

At a budget workshop meeting of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held at Southampton High School, 23350 Southampton Parkway, Courtland, Virginia on May 19, 2014 at 7:00 PM.

SUPERVISORS PRESENT

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman (Drewryville)
Ronald M. West, Vice Chairman (Berlin-Ivor)
Dr. Alan W. Edwards (Jerusalem)
Glenn H. Updike (Newsom)
Carl J. Faison (Boykins-Branchville)
Barry T. Porter (Franklin)
S. Bruce Phillips (Capron)

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
Beth Lewis, Director of Community Development
Lynette C. Lowe, Deputy Administrator CFO
Richard E. Railey, Jr., County Attorney
Amanda N. Smith, Administrative Assistant

OTHERS ABSENT

Julien W. Johnson, Jr. Public Utilities Director

Chairman Jones called the budget workshop meeting to order. He stated that this is the public hearing for the budget. If you want to speak and your name is not on the list, you can still come up front and we will hear you. You don't have to be on the list. He asked Mr. Michael Johnson to call the first speaker.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that the first speaker is Linda Drake.

Mrs. Linda Drake of Newsom addressed the Board. Good Evening Mr. Chairman and the rest of the board. My name is Linda Drake and I am a resident of Newsom Virginia. I stand here tonight to simply say thank you. I have stood here before as a business owner and taxpayer asking you to support the school system. I am not going to talk about that tonight. I am a pre-k teacher for at risk four year olds that find a love for learning in a secure environment. These children have gone on to do remarkable testing on PAL's and SOL's. The rates for students held back have decreased and tonight I want to say thank you for your support. Tonight is the last time I stand before you with two kids in Southampton County Schools. I have a child that will be graduating this year. She was accepted in the first school of her choice, Virginia Tech. She was awarded several scholarships and to say how proud her dad and I are is an understatement. It takes the community and a supportive school system to make their dreams come true. She stated after college she wants to come back to this county. She wants to major in Pediatric Physical Therapy. I see it every day as a teacher the opportunity that is given to these students. Again, I say thank you for the support.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that the next speaker is Mrs. Allene Adkinson.

Mrs. Allene Adkinson of Courtland addressed the Board. Good evening Chairman Jones and the Board of Supervisors. My name is Allene Adkinson and I reside here at Southampton High School. I have resided here for some time. It is a privilege and an honor to stand before you tonight. I come before you to express gratitude. I have been in the school system for a long time and it feels good to stand before the board tonight showing support for the school system. I appreciate the support you have shown in the past but most importantly the support you have shown this year. In just four years the staff has shrunk by 23 members but we continued to do what was needed for our children. I am standing here tonight feeling thankful and very hopeful that we will move Southampton County School system forward. The Board is investing well. Your

financial support will allow for seven new positions that are needed across all of our schools. Approving the salary increases this year will allow us to stay competitive with pay compared to the surrounding areas. We are able to accomplish so much in our schools because of your support. Tonight I want to let you know what state the high school is in. We are doing wonderful. We have achieved twelve straight years of accreditation. We have received notification that we have passed the writing SOL so we are working on thirteen years. This weekend I found out that our Cosmetology students will graduate with full state accreditation. They will be graduating from High School ready for the job market. This is what we strive for with your support. We are proud of our attendance. We have had eight straight years at 95% or better. We have achieved a total of 58 years of state accreditation. We had our audit done for this year and came out on top of that. With graduation quickly approaching, our four year on time graduation rate is 88%. Our graduation class is smaller this year. We have 82 honor graduates. One of those students is Mrs. Drake's daughter. Those graduates will be attending over 53 schools across the nation. Many students do want to come back because they love this county. I have heard concerns in previous meetings regarding volunteerism in the county. It is alive and very well at the high school. The students have given back over 25,000 hours of volunteering. The figures have not been given yet regarding scholarships and grants given to the students but we will have those figures for graduation. I am confident those figures will exceed expectations. The Board has been focusing on Fire and Rescue. Southampton High School has partnered with Paul D. Camp Community College with that program. We are going to see how we can help and what we can do. We are very proud of the students. We hope the programs can continue to develop. The students at the High School have started job shadowing and doing internships in the community. This can only be done with your support. Again, I want to thank you in advance. Thank you for what you are doing tonight and what you have done in the past. We will continue to strive forward.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that the next speaker is Ms. Dawn Gunn.

Ms. Dawn Gunn of Courtland addressed the Board. Good Evening Mr. Chairman and Board members. My name is Dawn Gunn and I am here to support the library and the school system. Both of them are institutes that help build the future of our county. If we don't build now, it will affect our community and be felt in the future. The library does enormous things with very little money. There is no better place to spend time when you are raising children. I would like to thank the school system and library for the information they both provide, the support, and willingness to help. I want to thank Ms. Pope for everything she has done for them. I loved it when I was in school there and hoped to teach in Southampton. The children here love this area. They will buy their homes here and pay taxes. I ask that you continue to provide what makes their lives secure and continue to give them what they need. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that the next speaker is Ms. Rachel Pope.

Mrs. Rachel Pope of Drewryville addressed the Board. Good evening. I will only be speaking briefly. I teach Pre-k at Southampton Academy. This year I have had a great relationship with Walter Cecil Rawls Library. The youth coordinator with the library came every month to my classroom and provided books from various topics. She came every month and would switch them out. I would have over 100 books in hand related to the topic we would be talking about at the time. Thanks for funding them last year and I hope you will fund them this year. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that the next speaker is Lorraine Whitehead.

Ms. Lorraine Whitehead of Sedley addressed the Board. Greetings to Chairman Jones and the Board. My name is Lorraine Whitehead and I live in downtown Sedley and I stand before you tonight to say thank you for your support. I have something I want to share with you. I remember watching a kid's cartoon and the main character asked what do you do with your time here. I am here to let you know my time here does count and I will make it a better place. Today I am grateful to say I have taught children for 38 years now. Education has changed for the children of Southampton County. Creativity and leadership in the classrooms transitions into future healthy living habits for the students. I have a message for the seniors and that is to go forward confidence in your dreams. The skills we foster to the students reaches beyond SOL's. We give them the skills they need to be life ready. We are only able to do this because of your support. We take the responsibility of school funding seriously. We take each dollar budgeted as a game changer. What you and I do makes a difference as we create a better life for our children.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that our next speaker is Ms. Sally Vick.

Ms. Sally Vick of Courtland addressed the Board. Good Evening gentlemen. My name is Sally Vick and I was asked to speak on behalf of the Library. We are blessed with a wonderful library. I remember the excitement when we heard we were going to get a library. I still remember the electricity that went through the community. What a blessing it has been. I used it as a child but I have used it more as an adult. I use it for different research and high-speed internet. I have requested material through the inter-library system. I have done plenty of research at the library. When I was working on my MBA, it was a great resource along with the College library. Reading has been a great recreation. I have had the privilege to volunteer reading during story hour at the library. As I read, I am reminded of the importance of reading. The pictures provide stimulation to young children's brains. As of right now, Wednesday evening is the only hours available for working adults. For many children, they don't have a way to get there unless a parent takes them. I do hope you consider the budget request. Over the last two years, budget cuts have caused a decrease in operating hours. Our library will be used to its full extent.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated that our next speaker is Carl Garner.

Mr. Carl Garner of Ivor addressed the Board. Good Evening gentlemen. My name is Carl Garner and I am here tonight on behalf of Southampton County Fire & Rescue Association. I want to reinforce what the school has said. Ivor, over the last four years, has had six students state certified from Southampton High School. Of those six that attended Jefferson College in Roanoke Virginia, one graduated with a degree in medic services. We have one senior starting in the fall and one who has finished his first year of college. The Fire & Rescue Association would like to thank you for what you have done and listening to us. We thank you for realizing the need was there and thank you for your support. If there is anything that I can do for the county please let me know. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated the next speaker is Dr. Alvera Parrish.

Dr. Alvera Parrish, Superintendent of Southampton Public Schools, addressed the Board. Good Evening. Chairman Jones and the rest of the Board members I stand before you as Superintendent of Southampton County Schools but also as a resident. I stand before you to say it has been a great year during this budget process. We all dread the budget season but we were able to share a different story this year. We have worked together with very collaborative efforts. We have been able to utilize the resources of the county and in return you have provided the needs of the School System. It has been an interesting year but very profitable and productive. Great things came from attending the Board of Supervisors Retreat. It allowed one on one time to talk with each other and ask those questions that needed to be asked and get a better understanding of what we were asking for and why we needed those resources. I am very optimistic about the budget request. I am excited about next school year. We have suffered a long time with the reduction in different positions. It seems if this budget goes forward we will be able to provide to students and reduction in teacher-student ratio. Our goal is to open the door of excellence to all students. We can see how different people have benefited from students going through Southampton County. One of the departments who benefit is the Fire and Rescue Department. As people graduate, they usually don't want to come back but I find that different here in the county. They go get the education they need and then they come back. It is an investment that never stops giving back and that is a result of the county. I say to you tonight, the job you are doing and the impact you have is something that is observed. It is a welcoming feeling that says you want to be here. I have heard great news about the future of Southampton County students. That is what it is all about. We can do nothing but make progress and move forward by working together. I wanted to express my appreciation tonight for your support. Thank you for the individual conversations and I consider all of us to be on the same side. I feel good about this budget season. I know you have tough decisions to make but I want to thank you on how you have conducted business.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated the next speaker is Allison Francis.

Mrs. Allison Francis of Capron addressed the Board. Good Evening Board Members. I come to you from Capron born and raised in Newsoms. Tonight I come to you as a parent and not a principal. All three of my children went through Southampton County School System and two

have graduated from Virginia Tech. One will graduate from Virginia Commonwealth University with her Masters and the other child will graduate from William & Mary with her Masters this year. My son Walter Johnson Francis Jr graduate this year from the High School and will be going to American University in Washington D.C. in August. All my children have gone through this system and have been successful no matter what path they took. Southampton County has vision. We believe all students will be successful and productive. Thanks for supporting us and making students' visions a reality.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated the next speaker is Florence & Clifton Reynolds.

Mrs. Florence Reynolds of Zuni addressed the Board. Good evening Board Members. Let me just say following suit what students do when they leave Southampton County. I have one that is a partner at a law firm in Washington D.C. and I have another one that is an Entrepreneur. I want to just say thank you so much for working with the school system this year. Working together we can have a school system we are all proud of.

Mr. Clifton Reynolds of Zuni addressed the Board. Good evening Board Members. My name is Clifton Reynolds and I live on Tucker Swamp Road in Zuni. I have a question about the budget if you don't mind. The other week I looked at the budget printed in the Tidewater News Paper. I saw the personal property part that lays out farmers' equipment rate and at the bottom, the construction equipment rate had the same rate. I need an explanation on construction equipment. I recall a guy had a question about his construction equipment and he is a logger. I saw favorable comments on this request. I am thinking most favorable comments came from loggers who have this equipment. What about other people like carpenters and plumbers? Do they fall under the same rate as construction equipment? You don't have to answer that right now. Mr. Johnson you can see me afterwards.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated the next speaker is John Burchett.

Mr. John Burchett of Sebrell addressed the Board. Good evening. I am John Burchett and I live in Sebrell. It is just amazing to me. I am just bubbling all over and it feels so good to know how people like her and others are taking care of our children. You have heard Dr. Parrish and other teachers talk about what they do. I remember Dr. Conco saying Southampton County leads in student preparation for college. You have someone that is receiving the product giving credit for what Southampton does. I think I have told you before; I have had three graduate from Southampton County Schools. I am also a proud granddad. Gina graduated from Radford University May 10 and will go to college in North Carolina for a pharmacist degree. Bridget is an uprising Junior. She said Saturday she got all A's praise the Lord. Both girls have worked really hard. Olivia who is in first grade, we have been blessed with as well. Her mother told us she is in first grade reading on a 4th and 5th grade reading level. She can read faster than me but that isn't saying much. Yesterday at Courtland Baptist Church two children were dedicated. Pastor said these children are gifts from God. All children are gifts from God and we have to accept responsibility for God's gift. The one's coming out of the trailer park and Oak Trail their parents really don't give a flip but they are also gifts from God. Our responsibility is to give them a chance. You can't make them learn but we can offer them help. I have two neighbors that volunteer with reading and all that good stuff but we can't replace teachers with volunteers. We have to have special teachers for them. I do want to thank you tonight for your support in education. I have had people to ask me, why do I support them? I went through the apprentice school of Newport News and then I woke up and found out I had to work for a living. We are also on the receiving end of students coming out of Southampton County Public Schools. I am very pleased with what has come out of the county. The teachers are giving the students the basic skills needed and some could even read drawings. I am hoping your support this year is a change in what you think about education. I hope it is not because we got a lot of money dumped on us from the State. We will see in future years if you changed or you were just dumped a lot of money. I have a few comments on the budget. Let's see, Glenn, Alan, Barry, and Bruce. You four were bought in to revolutionize our operations in the county. I look back over the years and guess what? Three years ago the tax rate was .77 cents now we going back to .77 cents. Three years ago there wasn't a \$200 trash fee and now there is. I think you need to call the former board and apologize to them because we are right back where we started. I am not optimistic about the \$200. I am sure we won't see it go anywhere. Glen, didn't we spend all of it? We always have something we have to have. We spend every dime we get. It is always something. I came up with a few things last time

but I have made some changes. I am going back to the detention budget for the Sheriff. It was raised \$282,000. That is 8.3% and if you add in \$20,700 to include the kitchen that is a 9.5% increase. So you are not going to raise the budget 4% or 5% but 8%. Why weren't there any questions asked? Not in the public anyway. We are now spending according to this budget for 100 detainees \$31,310 a year. If you just did the level funding for the detention of the Sheriff's budget you could forget about the 2% tax increase. You took the easiest path. Raise the tax rate .02 cent. That is not right. Thank the Lord that I can have my say.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated the next speaker is Leroy Hardy Jr.

Mr. Leroy Hardy Jr of Sedley addressed the Board. Good evening. My name is Leroy Hardy Jr and I reside in Sedley. I stand before you tonight to advocate for the library. Their services play a valuable role in or community. I have four teenagers and we utilize it in a lot of ways. I have worked closely with the library regarding geological research. Our local history is very rich in Southamptton County. All of the programs that are provided for the children are very important to them. From what I can see, they are not requesting a big increase. Thank you for a job well done.

Mr. Michael Johnson stated the next speaker is Joanne Nichols.

Ms. Joanne Nichols of Courtland addressed the Board. Good evening board members. My name is Joanne Nichols and I live in Courtland on highway 616. I have three daughters and they have received a good education from Southamptton County Schools. Tonight I am here in support of the library. It is my friend. I do a lot of research there and I also do things for the church. We use the library for our children. Tonight I ask that you consider giving them what they need. Thank you.

Chairman Jones states that is all that has signed up to speak. Does anybody else have anything to say? I will close the hearing at this time. Do any of the board members have any comments at this time?

Supervisor West states I only have one comment and thanks to everyone for coming out. We have done the best we could under the circumstances. We have seen a lot of support tonight for the library and the schools. Again, thank you for coming out this evening. We will meet tomorrow to discuss the budget. Next Tuesday we will vote yes or no on the budget.

Chairman Jones states anyone else? He called on Supervisor Phillips.

Supervisor Phillips states preparing the budget has been easier this year than in the past. We have worked towards giving the departments what they needed. Fire and Rescue had a need for the past few years and we had to wait for the right moment. The department needed funding and we didn't have it in the past. This year we had money to work with. We are able to put money back in the Reserve Fund. I want to address the tax increase at this time. That money will be going directly to Fire and Rescue. The State has placed mandates on Rescue when EMS goes pick someone up and take them to the hospital. I would like to thank everyone for their support. The past three years has been rough. It is not a guarantee that next year will hold because there is no guarantee the state budget will hold.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Faison.

Supervisor Faison states I would like to thank everyone for coming out tonight to the public hearing. I think we all feel better this year about the budget. We feel better not by accident but because we have put a lot of preparation and planning into this budget. We are blessed that industries are coming into the county. This doesn't happen unless some spending is done. No one here like to raise taxes but sometimes it is necessary in order to move forward. I have enjoyed working with everyone this year and it has been a privilege to serve on this board. It may appear that we want to spend but it is all of our money. I look forward to next year and having another year where we feel good about the budget.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Porter.

Supervisor Porter states I would to thank everyone for coming out tonight. I have talked to a lot of people about things we are trying to do. I have not heard a lot of negative feedback. People didn't

like the tax increase but they understood why it was necessary. People stated that they support the schools and support adding additional services to EMS. They felt like that was important. People asked that we don't close the disposal centers. They stated we pay \$200 to dispose trash and it should be open. Not one person I talked to supported closing disposal centers for a couple of hours. So, we do listen. John we listen to you and see what we can find. We looked to find ways to get rid of the 2% tax increase. We dug into it. We could find \$100 here \$200 there but it was no way we could find \$300,000 without affecting services we needed. We all support the schools. We supported it last year and the year before. We just didn't have the money. We told you last year to bare with us and we would help you when we can. This year we came through like we promised. We will help you when we can. I believe education is the most important thing we provide. We also can't nickel and dime our law enforcement. Our neighbors nearby have it a lot worse than we do. John pointed out our detention budget. It costs a lot of money to house a prisoner but it really isn't high when you look at other localities. Yes, there is building money in the budget for their new kitchen. We either do it or be forced by the state. If we cut \$20,700 we are not going to save that because a large portion of that is given by the state. Many of us take a tight look at the budget and try to find ways to cut it. Yes we can cut money in one place but then it's like pulling back layers of an onion. The money is not there. I can't find additional money. One thing too we are not taking money out of the reserve. That is a half a million dollars we have been taking out of the reserve over the last... as far back as I can go back and check. That is like cutting the budget a half a million dollars right there. That is where some of the extra money went too. There are a lot of things that when you look at it individually it doesn't make a lot of sense but when you put the whole puzzle together it starts to make a lot more sense.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Updike.

Supervisor Updike states I appreciate everybody showing up. We have listened to everybody and everything for the citizens. It is the first time a person didn't address one issue and that is the tax payers. No one seems to be concerned about the taxpayers of the county. Taxpayers make roughly \$33,000. Their tax bill is going to run \$1500.00. Well you say 2% isn't going to hurt them. I think 26% or so receive some type of food assistance. This will just put more people in line for food assistance, more delinquent in taxes, and delinquent in trash fees and what are they going to do; Sell it. We have no conscious whatsoever putting more burden on the average citizens. We have spent 7.3% more than previous years. Who salary went up 7.3%? Who retirement went up? They do good to get 1% and then the government takes half of it for insurance. These people are tired and we just don't realize that the taxpayers in the county are fed up with all of the additional cost. You talk about the trash fee that was an 8% tax increase. We all saying .77 cents but really, add another .08 cents to that. So we are equivalent to paying .85 cents. Then the first thing you say, we are not taking any money out of the reserve. Do you realize we are 50% below the recommended amount in the reserve fund? We should have between 6 and 7 million dollars in reserve fund so we don't have to borrow money every August to subsidize paying our bills for the next few months. We have 3 million dollars. Over half, well I wouldn't say half, but at least close to a million dollars should be put back into reserve. I have worked with farmers for over 35 years. What is their first attitude when they have a surplus in farming? I am not going to pay income taxes I am going to go out and buy a new tractor. The next year, what happens? We have a bad year and they need to pay us and the IRS and before you know it they are in foreclosure. We should get our reserve back where it belongs and look after the citizens that are not getting big raises every year and stop spending 7.3%. It is unsustainable. I for one understand this budget is with an attitude we have 3 million dollars let us spend it all. That philosophy doesn't work with me.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Edwards.

Supervisor Edwards states I look at this budget tonight as a three year process. During the last three years there has been a trust developed between the people who give the money and the people who spend the money. You know the money that you give is not going to be wasted. I think we all realize that now. I think it has been a three year process to learn each other and I am really happy with the budget.

Chairman Jones states is there anything we need to change in the budget.

Supervisor West states Mr. Chairman I don't see a need for a meeting tomorrow night at this point. I think we need to go forward with our meeting next Tuesday night. I make a motion to not meet

tomorrow night.

Chairman Jones states so we don't need to meet tomorrow night.

Supervisor Edwards seconded the motion.

Supervisor Phillips states I don't see a need but I don't mind if there is some further discussion and reflection after tonight I will be there.

Supervisor Faison states I am satisfied. I don't see any changes at this time.

Supervisor Porter states I don't see where we would make a change by tomorrow night. We are still open to comments and suggestions before we vote next Tuesday.

Supervisor Updike states once again we promise the citizens to take in their comments and considerations and to say the budget is a done deal, end of discussion, I think that is a slap in the face towards the people that did show up.

Chairman Jones states we have heard from the citizens. We are not going to have a meeting tomorrow night. We will plan to meet next Tuesday evening. If you have any questions, you can always call us on our cell phones or at home. If you can't get us at home, call us on our cell so we may answer any questions you may have. If you can't get us you can call Mrs. Lowe or Mr. Johnson. If there is nothing else, we will meet again next Tuesday night.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk

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