

April 25, 2007

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Wednesday, April 25, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room of the Martin County Governmental Center, 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina.

## **ASSEMBLY**

Chairman Tommy W. Bowen, Vice Chairman Ronnie Smith, Commissioners Elmo "Butch" Lilley, Alphonzo Perry and C. Mort Hurst, County Manager W. Russell Overman and Clerk to the Board Linda G. Hardison were present. County Attorney J. Melvin Bowen was absent.

Chairman Bowen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Following the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by Vice Chairman Smith, Commissioner Lilley offered the Invocation.

Chairman Bowen then introduced Sheriff Dan Gibbs, Register of Deeds Tina Manning and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Daly who were in the audience. He then explained that he had called this meeting to go over preliminary budget information. A general work session on the budget is already scheduled for Wednesday, May 16, 2007.

## **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Commissioner Hurst made a MOTION, with a SECOND by Vice Chairman Smith, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

## **BUDGET WORK SESSION**

Chairman Bowen explained that the Manager will cover his material first and then the floor will be opened for discussion.

Manager Overman stated that figures are still being compiled and it will be 2-3 weeks before tax revenues will be received. He also explained that the Board of Education will meet May 7<sup>th</sup>. A joint meeting between the two boards will be planned after the meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Manager Overman also explained that he cannot wait to see what Raleigh will do in regards to the many bills that have been introduced that affect county governments before he prepares a budget. He then reviewed a legislative tracking document and suggested that we may be close to the end of new bills to be introduced this session.

He presented the following information concerning legislative issues:

- There are four bills introduced that would amend the way lottery proceeds are distributed, all which would be detrimental to Martin County.
- There are five bills introduced that would either cap Medicaid costs, phase them out completely or eliminate them immediately.
- There are seven bills that have been introduced that would provide additional revenue authority to counties and municipalities. This includes items such as a new 1 cent sales tax, land transfer taxes, and occupancy taxes.
- There are seventeen bills that have been introduced that would provide some level of property tax relief by eroding the tax base. These include increasing the homestead exemption, reducing size of farms for present use value, exemption for wildlife conservation, eliminating some value for disabled veterans, qualified day cares and others.
- There have been several bills introduced for Martin County or agencies in Martin County that include the following:
  - S425, H1362 Senator Bob Martin Eastern Ag. Center Funds \$3 million
  - S1247, H1122 Coastal River Herring Funds \$150,000 for study of spawning techniques

- S1381, H1124 Coastal River Herring Funds \$150,000 for study of current status
- H874 Martin County Local Option Sales Tax one cent for schools and Community College
- H875 Martin Courthouse Restoration \$1.5 million
- H1170 Fort Branch Funds \$25,000
- H1171 Martin County Historical Society Funds \$15,000
- H1385 Martin County Arts Council Funds \$500,000

Manager Overman spent time explaining these legislative issues and how they would affect Martin County.

Commissioner Hurst also discussed the affect some of these bills will have on the county and what the State stands to gain from them. He discussed the budgeting process and whether to include Medicaid relief initially. Manager Overman explained what would happen if the Medicaid relief was included in the budget and the bill did not pass: the relief would have to come from Fund Balance.

Commissioner Hurst agreed and used what happened in 2003 as an example. The relief was not included in the original budget for that year; however, when the Medicaid relief was approved, the new budget was amended. Minutes with those budget amendments were provided to the Commissioners to show that the County gave the Board of Education an additional \$193,248 to cover requests that had been cut from the initial budget. He also showed where the budget was amended to add \$33,595 to the Community College budget to be used to hire a Security Guard.

Commissioner Hurst also pointed out that even though the school construction referendum which is proposed in the Legislature is more than the last referendum, Martin County will receive less if the referendum is approved because our school population is less.

Commissioner Lilley reminded everyone that mental health will be considerably less this year. Manager Overman stated that the 5-cent per bottle tax will go to Albemarle and the amount will be less that the \$71-72,000 originally stated.

Commissioner Hurst then explained that there is a lot of public talk about the Drug Task Force not being funded in the new budget. He said they are doing a good job. Commissioner Lilley added that when the program was implemented he thought the Board had made a commitment for 18 months. The program would be reviewed at that time.

Vice Chairman Smith added that any program that has just started needs time to prove itself. He said that in the long run, the Drug Task Force will be paying for itself and producing a profit.

Commissioner Perry informed everyone that the new Health Director is on board, living in Jamesville and doing a good job. He said the health department is “on the mend”. The new inspector’s position has been advertised. He stated that the proposed budget is more than last year’s but this is due to new mandates that have been handed down from the state.

Chairman Bowen thanked the Manager and his staff for the work they have done on the budget and for “what lies ahead”. He said that Martin County has a good Board and they have some tough decisions to make with this coming budget.

Manager Overman reminded the Board that County Assembly Day is scheduled for next Wednesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>. He encouraged everyone to attend and lobby for the bills that will help Martin County.

Vice Chairman Smith thanked Chairman Bowen for calling this special meeting. He stated that a lot of issues for the coming budget have been put in perspective. Commissioner Hurst thanked the Chairman also and said the Board would follow the Chairman's lead.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, Commissioner Hurst made a MOTION, with a SECOND by Vice Chairman Smith, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously APPROVED, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

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Tommy W. Bowen, Chairman

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Linda G. Hardison, Clerk to the Board