MINUTES
Board of County Commissioners Meeting
Thursday, May 13, 2021 4:00 PM
Pender County Public Assembly Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Brown
Fred McCoy
Jacqueline A. Newton
David Piepmeyer
David Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Chad McEwen, County Manager
Trey Thurman, County Attorney
Nancy Avery, Interim Clerk to the Board
Doug Shipley, Assistant County Manager
Allen Vann, Assistant County Manager
Other Staff and Members of the Press and Public.

1 CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brown called budget session # 3 to order at 4:12 pm. All members of the board were present and there was a quorum. The budget session was held in Hampstead in the County Annex facility.

2 OPEN DISCUSSION

County Manager McEwen stated this is the third and last budget meeting and all departments will have been covered.

County Attorney Thurman asked for a closed session after this meeting.

3 COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Cooperative Extension Department Head Mark Seitz said:

- 4H programs were shut down last year because of Covid 19 and the relationship with University of North Carolina (UNCW) lost a lot of ground
- Part of the reason it was shut down was because he did not think children could handle anymore face-to-face in addition to school

- He reviewed his budget and is asking for one new staff person

County Manager McEwen explained that this department was not part of the salary study as it is dictated by the state.

4 PARKS AND RECREATION

Zach White, Department representative said:

- One main goal is to update the master plan which we hope to be done in December
- We are working to develop an adult recreation program with volleyball, kickball, pickle ball, etc.
- Want to make part time recreation coordinator full time as the person has been with the department six months

5 SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

Soil and water conservation representative Doug Rawls stated:

- We are continuing to trap beavers and have to date trapped 143 beavers

6 FORESTRY

Forestry Division Head Hagen Blake stated:

- Our budget request is 6% increase over current budget

7 PUBLIC BUILDINGS | GROUNDS & MAINTENANCE | VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Assistant Manager Allen Vann stated:

- There were challenges this year
- Thanked staff for doubling up on work and keeping things running
- Right now we contract out custodial services and this proposed budget includes that
- Would like to bring that service in house as employees
- Cost to switch to in-house employees is additional $18,000
- Right now contractors are driving county vehicles which is a liability and the county already buys the supplies. Additional cost is salary and personnel only.

Commissioner Piepmeyer asked about the $174,000 in capital outlay for generators.
Assistant Manager Vann replied it is for two generators; one of which is for Burgaw Elementary school.

Consensus of Board: fund in-house custodian service

Commissioner Newton asked if there is money in the budget for planting trees? Manager McEwen answered no, not as such. We wanted to close out the courthouse project first.

8 BREAK

Chairman Brown called for break at 5:40 pm.
The meeting resumed at 6:07 pm.

9 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Manager Tommy Batson said:

- His office has four personnel
- Two biggest things in budget are Emergency Operations Center (EOC) audio-visual system
- It is at the 10 year mark and there is capital expense of $125,000 to upgrade
- Pickup truck is at the end of its life and needs to be replaced
- We need to create staff shower for emergency staff
- Otherwise the rest of the budget is normal operating expenses

Commissioner Newton asked about the compensatory payout.
Mr. Batson said it is because he is now an exempt employee.

Commissioner Piepmeyer asked if the county owns the EOC facility.
Mr. Batson said no, there is a gentlemen’s agreement with the Fire Department, but the county maintains the infrastructure, occupies 4 offices and maintains audio-visual equipment for EOC and conference room.

10 PENDER EMS & FIRE | FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Shiloh Fire Department Chief said he asked for extra $25,000, but the manager said no.

Penderlea Fire Department representative stated they put $30,000 in budget for 50/50 grant, but didn’t get the grant. They spent $30,000 anyway for equipment using funds from the equipment budget.

Atkinson Fire Department Chief said the budget is pretty much the same as last year. We are asked for $25,000 for staffing to improve #the number of staff working. We are averaging 15-18 volunteers to do training.

Rocky Point Fire Chief stated their budget didn’t change a whole lot. We came last year with our hands out and we are doing the same thing this year. We reduced insurance rating from 6.0 to 4.0 and need additional staffing to maintain the rating. We are anticipating a growth spurt that will bring hundreds of houses to the district which means more call volume. If take municipal fire departments out of the equation, Rocky Point is the next biggest. We responded to 597 calls last year. Many calls were EMS/first responders. All employees are part time and it is hard to find volunteers that can stick with all required training. From 7 – 9 am we would like to have 2 employees; from 9 am – 5 pm a total of 4 paid on roster; from 5 – 7 pm we would drop back to 2. Ours employees have full time careers with other fire departments and that presents challenges. Current tax rate is $0.875. He would like the board to agree to move it to 10 cents which brings in about $78,000. Pay is $10 - $12 an hours. It is hard to recruit new trained firefighters.
table now to budget.

Surf City Chief said the department is primarily funded by Town of Surf City with $246,000 from the county. We cover 43 square miles in the county and 4 square miles in town. We have 12 full time staff and 18 part time and a dozen volunteers. We are not asking for additional staff in budget.

Pender EMS and Fire Chief Woody Sullivan said we have 10,000 EMS calls and 2400 fire calls annually. Construction of station 9 was delayed because of Covid 19 and we have USDA approval. We received $4.3 million in grants last year plus some CARES act money and SAFE act funds. Budget stayed flat last year because of concerns about Covid 19. He is budgeting funds to bring salaries where they need to be to retain employees. He is not asking for a fire tax increase. There is a lot of turnover in fire fighters. Salary is not competitive.

11 COUNTY MANAGER | GOVERNING BODY | ATTORNEY SERVICES |OUTSIDE AGENCIES | COURTS | REVENUE

County manager McEwen said:

- The only change is the salary study implementation
- For the Governing Body the only substantive changes is the addition of the 457
- The attorney budget is flat line. We have discussed a possible in-house legal department in the future.
- Outside agencies:
  No funding allocated for Atkinson library because they didn’t request it
  Same for the Pender County museum
- Policy is if not asked by an outside agency, it isn’t budgeted
- No increase requested by District Attorney
- Capital outlay budget is $1.6 million for land

- Merit pool is $500,000 which is based on 2% of total salaries
- Based on evaluation and employee must go above and beyond

Board consensus:

- Add $4,500 for WOW
- Don't line item Outside agencies

12 FINANCE | DEBT SERVICE | NON-DEPARTMENTAL| TRANSFERS/OTHER

Finance Officer Blue said she is asking for two new positions; one for for internal audit and to reconcile benefits and one as asset manager at cost of $150,000.

13 CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Williams motioned to go into closed session at 8:23 pm as per N.C.G.S 143-318.11(3) for consultation with the attorney. Seconded by Commissioner McCoy. Unanimously approved.

14 WRAP UP DISCUSSION

Commissioner Williams motioned to return to open session at 8:44 pm. Seconded by Commissioner Piepmeyer and unanimously approved.

Commissioner Williams motioned to adjourn at 8:44pm. Seconded by Commissioner Piepmeyer and unanimously approved.