

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 4, 2008, 7:00 PM
SPECIAL MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET

PRESENT: Chairman J. Breeden Blackwell
Vice Chairman Jeannette M. Council
Commissioner Kenneth S. Edge
Commissioner John T. Henley, Jr.
Commissioner Billy R. King
Commissioner Edward Melvin
Commissioner Diane Wheatley
James Martin, County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager
Cliff Spiller, Asst. County Manager
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Harvey (Butch) Raynor, Deputy County Attorney
Sara VanderClute, PIO
Marie Colgan, Deputy Clerk
Marsha Fogle, Clerk

The purpose of this Special Meeting is to hold the Public Hearing on the proposed budget for FY 08-09.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the Public Hearing.

SPEAKERS:

1. Sue Horne – Fayetteville Area Sentencing Center

Ms. Horne thanked the Board for its continued support and stated that the funds provided to their agency will be used to match State grants to continue to serve Cumberland County citizens by providing assistance with community alternative resources for offenders which helps save taxpayers money for incarceration.

2. June Lancaster - Member of the Friends of the Library – Bordeaux Representative

Ms. Lancaster, a Cumberland County resident for over 40 years, spoke on behalf of Bordeaux Library and other branches that have shortened hours stating that patrons are confused about when the library is open because of different hours for the libraries. Ms. Lancaster thanked the Board for what it has done for the library system and requested that providing more hours be looked at seriously. Due to the closeness of the Bordeaux branch to several schools, more hours in the evening are needed for students as transportation to other libraries that are open is a problem.

3. Linda Whitney – Kids Voting NC Cumberland County

Ms. Whitney explained that Kids Voting is a national organization and during Super Tuesday, they had 3,400 voting kids and were second in the state. During the primary, they doubled that amount from last year. The Kids Voting curriculum has been provided to almost every middle and high school social studies teacher. Currently, they are working on providing it to the elementary schools. Ms. Whitney requested that the funding for their agency be increased as the cost per child is \$1.50 and the curriculum is about \$10 per book. In answer to questions posed by Commissioners, Ms. Whitney explained that their State appropriation in Cumberland County is currently \$15,000, but these funds have gone down every year. They seek grants and have received some funds from Time Warner and the Junior League. The State Department of Public Instruction is involved in promoting the program, but they receive no funds from that agency, nor do they receive funds from the school system. A meeting with Dr. Harrison has been requested. Commissioner Council will follow up with possible funds through the school system.

4. Sylvia Ray – Women’s Center of Fayetteville

Ms. Ray stated that the women’s business center is mainly funded by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and does receive a little over \$10,000 from the County. Ms. Ray advised that they have requested an increase in their funds for the services provided by their agency as their funds from the SBA have been cut from \$100,000 to \$50,000. Ms. Ray informed the Board that their agency is the only comprehensive resource in the county for small business owners, which make up 85% of the local businesses. In response to a question from Commissioner Edge, Ms. Ray stated that their agency receives funds from the city and county passed through the Chamber but not funds from the Chamber itself.

5. Mena Auja – Director, Women’s Center of Fayetteville

Ms. Auja thanked the Board for its support as its funding is used for cash matches for funds received from the SBA. Ms. Auja informed Commissioners that most of their clients do not have access to large loans, but their agency grants loans up to \$50,000.

6. Nicole Sullivan

Ms. Sullivan commended the Women’s Center of Fayetteville for assisting her with opening her business, The Sweet Boutique, after several years of trying to open on her own. The Women’s Center helped her with financial planning, marketing, start-up information and networking. Ms. Sullivan strongly requested continued funding for the Women’s Center

7. Ray Manuel – Credit Analyst, Women’s Center of Fayetteville

Ms. Manuel explained that her job is to help find monies for their clients and to provide technical assistance. Their agency provides in-house micro loans from \$500 to \$5,000.

8. Tracy Huff

Ms. Huff, a small business owner, commended the Women’s Center for its help with her business which she opened in 2001, stating that they are the only resource in Cumberland County that has been able to provide her assistance with every facet of her profitable business.

9. Joseph Palmer

Mr. Palmer stated that as a patron of the East Regional Library, he requests that libraries be opened full time in order to provide students and the local workforce access at times that are

convenient for them. He stressed that libraries provide a quiet area for students to study, but the shortened hours do not provide enough hours for this needed time.

10. Kim Richardson – Program Coordinator, Cape Fear Botanical Gardens

Ms. Richardson thanked the Board for its support and asked that it continue to fund their agency at the level requested as attendance at the gardens has increased by 68% in the last two years. They were recently named by Southern Living Magazine as one of the best exits off I-95. Renovations have been completed in the Heritage area, and they have raised over \$6.2 million for their capital campaign which is a campaign for natural growth.

