

Regular Meeting
March 1, 2004

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 1, 2004 at 9:00a.m. in the Commissioners Room, Courthouse.

Present: Jimmy Alligood, Louis Belfield, Ralph Cole, Jerry Downum, Wayne Goodwin, George Jones, Harry Lee Winslow.

Chairman Louis Belfield called the meeting to order and Commissioner Winslow presented the invocation.

Consent Agenda

By motion of Commissioner Jones, the Consent Agenda, including the minutes and the following budget amendments and tax releases, was approved.

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Budget Amendments

4330 Civil Prep.	inc	\$51400	lease/purchase proceeds for EMS vehicles and equipment
5232 Sentencing Services	inc	\$ 2000	grant
4381 Animal Shelter	inc	720	wireless internet
4381 Animal Shelter	inc	500	SPCA donation for PT adoptions position
4952 Food/Nutrition Prog.	inc	2060	KB Reynolds grant
5352 DSS	dec	6506	rural transport. adjustment
4930 CDBG	inc	2624	budget adjustment to reflect act.rev.
5345 DSS	inc	1607	child care funding

Tax Releases

WI Davis	\$192.81	listed in Bertie Co.
JC Gloe	\$106.34	listed in Perquimans Co
JM Nolen	\$204.55	purchased commercial tag
CB Ward Jr	\$109.37	vehicle turned in

Board Appointment - Region R Aging Advisory Council

Commissioner Alligood moved that Bill Miller be appointed to the Region R Aging Advisory Council.

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Set Salary for Register of Deeds

Register of Deeds Sue Rountree's term expires with the upcoming election and it is necessary that the Board of Commissioners set a salary to be provided to the Election Board. By motion of Commissioner Goodwin, the salary for the Register of Deeds will be set at \$34,010.

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Schedule Public Hearing - CDBG Grant

Commissioner Jones made a motion that the Board schedule a public hearing for April 5 at 6:00 pm to receive comment on the closeout of the 2001 grant.

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Schedule Public Hearing - Rural Operating Assistance Application Commissioner Goodwin moved that the Commissioners schedule a public hearing for the April 5 meeting at 6:00pm to receive comment on the proposed application for State transportation funds for the InterCounty Transportation Program.

Transfer of Funds - Board of Education

By motion of Commissioner Alligood, the Board of Commissioners authorized the Board of Education to transfer \$342,524 from the current expense fund balance to the 2003-04 capital outlay budget for renovations at Holmes High School. Renovations include improvements to the handicapped students facility, relocation of the guidance and counseling program, the purchase of four temporary classrooms, and minor improvements to the administration area. The work is scheduled for completion for the beginning of the 2004-05 school year.

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Planning and Inspections Report

Planner Elizabeth Bryant reported that 266 inspections were performed and 89 permits issued during the month of January, which is traditionally a slow month, but was not so slow this year. She reported storm repairs continuing and also considerable new construction.

She announced that a mobile home task force has been established for Chowan, perquimans and Gates Counties to administer a FEMA grant to purchase a mobile home excavator to remove destroyed and abandoned mobile homes, particularly storm damaged, through a FEMA reimbursement.

Ms. Bryant also reminded the Commissioners about the joint meeting with the County Planning Board for Thursday night to discuss planning issues, including subdivision ordinances, land use issues and managed growth.

Economic Development Report

Economic Developer Richard Bunch presented a power point "snap shot" of Chowan County, describing the County's economic condition as "on a steady pace". He noted a currently healthy textile business at George C. Moore, boat building industries working to keep up with their orders and busy peanut industries at Seabrook and Jimbos Jumbos. He commented on the industry managers' complaints that local applicants do not meet employment qualifications and stressed the need for additional job training for those applicants looking for work. Mr. Bunch discussed the cooperative effort between the businesses and COA to provide training, and also the cooperation between the High School and COA. Just last week, guidance counselors and teachers toured some of the industries and participated in discussions about how the School System, COA and the industries can work together to identify students for potential employees, to guide them toward the needed training to become successful employees.

Chowan County enjoys a low unemployment rate of 4.0%, compared to a State rate of 5.8% and a national rate of 5.6%; but that means there are 280-320 people out of work and the County has a poverty rate of 17%. Mr. Bunch stated that this becomes an education issue because these residents need help to improve their quality of life. He sees his goal to continue to grow jobs and to help educate the unemployed so that they can help themselves.

He discussed the Peanut Drive Industrial Park and the Airport Industrial Park as having yielded more than 150 new jobs to Chowan County. The Airport Industrial Park development includes a barge

site, boat lifts, natural gas, sewer, and an incubator facility for start-up businesses. Available space includes a corporate hangar and office space, an 8-acre tract, a 5-acre tract, and the former Agri.Cell building. Challenges to economic development include competition from other communities building roads and spec buildings, and providing sewer and water; and to work on Phase II of the Airport Industrial Park for job retention, expansion and new clients. Mr. Bunch described the EDC's goal to provide jobs for residents so that they can work at home.

Public Safety Committee Report

Commissioner Alligood stated that the Public Safety Committee received reports from the EMS and Sheriff Departments at its meeting on Thursday. The EMS department is at full staff now with 12 full time employees, one clerical position and 28 parttime employees. The EMT-I evaluation is on-going.

Information was also provided on the efforts to collect delinquent ambulance fees, including garnishments of wages and tax refunds.

Legislation was passed to provide a no wake zone in pembrook Creek and buoys have been ordered to mark the designated areas.

The Sheriff reported on the overcrowded conditions at the jail, partially due to a backup in the State system. Options are being reviewed by County staff and a recommendation will be presented to the Commissioners at a later time. None of the options being considered include a major financial impact on the County.

Human Services Report

Commissioner Jones introduced Recreation Director Robbie Laughton and DSS Director Ben Rose for comments.

Mr. Laughton presented participation numbers showing 2500 youth registrations and 1300 adult registrations for 2003. The Northern Community Center increased youth participation by 400 and adult participation by 1800 registrations. Forty percent of County residents participate in Recreation Department activities.

Mr. Rose reported that he was invited to serve on a State 5-year plan task force and he served on a committee to address medical insurance for children in child support situations. Approval has been requested from the Federal government for the State to be able to contract with medical insurance carriers through a group plan for parents without medical insurance to be able to subscribe through the State group plan. This will guarantee health insurance benefits to more than 40,000 children. Such a program was established in Sacramento County California in 1998 which has been very successful.

Commissioner Jones moved that the Board of Commissioners approve a resolution supporting the plan.

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RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Chowan County Social Services operates the Child Support agency to collect payments on behalf of children with absent parents; and,

WHEREAS, the health and well-being of children is vital to the Chowan County community; and,

WHEREAS, access to health care is critical for children's development and later success; and,

WHEREAS, Child Support has a primary mission to secure health insurance for children with absent parents; and,

WHEREAS, the cost of Medicaid has grown an average of 10% annually; and,

WHEREAS, Chowan County supports the State's goal of being a top ten performance state in the collection

of Child Support in the country; and,

WHEREAS, the procurement of health care coverage for children of Child Support cases will be a new performance measure for the State of North Carolina and its Child Support operations; and,

WHEREAS, not all non-custodial parents have affordable access to health care insurance for their children.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners does hereby support the State of North Carolina Child Support Division in developing and implementing a private health insurance plan for children in the Child Support case load by contracting with companies to provide group rates and coverage to these children. These plans would be available for any absent parent of a North Carolina Child Support child and would provide comprehensive major medical coverage for that child at a rate that is affordable and cost-effective. These plans would provide coverage for a child whose absent parent has no access to health care coverage or that the coverage is beyond reasonable cost.

Resolved today, March 1, 2004, by the Chowan County Board of Commissioners.

Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk

Chowan County Red Cross Month

Red Cross representatives Cyn Owens and Dave Holton attended the meeting to request support for a resolution designating March as Red Cross Month in Chowan County. Commissioner Downum made a motion that the following resolution be approved.

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Resolution

WHEREAS, the Greater Albemarle Area American Red Cross has devoted itself to the goal of vigilance and preparedness since March, 1995 -educating individuals, families, schools and businesses about what they can do at each threat level of the federal alert system to strengthen community response in the event of attacks and other disasters; and,

WHEREAS, the Greater Albemarle Area Red Cross has an unparalleled record of helping the residents of Chowan County prevent, prepare for, and respond to life-threatening emergencies by delivering relief services to victims of disaster; offering health and safety training such as first aid, CPR and aquatic lifesaving to more than 175 people last year; providing emergency communication services to military families; participating in international humanitarian projects that save lives; and collecting 375 units of blood from 200 donors in 2003; and,

WHEREAS, by joining the American Red Cross as a volunteer, course participant or instructor, contributor or blood donor, one can help make the Chowan County communities and nation safer. Last year, the Red Cross responded to 5 disasters in Chowan County, from home fires to hurricanes. During Red Cross relief operations, volunteers assess damages, drive emergency response vehicles to distribute food and other supplies, provide shelter for families who have been evacuated from their homes and necessities to people in need. These invaluable services are provided free of charge, paid for by generous contributions from the American people; and,

WHEREAS, the American Red Cross also serves military families by delivering emergency messages between soldiers and their families back home. With US troops deployed overseas in Iraq and Kuwait defending freedom, this support has been especially important. In addition, Red Cross workers at home and overseas provide critical aid to the victims of disease, famine, war and natural disasters. The Red Cross organized an effort to vaccinate nearly 43 million African children against the childhood killer measles last

year and continued a program to aid families in war-torn Afghanistan with clean water, tents, school supplies and other necessities.

To commemorate these valuable humanitarian services, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners does hereby designate March 2004 as Chowan County Red Cross Month; and,

FURTHER, urges all residents of Chowan County to work through the Greater Albemarle Area American Red Cross to help prepare their families and community for emergencies, to give time, financial contributions and blood donations to support this worthy organization's mission to prevent and relieve suffering and to save lives.

RESOLVED today, March 1, 2004.

Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk

Hurricane Relief Report

Staff Attorney Peter Rascoe reported that debris sites were cleaned and closed as of Friday, February 27, with a cost of clearing the debris placed at \$1.8 million. The Landfill will continue to receive storm debris through the end of March. DOT's third round of pickup is still in progress.

Commissioner Alligood asked about the deplorable condition left behind logging at Cape Colony, particularly the way the drainage ditches have been blocked by logging debris. Mr. Rascoe responded that DOT is investigating the issue through its right-of-way jurisdiction.

Support for 800 MHz Communications System for Region

Commissioner Alligood made a motion that the County approve a letter of support of an application for federal funds for a regional 800 MHz communications system, to be submitted to the legislative delegation requesting federal assistance by the Albemarle Commission.

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Public Comment

Jim Leggett asked about the possibility of a joint effort between the proposed Cape Colony/Country Club sewer project and the proposed Sandy Point development. County Manager Cliff Copeland responded that such communication has already taken place.

Manager's Report

Lease/Purchase County Vehicles

In the February meeting, County Manager Cliff Copeland reported that the low bidder for the lease/purchase financing of vehicles for the Sheriff's Dept, EMS, Animal Control and the Water Dept, was RBC Centura at 2.45%, for \$134,400. He corrected the amount to \$159,400, a vehicle was not included in the original amount, and requested that the Commissioners approve financing documents, including a resolution authorizing the execution of the financing agreement that was received from the bank last week.

Commissioner Goodwin made a motion that the County authorize the resolution with RBC Centura.

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Sewer Study

Mr. Copeland reported further that the soil work has been completed for the sewer study and a model is being designed and cost estimates determined for presentation to the Commissioners.

Maintenance Supervisor

A Maintenance Supervisor has been hired effective March 16, Orville Mason, who will be presented at next month's meeting.

Old Courthouse Opening

Events to commemorate the opening of the renovated Old Courthouse are tentatively being planned for October 8. More information will follow, as plans are finalized.

Landfill/Solid Waste Fees

Mr. Copeland reported that he and staff members are reviewing commercial rates for solid waste fees, which are out of line in comparison to residential fees. A recommendation will be presented to the Commissioners.

Status of Debt Service Procedure - Schools

Mr. Copeland discussed the procedure the County uses for funding of School construction projects. Funding sources include two sales tax revenues that are designated to the capital reserve fund for schools capital outlay. Contributions from the General Fund and state corporate income tax through the ADM Fund (Average Daily Membership funded based on school attendance), and interest earned on the funds, comprise the County funds available to school construction. The County is in the last year of a five-year commitment for an additional \$250,000 per year for technology. Payments to debt service will experience no significant drop until after 2006. Due to the flat economy being experienced and the low interest rates for funds invested, the reserve funds have not grown as in previous years. The County Manager distributed financial information documenting that no additional debt should be incurred until after 2006.

Mr. Copeland said that he presented this information to the Board of Education at its recent retreat and was presenting it to the Board of Commissioners as information important to decisions to be made in regard to long range plans for school construction.

The Chairman recessed the regular meeting and declared an executive session to receive information

Executive Session

The County Manager requested an executive session so that information could be presented to the Board concerning a possible litigation. Staff Attorney Peter Rascoe presented the information to keep the Board informed but no action was required.

The Executive Session was adjourned, the regular meeting reconvened with no action taken resulting from the Executive Session.

The regular meeting was adjourned and the Commissioners joined the Board of Education at a meeting to receive information concerning a proposed long range school construction plan.

Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk