

Regular Meeting
February 10, 2005

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, February 10, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. in the Panel Room of the Old Courthouse.

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

Chairman Wayne Goodwin called the meeting to order and Commissioner Cole presented the invocation.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Belfield moved that the Consent Agenda be approved, including the following tax releases, amended Capital Project Ordinance, budget amendments, and a resolution expressing the County's support that the General Assembly provide relief to North Carolina counties for Medicaid expenses.

Tax Releases

A Hughes Inc	\$118.63	new weighted tags purchased
CM Banks	\$533.94	County property
WA Bass	\$121.17	vehicle traded
MM Burns	\$292.94	listed in Georgia
C Brabble	\$197.61	incorrectly measured
BJ Evans	\$169.97	listed in Cumberland Co
JT Keel	\$101.92	vehicle given to daughter
GC Bradham	\$144.36	listed in SCarolina
WE Chesson	\$129.72	changed tags
GS Cox	\$181.86	changed tags

Amended Capital Project Ordinance

To include Interest in the amount of \$200,000
Public Safety/Emerg. Operations Center \$10,956,645.00

Budget Amendments

4248 COA	inc.	\$22,000	renovate labs and add lift Station at DFW campus
5311, 5321, 5351,5363 DSS	dec.	\$10,000	cost savings
4730 Soil&Water	inc.	\$177,228	waterway cleanup grant
6132 Recreation	inc.	\$26,740	NCDENR grant/Bennett's Millpond
4310 Sheriff	inc	\$1,177	vehicle repair
4268 SrCenter	inc	\$3,402	grants for health promotions
4170 Elections	inc	\$15,085	Elections technology grant

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Chowan County pays \$989,497 or 6% of its General Fund expenditures for services to Medicaid eligible citizens; and,

WHEREAS, the share of Medicaid reimbursements paid by counties has increased over 67 percent in the last five years, and now totals approximately \$440 million; and,

WHEREAS, North Carolina is one of only two states in the nation that require counties to pay a share of all Medicaid services costs; and,

WHEREAS, in Chowan County, 20% of the population is Medicaid eligible and Chowan County spends \$65.97 per capita cost of Medicaid, costing twelve cents on the tax rate.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners urges the North Carolina General Assembly to provide immediate Medicaid relief to Chowan County.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to members of the General Assembly representing Chowan County.

Adopted today, February 10, 2005.
Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk

Special Presentation – Alyssa Miller

Cooperative Extension Chairman Mike Williams introduced Alyssa Miller, an eleven-year old Chowan County 4-H member who won a bronze medal in State 4-H competition for her presentation “A Day in the Life of a Chowan River Herring Fisherman”. Alyssa is the granddaughter of Herbert Ray Byrum, one of the few remaining herring fishermen in Chowan County. Alyssa made her presentation to the Commissioners, including photographs taken of the day she spent with her grandfather and uncle, Bobby Gene Byrum, fishing the pound nets belonging to the family business, and displaying samples of the herring fish.

Planning and Enterprise Committee Report

Planning and Inspections Report

Commissioner Gardner reported on information presented to the Planning and Enterprise Committee including:

- that the Monds property cleanup is progressing and work continues with the O’Kelley property.
- the GIS project for Land Records is nearing completion.
- work continues to determine how the proposed sewer system for southern Chowan County and the proposed Sandy Point development can be combined.

-growth projections for the Water System were discussed, including the projected need for a new treatment plant in the southern part of the County, and projected tap-on fees to cover the costs.

-commercial landfill users are now contracting with private collection firms and are being billed by the private firm, and the County is no longer collecting landfill fees from the commercial users on the water bills.

Planner Elizabeth Bryant reported that several proposals have been received from companies interested in conducting the county-wide zoning survey and documentation. She also stated that the first approvals have been received from FEMA for the residential buyouts and elevation applications submitted by citizens in Chowan County.

Nuisance abatement costs not paid by the landowner but paid by the County, are applied as a tax lien on that property. The Tax Administrator has been instructed to proceed with foreclosure if the costs are not promptly repaid by the landowner.

Finance Committee Report

Upgrade for 911 Central Communications Center

The low bidder, Commercial Radio, did not meet the specifications of the request for bid in several areas. In fact, if Commercial Radio had responded to all the specifications, it would not have been the low bid. Staff members verified the bids, and following communications with the two bidders, recommend that the bid not be awarded to the low bidder, but to Copeland Communications at \$88,000.

Commissioner Allgood made a motion that the bid be awarded to Copeland Communications.

Ayes 7

No 0

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds

Superintendent Dr. Allan Smith presented a proposal to the Finance Committee that the County investigate applying for a loan of interest-free bonds from a pool of federal money. These funds can be used for renovations of school facilities only, and are awarded by a formula based on students qualifying for subsidized lunches, at a maximum of \$2 million. The more school systems applying will decrease the amount of money available to each school system. In-kind match will be provided by Chowan Hospital through the student intern program. Qualifying renovations, including asbestos abatement and upgrading restrooms, are identified. Local banks offering proposals to the County will qualify for tax credits. The County would have three years to begin the project and fourteen years to repay the loan, to be placed in an escrow account to be paid in the fourteenth year.

Interest on the deposit of the loan proceeds would accrue to the County during the time prior to construction and during the fourteen years of repayment. Banks using the tax credits may return the payments to the County as a donation and take the donation credit. This would, in fact, make the loan free to the County.

