

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION
June 7, 2022

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, June 7, 2022 at 4:04 P.M. Present for the meeting were the following members: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner David Gambill, Commissioner Eddie Settle, and Commissioner Brian S. Minton.

Also present for the meeting were John Yates, County Manager; Tony Triplett, County Attorney; Chris Huffman, Finance Director; Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the work session to order.

INVOCATION – Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson led the Invocation.

FUNDING REQUEST NOT INCLUDED IN RECOMMENDED BUDGET –

1. Cybersecurity Insurance \$50,000 – Chris Huffman stated about 4 years ago Mecklenburg County was locked down from ransomware and so was the Hospital both by an email. At that time the Insurance Broker, Claude Faw, approached the County about getting Cyber Insurance. He added it was very minimal to get a lot of coverage and it was added to the county's insurance policy. Mr. Huffman stated last year it became a standalone policy for Cyber Insurance and it was \$10,000 to \$12,000, they were able to pay from the insurance line through insurance savings. Now so many companies have been hit with this and with the Russia and Ukraine uncertainties it has become very hard to get Cyber Insurance. Mr. Faw told them on Friday there is no company that will give the coverage they had last year for that price. They can't get anyone to write a policy for less than \$50,000. This is not budgeted and this why he is bringing it to the Board. Mr. Huffman stated they have never asked the Board if they need or wanted it. It was insurance to protect the county and they could cover it in the insurance line. When it gets to this level and cost they need to bring it to the Board.

Mr. Yates stated Greg Adams has added cyber protection, two factor authentications is being rolled out and stated with the first floor for added protection, but this is scary. Mr. Huffman added IT has to be right 100% of the time, it takes one email to cripple us. The cyber insurance limits we had were to help if Wilkes got cyber attacked. Mr. Huffman stated IT runs tests and sends phish emails to help employees learn not to do this, but some still click on it. In addition, IT runs a backup every 24 hours. This helps cover the County's Liability for information that may be compromised if there were a cyber-attack as well as help if there is a ransom demand. Mr. Huffman said when he gets the quotes and what is covered from Mr. Faw he will bring that to the Board. Mr. Yates added they are working to get several quotes for the Board, but there is

not a lot that are writing it. Mr. Huffman added all the other insurance will be flat renewals with no increase except this one.

CONSENSUS – After discussion the Commissioners agreed they don't have a choice, and must have it. They would like more information and quotes to see what is covered, the cost, and limits to get the best coverage for the money. Insurance is something they must have and hope they never use it. They ask Mr. Huffman to contact the NCACC Association to see if he can get a quote on this from them and see what they recommend and are seeing other counties do. The Board approved to add up to \$50,000 for Cybersecurity Insurance in the proposed 2022-2023 Wilkes County Budget.

2. Catherine H. Barber Homeless Shelter (request \$100,000) recommended budget includes \$50,000 FY 22-23 and \$50,000 FY 23-24 in addition to the \$10,000 appropriation. Ms. Liz Huffman and Ms. Pam Porter made a presentation to the Board on the justification for the \$100,000 request. Mr. Yates added there is more information on the request in the packets on their desk and was emailed out to the Board as well. Ms. Huffman thanked the Board for the \$50,000 and explained why they would like to ask for the entire \$100,000 this year. She also went over the plans and what will be included at the new facility. They have raised \$269,000 so far, \$90,000 more would put them at \$360K which is 60% of the \$600K they want to raise. They need to have 60% to apply for grants. Ms. Porter and Ms. Huffman briefly went over the plan and how they will keep folks safe at the new location. They went over their guidelines, people they serve, and all they do to try to help them.

CONSENSUS – After further discussion Commissioner Gambill, Commissioner Settle, and Commissioner Minton agreed to approve an appropriation of an additional \$50,000 (total of \$100,000) to the Catherine H. Barber Homeless Shelter in the proposed 2022-2023 Wilkes County Budget. Chairman Elmore and Vice Chairman Johnson were in favor of \$50,000 FY 22-23 and \$50,000 FY 23-24 in addition to the \$10,000 appropriation as recommended in the proposed budget.

3. EMS Boomer Sub-Station – Tim Pennington stated he was asked to research this, the location the county currently owns on 18S is a good location. The call volume for the entire Ferguson, Goshen, and Boomer fire districts is .78 call per day. Commissioner Minton asked the calls for Darby. Mr. Pennington stated he did not isolate the calls to that one area, Boomer does have the highest volume of the three districts. He added they would need 8 more EMS employees to cover a new sub-station 24/7. The new facility being built currently will help the response time to the Boomer area some as well. Commissioner Minton said this does not help with Ferguson and Darby, he asked what is the response time to Darby. Mr. Pennington replied 22-25 minutes. Commissioner Minton said that is too long, Darby is a long way and they have to get closer. He said adding something minimal at Boomer Fire Department for EMS would cost much less and get them a lot closer to those folks and what they need to do. Commissioner Gambill said this county is very fortunate to have very good, trained first responders that also help folks. Commissioner Settle agreed with Commissioner Minton those folks deserve better than 25 minutes response time when they need help. Commissioner Minton added Darby folks pay taxes in Wilkes County and deserve the same services as everyone else gets.

Mr. Pennington said he thinks the Boomer Fire Chief would be open to something there. Vice Chairman Johnson said they need 8 more folks to do that. They staff Millers Creek 24/7; a Boomer location would increase coverage. Mr. Pennington said he can study this further and come up with a plan if the Board would like. Chairman Elmore asked the cost to do this. Mr. Pennington replied it depends on the cost of construction needed at Boomer to add one bay and personnel. They have the equipment and truck. Mr. Yates stated 8 personnel would cost \$500,000 per year. He added a few years ago they did add several EMS personnel to go from 24 hour shifts to 12 hours shifts as well.

The Board discussed many options and locations to get more EMS coverage in these areas of the county for quicker response times. They asked Mr. Pennington as the EMS Director what is his recommendation on this. Mr. Pennington replied they have two options: Place a QRV in the Boomer area that provides total Advance Life Support Treatment to a person while the truck is on the way; or look at a project at the Boomer Fire Station with a truck and crew placed there. The optimal thing is to have an ambulance placed at Boomer and this is his recommendation. They could help and have backup when that is needed as well.

Chairman Elmore asked the pleasure of the Board. Commissioner Gambill stated he would like to see a 5-year plan working toward the future, maybe not in this budget. He added that was their goal when they started these sub-stations to locate and have a plan. It has been started and they need to get through the completion of the new EMS facility and then adjust. Commissioner Gambill said Mr. Pennington can keep looking and identify the problem areas and keep doing these as they have been doing. Commissioner Settle said they need a plan, they need to focus on it so it does not fall through the cracks. Chairman Elmore added they have a \$11-\$13 million facility in the works at this time they need to finish that and then look at doing this. Commissioner Gambill agreed, but they also need a 5-year plan and goal that looks at locations and maybe more staffing after Base 1 is complete. Commissioner Settle said 5-years is a long time. Commissioner Minton agreed, that is to long, 25 minutes is to long for someone to wait for help. Commissioner Settle said what if they had a crew from 11 AM to 11 PM this year and add another one next year to cut the personnel cost in half.

Chairman Elmore asked if the consensus of the Board is to leave this out the budget. Commissioner Minton said he is not for that. Commissioner Settle said he is not for that. Commissioner Minton added people's lives on that end of the county are just as important as the other ends of the county. They need to know the cost to do this at Boomer and add that to the budget. Commissioner Gambill said he does not want to add this to the budget this year, they need to finish what they have started and look at a 5-year plan. Vice Chairman Johnson stated he agrees with Commission Gambill. Commissioner Settle stated this will not be swept under the rug and just let it go. Commissioner Minton said he will come to the meetings and make sure this is done for Boomer and Darby and get those folks to help, if needed. Commissioner Gambill added they have an EMS Director that is fully capable of putting a plan in place. Commissioner Settle asked Mr. Pennington if he can come up with a plan, he recommended it. Mr. Pennington replied yes. Commissioner Gambill added they have 100% faith in Mr. Pennington and EMS and the ability to lead and come up with a plan.

Chairman Elmore said just for information, they have already approved the following:

Thurmond Community Center \$1,720.00
No Fee Increases for any County Departments
\$10.00 Unsecured Load Tipping Charge will be added at the Landfill
COLA 1% Increase total of 7%

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

Chairman Elmore asked if there is anything else they need to add or cut from the Budget. Commissioner Gambill said the County Manager did a good job getting them a good budget, they added a little to it. Chairman Elmore said he remembers times when they made cuts to the budget, but not lately. Commissioner Gambill said they have been blessed, the tax payors have stepped up and had a good economy for a while. Commissioner Settle asked the current fund balance and percentage. Mr. Huffman replied approximately \$29 million unassigned and 46% total fund balance. Chairman Elmore asked how much has been budgeted to come out of fund balance. Mr. Huffman replied about \$5.9 million.

Vice Chairman Johnson congratulated Rachel Willard on the Ron Levine Award.

ADJOURN – The Budget Work Session of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners adjourned at 5:03 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: June 21, 2022