ceremony

and they were just added to the Historic Registry. Their Board is trying to raise funds to restore the building, it is a big part of the community and he fully supports giving them a stipend to help.

After some discussion the Board consensus was to add an appropriation for Lincoln Heights in the amount of \$2,000 in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

AIRPORT GRANT MATCH – Mr. Yates stated the Airport taxiway project bids came in recently at almost \$4.2 million. They have spoken with the NCDOT Division of Aviation and they have agreed to give Wilkes County the grant, which requires a 10% match. He added they would get about \$4 million and the county would need to match with \$400K for the project. Mr. Yates stated the recommended budget included \$300K, but the bids had not been received. They have come in, they were high, but there was more work involved than originally expected. He added they need an additional \$100K for the match.

After some discussion the Board consensus was to add an additional \$100,000 for the grant match at the Wilkes County Airport in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

COUNTY EMPLOYEE RAISES – Mr. Yates stated it was recommended in the budget for county employee raises of 2%. Commissioner Gambill stated his understanding was after last year they were going to look into doing more than 2% for the employees, he would like to see more. Chairman Elmore said he thinks they all agree, but it would have to come out of fund balance and don't see how they can do that. Vice Chairman Settle asked about the increase in insurance cost to the county this year. Mr. Yates replied it went from \$780 per employee per month to \$815. Mr. Huffman added this is a total of about \$200K. Vice Chairman Settle asked how much a 2% raise cost. Mr. Yates replied 2% is \$373K. Vice Chairman Settle said that is a \$573K raise, the county is covering all the cost of the insurance increase. Commissioner Blevins stated 2% with the insurance increase is about all they can afford this year. Commissioner Minton said he agrees with Commissioner Gambill and would like to see more, but understands they may not be able to do it this year. He added they have to look at this in the future, because they want to retain these employees and don't want them going somewhere else. Commissioner Minton stated they don't want to train them to go elsewhere, they have to look at a higher raise in the future. Commissioner Gambill agreed.

After some discussion the Board consensus was no change in the 2% COLA for all full-time Wilkes County Employees as included and recommended in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

Chairman Elmore opened the floor up for comments or requests at this time with a three minute time limit.

REGISTER OF DEEDS – ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE – Misty Smithey, Wilkes Register of Deeds stated they had always had 6 employees in the ROD office. During the recession each department had to lose one employee, to her knowledge most departments have gotten this back except the ROD. Ms. Smithey stated they have a temporary employee due to surgeries that will end on May 31st. She asked for the 6th position to be reinstated. Their office

is very busy and she is very busy with the Register of Deeds Association and this year will be the first time that Wilkes County will be a host for the State Conference.

Ms. Smithey said last year they took in \$686,898 in revenue, they are self-funded and don't run off tax dollars. The requested budget was \$404K which included the 6th full time position. Vice Chairman Settle asked how much of the revenue goes to the state and for retirement. Ms. Smithey replied she does not have those figures, but \$279K goes to the general fund. Vice Chairman Settle stated all the rest goes to the state if only \$279K goes in the general fund, correct. Ms. Becky Caudill replied \$686,898.25 was their total deposits, mandated was \$439,566.52 and left over is \$399,591. Vice Chairman Settle asked where does the mandated amount go. Ms. Caudill replied it goes to the state, it is from all of their various fees and excise tax, a little percentage comes out of everything. Vice Chairman Settle ask what is left over from the \$686K that goes back to the county. Ms. Caudill replied \$399,591. Vice Chairman Settle replied that does not add up. Ms. Caudill apologized and replied she was off a line, it is \$247,341.73. Vice Chairman Settle stated that is what comes back to the county. Ms. Becky replied yes. Ms. Smithey stated that is after their budget. Ms. Caudill replied it is after the mandated fees come out.

Mr. Huffman said from the fees collected by the ROD they turn in \$30K to \$40K each month to the state. Commissioner Blevins asked if other departments lost employees during that time as well. Mr. Yates replied yes, many departments lost employees such as Inspections, Tax Departments, Planning and none have gotten their lost employees back.

After some discussion the Board consensus was to add one additional full time employee to the Wilkes County Register of Deeds office in the proposed 2019-2020 Budget.

ADJOURN – Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the Budget Work Session of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 6:31 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Giddeon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: