

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
ROWAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 1, 1998- 8:30 A.M.
COMMISSIONER'S MEETING ROOM, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

PRESENT: Jim Neely, Chairman
J. Newton Cohen, Vice-Chairman
Steve Blount, Member
Dave Rowland, Member
Frank Tadlock, Member

The County Manager, Clerk to the Board, County Attorney and Finance Director were also present. Chairman Neely called the meeting to order and Commissioner Cohen provided the invocation.

Chairman Neely recognized Tim Russell to describe the process for starting the project to create a county quilt. Mr. Russell stated that he had approached Cooperative Extension Director Amelia Watts about creating a work of art to hang in the Commissioner's Meeting Room. He then recognized Ms. Watts who described the process used to create a county quilt. She noted that the Homemaker's Extension Club and the Quilter's guild had created the quilt to show the history of all areas of the county using artwork from local artists Neil Marcum, Clyde Overcash and Betty Sedberry. She then introduced the members of both organizations who had participated in the project. Ms. Watts and Chairman Neely then unveiled the Rowan County Quilt for the audience. Chairman Neely, on behalf of the whole Board, thanked all of the volunteers for their many hours of hard work. He then adjourned the meeting for a recess in order to participate in a reception honoring the volunteers.

ADDITION TO THE AGENDA:

Chairman Neely recognize Sheriff Bob Martin to present an award. Sheriff Martin presented the Sheriff's Medal of Honor to Billy Martin for his heroics during

a recent house fire. Mr. Martin had helped save a woman and her dog. Sheriff Martin and the Board thanked Mr. Martin for his selflessness.

- Mr. Russell asked the Board to allow Charlie Patton to make a presentation on using high school students to rehab old computers.
- Mr. Russell asked the Board to consider the renewal of the hauling contract for the convenience sites.

CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT AGENDA:

Commissioner Blount moved to approve the consent agenda as submitted. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried. The consent agenda consisted of the following items:

- (A) Approval of Minutes from 5/4/98, 5/18/98, 5/19/98, 5/25/98, 5/26/98 meetings
- (B) Approval of Refunds totaling \$1,963.79
- (C) Request from NCDOT to Add *Scotland Lane* to the Secondary Road System for Maintenance
- (D) Approval of Budget Amendment

ADDITION TO THE AGENDA:

Mr. Russell stated that bids had been received on the renewal of a contract to haul from the convenience centers to the landfill. He noted that the lowest bid was from Waste Management for \$134,035.64.

The bids received were from:

BFI	\$173,884.54
CCC	\$138,021.16
Waste Management	\$134,035.64

Commissioner Cohen moved to approve the resolution awarding the contract to Waste Management. Commissioner Blount seconded and the motion carried.

RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH:

Mr. Russell told the Board that the personnel committee had begun a program approximately two months ago to recognize outstanding employees in County government. The first recipient of the new award was Revonda Hudson from Social Services. Chairman Neely thanked Ms. Hudson and presented her with a certificate of appreciation along with gift certificates to a local restaurant.

WORK FIRST PLAN REVISION & UPDATE ON CHILD WELFARE FUNDING:

Social Services Director Rick Travis told the Board that the Social Services Board had voted not to renew its contract with the Employment Security Commission for job placement preparation services. He stated that they had a smaller pool of recipients eligible for the service. The contract was for \$42,000 but they only averaged eight job placements a month. Mr. Travis asked the Board to approve the termination since it was a part of the plan originally approved by the Board.

Commissioner Blount moved to terminate the contract with the Employment Security Commission. Commissioner Tadlock seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Travis then gave the Board figures on the funding of the new child welfare positions in his department. He stated that when the General Assembly appropriated the extra positions last year they did so with the understanding that they wouldn't cost the county. He stated that this March it was determined that the State was not reimbursing the positions 100% after all.

Commissioner Rowland questioned Mr. Travis about his proposal to eliminate positions after the Board had been chastised in the past for not hiring supervisors. Mr. Travis stated that they had been unable to find qualified supervisors to fill the positions.

Commissioner Blount asked Mr. Russell if he or Ms. Earnhardt had reviewed the numbers Mr. Travis had presented. Mr. Russell replied that they had not and that his expectations were much different than the numbers presented.

Commissioner Blount moved to delay any action on the positions until the estimated figures could be reviewed. Commissioner Cohen seconded and the motion carried.

Commissioner Rowland stated that the County had a qualified Finance Department and he would like the Board to authorize hiring temporary staff, if needed, to review the books at DSS to determine the true status. The Board agreed by consensus.

PUBLIC HEARING: NCDOT SECONDARY ROAD PROGRAM:

Mr. Chris Corriher and Jim Turlington presented the proposed 1998-99 Secondary Road Program to the Board for their review. Mr. Corriher reviewed the roads included in the upcoming years project and stated they would spend an

estimated \$2.3 million dollars. He said this would include approximately fourteen miles of road which would be paved in priority order.

Commissioner Blount moved to open the public hearing on the proposed 1998-99 Secondary Road Program. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried.

Chairman Neely called for comment, and there being none offered, Commissioner Blount moved to close the public hearing. Commissioner Rowland seconded and the motion carried.

The Board discussed how funds are allocated for the repair and maintenance of existing roads. Mr. Turlington noted that this was currently being debated in Raleigh.

Commissioner Blount moved to adopt the Secondary Road Program as presented. Commissioner Cohen seconded and the motion carried.

Commissioner Cohen asked Mr. Corriher and Mr. Turlington their opinions about creating a five lane road on US 70 versus a four lane road with a grass median. Mr. Turlington answered that as an engineer he did not particularly like grass adding that it also created traffic flow problems when the road had a high number of businesses and homes.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Mr. Charlie Patton made a presentation to the Board concerning creating a computer academy at a local high school. The program would teach high school students to rehab computers and would provide computers at a reduced cost while teaching the students a very profitable trade.

Commissioner Blount asked Mr. Patton if had made his presentation to the School Board. He answered that he had not but hoped to do so in the near future.

Commissioner Blount stated that the program sounded exciting but he wasn't sure what the proper steps were to pursue the project.

The Board discussed the allocation of \$150,000 in technology grant moneys to one high school a year and the possibility of using a portion of that money to start the program. The Board agreed by consensus that they would like to proceed with investigating the potential for this project as a pilot program and would discuss further during their budget sessions.

DISCUSSION ON SECTION E OF US70 WIDENING PROJECT:

Marion Lytle stated that staff had been asked to review the City of Salisbury's plan for widening Hwy 70 to a four lane road with a grass median. He stated that it was the planning committee's opinion that a five lane road (with turning lane) would be more suitable for the area.

Commissioner Blount moved to endorse the Planning Board's recommendation to maintain the five lane plan as originally submitted from NCDOT. Commissioner Rowland seconded and the motion carried.

The Board asked Mr. Lytle to inform City Staff that the County did not endorse their proposal.

APPROVAL OF TEMPORARY CONCRETE BATCH PLANT FOR REA CONSTRUCTION:

The Board received a request from REA Construction Company to establish a temporary on site concrete batch plant. REA has been awarded the contract for construction on I-85 from NC 152 to Webb Road. The Board may grant a temporary use for up to two years.

Commissioner Rowland moved to approve the request. Commissioner Blount seconded and the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF CONTRACT WITH CHINA GROVE FOR FIRE SERVICE:

EMS Director Wayne Ashworth asked the Board to approve a modified contract with the Town of China Grove for fire service protection. He stated that there was no change in boundaries as previously approved in the contract, but merely to change the contract to proper legal wording.

Commissioner Blount moved to approve the wording change. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO EMPLOYEE PRE-TAX PREMIUM PLAN:

Mr. Russell stated that County Employees currently have the option to participate in pre-tax payroll plans such as 401K and the cafeteria plans. He stated the amendment would allow County Commissioners to participate in the program as well.

Commissioner Blount moved to approve the resolution for the amendment. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT FEE POLICY:

Health Director John Shaw presented the Board with revised policy for a change in the fee schedule for health service clinics. He stated that the change should increase clinic revenues by \$61,000.

Commissioner Blount asked about if Mr. Shaw felt those who could not afford to pay would stop seeking healthcare, especially prenatal. Mr. Shaw said that the Health Department would work with each client to structure a payment plan so that health service would not stop.

Commissioner Blount moved to approve the fee schedule as presented. Commissioner Cohen seconded and the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS:

Commissioner delayed the Board appointments for the EDC and DSS Boards.

Community Based Alternatives Task Force:

Commissioner Blount moved to reappoint Joe McCann and Rick McCollister to the task force. Commissioner Cohen seconded and the motion carried.

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

Commissioner Blount moved to reappoint George Knox to the board. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried.

City of Kannapolis

Commissioner Blount moved to reappoint Mr. Conrad Sloop as an extraterritorial member of the Kannapolis Planning Board. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried.

Town of Granite Quarry

Commissioner Blount moved to appoint Ray Charleston as an extraterritorial member of the Granite Quarry Planning Board. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion carried.

There being no further business in Regular Session, Commissioner Blount moved to enter closed session to discuss the sale of property (Norman's Property). Commissioner Cohen seconded and the motion carried.

Upon conclusion of closed session, Commissioner Cohen moved to return to open session. Commissioner Blount seconded and the motion carried. No action was taken during closed session.

Chairman Neely then recessed the Board for a lunch break.

After lunch, Chairman Neely reconvened the meeting for a budget worksession.

Mr. Russell asked the Board to begin the budget worksession by reviewing the expansion list first and his recommendations on the list.

He stated staff expected the tax base to grow about six billion dollars, and reviewed the two revenue streams (sales tax and property tax) that would be used to meet the budget needs.

Merit Pay Plan - Commissioner Rowland stated he supported a merit plan for employees but felt that it should be a bonus plan because currently it was an increase to an employees base pay which became a continuing cost for the county. He said he would rather pay a bonus that was earned year by year and would be paid to work-line employees and not department heads. Commissioner Blount stated that department heads deserve merits and the Board should let staff do their job and study the bonus idea and made a presentation to the Personnel Board for review.

NC Transportation Museum - Commissioner Cohen asked about funding for the North Carolina Transportation Museum. Mr. Russell stated that he had budgeted a \$10,000 appropriation with \$40,000 set aside to be used only to match grants the Museum may receive. Commissioner Cohen stated he would like to continue the restriction on the \$40,000.

Cabarrus/Rowan Park Commission - Mr. Russell gave the Board a letter from Kannapolis City Manager David Hales requesting the Board to fund the Cabarrus-Rowan Park Commission (Baker's Creek) for one additional year. The Board discussed their actions last year to let Kannapolis know they wished to cut funding for the park and for it to become a Kannapolis City park. Commissioner Cohen moved to take out the funding for the park from the 1998-99 budget. Commissioner Rowland seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 3/2 with Commissioners Neely and Blount voting against.

Commissioner Tadlock stated he would like to see a smooth transition but needed to let Kannapolis know that the Board gave notice last year of its intentions and confirm the County's position on the matter.

Rowan/Salisbury Schools

Mr. Russell told the Board that the budget, as presented, included funding to bring the schools to state funding average in two years.

The Board discussed its proposed plan to bring the schools to state average over a two year period. Commissioner Cohen moved to officially extend the Board of Commissioners intentions to bring the funding to state average over a two year period. Commissioner Tadlock seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 4/1 with Commissioner Rowland voting against.

Commissioners Cohen and Tadlock discusses their wishes to match \$215,000 in appropriations to be set aside by the School Board to go directly to teacher supplements. They stated that matching this amount would bring the allocation to \$430,000. Commissioner Cohen said he would like to match the funds if the School Board agreed to the funding plan. He then moved to seek funds from other sources, with the last resort being fund balance, for the recurring expense to match the \$215,000 the School Board will appropriate for teacher supplements for a total of \$430,000. Commissioner Tadlock seconded the motion. Commissioner Rowland offered an amended motion to take out any reference to the use of fund balance and to find the revenues through cuts to the budget. His motion died for lack of a second. Chairman Neely called for the vote on Commissioner Cohen's motion and it passed by a vote of 4/1 with Commissioner Rowland voting against.

Commissioner Tadlock then moved for the Board of Commissioners to commit to the School Board \$325,000 to be used only for classroom supplies. Commissioner Cohen seconded the motion. Commissioner Cohen stated that this was not a reoccurring cost but a one time appropriation to be evaluated at the end of the year to determine if it should be continued.

Commissioner Rowland asked if they could use the interest earned to fund this appropriation and Mr. Russell answered yes. Commissioner Rowland stated that he would also like to add to the motion that the money can only be used for academic classroom instruction and the teachers would be the ones to evaluate the allocation. He then amended the motion to take the money out of interest earned for use for academic instruction only, as a pilot program with a teacher evaluation at the end of the year. Commissioner Blount seconded the amendment and the motion carried by a unanimous vote.

New Positions – Mr. Russell reviewed the list of positions he recommended to the Board for approval. They were as follows:

- 1 PC technician – Information Systems
- 2 Deputies – Sheriff's Office

- 1 Investigator – Sheriff’s Office (grant)
- 1 Resource Officer – Sheriff’s Office (grant)
- 1 Clerk/Typist – Telecommunications
- 1 Electrician – Buildings and Grounds

Mr. Russell noted that the resource officer would be assigned to Erwin Middle School.

Commissioner Rowland asked if the County paid for enough outside electrical work to justify the Electrician position. Mr. Russell stated that staff would determine if there would be savings and return to the Board with the information.

There being no further business, Commissioner Blount moved to adjourn the meeting until 7:00 p.m. for the public forum on school funding. Commissioner Cohen seconded and the motion carried.

PUBLIC FORUM FOR SCHOOL FUNDING

Chairman Neely called the meeting to order and introduced Larry Parks who served as moderator for the meeting. Members from the School Board present were Betty Starr, Vick Bost, Kay Norman, Karen Carpenter, Eldridge Williams and Bruce Jones.

Mr. Russell presented the County’s funding plan to bring the per pupil funding average to state average over a two year period.

Mr. Howard Hurt presented the School’s plan for use of additional funds and the needs that they faced.

Mr. Parks then opened the floor for public comments and the following citizens addressed the Board:

1. Joseph Lee- supported additional funding for the schools and supported the computer academy at East Rowan because it was hands on learning.
2. Ed Haden – stated he did not want to give the schools a black check on property tax increase each year and added that they shouldn’t over build facilities by 10%. Opposed an increase in funding until the schools show accountability.
3. Jim Beard – told members that teachers need tools to teach with and enough teacher to create smaller classrooms.
4. Patrick Billings – spoke in support of Charles Patton’s computer rehab project.
5. Anna Mills Wagoner – spoke in favor of increased funding for schools.
6. Jan Harwood – supported an increase in funding for schools.
7. Judy Getzloff- supported an increase in funding.
8. Robin Davidson – supported an increase in funding

9. Sara Misenheimer – said that citizens have demonstrated that they believe in education and support increase funding.
10. Beth Dixon – opposed a property tax increase but felt the Board could make a one time allocation from fund balance to give the schools the money they need.
11. Jane Gamewell – stated the Board must find a way to fund the schools at an adequate level, adding they should go beyond the state average.
12. Penny Bowman – in support of funding in excess of average needs. She stated that they needed to support highly skilled technical industries in the County by provided high skilled students.
13. Rosie Snow – stated her concerns about overcrowded classrooms and the policy of not replacing retiring teachers with new ones. She said they must have adequate funds to pay teachers.
14. Lugene Cox – wanted to challenge the school system to not only meet the top 40% of the state’s average on SAT scores but also the top 10% of the nation.
15. Jayson Barber – stated his support for Charles Patton’s plan for a computer academy at East Rowan stating he had worked with Mr. Patton for the past two years rehabbing the old computers to return to classrooms.
16. Shannon Barber – supported Mr. Patton’s project because she had seen what a change it had made in her son.
17. Sue Wales – stated she wanted higher test scores but they couldn’t be achieved without increased resources, adding she wanted to use fund balance to fund the schools.
18. Jimmy Misenheimer – supported the computer rebuilding program and a hands on learning process.
19. Lea Anne Honeycutt – supported increased funding.
20. Pam Jenkins – spoke in favor of the proposed funding plan because the job market has changed and the needs of schools has changed.
21. Linda Halperin – stated she appreciated the effort to increase the schools funding to state average but urged the Board to do so this year.
22. Rebecca Corriher Daugherty – questioned the schools Class of 1999 policy requiring a 2.0 for graduation with a diploma.
23. Ann Boyd – stated that to attract industry schools must be improved and added that she wanted better than average schools.
24. Lois Nobles – favors funding for better education for children.

There being no other speakers, Mr. Parks thanked the audience for their participation. He then turned the meeting back over to Chairman Neely, who recognized Commissioner Cohen. Commissioner Cohen thanked the citizens for participating in the public forums. He stated that teachers and PTA supporters had told the Board that the supplements were low and they had no classroom supplies. He then stated that the Board had made a commitment to fund the schools at state average over a two year period and reviewed the budget figures tentatively approved by the Board. He stated that the Board had voted to match \$215,000 to be appropriated by the School Board to be used for teacher supplements.

Commissioner Rowland then stated that the Board had appropriated \$325,000 to be used only for instructional supplies and noted that with these two additions the amount appropriated for the schools for 1998-99 was approximately \$2.5 million.

Commissioner Blount then presented the School Board with a check for \$1,970,000 representing the continuation budget and teacher supplements. Chairman Neely then presented a check for \$215,000 for the teacher supplements and Commissioner Tadlock presented a check for \$325,000 for instructional supplies.

School Board members Vick Bost and Bruce Jones thanked the Board for their commitment to bring the schools to state average in funding adding it was a positive first step in getting where they needed to be.

Betty Starr stated that she appreciated the Board of Commissioners working cooperatively with the School Board but was disappointed that the remediation programs would go unfunded.

Kay Norman stated she was disappointed that the Commissioners only took a small step to meet the needs of the students, adding that the programs that would not be funded directly affected the children. She asked Commissioner Cohen how he had justified picking the programs that would be funded.

Commissioner Rowland responded by saying that the Board did not pick and choose between programs and that they had said from the beginning of the process that raising school funding would be a two year process and they could not fund the \$3.2 million in one year, but that \$2.5 million was a good start to the two year period.

Karen Carpenter stated that she was tired of saying she was grateful when they have demonstrated the need for the funds. She added that the specifying the \$325,000 to be used only for instructional supplies was micro-management at its worst.

Eldridge Williams added that the County had not done what it needed to do for schools over the years and now they are behind.

Commissioner Tadlock asked to clarify that from the beginning the Board had committed to increase the funding over a two year period and that with this year's appropriation they would exceed over half of the goal.

There being no further business, Commissioner Blount moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Rowland seconded and the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Dickinson, CMC
Clerk to the Board