

**RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RICHMOND COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
REGULAR MID-MONTH MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2008, 12:00 NOON**

The Richmond County Board of Commissioners met for the Regular Mid-Month Meeting at 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, May 20, 2008 with the following Commissioners present: Chairman Kenneth R. Robinette; Vice-Chairman John B. Garner; Commissioners Pamela N. Dillman, Jimmy L. Maske, J. C. Watkins, and Paul Wilson, Jr.

Commissioner Thad Ussery was absent due to illness.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robinette at 12:00 Noon.

ITEM NO. 1 – INVOCATION

The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Jimmy L. Maske.

ITEM NO. 2 – APPROVAL OF AGENDA

By a motion of Commissioner Garner, seconded by Commissioner Wilson and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Agenda as presented.

ITEM NO. 3 – STAFF REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT RICK SAGO

Director of Development Rick Sago reported to the Board on prospects that he has recently met with, one of which plans a return visit. Mr. Sago also mentioned a meeting to be sponsored by Congressman Hayes concerning business opportunities with the military through BRAC, and he encouraged everyone to attend.

ITEM NO. 4 – APPEARANCE BY HUMANE SOCIETY OF RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS – MS. TAMMY BRIGMAN, CHAIRMAN

Ms. Tammy Brigman appeared before the Board in behalf of the Humane Society Board of Directors to request an additional \$40,000.00 to cover costs to operate the shelter for May and June in the current fiscal year 2007-2008.

Chairman Robinette questioned the reason for the budget overrun. Ms. Brigman advised that the cost of operations had been underestimated, along with increasing numbers of animals admitted to the shelter; the number of employees has increased; minimum wage has increased; and donations have decreased. Chairman Robinette asked the number of employees, and Ms. Brigman advised that there are 6 full-time, and including part-time people, there are always 9 to 10 employees. Chairman Robinette suggested that expenses should be cut. Ms. Brigman noted that hours of operation have been reduced, and she added that operation of the crematory had not been profitable as they had hoped.

Commissioner Dillman recommended advertising to other counties that the crematory service is available.

Commissioner Wilson asked if animals are accepted from other counties for cremation, and Ms. Brigman advised that animals are accepted and charged a fee beginning at \$70.00, based on weight.

County Manager Haynes recapped the conversations and the meeting that he had with Humane Society Director Candy Bacon on February 8 regarding the budget shortfall. Mr. Haynes reported that at that time there was an equivalent of 9.5 full time employees, and he had recommended cutting personnel to save on costs. Mr. Haynes stated that shelter operating expenses have been running \$29,000.00 per month with monthly revenues of only \$13,000.00. Mr. Haynes clarified that the Humane Society is a separate operation from the shelter, and this has helped to offset some of the cost overruns with the funds for the two operations being combined. Mr. Haynes reported that more than 5,000 animals came through the shelter during 2006-2007. In further discussion of statistics, County Manager Haynes advised that the City of Hamlet brought in 150 animals to the shelter, and the City of Rockingham brought in 142 animals. Mr. Haynes added that more money is needed from the cities, but the cities feel that this is a county service that should be provided. Both Hamlet and Rockingham are enforcing their own ordinances and leash laws. In further discussion of where the animals are coming from, Mr. Haynes noted that animals are coming from other counties and many are dropped off at night.

In summation, Mr. Haynes stated that he did not see an immediate solution to the problem; the County can simply not afford to continue to fund the shelter operation at the current rate of increase.

Commissioner Garner stated that this is a complex issue, and volunteer help is needed through the Humane Society for the services to survive. Commissioner Garner also noted that this is an issue of the taxpayers, as any additional funds would have to come from taxpayers' pockets. Commissioner Garner stated taxpayers need to be aware that it may reach the point that owning a pet may come with a cost.

Ms. Brigman commented that there has been a joint effort on the part of the County and the Humane Society, but the increasing costs and volumes could not have been foreseen. Ms. Brigman went on to state that the Humane Society budget request for the coming year had been doubled so as to avoid cost overruns in the coming year. In further discussion of intake numbers, Ms. Brigman advised that during the first year of shelter operations, the intake number was 2,022; last year the intake was 4,823; and thus far the current year intake is 3,537.

Commissioner Watkins commented on whether the County is legally or morally obligated to provide this service as a county department. County Manager Haynes confirmed that this is not a required service that the County must operate as a department.

