

**RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
RICHMOND COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
REGULAR MID-MONTH MEETING  
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2008, 12:00 NOON**

The Richmond County Board of Commissioners met for the Regular Mid-Month Noon Meeting on Tuesday, June 17, 2008 with the following present: Chairman Kenneth R. Robinette; Vice-Chairman John B. Garner; Commissioners Pamela N. Dillman, Jimmy L. Maske, Thad Ussery, J. C. Watkins, and Paul Wilson, Jr.

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 Watkins, seconded by Commissioner Garner and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Agenda as presented.

**ITEM NO. 3 – PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE CITIZEN COMMENTS ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FY 2008-2009**

The public hearing to receive citizen comments on the proposed FY 2008-2009 Budget was declared open by Chairman Robinette at 12:05 P.M.

There were no speakers, and the public hearing was closed by Chairman Robinette.

**ITEM NO. 4 – CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST BY HUMANE SOCIETY OF RICHMOND COUNTY FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO COVER OPERATING EXPENSES IN FY 2007-2008 BUDGET**

Ms. Tammy Brigman, Chairman of the Humane Society Board of Directors, appeared before the Board to provide an update of the Humane Society's financial status. Ms. Brigman advised that \$28,000.00 is owed on the equity line, but recently a \$20,000.00 anonymous donation was received. Therefore, the Humane Society request for the Board of Commissioners to grant an additional \$40,000.00 to cover operating expenses during the current year budget is now reduced to \$20,000.00 needed to meet expenses in the current budget year. Ms. Brigman stated that the Humane Society Board is satisfied with the level of funding recommended in the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year, and she assured the Board of Commissioners that they plan to change operations so as to work within the funds budgeted.

County Manager Haynes reiterated to the Board that the Humane Society is now requesting an additional \$20,000.00 in the current year budget rather than the initial request for an additional \$40,000.00.

Commissioner Dillman recommended that the Humane Society charge fees for services that may be rendered to other counties.

Ms. Brigman corrected the fees that she had previously provided to the Board for crematory services, advising that \$35.00 is the minimum fee. Ms. Brigman reported that 43 dogs have been adopted during May, and 510 animals had been admitted to the shelter. Ms. Brigman cited the problem that many animals are left at the shelter after hours.

Commissioner Ussery asked how many animals come into the shelter from other counties, and Ms. Brigman estimated at least 10 to 20 per month. Commissioner Ussery suggested that a Commission representative should serve on the Humane Society Board. Ms. Brigman advised that there are plans to restructure the board, and they would welcome a Commission representative as well as municipal representatives.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Garner to grant an additional \$20,000.00 appropriation to cover Humane Society operating expenses during the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson. Commissioner Maske confirmed that the additional appropriation would be made from Fund Balance, and he reaffirmed that the total budget appropriation recommended for FY 2008-2009 is \$166,000.00. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Robinette thanked Ms. Brigman for her efforts and for the changes that the Humane Society plans to make in their operations.

#### **ITEM NO. 5 – REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT RICK SAGO**

Director of Development Rick Sago advised the Board that he had attended a BRAC meeting the previous week, and he provided reports from the meeting. Mr. Sago advised that the BRAC meeting sponsored by Congressman Hayes had been informative. It was noted that plans are for \$2.2 billion in construction at Fort Bragg during the next two years. Mr. Sago assured that he will continue to attend the meetings and remain informed on BRAC plans for the region.

Mr. Sago reported that the loan closing for the shell building project was held on June 9, and the CDBG closing should be during the first week in July.

Mr. Sago advised that he continues to hear concerns about retail in Richmond County, and he has made contact with representatives of K&W about locating in Richmond County. However, he was told that the company is not expanding nor planning new locations at this time.

In further discussion of retail space, Mr. Sago noted that Blue Ridge Capital from Atlanta has purchased the old Lowe's shopping center, and he provided detailed demographic information compiled by this company. Mr. Sago pointed out that restaurants and other retail establishments base their location decisions on income and population.

Mr. Sago completed his report, reminding the Board what a successful year it has been with two major industry announcements in 2007-2008: Progress Energy and SRB.