11. Judy Klinck – Executive Director, Better Health of Cumberland County

Ms. Klinck explained that Better Health is a home-grown organization founded in 1958 by concerned citizens for indigents and their medical needs. Diabetes is at an epidemic stage with 26,000 cases diagnosed in Cumberland County and education is the most effective way to provide information to its citizens. In response to questions posed by the Commissioners, Ms. Klinck advised that they work with four programs: Diabetes, financial assistance for medical emergencies, medical equipment fund and information/referral, but that diabetes is the largest program and the funds from the County are used for this program. Ms. Klinck explained that approximately 50% of their budget is funded by United Way and they are connected with the Hospital through use of volunteer professionals who teach for their programs which includes individuals from the Diabetes Center.

12. Jill Beimdiek

Ms. Beimdiek spoke on the need for additional hours for the East Regional, Bordeaux and Spring Lake libraries as they are needed for individuals completing job applications, for students completing financial aid forms and doing school work, and for information on health diagnosis.

13. Jim Aynes – Executive Director, Employment Source

Mr. Aynes explained that Employment Source is a community rehabilitation program creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities through employment, training and support services. Mr. Aynes thanked the Board for the funds they have received in the past, but because funds have been cut in half this year, the agency will be negatively impacted since they may have to cut services. In response to questions posed by Commissioners, Mr. Aynes stated that they are a non-profit agency and do not receive any state funding or funding from the United Way. They do have service contracts through the military. County Manager Martin advised that Employment Source requested less funding (\$8,000) than in the past (\$80,000) and he recommended they be funded at half last year's level. Mr. Aynes stated that they did not reduce their request as they requested the same as in the past which was a little over \$80,000. Mr. Aynes advised that this year's budget for his agency in Cumberland County is \$9 million of which \$8 million goes to the disabled individuals in salaries. Mr. Aynes added that they receive referrals from Cumberland County Vocational Rehabilitation and when they place an individual on the job for 90 days, they are paid \$4,000 which does not come close to the time it takes to train and place an individual. Through Mental Health, there is a Adult Developmental Day program from which they receive \$1.57 for every 15 minutes they provide support for an individual. The total number of clients is 248 individual with disabilities. Mr. Aynes stated no funding is received from Individual Disability Education and that the funding from the county assists with providing insurance, facility maintenance on the county building they use and one instructor's salary.

14. Robin Deffendall – Branch Manager, Bordeaux Library

Ms. Deffendall spoke on the need to restore hours to all the libraries that have reduced hours as the need is critical. She thanked the Board for the funding that has been placed in the budget, but spoke to the need at the Bordeaux location due to the many schools that surround it and also the large number of senior citizens that live nearby as well as individuals seeking medical information. In response to a question regarding the Bordeaux hours, she advised that they are open Monday through Tuesday from 9 am to 9 pm and Wednesday through Saturday from 11 am until 6 pm. They are closed on Sundays. If hours are extended, she would prefer to have the branch open until 9 pm on Wednesday and Thursday as well.

15. Catherine VanSickle – Executive Director, Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults

Ms. VanSickle thanked the Board for its ongoing support of services for the senior citizens of Cumberland County. She thanked Chairman Blackwell for the part he played in their recent fundraiser and invited all members to future fundraising events. In response to Commissioner Wheatley's question regarding how many individuals are on the waiting list for home delivered meals, Ms. VanSickle stated they are down to about 70 individuals on the waiting list.

Chairman Blackwell thanked everyone for their attendance which helps put a face to the requested needs. He added that the budget is the most difficult thing for Commissioners to work with as they understand and are sensitive to the needs presented, but they must make the hard decisions that come with passing a budget. Chairman Blackwell expressed his and the Board's concern over the lack of clean water in parts of the County and that in order to bring clean water to all areas that have contaminations which have been recently brought to light, it will be a long and expensive process.

Commissioner King questioned County Manager Martin's position on the funding for Employment Source since there appeared to be confusion regarding the amount of their request. County Manager Martin stated he stands by his request for reduction as he does not believe that the facility would be placed in jeopardy with the amount he requested, but will advise if he finds out differently. Mr. Howard Abner, Assistant Finance Director, confirmed that the initial request from Employment Source was for \$8,000, and stated that he questioned an employee of Employment Source about whether \$8,000 from the County would allow them to balance their budget and he was told yes.

Commissioner King asked the Manager to provide more information on the Foster Care Program funds which was discussed at an earlier budget meeting. County Manager Martin stated that an estimated increased cost in direct payments for the coming year starting July 1st is \$1.6 million with a revenue offset of around \$800,000. However, due to a legislative delay, it may be January, 2009 before it takes effect, which would save about \$400,000 (half of the \$800,000, due to it being half a year), but will not know anything until the Legislature adjourns. Consideration will be given to allocating part or all of those funds to the water fund at that time, but there are no water funds in the budget at this time.

The Board agreed to meet again on Monday, June 9th at 5:30 pm to further discuss the budget with Commissioners making recommendations at that time.

MOTION: Commissioner King moved to adjourn the meeting.
SECOND: Commissioner Henley
VOTE: Unanimous

MEETING ADJOURNED