

**CONTINUATION OF THE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 4, 2001 – 11:30 A.M.
COMMISSIONER’S MEETING ROOM, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
*BUDGET SESSION***

Present: Steve Blount, Chairman
Gus Andrews, Vice-Chairman
Arnold Chamberlain, Member
Frank Tadlock, Member
Leda Belk, Member

The County Manager, Clerk to the Board, Finance Director and Assistant Finance Director were also present.

Chairman Blount reconvened the meeting at 11:25 am and stated that no voting and no decisions have been made “behind the scenes” on the proposed budget. Mr. Russell added that he had an opportunity to discuss the budget with each member of the Board individually and answered any questions that they had.

Commissioner Andrews added that approval of the budget would depend on the outcome of the General Assembly in Raleigh. Mr. Russell added that the Board might want to consider an interim budget until July 1, 2001.

Mr. Russell presented the Continuation Budget, which only allows necessary increases such as fuel oil. New items are not included in the Continuation Budget. Mr. Russell explained that due to the recession and plant closings, the property tax anticipated growth of 5% will only reach approximately 4.5% and the sales tax growth will be between 4% and 5% versus the anticipated 6 % plus. These adjustments have been included in the proposed budget.

Mr. Russell explained that the Continuation Budget contained no new positions, only mandated increases in operating budget items, the increase in the Employee Health Insurance will be in the Expansion Budget. However, there is a recommended reduction in benefits and an increase in the cost of family coverage to employees. Mr. Russell continued to propose the replacement of necessary motor vehicles and the same level of

funding to the Public Schools, the Community College and Piedmont Behavioral Healthcare.

Mr. Russell followed with an explanation of the Expansion Budget and reviewed the priority listing that the Commissioners decided at the goal setting retreat. Mr. Russell also explained the expansion request coming from department directors for operating expenses and new positions. Mr. Russell proposed a COLA (cost of living allowance) of 3.4% for county employees and if funding should become available during the year, the merit increase could be reinstated. Mr. Russell proposed two additional holidays; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Veterans Day

Mr. Russell stated that the retirement health insurance program is not included in the expansion proposals. Commissioner Belk said that a policy should be in place by the next budget. The Board discussed the importance of this plan.

Mr. Russell also discussed rental space for the Child Support division of DSS and renovations.

Mr. Russell continued to highlight the reclassification of county positions and the increase in the Schools funding.

Mr. Russell reviewed the School Budget and the difficulty in funding the schools at the State Average without an increase in taxes.

Mr. Russell proposed a new ambulance station in the South Rowan area, which would need six full-time employees

Capital Improvements areas discussed were the ambulance site, the 300 block of North Main, the parking lot on North Main, the South Rowan Library, water/sewer to South Rowan area and renovations to the Nature Center at Parks.

Mr. Russell explained the increase in Medicaid that the County is required to pay. Rowan County will see an increase of approximately \$1,125,000 for next fiscal year.

Chairman Blount explained that the Continuation and Expansion Budget are all open for discussion and because members may not vote in favor of some of these items, this does not mean that the members do not support these areas. Chairman Blount reminded the Board members to debate the issues and not each other. Chairman Blount continued to state that there are three ways to budget items; a tax increase, the Fund Balance and make cuts within the proposed budget.

The Board reviewed, discussed and debated the following areas and issues for consideration:

INCREASES	FUNDS	DECREASES	NEW
Planner	53,037 (10/01)		
Codes Enforcement Plan Reviewer	54,038 (10/01)		
Increase Code Enforcement fees	40,000		120,000
	+120,000		
South Rowan Library	200,000		
Bd. Of Elections	1,350		
Health Department/Equipment	17,684		
ROD / Equipment	31,805		
DSS/Equipment-shelving	23,039		
	73,878 Total		
Sheriff's Equipment	7,000		
Sheriff's Interpreter	20,000		
	27,000 Total		
DSS – IMCW (Medicaid)	20,000		
Reduce Rowan Rescue Squad		(10,000)	
EMS Equipment	4,100		
Reduce Nature Center	50,000		
Senior Games Coordinator	7,171		
Employee Holiday	9,000		
Elections	20,000		
Sheriff Control Room	39,000		

Commissioners questioned and discussed the funding to the Rowan Rescue Squad. Mr. Russell explained that \$201,750 was given to the Rescue Squad in the last fiscal year and the Board could specify how the money is spent, although they have never done this before.

Chairman Blount called for a break at 1:20 pm.

The meeting reconvened at 2:10 pm.

Commissioners discussed concerns about fees being considered taxes and increasing fees because a position is needed. Commissioners were concerned about starting any new fees but would consider increasing current fees, which could be used in other areas.

Mr. Conner stated that Rowan County is 20-25% below other counties in building permit fees. Mr. Conner and Ms. Heidrick agreed that a 20% increase in fees would support the two positions in the Planning Department.

Commissioners Blount, Belk, Tadlock and Chamberlain agreed to the 20% increase. Commissioner Andrews voted “no” to the increase.

Commissioner Andrews stated that it was more important to give employees more technology and improve their working conditions. The other Commissioners agreed with this philosophy. Commissioner Andrews proceeded to list technology needs to add for consideration.

Commissioner Belk expressed the need for IMCW (Income Maintenance Caseworker) in the Medicaid division and the fund one worker would cost Rowan County \$20,000 for their portion

Commissioner Belk stated that she would like for the Senior Games Coordinator to be a full time position at the Parks and Recreation Department.

Commissioner Andrews and Chamberlain agreed that it would be better to give employees one holiday this fiscal year and the other holiday the next fiscal year. Chairman Blount stated that Rowan County offered fewer holidays than other counties in comparison. Commissioners Belk and Tadlock voted in agreement with Chairman Blount to offer both holidays this fiscal year. Commissioners Andrews and Chamberlain voted “no.,” but they would be in favor of implementing one holiday this year and one holiday next year.

Commissioner Belk voted to reduce the Rescue Squad by \$10,000, which would not reduce the “peak time” amount and Commissioner Belk stated that there was no reflection of the grant money received by the Rescue Squad in the budget presented to the Board. Commissioners Blount, Tadlock, Andrews and Chamberlain voted to leave this amount in the Rescue Squad allocations.

Commissioners Blount, Tadlock and Belk voted to approve leaving the funds available for the Nature Center. Commissioners Andrews and Chamberlain voted “no.”

Commissioners Blount, Tadlock and Belk voted to approve the funds for the South Rowan Library. Commissioners Andrews and Chamberlain voted “no” and to delay the funding.

Commissioners Andrews, Tadlock and Chamberlain voted against the addition of new Zoning Fees with Commissioner Belk voting in favor.

Commissioner Chamberlain made a motion to fund the two positions in Planning plus equipment totaling \$120,000 and to add these two positions in October, which would save an additional \$25,000. Commissioner Belk seconded and the position passed unanimously.

It was announced that the public hearing for the Budget for Fiscal-Year 2001-2002 would be held on June 18, 2001.

Chairman Blount adjourned the meeting at 4:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rita K. Foil
Clerk to the Board