Commissioner Dillman asked if surrounding counties have realized any new business locations as a result of BRAC. Mr. Sago did not know of any at this time, and he noted that Greenfield is the marketing company for BRAC.

Commissioner Watkins inquired about a directory of minority owned businesses. Mr. Sago did not know of a local listing of such businesses, but he knew of a state office that maintains these listings.

Chairman Robinette thanked Mr. Sago for his informative report, and he pointed out that while there are buildings available in Richmond County, businesses naturally locate where they can make money, based on demographics.

Commissioner Dillman noted that Anson County had recently rented a portion of the former Wal Mart shopping center to Tractor Supply.

There was further discussion of vacant buildings and shopping center properties, and Mr. Sago remarked that owners of buildings and shopping centers seem to hire their own marketing firms, and that this information is therefore readily accessible through the internet. Commissioner Garner concurred, and he acknowledged that jobs are the key to providing the disposable income needed to support retail. Commissioner Garner stated that retail depends on what people have left after necessities.

**ITEM NO. 6 - REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT TO ACCOUNT FOR ROOM OCCUPANCY TAXES IN EXCESS OF AMOUNT BUDGETED IN FY 2007-2008**

By a motion of Commissioner Maske, seconded by Commissioner Garner and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following Budget Amendment to appropriate Room Occupancy Taxes collected in excess of the amount budgeted in FY 2007-2008 for the Tourism Development Authority:

**Expenditures:**

**116170-6170            Occupancy Tax Collected            Increase by \$70,000.00**

**Revenues:**

**116170-312005    Tourism Development Authority    Increase by \$70,000.00**

**ITEM NO. 7 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT TO TRANSFER UP TO \$80,000.00 FROM GENERAL FUND TO WATER & SEWER FUND**

A motion was offered by Commissioner Watkins and seconded by Commissioner Wilson to approve a Budget Amendment to transfer \$80,000.00 from General Fund to the Water and Sewer Fund for water tank maintenance. Commissioner Ussery confirmed that this would be a one-time amendment. Commissioner Maske confirmed that these funds were not a loan that had to be paid back to the General Fund. The motion carried unanimously to approve the following Budget Amendment:

**Expenditures:**

**119800-8169            Transfer to Water & Sewer Fund            Increase by \$80,000.00**  
**647100-4334            Maint. & Repair-Water Tanks & Lines    Increase by \$80,000.00**

**Revenues:**

**119900-399001    Approp. Undesignated Fund Balance    Increase by \$80,000.00**  
**617110-392001    Transfer from General Fund            Increase by \$80,000.00**

**ITEM NO. 8 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR TRANSFER OF LOCAL APPROPRIATIONS AMONG BUDGETS**

By a motion of Commissioner Ussery, seconded by Commissioner Dillman and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following Health Department Budget Amendments to transfer local appropriations from one budget to others, with no additional funding requested:

Local Health:

Salaries: Regular	115110-4100	Decrease	(\$23,085.00)
FICA	115110-4110	Decrease	<u>(\$10,000.00)</u>
			(\$33,085.00)

AIDS State:

Salaries: Regular	115120-4100	Increase	\$ 6,100.00
FICA	115120-4110	Increase	1,898.50
Postage	115120-4305	Increase	<u>86.60</u>
			\$ 8,085.00

Dental:

Salaries: Regular	115199-4100	Increase	\$ 8,000.00
FICA	115199-4110	Increase	<u>2,000.00</u>
			\$10,000.00

CAP:

Salaries: Regular	115211-4100	Increase	\$ 7,500.00
FICA	115211-4110	Increase	2,744.90
Medical Supplies	115211-4220	Increase	<u>4,755.10</u>
			\$15,000.00

Revenue:

Immunization Action Plan:			
Insurance Reimbursement	115193-333141	Increase	\$10,500.00

Expenses:

Immunization Action Plan:			
Salaries: Regular	115193-4100	Increase	\$ 8,100.00
FICA	115193-4110	Increase	<u>2,400.00</u>
			\$10,500.00

**ITEM NO. 9 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF YEAR-END GENERAL FUND BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS AS SUBMITTED BY THE FINANCE OFFICER**

A motion was offered by Commissioner Maske and seconded by Commissioner Wilson to approve the following list of year-end budget amendments prepared by the Finance Officer as necessary to close FY 2007-2008. Commissioner Garner questioned a DSS Budget Amendment of \$26,000.00 for the Day Care Program. The motion carried unanimously to approve the following Budget Amendments:

**ITEM NO. 10 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENTS FOR NORTHSIDE 1 AND NORTHSIDE 2 FIRE DISTRICTS**

By a motion of Commissioner Dillman, seconded by Commissioner Garner and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following Budget Amendments to distribute taxes collected for Northside 1 and Northside 2 Fire Districts that were over and above the amount anticipated:

**Expenditures:**

<b>564340-9150</b>	<b>Northside #1 Fire District</b>	<b>Increase by \$7,000.00</b>
<b>574340-9150</b>	<b>Northside #2 Fire District</b>	<b>Increase by \$2,200.00</b>

**Revenues:**

<b>564340-311006</b>	<b>Vehicle Tax Collections</b>	<b>Increase by \$7,000.00</b>
<b>57430-311019</b>	<b>Delinquent Taxes</b>	<b>Increase by \$1,100.00</b>
<b>57430-311021</b>	<b>Delinquent Vehicle Taxes</b>	<b>Increase by \$1,100.00</b>

**ITEM NO. 11 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING FIRE-FEE TAX ASSESSMENT FOR FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES ON LAND AND STRUCTURES IN RESPONSE AREAS ADJACENT TO HOFFMAN**

County Manager Haynes requested Board approval of a Resolution to establish a fire fee district for fire protection in areas outside the corporate limits of the Town of Hoffman. Mr. Haynes explained that the Resolution would establish a fire fee district similar to those that have been established in areas outside the corporate limits of Hamlet, Ellerbe, and Rockingham.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Ussery and seconded by Commissioner Watkins to adopt the following Resolution Establishing a Fire Fee Tax Assessment for Fire Protection Services on Land and Structures in Response Areas Adjacent to Hoffman. Commissioner Ussery inquired about revenue expected to be generated from the fee, and County Manager Haynes advised that \$20,000.00 is what the fire department hoped to generate, and this area should match the amount. Commissioner Maske asked if the fees collected would go into the General Fund. County Manager Haynes advised that the fees would be treated separately for audit purposes. The motion carried unanimously to approve the following Resolution:

**ITEM NO. 12 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES FOR TOWN OF ELLERBE**

County Manager Haynes advised the Board that this would be the third renewal of the Interlocal Agreement between Richmond County Sheriff's Department and the Town of Ellerbe for Law Enforcement Services. Mr. Haynes advised that the cost reflects only the County's cost of providing the service, and Ellerbe has already approved and signed the agreement. The Board is now asked to authorize the Chairman to execute the contract in behalf of the County.

By a motion of Commissioner Dillman, seconded by Commissioner Watkins and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following Interlocal Agreement for Law Enforcement Services for the Town of Ellerbe:

**ITEM NO. 13 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF REGULAR MID-MONTH MEETING OF MAY 20, 2008 AS SUBMITTED BY THE CLERK**

By a motion of Commissioner Watkins, seconded by Commissioner Wilson and unanimously carried, the Board approved the minutes of the Regular Mid-Month Meeting of May 20, 2008 as submitted by the Clerk.

**ITEM NO. 14 – REQUEST FOR BOARD APPROVAL TO OFFICIALLY NAME ROCKINGHAM NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY IN MEMORY OF FIRST SERGEANT WALTER ERSKINE BOSTICK**

By a motion of Commissioner Maske, seconded by Commissioner Watkins and unanimously carried, the Board endorsed the request to name the Rockingham National Guard Armory in memory of First Sergeant Walter Erskine Bostick.

**ITEM NO. 15 – BUDGET DISCUSSION AND ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR FY 2008-2009 AS SUBMITTED BY FINANCE OFFICER**

County Manager Haynes referenced the proposed Budget Ordinance provided to the Board and offered to answer questions or discuss any specific items in the budget that the Board may have.

Commissioner Maske referred to \$250,000.00 that had been set aside for capital projects as discussed during the Board's Retreat. Commissioner Maske offered a motion that this \$250,000.00 could remain in Fund Balance but not be designated so that the tax rate could be reduced to .82 cent per \$100.00 of valuation. The motion to set the tax rate at .82 center per \$100.00 was seconded by Commissioner Wilson.

Chairman Robinette confirmed that these funds would still be available and could be designated by the Board at any time.

Commissioner Ussery then offered a substitute motion to set the tax rate at the revenue neutral rate of .81 cent per \$100.00 with the County Manager authorized to cut \$500,000.00 from the budget in order to reduce the tax rate from the .83 cent recommended rate to .81 cent. Commissioner Ussery specified that he offered this motion based on not interfering with the basic budget and county operations and not affecting employees and staff. Commissioner Ussery stated that .81 cent per \$100.00 would be the revenue-neutral rate based on Revaluation numbers.

County Manager Haynes confirmed that it would be feasible to set the tax rate at .81 cent and that he could reduce the budget by \$500,000.00.

The substitute motion was seconded by Commissioner Garner.

Commissioner Watkins stated that he still would advocate the \$250,000.00 Capital Improvement Fund that the Board had agreed upon at the Retreat, but he felt comfortable that these funds could still be available and the tax rate still be reduced. Commissioner Watkins agreed with the substitute motion to set the tax rate at .81 cent as long as the capital funds would still be available if needed.

County Manager Haynes advised that the Board's way of saving money has been through Fund Balance, and that the Capital Reserve would allow \$250,000.00 to be set aside in Fund Balance for future capital needs, and that these funds would stay there and not be categorized.

Commissioner Maske and Chairman Robinette concurred that the County budget is in sound financial condition with a 20% Fund Balance at this time.

Commissioner Watkins confirmed with the County Manager that the Capital Reserve Fund can be changed later by the Board if need be.

Commissioner Maske asked County Manager Haynes if he could foresee the necessity for a tax increase next year. County Manager Haynes stated that he did not foresee the need for a tax increase next year, and he went on to state that 2011-2012 may be the earliest year that the Progress Energy expansion would increase the County tax base. Commissioner Ussery added that the County should anticipate continuing savings in Medicaid.

County Manager Haynes felt that perhaps the decline in sales tax revenues has already reached its lowest point.

Commissioner Garner noted that Fund Balance belongs to the taxpayers, and he emphasized that the Board has done a good job of looking after these funds. Commissioner Garner went on to state that a lot depends on timing and what is required as to whether tax increases are needed. During this slow economy, Commissioner Garner emphasized what a big help a reduction in taxes would be to the taxpayers. Commissioner Garner stressed that reducing the tax rate is doing what is best for the taxpayers.

Commissioner Dillman concurred that Commissioner Ussery's recommendation to reduce the tax rate to .81 cent is the best thing to do for the taxpayers.

The motion to set the FY 2008-2009 tax rate at the revenue neutral rate of .81 cent carried unanimously.

County Manager Haynes then pointed out the numbers in the proposed Budget Ordinance that would be affected by the reduction in the tax rate to .81 cent.

A motion was then offered by Commissioner Watkins to adopt the Budget Ordinance with the necessary changes to be reflected. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ussery and unanimously carried to adopt the FY 2008-2009 Budget Ordinance as follows:

Chairman Robinette thanked County Manager Haynes and staff for all of the work involved in the budget process.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Watkins to accept the adjusted total for the FY 2008-2009 Budget at \$47,836,890.00. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ussery and unanimously carried.

**ITEM NO. 16 - ADJOURNMENT TO CONVENE AS BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW**

There being no further business for discussion, a motion was offered by Commissioner Dillman, seconded by Commissioner Wilson and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 1:00 P.M. to be followed by a Board of Equalization and Review Meeting.

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