

COUNTY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 10, 1993, 9:15 A.M.

PRESENT: John Keefe
Billy King
Lee Warren
Juanita Gonzalez
Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager
Pat Jones, Personnel Director
George Tatum, Register of Deeds
Rhonda R. Davis, Deputy Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of two new Deputy Register of Deeds positions.
Appearing: George Tatum, Register of Deeds

Cliff Strassenburg stated that George Tatum has expressed a need to move the county forward into making the Register of Deeds totally automated, and needs two additional positions to do this.

George Tatum stated he knows this is an unusual request at this time of the year, but they are in unusual times. He is not only a Department Head, but an Elected Official and not only has a responsibility to the board, but to the citizens that elected him. If the committee looks at his figures for the first couple of years, which would be 1990-91, they can see a steady growth pattern. Even excluding Desert Storm statistics, this growth can be seen. They have maintained this growth with existing staff for the last five years. They had a revenue of over one million dollars for the first six months of the fiscal year. He then read the statistics of the number of records recorded, etc. during this time. Even though there is a recession going on in other places, there is not one here in Cumberland County.

Chairman Billy King asked what was meant by "land instruments".

Mr. Tatum advised that land instruments were all records not including vital records. The reason he is requesting these positions now is seasonal. May and June are big months for them with marriage licenses and the registering of children for school. They also provide a free service to the military and this has increased due to the sizing down of their personnel at this time. They also provide services in conjunction with Raleigh. This time of the year is also vacation time for employees. He hopes to get these new people on board and have them trained for this particular time.

They are currently completing three books a week. At this rate, they will only have enough room to store these books through November. There is a great desire from the public to have hard copies to look at. Also, one of the major concerns that has arisen since he looked at these figures is the fair labor law. This refers to employees working additional time during the work week and on Saturdays. Having employees work this additional time means he must pay them time and one-half. With this law he understands that he should not let his people into the building until ten minutes before 8:00 AM and must almost run them out at 5:00 PM. This poses the

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problem of having customers waiting for service and then having to tell them they cannot help them after 5:00 PM. He has had some of his people come in at 7:30 in the morning and start working on their own time because of their dedication to the county. He cannot allow them to do this anymore. He does not have a problem with going to a time clock and he feels it would work well for him. He also realizes there are needs in other departments. He knows the approval of these new positions may be viewed as special treatment, but he also feels he has justified them and that he is in the same situation as the County Attorney. He would like them to judge his request on it's merits.

Chairman King asked Mr. Tatum what his needs were at this time.

Mr. Tatum - He is currently twenty books behind on scanning and forty books behind on microfilming. This also poses a security problem, as he sends all microfilmed information to Raleigh to be stored off-site, in the event that his documents are destroyed. He is charged with maintaining and safekeeping these records.

He has a workday scheduled for this Saturday. This will catch him up a little, but in the long run, it will only put him further behind. He has to give this time back to the employee, and the extra work is putting his people under alot of stress. He does not have the luxury of being able to take one person and put them to work on catching up the microfilming. His people are cross trained to work in other areas of the office.

Commissioner Warren asked Mr. Tatum about the increase of death certificates. In one year there was a 400% increase.

Mr. Tatum - The Health Department filed some of the death certificates previously, and the process has now changed. The Health Department checks the certificates for accuracy and the Register of Deeds files them.

Questions were asked about the type of position being requested.

Mr. Tatum - He has three classes of deputies: Deputy, Senior Deputy and Assistant Deputy. He then explained the duties of each position. He has also asked for an audit of the structure of his office and a possible change in grade and classification for certain positions.

Chairman King asked what would happen to his office if the request for these positions was denied? Would the office shut down?

Mr. Tatum stated that his office would not shut down, however, they would have to work at a different level. They have been hurt by this wage and hour thing. He must pay his people for the additional time they work. Denial of these positions places more liability on the county. The lack of sufficient manpower adds to the possibility of having a deed of trust cancelled in error, or incorrect filings. These types of errors can cost the county money. The additional staff will help eliminate these types of errors. Errors can certainly occur at any time, but the additional manpower will help eliminate any possible errors.

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Commissioner Keefe asked about the mention of additional equipment in his memorandum.

