

June 8, 2015

A Special Meeting of the Bladen County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, June 8, 2015 at 6:00 pm in the Commissioners Room on the lower level of the Courthouse. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss FY 2015-16 Budget.

Members present were:

Charles R. Peterson, Chairman
Russell Priest, Vice Chairman
Delilah Blanks
Michael Cogdell
James G. "Jimmie" Smith
Daniel Dowless
Billy Ray Pait
Wayne Edge
Arthur Bullock

Chairman Peterson called the meeting to order. Commissioner Pait provided the invocation. County Manager Greg Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Peterson turned the meeting over County Manager Greg Martin.

ITEM I. Review Changes from Proposed Budget:

Mr. Martin provided an overview of the changes to the budget since the previous meeting. Including the cost of living adjustment (COLA) for employees requested by the Board, a net decrease to the General Fund was \$63,355. This net change also included reducing the proposed allocation to Bladen County Schools in the amount of \$205,812. This proposed decrease to Bladen County Schools would allow for the same amount of funding as FY 2014-15.

ITEM II. Property Tax Rate:

Mr. Martin reviewed a proposed property tax rate of \$0.81 per \$100 in tax value for FY 2015-16. Following is a breakdown as presented:

\$ 0.7489	Revenue Neutral Rate
0.0463	New Detention & Law Enforcement Ctr. Expenses
<u>0.0148</u>	EMS Additional Allocation
\$ 0.8100	Total Proposed Tax Rate for FY 2015-16

ITEM III: Items of Discussion since Last Budget Meeting:

Mr. Martin provided information regarding a Health Cost Settlement which could affect the budget. Currently, Department of Public Health (DPH) and the State Medicaid Office (DMA) have not come to terms on the way the Cost Settlement should be determined. The calculation method used by DMA has shown a significant decrease in reimbursement or actually resulting in refunding to Medicaid. The outcome is yet to be determined.

Mr. Martin also shared information regarding the E911 PSAP Funding distribution. Currently being funded at \$230,000 annually, notification of FY 2014-15 funding has been received indicating that \$186,445 will be allocated for Bladen County. The 911 Board must consider the amount of funds carried forward for the primary PSAP in determining the distribution amount for the upcoming fiscal year. NCGS 62A-46(b1) allows for only carrying forward 20% of the average yearly amount of the prior two years for eligible expenditures for capital outlay, capital improvements or equipment replacement. The 911 Board however, may allow a PSAP to carry forward a greater amount.

ITEM IV: Discussion Items:

Mr. Martin further explained the increase for the new detention and law enforcement center would include funding for six (6) additional jailers, debt service payment and anticipated increases in operating expenses.

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The additional \$0.0148 for EMS was anticipated during the FY 2014-15 Budget process. Discussions at that time reflected an actual anticipated increase of \$0.02. This increase would generate funding so that Fund Balance should not have to be used.

An additional Information Technology (IT) position has been requested by the Sheriff's Office. The new Detention and Law Enforcement Center, with the newest technology, would require a full time IT position. The Commissioners discussed the possibility of actually needing two full time positions for around the clock coverage should there be an outage or issue to be addressed. An additional \$53,514 would fully fund a position, which includes benefits.

Discussions have been held recently regarding the need for additional shell buildings to encourage additional industry to locate within the County. Currently, there are no available industrial buildings available for lease. An amount of \$144,000 annually to set aside for an Economic Development building project was discussed. Mr. Martin stated the amount of \$144,000 annually could cover the cost of annual debt service should there be a need if an industry currently being housed in a Bladen's Bloomin' Agri-Industrial building not be successful. Mr. Martin indicated that he would secure additional information from Economic Development Director Chuck Heustess.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has requested additional funding to purchase a remount ambulance to support its services. Mr. Martin shared that a remount ambulance could be purchased for \$92,500.

Water Rescue has been requested to include land search in its responsibilities, which would increase Water Rescue budget by \$5,500 annually to \$15,500.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to consider an additional \$0.01 to the tax rate in order to fund each of the requests under Discussion Items.

ITEM V. Other:

Chairman Peterson expressed the need to further discuss the one-time appropriation to Bladen County Schools of \$350,000 from the County's General Fund Reserves. The adjusted proposed budget does reflect the same level of funding to Bladen County Schools in the amount of \$6,400,245, which is a \$205,812 decrease from the originally proposed \$6,606,057.

Chairman Peterson polled the Commissioners regarding their view of the now proposed tax rate of \$0.82. Commissioners Smith, Dowless and Pait indicated their disapproval in discussing that much of increase. Chairman Peterson, Commissioners Cogdell, Blanks, Bullock, Priest and Edge indicated their discomfort in having to increase the tax rate. However, the items to be funded are immediate and necessary in order to continue providing critical services.

Chairman Peterson asked Mr. Martin to review the proposed budget to search for any cost cutting suggestions. Budget discussion will continue on June 22, 2015 at 6:00 pm.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Edge, seconded by Commissioner Pait, the meeting was adjourned at 6:35pm.

ATTEST:

Maria C. Edwards, Clerk to the Board

Charles R. Peterson, Chairman