

May 16, 2016

At a budget workshop meeting of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held at Southampton High School, 23350 Southampton Parkway, Courtland, Virginia on May 16, 2016 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 (Newsoms)
Carl J. Faison (Boykins-Branchville)
Barry T. Porter (Franklin)
S. Bruce Phillips (Capron)

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
Richard E. Railey, Jr., County Attorney
Amanda N. Smith, Administrative Assistant

OTHERS ABSENT

Julien W. Johnson, Jr. Public Utilities Director
Beth Lewis, Director of Community Development
Lynette C. Lowe, Deputy County Administrator/ Chief Financial Officer

Chairman Jones called the budget public hearing to order. Good evening everyone. At this time we will have the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

After the pledge, Supervisor Faison gave the invocation.

Chairman Jones states I have the list of speakers. Is there anyone else that did not sign up who would like to? Alright, our first speaker tonight is Ms. Mandy Hall.

Ms. Mandy Hall addressed the board. Good evening members of the board. My name is Mandy Hall and I am a resident of Southampton County with two children enrolled in Nottoway Elementary School. I am here tonight to encourage you to fulfill the school board's request for funding. I am at school twice a day on most days and as a PTA President I can attest to the teamwork that it takes the teachers, resource instructors, administration, and support staff to make a great school. Every person wears multiple hats and every single position matters. To allow our schools to maximize their potential, there is a need to allow resource teachers to remain at each school and be completely invested in their own school. It would unlock each school's ability to educate the whole child. Our kids are more than just test scores. They are energetic, curious, compassionate, and they are thirsty for experiences. They are worth the investment because they are, after all, our future workforce. The next generation of entrepreneurs, and the people who will be responsible for this community in the coming years. We need to retain teachers that we have and allow them to work in environments that are completely supported by the community and our local government with opportunities to enrich their student's lives. Smaller class sizes, dedicated resource teachers, and motivated teachers are what our schools need. Evidence from the National Education Policy Center suggests that an increase in class size will harm not only children's test scores in the short-run, but also their long-run human capital formation. Money saved today by increasing class sizes will result in more substantial social and educational costs in the future. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Chairman Jones states thank you Ms. Hall. The next speaker is T.J. Babb.

Mr. T.J. Babb addressed the board. Good afternoon members of the board. My name is T.J. Babb.

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I am also a resident of Southampton County. My parents are also from Southampton County. I also graduated from Southampton High School. I am here tonight also to talk about our education. I have a daughter who is eight years old. She goes to Riverdale Elementary School. She got into Pre-K and since then she has made honor roll or principal's list every year. She has gotten student of the month at least one month every year since she has been there. This year being in third grade she has made principal's list all year. I think you need to consider everything that the board has asked, and give great thought to the budget as far as our education goes. Like Ms. Hall said, our kids growing up now are our future. Southampton County has the ability to produce the next President of the United States. Don't you all agree? We have the ability for the next great doctor. But, in order to do that we have to make sure our schools are equipped with the latest technology and the latest tools so that our kids can excel. So, the state can give us more funding. If we do that, other counties in Virginia will say hey, what is Southampton County doing. The state will be like hey, Southampton County is doing great things for their kids. Their kids are within the highest graduation rate. They are getting the most money for scholarships. We need to find out what they are doing. That is what I want. I want my daughter to grow up in this county. Go to school in this county, and knowing that you guys are doing what you need to do to make sure that she succeeds. I can promise if you guys do what you need to do; stand behind the school board and stand behind the teachers, staff, and administration. Let them see that you are behind them. I will do my part so that after school she is steady learning. Making sure she has the tools so that when she goes back to school she is able to do what the teachers ask. She is able to learn and is disciplined so she is able to pay attention in class. She doesn't disrupt the class. With that, I think our kids will excel. I have been to several of the school board achievement banquets they have had here and it has really overwhelmed me with the amount of kids this year that got perfect attendance, honor roll, and principal's list from every county school. To me, it says that the parents are doing something. And, if the parents are doing something I feel like the board needs to step up, fund, and stand behind everything. If the parents are doing it, and they see that you are doing it also, I think we have a win-win situation. Don't you all agree? With that being said, I appreciate your time. I hope what I have said goes a little further than just here. Maybe you can put into consideration of different things that the school board has implemented. I also would like to add that Mr. Melby at Riverdale Elementary School has done an outstanding job this year of making things happen there for the kids and the parents. I am happy with everything there. With that being said, I appreciate your time. Thank you all.

Chairman Jones states thank you Mr. Babb. The next speaker is Shellie McHenry.

Ms. Shellie McHenry addressed the board. Good evening, my name is Shellie McHenry and I have taught English at Southampton High School since 2004. Since that time, I have also served as advisor to Southampton Key Club which volunteers over 5,000 hours of service to our local community and raises over \$10,000 for charities we support each year. Our local Key Club has received a distinction of a distinguished club diamond level for the previous four years. This honor labels our members as an award winning top student led service organization. Not just in the region or state but internationally. In addition, I advise SHS Relay for Life team and serve as the English Department Chairperson, as well as a member of our school's leadership team. My husband has retired from the U.S. Navy and this school year has been his first year as a teacher at Southampton High School. Upon retiring from military service he knew that not only did he want to be a history teacher but he wanted to do so here in Southampton. I love the schools. That is what has kept us in this area despite having no family or ties in Southampton County. Our three sons are currently enrolled or have graduated from Southampton. Our oldest graduated in 2011, our second son graduated last year, and our youngest will graduate from High School in 2028. So, needless to say, I and my family are very invested in this county and in our schools we do multiple different roles. Prior to moving to Southampton County my sons were enrolled in private schools because that was the best education available to them at the time. Upon moving here, we moved them into the public school system because it is the best option available to them in this area. This is specifically due to the dedicated teachers within our school system. Each week I spend anywhere between 8 to 20 hours grading assignments from the previous week and planning for the week ahead. Time spent is a second part-time job. I do not think I am unique in this and I do not say this to be opening an argument that the teachers in our county deserve higher pay. I truly believe that you recognize the superior education offered by Southampton Schools. How could you not when the High School has been accredited since accreditation has existed and now is receiving national attention as one of the top schools in the country. I truly believe you see the success as a result of teachers like myself who are tirelessly dedicated to the success of her

students. That has certainly been my experience in the past 14 years that we have been parents in the school system. While I believe you know these things, I still think there is something intangible to you. The idea that the schools need more funds is a given and becomes an abstract idea when you are not in the classroom everyday facing these students like we are. We are stretched thin. Our classrooms are crowded and our resources are limited more so every day. The result is we are punished for our successes. Our schools rise up to meet the challenges right before us, whether by federal laws, big testing, or by your budget restraints. We still get the job done and we do it well. Unfortunately, the message our successes seem to be sending is that we can continue to do more and do it with less. At some point this equation will fail. It is inevitable and it is ashamed. An organization just like any structure is only as strong as its foundation. The foundation of Southampton County is our schools. I know that sounds cliché but it is true. The decisions being made today are affecting the future of this community. Without a strong school system, this community will crumble. We are not going to attract good teachers who want to stay in the area. We are not going to bring in families who want to move into the area or businesses who want to support the area. I do not stand before you imagining that you are going to perform some magic trick and find money where it does not exist, although that would be a nice solution. I realize as well as we all do that you too are working within limited means. I do stand before you; however, to request that you strongly consider the budget requested as submitted by Southampton County Public Schools and find a way to meet this need; because, it is a need much more so than just a request. As a parent and an employee of the school system I clearly see the successes being made and I hope to see that continue. To not invest in our schools now only creates a debt that our community will have to pay in the future. Thank you.

Chairman Jones states thank you. Next is Steven Bott.

Steven Bott addressed the board. Good evening gentlemen. My name is Steven Bott and I live in Southampton County near the Scottswood section. My wife and I have five children at Riverdale. The oldest of the five will be rising next year and going to middle school. The speakers that came before me did a real good job. They addressed probably just about everything that I wanted to say so I won't be too redundant. I would like to stress the emphasis on the budget and giving the schools the tools that they need. In addition to the success of our children which is paramount and primary to all of us, the impacts that a positive public school's reputation does for an area, the economy, real estate, the attraction of businesses goes well beyond today. It strengthens our community for generations. It helps our children with their future well after they leave the public school. I would also like to mention Mr. Melby and Mrs. Railey along with the administration and teachers at Riverdale. I have seen a really good year with the efforts that Mr. Melby and Mrs. Railey have made. I would like to congratulate them. I have been very involved in the schools since my kids have been there. I have served on the parent advisory committee for two years in a row. I try to stay involved with the activities and communicate with the school on a regular basis. Of my five children, they are all either on principal's list or honor roll. I am very pleased overall with what the administration of that school has done. Again, I would like to thank you this evening and just ask you to consider giving the schools, all of them within our county, the budget and the tools they need to support not only the school but the transportation system; everything right down the line. Thank you and have a good evening.

Chairman Jones states thank you. Next is Ms. Florence Reynolds.

Ms. Florence Reynolds addressed the board. Good evening. My name is Florence Reynolds and I live in Zuni, Virginia. Chairman Jones, members of the board, and Mr. Johnson, first I would like to say I appreciate your service to the county and thank you. Now, as far as the school board's budget is concerned we ask that you please fully fund the budget that has been presented to you. A lot of times along with the budget, as you already know, we have done numerous cuts and have already made what is now a bare bone budget. There is just no other place to cut. As we say, about this time every year, our children are our most precious resources. We say it because they are and we must prepare them for future success and that we all know takes money. Because of the office that you hold, it is your responsibility to find the funds to do just that. You are the board. It is your responsibility. I hear you when you say we are doing our best. I hear that. I agree with you that you are doing your best with the resources that you presently have on hand. We all know that the bulk of Southampton's income comes from real estate and personal property taxes. I would like to say in my humble opinion I believe that the time has come for this board to look beyond the taxing of its citizens to fund the needs of this county. There is no way that the citizens of this county can

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continue to carry that burden. You are talking about raising taxes again this year. Yes, I know you didn't raise the taxes last year but you would have had it not been an election year. Yes, you turned down the one cent increase. Now, you are talking about two cents or more this year. Of the hundreds of people who have failed to pay taxes this year, I am sure many of them just could not afford to pay and now you are talking about more taxes. Where will it end? Just the other day I read that the Planning Commission turned down the zoning request for the U.S. 58 Business corridor. The reason being, everybody is saying not in my backyard. But, are we turning away jobs? Are we turning away taxes? Once again, it seems like we are about to turn our backs on new streams of income. When I look around at surrounding counties, I see that they are moving in the right direction to bring in revenue. I wonder what are we doing that hinders our economic growth. Why can't we get businesses into this county? I firmly believe we must look beyond taxing the citizens to no end to balance a budget. For years now, I have stood before you and asked that you reexamine the land-use tax. Every time I have gotten negative responses from you. Well, I am back again and playing the same old record. We must do something about the land-use tax. There is entirely too much money going to fund this program for only a limited number of county citizens. Really? I am not so much against the citizens of this county being in the program but every time I think about Joe Blow from near and far away who are not citizens of this county; when I think about how the poor citizens of this county subsidizes the fat cats. That puts a burr under my saddle. You must sooner rather than later do something about this program. We cannot; I said we cannot afford the over \$2 million that is needed to support it as it stands. It is time to take a look at it. Lastly, I don't know if you have looked at the predictions for the future of this county. If not, I ask you to take a look. It is not good gentlemen; it is not good. According to statistics, Southampton's rate of growth is presently at 0. The time is upon you to be bold; to be proactive rather than reactive. It is time to think about other streams of income. No more taxes. Thank you.

Chairman Jones states thank you. Next, is Saria Mizell.

Saria Mizell addressed the board. Good evening members of the board. My name is Saria Mizell. I am a new resident to Southampton County. I have two children in the school system. I want to start out by saying it is very hard having a mental disorder. It is hard for the parents, the teachers, the family, the friends, and most importantly it is very hard on the child. Before we came to Southampton we were in a district where they did not care about my son. They did not mind showing it that they were not willing to provide any type of help to get my son where he is. He was basically swept under the rug right in front of my eyes. They said he was failing and there was nothing they could do for him. We ended up moving to Southampton. I exalted everything to move out here to Southampton. We ended up moving to Boykins and he ended up going to Meherrin Elementary School. Meherrin opened their doors and their arms to us. They helped us. Meherrin's staff helped us to obtain an education plan that suited my son in a way that he learned. Not all children learn the same, and Meherrin Elementary School and the staff understood that. My son went from having C's and D's to A's and B's. He functions well in a regular classroom setting but he goes to a smaller group for testing. In this group, he still obtains and retains informational knowledge that nourishes his mind just like any other child. The staff remains patient and never stops pushing him regardless of his learning curve. When schools are not fully staffed, all students suffer; children such as my own that sometimes need special accommodations and miss the chance to be successful. Not only do they give him the education that his heart desires, but they genuinely do care about him as a person. We are grateful for what Southampton County Schools are providing for our children. We hope that you can approve the budget that has been presented. I would like to end by saying, they say it takes a village to raise a child and Meherrin Elementary has truly been a village to me and my family; help raise my son and get him to where he needs to be to be a successful member of society. Thank you.

Chairman Jones states thank you. This is all that have signed up. Is there anyone else that would like to say anything? If so, you may come to the podium.

Dr. Alvera Parrish addressed the board. Good evening Chairman Jones and members of the Board of Supervisors. Thank you for the opportunity to stand before you tonight. First of all, I am Alvera Parrish, Superintendent of Southampton County Public Schools as you well know. I stand before you tonight because I want to take this time to just say thank you and we appreciate you for the support and the open communication that you have been intricately involved in during this budget cycle. We have continuously improved in working together and developing a relationship that I think benefits us all as we are trying to prepare the best for the students and the best for the county

as well. Of course I am here to represent the school system and in doing so I have to say that this year was a very interesting year. There were some changes and our enrollment certainly helped us a whole lot in terms of the financial situation that we are in this year is much better than we were last year. However, I do want to say to you that the personnel needs are so significant with the school division in terms of being able to continuously deliver those services for the students. In order for the students to have that quality of exposure experiences and for us to be able to continue to offer those services at a higher level we need to make sure we have the personnel to work with the students. Class size is significant in helping students to learn and for teachers to teach. We had in this year's budget when we first submitted it a list of new personnel we needed to provide in order for our student's means to be met and for various course offerings to be available and accessible to our students. If we are not funding that full amount, we would have to decrease by looking at taking away those additional staff members. We are still trying to get back what we lost over three or four years ago due to the cuts from the state department which of course is not your fault, but still we are where we are, and our students must be educated. We want to provide the highest quality education that we can for the students. We do, and I know you have heard a lot tonight about our staff, and I have worked a lot of places. I don't think I have ever seen a place or experience where people are so dedicated and committed to the education of all children. Not just teaching and learning but the nurturing of children and the care about the county; a commitment and a loyalty to the growth of the county as well as the growth of the children and their families in the county. We do have that responsibility. I recognize that some may think that the parents need to do this and it is this person's responsibility, but the bottom line is we don't get to pick and choose who comes through the school's doors. Whoever comes through those doors, we must give them 100 percent every day and we do work very hard to fill all of those gaps. We are the guidance counselor, we are the parents, and we are the nurses. A lot of times we serve in so many different roles and the teachers are constantly switching bibs or their hats to make sure every child can receive that education experience and that nurturing environment that they so much need. I say to you as you continue to consider this budget, to consider very seriously what the original requests were in that budget; especially the personnel needs that we put forth. Continuously, we have more and more requirements from the Department of Education in terms of students being able to graduate with Advanced Studies diplomas and being able to go on to college and compete with others around this state and beyond. Southampton High School/Southampton Public Schools has so much to be proud of. Just at our last board meeting we recognized a numerous number of students. I don't know if you saw that in the paper, but none of the less, there were numbers of students that came forth. Mr. Porter was there and saw those students recognized with national honors, state awards, regional awards, and district awards. They are able to do that because of the teachers and the staff who are the same people that coach working day and night burning midnight oil to help our children be able to go outside of Southampton County and beyond even Virginia. We have kids going to Kentucky in just a few weeks to compete on a national level. So, Southampton County Public Schools has a national name for quality. It has a national name for excellence. And people from all over want to bring their children here. So, I say to you please consider the budget request that has been put before you and do all that you can do to fulfill the request as we have presented. Thank you, gentlemen again for the experience over the past four years. I do appreciate the relationship going forward.

Chairman Jones states I would like to thank all of the speakers and thank everybody for showing up tonight. Is there anyone else that has anything they would like to say? Does any board member have anything? So, do we need to have the budget workshop on Wednesday?

Supervisor West states I am not seeing the need at this time. The regular scheduled monthly meeting is next Monday. At that time, we will be back in the board room, and we will discuss the budget at that time. But, right now I don't see any need. Thank you for your comments.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Faison.

Supervisor Faison states I would like to say good evening to everyone. I certainly appreciate everyone for coming out. Everyone tonight spoke on the schools and I certainly express my sympathy. I wish we did have the money to be able to give what was requested by all. Our budget calls for a five cent tax increase and that is a burden in itself. As been said, we don't have places to get money from. We have to get business in this county and every opportunity that we have to do so, the board looks at it. I appreciate all of you for doing an excellent job throughout the school system. I have five children that went through Southampton County Schools and I am thankful

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that it was Southampton County that they all went to school. I know how hard teachers work considering the time that I have spent at Meherrin Elementary School. I see the work that is being done and I certainly appreciate it. As we look forward, we do have to concentrate on businesses and industry. Every opportunity we have to attract businesses we have to do so. I recognize that Southampton County Schools play a very significant role in the county. We support the schools. It is just unfortunate that we don't have the money to back up our word.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Phillips.

Supervisor Phillips states I would like to also thank everyone for coming out tonight. This board has met at a retreat and has had several public meetings to discuss the budget. I believe we are at a point that we can advertise the budget and I think we have made some efforts to fund the school's request. We have done an employment study to help better understand the job classification for our staff. There are some things that this board has had to put off because of lack of funding, and at this point we have decided to raise taxes five cents. That is the proposed budget at this point. We do realize that we need new sources of funding and we are looking for those. I do believe at this point we have done what we can with the revenues available. The only thing I will add to that is we need to look to the future with a vision of how we are going to do better for the schools and for the county.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Edwards.

Supervisor Edwards states the board's primary duty is to keep the schools going; keep the quality up. Of course this is a tough budget. Every budget that I have been on in the past four or five years has been tough. We did give the school the brunt of the increase. I think about 71% of the increase in this year's budget. I would like to fund 100% of what everybody wants but it is just impossible. I would like to commend the schools. The schools have done a tremendous job over the last year or so with their budget; cutting back. There are a lot of dedicated people who work there. We will continue to support you to the best of our ability and you will always be number one. Thank you.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Porter.

Supervisor Porter states I would like to thank everyone for coming. Hopefully by now no one is surprised by my support of the schools. I want to thank Dr. Parrish for what she has done for the last four years. I think she has been a positive influence on the movement and getting the schools through a very difficult period. I think we are better off for having her here and I am sad to see her go. I won't say that the schools are our number one source. I will say they are at the top with any other one. I look at the critical services we need to provide in the county. I also look at services like EMS, Fire, and the Sheriff's Department. It is hard for me to put one before the other because they are all critical services. It makes me sad that we don't have enough money or what I consider to be proper funding. If I had more money... I think we shorten the schools by a half of a million dollars this year. I think we shorten EMS services by \$300,000. I think we shorten the volunteer Fire Departments by at least \$100,000. And, I think we shorten the Sheriff's Department by a couple hundred thousand dollars. It may frighten you to know that in our county which is 600 square miles on the midnight shift, we only have one deputy on duty. If that person is in Drewryville and something happens near Franklin you are out of luck. That's the kind of thing that concerns me on the safety caliber. The most important things we provide are education and safety. We need more money for all of those. We have to raise taxes this year to get by. We are just getting by. I agree with Ms. Reynolds. We have to find other sources of revenue. We have to take advantage of every opportunity we have to bring significant businesses in here. It won't surprise any of you here that I am disappointed at the actions of our Planning Commission. They just don't get it. We are going to have a public hearing on that and I invite some of you to come and speak to that too. For the board, it is not dead, but we have to find a way to make this thing work; not roll over and play dead. We have to get the best benefit for the county; not only that one, but others. It is time for this county to be open for business and lose its negative attitude that yes it is fine if you want to put your business over there. We have to be pro-business if we are going to survive. We are financially stretched. We don't have more money. This five cents tax increase is a burden on a huge portion of our community. Very few of us have the resources to pay for it. It is a balancing act. If we don't get more businesses in here, there is going to be more tax increases next year. There is going to be more tax increases year after that, and eventually there will be the elimination of the land-use program. All of that is dependent on getting more businesses in here. The whole

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thing about getting more businesses in here is people say we want to be an agricultural community. Well, we can't afford to be strictly an agricultural community. Business will not destroy the agricultural character of our community. Business will ensure its survival. Anyone who doesn't believe that, you stay around and fight business in this county, this county is going to be dead in ten years.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Cook.

Supervisor Cook states thank you. It was nice to hear from parents, school board members, and educators tonight. I agree with all of those comments. We do have a great school system I think and I know a fair amount about it since I have grandkids in there. I wish I could sit up here and say we could turn over another leaf and find some more money to fund the schools. Believe me, this board has worked hard. Five cents is a large increase. Like the board and others have said, that is probably a burden on somebody. So, we had difficulty getting to the five cents, but we felt that we are at a point we had to. Part of that goes to the schools. You won't get all that you want and I hate that we can't do that but at least you will get more than you had in the past years. It has been a rough five or six years with the economy being like it was. So, I am glad that we are moving forward. There are other things like getting businesses into Southampton County that has to happen. You all have spoken to that also and understand. I hope we can move forward and it is nice working with the schools and the school board. We will continue to do the best we can for the schools. Thank you.

Chairman Jones states so I would like to ask at this time are we going to meet on Wednesday?

Supervisor West states I figure at this time there is no reason to continue until the regular scheduled board meeting next Monday evening.

Supervisor Edwards states I agree with Mr. West. Everything has been well thought out. We have a well-planned budget here. I know I have gone over it a thousand times.

Chairman Jones states alright, does anybody else have anything? If not, we are adjourned.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk

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