

June 11, 2020

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in recessed meeting on Monday, June 11, 2020 at 6:09 PM by using ZOOM—virtual meeting software (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) for Facebook Live Streaming and in person. Commissioners Johnson, Phelps, Sexton Riddick and Walker were present. Also present were County Manager/County Attorney Curtis Potter, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett and Finance Officer Missy Dixon.

Chair Phelps called the meeting to order.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS: The Chair added Budget Amendments to the agenda.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE RE-OPENING OF THE COURTHOUSE: Mr. Curtis Potter, County Manager/County Attorney spoke about the re-opening of the Courthouse. He said the team is meeting weekly by ZOOM. They are still targeting a re-opening on June 15. Preparations are being done to make this happen. Commissioner Walker asked what they are doing. Mr. Potter said they are putting up Plexiglas in some offices. Commissioner Sexton asked how court went last week. Mr. Potter said he heard no complaints.

Chair Phelps said there were comments on Facebook saying everyone sounded muffled. Ms. Fikes was in the room and helped to troubleshoot.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BUDGET WORK SESSION:

Governing Board:

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to add \$2,000 each to the Bear Festival, May Daze and Peanut Festival along with the Food Bank. Commissioner Walker seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to add \$600 to MTW Partnership for Children. Chair Phelps seconded, motion carried 4-1. Commissioner Sexton voted nay.

Manager's Office:

Mr. Potter said he was fine with his budget. Chair Phelps asked about the Professional services and the \$12,500 in that line item. Mr. Potter said we may have expenses relating to the Opioid settlement. Also with the Board being the Board of Adjustment we may have more hearings requiring an outside attorney. Commissioner Johnson said leave it as is you never know what may come up. Commissioner Walker agreed.

Finance:

Ms. Dixon was fine with her budget. Commissioner Riddick asked if Finance is working on getting the County with Southern Bank. Ms. Dixon said she has asked for another updated quote from them. Things have changed since the last quote. Commissioner Riddick asked if Ms. Dixon had a timeline on that. Ms. Dixon said no, not yet. Mr. Potter said he thought that was to come back on the July agenda.

Tax:

Ms. Wilkins said she understands cuts that have been made. Chair Phelps asked about the repairs and maintenance on the Jeep. He saw that Mr. Potter deleted \$4,000 on that line item. Ms. Wilkins said it was for a paint job on the Jeep. Mr. Potter said he didn't feel an older vehicle needed a paint job. Also, Ms. Wilkins may be able to have a Fleet vehicle in the future. Commissioner Walker thanked Ms. Wilkins for her response. Chair Phelps said he saw where they wanted to upgrade their computers.

Commissioner Sexton asked how far along are they in the re-val. Ms. Wilkins said they are doing the walk arounds and they have a set up in their office for working here. Mr. Potter said he feels that we will hold the values from the reval. Do not expect them to go down. Mr. Potter said he did ask for a timeline in the budget on the reval and it's under tab 42.

Professional Services/Hospital:

Mr. Potter said this is the annual contribution to the hospital pension program of \$320,000. Mr. Potter said he distributed info tonight for giving the hospital pension plan an additional \$100,000.

Commissioner Sexton asked what the professional services under the hospital are for in the amount of \$300,000. Ms. Dixon said it is cost associated with the administering of the hospital pension plan. Chair Phelps asked is the County required to pay for this. Ms. Dixon and Mr. Potter said they would have to do research on that.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the increase for the hospital pension of \$100,000 . Commissioner Sexton seconded. Commissioners Walker and Sexton voted aye. Commissioners Johnson and Riddick and Chair Phelps voted nay. Motion failed.

Board of Elections:

The Clerk called Ms. Bell to get her on speakerphone to talk to the Commissioners. (The line was busy). Ms. Bell called in and said she asked for a full time person and an increase in pay.

Commissioner Johnson said she felt that two part time people would be needed to justify the pay of the Elections Director. Ms. Bell said she could work with that since the election is coming up quickly. But she also said she does need a full time person. Commissioner Sexton asked what the part-time person does. Ms. Bell said she put the info in their budget book.

Mr. Potter said that the Elections part-time line has money in it for various items. Mr. Potter said he put some money in the COVID-19 funds for Elections for some of the items she might need in the future.

Chair Phelps said the letter from the State Board of Elections stated Ms. Bell is grossly under paid. Chair Phelps said the Board needs to discuss this. Commissioner Johnson asked if Elections needs to go with a part-time person for one month--not to exceed 150 hours.

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to hire a part-time person in Elections for one month—not to exceed 150 hours. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to hire a part-time person (the current part-time person) in Elections for an additional 199 hours. Commissioner Walker seconded, motion carried 4-1. Commissioner Sexton voted nay.

Commissioner Sexton said he doesn't understand what all the work is that is done in Elections. Ms. Bell suggested that Commissioner Sexton look at her justification in the budget book. Ms. Bell stated she would like for Commissioner Sexton to come to her office so she can show him what goes on in Elections.

Mr. Potter noted that these motions add \$2,000 to the part-time line in Elections.

Register of Deeds:

(Mr. Esolen was not available to speak to the Commissioners.) Mr. Potter said Mr. Esolen is using unrestricted fund balance for replacing computers.

IT:

Ms. Fikes said her budget was fine except she wanted to have a salary increase. Chair Phelps said that would be discussed in Closed Session.

Buildings/Facilities:

Commissioner Johnson asked Mr. Potter about line 215—maintenance and repair of buildings. She stated that Mr. Boone requested \$151,140 but Mr. Potter recommended it to be \$75,000. Mr. Potter said there are a lot of buildings that need improvement.

Mr. Potter said he is looking at moving probation to where Emergency Management is and moving EM/Planning/Safety to the Strader building.

Mr. Potter noted the Board can address his performance in Closed Session.

Chair Phelps told the Clerk to put the moving of offices on the agenda for August.

Sheriff's Office:

Chair Phelps said he knows there were additional costs for raises and they will be discussed in Closed Session.

Commissioner Riddick asked about the budget line for drug informants and undercover work. Mr. Potter said the Sheriff looks to increase those efforts and so he increased that funding line. The Sheriff said the cost of buying the drugs is increasing.

Animal Control:

Chair Phelps said the justification is blank for the items the Animal Control Officer is requesting. Mr. Potter said the shelter is enclosed but not climate controlled and does need a washer and dryer. Chair Phelps said the salary request will be discussed in Closed Session. The Sheriff arrived to speak to the Commissioners and said he is ok with his budget, but really needs the salary increases. He stated he has 5 openings in his department.

SRO:

The Sheriff is satisfied with this budget.

Detention:

The Sheriff is satisfied with this budget.

Emergency Management:

Mr. Swindell noted that the vehicle he requested was \$42,000 but not sure how much the final cost will be. Mr. Swindell said the current vehicle doesn't suit him for doing his job. Chair Phelps asked how come it worked for Ms. Keyes for 40 years. Mr. Swindell said she kept a lot of equipment in her office and would have to come back and retrieve it whereas he would like to have his equipment with him. Commissioner Walker asked about the mileage on the current vehicle. Mr. Swindell said it has about 115,000 miles and said it has a lot of vibration when driving. Commissioner Riddick asked how many times has the vehicle been serviced since he took over. He said once and he's put 15,000 miles on it. Commissioner Sexton asked what Hyper-Reach is. Mr. Swindell said it is a system his office uses that residents can add their phone numbers to be notified of storms, emergencies, water issues, etc. Mr. Potter said Washington County used to administer the system but we turned it over to Bertie County so that's why the recommended budget for that item was so dramatically decreased.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the truck can come from the fleet. Mr. Swindell said he would be glad to look into that. However, he said he needs to have Wi-Fi on the vehicle and doesn't know if a fleet vehicle would offer that. Mr. Potter said we are trying to get half of the vehicle paid for with grant money and may not be able to do it with a leased vehicle from the fleet.

Commissioner Sexton asked what the SunEnergy1 grant line was for. Mr. Swindell said it was to pay for the generators that were stolen from the airport.

Commissioner Riddick asked about the \$4,000 for department supplies. It's been \$3,000 in the past. Mr. Swindell said he wanted to make sure that money was available for a possible move of offices.

Commissioner Johnson asked how much the grant is for. Mr. Potter said the grant is for 50% of what the cost of the vehicle is.

Commissioner Johnson said she thinks it's high. Commissioner Sexton asked if he checked with Feyer Ford. Mr. Swindell said he did get a quote on a 2019. He did check with the state contract and they didn't have what he was looking for (4 x 4). Commissioner Riddick

asked why he needed a truck instead of a Jeep. Mr. Swindell said he needs a truck with to the ability to tow large trailers and can put a camper shell on it.

Commissioner Sexton made a motion to approve the purchase of a truck in Emergency Management. Motion died for lack of a second.

Mr. Potter said the grant has already been approved for paying 50% of the cost of the truck (whatever the cost is).

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to approve the purchase of a truck in Emergency Management. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Fire/Forestry/COVID-19 Recovery:

Mr. Potter said Mr. Swindell has been in touch with the Fire Departments and they are ok with their budgets.

Mr. Potter said Michael Ward (Forestry) requested a vehicle also. The State pays 65% of theirs.

COVID-19 Recovery:

Mr. Potter said this is the initial \$435,000 COVID funds.

Planning & Inspections:

Mr. Pittman was ok with his budget. Mr. Potter said Mr. Pittman will be getting his vehicle as a lease with the fleet rather than an outright purchase.

GIS:

Mr. White said his budget is fine.

Health Department MTW/Drug Court/Medical Examiner/Mental Health/Trillium:

Mr. Potter said there were no extra requests this year. Mr. Potter said he talked to the coordinators and they were happy with \$5,000. Chair Phelps said he'd like the Drug Court funding to be at \$10,000. Commissioner Johnson said she would like to reach out to Trillium for some extra funding.

Chair Phelps made a motion to increase the funding for the Drug Court to \$10,000. Motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Sexton made a motion leave the drug court funding at \$5,000. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried. Chair Phelps voted nay and said he wanted to increase it to \$10,000 as Judge Parker requested all the counties do.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion decrease the Medical Examiner's budget to \$5,000. Commissioner Riddick seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Trillium:

Mr. Potter said there cost is set as a per person rate and can't be changed.

Senior Center:

Ms. Joyner said she wanted to address her assistant. She is currently classified as a receptionist and would like her re-classify to the same as the assistant in the County Manager's office. Other than that, she is happy with her budget. Chair Phelps said her personnel issue will be discussed in Closed Session.

Veteran's Service:

Mr. Potter stated there were no changes to the Veteran's Services budget.

Social Services:

Mr. Potter said Mr. Hardison had removed the reclassifications he originally requested. However, he then decided he did want to reclassify two positions. Discussion ensued. The Board tried to talk to Ms. Swett and Mr. Harrison on the phone, but the reception was of bad quality. Mr. Potter tried explaining parts of the DSS budget to the Board. They did cut the one psych eval line from \$20,000 to \$10,000.

Chair Phelps asked the Clerk to add the Social Services budget to the next budget work session.

JCPC:

Chair Phelps wanted to know what does JCPC do. Ms. Dixon said they are involved in Teen Court. Chair Phelps asked why Teen Court has stopped. Ms. Dixon said she thought they said they didn't have enough kids to participate. The Board left the JCPC budget as is.

School System Current/Cap Outlay:

Commissioner Sexton said he is not in favor of the \$120,000 in the budget again for transportation. That was supposed to have been for just one year. Commissioner Johnson said she wasn't in favor of it either.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion decrease Transportation by \$30,000 and assign it to coach's salaries. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Johnson withdrew her motion.

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to recuse Commissioner Walker from voting on the school budget. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion decrease Transportation by \$30,000 and assign it coach's salary supplements. Commissioner Riddick seconded, motion carried 4-0.

Communications:

The Board said to leave as is.

Cooperative Extension:

The Board said to leave as is.

Soil & Water:

The Board said to leave as is.

Library:

Mr. Potter said he sent out detailed information to the Board regarding the Library.

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to approve their purchase of thirteen (13) computers and licenses for approximately \$9,613. Chair Phelps seconded, motion carried 3-2 with Commissioners Sexton and Johnson voting nay.

The Board discussed having their next budget work session on Monday, June 15. They will continue with the Departments under tabs 31 – 45 in their recommended budget books. And will also bring Social Services back to the meeting. Other items on that agenda will be designating an NCACC delegate, approving an ABC permit and a Closed Session to discuss salaries.

Mr. Potter asked if staff needs to work on the weekend on the Compensation Study. Chair Phelps said no.

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(3) (attorney-client privilege) Commissioner Sexton seconded, motion carried unanimously.

At 10:15 PM with no further business to discuss, **Commissioner Riddick made a motion to recess to Monday, June 15, 2020 @ 6:00 PM in the Commissioners' Room and on ZOOM. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

D. Cole Phelps
Chair

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