

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
APRIL 27, 2015**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a budget work session on Monday, April 27, 2015 in the Community Room at the Public Safety Building.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joseph S. Winslow, Jr., Chairman
Cecil Perry, Vice-Chairman
Jeff Dixon
Lloyd E. Griffin, III
Dr. William R. Sterritt
Frankie Meads
Bettie Parker

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rodney Bunch, County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Sheri Small, Finance Officer.
Lynn Scott, Assistant Clerk to the Board

The work session was called to order at 9:00 AM by Chairman Joe Winslow who welcomed School Board Chairman Barry Overman and Superintendent Linwood Williams.

1. BUDGET WORK SESSION

Chairman Winslow called on Linwood Williams, Superintendent of Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools, to present the School System's proposed budget for 2015-16. School Board Chairman Barry Overman passed out a summary of the School System's budget request and he and Mr. Williams answered questions from the Board. The request for funding from the County is \$11,022,541 for Current Expense and \$2,707,000 for Capital Outlay, which includes debt service for activity buses.

The Board took a brief recess and reconvened at 10:15 AM.

Melissa Stokely, Director of Social Services stated that after Friday's meeting with disgruntled Department of Social Services Employees regarding their pay, she was directed to provide figures that would put her employees on the correct competitive step in their pay grades, which have been frozen since 2007. She passed out information she prepared. She said she added the starting salaries in Camden and Currituck County as well, because in most cases even after putting employees at their correct steps, they were still less than the starting salaries in both those counties. She said she estimated it will cost \$151,120 to bring her employees up to their correct pay scales, based on their years of service. She estimated that she would be reimbursed approximately half of that total in State and Federal Funding. The Board discussed the handout and asked questions.

Finance Director Sheri Small explained that the Career Development Plan was for all County employees and the majority of County employees have been frozen for many years. She said if the Board decides to bring every employee up to where they should be and reinstate the Career Development Plan it will fix a lot of the problems, however the salary studies performed in the past show that our starting salaries are not competitive with our neighboring counties.

DSS staff thanked the County Manager and the commissioners who came to Social Services immediately on Friday to help acknowledge their problem. Chairman Winslow thanked the DSS employees for coming and asked them to be patient because this cannot be solved overnight. Chairman Winslow said this issue has gone on for too long and the employees need to be #1 on their list and treated fairly.

County Manager Bunch stated that he and staff need direction from the Board on how to move forward with salaries and benefits for the budget. He noted that he and Chairman Winslow met with Donna Nixon, Pierce Group Benefits and representatives from Albemarle Regional Health Services and Perquimans County to discuss our health insurance plan and premium rates for 2015-16. He shared a spread sheet that showed the current plan and an alternate plan that was

chosen by the group. The alternate plan reflects a reduction in benefits. Mr. Bunch explained that the \$561.13 premium that was set at the beginning of the 2014-15 fiscal year was not sufficient to pay claims and that Pasquotank County had to add approximately \$500,000 to the total premiums paid during the fiscal year. This equates to a \$723.96 premium per employee. The alternate plan was designed to set a \$725.00 premium per employee for the 2015-16 fiscal year. Commissioner Sterritt said employees should be offered the opportunity to enroll in the flexible spending account. Mr. Bunch said this could be done during the opening enrollment planned for some time in May.

Jerry Newell, EMS Director, presented the budget requests for the EMS Department and Sheriff Randy Cartwright presented budget requests for the Sheriff's Department, School Resource Officers, Animal Control, Jail, and Central Communications. The Board discussed the requests and asked questions.

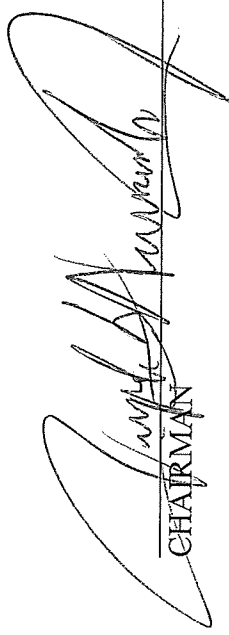
Sheriff Cartwright stated that the Sheriff's Department, as well as Central Communications and the Jail has spent a lot of time and money training deputies and other employees only to see them leave the county to go to neighboring counties to make more money. He explained that new hires come in making the same salaries as 10 year employees. Lieutenant Jackson provided data he prepared for Sheriff's Department employees that would make their pay comparable to other counties, as well as bring them up to their correct pay grades. He estimated the cost at \$173,000. Finance Officer, Sheri Small estimated adjusting the salaries for EMS employees to their correct steps would cost approximately \$130,000, but stressed she had not vetted those numbers with the EMS Director.

Sheriff Cartwright was instructed to provide cost estimates for providing video arraignment in the courthouse.

After much discussion; Staff was instructed to calculate what it would cost to provide across-the-board raises to all county employees in order to make their pay grades more competitive with surrounding counties and also to calculate the cost of bringing all employees up to their correct pay grades.

The budget work session was adjourned at 12:45 PM


 ASSISTANT CLERK TO THE BOARD


 CHAIRMAN