

June 9, 2014

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a recessed session on Monday, June 9, 2014 at 6:00 PM in the Courthouse in the Courtroom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 120 Adams Street, Plymouth, NC. Commissioners Johnson, Manning, Phelps and Sexton were present. Also present were County Manager Jerry W. Rhodes, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett, County Attorney Curtis Potter and Finance Officer Frank Milazi.

Chair Johnson called the June 9, 2014 recessed meeting to order. Chair Johnson stated that this is a public hearing on the recommended budget for Washington County for 2014 – 2015. She also encouraged the public to remember that this budget is still a work in progress; everyone will be given a chance to speak for 3 minutes; and to please state your name and address and what you are going to be speaking on.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE WASHINGTON COUNTY RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR 2014-2015: Commissioner Sexton made a motion to open the public hearing. Commissioner Phelps seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Johnson called for comments during the public hearing for the recommended budget.

Tracey Peele, Williamston, yielded his time to Dr. Davis.  
Nicole Moore, Grimesland, yielded her time to Dr. Davis.  
Sharon Cherry, Plymouth, yielded her time to Dr. Davis.  
Diane Stokes, Roper, yielded her time to Dr. Davis.  
Ivy Cheeks, Greenville, yielded her time to Dr. Davis.

Dr. Davis, Plymouth, Superintendent of Washington County Schools (WCS), spoke to the Board. Dr. Davis stated that he joined WCS in September of 2012 and last year he submitted a budget with no increase. This year after doing a study of all the schools he submitted a comprehensive budget with current operating expenses and capital outlay. He is asking for an additional maintenance employee, supplements for employees and for teachers. Teachers in our district do not receive supplements from the State. We need to improve our schools. We need to have not just good schools but great schools. Dr. Davis went on to say that to say no to the teachers and students is wrong. Dr. Davis stated that WCS has received \$300,000 for the last few years in capital outlay. A walkthrough of the schools will show you the need for improvements in our school buildings. There is a recurring mold problem at Pines Elementary, lights are needed for the athletic fields, etc. Dr. Davis said we have to work together as a community to improve our schools and the County. We don't need to be on opposite sides. Dr. Davis said that Gates County has a budget total similar to ours: \$14,800,000 total budget, and they give 22% of their budget to their schools. Washington County only gives 14%. If Washington County funded WCS at 22% like Gates County, WCS would receive a \$1,100,000 increase for schools. Education has to be made a priority. Dr. Davis ended with saying funding Washington County schools will give the students a better education.

Vickie Livingston, Roper, school librarian, went to school in Creswell, graduated from Creswell. Ms. Livingston said she learned to travel through books. She depended on the

Creswell library at school. She uses her personal credit card to buy books for students when they ask for books that the school library doesn't have. She can no longer afford to do that now. Washington County will lose teachers to other schools who receive supplements. She asked the Commissioners to not think of education as an expense but as an investment not just in schools but in Washington County.

Charlene Evans, Plymouth, PHS math teacher, has taught for 34 years and has worked tirelessly for our students. She has helped them to become lawyers and teachers and some have come back to the area to teach. This is what vested looks like. Without the necessary funding, she won't be able to help students. "It takes a whole village to help a child". Math books are over 10 years old—she needs new ones. Need books as an anchor. Students need laptops--technology opens up a whole new world for students. Ms. Evans stated that years ago Washington County was ahead of other counties in technology, but not anymore. Where the County puts their money, shows what is supported. Please support our schools.

Leroy Sharpe, Chesapeake, VA, ROTC instructor at PHS, said he chose to come to Plymouth because of the friendliness of the people here. WCS needs the Commissioners help in funding schools. Quality of schools affects economic development. The schools must be adequately funded in hopes of attracting economic development. Please fund our schools. The Commissioners must put aside petty difficulties for the children of Washington County.

Kimberly Ralph, Elizabeth City, teacher at CES, thanked the Commissioners for what they have done for WCS in the past and asked that they please dig deeper this year for WCS. Ms. Ralph said there is no better investment than the County's children. She has been teaching pre-K for 8 years. She is dedicated to educating the children of Washington County. Please fund our schools. WCS has lost teachers and teachers assistants over the last 7 years. The children of Washington County are precious. Please fund our schools at a higher level.

Joanna Revels, Plymouth, rising senior at PHS, said she is watching WCS crumble right in front of her. She wants to know that there will be a secure future for PHS. The County's socio-economic status cannot stand anymore taxes.

Wayne Rogers, Creswell, has been teaching for 39 years. Mr. Rogers says he stays for the kids. Things need to get better for the kids. There is a need for running water in the weight room. Schools are the best industry in Washington County and they need funding to keep going.

Sandra Arnold, Roper, teacher at CHS, has taught in Washington County for a number of years. She didn't like the article in the paper that said 'no', meaning 'no' funding for schools. Washington County scholars need new innovations, WCS buildings need improvements. Ms. Arnold asked if the Commissioners were prepared to write the eulogy for our schools.

Olivia Hinton, WCU student, said WCU needs a new band room. She wants to become the next Alicia Keyes or Jordan Sparks. WCU also needs new bleachers—the current ones are dilapidated. WCU also needs new bathrooms and text books.

Tiyana Norman, WCU student, said that students are the future. With more money WCS could have more extracurricular activities needed for scholarships. WCS students need better education to be able to survive out in the world.

Dwayne Brooks, Washington County native, graduated from ECSU. Mr. Brooks said that he has a testimony that Washington County education works. He chose to come back to Washington County to teach. There is a bigger world out there. He tells students of his adventures and places he's been. The only way for Washington County kids to make it in the world is through education. If Washington County chooses not to invest in education, we choose not to invest in our children. What is the world like without education? What is Washington County like without education?

Jevon Davis, WCU School, teaches PE and is also a coach, stated that WCU needs a security system at WCU. The facilities have not changed in many, many years. WCU needs new equipment and new lights. Please fund our schools.

Kiara Smith, Washington County student, said there is a need for three printers for printing 3-D shapes. These printers can help students get into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Please fund our schools,

Cori'ana Carter, Plymouth, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student at PES, said there is a need for tutors. Her parents help her with homework and want the best for her. In order for Washington County students to succeed, things must change. Washington County must take a different approach to education. Teachers work hard to help students reach goals. Tutors can help make a difference. Parents as tutors would be a great way to have parents assist in school.

Geovanne Rouson, Plymouth, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, PES, stated that it is difficult to reach goals with limited funding. Mr. Rouson mentioned that teachers have to spend money out of their own pockets for the schools. It is no secret that teachers have not received raises in years. Washington County should improve a supplement for teachers so they help students. Full time tutors will help growth also. There is a need for a media assistant and more books for media center. Need updated math books and material. Children need to be challenged. Technology is the gateway to the future—there needs to be more technology in the primary grades.

Kimberly Dunlow, Windsor, teaches music at PES, and has been an educator for 9 years. Students depend on teachers to give their best. Washington County needs a safe and mold free school for kids. WCS wants to be the best. WCS needs your help. Fund our schools. How can the County Manager not fund Washington County schools? Please examine the budget and make schools a priority. Fund our schools. Provide supplements so teachers will want to come to Plymouth and stay in Plymouth. You have the power to change the path of education in Washington County.

Selita Skinner, Crossroads, teacher, has taught for 22 years and has seen times when Washington County had solid updated resources for students, but now she sees outdated resources. Teachers must grade tests manually instead of having on-line testing. WCS needs updated textbooks. Please fund our schools--our students are worth it.

Amy McHam, Plymouth, music teacher at WCU for 7 years, said she chooses to stay here, loves the kids and community. She has seen other teachers come and go. When money is pulled from schools, it makes the kids feel unimportant. Ms. McHam said she used money out of her own pocket (\$1,000 last year). WCS needs funding for children to get out of Washington County to experience other cultures (field trips). New equipment is needed in the music room. Please invest in the kids. Fund them.

Dontasia Hill, PES student, 5<sup>th</sup> grader, said schools need more field trips to have adventures in the world. This costs money. There is a lack of field trips. Her class went to WCU on a field trip which was a crying shame. There are plenty of historical sites in North Carolina that Washington County students have not had the chance to visit. Please help us.

Danisha Norfleet, Plymouth, said she was born and raised in Plymouth. Ms. Norfleet said that because of two math teachers, she became a teacher and came back home to give to her community. Nothing much has changed. The schools still have the same old furniture. She funded supplies out of her own pocket to survive. Updated textbooks are essential and are needed. Please fund our schools. Students are our future and the future of Washington County.

Alfreda Leathers, Roper, Science teacher at WCU, is in need of a science lab. Classroom setting is obsolete for middle school students. Please fund our schools.

Jane B. Green, Roper, sang a song and ended with saying the throttle of the education train is in your hands. Fund our schools.

