

**Special Meeting**  
**Monday, May 13, 2024**  
**9:00am**  
**Chowan County Public Safety Center**  
**305 West Freemason St.**  
**Edenton, NC**

Present: Chair Bob Kirby, Commissioners, Ron Cummings, Chris Evans, Larry McLaughlin, Alex Kehayes and Ellis Lawrence.

Commissioner Tray Taylor joined the meeting later.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard, Finance Officer Cathy Smith and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings.

This meeting was recorded. A copy of the meeting audio is in the meeting file labeled May 13, 2024.

Chair Kirby called the meeting to order.

**9:00am - Fireworks Display Request**

The Board was presented with a request from Wetzel Pyrotechnics and the Edenton Optimist Club for a fireworks display in Edenton on July 4, 2024 to be displayed at Hayes Plantation. All required documentation has been submitted to the County. The final inspection and approval of the display would be conducted by the Fire Inspector/Fire Marshall on the day of the event.

Commissioner Cummings moved to approve the request as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (6-0).

**Recreation Master Plan Update and Adoption**

At the meeting on May 6, 2024 the Board was presented with the 2024 Recreation Master Plan. The Board will consider approval of a resolution adopting the 2024 Master Plan.

Board members discussed the draft Master Plan Document. They asked if the plan obligates the Board to complete the suggested projects within the plan.

Mr. Howard noted the plan is a guideline and the Board is not obligated to complete any of the suggested projects.

The Board discussed the following topics within the plan that they questioned or had concerns:

- Population totals
- Median age
- Survey Accuracy
- Staffing recommendations (including new positions)
- Building needs

- Renaming and rebranding the recreation department.

Board members indicated they would support approval of the Master Plan as long as there was no obligation to fund any of the items identified for improvement in the plan.

Commissioner Lawrence moved to approve the plan adoption resolution as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (6-0).

## **RESOLUTION**

### **ADOPTING THE CHOWAN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the citizens and stakeholders of Chowan County’s Parks and Recreation system value a well-planned network of facilities for their use and enjoyment; and

**WHEREAS**, the provision of parks, recreation, and open space opportunities for physical activity may serve to enhance health outcomes of Chowan County citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chowan County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board formally recommends adoption of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan by the Chowan County Board of Commissioners; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chowan County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board shall use the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a guide to advance the recommendations, goals, and strategies of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chowan County Board of Commissioners is under no obligation to fund any recommendations, goals, or strategies contained within the Chowan County Parks and Recreation Master Plan;

**NOW, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED** that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the Chowan County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### **2024 Bond Referendum Discussion**

The Board discussed proposed projects in order to provide a preliminary recommendation for a bond amount to be considered in the 2024 referendum. It was noted that additional meetings to finalize the bond referendum and ballot question will be held at a later time.

Chair Kirby stated he liked the statement made by Mr. Holbuka when the Master Plan was being presented at previous meetings and that was to “phase projects and build on prior successes.”

Board members discussed the development of Red Banks Farm as a Recreational complex. The Board discussed the property was purchased in the late 90s with the intent to develop the property with ballfields, walking trails and other recreational opportunities. It was noted the property was purchased with Clean Water Management Trust Fund monies and there are recorded conservation easements on the property.

Recreation Co-Director Shannon Ray stated that there is the possibility to request a waiver of some of the land restrictions to allow for the construction of a building/gymnasium on the property. She noted the Board would have to apply for the waiver and there are instances where the waiver was granted.

Mr. Howard noted the Board may also consider making offers to purchase adjoining land in front of the 90+ acre parcel to build recreational facilities.

Commissioner McLaughlin stated his concern over the suggested \$35 million recreation bond amount that includes a tax increase. He stated he did not feel a bond of this amount would pass. He stated he would suggest looking at a phased approach and present a \$10 million bond to see what development of the site could be done with that. He stated he would support a bond referendum for a lesser amount that previously discussed. He noted that the Board could ask for another bond in the future for more recreation development.

Commissioner Lawrence stated he felt that the Board should allow the voters to decide what projects are done.

Commissioner Taylor joined the meeting.

Recreation Co-Director Brian Chappell stated that he felt development of Red Banks Farm, construction of a new gymnasium/Senior Center and the implementation of a feasibility study for construction of a natatorium (Pool) should be prioritized projects.

All Board members agreed that a \$35 million bond referendum would not pass.

It was noted that cost estimates have said that \$6 to \$8 million is needed for the development of Red Banks Farm to install ballfields, soccer fields and walking trails. It was noted that another \$8 million would be needed to build a new gym and Senior Center.

Recreation Co-Director Shannon Ray noted that there are grant funds available to the County that could assist with some of the development costs for the Red Banks Farm project. She stated that she felt a bond in the \$12 to \$15 million stood a better chance of passing with the public.

Commissioner Cummings moved to set the bond referendum amount to \$10 million.

Board members discussed the current need for consolidated recreation facilities and the need for a new senior center and gymnasium. It was noted that \$10 million is not enough to complete these projects.

Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion failed (3-4 Evans, Kirby, Lawrence and Taylor).

Chair Kirby discussed the needs for Recreation and noted he felt it was important to include the Senior Center in the referendum.

Commissioner Lawrence moved to set the bond referendum amount at \$15 million. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed (4-3 Cummings, McLaughlin and Kehayes).

The Board took a five minute recess. After five minutes Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

### **FY 2024-25 Budget Work session**

#### **Budget Overview**

Mr. Howard provided the Board with handouts that provide an overview of the proposed budget and requests. The Board reviewed the Fund Balance which noted that the projected fund balance projected to be available or unrestricted after the budgeted fund balance appropriation in the upcoming budget to be 25.24%. Mr. Howard then reviewed a handout on the proposed 2025 budget revenues and expenditures as compared to the 2024 budget. Mr. Howard noted that the 2025 budget includes a budgeted debt service payment for the high school. He noted that the Board may want to consider use of these funds noting that this was a Board request to budget for the debt service however it will not come online until the following fiscal year. He reviewed two spreadsheets that detail the 2025 budget requests that were not included in the proposed budget and another spreadsheet that further details requested increases from departments. A copy of all handouts is in the May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Budget Work session meeting file. He noted that the total increase requested from departments that was not included in the Manager's recommended budget totals \$2,694,209

#### **Lunch**

The Board recessed for lunch from 12pm to 1pm. At 1pm Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

#### **COA**

Dr. Jack Bagwell along with representatives from COA including County COA Board member Patti Kersey presented the Board with a PowerPoint presentation on the COA Budget request. A copy of the presentation is in the May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Budget Work session meeting file. It was noted that COA has requested an additional \$24,695 to be used from COA capital. He noted that this capital increase is to replace a roof on Building A, monies for landscaping and storm water drainable. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$24,695).

#### **Senior Center**

Ms. Ray reviewed the requested increases for the Senior Center budget which include new positions for office staff and nutrition site worker. Three additional instructors, a new vehicle lease and postage increases for newsletter mailings. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$27,849).

## **Recreation**

Ms. Ray and Mr. Chappell reviewed the requests in the Recreation budget which include one additional employee, a salary increase for part time staff and new staff for sailing and swimming. They noted they will recommend an increase in recreation fees to cover the costs for registration software. Staff indicated they are requesting a salary increase for one employee. The budget includes capital purchases for the purchase of a new vehicle lease. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$44,707).

The Board took a five minute recess. After five minutes Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

## **Jail**

Sheriff Basnight reviewed the requested items in the jail budget. The requested increase is a 20% salary increase for jailers. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$115,959).

## **Central Communications**

Sheriff Basnight reviewed the requested items in the 911 budget. The requested increase is a 20% salary increase for employees, the purchase of uniforms for 911 operators, a vehicle lease and employee training. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$129,076).

## **Sheriff/SRO**

Sheriff Edward Basnight reviewed the budget request for the Sheriff Office. He noted the requested increase is a 30% salary increase for competitive salaries with neighboring counties. He stated the request also includes the creation of a new position to train under the Admin Assistant who will be retiring after a year. The budget increase includes four new vehicle leases, new in car cameras, upgraded interview room equipment, monies for the K9 program and capital outlay monies for a boat lift. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$542,469 for Sheriff and \$58,534 for SRO).

## **Library**

Librarian Jared Jacavone provided the budget request for the Library. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is in the meeting file labeled May 13 and 14, 2024. He noted his budget increase over the previous year is \$13,123. He noted these increases include increased utilities, a COLA adjustment of 4% and a salary increase for the Library Assistant. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$10,078).

## **Adjourn**

Being no further business, Commissioner Kehayes moved to adjourn the special meeting. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0)

---

---

Bob Kirby, Chair

---

Board Clerk Susanne Stallings

**Special Meeting**  
**Tuesday, May 14, 2024**  
**9:00am**  
**Chowan County Public Safety Center**  
**305 West Freemason St.**  
**Edenton, NC**

Present: Chair Bob Kirby, Commissioners, Ron Cummings, Chris Evans, Larry McLaughlin, Alex Kehayes and Ellis Lawrence.

Commissioner Tray Taylor was absent.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard, Finance Officer Cathy Smith and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings.

