

**COUNTY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2000, 9:30 AM**

Present: Talmage S. Baggett, Chairman
Billy R. King, Commissioner
J. Lee Warren, Jr., Commissioner

Others: Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager
James Martin, Deputy County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Assistant County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
James Lawson, Personnel Services Manager
Tonya Harris-Council, Public Information Director
Rhonda C. Raynor, Deputy Clerk to the Board
Press

Chairman Baggett called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION: Commissioner Warren offered the Invocation.

1. Approval of Minutes of the June 8, 2000 meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Warren offered a motion to approve the June 8, 2000 committee meeting minutes.

SECOND: Chairman Baggett

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

2. Consideration of Proposed FY 200-2001 Classification and Pay Plan.

BACKGROUND: The proposed FY 2000-01 Position Classification and Pay Plan has been prepared to reflect all classification changes that have occurred since its last annual approval by the Board of County Commissioners, pursuant to Section 10-27 of the Cumberland County Code.

The changes are grouped by category into the following attachments:

Attachment A – Classification Changes Previously Approved by the Board of County Commissioners

Attachment B – New Classifications

Attachment C – Deletions

Attachment D – State-Mandated Classification Changes Submitted for Approval

Attachment E – Proposed Title Changes Submitted for Approval

Attachment F – Job Classification Listing (Grade Order)

RECOMMENDATION/PROPOSED ACTION: Consider approval of the FY 200-01 Position Classification and Pay Plan effective 7/2/00 to include the changes reflected on Attachments A through F and recommend adoption by the Board of County Commissioners.

James Lawson reviewed each of the changes to the pay plan. He noted the State Personnel Office approves the state agency classification changes. The name changes are proposed as a part of the pay plan. He noted the Personnel Office would like to change the name of the office as well as the titles of the employees. He also noted approval had been previously given to extend the ranges of the pay grades. Attachment F shows the new maximums in the pay grades.

Commissioner Warren asked if the Register of Deeds had a pay grade in the County's pay plan.

Mr. Strassenburg advised the two elected officials; the Sheriff and the Register of Deeds are not in the pay plan.

Commissioner King arrived.

Chairman Baggett asked if the new positions the Sheriff requested are in the plan.

Mr. Strassenburg advised the positions exist in the pay plan but the additional personnel had not been funded in the budget.

Chairman Baggett asked if the additional personnel the Sheriff has requested will receive their training here or at another facility.

Mr. Martin advised some of the training of the personnel would be done in Florence, South Carolina.

Mr. Strassenburg advised some of the training would be done at the new jail facility.

MOTION: Commissioner Warren offered a motion to approve the FY 200-01 Position Classification and Pay Plan effective July 2, 2000 to include the changes reflected on Attachments A through F and recommended adoption by the Board of County Commissioners.

SECOND: Commissioner King

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

3. Discuss Criteria for Exemptions to the 120-Day Hiring Freeze on Vacant Positions.

Mr. Martin presented a draft of the Hiring Freeze Policy and reviewed it for the committee. He noted the exclusions included the Department of Social Services, Health Department and all Separate Funds. Separate funds included the Recreation Department and Solid Waste Management. The draft was developed by the County

Manager, Deputy County Manager, County Attorney and Human Resources Manager. It captures the essence of the intent of the board action taken during budget deliberations. Management would like all Department Heads to approach the policy with the overall intent to honor it.

Mr. Barrett stated Management wanted to acknowledge the exceptions up front so that Management would not spend a lot of time dealing with those vacancies on a case by case basis.

Chairman Baggett asked about Pre-Trial Release being one of the departments granted a limited exemption.

Mr. Strassenburg advised this section only has four employees. Pre-Trial Release keeps track of inmates on house arrest. An extended vacancy in this section could be critical.

Chairman Baggett expressed his concern that the listing of positions in certain departments that would be granted limited exemption to the freeze. This may create a problem in the future.

Mr. Martin then noted the first bulleted item on the second page of the policy noting critical position vacancies in departments.

Chairman Baggett asked if those positions would be referred to the Personnel Committee for consideration.

Mr. Strassenburg advised positions other than the ones already outlined in the policy, would be deemed critical by him if the proposed policy is adopted and would not go to the Personnel Committee.

Mr. Martin then noted that all non-critical positions could have the recruitment process begun after the first 60 days of the 120-day hiring freeze with the date of hire to occur after expiration of the 120-day period. He then noted the County Manager might approve a Department Head filling any vacancy by promotion from within that department so long as the position vacated by the promotion is frozen for the 120-day period.

Commissioner King asked how a position was determined to be non-critical.

Mr. Martin stated the determination is a judgement call.

Commissioner Warren asked if Management sees the potential for abuse of promoting employees when vacancies occur.