Janice Bell, Washington/Martin County line, WCU teacher, has taught for 30 years, 28 in Washington County. Incentives for attracting and keeping good teachers are dwindling. Washington County is being used as a stepping stone to other schools in other counties. WCS needs funding. Teachers are buying supplies out of pocket. This puts a strain on their un-supplemented paychecks. Cameras are needed to monitor student activities. Don't continue to turn your back on Washington County schools. Fund our schools.

Angel Small, Plymouth, PHS student, rising senior, said there is a need for updated restrooms. Limited funding means limited success for Washington County students. Fund our schools.

Brianna Jackson, PHS student, rising senior, said students need field trips but there is no funding for them. Students need the opportunity to be exposed to new things. Field trips will improve academic growth. Please fund our schools.

Zachary Singletary, Roper, said what students learn in the classroom influences what they do in life. Mr. Singletary wants to become a teacher. Find money in the budget to fund schools.

Ashley Wilkins, Plymouth, said teachers are leaders in society, but are the most underpaid teachers. Teachers don't have the adequate amount of money for supplies. Washington County schools are suffering and the teachers are suffering.

Jah'mez Fuller, 4<sup>th</sup> grader at PES, said PES needs a basketball court and other sports equipment and books in the library.

Summer Ridenour, Jamesville, PES, has taught for 14 years, said fund our schools. Schools need renovation. Poor working conditions and low salaries don't make it desirable to be in Washington County. Families have made investments in Washington County. Now the Commissioners need to make the investment--fund our schools. I believe in Washington County teachers and Washington County students. Help us change our world.

D'asia Bonds, 1<sup>st</sup> grade student, PES, said teachers should be paid for their hard work. Please fund our schools.

Juanita Boone, Edenton, 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, PES, has taught for 16 years. Washington County teachers are the future. Ms. Boone made the decision to become an educator. She faces challenges as an educator every day. She asked how she could prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century if she doesn't have the equipment to teach them. Please fund our schools.

Russell Wilkins, Roper, member of Washington County Board of Education, stated that Washington County is a Tier 1 County, however the failure of an increase in the budget would hurt our educators and our teachers. Education must be first. Funding will help eradicate poverty in our community. Providing additional funding is crucial if all students are to be afforded the opportunity to be successful. Washington County must continue to invest in education. To deny the WCS budget request would harm students. Mr. Wilkins asked the Commissioners to review the budget sent to you by Washington County Board of Education. Let us work together to make things happen for our children.

Latoya Howell, Roper, stated that if Washington County gives \$5.4M to the schools she sees other things closing down, such as the hospital. If the Board is going to find cuts, don't find them in what will stifle the economic development of Washington County. Ms. Howell stated that she has 5 kids and one in every Washington County school. Her daughter wants to be a pediatrician in Washington County. Find a way to make the cuts so it won't hurt the citizens.

Novilla Norman, Plymouth, donates paper to the teachers.

Julie Tellicorico, Plymouth, teacher, has taught for 10 years, and says she has to tell students no to playgrounds and field trips. The schools need a roof that doesn't leak and no mold in the classrooms. Ms. Tellicorico moved from Pennsylvania and made this her home. The State has told her that Washington County teachers haven't deserved a raise for the last 7 years. She has to tell her family 'no' to vacations because her money goes to her 'other' kids to take on field trips and to pay for materials for her classroom. It is time for you to step up and make our children a priority.

Thomas Norman, Plymouth, schools are not sufficient for students. They don't have proper paperwork or technology. Schools should not have mold or heating/ac problems. People are being pushed out of this town. There are not going to be any teachers here to teach what our students need to learn.

Robert Mallory, Roper, pastor, has had students in his church who don't have the money for field trips. He helps them. Parents are sacrificing enough. Fund our schools.

Mayor Bunny Sanders, Roper, 54 years ago, her father was principal of WCU. WCU needs new lights (her father put up the ones that are there now). Be responsive to the needs of this County. Washington County has been the 5<sup>th</sup> poorest County for 10 years. Washington County desperately needs the Commissioners to be responsive to the needs of this County. Mayor Sanders continued by saying "Hear what the people elected you to do. Shame on you if you do not respond."

Michelle Carter, Plymouth, taught 4 years at PHS, until she resigned and went back to nursing school. Schools need to be funded to give Washington County students the best resources they can possibly have and the teachers to have the resources they need to teach these students. Students have to compete on a global level even in our community colleges. Please fund our schools.

**Commissioner Sexton made a motion to close the public hearing; Commissioner Phelps seconded; motion carried unanimously.**

**Chair Johnson called for a 10 minute recess.**

Chair Johnson called the meeting back in session Chair Johnson stated that there will be another budget work session on Monday, June 16 at 6:00 pm in the Commissioners' Room. The Commissioners will be discussing additional cuts to the County's budget.

Commissioner Phelps stated he had received a lot of calls regarding supplements for teachers. Commissioner Phelps noted that out of 115 school districts in NC, 107 give supplements. Washington County is one that does not provide a supplement. Supplements range from a minimum of \$100 to a maximum of \$6,441. Tonight teachers spoke about buying their own supplies. Commissioner Phelps stated he would like to see Washington County teachers receive a supplement of \$1250 per certified teacher—which is total of \$175,000. Commissioner Phelps instructed the County Manager to find the money to supplement the 140 certified teachers in Washington County. Commissioner Phelps stated that Washington County is not being competitive with surrounding counties and supplied the following information:

**Neighbors give the following supplement to their teachers:**

- Hyde County \$ 650.00
- Tyrrell County Schools \$ 1,000.00
- Edenton Chowan Schools \$ 1,158.00
- Martin County Schools \$ 1,200.00
- Beaufort County Schools \$ 1,490.00
- Washington County Schools \$ 0.00
- Statewide Averages
  - 107 out of 115 school districts provide supplements
  - Only 7 counties out of 100 counties in the entire state do not provide supplements and we are one of them.
  - Minimum is \$100.00 – to maximum \$6,441.00
    - Average statewide: \$3,553.00

Commissioner Sexton wanted to ask Dr. Davis why teachers are paying for items out of their pockets, but Dr. Davis did not return to the Commissioners meeting after the recess. Commissioner Sexton would like to understand this better.

Commissioner Manning said that he has never heard it discussed before about giving teachers a supplement. Commissioner Phelps said the money can be earmarked for specific items.

County Attorney Curtis Potter said some discretion can be used in the budget. The Commissioners can put the percentage in the budget ordinance of what can be tweaked in the funding for the schools. The Commissioners can put the percentage to the function code. However, there can be no 100% guarantee that the earmarked funds would go to a specific function code.

Commissioner Phelps said he feels that the teachers would let the Commissioners know if they didn't receive the supplement.

Commissioner Manning said he knows teachers are not high paid, and the County employees are not high paid either and have not received a raise recently. Commissioner Phelps said that County employees got a 2% raise starting in January.

County Manager Jerry Rhodes said he needs more guidance on finding the \$175,000 for teacher supplements. Mr. Rhodes said there are only about 2-3 more large departments where significant cuts could be made.

Commissioner Manning would like to see money allocated for repairing the schools. Commissioner Manning said this needs to be discussed further.

Commissioner Phelps liked Finance Officer Frank Milazi's suggestion of the schools taking out a loan to help with school repairs, replacing of lights, etc.

Mr. Milazi stated that the Commissioners have directed Mr. Rhodes to find \$175,000, to readjust the \$1,500,000 and \$300,000, which is what has already been given to the schools. Commissioner Phelps said he wants Mr. Rhodes to find \$175,000 in additional money for Washington County Schools.

This means that \$49,000 needs to be found in addition to the \$157,000 needed to balance the budget at this time and to not be taken out of general fund.

Rebecca Liverman, Cooperative Extension Director, said that all County departments are working on tight budgets now. Cooperative Extension wants to continue to serve the community as best as they can.

Rhonda Woolard, DSS Director, said DSS serves the parents of these students. Cuts do impact DSS. DSS salaries are very low and DSS staff works very hard to help the students and the parents. Some of DSS's services are mandated.

Randy Fulford, Recreation Director, said for his 30 years, he has been going into his own pockets for funds for the kids. Mr. Fulford thanked the Commissioners for what funding they do give him. Mr. Fulford noted that yes, the schools do need money, but so does the County.

Commissioner Sexton would like to know what capital improvements have been made by the schools.

Chair Johnson would like to move \$10,000 from a Recreation fund (that was initially set up to be used for recreational beach access) to the Parks and Recreation Board.

**Commissioner Manning made a motion to move \$10,000 from a Recreation fund (that was initially set up to be used for recreational beach access) to the Parks and Recreation Board. Commissioner Sexton seconded; motion passed unanimously.**

**With no further business to discuss, Commissioner Phelps made a motion to recess the meeting until Monday, June 16, 2014 at 6:00 pm in the Commissioners' Room for a Work Session on the Washington County Recommended Budget for 2014 – 2015. Commissioner Manning seconded; motion carried unanimously.**

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Tracey A. Johnson  
Chair

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Julie J. Bennett, CMC, NCCCC  
Clerk to the Board