

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 20, 2011 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)
Ronald M. West (Berlin-Ivor)
Moses Wyche (Capron)

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
Lynette C. Lowe, Finance Director
Sandi Plyler, Information Technology Manager
Susan H. Wright, Administrative Secretary

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

Mr. Johnson, County Administrator, advised that the purpose of tonight's budget workshop was to reach consensus on a proposed FY 2011-2012 draft budget to advertise in the newspaper to receive public comment.

Vice-Chairman Young stated that we were fully funding Southampton County Schools, and he did not ever remember doing so in the past.

Chairman Jones noted that they had done so once before.

Vice-Chairman Young asked, couldn't they find \$141,514 (the equivalent of 1¢ on the real estate tax rate) they could cut from the budget to enable them to increase the real estate tax rate by 2¢ instead of the proposed 3¢ increase.

Vice-Chairman Young indicated that funding was included for an additional animal control officer, but he wondered if that position was really needed right now.

Supervisor Felts asked if the school employees received raises in the current fiscal year. Mr. Johnson informed that the teachers received bonuses. He was unaware whether or not Central Office staff received raises or bonuses. Supervisor Felts indicated that she would like for him to find out.

Supervisor Felts advised that funding for courthouse security (phase 1) was included in the draft budget, and she thought that should be their number 1 priority. They were taking a big risk each day by not having increased security measures in place.

Supervisor Faison stated this draft budget was much more pleasant than the previous budget. He noted that he was not in favor of making any additional cuts in the budget.

Supervisor Faison asked for clarification regarding Mrs. Susan Wright's new position (page 258). Mr. Johnson explained that Mrs. Wright, current Administrative Assistant, would be reassigned to the Data Processing department to assist with an ever-growing information technology work load. He anticipated the department to assume full responsibility of our website, and possibly our Geographic Information System (GIS), both of which we currently outsourced. Those savings would help to offset the cost of an additional employee in the department. He noted that Mrs. Wright had a background and degree in Information Technology. Mr. Johnson clarified that they would seek to fill the Administrative Assistant position that would be vacated by Mrs. Wright. It was important to have someone answer the phone, greet people when they come in, etc.

Supervisor West advised that ideally he would like to hold the real estate tax rate increase to 0, but no more than a 2¢ increase instead of the proposed 3¢, and give the taxpayers a break this year, as mentioned by Vice-Chairman Young. He hoped they would get businesses in here to help the tax base. Semi-annual collection of taxes was also something to think about. He recognized it was a one-time windfall of additional revenue (at least on paper).

Supervisor Wyche indicated that he was in favor of funding courthouse security improvements. He was also in favor of providing funding for an additional animal control officer if it was really needed. The volunteer fire departments/rescue squads had requested a 5% increase in funding. He acknowledged that an additional \$4,000 was included in the proposed budget for Sedley and Newsoms Volunteer Fire Departments to help with the cost associated with First Responder Emergency Medical Services they provided. Fire/rescue had also requested a 24/7 Advanced Life Support (ALS) person in Ivor, Boykins and Capron. He did not think we could afford to do so at this time. He recognized that they were requesting funding this year just for Ivor, but in his opinion, that if they could not fund a 24/7 ALS person for all 3 requested localities, they should not fund it at all. He noted that he was in favor of the proposed budget as is.

Chairman Jones stated that he would like to advertise the proposed budget as presented.

Supervisor West reiterated that he would like a 2¢ increase in the real estate tax rate to be advertised for public comment, versus the proposed 3¢ increase. He suggested taking the 1¢ (equivalent to \$141,514) out of the Reserve. They often allowed 15 or so people to sway their decisions, and that's not the way it should be. He'd had the opportunity to talk to a fair amount of people in his district. They should only tax as needed. We should give a break this year to our citizens who had supported them in building new schools, etc. He noted that land use tax relief was a good thing, but it was equivalent to about 18¢ on the tax rate.

Vice-Chairman Young agreed that they should advertise a 2¢ instead of 3¢ increase on the real estate tax rate.

Chairman Jones disagreed. He thought they should advertise the 3¢ increase, as everyone knew it was coming – they knew a 3¢ increase was necessary in FY 2011-2012 to pay the debt service.

Supervisor Felts shared some concerns she had received. The contracting equipment tax was currently \$2.40/\$100. Some of her constituents, primarily loggers, had asked why they could not be taxed the same rate as farm equipment, which was \$1.95/\$100. Mr. Johnson stated that if they were to drop the contracting equipment tax from \$2.40/\$100 to \$1.95/\$100, they would lose \$28,826 in revenue.

Supervisor Felts stated that she was also contacted about the tax on motor homes. The rate was currently \$5.00/\$100, which some constituents thought was too high. One constituent in particular indicated that he could register his motor home in North Carolina and pay less tax, and Southampton County would lose that revenue.

Supervisor West advised that he owned a motor home and a reduction in the tax would benefit him directly. However, in his opinion, a motor home was more of a luxury and he could not support a tax reduction.

Supervisor Wyche stated that a lot of time and effort had been put into preparing the budget. He was in favor of advertising the proposed budget as presented. However, he did want to talk to David Britt, Southampton County Treasurer, regarding delinquent taxes. He had received a lot of calls from his constituents indicating that there were millionaires in the County with delinquent taxes. They needed to pay just like everyone else.

Chairman Jones agreed that they needed to talk to Mr. Britt.

Vice-Chairman Young and Supervisor West indicated that they would like to amend the proposed budget and advertise a 2¢ increase instead of a 3¢ increase in the real estate tax.

Supervisor Faison indicated that he was in favor of 2¢ instead of 3¢, but he wanted to advertise the proposed budget as is, reflecting the 3¢ increase.

Chairman Jones and Supervisors Felts and Wyche also indicated that they were in favor of advertising the proposed budget as is.

Vice-Chairman Young and Supervisor West indicated that they would vote in favor of advertising the proposed budget as is, under the pretense that they would work on lowering the real estate tax increase from 3¢ to 2¢.

It was consensus of the Board to advertise the proposed FY 2011-2012 draft budget as presented.

It was also consensus of the Board to hold the budget public hearing in the auditorium of Southampton High School.

Vice-Chairman Young had a question about page 2-218. He asked why the salary of the Facilities Maintenance Supervisor was above the high range. Was it because of years of service. Mr. Johnson replied that was part of it. Also keep in mind that the employee was hired prior to the last pay and classification plan they adopted in 2006. He would have to check but it was possible that the former pay and classification plan could have had that position graded higher, and it was dropped back in 2006. Vice-Chairman Young stated that he didn't realize the salary was so great considering the responsibilities of that position.

Supervisor Felts noted that with the proposed 2% salary increase, that employee would be above the high range even more.

Chairman Jones asked if we were adding an additional custodian. Mr. Johnson clarified that we currently had 3 custodians – 2 full-time and 1 part-time. They proposed to make the part-time position full-time. The County would be assuming custodial responsibilities of the public utilities office in Boykins, which up to this point had been assumed by the accountant in that office.

Vice-Chairman Young had a question about page 2-209. The salary of the Public Works Director was within the range, but there was a lot of responsibility with the equipment and 5 full-time employees. What was the difference between this and a Facilities Maintenance Supervisor? Was it years of service? Mr. Johnson replied that it was not so much years of service, but the grade of the position. Vice-Chairman Young pointed out that the Public Works Director position was a grade 29, and the Facilities Maintenance Supervisor was only a grade 22. Mr. Johnson replied that it likely had to do with the salary the Facilities Maintenance Supervisor started with 12 years ago and where he had moved to. Vice-Chairman Young stated that the Public Works Director had more responsibilities than the Facilities Maintenance Supervisor, and he just didn't realize there was that much difference in the salaries.

Supervisor West advised that he would like to request David Britt, Treasurer, to meet with the Board to discuss delinquent taxes. So was the consensus of the Board. Mr. Johnson agreed to set up the meeting with Mr. Britt.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk

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