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**Minutes**  
**Cumberland County Board of Commissioners**  
**March 29, 1999, 6:00 PM**  
**Special Meeting: Town Of Stedman**

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PRESENT:

Chairman Thomas B. Bacote

Vice Chairman Ed Melvin

Commissioner Talmage Baggett

Commissioner Breeden Blackwell

Commissioner J. Lee Warren, Jr.

Commissioner Billy R. King

Commissioner H. Mac Tyson II

Members, Stedman Town Council

Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager

James Martin, Deputy County Manager

Neil Yarborough, County Attorney

Grainger Barrett, Senior Staff Attorney

Attorney for the Town of Stedman

Marsha Fogle, Clerk

Connie Spell, Clerk to the Stedman Town Board

INVOCATION:            Commissioner Billy King

Chairman Bacote and Mayor Billy Horne called their respective Boards to order.

## ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

### 1. Water/Sewer services

Billy Horne, Mayor of the Town of Stedman, asked the Board of Commissioners to provide some up-front money for construction on the sewer lines into Stedman. Mayor Horne indicated the Town has applied for loans and grants to fund some of the construction cost (\$4 million project). Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager, said that the County could advance funds out of its water and sewer fund with the understanding that the Town will reimburse the County when the loan and grant money are received. An interlocal agreement will be drawn up for approval by the Town of Stedman and the County. Mr. Strassenburg also noted the County has actually put some money into the project which funded sewer to Cape Fear High School. Mayor Horne said he was not sure how much up-front money would be needed to get started on the project.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Baggett moved to advance to the Town of Stedman up to ½ of a million dollars to start construction of the sewer lines, to be repaid to the County under the terms of an Interlocal Agreement to be drawn up and approved by both Boards.

**SECOND:** Commissioner King

**VOTE:** UNANIMOUS

### 2. Discussion about satellite services, i.e. Sheriff, Health Department, Inspections, DSS, Mental Health in Stedman

Mayor Horne told the Commissioners that the Old Depot which use to house the Library will be made available to the County at no cost to house some satellite services for Stedman and the surrounding area. Sheriff Butler said his department could utilize the building and it felt there is a need in this area of the County. He noted his deputies could work out of this office and respond more effectively to calls east of the river. The Town of Stedman would be responsible for keeping the building up, i.e, outside appearances, all mechanical equipment in working order, etc. The County would be responsible for the inside maintenance, janitorial type care. Other departments that may possibly utilize space in this building would be the

Health Department, DSS, Inspections, and Mental Health.

Mayor Horne said the Town has applied for a grant in the amount of \$200,000 to make improvements on the building.

Chairman Bacote asked if any Community Development Funds could be utilized to make improvements on the building. Ms. Thanena Wilson said monies could only be used to offer public services, as opposed to government services.

Sheriff Butler said he would check to see if there are any funds that could be secured from the Crime Commission for equipment (computer and equipment) to go in the building.

**MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved to approve utilization of the Old Depot in Stedman for government services and that an agreement be drawn up for approval by both Boards.**

**SECOND: Commissioner Warren**

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

### **3. Other matters**

Town Commissioner Robert Johnson shared a concern relative to drainage problems in satellite branches off of Sandy Creek. He asked where the Town can go to get some funding to clean the ditches. County Manager, Cliff Strassenburg, indicated there were two options, one is to re-establish the drainage district; or two, to ask the Storm Water Department to see if they can do anything to help in this project. Following some discussion, Mr. Strassenburg said he would contact the Storm Water Department to see if they can assist in this matter.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Cumberland County Board Of Commissioners  
Special Meeting: Town Hall Meeting For Residents  
In The Stedman, Vander, Bethany, Cedar Creek &  
Beaver Dam Areas  
March 29, 1999, 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Chairman

Vice

Tom Bacote

Chairman Ed Melvin

Commissioner Talmage Baggett

Commissioner Breeden Blackwell

Commissioner Billy King

Commissioner H. Mac Tyson II

Commissioner J. Lee Warren, Jr.

Cliff

Strassenburg, County Manager

James

Martin, Deputy County Manager

Neil

Yarborough, County Attorney

Grainger

Barrett, Senior Staff Attorney

Marsha

Fogle, Clerk to the Board

Chairman Bacote called the meeting to order, noting the purpose of the meeting is to allow a forum for citizens to comment on any concerns/ and or questions they may have relative to county government.

#### SPEAKERS:

1. J.D. Melvin: Thanked the commissioners for approving up-front money for Stedman sewer lines and asked them not to forget the surrounding areas.
2. Frank Beck: Mr. Beck asked the Board about future plans for the extension of water and sewer into the County.
3. Mable Smith: Ms. Smith lives east of the Cape Fear River and

inquired as to the type of buffer around the new County Industrial Park. She noted that Missionary Baptist Church does not want this park to interfere with their worship services.

4. Bill Bullard, Stedman Fire Chief. Mr. Bullard noted his concerns and those of his Board of Directors about the letter from the County Manager requesting them to turn in a budget with a 10% reduction in expenditures. Mr. Bullard said that Stedman is in the middle of massive capital improvements and cannot afford to reduce the budget. In addition, they are contemplating buying a new fire truck to replace one that is 20 years old. It will cost \$250,000 to purchase the new truck. Stedman will also be replacing turn-out gear for their firefighters (10 sets at \$1,000 per set). The projected revenues for FY2000, if there is no cut in the 10 cent tax rate, is \$64,615. Mr. Bullard said payback on the truck alone will be about \$40,000 per year. Mr. Bullard said he would turn in a budget recommending the 10 cent tax for the Stedman Fire District. He asked the Board of Commissioners to re-evaluate their stand on reducing the fire department budgets.

5. Eleanor Ayers, Treasurer of Stedman Baptist Church. Ms. Ayers asked about a bill she received from the Fire Marshal's office in the amount of \$35.00.

Mr. Strassenburg, County Manager, indicated the bill is for fire inspection services.

6. J.D. Pone, Deputy Chief at Grays Creek Fire Department. He said their department is in debt and cannot cut their budgets. He said they could not provide fire service to the residents with any less money. He inquired as to why commissioners did not return his calls.

7. J.F. Hall: Bethany Fire Department and Vice President of the Fire Chief's Association. Mr. Hall said his department would lose about \$7,000 if the fire tax was reduced to 9 cents. He noted that Bethany uses their 3% money to pay for full-time firemen. Mr. Hall noted the citizens voted on the fire tax and they want it.

8. Debbie Knowles: Lives in the Vander area. She is a Welfare Fraud Investigator for DSS. She told the Board that DSS has sent out letters to the Fraud Division notifying them they will not longer be employed as of

July 1. She noted this is the unit in DSS who investigates fraud and tries to save the county money. She said she did not think the County should be eliminating these jobs.

9. Rosie Fox: An employee of the Fraud Unit at DSS. She is an interpreter for the unit. Suggested other things be cut such as travel expenses and supplies as opposed to eliminating people.

Commissioner Tyson noted he is the liaison to the DSS Board. He said that the Board of County Commissioners has not yet made any decision to eliminate people and positions. He noted concern about the letters that are going out at DSS notifying people their positions will be eliminated.

County Manager Cliff Strassenburg noted that no jobs have been eliminated at this time.

Chairman Bacote said that the letter written to departments by the County Manager directing them to reduce their budgets by 10% was a directive from the Board of Commissioners. He said it appears some misinformation has been sent out. He reiterated "we have not given Mr. Strassenburg any directive to get rid of anyone."

Vice Chairman Ed Melvin stated that departments were to submit the 10% reduction for the Board of Commissioners to review. No action has been taken at this time to eliminate any employees.

Commissioner Blackwell noted that the Personnel Committee will receive a report from staff at their next meeting relative to the elimination of positions/employees.

Mr. Strassenburg noted his instructions to Departments were that the 10% reduction should be arrived at by the following methods:

1. reduce operating expenses;
2. eliminate unoccupied positions;
3. eliminate occupied positions as a last resort.

10. Mike Middleton Fire Chief, LaFayette Village. Mr. Middleton noted that the fire departments are now providing emergency response service at no additional cost to the citizens. He also said that because of

annexation, the LaFayette Village Fire Department will have to relocate and build a new station. He said that could not be done if there is a cut in the fire tax. He also noted the requirement that has been placed on firefighters - 2 in, 2 out. That means no fireman can enter a burning building until there are fireman outside. He urged the Board to consider fully what these cuts will mean to the fire stations and the services they provide to the citizens.

11. John Goetke: President Stedman Youth Athletic Association. Commended the Board for equal cuts across the Board for everyone. He asked the Board how we were going to pay for the purchase of Highsmith Rainey Hospital.

Chairman Bacote told Mr. Goetke that the revenue generated by the hospital will pay for the bonds to buy Highsmith Rainey Hospital. Mr. Bacote pointed out that no tax money is used to operate the hospital system.

12. Joseph Forte: Concerned that the Planning Board did not approve the Vander Land Use Plan. There were differences of opinion as to the density from HWY 53 to Seabrook Road.

Commissioner Tyson noted that the Planning Director position is currently vacant and that this is a time when the Board of Commissioners will have to make some tough decisions.

13. Ronnie Marley: Chief, Pearces Mill Fire Department. Mr. Marley said his fire department was the oldest in the County. He asked the following questions:

How does annexation affect the revenue stream for the county: ?

Can the commissioners do anything to prevent annexation?  
If the fire departments cut their budgets will the county still collect 10 cents?

The County Manager said recent annexations have cost the county \$4 - \$5 million dollars. He noted that even though areas are annexed into the City, the County still provides services. Commissioner Warren stated that the County is very concerned about annexation. He noted we have no control at all over annexation. The State Legislature has approved legislation



allowing for annexation by municipalities. In reply to the last question reference will the county still collect 10 cents is the fire departments cut their budgets, the answer is no.

Mr. Marley also voiced his concern that areas annexed have no voting power and no say in anything that affects them.

14. Dallas Byrd: Member, Joint Planning Board.

Mr. Byrd said the Planning Board voted unanimously to deny the Stedman Use Plan, as the plan did not deal with density in the area. He said that A1 from Vander to HWY 53 is not the answer and there should be a corridor of industrial development to HWY 53.

15. Steve Fox: Husband of Rosie Fox. Mr. Fox said he did not understand why the Board uses the word "can't" all of the time, relative to not being able to do anything about annexation of county property into the City.

In response to some of the comments and questions asked, the County Manager stated the following:

- n there is a possibility that at some point in time there could be county-wide water;

- n it is not possible to have county-wide sewer, because of the gravity issue;

- n PWC is the designated county-wide provider of water and sewer services;

- n The county often works in partnership with PWC to assist in providing water by providing some up-front funding, paid back through assessment;

- n another option that can be used to obtain water services is to form a Sanitary District like Eastover has done.

- n the County's new industrial park will provide buffering to alleviate any problems connected with worship at the Church.

Commissioner Talmage Baggett encouraged everyone interested in water/sewer services to contact the Eastover Sanitary District for information on how to establish a district in their area.

Commissioner Warren thanked the firefighters and the ladies auxiliary for the



work they do for the community. He assured them this Board of Commissioners would look very carefully at their needs.

Commissioner King noted he was in the insurance business and understood the concerns of the firemen relative to insurance ratings in their districts and how they affect the citizens. He said he was troubled about the fact that some departments have already sent out letters concerning the reduction in force. Mr. King noted the County is in a bind as far as the FY2000 budget is concerned. He said the Board of Commissioners would appreciate help in putting heat on the legislators in Raleigh to approve the additional one cent sales tax. He urged the citizens to let the delegation know we are supportive of the tax.

Commissioner Blackwell thanked everyone for coming and participating in the forum.

Commissioner Melvin urged the citizens to contact the delegation and urge support of the sales tax.

Commissioner Baggett stated the firemen had made a convincing case and their comments will be considered as the Board deliberates about the budget.

**MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved to receive the comments from the fireman and employees of the County and them full consideration at budget time.**

**SECOND: Commissioner King**

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:40PM.

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