Mr. Strassenburg stated that any promotion would require that the individual promoted be qualified as described in the job description. Even though a promotion would include

a pay increase, the difference would be much less than hiring a new person.

Mr. Barrett noted that if a vacant position will cost the county more to freeze than it would cost to fill it then the purpose of the freeze would be defeated. If the freeze hampers service to the public then it would be considered for exemption.

Chairman Baggett asked if the policy needed a provision that would allow the Deputy County Manager to make the decisions outlined in the policy in the absence of the County Manager.

Mr. Barrett advised that by law, Mr. Martin is automatically the acting County Manager when Mr. Strassenburg is away.

Commissioner King asked if the full Board of Commissioners would need to approve the policy.

Mr. Strassenburg noted the Board of Commissioners specified that the Personnel Committee could approve the policy.

MOTION: Commissioner King offered a motion to adopt the Hiring Freeze Policy as presented by Management.

SECOND: Commissioner Warren

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Commissioner King asked that the policy be forwarded to the whole Board of Commissioners as information.

4. Discuss Employment contract for the County Attorney.

Mr. Barrett stated it has been the practice of the Board of Commissioners to provide employment contracts to the County Clerk, Finance Director, prior County Attorney and County Manager. He does not mind not having an employment contract, but he would like the same provision as the other employees he mentioned. He noted all the contracts are the same. They include a separation provision, the salary and the travel allowance is stated. Now that he is in a full fiscal year as the County Attorney, he would like to request an employment contract. His request is to conform to the practice of the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Strassenburg stated that when he first assumed the position of County Manager, only the Manager and the County Attorney had a contract. Within the last four or five years, the board decided that the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Board would also have one. That way, every person who serves at the pleasure of the board would have a contract.

Commissioner King stated it would seem that the County Attorney's request is reasonable. He would be in support of giving him what the others have received.

Commissioner Warren asked what the County would be required to pay if one of these employees were to be terminated.

Mr. Barrett noted the contracts reiterate that these employees are "at-will" employees. The contract states these employees will be paid one month for every two years of employment with the county. The clause does not apply if the employee was released for cause of left voluntarily.

Commissioner Warren stated there have been discussions of employment contracts for other department heads. He feels this could get out of hand. Because the Board has done certain ones in the past he feels they should continue. However, he is fundamentally opposed to an employment contract with any other employee.

Chairman Baggett stated he would only like to have a contract with those employees who serve at the will of the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Strassenburg stated management agrees with Commissioner Baggett because contracts for other department heads would lessen management's control.

Chairman Baggett asked if the Board should approve these contracts. As he understands the situation, the Chairman is given the contracts to sign each year. It may be a good idea to put the contracts on the consent agenda each year just to remind the Commissioners that they are done.

Mr. Barrett stated that if the Board has approved the funds for these department heads in the budget then the Chairman has the authorization to sign the contract. He would be happy to prepare the contracts and place them on the agenda for approval by the board. The Board would have to initially approve his contract and then it could go on the consent agenda each year thereafter.

MOTION: Commissioner King offered a motion to establish an employment contract for the County Attorney.
SECOND: Commissioner Warren
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

5. Other Committee Concerns.

Chairman Baggett mentioned the information the Board received advising that Hope Mills may decide to pull out of the Joint Planning Board. He asked if the County's inability to hire a Planning Director had any affect on this action.

Mr. Strassenburg stated the Hope Mills Town Manager did not indicate the Planning Director as a reason for this possible action by the town board. The Town Manager indicated the town board felt it would enable them to provide better service to the citizens and allow for more control in the planning area. Mr. Strassenburg noted the Hope Mills Town Board approves all planning actions so they have ultimate control. This action would further fragment the ability to plan for the whole community. He

advised the Hope Mills Town Board will be meeting in August and will take up this matter then.

Commissioner King stated the Board of Commissioners should convey to the Hope Mills leadership that the County would work in any way possible to keep this from happening.

Mr. Strassenburg stated the Joint Planning Board would be taking this issue to the Hope Mills Board.

Mr. Barrett suggested that during their next meeting the Commissioners could respectfully ask that the Hope Mills Town Board delay action on this matter so that discussions can take place.

Chairman Baggett asked if the number of representatives Hope Mills has on the Planning Board could be a problem.

Mr. Strassenburg stated an increase in Hope Mills' representatives might create an issue with the other municipalities, as it would diminish their representation.

Commissioner Warren asked where the County is with the Planning Director vacancy.

Mr. Lawson stated a meeting will be held next week to re-evaluate this situation and look at the candidates that have recently applied. The applicants will be narrowed and a determination will be made about what is to be done next.

Mr. Strassenburg stated the Board of Commissioners might want to adopt a resolution at their next meeting to address the Hope Mills issue.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM.