

MINUTES

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF HENDERSON**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 9, 2005**

The Henderson County Board of Commissioners met for a special called meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room of the Henderson County Office Building.

Those present were: Chairman Bill Moyer, Vice-Chairman Charlie Messer, Commissioner Larry Young, Commissioner Shannon Baldwin, Commissioner Chuck McGrady, County Manager David E. Nicholson, County Attorney Russell Burrell, and Clerk to the Board Elizabeth Corn.

Also present were: Budget & Management Director Selena Coffey, Finance Director J. Carey McLelland, and Deputy Clerk to the Board Amy Brantley.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairman Moyer called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to hold a Public Hearing with respect to the FY 2005-2006 Budget.

FISCAL YEAR 2005-06 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

- 1. Fielding Lucas** – Mr. Lucas stated that this budget was the public referendum on the School Board's Strategic Plan for Class Size Reductions. Depending on what the Board does, the County may or may not be committed to forever funding an operating cost differential for the elementary part of the school system and later, by this precedent, for the middle schools. He reminded the Board that of the two original bond referendum schools, Mills River and Hillandale were in dire need of or even beyond repair, yet the School Board found it more necessary to deal with a self-imposed class size mandate. He suggested the following alternatives for the Board's consideration: 1) decline to fund the request to implement the third year of the class size reduction program and direct that the Sugarloaf School conform to State 600 elementary school model class and classroom sizes, 2) pull the Sugarloaf School out of the Schools Debt Service budget and submit the project to a bond referendum and do not fund the year three class size program until the public decides, 3) fund both the debt service and class size reduction plans as submitted by the School Board, or 4) give the School Board taxing authority and get out of the schools management process. He recommended option one, giving Mills River and Hillandale some modernization and general resuscitation first.
- 2. Don Bryant** – Mr. Bryant stated that he was the Principal at Upward Elementary School. He spoke to the need for office support help, citing examples where such support would be able to really make a difference at a school. He stated that the major item he wished to discuss was the additional need for school nurses, noting that Henderson County was desperately behind on ratios. Mr. Bryant introduced Shelia Devine and Robbie Goolsby, both school nurses who discussed the need for school nurses. Ms. Devine noted that in schools having school nurses, on average it saved teachers 7 hours a day in instruction time. Ms. Goolsby discussed a number of the procedures performed by teachers following training by the school nurses, pointing out many which required significant training and forced the nurses to delegate a nursing responsibility to teachers and teacher's assistants. Mr. Bryant discussed a specific case at Upward Elementary School where a new teacher was spending a minimum of 45 minutes a day caring for a student with diabetes.
- 3. Jim Barrett** – Mr. Barrett stated that he was the Director of Pisgah Legal Services, which had an office on 4th Avenue East. He thanked the Board for their funding of the Alliance agencies, of which Pisgah Legal Services was one of their accredited safety net programs. Pisgah Legal Services provides free legal assistance in non-criminal cases to help people meet basic needs, such as helping victims of domestic

DATE APPROVED _____

violence get protective orders in court. He stated that funding for the Alliance had been static for many years, and urged the Board to increase that funding level. The County funds Pisgah Legal at \$10,000 per year, while the services cost more than \$250,000. Their request was for an additional \$10,000 which would provide an additional 20 domestic violence protective orders per year, or help 25 families not be suddenly displaced. Mr. Barrett continued his discussion regarding a variety of reasons why the County should increase Pisgah Legal Services funding for the coming fiscal year.

4. **Melanie Mullen** – Ms. Mullen spoke as the Director of the Alliance for Human Services for the 14 non-profits who had gone through the accreditation process with the Alliance. She recognized the representatives from the agencies funded by the County. She thanked the Board for their time and consideration of the Alliance’s funding request.
5. **Henry Johnson** – Mr. Johnson stated that he was speaking as a representative of the United Way of Henderson County where he was the Executive Director. He believed it was time for the County to consider an increase in the amount of funding provided to private non-profits. He supported the Alliance’s Board recommendation of \$222,500 in County funding for 14 Alliance accredited programs to help partially meet their needs. Funding for the Alliance had been static at \$180,000 for the past five years. County support of the programs had been crucial, and had helped provide solutions to local human service issues that would otherwise have fallen to the public sector – primarily to County departments. The United way had seen an increased demand for program services and the need for local funding, not only due to population growth but also due to changes in federal and state support.
6. **Jim Howard** – Mr. Howard stated that he was a member of the Board of the Alliance for Human Services. For the last several years, a representative of the Alliance had come before the Board and urged them to fund the human service agencies requesting County grants. During that time, the lives of thousands of individuals had been improved by the funding of those agencies. Those agencies save the County money by providing services that would otherwise fall on the County. Some agencies provide training and education for individuals to help them become job seekers and applicants, when they otherwise might require public assistance. Funding is also sometimes used as a match for federal or state grants. He discussed the financial significance of the agencies as a source of jobs and salaries, and the impact that has on the economics of the County.
7. **Maureen Adams** – Ms. Adams stated that she was the Executive Director of the Children and Family Resource Center, one of the Alliance accredited agencies. She stated that the Center improved the lives of children and families. Since the inception of the center about five years ago, they had grown from serving 500 to over 6,000. They had grown from 3 staff to 16. She stated that they keep a thumb on what is going on with children in the community, and stated that the County would see more diabetic children, more abuse and more strain on the foster care system unless we work together with families early in a child’s development before these problems become bigger problems. The funding provided by the County is a collaborative piece of that effort, and she asked that the Board give serious consideration to that funding and the Alliance’s request.
8. **Dr. Colin Thomas** – Dr. Thomas stated that he represented the free clinics as the incoming Board President of the free clinics, also known as the Volunteer Medical Resource Center. He stated that they provide free medical and dental care to uninsured low income residents of Henderson County. They use volunteer health care professionals to provide those services. They had been in existence about 3 ½ years. In 2002, a study showed that 17% of Henderson County residents had no health insurance, and 20,000 residents had an income less than 185% of the federal poverty level. All of those individuals can get their health care in the hospital emergency rooms, and many do. However, the burden on the emergency rooms can be lessened by individuals using the clinic. The estimated value of services and medications given last year was \$465,000 and the estimated emergency room savings were \$196,000. By using volunteer professionals, the clinic can also lessen the Health Department’s need for increasing paid staff.

- 9. Dr. David Cook** – Dr. Cook was present representing Innerfaith Assistance Ministry. He thanked the Board for their previous support of Medifind, a volunteer based program helping some of our vulnerable, fragile citizens acquire medications. Last year, Medifind saved 649 residents \$2,021,620 in medication expenses. He stated that this program also creates a savings in reduction of visits to the emergency room, while improving the health and quality of life for some older citizens. He asked that the Board consider continuing to support Medifind.
- 10. Jill Van Horne** –Ms. Van Horne stated that she was a Counselor at Marlowe Elementary School. School counselors are required to have a Master’s Degree in School Counseling. In addition, many counselors in Henderson County have their license to practice privately. Her time as a counselor is chiseled away with many tasks not related to school counseling, which prevents her from developing a comprehensive school counseling program as recommended by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA). While all of the tasks being performed are important, they are not the best use of time and education for school counselors. Ms. Van Horne discussed a number of duties being performed by the counselors that could be performed by a paraprofessional, leaving the counselors to do the job they were trained to do.
- 11. Diane Bowers** – Ms. Bowers stated that she was the Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Literacy Council, an Alliance accredited agency. She thanked the Board for their previous support, and requested their support for the increase in the Alliance’s budget. She stated that they were no longer the non-profits of the past, but were lean, mean, and cut-throat and do a big, good and effective job in the County. She pointed out that they were also held accountable now. Like the school system, the Council must conduct standardized testing on every student they work with. They are held accountable to federal standards of level increase, and consistently exceed federal mandates by 90 percentage points. She noted that about five years ago a national accounting firm was commissioned to do an economic impact analysis of the cash contributions to volunteer literacy councils in the United States. They found that for every dollar donated, 33 dollars are returned to the local economy. Based on their past rate of funding, the County’s contribution had returned to the local economy \$478,000 a year. She urged the Board to consider the Alliance’s request, stating that the County would get it back.
- 12. Ann Crisp** – Ms. Crisp stated that she was an elementary school counselor at Dana Elementary School. She thanked the Board for the renovation and expansion project that had just begun at the school. She spoke on behalf of the request to add additional support staff in the School budget. She discussed the job of the school counselors, stating that they help teach social, emotional and person skills, they help students learn how to learn, and teach students how to earn a living. She reiterated that her time as a counselor is chiseled away with many tasks not related to school counseling., and requested the Board consider the funding request which would allow the counselors to do their jobs.
- 13. Ken Perkins** – Mr. Perkins is the Director of Housing Assistance. He thanked the Board for raising the real issues of affordable housing in the County. Housing Assistance is one of the few non-profits in the County that bring tax dollars to the County budget. Over the past few years, they had produced over \$20 million worth of tax producing shelter in the County. He discussed the Village at King Creek, stating that it had received a lot of state and national attention. He stated that in addition to providing new shelters, they needed to work to preserve the tax base already here. He noted that they get countless calls for a program called Urgent Repair, which preserved health, safety and warmth for the citizens occupying those shelters. Very few dollars are available for home repair, and Mr. Perkins requested the County help them get the dollars that were available by providing a match for already promised State grants.
- 14. Dick Baird** – Mr. Baird stated that government finance is composed of three distinct groups of somewhat opposing objectives: the service provider, the service consumer and the sugar daddy. The service provider, the County and County Manager, naturally advocates for the service consumer. Mr. Baird stated that he was advocating for the sugar daddy. Mr. Baird discussed true budget growth, the cost of illegal immigrants to the residents, his ideas for improving the education system, that there was not a need for a Development and Enforcement Services Division, and the growth management strategies.

15. Kelly Dull – Ms. Dull stated that she was a school counselor at Edneyville Elementary School, and was speaking of behalf of the request for support staff. She provided the following monthly statistics from her school: 10-15 reports made to DSS, 10-15 family or individual referrals to counselors in the community, 80-100 students seen for counseling, 45-50 students involved in small group counseling, 20-25 students are helped financially, about 100 contacts are made with teachers, and 50-55 contacts are made with parents. Additional support staff would allow students to continue receiving the services they desperately need.

ADJOURN

Commissioner McGrady made the motion to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Attest:

Elizabeth W. Corn, Clerk to the Board

William L. Moyer, Chairman

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