

Special Meeting
Wednesday, May 22, 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 22, 2024.

Chair Kirby called the meeting to order.

Budget Work Session

Mr. Howard provided the Board with a revised budget based on discussions from the previous work sessions. He noted the revised budget includes a tax increase of 3 cents. It also includes increased ARPA funds revenue for one time capital purchases. The total increase in revenue was \$754,431. He noted the revised budget includes a 5% COLA for all employees, the reduction of a laptop purchase for Admin and a reduction of the EMS transfer as ARPA funds would be used for the capital outlay and not general fund. The total additional expense is \$340,282 with a net of \$414,149. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled May 22, 2024.

Mr. Howard reviewed a handout regarding the capital outlay purchases using ARPA funds. The proposed budget utilizes \$217,103 in ARPA funds. There remains \$109,000 excluded from the recommended budget for a boom (Maintenance dept), mobile messaging board (Emergency Management) and a floor cleaning machine (Recreation).

Mr. Howard noted there are additional requests not included in the Manager's budget which include the Sheriff salary request (\$636,442), DSS salary request (\$79,132) and EMS salary request (\$99,221). These salaries are the difference after the approved 5% COLA is included.

Chair Kirby discussed his concerns over the three departments that have significant salary increase requests and their struggle to keep positions filled. He stated that if the County appropriates additional funds for salaries he fears that next fiscal year we will be having the same discussion.

ARPA Funds

It was noted that \$375,000 was available in ARPA funds, the managers recommendation uses \$217,000 which leaves \$158,297.

The Board discussed the additional capital requests. The Board agreed to the following by consensus:

- The portable boom is not an immediate need and should not be included.
- Consensus to purchase only one mobile messaging board in the 2025 budget, the cost is \$27,500.
- The Board agreed to include \$80,000 for the purchase or lease of vehicles.
- The Board agreed to purchase the additional floor buffer machine for Recreation \$9,000.

It was noted that \$41,797 remains in the ARPA fund.

- The Board discussed the previous request for stationary license plate readers. Sheriff Basnight stated he would prefer to have the car mount cameras for now and they can be placed in neighborhoods to scan as needed. It was suggested that the remaining monies be set aside to look into building a trailer mount scanner.

DSS

Ms. Phelps noted that while she needs the three positions requested the priority position is the child welfare supervisor. She stated she was pleased with the 5% COLA requested.

Sheriff/Jail/911

The Sheriff discussed the salary requests in his requested budget. He noted the increase is 30% for Sheriff and 20% for 911 and Jail. He discussed the request for the addition of one administrative assistant to be full time, and one to hire and cross train with the retiring administrative assistant over the next year.

The Board discussed various options for the increase, it was decided to take out the 5% for sworn law enforcement officers and put in a \$10,000 salary increase in place of that. The remaining positions would keep the 5% COLA. It was noted this change would impact 22 sworn positions.

The Board took a 5 minute recess, after five minutes Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

Windfarm Tax Revenue

The Board discussed the tax revenue that would be in future budgets from the windfarm. It was decided that later in the current year, the Board would schedule a special meeting to designate those revenues for capital projects.

ARPA

Later in 2024 the Board will look into budgeting the remaining ARPA funds for capital. The purchase of AED machines was discussed as a potential capital expense.

EMS

The Board discussed the salary request it was noted the current budget only includes the 5% COLA increase for employees.

Animal Shelter Revenue

Ms. Smith noted the proposed budget includes an increase in shelter adoption fees to cover the costs of the new software.

Mr. Howard will bring a revised budget to the June 3rd meeting for the public hearing.

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