

**Minutes**  
**Catawba County Board of Commissioners**  
**Special Session**  
**Thursday, June 3, 2010, 7:00 p.m.**

**Budget**

Budget Public Hearing and Wrap Up

583 06/03/10

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Thursday, June 3, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the 1924 Courthouse, Robert E. Hibbitts Meeting Room, 30 North College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina. The purpose of the special meeting was for a budget hearing for public comment on the proposed County budget for Fiscal Year 2010/11.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes and Commissioners Dan Hunsucker, Glenn E. Barger and Barbara G. Beatty.

Absent: Vice-Chair Lynn M. Lail.

A quorum was present.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Budget Manager Jennifer Mace and County Clerk Barbara E. Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Chair Barnes noted that Vice-Chair Lynn M. Lail was unable to attend the evening's meeting due to other business commitments. She welcomed all present and said the Board was pleased to see the number of people attending the meeting and appreciated the letters and emails the members had received regarding the funding of the County's libraries and parks. Chair Barnes clarified that the Manager's Budget Proposal did not reflect total closure of parks and libraries and felt that this misconception was a result of the media reporting of the Charlotte budget.

Chair Barnes went on to say that historically Catawba County was very conservative in budgeting and this stance had lessened the impact that some counties were feeling from the current economic conditions but the County still had lost positions in both the current and proposed budget due to the economic downturn.

She then opened the public hearing and asked that people limit their speaking time to three minutes and provide their name and address when they came forward to speak.

Brenda Huggins – Conover – Member of the Catawba County Outing Club. Thanked the Board for extending the days the parks were opened when the Club had come before the Board several years ago. She now requested that the current schedule remain the same. She asked all those in support of the parks to stand and the majority of the audience stood.

John Martin – Hickory – Member of the Catawba County Outing Club. Thanked the members of the Board for the time and effort they committed to serving Catawba County. He stated the Outing Club was comprised of approximately 150 families who loved the parks and would be sick if they were not allowed the opportunities to utilize them. He said Monroe Pannell's letter summarized all the club's concerns.

Ron LaSalle – Burke County – Board of Directors, Burke County Chamber of Commerce – He said he had great respect for the Board Members and knew they had difficult decisions to make in hard times. But hard times were when the parks and libraries saw increased usage. Noted that Bakers Mountain was listed in the Birding Trail directory, with current hours of operations. Challenged the Board to add dollars to the parks in the proposed budget.

Charles Eggers – Hickory – cancer survivor – uses parks for health and exercise and fresh air – wants the

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hours/days maintained.

Thomas Hopkins – Hickory – part of the Thread Trail Advisory Board – noted attendance at the parks was up 48% - although it was tough to come up with the money to support the current schedule at the parks, the Board should look at the long term benefits – bringing people and business to the County.

Monroe Pannell – Conover – Appreciated opportunity to speak – his letter outlined his concerns but wanted to say that people have to say what they want and that was what he was doing – and the parks would give our kids opportunities that they would be missing without them.

Debra Lowe – Hickory – involved in animal rescue – wants the Board to rethink expanded or new animal shelter and use the money for funding free spay/neutering program; increase fines for lack of rabies vaccinations and consider combining the humane society and animal shelter into one facility.

Karen McDougal – Newton – teaches biology at Lenoir Rhyne University – encourages student to utilize parks – complimented park staff and any reduction in staff would result in safety issues.

Dr. Mark Hawkins – lives close to Bakers Mountain – uses it often – staffing should remain as is due to safety issues.

Bruce Beerbower – Hickory – worked at Science Center for 30 years – used Bakers Mountain before it became a park – park protect unique species to this area. Felt many out-of-work residents used the park and the hours should be maintained.

Clark Isenhour – from Alexander County – used parks and appreciates them.

Ashley Taylor – Maiden – graduating from Bandys and plans to go into conservation – believes the parks are great locations for teaching children – and that they conserve our natural resources. A great place to run without having to worry about traffic. Commissioner Beatty noted Ashley was 4<sup>th</sup> in NC in track.

David Barton – Hickory – Thanked the Board for previously expanding hours and day for parks – asked that those hours be maintained.

Jonathan Agreta – Hickory – Student who had used the parks throughout his college years and continued to do so.

Nancy Gochet – Newton – loved the parks and saw musicians at the top of Bakers Mountain practicing.

After determining that no other persons present wanted to speak at the public hearing, Chair Barnes closed the public hearing at 7:40 p.m.

Chair Barnes then explained that the Board had spent the entire day on June 1, 2010 hearing from departments and outside agencies on the proposed budget. Following those hearings, the Board directed staff to revisit some allocations and she asked County Manager J. Thomas Lundy to summarize the proposed changes to the proposed budget.

The first action requested was a 2% reduction to the current (2009/10) budget. In December 2009, County departments, schools and outside agencies were notified to hold 2% of their current year budget. These funds have not been released because of continuing uncertain economic conditions. The state took over \$2.5 million in local revenue, sales tax receipts are 5.5% below last year, motor vehicle tax collections are lagging behind the prior year by more than 1%, motor vehicle values are down substantially, and excise tax revenues are down. It is recommended that the 2% be taken in the current year resulting in a reduction of \$769,684 for schools and \$1,042,934 for county departments.

Commissioner Glenn Barger stated that since the county departments and schools had done so well managing these reduced funds and since it was so close to the end of the current budget year, he believed these funds should be removed from the current year's budget and be made available for the 2010/2011 budget. He made a motion to reduce the current year budget for schools and county departments by 2%,

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resulting in a reduction of \$769,684 for schools and \$1,042,934 for county departments. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Lundy then said there were seven items for the Board to consider which would amend the proposed 2010/11 budget:

(1) Mental Health Partners

The County has historically received funds from the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board from a 5 cent bottle tax and 7% of gross receipts on the sale of alcoholic beverages. These funds are spent through Mental Health Partners (MHP) for substance abuse services in accordance with the statute. The recommended Fiscal Year 2010/11 budget includes \$45,000 (5 cent bottle tax) and \$63,000 (7% gross receipts tax) expected to be received by the County from the ABC Board, but staff overstated the projected expenses by \$14,789. The budget needs to be decreased so that ABC revenues and expenses match.

Commissioner Dan Hunsucker made a motion to approve this \$14,789 reduction to the budget. The motion carried unanimously.

(2) Bandys Fire District

Bandys Fire Department, Catawba Rescue Squad, Maiden Rescue Squad and Sherrills Ford Fire/Rescue Department have come to an agreement for Bandys to begin providing medical first response services in its fire district. Bandys will also be providing rescue services in the Maiden Rescue Squad and Sherrills Ford Rescue portions of the Bandys fire district. To assist with this process, the County contributed funds to help purchase some one-time start-up medical equipment. Bandys has agreed to purchase \$35,000 of rescue equipment from its fund balance.

Commissioner Beatty made a motion to add \$35,000 to the budget for the purchase of rescue equipment. The motion carried unanimously.

(3) Justice Assistance Grant

The Sheriff's Department is applying for a Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) from the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. Funds will be used to purchase a forensic digital video/image clarification solution. This is a formula based grant with no local match. The department will only be allowed to spend the money when the formal grant award is received. The budget needs to be increased by \$14,555 to account for these grant funds.

Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to add \$14,555 to the budget to account for these grant funds. The motion carried unanimously.

(4) Cooperative Extension

The Manager's recommended budget reflected Cooperative Extension being removed from Reinventing status as a result of the transition to being a send-in agency for payroll purposes with the State in January 2011. As a result, \$6,014 was added to the budget to cover items that the department would normally fund through its Reinventing surplus. After further review, staff recommends that Cooperative Extension remain a Reinventing Department and the \$6,014 be removed from the budget. Mr. Lundy briefly explained that reinventing gave departments flexibility with how they spent their funding as long as their outcomes were met.

Commissioner Barger made a motion to approve this \$6014 reduction to the budget. The motion carried unanimously.

(5) Parks

Restores 6 hours at Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks so that both parks will operate **4 days a week under the current seasonal schedule averaging 11.5 hours**. This will allow parks to be open 46 hours per week.

Mr. Lundy indicated that the Planning and Parks staff had surveyed park attendees and found that the preference would be longer hours versus additional days. Planning Director Jacky Eubanks stated that the summer hours would be 12 hours per day and staff would monitor park use and determine hours for the fall

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schedule. Commissioner Hunsucker told the audience that other options would be investigated to maximize the days and hours of operation of the parks. Commissioner Beatty thanked everyone for coming and giving their opinions and stated that the Board had looked long and hard at the best options for everyone. Chair Barnes added that the Board had felt it was important to add hours based on the survey of park users.

Commissioner Beatty made a motion to add \$21,000 to the budget to allow the parks to operate 4 days a week under the current seasonal schedule averaging 11.5 hours per day. The motion carried unanimously.

**(6) Libraries**

Delete all Sunday hours, but maintain hours at Main and St. Stephens, which allows for the continued delivery of the following services: 6 literacy enrichment activities at Main; 24 digital literacy skills workshops for adults at Main; 6 library tours for school groups at St. Stephens; 4 programs for teens at St. Stephens; and 45 toddler music programs at Sherrills Ford. Customer service levels would be maintained at current levels as the part-time workers provide assistance in circulation and shelving and allow for full-time workers to provide direct customer assistance and programming. This restores two full-time and 1.58 FTE part-time hourly positions but still deletes two full-time and two half-time positions.

Commissioner Barger made a motion to add \$108,124 to the budget to maintain hours at the Main and St. Stephens libraries and continue the delivery of the above listed program – this addition restores two full-time and 1.58 FTE part-time hourly positions but still deletes two full-time and two half-time positions. The motion carried unanimously.

**(7) CVCC**

CVCC requested the following increase in current expense based on increased enrollment and the opening of the Simulated Hospital, Pottery, and expanded Student Center:

- Janitorial services \$80,258
- Electricity \$72,304
- Lease payment for truck driving training \$36,000
- Heating \$7,460
- Water \$2,376
- Property Insurance \$4,560
- Liability Insurance \$2,480
- Medical Insurance for maintenance staff \$4,892
- Telephone cost increases for new facilities and anticipated inflationary increases \$6400
- Total request is \$217,068 – of which \$100,000 was included in Manager's recommended budget.

Commissioner Barger, who sits on the CVCC Board of Trustees, outlined the huge increase in enrollment and the additional expenses from that enrollment as well as the opening of the simulated hospital and expanded Student Center and pottery program. These programs and expanded enrollment are needed as more out of work citizens need training and the demands for training increases.

Commissioner Barger made a motion to increase the budget by \$117,068 for these increased expenses at CVCC. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Barnes pointed out that the animal shelter study funds were already budgeted in previous years and the items brought up in the public hearing regarding the animal shelter had been addressed and the County Animal Shelter had an ongoing relationship with the Humane Society.

Commissioner Hunsucker pointed out to all present that while this was a public hearing at this meeting, everyone was welcome to speak at any of the Board meetings at a portion of the agenda that welcomed public comments. Chair Barnes then outlined the Board's meeting schedule and indicated the budget would be adopted at the Board's Monday, June 7, 2010 meeting scheduled for 9:30 a.m.

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3. Commissioner Beatty made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

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Katherine W. Barnes, Chair  
Board of Commissioners

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Barbara E. Morris  
County Clerk