

June 8, 2015

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a recessed meeting Monday, June 8, 2015 at 6:00 PM in the Washington County Courthouse 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Courtroom, 120 Adams Street, Plymouth, NC. Commissioners Johnson, Manning, Phelps, Sexton and Walker were present. Also present were County Manager Jerry W. Rhodes, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett, Finance Officer Frank Milazi and County Attorney Curtis Potter.

Chair Sexton called the June 8, 2015 meeting to order.

PROCLAMATION: VULNERABLE ADULT AND ELDERLY ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH IN THE COUNTY OF WASHINGTON, MAY 8 – JUNE 22, 2015: The Albemarle Commission's Area Agency on Aging has asked counties to proclaim May 8 – June 22, 2015 Vulnerable Adult and Elderly Abuse Awareness Month.

**Commissioner Phelps made a motion to approve the Proclamation: Vulnerable Adult and Elderly Abuse Awareness Month in the County of Washington, May 8 – June 22, 2015. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Sexton called on Ms. Rebecca Liverman to introduce the County's new Agriculture Agent, Anna Beth Stewart. Ms. Stewart said she graduated from Virginia Tech with her Masters degree. She is glad to be here and hopes to be here for a long time.

PLYMOUTH MUNICIPAL AIRPORT—T-HANGARS AND PARTIAL PARALLEL TAXIWAY (PRELIMINARY DESIGN): Mr. Rhodes spoke to the Board and said that the County has some airport grant funds that will expire in July 2015. The Division of Aviation (DOA) will supply 90% funding but needs a 10% local match (~\$9,300) for the T-hangars and partial parallel taxiway project. Mr. Rhodes said he has put funds in the 2015-16 budget for the match. Mr. Jason Elliott of Michael Baker Engineering, Inc. spoke to the Board about the Plymouth Municipal Airport—T-Hangars and Partial Parallel Taxiway (Preliminary Design) reiterating what Mr. Rhodes said. Mr. Rhodes also noted that these projects are also in the Transportation Improvement Plan that the Board improved earlier this year. Commissioner Johnson asked if these projects are to improve safety at the airport. Mr. Elliott said the parallel taxiway is. Mr. Elliott explained to the Board that the County receives \$150,000 each year from DOA and the County has 4 years to spend it. Commissioner Johnson asked if the County could cut some trees at the airport to generate revenue for the local match that is needed. Mr. Rhodes said he has asked Mr. Potter to look at the contracts that have been received for cutting the timber. Mr. Potter reminded the Board that they approved a resolution to go out for bid for tree cutting at the airport. The Board then decided to see if any additional trees could be cut. Mr. Knapp Brabble, Airport Director said he had someone come out to look at the timber. Mr. Potter said he would be bringing a resolution to the Board in July for Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Milazi to be able to sign off on the bids received for tree cutting at the airport. Mr. Brabble said the County has \$499,000 that we have been awarded and the County has had to match the funds for the \$150,000 given each year.

Commissioner Phelps said he doesn't feel that this is the most efficient way to spend taxpayer's money with all the other cuts that have been made to the County's budget and he will not vote for this.

Commissioner Manning said he feels that this would help to improve income by improving the airport and having more fuel sales and property tax on hangars.

Commissioner Phelps said he wonders how many flights come and go from the Plymouth Municipal Airport. How often is the airport used? Commissioner Phelps feels that money that would be needed for the local match could be used elsewhere.

Mr. Elliott said the money that is given each year is given with the expectation that it will go for airport improvements.

Commissioner Johnson said she can vote for this because the money for cutting down the trees has to go back into the airport funds.

Mr. Brabble also said that the airport is going to be a critical part of the economic development of Washington County in the coming years. The first thing developers are looking for are roads and airports.

Mr. Rhodes said he showed the Commerce Building last Tuesday to a gentleman from South Africa who is looking to locate his business in NC. He liked the access to the airport from the Commerce Building.

**Commissioner Manning made a motion to approve the Plymouth Municipal Airport—T-Hangars and Partial Parallel Taxiway (Preliminary Design) and the \$9,300 match. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion passed with four aye votes. Commissioner Phelps voted nay.**

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE WASHINGTON COUNTY RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR 2015-2016: Chair Sexton stated that the public hearing is on the recommended budget for Washington County for 2015 – 2016. He also encouraged the public to remember that everyone will be given a chance to speak for 3 minutes and for speakers to please state their name, address and what they will be speaking about.

**Commissioner Walker made a motion to open the public hearing. Commissioner Phelps seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

Ms. Francine Hines, Adult Services Supervisor, DSS, lives in Jamesville and her kids have been in Washington County schools. The staff at DSS is a great staff. Ms. Hines stated that during the 35 years that she has been employed by the County she has only received a raise in about 15 of those years. Ms. Hines said she stays because she loves her job even though she receives verbal abuse from clients and some even threatening physical abuse. There are currently a lot of positions open in DSS and DSS will continue to have turnover. Ms. Hines said that changes in how DSS operates are constantly being made by the State and DSS staff is burned out. Ms. Hines noted that when staff doesn't have something they can look forward to, they start looking elsewhere. Ms. Hines said some of her staff has been working 12 hours 7 days a week.

Ms. Hines explained that her staff does not get overtime; however, they are told to take a day off sometime, but they can't because of the work that needs to be done.

Commissioner Manning asked what are the benefits that staff receives. Ms. Hines said health insurance, dental insurance, eye insurance and longevity pay. Ms. Hines explained longevity pay. At 5 years an employee gets 1% of their gross salary. The percentage increases for every 5 years of service. Ms. Hines stresses the County's benefits to new employees since the salaries are relatively low. Ms. Hines stated that the County also offers a 401K plan.

Mr. Doug Maxwell, Creswell, has worked with DSS and said they are a great group. Mr. Maxwell then went on to say that he has heard that the Board is looking to raise taxes. Mr. Maxwell said he owns many businesses in the County. Mr. Maxwell noted that if the Board increases taxes, how can he bring in new business to the County. He is struggling now as it is. Mr. Maxwell he doesn't think a new company would come to Washington County because of our high tax rate.

Mr. Wesley Stokes, 395 Backwoods Road, Roper, stated he wanted to talk about the tax base. Mr. Stokes said Washington County is sick, the unemployment rate is currently at 8.2% and in September of 2008 it was at ~7%. Citizens from Creswell don't have a gas station. They have to go to Columbia or Edenton to get gas. Mr. Stokes said he wants the Board to consider hiring an economic developer. Mr. Stokes said he knows that at this time, the County couldn't attract a business like Domtar. Mr. Stokes said he knows that the Board is getting ready to hire a County Manager, and asks that the Board hire a new manager that has some economic development experience so that person could devote some of their time for improving the economic development situation in Washington County. Mr. Stokes said he knows that the Board wants to improve the County.

Liz Mincer, teacher at Plymouth High School (PHS), said that this will be her last year at PHS. There is no incentive for young teachers to come to Washington County. Ms. Mincer received a \$5,000 stipend through Teach for America, but does not get paid enough to stay in Washington County. Teachers need to know they are supported in Washington County. If the Board gives the teachers an increased supplement, the teachers will feel supported. If teachers are incentivized to come to Washington County, then the Board should incentivize them to stay in Washington County.

Dr. Joe Davis, Superintendent of Washington County Schools, asked for additional supplement for teachers. Dr. Davis thanked the Board for the \$600 supplement they gave last year. Dr. Davis also said that one way to improve economic development is to improve schools. The first thing people ask about when coming to the area is how the schools are. Dr. Davis said he is asking the Board again for \$2,500 per teacher this year--\$2,000 for teachers and \$500 for classroom supplies. Dr. Davis pleaded with the Commissioners to consider giving the schools more money. Dr. Davis went on to mention that teachers are given a signing bonus their first year if they are certified. He also said Teach for America is great program.

**Commissioner Johnson made a motion to close the public hearing; Commissioner Manning seconded; motion carried unanimously.**

**At 7:15 PM, with no further business to discuss, Commissioner Walker made a motion to recess the meeting until June 15 at 6:00 pm. Commissioner Phelps seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

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William R. Sexton, Jr.  
Chair

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