

May 15, 2017

At a budget workshop meeting of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held at Southampton High School, 23350 Southampton Parkway, Courtland, Virginia on May 15, 2017 at 7:00 PM.

SUPERVISORS PRESENT

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

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
Lynette C. Lowe, Deputy County Administrator/ Chief Financial Officer
Richard E. Railey, Jr., County Attorney

OTHERS ABSENT

Julien W. Johnson, Jr. Public Utilities Director
Beth Lewis, Director of Community Development
Amanda N. Smith, Administrative Assistant

Chairman Jones states it is 7:00pm and I will call this meeting to order. And to everyone, good evening, thank you for coming, and we will talk about the budget, on the budget only tonight. At this time, who is our first speaker, Mr. Johnson?

Michael Johnson states first speaker is Andrew Gregory.

Chairman Jones states all right. Mr. Gregory?

Andrew Gregory states good evening; ladies and gentlemen of the community and members of the Board, my name is Andrew Gregory. I reside at 403 Watson Drive in Smithfield, Virginia. I'm not a Southampton resident, but I am here to thank you tonight as a part of your draft budget and in past budgets, and, of course, we hope in the future budget. I'm the president of an organization called Voices for Kids, CASA of Southeast Virginia. Just as a reminder to the community of what this organization does: when a child comes before the court who has been abused and neglected and does not have a voice, many times there are people trying to make decisions on behalf of the child, and a lot of times these are teenagers. So they do not give a child a voice of what their concerns are and what's going on in their universe, and that's what our organization does. We have dedicated volunteers who work in concert with Social Services to provide a voice for these kids in the courtroom so that a permanent resolution, with permanent residency can be achieved. Our organization serves Isle of Wight County, Franklin, Southampton County, and the City of Suffolk. And this Board has been supportive in the past and we appreciate the support that is in the draft budget. It does not go unnoticed, and so we appreciate everything that you've done and appreciate everything that you can do in the future. I wanted to come and acknowledge that today. Thank you very much.

Chairman Jones states thank you.

Michael Johnson states John Burchett.

John Burchett states John Burchett, and I live in Sebrell. And I want to thank you and the Lord for the opportunity to come here and speak to you tonight. I didn't spend my normal two or three days

May 15, 2017

going through the budget this year because I was confident that you all do the best you can. So, I just got a few comments on the budget, the executive summary. One thing that's jumped out at me, Mike, is over the last 12 months, the Consumer Price Index has increased 2.7 percent. I wish Social Security had a used that when they did theirs, because I got a .003 percent raise, which added up to \$6 and all of it went to Medicare. So my point is, and the rest of my retirement plans, I got zero increase. Jean, my wife -- I usually -- I -- I take care of most of the finances, and I don't think she got an increase in VRS. The point being and I told you all in the past, I can afford to pay, and if it goes to school, I really don't really have a problem. But a lot of people can't. They, you know, people are hurting. We got to have money to pay for what we do and for mistakes you've made in the past, and we're still paying for those. If I make a mistake when I talk about something, please correct me. When I saw the pay and classification plan \$143,000, how many more phases are in that?

Michael Johnson states next year.

John Burchett states so, but the actual increase is it looks like it adds up to about a penny on the budget to increase; is that right, \$142,000?

Michael Johnson states that is close to it.

John Burchett states is that what with it will be next year?

Michael Johnson states I don't know.

John Burchett states but it probably will be or more. And I agree with that because we balanced our budget in the past year on the backs of our employees, and it's not fair. They deserve a decent living, too. There was one thing that really jumped out that we need. I'd like to see you all show me and show the rest of the County that we're not out of touch with reality. This \$30,000 for potential shared parks and recreational opportunities with the City of Franklin. I'm not sure exactly what that is, but I know that when they built the ball field in Sebrell, some guys got together and they needed a ball field for Courtland. They got donations. They got the land donated. They got contractors' supplies to support them, civic clubs. My point is, we don't need to spend \$30,000 for potential shared services, recreational services with the City of Franklin. That \$30,000, I'm sure our school board and schools could put that to really good use, since they're coming about a million dollars short on what they requested. I'd like to see us take that \$30,000 and give it to the schools, and if some time in the future, if Franklin and Southampton want to get together and do something on the recreational, it should be raised the way all the rest of them are. The civic clubs support the Newsoms, all the ballparks, the civic clubs support them, and the kids' families' support them, and that's the way it should be. We don't need to pour another \$30,000 in the black hole of the shared services with Franklin. And I see we got another \$25,000 for continued work in evaluating, creating. How many years are we going to pour money into this before we get an answer? We need to set a deadline of somebody got to make up their minds or throw in the towel. I don't have any idea what we spent, but we planned it today. We need to do something. We need to quit spending money because we don't have it. And I'll take this opportunity to use my last comment to thank the school board and the schools, the principal, superintendents, teachers, what a miracle. They are the true miracle workers in this county. They do their job without getting what they need, and it's a blessing that they have done what they have done, but I don't know how much longer we're going to be able to do it. I do appreciate what they do. Thank you very much.

Chairman Jones states thank you.

Michael Johnson states Florence Reynolds?

Florence Reynolds states good evening. My name is Florence Reynolds, and I reside in the Zuni area. I've been in this county for over 38 years. And the first thing I'd like to say is that I concur with the previous speaker. He had some good there, and you need to think about it. Chairman Jones, members of the Board, and Mr. Johnson, first, let me say that I appreciate what you do, I really do, and I appreciate what you do for the school system. But we all know that the bulk of Southampton's income comes from real estate and personal property taxes. And I would like to say that in my humble opinion, I believe the time has come for this Board to look just, look

beyond just taxing our citizens for funds that you need to run this county. We got a five cent taxes raise last year. Now you're looking at a three cent this year, and as the previous speaker said, I, too, am on Social Security, and I got a .00006, which went to try to go maintain your Medicare so that leaves you with zero. Even as the Board was voting on the increase and I talked to some of you about the increase, and you're already saying that there was not sufficient funds to meet the present needs of the County of the schools and all of the other agencies. Mr. Chairman, every year I come before you and this Board with the same message that, there is no way -- and I keep saying that -- I keep saying that to you every year that, there is no way that the citizens can continue to carry the burden of this county, five cent one year, three cents one year, two cents another year. Those cents add up. And then you threw in the garbage fee and called it a fee, but we all know that it was really a tax, and then you call it a fee, and now we can't even write that off on our income taxes. I just wonder how much people owe back taxes. I'm sure many of them just can't afford to pay and now they've raised the, increasing it again, which is going to put more and more people in the category of not being able to pay their taxes. And I wonder how much effort is being put forth to collect from those who can pay but have not paid their taxes. I wonder how much money is out there that we have not collected, but the people can afford to pay. I'm just wondering when is it all going to end, and you start looking and being proactive, rather than reactive when it comes to the economics of this county. When I look around at other counties around us, it seems that they are moving in the right direction in bringing in revenue, and I wonder what we're doing. What are you doing? What's hindering us in our economic growth? Why can't we get businesses into this county? I ask this every year. Why can't we get businesses into this county? I've been here 40 years, and I can name, you can name businesses on one hand that you brought into this county 40 years. You have to be reactive, I mean, you've got to be proactive; you can't be reactive. You have to think about it. I've seen mistakes made over the years when we could have had an opportunity to bring businesses into the county. I firmly believe that we must, as I said, we must look beyond taxing our citizens every year to make ends meet and not to even make them meet really but to get a budget. And, again, this year I ask you to look at predictions for the future of the county. We have to look towards the future of the county. It's not good, it's not good. When I took a look at the statistics for Southampton County rate of growth, it is zero, zip zero, no one wants to move into Southampton County. I wonder why. Could it be, too, that you are now saying you have to have five acres of land to build a house? That might be another reason. The time is upon you to be bold, to be proactive, as I've said, rather than reactive. It's time to think of other streams of income for this county. It is time gentlemen to think of other streams of income for this county. And it's time to stop burdening the citizens of this county to put money in the pockets of outsiders. Now, let me explain that. I said it's time to stop burdening the citizens of this county to put money into pockets of outsiders through the land use taxes. I hope you heard "outsiders" because I'm not talking about our own citizens. I'm talking about those people who come into our county and take our tax money and spend it somewhere else through the land use. It's time gentlemen to think about what you're going to do about Southampton County and its economic problem. Thank you.

Michael Johnson states that's all I have.

Chairman Jones states that's all you have. Mr. West?

Supervisor West states we appreciate your time, and the comments made this evening, and if you'll come next Monday evening at our regular board meeting, at that time we will be voting on the budget, so we will consider the comments made tonight. We are sensitive to every request and question. Thank you.

Chairman Jones states Mr. Faison?

Supervisor Faison states I'd like to say good evening and thank you for coming.

Citizen states I thought the superintendent was going to speak.

Chairman Jones states what did you say?

Citizen states I just thought the superintendent was going to speak.

Chairman Jones states she didn't sign up?

Michael Johnson states no, sir.

Lynette Lowe states Mr. Jones, I did tell some of them when they came in that a lot of times at the end you will ask if there anybody else that would like to speak.

Chairman Jones states all right. I've been doing that. I'll continue it. Go ahead, Carl, you want to finish?

Supervisor Faison states again, I would like to thank everybody for coming this evening, showing interest in Southampton County. As your supervisor, we're certainly interested in the welfare of Southampton County, and this budget reflects the position of the County. There's been a lot of deliberation over this budget, and we thank you for your cooperation.

Chairman Jones states all right. Mr. Porter?

Supervisor Porter states again, I'd like to thank you all of you for coming out this evening. I think the comments made were all relevant in certain context, and I'd like to state what Carl said about the budget. The budget is a reflection of the financial condition of the county. None of us like the expenditure side because we don't think it fully supports the needs of the county. We think we need more money for education. We need more money for emergency services. We need more money for the sheriff's department. Again, I say the same thing every year just about. It frightens me we have one deputy sheriff patrolling a 600 square mile county on the midnight shift. If there's a problem on one side of the county and the deputy's are on the other side of the county, we're out of luck. That's just a situation that we're in. I think four years ago I sat on this very same stage and I said if we didn't get more businesses into the County, we wouldn't be looking at -- in 10 years we wouldn't be looking at a 75 or 80 percent tax rate, we'd be looking at a dollar and a half tax rate. That still scares me because I know some of us have been working very hard over the last four and five years to try to get economic development. One of our problems is we still have this reputation that we're not business friendly. And why? Because every time we get a good opportunity, the opposition comes out in the thrones. It's fine. Let's have a business over in the County. We need businesses but don't put it close to me; even when it makes sense to put it close to people, we still say, "don't put it close to me". And they make up wild stories and scare people about the things that they claim might happen. When in most cases that's just what they are, scary stories. Until we, as Ms. Reynold's said, until we open our arms and cooperate and bring in additional sources of tax revenue in here, we only have one place to get it. We are funding the bare necessities of the County, and, unfortunately, we have to raise taxes. And if we were trying to meet the minimum, we probably raise the tax rate 12 cents instead of 3 cents this year because we would give the school another million dollars, and we'd take a little more money to try and find another deputy, and we try to fund EMS services for around the clock. We overly depend on volunteers today for our EMS, and the volunteers are going away, two reasons: We don't get the interest of the younger volunteers; and two, the requirements for certifications are so great now, and it is difficult for a volunteer to acquire the certifications. So if you have somebody in your home, pray you don't have to call an ambulance at 3:00 in the morning on Wednesday night because you might have to wait too long and we have to suffer the consequences because we can't afford to have around-the-clock services. And some of you know how important that is. And I'm frustrated, too, John about the sewer and water because that's a big prize we can get. That project is worth millions of dollars to the County; unfortunately, when you deal with government bureaucracies, they move at a glacial speed. It frustrates me because I'm from a private business background, and I want to get things done. I used to joke about seeing it done before my first term was up, well at the end of that, I was hoping to see the report by the end of my first term. And now we're getting close, but the prize is so big that we have got to pursue it, and we've got to make it happen, because we can't continue to subsidize on the sewer and water services by two and a half to three million dollars a year in the County. That's a big number. That's a lot of tax revenue. And I wish we could do more, and I wish we could lower taxes but until we get more business friendly, get more businesses in here, and put to use some of these assets that are underutilized that we're subsidizing, I'm afraid what we're doing this year, is going to happen for every year in the future. And that scares me, and it should scare you, too.

Chairman Jones states gentlemen, I'll ask you to continue this after the last speaker has spoken. I'll give the rest of you a time to say something. All right. Anyone else who wants to come to the podium, they are welcome to come here at this time. Ms. Shannon is our superintendent.

Gwendolyn Shannon states I am Gwendolyn Shannon, and I live in Courtland, Virginia, and I represent the students of Southampton County Public Schools. I'm the superintendent. First of all, I want to thank you all for the contributions that you've made in the past and that you all continue to make to the children of Southampton County Public Schools. On March the 27th, I had an opportunity to present a needs-base budget to the Board of Supervisors, and tonight I'd like to highlight some of the items that were included in that budget. Some of the mandatory budget items were: The VRS rate increase, the health insurance increase, the special education regional tuition increase, and the dual enrollment increase and dual credit. Those are items that we had no control over. Some of the additional personnel items that were included in the budget at that time were: Elementary guidance counselor, a speech therapist, elementary teacher, special education teacher, a special education assistant teacher, content area specialist, and we need custodians here at the high school and middle school. Some of the other instructional needs that were in the budget are, Elementary reading technology resources, like iPad cart, personalized learning, and professional development for elementary and secondary; library books for our elementary and secondary schools; band instruments; elementary computer science programs, we're trying to implement to the future, and a laptop lease program. Prior to March the 27th meeting, I had also included in the budget some capital improvement needs, but I did remove those from the budget, but we still have the need, and they are, to resurface the tennis courts at the high school, to repair broken playground equipment at Riverdale and Nottoway, to repair our seating at Capron, to repair the boys' and girls' restrooms at Capron, to repair the marquee at Riverdale, all the marquees at the fresh start center, and to update the marquee at the high school, to resurface our gymnasium floors at the high school, and to replace roofs as needed. I do want to say that I am extremely proud of the ones that you all have done, I am equally appreciative of the work that you all plan to do. I want to thank you all so much for the new buses that you all have added to our fleet, and the buses that you all continue to add annually to our fleet. They do not go unnoticed, and our children really, really need those resources, and we thank you for it. I also want to thank you for the funding that you all have considered for the roofing. I'd like to point that out. I know I mentioned it here, but I also know that we have had some discussions about you all funding those, and I do thank you for considering that. And, lastly, I want to thank you in advance of any additional monies that you can provide to our school system. Thank you all so much and just note that an investment in the children of Southampton County, is an investment in the future of Southampton County, so thank you all.

Chairman Jones states thank you, Dr. Shannon. Anyone else? Anyone else want to speak? With that, I'll say at this time I'll finish with the Board. Mr. Cook, do you have anything?

Supervisor Cook states I appreciate everybody that did come out tonight and your comments. I won't reiterate what my colleague Mr. Porter said, but I agree with pretty much everything he laid out. It's not a rosy picture he's painting, but we need more concerned citizens like yourselves to help the Board move Southampton County forward. We have a lot of challenges ahead of us, and we'll do our part as best we can to make things happen that should happen.

Chairman Jones states thank you, Mr. Cook. Dr. Edwards?

Supervisor Edwards states good evening, everybody. It's good to see you here. I wish we had about ten times as many people here and more interested in the government. It's good to see you interested people here. What I'd like to say about the budget is that we did not put this together without a tremendous amount of thought. We've been over it time after time after time. Everybody knows it entails a three cent increase into your real estate, but everybody needs to realize that, that three cents, almost two cents of that is going to the public education, and almost all of the rest of that penny there is going to go to public safety, so we haven't wasted anything. We've put our priorities where we thought they needed to be, education and safety. So I think in that respect, it was a good budget. We didn't waste anything, and we all realize your concerns. We know your concerns. They were expressed tonight, and I think we all agree with those concerns. And I thank you for coming tonight.

Chairman Jones states Mr. Phillips?

Supervisor Phillips states I can't help but remember that I ran on a platform for no tax increases. I also remember that we had to do things that we had to do without any economic increase in

May 15, 2017

revenue. And when you have that, you have no choice but to either, as Ms. Reynold's recommended, become more business friendly or you're going to have to raise taxes. And we are struggling with that as we come to this budget cycle every year. I'd like to thank Dr. Shannon for delineating things that were imposed on us from Richmond, the costs that we have no choice about; that we have to fund. The rescue conditions the state has mandated that we have to have an ALS provider every time a rescue squad roles out, and what we're trying to do is, do that in a, we've been trying to add one day a week to, for a total 24-hour coverage for that because we have run out of volunteers that have that certification. The employment classification upgrades are way overdue, and those were touched on earlier. The shared services, I sit on that committee, and I have lost count on how many meetings that I've been to, but if we are to, as Mr. Porter said, we're spending between two and three million dollars a year out of our general operating funds to fund that. We need a business or businesses that would, it's the old saying, if we build it, they will come. We have the capacity to host more businesses and that is, rest assured, we are working to find and locate businesses for this county. And I would remind you, though, we have Enviva, Hampton Farms, Curtis Contracting are three of the bigger companies that have settled here in this county, and we're proud to have them, and they are a help to our financial needs. I would just say at this point that we are concerned about the future. We hope that there will be more businesses. The Port of Norfolk is growing. The largest ship carrying shipments, just stopped in Norfolk. It's the only port that can receive these new and bigger ships. We are in the path of development coming from the port, transporting the products that are coming into our port. I hope that we can open some development soon in this county. I just thank everyone for coming tonight and look forward to the future.

Chairman Jones states and then I'd just like to thank you, everyone who spoke and the citizens who came to listen. We will have our regular meeting on the fourth Monday of this month, and you're welcome to come. That's when we'll be voting on our budget. If you have any other comments, you can talk to your supervisor. I think any of them will.

Michael Johnson states Mr. Chairman, if it is appropriate at this time, I would make a motion that we dispense with the meeting on this Wednesday, and we will move forward with our next discussion at the Board of Supervisor's meeting the following Monday.

Chairman Jones states all right.

Supervisor Edwards seconds.

Chairman Jones calls for a vote.

The Board approved with a voice vote recorded as follows:

Dallas O. Jones	AYE
Ronald M. West	AYE
R. Randolph Cook	AYE
S. Bruce Phillips	AYE
Barry T. Porter	AYE
Carl Faison	AYE
Alan Edwards	AYE

The motion carried.

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

May 15, 2017

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk

May 15, 2017

*****THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK*****