



## **GENERAL GOVERNMENT – GOVERNING BODY – APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Mendenhall entertained a motion to approve or amend the January 24<sup>th</sup> Agenda.

Vice Chairman Nickelston moved to approve the January 24<sup>th</sup> Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Walker seconded.

Chairman Mendenhall opened the floor for any discussion/questions/comments.

Commissioner Morris commented:

- I question the need for four budget meetings.
- We pretty much have the same budget as last year besides equipment and personnel requests.
- I think two would be sufficient, especially while we are still being paid by the meeting.

Commissioner Walker responded:

- I thought we only had two meetings scheduled and would recess or schedule more if needed.

Commissioner Morris continued:

- I thought the Chairman said there were four meetings.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- That is my mistake.
- We have two scheduled.
- We can see where we are after the second meeting and assess that then.

With no further discussion the January 24<sup>th</sup> agenda was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- LifeBrite – ER in King
- Wellness Center
- Started talking about this about a year ago.
- Task Force put on hold.
- At a meeting on Saturday there was a student there from the early college that really wants the Wellness Center.
- Our county is not doing that well.
- We are losing people to other counties.
- We are losing students.
- We pay one of the highest ADM's.
- We have some work to do as a board.

- The more positive things we can do like that the better and stronger our county can be.
- Worked in market and research at RJ Reynolds for year along with Leroy Smith.
- I would like to see an in house survey.
- I have put some thought into this.
- Not everyone has the experience in marketing and research but I believe we can do it.
- I am not sure what happened with the school budget last year.
- We gave that money in the budget for the supplement.
- Commissioner Morris stated to me that a special appropriation is the only way to hold the schools accountable.
- It turns out that is not true.

Finance Director Julia Edwards commented:

- As long as both boards agree it is fine.
- They can still use the money as they see fit.

Commissioner Walker continued:

- I don't want this to happen again and end up in the same situation.
- I want to know when we have included something in the budget that it is going to be done.
- It feels that a lot of praise is being given to the Commissioners that funded the supplement.
- It is embarrassing to me that we did the right thing to start with.
- It seems there were some other priorities that came up and the supplement was not funded.
- I don't want to end up in this situation again.
- I hope we can figure out some way to work better with the School Board.

Commissioner Morris commented:

- On the top 5 projects: school security, salary study completed this calendar year and implemented in the 20/21 budget, improve our vehicle fleet, look at recreating the Health and DSS boards, right sizing the county government.
- I don't want it to be too small or large.
- Green box sites safety issue, especially Pinnacle and Walnut Cove.
- Look at opening the sites back up that we closed on Wednesday's several years ago.
- Would like to look at the 4 cent model.
- Would like to have department heads involved with us during the budget process.
- Not necessarily to make appeals.
- Will not rule out a tax increase, would rather not.
- Like to see all personnel requests.
- Would like to revisit the 4 cent fund, and explore additional uses for that fund.
- Education fund increase to 8 cent, not sure what that is about.
- I campaigned on SRO officers in all schools.
- SRO officers budgeted for all schools and am in support of that.
- No to the 8 cent fund.

- I don't want to insist on that if the Sheriff and the Superintendent have a better idea.
- Would like to know what the LGC recommends on the level of fund balance.
- Would like to stay close to what they recommend.
- Would like to have as few as possible budget work sessions, and still be able to get the job done.
- Ok with tax rate being 31/31
- We have always advertised it is about a 50-50 split.
- Would like to develop the Pinnacle area for water and sewer.
- It would be a home run as far as economic development.
- Would like to discuss funding a feasibility study for the wellness center.
- I will never agree to do it in house.
- It will not have any credibility.
- I will not support it being done in house.
- On the land where the prison is I would like see it cleaned up and a strategic plan created.
- We have a 2035 plan that says that land will be used for commercial development and determine the best return for investment for the taxpayers.
- RiverStreet hasn't asked for any more money and I don't have any thoughts of giving them additional funding.
- I am willing to look at other opportunities from companies on getting the internet.
- We need to look at every opportunity.
- I am willing to lease vehicles.
- Would like to see more vehicles with propane.
- I spoke with the Sheriff and they are having really good luck with fuel use and maintenance.
- In support of 24/72 for EMS.
- If that would help us be more competitive.
- Municipalities' incentives?

County Manager Oakley commented:

- Utilizing the funds they pay for their billing.
- Using their percentage they pay in to help fund their projects.

Commissioner Morris continued:

- Would like to see the municipalities incentives looked into further.
- Would like to see things happen in League of Government meetings, like updates from LifeBrite, and RiverStreet.
- Would be a chance for them to speak to all 4 governing bodies at once.
- Would like to keep a close watch on what LifeBrite is doing and receive at least good quarterly updates.
- The medical business changes so rapidly.
- I would lean heavily on the information they give us.
- In favor of keeping medical center or urgent care.
- In support of a five year capital plan for all county buildings.

Commissioner Yontz commented:

- Top 5:
- Economic Development, capitalize off tourism/recreation
- 600,000 visitors come to this area and we have to figure out how to capitalize off that.
- We need to expand water and sewer.
- Possible business park
- School safety and school funding.
- Revisit 4 cent school fund
- Salary study for the county employees.
- Would like to have department heads at the table anytime they can be here.
- I would invite them to come anytime and express their concerns.
- It is hard to know there needs.
- I would rather not have a tax increase but am not unwilling.
- Sounds like we have an indirect tax increase on the way with double digit revaluations,
- Would like to see all personnel requests.
- Need to revisit the 4 cent fund
- Decide if we want to keep it just capital.
- Need to give the school system a fund balance.
- Not necessary on increase to 8 cent
- SRO officers at all schools in favor
- 20 to 25 percent is more than healthy but would like to get the info from LGC.
- No problem with how the new tax rate is set up.
- Some Commissioner at the training in Asheville last week stated they have 65 percent school tax
- In favor of helping King with water/sewer to get Pinnacle.
- I have been misunderstood on the wellness center.
- I am not against it.
- It is just not one of my top priorities.
- I want to build it right.
- If we can build several gyms and use for travel ball.
- This creates economic development.
- People need lodging for those.
- I have said many times Stokes County is not good at phase two.
- Support cleaning up old jail.
- We should not choose winners and losers in the high speed internet businesses.
- Great idea to lease the county vehicles.
- Would consider 24/72 for EMS.
- Need to see how it would affect us budgetary.
- Would like to give them a chance to talk about how 24/72 can help them.
- Municipalities incentives, would love to talk to Jake more about that in depth.
- Would certainly entertain this idea.
- We need more urgent care facilities in our county.
- Not just in King but other area in the county

- It is not up to us to keep LifeBrite going.
- They are not a non-profit.
- They need to show us a plan.
- Not willing to put more into LifeBrite without seeing a plan.
- Would like to see the infrastructure in place.
- In favor of a 5 year plan on buildings, it is a must.

Vice Chairman Nickelston commented:

- I want to let Commissioner Walker know that not all of the calls I am receiving on funding the full 4 percent supplement have been positive.
- I have had more people call to complain about than to give praise.
- Top 5 priorities:
- High speed internet is crucial if we are going to ever see residential or commercial growth.
- Water and sewer expanded
- Keep taxes low
- Improve schools
- Opioid crisis
- Would like to meet with department heads.
- Would not want a tax increase
- Personnel requests from each dept. yes
- 4 cent more discussion, open on that.
- Not in favor of 8 cent
- 22 to 25 percent on the fund balance
- Yes to SRO officers
- Few as possible work sessions and still get the job done.
- No problems with new tax rate
- Agree with water and sewer expansion and helping with that.
- Wellness center – from where I am now, no, want to wait til we can build it right.
- Yes to cleaning up the old jail.
- No funding to RiverStreet
- Other options yes for internet
- Yes to leasing county vehicles.
- 24/72 yes
- Incentive program –willing but need more info
- LifeBrite- nice to have but can't keep funding them, not fair to the taxpayers.
- Yes to urgent care.
- Would like a comprehensive plan on buildings

Walker commented:

- Top 5, Wellness Center, ER in southwest part of the county, School transparency, Internet access, those are 4.
- Poll the Board on top 5 and see how they rate these.

- I am not saying no to meeting with department heads, but it can lengthen our budget process.
- Tax increase as a last resort.
- I will consider it.
- Personnel requests- no, we have a county manager and he is qualified to run the county on a daily basis.
- I think common sense needs to prevail.
- We need to look at the commitment we made to the people when we put the 4 cent in place.
- We need to be credible.
- Would have to be convinced that 8 cent is needed to get on board
- With SRO officers I would rely on our Sheriff.
- There is technology available to help with school security.
- It has taken a lot of dedication of our county employees to build the fund balance.
- They went years without raises.
- I got a letter when I was on the King Council from the LGC stating that our fund balance was too low.
- If we don't want the letter for LGC it has to stay above 8 percent.
- Our balance was 3 percent at one time.
- This did not fare well.
- Like the new tax rate.
- This is transparent government when people can see where there money is going.
- We need to build the infrastructure with water and sewer.
- I am puzzled why there has not been more economic development in the Pinnacle area already with the 6 miles of highway running through that area.
- Would like to know if there is substantial interest from businesses.
- High speed internet is just as important.
- Would like to see multiple wellness centers around the county.
- Our insurance company applauded us for considering the wellness center.
- RiverStreet has committed to spending \$2 million on finishing the backbone.
- Willing to look at other options to fill the need until RiverStreet can complete the project.
- RiverStreet may not be able to pull this off.
- It might be dead in the water.
- I am in favor of looking at leasing the vehicles.
- I do not support a 24/72 schedule for EMS.
- That is not even a full time schedule.
- I am for other options instead.
- I don't think we promote enough people.
- I am for merit.
- Promotions are a good way to reward our people.
- I am in favor of working with incentives for municipalities.
- With medical care, we cannot continue to fund them.
- We have gone far enough with LifeBrite.
- That is why I opposed the \$60,000.00.

- We cannot continue to use county money to fund LifeBrite.
- I hope they can make it.
- I want the people in the county to have the best medical care that can be provided.
- Urgent Care – could be a workable concept.
- Would not oppose a comprehensive plan.
- Information is good.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- Top 5:
- Increasing Economic Development, this can be in a number of ways.
- Salary Study
- Wellness Center – willing to do a feasibility study
- Infrastructure
- School safety – can be handled in a variety of ways.
- I trust a variety of sources.
- If our Sheriff and Superintendent think we need an SRO in each school I am good with that.
- If they have a different idea I am open to that.
- I would have to think about department heads being part of our budget meetings
- I have never been a part of that.
- I do not want a tax increase
- I would not like to see personnel request- rely on County Manager.
- Same as Jimmy on the 4 cent, want to see what our commitment was to the citizens on this.
- No on the 8 cent
- Open on SRO to hear the recommendations of the Sheriff and the Superintendent.
- 25 percent on the fund balance
- The less budget work sessions the better.
- I am willing to work until we get the job done.
- Behind the infrastructure.
- Answer clear on the wellness center.
- In favor of prison site clean-up.
- No on RiverStreet.
- Yes to other options.
- In support of leasing the county fleet
- Need further information on the 24/72
- LifeBrite –will talk about Monday.
- Yes to urgent care.
- In favor of a 5 year plan, it is valuable.

Chairman Mendenhall opened the floor for any further discussion/questions/comments.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- I agree with about all of you on about 18 out of 20 questions.



- One thing I have heard recently discussed is armed personnel at schools.
- I have never had a discussion with our Sheriff on this.
- They can be trained to carry a firearm.
- They can have the same firearm training if they are willing as our officers.
- It could be of some benefit.
- I see a lot of agreement on our Board with most of the items on this list.
- I expected this.
- I am not overly concerned with anything I have heard here tonight.
- I do have one area of concern which is our Wellness Center.
- I don't want to see our Wellness Center delayed.
- I don't want to see our Wellness Center fall into paralysis by analysis.

Commissioner Morris commented:

- The 4 cent fund was set up to help build new schools.
- They were trying to fund new schools without a tax increase.
- I don't think it was ever set up to use solely for schools.
- It was set up this way to make it transparent to the public while getting the new school constructions and remodeling completed.
- We have the freedom to use it for other things as long as we advertise it.
- It is funded by various revenue sources.
- I don't think it was ever intended to only be used for the original use.
- With RiverStreet you don't have to worry about them not pulling it off.
- They are on plan B.
- We had a three legged business model for them that included the school system's business.
- They didn't win the school system contract.
- We were on the secondary schedule as soon as that happened.
- They are just now completing the backbone.
- What we thought was going to happen years ago is just now being completed.
- Now they have lost the school business for the second time.
- We haven't given them the business that was in the original business model.
- It is taking longer because of not meeting the model.
- They have lost the schools for a second time.
- Eric has a Board of Directors that he has to convince to do things.
- If we don't give them the business in the original business model then they may have to focus on other things.
- They have a couple of hundred miles of cable in the ground and are committed to completing the project.
- It's just a matter of how long it's going to take versus how long it could have taken if our business model had panned out.
- I think it is a good idea to have him come in and give an update or where they are and where they had hoped to be.
- I agree with not picking winners and losers in the high speed internet business.
- Anything we do needs to be on a straight competitive basis with RFP's.

- I have some goals I want to run through quickly.
- Keep the 5 year capital plan for the schools and the county.
- We have funds that are set up just for schools that have to go to the school system.
- If we know it is going to the schools anyway I would like to go ahead and give it to them.
- I don't like holding it over their head and go ahead and give it to them.
- The 2035 plan was agreed upon by all elected officials.
- Would like to develop a strategic plan to supplement or refine the 2035 plan for development.
- For instance the plan says we would use the land at Meadows for commercial development.
- Would like to look at or have Will look into creating an Economic Development Corporation instead of how we are now.
- A lot of counties use this approach.
- I don't know enough about it to know if it is a good idea or a bad idea but just that a lot of counties do it this way.
- We need to address our revenues.
- As County Manager I often talked about the fact that we have a revenue problem.
- The county fund balance covers the school fund balance.
- I would like to have a better discussion on that and see what level they need and what they need to operate efficiently.
- Need to talk about voting machines and if we are going to purchase those.
- The last thing I want to happen is we get embarrassed nationally over a problem with our voting machines.
- I am sure Jason will be talking with the County Manager about those machines.
- Want to take a look at Veteran services hours and be sure we are properly serving our Veterans.
- I know Larry does a great job.
- I mentioned earlier taking a look at our green box sites, as far as opening the sites on Wednesdays that were closed several years back, as well as some redesign of some of the sites.
- Would like to know what all departments' personnel issues are.
- Would like our collection rate to stay at the same rate.
- Julia always does this but we have to be conservative on our revenue estimates.
- Talk about a way to get in trouble
- Need to discuss how we are going to treat and track the jail revenues once the addition is complete.
- Would like to give the Sheriff credit for paying off that building with revenues generated if that happens.
- The Animal shelter building is substandard.
- We need to at least from a strategic standpoint look at doing something besides what we are doing.
- Want to look at reinstating the Health and DSS Boards like we had before as quickly as possible and decide if that is something that we want to look into.

Commissioner Yontz commented:

- Good dialogue between everyone.
- There are a couple of questions that I want to revisit after hearing some of your comments.
- It is harmful to us to cement our feet in the ground on using the 4 cent fund for capital only.
- Things change.
- We do not need any new schools in Stokes County.
- The existing facilities need repairs.
- They should be able to utilize all of the matching grants out there without having to come and ask for their half of the funding.
- It can be used for technology, art teachers, school security, and even the supplement.

Vice Chairman Nickelston commented:

- I want to revisit the question on the tax increase.
- I want to clarify that when I said I am not for a tax increase that I am not in favor of an increase just to get the spending up.
- If it comes down to it and we have to we can visit that then.
- Need to work on getting the internet provided.
- Economic Development is very important to me.
- It does seem that we agree on a lot of things.
- I understand the Wellness Center is important to a lot of people.
- I would love to see us have something like this, or a sports complex.
- It is just not my top priority right now.
- One of the biggest things people look at when they are moving somewhere is schools.
- Stokes County has good schools.
- We just have to expand and provide the internet.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- Very proud of the Trades School.
- Everybody is not going to a 4 year college.
- I am excited about the trade's school.
- I appreciate everyone working together.

Walker commented:

- Need to give our Economic Development Director some funds to work with.
- The wellness center is a comprehensive solving of needs.
- If we would have said we were building this wellness center for the schools, like the early college, we wouldn't get the push back.

**Adjournment**

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

Vice Chairman Nickelston moved to adjourn the Goals/Budget Work Session.

Commissioner Yontz seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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

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**Ronnie Mendenhall**  
**Chairman**