



Commissioner Booth seconded the motion.

Chairman Mendenhall opened the floor for discussion.

With no discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Open Discussion**

Commissioner Jones commented:

- I feel confident that we can keep the fund balance strong.
- We will have to build in growth as that is the natural progression of things.
- The trend in the economy is looking good.
- Overall I feel we will be ok.
- I don't feel the 2007-2008 oppression.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- Obvious that our County Manager has put a lot of thought along with Julia and others to bring us to where we are.
- I try to stay in touch with people and what they want.
- I heard two things mainly at a recent meeting.
- One of which was school safety and security.
- This is something we have been working on and doing well with.
- The second thing is no tax increase.
- As far as safety and security in our schools we are trying to do as much as possible, along with the Superintendent and the Sheriff.
- The Superintendent complimented the Board at a current local meeting on having SRO's at every school either part time or full time.
- Regarding the tax increase, to no increase taxes we have to control our spending.
- Are we saving money using county cars rather than just paying mileage?
- Some things can come down to a personal agenda for each Commissioner.
- We need to be realistic and watch our spending and the taxes will take care of themselves.
- I see tons of things we can trim to save money as I am looking at the budget.
- This is the year to do it.

Commissioner Booth commented:

- You can't spend more than you have revenue.
- We have been working as a Board for the last several years to build the fund balance.
- Trying to overcome the whole harmless money.
- We have done that with the sales tax, when some of us lobbied for the 1.5 million in revenue from this.
- We were blessed to get that.
- Talking with Julia on sales tax revenue.
- Last year the sales tax increase from Walmart made up the difference in the whole harmless money.

- The sales tax numbers are down so far this year.
- We have 4 that say no and 1 that is open either way depending on the situation with a tax increase.
- We are going in the right direction so that our County Manager knows what kind of budget the Commissioners want.
- We need to answer the questions that he has asked so he can move forward with the budget.

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- For the last 11 years you have heard me say I like to be fair to the 46,000+ citizens in this county.
- I also like to stay in tune with where we are and where we have been.
- We went from a county being total y broke to now having a little better than 31% in the fund balance.
- To be fair and consistent you have got to watch your spending.
- I want to remind people when we were broke it was because a set of Commissioners and County Manager at that time did not believe in controlling spending.
- They did not keep a tab on spending.
- It got down to where we could not support a loan for the Walnut Cove Library.
- That is a hard place to be in.
- When you are broke and if you have a disaster what do you do?
- A Commissioner's duty is to provide financial stability to the county citizens.
- Spending is the key to the whole thing.
- We can provide citizens services without breaking the bank.
- On a quarterly basis we have been looking at every budget line item and things that are not used go into general fund.
- I have a problem with the view of if we have some extra money we can go ahead and use it.
- This is not being consistent.
- Safety incentive program is new this year with our workers comp insurance.
- We are still in the multi-pool.
- We will have a longevity award for members in the insurance pool for 10 years or more.
- Points will be received for having a member on the trustee board.
- This encourages people to stay with them and gain more clients.
- We are not looking at an increase.
- Julia handed out some information on changing the salary grade scales.
- It looks like this would be something that would be encouraging to our lower paid people.
- Another thing about being consistent is we have stayed consistent on salary adjustments during budget time.
- We need to stay with this model on salary and grade increases during budget time.

Interim County Manager Oakley commented:

- I am thankful for the guidance received during these meetings.
- This is obviously my first budget and I am relying on guidance and input from Julia and others as well as the Commissioners in putting the budget together.

- I have my list of concerns from the Board and where you stand on issues.
- We do have some capital projects that need to be addressed.
- A lot of paving is needed.
- We need to get bids while the gas prices are down, since this directly affects the cost.
- I would recommend not doing anything in this lot until after the jail construction is complete.
- EMS is asking for another ambulance in their budget.
- That will be a \$200,000.00 raise in their budget.
- This is supposed to be rotated out due to high mileage.
- This would be replaced with a larger 4 wheel drive ambulance.

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- Our process was supposed to be to do remounts.
- We have bought I believe 5 new ones without doing any remounts.
- When we got to a certain point we would start this which is about half the price of a new ambulance.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- The smaller ambulances were what we were looking at being remounted..
- We should be getting to that point.
- We put a rotation plan in place for this.
- This is something we already put in place.
- To me this is a no brainer.

Commissioner Booth commented:

- We need to know how many mounts we have with the big boxes and mounts.
- When we get to 5 then we start remounting.
- The large ambulances went from \$ 170,000.00 to about \$240,000.00.
- When you add that with the stretchers that is \$30,000.00 more each.
- The larger ambulances that we are getting we need to look at if we have gone to the best option with our roads in our county.
- One of the newer ones has already had a transmission come out and it is not in warranty.
- The new stretchers are supposed to be helping, hopefully keeping workers comp claims down due to on the job injuries from lifting.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- Want to mention we cannot compete with larger counties in pay with EMS and some other departments.
- We have been able to provide good equipment.
- This seems to be consistent with our rotation plan.
- We always do remounts when possible.
- I will say I am not on board with 24/72 and will not change my mind.