Commissioner Winslow made a motion that the following resolution to allow the County to apply for the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds be approved.

Ayes 7
No 0

Resolution

WHEREAS, John A. Holmes High School in Chowan County was constructed in 1950 with subsequent additions and renovations made to the facility; and,

WHEREAS, the school facilities have been well maintained, but are in need of general improvements; and,

WHEREAS, the Chowan County Board of Commissioners has reviewed plans to further improve the physical facilities at John A. Holmes High School, as prepared by the Edenton Chowan Board of Education; and,

WHEREAS, the Edenton Chowan Board of Education has determined that the school meets the criteria for the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners authorizes Chowan County and the Edenton Chowan Board of Education to apply for the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.

Approved today, February 8, 2005.
Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk

Personnel Policy

DSS Director Ben Rose presented a proposed re-write of the County's Personnel Policy, as prepared by Mr. Rose and a staff committee. Included in the proposed policy is a performance appraisal system, strengthened policies for compliance to federal laws and Statutes and an appeal process, random drug testing, health insurance for retirees from Chowan County with twenty years of service to Chowan County and are eligible for full retirement from the Local Government Retirement System, and a more effective administration plan.

Also included in the Personnel Policy is a Separation Allowance Policy for Retired Law Enforcement Officers. In 1986, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring counties to provide a special separation benefit for qualified law enforcement officers. Officers must have completed 30 years of creditable service; or be 55 years of age and completed five or more years of creditable service, as allowed under the retirement system. The benefit stops at age 62 or if the employee is reemployed by any city, town, county or the State.

Commissioner Winslow moved that the County approve the Personnel Policy, including the Separation Allowance Policy for Retired Law Enforcement Officers.

Ayes 7
No 0

Emergency Operating Center

Emergency loan money has been allocated to counties impacted by Hurricane Isabel through the administration of the USDA. County Manager Cliff Copeland reported that the USDA has reserved \$7.5 million for construction of an EOC and \$3.3 million for security equipment upgrades for Chowan County. He emphasized that the County does not intend to borrow this full amount, since all grants available to the County will be pursued to reduce the amounts needed.

Also, the Town of Edenton will be responsible for its share of costs if space for the Police Department is included in the design and construction of the facility.

Albemarle Learning Center

The Board of Directors of Albemarle Learning Center proposes to lease the ALC buildings and 68 acres of land to Chowan County for \$1 per year. The Board of Directors is no longer able to provide financial and administrative support for the property and the programs housed at ALC, and desires that the County serve as administrator. Finance Officer Lisa Jones has projected a budget for the ALC at no additional cost to the County. The County contributes an annual allocation of \$25,000, and this allocation would be combined with other resources, including horse barn and farm rent.

Programs currently housed at the ALC include the NCSU Science House, the Northeast Regional School Superintendents Association and Cooperative Extension programs.

Also proposed for five acres of the farm property is the location of the County's communication tower planned for construction from the \$1 million grant recently awarded to the County, and also the possible development of some of the property for industrial sites.

Commissioner Belfield made a motion that the County accept the lease and approve the operation budget as presented.

Ayes 7

No 0

Northeast Albemarle Group Health

Chowan County has participated in a group self-insurance program since 1990 with the district health department and other county governments in northeastern North Carolina.

Auditors have recommended that the participating agencies should formalize their association and appoint a governing body, to be comprised of County Commissioners and County Managers from each of the member counties.

Commissioner Gardner moved that Chowan County approve the formation of the Group Health governing body.

Ayes 7

No 0

Chairman Goodwin appointed Commissioner Gardner to serve as the Commissioner appointment, along with County Manager Cliff Copeland to the Northeast Albemarle Group Health Board of Directors.

Board Appointment – Albemarle Commission

Commissioner Belfield made a motion that Roosevelt White be appointed to serve on the Albemarle Commission Board of Directors.

Ayes 7
No 0

Highway Safety

County staff members recently met with representatives from the DOT to discuss the recent survey where the section of Highway 32 in Chowan County was identified as the fourth ranked county with “the best chance of being killed”.

Mr. Copeland reported that DOT representatives believe this number to be skewed due to the fact that it is based on per-mile driven. Since the miles-driven in Chowan County is small, any fatal accidents tend to skew the results – similar to the issues encounter when dealing with unemployment rates. A layoff of twenty people in Chowan County increases the unemployment rate drastically, where a layoff of twenty people in a larger county has no impact on unemployment numbers. Accidents over the last two years were reviewed. Most of the accidents occurred in construction zones, and several of the accidents involved collisions with deer coming into the roadway.

The upgrade of Highway 32 is scheduled to begin this spring at both the Edenton end and at the Gates County line. The first phase for the southern end (from Edenton) ends at the Byrum Farms intersection. The County will seek discretionary funds so that the entire road can be completed within the year. The highway will be widened and reflectors installed.

Heliport at Chowan Hospital

Mr. Copeland reported that funds have been appropriated for construction of a heliport at Chowan Hospital. No construction date has been announced.

Cellular Phone Tower

Petitions requesting upgrades to cellular phone service, particularly in the southern and northern ends of the County, have been submitted to US Cellular and Alltel. The County finds itself a low priority to these corporations due to the low numbers of customer base. County staff continues to pursue assistance to improve cell phone service.

Public Comment

None offered.

The meeting was adjourned.

Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk