

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
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COUNTY OF STOKES)
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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA
MONDAY JUNE 5, 2023

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Public Hearing for the FY 23/24 Recommended Budget in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administration Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Monday June 5, 2023 at 7:00 pm with the following members present:

Chairman Rick Morris
Vice Chairman Brad Chandler
Commissioner Sonya Cox
Commissioner Ronnie Mendenhall
Commissioner Keith Wood

County Personnel in Attendance:
Interim County Manager/Clerk to the Board Amber Brown
Finance Director Lisa Lankford
Assistant Finance Director Tracy Aaron

Chairman Morris called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance.

INVOCATION

Chairman Morris invited those in attendance to join the Board in the invocation, if so desired. Commissioner Mendenhall delivered the Invocation.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT-GOVERNING BODY-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Morris invited those in attendance to join the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT – GOVERNING BODY – APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Morris entertained a motion to approve or amend the June 5th Agenda.

Commissioner Mendenhall moved to approve the June 5th Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Wood seconded the motion.

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

With no discussion, the Agenda was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Morris opened the floor for public comments to hear citizen input on the FY 23/24 Stokes County Recommended Budget. Chairman Morris noted that there were four individuals signed up to speak.

The following spoke during comments:

Matthew Martin

Deputy Fire/ Rescue Chief

Westfield Volunteer Fire/Rescue Department (WVFD)

6454 Westfield Road

Westfield, NC 27053

Deputy Martin spoke regarding the following: (provided the Board with a handout)

- Captain Jordan Smith and Lieutenant Glenn Lamb relinquished their time to Deputy Martin
- Westfield Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department would like to request an appeal to the manager's recommended fiscal year 2023-24 budget for WVFD which was submitted by the Stokes County Fire Commission in the amount of \$60,143
- WVFD would like to request \$71,846 for fiscal year 2023-24
- Believe the Stokes County Fire Commission did not take into consideration the citizens of Stokes County citizens which are served by WVFD in their decision-making process
- Expressed concerns regarding the Stokes County Fire Commission's plan regarding debt payoff and there being no plan to stay out of unnecessary debt for fire trucks, equipment, etc.
- Discussed the WVFD budget presented to the Stokes County Fire Commission
- Discussed the Stokes County Fire Commission's recommended budget presented to the county manager
- Discussed the area and the number of Stokes County citizens being served by WVFD
- Discussed the past five-year budgets for WVFD
- Discussed the call volume ran in Stokes County during the past five years by WVFD
- Discussed the fire tax received by WVRD
- Invited Board members to attend the department's 60th anniversary in August

Chairman Morris opened the floor for any questions and/or comments from the Board.

Commissioner Wood confirmed with Deputy Fire Chief Martin that trucks loans are paid on five-year loans to eliminate being in debt for long periods of time.

Vice Chairman Chandler confirmed with Deputy Fire Chief Martin that the department would not know what the implications might be if the Fire Commission's recommended budget remains the same.

Vice Chairman Chandler confirmed with Deputy Fire Chief Martin that there are approximately 10 Stokes County citizens in the department.

The Board discussed the fire service districts and fire tax within Stokes County with King Fire Chief Steven Roberson and Deputy Fire Chief Martin.

Deputy Fire Chief Martin discussed the department's work schedule.

Commissioner Cox commented:

- Notice in the documentation provided that the other departments in the Service District are getting the \$165,120
- If you take 42% (which is the area that WVFD serves in Stokes County) that would equate to approximately \$69,350 which would be close to the requested \$71,846 (excluding the debt)

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Appreciate all the dollars received this past year in grant funding that went to fire facilities in Stokes County, but don't feel it was fair to the citizens who are being served by WVFD who did not get grant funding because they did not have a facility located in Stokes County
- Need to make sure all fire departments receive recognition for the services being provide to our citizens

Chairman Morris expressed the Board's appreciation to Deputy Chief Martin for his presentation.

Deputy Fire Chief Martin expressed his appreciation for being allowed to address the Board.

Fire Chief Steven Roberson

King Fire Department
302 W. King Street
King, NC 27021

Fire Chief Roberson spoke regarding the following:

- Would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to speak tonight
- Here representing the King City Council and the City of King asking for the Board's consideration for a half cent fire tax increase for the King Fire District that is outside the corporate limits of the City of King in Stokes County
- The request is for assistance in hiring additional staff
- Discussed the growth in population being served outside the corporate limits of the city
- Discussed the need for the new positions, call volume, and assisting other neighboring fire departments due to lack of volunteers within Stokes County, and the department's fire rating
- Have also requested an increase from Forsyth County which has been recommended by the county manager and currently in front of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners for consideration

- Respectfully request the approval of the half cent fire tax

Chairman Morris opened the floor for any questions and/or comments from the Board.

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Expressed appreciation for the department's assistance to other neighboring fire departments
- Expressed his opinion the need for all the departments to sit down to discuss a plan for the future and what is best for Stokes County

Chief Roberson responded:

- Currently volunteer for the Sauratown Vol. Fire Department and in favor of the respond truck as we plan for the future
- Believe constructive planning is the right move forward

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Confirmed with Chief Roberson that the half cent fire tax would generate approximately \$25,000 in revenue
- Just want a plan that will move Stokes County forward to solve the issues – need to get the people in the room to discuss the issues and start planning for now and the future

Fire Chief Roberson responded:

- Might be a good idea to contact Forsyth County manager who hired an outside consultant to deal with similar issues – could possibly speak to the advantages/disadvantages of hiring an outside consultant

Vice Chairman Chandler along with other commissioners expressed their appreciation for those speaking to the Board tonight and for the services being provided by all the fire departments.

Commissioner Cox noted the need for a firefighter program in the school system and how beneficial it would be for our citizens.

Interim Manager/Clerk Brown noted that two of the fire chiefs are scheduled for the June 12th meeting as an agenda item (will be representing all the fire chiefs).

Fire Chief Roberson noted that he would definitely provide the Board with more updated information/data in the future

With no other individuals signed up for comments, Chairman Morris closed the Public Hearing.

Adjournment


With no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Morris entertained a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Mendenhall moved to adjourn the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Cox seconded.

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

With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.



Amber Brown

Clerk to the Board



Rick Morris

Chairman