Mr. Tatum - He will be asking for more equipment in the future. He has not had any new equipment in five years. However, he has decided that the best way to get this equipment would be to rent it. The costs to the county would be much less if it were rented.

Commissioner Keefe then asked how his rates are set.

Mr. Tatum - The law allows the Register of Deeds to set all fees for uncertified copies of documents. All other fees for documents are set by statute.

Commissioner Keefe asked where these funds go. Do they all go to the county?

Mr. Tatum - Some of the funds must be sent to the state.

Commissioner King asked if Mr. Tatum's office was self sufficient?

Mr. Strassenburg replied that the Register of Deeds Office was self sufficient.

Commissioner King - He had rejected this idea. He thought it would be more feasible to start at the next fiscal year. He thought three months would not make a difference. If they had made it through for nine months, they could make it for another three. He understands their work load has increased.

Mr. Tatum - He thought he explained the urgency in his previous statements. He again stated that this time of year was a busy time with the filing of marriage licenses and the registering of children for school. Also, vacations are taken at this time of the year and he would like to get these people on board and get them trained before this time of the year arrives.

Mr. Strassenburg - We all know that we need to move to an imaging system. Mr. Tatum is trying to get his office caught up before going totally to an imaging system.

Commissioner King asked Mr. Tatum if it was necessary to go forward with these positions now.

Mr. Tatum - He would not have asked for the positions now if he had not felt they were necessary. He has an obligation to the Commissioners as well as to the public to make his needs known to them when they arise. He wants them to be aware of this situation so that they may know about and join in the share of the liability they are facing over this problem.

MOTION: Commissioner Warren offered a motion to add the two new positions to the Register of Deeds staff and to use the lapsed salary money already

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in the budget as part of the funds needed for these positions through the end of the fiscal year.

SECOND: Commissioner Keefe

DISCUSSION: Mr. Strassenburg stated that since Mr. Tatum has \$6,000 in lapsed funds for salaries that he will only need approximately \$5,000 to fund these positions through the next fiscal year. The increase for next year would be approximately \$44,000 for these two positions. Mr. Tatum advised what he is looking for in micrographics will not be a high ticket item. If he has people to run the machines full time, the price will not go up. He would save on the maintenance of the machines through renting. Commissioner King stated that he hopes the other Commissioners realize there is a budget to deal with in the next few weeks. He understands the problems the Register of Deeds is facing, but the budget must be considered. Mr. Tatum stated he has tried to realize the problems the Commissioners have faced over the years with the budget and he has tried to work with what he had and now the problems are so great, they must ask for the additional help. Commissioner King stated that there is the possibility that unless taxes are raised, they may have to go back to Mr. Tatum next year and tell him to eliminate these two positions. Mr. Tatum stated that decision would be totally at the Commissioners' discretion. Commissioner Keefe stated he has no problems with these positions because of the additional funds that will be generated in the Register of Deeds office this year.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Commissioner Keefe then discussed certain department head positions in which that department head does not answer to the County Manager. That person is appointed by the Board of Commissioners and they are that Department Head's boss. He would like to make a motion to put all of these positions that are appointed by the board under the supervision of the County Manager.

Chairman King asked Mr. Strassenburg if he felt the need to clarify his position in the area of supervision of Department Heads?

Mr. Strassenburg - He feels it would be useful for the board to make a resolution concerning the department heads appointed by the board.

Chairman King - He and Mr. Strassenburg will discuss this in a meeting together and work out the basics and bring the information to the board at the next Committee meeting.

Chairman King left the meeting and asked Commissioner Warren to take over the duties as Chairman.

Pat Jones then presented information she had gathered on the three positions discussed during the last Committee meeting. She advised where she obtained the information from.

Questions were asked by the Committee to which Ms. Jones responded.

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Ms. Jones - She did not contact smaller counties because she wanted to get local information. She advised that she has presented a packet for each position.

Mr. Strassenburg - He and Pat will work on the information she has gathered and pinpoint exactly what they will need to request as far as these positions go and come back to the Committee with that request.

Commissioner Warren stated he had some information on one of the positions that he feels is very interesting. He would like to present it to the entire Committee and would like to save it until the next meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Warren offered a motion to adjourn.

SECOND: Commissioner Keefe

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 AM.