Interim County Manager Oakley asked for clarification from the rest of the Board on 24/72.

The Board is unanimously against changing the current schedule to 24/72.

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- We have provided a lot of good things for EMS.
- We have a contract with a transport system so our people are not tied up on transports.

Commissioner Booth commented:

- To go to 24/72 would add 11 employees.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- I am willing to work with everyone.
- To provide the best equipment.
- We will treat all departments fairly.
- At our next budget meeting we will get the exact schedule from Julia on the rotation of ambulances.

Commissioner Jones commented:

- The words fair and consistent are relative.
- Every department and employee within that department has a different function.
- They serve different clientele.
- There are different situations.
- I would like examples of where we believe money is being wasted.
- Duke Energy is projecting a 6% increase.
- What are we doing to counteract this?
- Do we have every light bulb changed to LED?
- Are we energy efficient in other ways?
- These are things that are recurring and would help with costs as this increase happens.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- I have the same take as Commissioner Jones on fair and consistent.
- Equality cannot always be accomplished.
- Every situation is different.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- We will move down the list and try and get all these questions answered in the time left in this meeting.
- Sales tax?

Vice Chairman Walker responded:

- I am not seeing the increase in sales tax that was projected.

Finance Director Julia Edwards commented:

- You can go to the voters and ask for the tax increase that was on the ballot last time.

Vice Chairman Walker responded:

- That did not receive any support last time.
- If some groups like schools got on board and helped educate it might help.

Commissioner Jones responded:

- The voters were not educated on this fair tax.
- I hate that it is not on this time.
- It will do no good to put it back on if people are not educated on it.
- This tax would come mostly from visitors and not residents of this county.

Vice Chairman Walker asked Finance Director Julia Edwards what she projects in the future for sales tax.

Finance Director Julia Edwards responded:

- We will not know for sure until the rest of the fiscal year.
- We are 56.92% collected on sales tax.
- We are not on our budget but not far away.

Commissioner Booth commented:

- This includes the 1.5 million sales tax for rural counties we received.

Chairman Mendenhall continued with the County Manager's budget guidance questions:

- Rent received?
- Part Time?

Commissioner Booth responded:

- Some are putting more into part time with lapsed salaries so we do not know what it is really going to be.

Chairman Mendenhall continued with the County Manager's budget guidance questions:

- Capital Projects?

Vice Chairman Walker responded:

- Sewer expansion, 3.5 million dollars? What did that entail?

Finance Director Julia Edwards responded:

- Running it to the community college, Danbury to Meadows.
- We had 3 bids on that.
- Engineer fees, pilot view, and all the other things that had to be done.

Chairman Mendenhall continued with the County Manager's budget guidance questions:

COLA for employees?

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- If I am asked why 2% how to I answer?
- I am not debating, just how we arrived at that.

Commissioner Jones responded:

- That is just typical growth of counties.
- 2% is the average growth and COLA increase.

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Regular employees have received about 16% in the past 7 years.
- Other employees received 26%
- This was in a time when other counties were stagnant.
- One year was a \$400.00 bonus.
- We have a 1% longevity, all employees love this.
- If we don't do a salary study we should consider a 2 %to 3% increase or even a grade increase which is 4 %.

Chairman Mendenhall noted that all Board members are in favor of a COLA if it is possible in the budget with an amount to be determined.

County Manager Oakley commented:

- The Salary Study is done as far as what is there now due to some vendors wanting to resubmit.
- With the natural growth if you chose to keep the budget the same, it can probably be balanced without going into the fund balance.
- As far as capital projects, do you just want to handle as they arise?
- I need to know do we stay at half time or go to true time and half for EMS employees.

Vice Chairman Walker asked Finance Director Julia Edwards to explain half time pay.

Finance Director Julia Edwards responded:

- It is from a fluctuating work week.
- This is through the fair labor standard.
- Changing to true time and a half would be more costly.
- Department of Labor can change that and we changed to this after they were here last time.

County Manager Oakley commented:

- I need to know what you want to do about a teacher subsidy.

Chairman Mendenhall asked that Board members give the County Manager their answer on a COLA increase and amount at the next meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman Mendenhall asked that Finance Director Julia Edwards get the numbers on the cost of a teacher subsidy for the Board at the next meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Walker entertained a motion to adjourn the Goals/Budget Work Session.

Commissioner Lankford moved to adjourn the Goals/Budget Work Session. Commissioner Jones seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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**Shannon Shaver**  
**Clerk to the Board**

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**Ronnie Mendenhall**  
**Chairman**

