

May 17, 2017

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in Special Called Session on Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room of the Martin County Governmental Center, 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina.

ASSEMBLY

Chairman Elmo “Butch” Lilley, Vice Chairman Tommy Bowen, Commissioner Ronnie Smith, Commissioner Dempsey Bond, Jr., County Manager David Bone, Clerk to the Board Marion B. Thompson, and Finance Officer / Deputy Clerk Cindy Ange.

Commissioner Joe R. Ayers and County Attorney J. Melvin Bowen were not in attendance.

Chairman Lilley called the meeting to order around 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Bond. The invocation was provided by Vice Chairman Bowen.

Chairman Lilley welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the following elected/appointed officials: Martin County Sheriff Dan Gibbs and Town of Bear Grass Mayor Charlotte Griffin.

AGENDA APPROVAL

County Manager David Bone requested the addition of a Closed Session, in pursuant of NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5) Contract Negotiations to the agenda.

Commissioner Smith made a MOTION to approve the agenda as revised, with a SECOND by Vice Chairman Bowen. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - NONE

FY 2017-18 BUDGET SESSION

For the purpose of discussion for the Budget Work Session, County Manager David Bone offered a draft budget, based on a tax rate increase of 5.5 cents. The draft budget would take Martin County to a tax rate of \$0.79 per \$100 valuation, plus the applicable fire district tax.

County Manager Bone stated even though a tax increase is never desirous or popular with anyone, a tax increase is sometimes needed for the good of the community. County Manager Bone based the need for the 5.5-cent increase on the following:

1.5cents	First Phase of Pay Study
.5cents	Up to 2% merit raise, to be granted after employee performance review, eligible on employee’s anniversary date
1.0 cents	Martin Community College
.5 cents	Bertie-Martin Regional Jail
1.0 cents	New Finance Software, 1 additional position in Tax Assessor’s Office
1.0 cents	Various Needs across departments
5.5 Cents	Total

County Manager Bone added some substantial cuts in this working document had already been made, including (but not limited to):

- Reduction of \$25,000 in appropriation to Martin County EDC (from \$269,447 to \$244,447)
- Reduction of \$10,000 in appropriation to the Boys & Girls Club (from \$25,000 to \$15,000)
- Reduction of \$42,800 in requests for renovations to various buildings in the Buildings & Grounds.
- Reduction of \$50,000 in the Board of Education's Capital Outlay request.
- Reduction of \$121, 497 in the Martin Community College Capital Outlay request.

FY 2017-18 DRAFT BUDGET SNAPSHOT

TAX RATE: The proposed budget was based on 5.5-cent increase in the property tax rate (from \$0.735 per \$100 valuation to \$0.79 per \$100 valuation, plus the applicable fire district tax).

TAX VALUATION: While the value of real property decreased a bit, due to revaluation, personal property value increased. The total tax value increased slightly from \$1.7389 billion to \$1.7398 billion.

WATER RATE: A \$2 increase in the current base rate of \$40 was proposed.

RAISES: The proposed budget included approximately \$240,000 for the implementation of the first phase of a pay study proposal, as well as approximately \$78,500 for the implementation of a merit rate increase (up to 2% merit raise, to be granted after employee performance review, eligible on employee's anniversary date)

STAFFING: Proposed funding for one new position in the Tax Assessor's Department

FUND BALANCE APPROPRIATION: A \$1,000,000 transfer from the Fund Balance was included.

USE OF HOSPITAL FUND: A \$1,566,667 transfer from the Hospital Fund was included (\$1,000,000 of the transfer from the Hospital Fund to help cover costs for a Career Technical Center)

BOARD COMMENTS

Chairman Lilley stated the departments were very conservative in their requests. Chairman Lilley voiced his agreement with the proposed budget presented.

Vice Chairman Bowen echoed his agreement with the draft budget, except for the \$1,000,000 proposed for the Career Center from the Hospital Fund, stating he did not want to do anything to hurt Martin Community College.

Commissioner Bond commented the budget looked good, as far as the departments were concerned. Commissioner Bond expressed concern for the decreased allocation for the Boys and Girls Clubs in Martin County, and the continual increase and inconsistency in water rates between the County and the Town of Williamston. (The budget proposed a \$2.00 increase for the water rates.)

The proposed increase in water rates led the Board to a discussion on the cause and effect of the water rates, water quality, and current waterline agreements with the Town of Williamston. Commissioner Smith suggested renegotiating with the Town of Williamston on the waterline agreements to see how both could come out winners. Adding, one side is contributing more than the other.

One of the major concerns to the Board is the potential of continued loss of water customers because of water taste, quality, varied and increasing rates among the two entities (Martin County and the Town of Williamston).

County Manager Bone stated many of the issues with water taste, color and odor maybe due to the chemicals passing through the old pipes, mainly the galvanized pipes. The Board suggested County Manager Bone get estimates to see what it would cost to have an independent study done on water quality.

Regarding tax assessment, Commissioner Smith recalled a new innovative tax assessment program the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) recently implemented. Commissioner Smith suggested County Manager Bone and Tax Assessor Elisha Hardison contacted Executive Director Kevin Leonard concerning the program, for potential advantages, especially with revaluation.

Commissioner Smith also suggested leaving the funding for the Boys and Girls Clubs in Martin County, at the current level, if possible. Commissioner Smith quoted statistics to support the positive impact the Clubs have been making in the Coastal Plains region and in Martin County. (The second Boys and Girls Club in Martin County held its grand opening on March 28, 2017.) Commissioner Smith stated the Coastal Plains Boys and Girls Club have plans to merge with a Craven entity, bringing the total clubs up to about sixteen (16).

Chairman Lilley stated he agreed with allocating \$25,000 for the Boys and Girls Clubs in Martin County. For the most part, the Board was in agreement with the draft budget. County Manager Bone was to restore the Boys and Girls Clubs' funding to the same level as FY 2016-17, without increasing the total budget.

The public hearing for FY 2017-18 Budget will be held during the June 14, 2017 Board of Commissioners' meeting.

CLOSED SESSION – NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5) Contract Negotiations

Around 8:14 p.m., Commissioner Smith made the MOTION to enter Closed Session in pursuant of NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5), Contract Negotiations, with a SECOND by Vice Chairman Bowen. The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Around 8:29 p.m., Vice Chairman Bowen made the MOTION to end Closed Session in pursuant of NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5), Contract Negotiations, with a SECOND by Commissioner Bond. The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

No action was needed in open session regarding the closed session at that time.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Commissioner Smith made a MOTION, with a SECOND by Commissioner Bond to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously APPROVED, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30p.m.

Elmo "Butch" Lilley, Chairman

Marion B. Thompson, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board