Commissioner Maske asked the program cost last year, and County Manager Haynes advised that the cost for the year was \$146,000.00, with Rockingham having contributed \$7,500.00 and Hamlet \$3,500.00. Mr. Haynes noted that Hamlet had just begun to contribute funds in the last two years, and Rockingham had decreased their level of funding from \$12,000.00 to \$7,500.00 whenever the City began their own animal control program.

Ms. Brigman expressed appreciation for the County's support and for assistance from other local entities to help defray the cost of operating the animal shelter, and she noted that in-kind donations of approximately \$15,000.00 have been provided.

Commissioner Dillman suggested refinancing the shelter building and perhaps a line of credit, but Ms. Brigman stated that this is not an option at this time.

ITEM NO. 5 – CONSIDERATION OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVISIONS TO REFLECT DECREASE IN STATE FUNDING FOR HEALTH PROMOTION/RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM

By a motion of Commissioner Maske, seconded by Commissioner Dillman and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following Health Department Budget Revision to reflect a decrease in state funding:

Revenue:

Health Promotion/Risk Reduction

115150-333007	Decrease	(\$601.00)
----------------------	-----------------	-------------------

Expenditures:

Health Promotion/Risk Reduction

Salaries: Regular	115150-4100	Decrease	(\$301.00)
FICA	115150-4110	Decrease	(\$300.00)

ITEM NO. 6 – CONSIDERATION OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVISION TO APPROPRIATE ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDS FOR CANCER PROGRAM

By a motion of Commissioner Dillman, seconded by Commissioner Watkins and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following Budget Revision to appropriate additional state funds for the Cancer Program:

Revenue:

Cancer Program	115180-333104	Increase by	\$4,366.00
-----------------------	----------------------	--------------------	-------------------

Expenditures:

Cancer Program

115180-4100	Salaries: Regular	Increase by	\$3,000.00
115180-4110	FICA	Increase by	<u>\$1,366.00</u>
			\$4,366.00

ITEM NO. 7 – CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 1513 THAT WOULD SHIFT TRANSPORTATION COSTS FORMERLY PAID BY THE STATE TO COUNTIES

County Manager Haynes advised the Board that at this point the issue of asking counties to help fund the cost of secondary road improvements is speculative, but some counties have adopted Resolutions opposing efforts to shift this burden to counties.

By a motion of Commissioner Maske, seconded by Commissioner Dillman and unanimously carried, the Board adopted the following Resolution Opposing HB 1513:

**RESOLUTION
IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1513
RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

WHEREAS, the North Carolina General Assembly passed House Bill 1513 during the 2007 session; and

WHEREAS, HB 1513 allows counties to "voluntarily" participate in the costs of transportation projects; and

WHEREAS, since 1931 the State of North Carolina has had a model system of constructing, improving and maintaining interstate, primary, and secondary roads; and

WHEREAS, the 21st Century Transportation Committee and the Transportation Oversight Committee are considering diverting all Secondary Road Program funding to the Primary Road Program; and

WHEREAS, diverting Secondary Road Program funding will leave no funding to pave and improve secondary roads; and

WHEREAS, some county officials have been invited to participate in the discussion regarding this transfer with certain state officials and committees.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF RICHMOND COUNTY THAT:

1. It strongly opposes the transfer of Secondary Road Program funding to the Primary Road Program or any other program that will reduce funding for secondary road construction, improvement, and maintenance.
2. It strongly opposes any efforts by the General Assembly or NCDOT to shift any transportation costs formerly paid by the State to counties.
3. It strongly opposes any efforts by the General Assembly to appropriate local revenues whether property tax, sales tax, or any other local revenue for State transportation programs or any other State programs.
4. It strongly urges all counties to be fully aware and concerned that any invitation to participate in discussions of transportation needs may lead to an indirect appropriation of local funds.
5. It strongly urges all counties to contact the N. C. Association of County Commissioners and direct it to oppose any efforts to transfer the funding of any State programs to counties.
6. That a copy of this resolution be sent to each county in the State.
7. That copies of this resolution are sent to Richmond County's Legislative delegation in the N. C. General Assembly along with each and every Commissioner's heartfelt concern about the transfer of this and future state costs to counties.

Adopted this the 20th day of May, 2008.

ITEM NO. 8 – CONSIDERATION OF BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR AIRPORT FUEL SALES

By a motion of Commissioner Garner and seconded by Commissioner Wilson, the Board approved the following Budget Amendment for the purchase of additional fuel at the airport. Commissioner Watkins confirmed that the County would profit from the sale of this additional fuel. Director of Community Services B. K. Jones advised that airport fuel sales have exceeded expectations, and the additional fuel purchased would be sold at a profit to the County. The motion carried unanimously.

Expenditures:

114530-4212	Auto: Gas & Oil	Increase by	\$45,000.00
--------------------	----------------------------	--------------------	--------------------

Revenues:

114530-34051	Airport Revenue	Increase by	\$45,000.00
---------------------	------------------------	--------------------	--------------------

ITEM NO. 9 – CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW DATES TO HEAR TAX APPEALS

Tax Administrator Butch Greene requested that the Board set two additional dates for Equalization and Review Meetings in late May or in early June to hear 33 more tax appeals that have been filed. County Manager Haynes added that he did not foresee that any of the appeals would have an impact on the proposed budget.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Maske to set Equalization and Review Meetings for 1:00 P.M. on June 2 and on June 17. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson and unanimously carried to advertise the two E&R Meetings for June 2 and June 17, 2008.

ITEM NO. 10 – REVIEW OF PUBLIC APPEARANCE POLICY FOR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS

Chairman Robinette recommended that the Board consider changes in the Public Appearance Policy and in the Agenda format. Chairman Robinette suggested that an earlier deadline for sign up to appear during the Open Forum portion of the meeting be imposed so that individuals wishing to appear be required to sign up no later than the Friday preceding the Monday Regular Meeting.

Chairman Robinette also recommended that the "Other Business" item at the end of the Agenda be eliminated. Chairman Robinette felt that this item is sometimes used to add last-minute Agenda items that staff nor Board members have had adequate time or information for which to prepare.

County Manager Haynes acknowledged that items have been added under the "Other Business" portion of the Agenda to include items that may have come in after the Agenda deadline, and he agreed that this is not fair to the Board to ask for a decision on items for which they have not been adequately prepared.

Chairman Robinette re-stated the recommended changes – implementation of a Friday at 5:00 P.M. deadline prior to first Monday of the month Regular monthly meeting for appearances during the Open Forum portion at the beginning of the meeting. And, no last-minute add-on items would appear on the Agenda under “Other Business.” Chairman Robinette commented that at the end of the meeting Board members may have announcements of interest to the public, but other than that, it would not be fair to the public, staff, nor the Board members to make last-minute changes once the Agenda has been completed and made public.

Commissioner Watkins stressed the importance of allowing citizens the opportunity to appear on the Agenda.

County Manager Haynes explained that timing is the key to Agenda preparation and deadlines so as to allow time for staff to provide the Board with the necessary background information to make a decision.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Maske to approve the amendment to the Public Appearance Policy to include a Friday deadline prior the first Monday Regular Meeting and to eliminate the “Other Business” portion of the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watkins and unanimously carried.

ITEM NO. 11 – DISCUSSION OF PARKING REGULATIONS

County Manager Haynes advised the Board that some downtown businesses have expressed concern that use of private parking lots would be abused during construction of the judicial center. Mr. Haynes noted that state law does not allow a parking lot or business owner to tow away vehicles without liability, but the Board is being asked to approach our Legislators to include Richmond County in special legislation along with several other counties that have parking regulations that would release parking lot owners from liability in towing illegally parked vehicles. The County Manager noted that the deadline for introduction of local bills in the Legislature is the next day, May 21.

County Attorney Futrell advised that this is a short statute and that if Richmond County becomes a part of the legislation, regulations would be applied countywide. Mr. Futrell further noted that Rockingham merchants brought up this concern about private parking during construction and actually should have expressed their concerns to the City of Rockingham. Mr. Futrell added that the legislation would not apply to county parking lots, but to privately owned lots.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Watkins to notify Richmond County's legislative delegation of the Board's request for them to submit a local bill to include Richmond County in parking lot regulations and that it be reserved for amendment later on if needed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Garner. Chairman Robinette felt that the City of Rockingham would be in support of this legislation. The motion carried unanimously to make the request to Legislators.

**ITEM NO. 12 – ADJOURNMENT TO CONVENE AS BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
AND REVIEW AT 1:00 P.M.**

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 P.M. by a motion of Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Commissioner Maske and unanimously carried.

Marian S. Savage, CMC
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners