

IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET SESSION MINUTES
THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2005

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met for a Budget Review Session on Thursday, June 2, 2005, at 5:30 p.m., in the Iredell County Government Center (South Wing Conference Room), 200 South Center Street, Statesville, NC.

Present were:

Vice Chairman Godfrey Williams
Steve D. Johnson
Marvin Norman
Ken Robertson

Absent: Chairman Sara Haire Tice (due to illness)

Staff present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Finance Director Susan Blumenstein, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

Others present: Carrie Sidener with the *Record & Landmark*.

CALL TO ORDER by Vice Chairman Williams.

20 County Wide Fire District: Fire Tax District Board (FTDB) Members Frank Phillips and Jeff Tucker, along with several firemen, joined the commissioners for this segment of the meeting.

Phillips said the original budget request was in excess of \$6 million, but the FTDB had reduced it to \$3.8 million. He said there was a need for an additional one cent on the tax rate which would generate \$600,000. Phillips said several departments needed renovations, some needed to be rebuilt totally, and paid firemen were needed. He said one new truck had been ordered this year, and it was for West Iredell. Phillips said group purchasing was being reviewed. He noted that it cost \$1,200 to fully-equip one fireman.

Tucker said that in the past three years, paid firemen had been the trend, and he didn't see the VFDs regressing back to strictly volunteer organizations.

Phillips said the First Responder costs (\$78,000) were in the budget, but the FTDB felt they should be included in the EMS budget. He said bandages, or expendable supplies were coming off the EMS trucks, but not defibrillators, oxygen tanks, and back boards. Phillips said there were several reasons why the First Responders might not get replacements and one of these was that they might be too busy cleaning up after an accident scene.

Commissioner Williams asked if the Mooresville Rescue Squad responded to calls.

Phillips said everyone needed to remember the rescue squad was a volunteer organization. He said during the day, the response times were acceptable, but after 5 p.m., the squad members could be slow in arriving, or they might not show up.

Williams asked Phillips and Tucker to explain how the FTDB made the budgetary cuts.

Phillips said the original request for trucks was 1.8 million, but it was reduced to \$195,000.

Tucker said salaries were equalized between the departments.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the insurance increase.

Finance Director Blumenstein said the insurance line item had increased was due to the consolidation of several types (property, liability, workers comp, bonds, etc.).

Commissioner Norman asked how closely the FTDB was following the consultant's study.

Phillips said the FTDB did not see the study as anything "laid in stone." He said that when a truck was replaced, there had to be a good reason, and the FTDB had a maximum amount it would pay out for vehicles. Phillips said that if a VFD wanted a \$400,000 truck, the FTDB would only assist up to \$300,000. He said the fire department then had to have fundraisers for the remainder.

Commissioner Williams said the FTDB or the board of commissioners did not have that much control over the fire departments.

Phillips said the VFDs were independent contractors. He said the FTDB inspected the departments and looked at the equipment and vehicles, but technically, the VFDs were independent contractors.

Tucker said the FTDB wanted to obtain a consensus on pumper or vehicle specs instead of allowing every department to write up their own.

Phillips said the county was experiencing growth, and the FTDB would have to find a way to fund it.

Williams asked why the First Responder costs were at 100% when there had been cuts in other line items.

Phillips said there actually were some cuts. He mentioned that if the First Responder costs were moved to EMS, the Director of Emergency Services didn't necessarily have to work with each individual fire department. Phillips said the FTDB could be the contact.

Commissioner Robertson asked about the VFD insurance ratings and the homeowners' property insurance costs. He asked if the FTDB had a proposal to encourage the fire departments to achieve better insurance. Robertson said the citizens would then be able to save money on their property owner's insurance, and they could see a benefit from their tax dollars.

Ken Journey showed a map that depicted the areas in the county with the better insurance ratings.

Phillips said it took more than water hydrants to achieve good insurance ratings.

Tucker said the FTDB tried to pick the most densely populated areas for hydrant placement.

Fire Marshal Lloyd Ramsey said the state insurance commissioner recently conducted the Monticello VFD's inspection. He said the review rated the department on communication (10%), water (40%) and the VFD itself (50%). Ramsey said the inspector reviewed invoices and paperwork for the past three years. He said all training had to be documented, and all equipment maintenance records had to be accessible.

Phillips said it took about a year just to get scheduled for a state inspection. He said, "It behooves the insurance department for the VFD not to receive a good rating."

Tucker said many departments were using their paid firemen to help prepare for the inspections.

Johnson said debt impacted the operational budgets, and it needed to be managed, or options were going to be limited.

Norman said it would seem difficult to manage the debt if the VFDs could purchase trucks no matter how expensive they were.

Phillips said the VFDs were told how much the FTDB would assist in truck purchases. He said it would be difficult for the departments to bury the extra costs.

Tucker said the departments had the autonomy to spend the money as they chose. He said just because something was budgeted in one line item, it didn't necessarily mean the firemen couldn't spend the money on something else.

Commissioner Williams thanked Phillips and Tucker for their FTDB work.

22 East Alexander VFD Budget: Blumenstein said \$44,304 had been requested.

(No changes from county manager's recommended budget.)

23 Mt. Mourne VFD Budget: Blumenstein said that in 2004-05, the tax rate was reduced from 3.5 to 3 cents at the request of the Mt. Mourne fire officials. She said the VFD had now requested for the 2005-06 rate to be returned to the former amount (3.5¢).

Williams said the VFD wanted to put the extra money in its future projects (reserve) account.

CONSENSUS of the board to allow the increase from 3¢ to 3.5¢.

24 Shepherds VFD Budget: Blumenstein said the Shepherds VFD had requested a 5 to 6¢ tax increase; however, it was recommended for the rate to remain at 5¢. She said the difference between what the five and six cent rate would generate was little less than \$100,000.

CONSENSUS of the board to leave the tax rate at 5¢.

36 Parks Reserve Fund: CONSENSUS of the board to allow the finance director to transfer \$45,000 for a park master plan for the North Iredell Park Project Fund and to amend the budget ordinance.

40 Capital Project Fund: CONSENSUS of the board to allow the finance director to include in the 2005-06 budget (1) the renovations of the Inspections/Code Enforcement Facility (2) the EMS Statesville Main Base and (3) the EMS Mooresville base.

52 Solid Waste: Blumenstein said the Solid Waste Director was recommending for the fee schedule to include a \$6 charge for a one-half, or greater, pickup load of demolition or commercial material and a \$3 charge for a smaller loads. She said there would also be a revision to the fees for tires. Blumenstein said passenger tires would cost \$3.00, and tractor tires would be \$6.00.

Commissioner Norman asked about the new West Iredell Transfer Station.

Mashburn said the station would begin operations in 05-06.

(No changes from the county manager's recommended budget.)

700 Mitchell Community College: Mr. Norman reminded the board members about the college's request for an additional \$100,000 for operating expenses associated with the new workforce development building.

Additional Jail Space Needs: Commissioner Johnson mentioned that even though the satellite jail would alleviate some of the overcrowding, the county would have to provide additional space in the near future.

Update on Ad Valorem Tax Valuation: Blumenstein updated the board on the newest valuation estimates. She said that after additional appropriations were made to the schools, and Statesville airport deductions were made, along with adding unused but proposed 05-06 funding (mapping software & leases for sheriff’s department), the county would have an additional \$233,245.

CONSENSUS of the board to make the following appropriations:

- \$50,000 to Mitchell College
- \$50,000 to the county’s contingency fund
- \$25,000 to the Greater Statesville Development Corporation for “seed funds associated with assistance for existing industry.” (Actual request was for \$50,000. The remaining \$25,000 will be in the 06-07 budget.)
- \$108,245 to reduce the county’s appropriated fund balance
(Note: Additional appropriations were made towards the end of the meeting.)
- \$233,245

Carolina Land & Lakes: Commissioner Williams said the Carolina Land and Lakes agency was providing many valuable services with no Iredell County funding. He recommended that the agency receive funding.

CONSENSUS of the board to fund Carolina Land & Lakes \$2,000.

Reclassification Study: Human Resources Director Carolyn Harris said the MAPS Group had visited the departments and performed desk audits to have a better understanding of the job responsibilities of some positions. She said a survey was then sent to comparable counties. Harris said a recommendation was given on the complexity of the job along with the amount of supervision needed, and other comparison factors. She said the majority of the recommended reclassifications were based upon the MAPS study that cost \$8,000.

Robertson asked why the sanitarians were not evaluated.

Harris said the state evaluated them.

Mashburn said they had been reviewed three times in the past five years.

The following positions were approved for reclassifications as of July 1.

	Current Classification	Number Emps	Current Grade	New Classification	New Grade
415 Administration	Administrative Assistant I	1	63	Executive Assistant	64
435 Tax Administration - Mapping	GIS Administrator	1	74	GIS Administrator	76
	GIS Analyst	1	68	GIS Analyst	71
	GIS Specialist	1	67	GIS Specialist	68
	GIS Mapping Tech	1	65	GIS Mapping Tech	64
	GIS Mapping Tech	1	65	Sr GIS Mapping Tech	66
	Mapping Tech	1	62	Processing Assistant V	61
445 Information Systems Mgm	IT Administrator	1	75	IT Administrator	76
	IT Consultant	1	72	Webmaster	72
	IT Consultant	1	72	PC Specialist	71
536 ECOM	ECOM Director	1	72	ECOM Director	73
	TC I	14	61	TC I	62
	TC II	4	63	TC II	65

542	EMS	EMS Training Officer	1	69	EMS Training Officer	70
		EMS Assist Shift Coordinator	3	67	EMS Assist Training Coord	68
		EMT I	1	60	EMT I	61
		EMT II	3	62	EMT II	63
		4-1/2% in-range increase to employees serving as FTO	9			
546	Emergency Management	Deputy EM Coordinator	1	65	Deputy EM Coordinator	70
		Dir of Emergency Services/EM	1	80	Assistant County Manager	85
560	Planning & Code Enf	GIS Addressing Tech	1	65	GIS Addressing Tech	63
		GIS Addressing Tech	1	65	Sr Addressing Technician	66
655	Recreation	Recreation Director	1	74	Parks & Recreation Director	76
750	Solid Waste	Administrative Manager	1	69	Administrative Officer II	70
		Field Sanitation Supervisor	1	69	Landfill Superintendent	70
		Transfer Station Supervisor	1	63	Transfer Station Supervisor	65
430	Finance	Director of Finance & Administrative Services	1	84	Deputy County Manager	87

Salary Adjustments: Blumenstein said that in the 05-06 budget, a total of \$830,140 had been included for across-the-board increases, merit increases, and step increases for the employees. She said all employees would be eligible for a 1.5% across-the-board increase. In regards to the merits, she said they would be awarded at either 1% or 2% based on performance (rating scale of standard or 0 = no merit; a 1 would be a 1% merit and 2 would equal a 2% merit). Blumenstein said she calculated the total merit amount needed by estimating 80% of the employees would receive the 2% and the other 20% would receive 1%.

Blumenstein said \$66,825 was included in the budget to implement steps into the payroll system. She said this would eliminate the staff from having to manually keypunch a step increase for each employee when needed. She said currently, there was a minimum, a mid-point, and a maximum pay range compared to the new system, that would use steps with a one-half percent increase between each one.

Employees Health Insurance: Blumenstein said no enhancements were made this year in the health benefits package except the NCACC had increased the lifetime benefit maximum from \$5 million to unlimited. Mrs. Blumenstein said the county mostly made changes in the coverage last year when the individual deductible was raised from \$500 to \$1,000. She said the family deductible was raised to \$3,000.

(8:05 P.M. Commissioner Robertson left the meeting for another engagement.)

560 Planning & Enforcement: (No changes from manager's recommended budget.)

575 Cooperative Extension: (No changes from the manager's recommended budget.)

655 Parks & Recreation: (No changes from the manager's recommended budget.)

Vance House Museum: Commissioner Johnson requested that funding be approved for the Vance House Museum.

CONSENSUS of the board to fund the Vance House \$2,500.

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:15 p.m., Vice Chairman Williams adjourned the budget meeting.

Approved: _____

Clerk to the Board