This meeting was recorded. A copy of the meeting audio is in the meeting file labeled May 14, 2024.

Chair Kirby called the meeting to order.

**EMS Budget**

EMS Director Colin Ryan noted the largest request in the EMS Budget that was not included in the Manager's budget was for salary increases for his staff. He discussed the need to remain competitive with salaries for paramedics and advance EMT. His request includes a 15% increase for Paramedics, 10% for Advance EMT and 5% for Basic EMT. He noted there is capital increase in there for the purchase of a stretcher. (He provided a handout a copy is in the May 14, 2024 meeting file).

(The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$178,232)

**DSS**

DSS Director Tyeshia Phelps and Assistant Mary White provided the Board with an explanation for the requested increases to the DSS Budget. The increases include the purchase or lease of a new vehicle for transport, the current is 15 years old. There is a request to add two additional positions in the services unit to reduce the amount of errors found. There are 32 employees included in the budget the request is for 34 employees. It was noted that a portion of the salary for employees is reimbursed by the State. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$65,648)

### **Emergency Management**

EM Coordinator Cord Palmer provided an explanation for the requested increases in the EM Budget. It was noted that the budget includes a new vehicle lease and capital outlay for the replacement of mobile messaging boards. The Board suggested purchasing only one message board an applying for grant funds for the other. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$72,423).

### **Information Technology**

IT Director Cord Palmer provided an explanation for the requested increases in the IT budget. He noted that the request includes increases for relicensing increases, a vehicle lease. He noted that staff is currently using personal vehicles to haul equipment or to provide IT services to County offices. (The total increases not included in the Manager's recommended budget total \$25,701)

The Board took a five minute recess, after five minutes Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

### **ARPA Funds**

It was noted that it is estimated that \$300,000 will remain in ARPA funds. There is an additional \$100,000 in LETC funds. It was noted that these monies should be used for one time purchases.

### **Schools**

School Superintendent Dr. Michael Sasser presented the Board with a revised budget request from the School System. A copy of the revised request and Power Point presentation is in the meeting file labeled May 14, 2024. The current expense request is \$1,515,528 over the previous year appropriation. He stated that this includes increases in cost of business costs (utilities, salary increases, step increases and the increased cost of employee benefits). He noted the Governors budget includes increases, there is an increase to the local supplement, technology and expansion of positions. He noted that the schools have a decrease in revenue not only from reduced ADM but from the impact of the revaluation on property values. Dr. Sasser reviewed the capital requests for the upcoming budget year which total \$1,238,307. He noted that \$500,000 is available in lottery funds to reduce the capital request to \$738,307. The Board discussed classes that are available to students in Edenton-Chowan Schools.

### **Lunch**

The Board recessed for lunch from 12pm to 1pm. At 1pm Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

### **Budget Work Session Deliberation**

The Board reviewed the following budgets, any further discussion or changes are noted under each budget:

### **Schools**

Mr. Howard provided the Board with a handout that reviewed school appropriations from 2017 to 2024. He noted that the 2025 budget request for current expense is a 30% increase from the previous year.

### **COA**

Mr. Howard noted that he would recommend the use of CIP funds to cover the additional capital request from COA.

### **COLA for County Employees**

The Board discussed the handout provided by the County Manager that provided a budget estimate for a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for County employees. It was noted that a 5% COLA would require an increase of \$396,745. Mr. Howard noted there would be an increased revenue from DSS and state reimbursement. Board members agreed by consent to provide a revised budget that includes a COLA for County employees.

Board members expressed their concerns over employee retention and stated they wanted to have competitive salaries to retain employees especially in Public Safety.

### **Tax Rate**

Mr. Howard noted that the current tax rate is low. It was noted that in previous years the Board has budgeted an appropriation from fund balance to balance the budget. Historically the County has realized a surplus of revenue which did not require use of the entirety of the appropriation. While it is unknown at this time how much will be used for the current fiscal year, it appears that more will be used than in previous years.

Board members expressed their concerns over an increase to the tax rate on residents.

The Board discussed the historical tax rate and the last tax revaluation where the tax rate was not increased or decreased.

Board members agreed that the tax rate increase needed consideration and by consent asked the Manager to bring back a budget with a 3 cent tax increase for more discussion.

### **ARPA Funds**

Board members requested that the Manager total up capital requests and consider a revised budget that utilizes ARPA funds for one time capital purchases.

### **Next Budget Meeting**

It was noted the next scheduled budget meeting is Wednesday, May 22, 2024.



**Adjourn**

Being no further business, Commissioner Evans moved to adjourn the special meeting. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (6-0)

---

Bob Kirby, Chair

---

Board Clerk Susanne Stallings