

At a budget work session of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held in the Board Room of the Southampton County Office Center at 26022 Administration Center Drive, Courtland, Virginia on April 16, 2008 at 6:30 PM.

SUPERVISORS PRESENT

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman (Drewryville)
Walter L. Young, Jr., Vice-Chairman (Franklin)
Walter D. Brown, III (Newsoms)
Carl J. Faison (Boykins-Branchville)
Anita T. Felts (Jerusalem)
Moses Wyche (Capron)

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

Ronald M. West (Berlin-Ivor)

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
James A. Randolph, Assistant County Administrator
Julia G. Williams, Finance Director
Susan H. Wright, Administrative Secretary

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order. After the *Pledge of Allegiance*, Supervisor Faison gave the invocation.

Mr. Demetrios Peratsakis, Executive Director of the Western Tidewater Community Services Board (WTCSB), was the first to speak to their respective budget. He presented a hard copy of a PowerPoint presentation and briefly discussed it. He advised that the WTCSB provided ongoing mental health, substance abuse, and mental retardation related services to children and adults in Southampton County. During the 2006-07 fiscal year, they were able to provide over \$760,000 in treatment to residents in need, including ongoing medical, counseling and support services to over 300 individuals, as well as emergency psychiatric, referral, and disaster recovery counseling to families throughout Southampton County. From FY 2003 to FY 2007, they experienced an increase in community service need, with a correspondingly high demand for new medical, psychiatric, and treatment services. They expected a continuing increase in demand for services in FY 2009. They were concerned about federal changes regarding Medicaid services. The Federal Government was pushing numerous unfunded mandates related to Medicaid services down to the state level. This was of great concern because 73% of the WTCSB budget was derived from fees, and 67% of those fees were Medicaid fees. The loss of funds would put pressure on the services. He noted that they had been able to push back some of the changes to April 2009. Those factors had increased their need for additional financial support from the Southampton County. They were respectfully requesting \$83,380, an 8% increase.

Mr. Peratsakis clarified for Supervisor Brown that he attributed the increased need for their services at least partially to the fact that there were more stressors in the environment. There was also less bed space in which to put these people. Beds had been decreased from 5,000 a few years ago to 300, half of which were reserved for geriatric patients.

Mr. Peratsakis clarified for Supervisor Brown that the federal changes in Medicaid services could eventually cut his budget by as much as \$1 million/year. There was no way to make up that funding, but to cut services.

Ms. Randi Blumeson, Managing Attorney of the Virginia Legal Aid Society (VLAS) in Suffolk, spoke to their respective budget. She advised that VLAS was a non-profit law firm that provided free legal information, advice and representation in certain civil cases to low-income individuals and families. Offices were located in Danville, Emporia, Farmville, Lynchburg, and Suffolk. They had been in their permanent location on East Washington Street in Suffolk for a couple of years and had almost raised all of the money for that building. In FY 2006-07, they closed 61 cases in Southampton County, which improved conditions for 142 people. Clients must have incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level. VLAS had helped low-income families gain access to health care, put food on the table, avoid homelessness, and get poor housing conditions remedies by their landlords. They had stopped door to door sales companies from foreclosing on the homes of elderly homeowners who unknowingly signed deeds of trust to secure payment plans on vacuum cleaners and shoddy home repairs. They had obtained divorces, child support, and child custody to help stabilize unstable families. VLAS operated on a deficit budget, spending more than they received in income because the need was great. They continued, however, to

improve client service. They were respectfully requesting funding from Southampton County in the amount of \$3,245, an increase of \$125 from last fiscal year.

Mrs. Iola Lamison, Branch Manager of the Walter Cecil Rawls branch of the Blackwater Regional Library, spoke to their respective budget. She stated that they were having an exciting year. Their Summer Reading theme for the youth was "Catch the Reading Bug" and for the teens, "Metamorphosis." She was happy to report that over the last 5 months, circulation had increased by 22%, patron count – 12%, new patrons – 33%, and computer usage – 78%. The look of the library had undergone some changes. They had incorporated some suggestions of the patrons to try and provide a more functional and attractive place to study and relax. They painted the walls in the Children's Room cheerful, sherbert colors. They had new furniture, books, and equipment they acquired through grants. Local artist Martha Gibson painted murals on the walls, one of which was a boy and girl reading a book under a tree. They were very pleased with their attractive new circulation desk custom-built by Davis Woodworking in Courtland. It had a built-in book return and lower level for wheelchair accessibility. She advised that Ardith Ohka was the new Youth Services Director. In February, they invited Kool Smiles Dentistry to give a free program and dental screening – 220 preschoolers attended. The program was so successful that they had Kool Smiles come back this past Monday – 240 kindergarten and first graders attended. There were a lot of talented people in Southampton County that graciously volunteered their time at the Library. Lee Copeland presented 2 digital camera programs with over 60 people attending. Bill Vick presented a scroll saw program. Lorraine Whitehead participated in special reading night. She informed that this week was National Library Week/Fine Free Week. They planned to have an Open House in the future in which the public was invited to see the changes that had taken place at the Library. (The Library was requesting funds in the amount of \$266,772, up from \$239,910 last year, or 11%, which was attributable to the new 2007 library agreement.)

Mrs. Connie Burgess, Director of Franklin/Southampton Office of Early Childhood, spoke to their respective budget. She distributed an information packet to the Supervisors. She advised that Franklin/Southampton Office of Early Childhood Commission was a collaborative partnership of community leaders appointed by the Franklin City Council and the Southampton Board of Supervisors committed to assuring that young children arrived at school ready to learn. This past year, the Commission had been developing an infrastructure, with goals and objectives in order to apply for a Partnership Grant from the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation this spring. In addition, the Commission had applied for and received a Planning Grant from the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, a 2-year grant from the Obici Healthcare Foundation to hire a director, and a grant from International Paper to support a literacy project. She stated that children in Franklin and Southampton County often arrived at school poorly prepared. Studies showed that by the age of 5, a child's brain had developed 90%, and that quality early care promoted the success of children in future employment and earnings capabilities. On a national basis, 49% of children who started Kindergarten unprepared were middle or upper income families. At a time when brain development was at its highest, our investment was at its lowest. For every dollar Virginia spent on a college student, only 5 cents was spent on a preschool child to support the early years. They were respectfully requesting funding from Southampton County in the amount of \$31,250.

Mrs. Burgess clarified for Supervisors Brown and Faison, that regarding the information packet she distributed, they were in the process of gathering data pertaining to Southampton County. (Franklin data was included in the packet.)

Mrs. Judy English, Director of Southampton County Social Services, spoke to their respective budget. Mrs. Phyllis Barnett passed out copies of their annual report for the Board members to review at their leisure. Mrs. English recognized Supervisor Wyche, who was a valued member of their Board of Directors. She also recognized members of her staff that were present. She stated that they were one of a few agencies in the state with a zero error rate regarding food stamps. She was very proud of the fact that if someone walked into their office, one of their staff members could usually help that person right away. She advised that changes in their budget would make it easier for them to reconcile the state and county budget. They were requesting a decrease of \$13,000 in local funds. They were actually anticipating an increase in total cost/total budget, but the rate of reimbursement from the federal and state levels had increased.

Mrs. English clarified for Supervisor Brown that she did know what percent was spent on Medicaid, as her agency only determined the eligibility.

Mr. Rick Francis, Clerk of the Circuit Court, spoke to their respective budget. He advised that he submitted a letter dated February 29 detailing his budget request. He was requesting 4% salary increases for his staff and custodian, as he wanted to do what he could for them. The majority of the other requests were for one time expenses. He was asking for assistance on postage. He was

requesting funding for a credit card machine to better serve the public. He had set up the Commissioner of the Revenue and Treasurer's Office on the remote access system so they could access deed/plat information without having to leave their offices. He would also like to make remote access available to any interested Supervisors. He would like GIS maps to be available at the Clerk's Office. At present, there was no way to access the County's GIS maps in the Records Room (without using a staff member's computer). Historically, the public needed to access the County's tax maps when reviewing Deeds. Having a GIS site available in the Records Room would serve the needs of the public, not to mention taking much of the present demand off of the Commissioner of the Revenue's Office from people needing access to their tax maps. They were also requesting funding for a new back door. At present, there was cardboard taped to the inside of the door to keep in heat and keep out lizards and snakes. He could reduce a few things from his letter, including reducing \$1,200 requested for travel to \$500, and reducing shredding services provided by "Shred It" from \$1,500 to \$600. He was concerned about potential fire risks, and was requesting funding to remedy some of those concerns. For example, there was a short in one of the double pole light switches that activated the lights when one entered the Clerk's Office. Also, the circuit breaker that controlled the lighting in the Records Room becomes warm to the touch and he was concerned that it was overloaded or beginning to malfunction. He asked Mr. Michael Johnson, County Administrator, to have his staff check with the phone book people at Verizon to make sure that the General District Clerk's Office and the Commonwealth Attorney's phone numbers were listed in the next phone book, as at least 40% of their calls were not related to Circuit Court matters. He advised that they welcomed any suggestions and planned to have some Open Houses on Saturdays to familiarize the public with the Clerk's Office.

Mr. Francis clarified for Supervisor Brown that they planned to go totally paperless within the next 5 years. They were in the process of removing social security numbers from online documents.

Ms. Joyelle Saunders, Program Coordinator for Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA) spoke to their respective budget. She distributed an information packet to the Supervisors. She then recognized Judge Alfreda Talton-Harris. Ms. Saunders advised that the vision of the Voices for Kids CASA Program of Southeastern Virginia was to serve the entire 5th Judicial District by providing quality advocacy for the abused and neglected children of Franklin, Southampton, Suffolk, and Isle of Wight. She was very excited at the opportunity to impact the lives of children in Southampton County who needed their help the most. CASA recruited and trained people to care for abused and neglected children. There were 27 statewide CASA programs in Virginia. They currently operated a CASA program in Isle of Wight County. The Judges serving the Fifth Judicial District had asked them to also serve Southampton County and the City of Franklin. She was the only paid person at the local CASA office. She explained that CASA volunteers could serve up to 3 separate children at one time, or 2 if the children were siblings. CASA volunteers were given permission by the court to have access to the child's medical records, court orders, etc. The CASA volunteers would report back to the judges. Their local CASA program was in the process of going non-profit and was recruiting Board members. They were requesting funding in the amount of \$1,000 per capita from each of the localities in the Fifth Judicial District, which equated to a funding request of \$18,000 from Southampton County. Volunteers must go through 35 hours of training. The funding would go towards training, travel, operations, and hopefully at least one part-time employee to help her out.

Judge Alfreda Talton-Harris spoke. She advised that CASA volunteers were willing to give their personal time to help children in need. Sure there were social workers, etc. that could provide assistance to children, but their large case loads prevented them from helping as much as they would like. Also, the parents of these children were often not in a position to get the child the help they needed.

Mr. Eric Cooke, Commonwealth's Attorney, spoke to their respective budget. He thanked the Board for their support. He advised that crime was on the rise in Southampton County and the City of Franklin. The gang problem was here and they were working to address it. The values of people in gangs were so different than mainstream America. Testifying was snitching in their eyes. Essentially, they were requesting to be level-funded with the exception of funding for 2 additional staff persons. They had not filled the positions for an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney and Paralegal because they did not have the space. However, they were working with Mr. Michael Johnson, County Administrator, and Judge Westbrook Parker on the space issues and would like to fill those positions. He stated that last year his office had 500 felony indictments and 130 misdemeanor appeals. They would prosecute each and every case presented to them. He tried not to get hung up on statistics. Jack Randall, Assistant Commonwealth Attorney, was their DUI specialist. They did collect court costs in DUI cases which helped offset expenses. They were doing a lot of asset forfeiture, which also helped offset expenses.

Mr. Charles Turner, Superintendent of Southampton County Public Schools, spoke to their respective budget and presented a PowerPoint presentation. He acknowledged the staff and parents who were present in support of the budget. He advised that the mission of Southampton Public Schools, through the combined efforts of staff, students, families and the community, was to ensure a quality education in a safe environment that would prepare students to be successful learners and productive citizens in an ever-changing society. Their focus areas were student achievement, school safety, school facilities, technology, transportation, communication, and professionalism. He noted that Mr. Billy Grizzard was the best transportation director in the state. All six schools were fully accredited, one was a Blue Ribbon school, two were Title I Distinguished schools, three were VIP schools, and one had been a SACS Accredited school for 50 years. Virginia's students were performing better than students in most states, and Southampton County students were performing remarkably well.

Mr. Turner advised that the proposed operating budget for the 2008-2009 school year had been developed with the intent to move Southampton County Public Schools in a positive direction. A significant factor in developing the budget was the cost associated with the opening of the new Riverdale Elementary School. The renovation of the Southampton Middle School auditorium was also incorporated in the budget. They had also taken into account the rising costs of utilities and fuel. With the rising price of gasoline, it was very expensive to operate buses and cars over a 600 square mile county. Six additional buses were needed, but only three buses plus one handicapped bus was being requested at this time. They continued to be mindful of salaries of their personnel. While they had made progress with beginning teacher salaries, steps 10-20 had been adjusted to address concerns with that portion of the scale. Southampton County was fortunate to have an outstanding staff which had enabled them to reach their current academic standing. It was imperative that they maintain and be prepared to competitively recruit teachers that were highly qualified in accordance with the No Child Left Behind requirement. They were currently above 99% in that particular area. Due to personnel needs, an Assistant Principal position for Riverdale Elementary, five teaching positions, and seven classified positions had been included. The proposed budget represented a 4% salary increase with adjustments from steps 10-20 on the teacher scale. An additional \$1,700 had been added for secretaries and technology technicians to try and get them to a competitive level. They had included life insurance for maintenance, garage and custodial staff.

Mr. Turner stated that the figures in the budget were extremely conservative. The fixed cost associated with the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health insurance, transportation cost, utilities, and heating service were areas over which they had no control. Also, a significant feature in the budget continued to be the fixed cost associated with Special Education. Those costs were expected to increase a minimum of 7.5%. But those children deserved and were entitled to a good education. There was also an expected increase for the Governor's School for the Arts. The proposed budget represented an increase in instruction, which included the implementation of a JROTC program and a Sports Trainer. It was essential that Southampton County Schools continue their momentum and progress. They would continue to make the Southampton County Public School System one in which all would continue to be proud. They had made great strides and the momentum must continue. (Southampton County Public Schools was requesting local funding in the amount of \$32,452,688, or a 7.87% increase.)

Supervisor Brown thanked Mr. Turner and the teachers for their hard work and dedication to Southampton County Schools. He congratulated Mr. Turner on his "Superintendent of the Year" nomination.

Supervisor Brown asked what was the loss rate of teachers, or the percent of teachers they would normally lose in a school year? Mr. Turner advised that he would get that number for him. He confirmed that the loss of teachers was due to salaries.

Mrs. Roberta Naranjo, Vice-Chairman of the Southampton County School Board, spoke. She advised that students in the Cosmetology class at the Southampton High School recently took part in a state competition, and the Cosmetology teacher was complimented over and over for the performance of the students. Students performing well made them so proud. The Principals were great. As Southampton Schools became more famous, people from the state were trying to steal their personnel. She thanked the Board of Supervisors for their support.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.