

HAYWOOD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**SPECIAL MEETING – MAY 31, 2011****CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Mark S. Swanger convened the regular meeting of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners at 5:30 p.m. in the Historic Courtroom at the Haywood County Historic Courthouse, Waynesville, North Carolina, with Chairman Mark S. Swanger, Vice-Chairman J.W. "Kirk" Kirkpatrick III, Commissioners Bill Upton, L. Kevin Ensley, and Michael T. Sorrells present. Staff members present were County Manager Marty Stamey, County Attorney Leon M. "Chip" Killian, III, Finance Director Julie Davis, Public Information Officer David Teague and Administrative Assistant Rebecca Morgan.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Swanger led the pledge of allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING**Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012 Budget Draft**

Marty Stamey, County Manager, explained that the proposed overall budget is \$65,280,785. Julie Davis, Finance Director, explained the calculations for the revenue neutral tax rate.

Chairman Swanger opened the public hearing. Comments are generally limited to three minutes per individual, unless the speaker is representing a group for which the comment period may be extended to five minutes.

Horace Edwards expressed his concern for the debt of Haywood County and stated that in the future, the citizens should be able to vote on the debt. Mr. Edwards suggested taking the budget as it is and add one cent to the tax rate.

Carole Larivee expressed her appreciation to the County Commissioners for their hard work and dedication. Ms. Larivee shared that she volunteers at Meals on Wheels, the Good Samaritan Clinic, and Mountain Projects, Inc. Ms. Larivee expressed that there are many in need in Haywood County and she is willing to pay more in taxes in order to help those who need help most.

Eddie Cabe expressed concerns about the rising debt of Haywood County. Mr. Cabe stated that he opposed the \$400,000 bailout for the fairgrounds. Presently a cowboy church holds its meetings at the fairgrounds. Mr. Cabe expressed that using tax dollars to fund a church is unconstitutional. Mr. Cabe stated that the dropout rate in Haywood County's school system is very high and the County's unemployment rate is 10.3 percent. Mr. Cabe urged the County to stop spending so much money.

Monroe Miller stated that on May 20, he sent a letter to Mark Teague, North Carolina's Assistant Attorney General. Mr. Miller explained that he would defer his statement until after he reads Mr. Teague's letter. Mr. Miller stated that the highlights to the proposed budget are that it is one percent less than last year's budget, the revenue from ad valorem taxes is 1.3 percent less than last year, there has been an increase in debt service principal and interest of 22 percent.

Dale McDonald, Principal of Tuscola High School, expressed that the graduation rate at Tuscola High School is 85 percent, the dropout rate is less than 3 percent, and the test scores are over 80 percent. Mr. McDonald shared that the schools have many activities, which are attended by school staff and administrator. Mr. McDonald expressed his concern for assistant principals and the need to keep them in the work force in the Haywood County school system.

Juanita Edwards expressed her support for education. Ms. Edwards urged the Commissioners to pay attention to spending money.

Debbie King expressed her belief that the Commissioners, Tax Assessor, and the Tax Appraiser have the responsibility to see that property owners get a fair and just appraisal that reflects the true market value of their property. Ms. King stated that the recent revaluation indicates that approximately half the properties in Haywood County increased in value, but nationwide there has been a decrease in property values. Ms. King stated that taxes should provide essential services, but the people should support causes that are important to them.

Patti Best stated that people do not need the government as a middleman.

Jenny Wood expressed that education is the foundation of Haywood County. Ms. Wood urged the Commissioners to reconsider the budget cuts that would affect the foundation of Haywood County.

There being no other public comment, Chairman Swanger closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Sorrells stated that through the economic crisis Haywood County is continuing to provide necessary services to its citizens. Commissioner Sorrells stated that citizens voted in favor of the school bond and the quarter-cent sales tax, which support Haywood Community College. These make up a portion of the County's debt.

Commissioner Ensley clarified a statement he made during a prior Board meeting regarding citizens requesting a reduction in their property revaluation. Commissioner Ensley stated that everyone who spoke to him received a reduction. Commissioner Ensley explained that the tax revenue is less this year than the year prior in Haywood County.

Commissioner Upton explained that the budget recommendation for the school system is \$13,971,307, a three percent decrease from last fiscal year. Commissioner Upton clarified that the County funds the school by contributing a lump sum and not by a line item that would specify how the money is spent in the school system. The school system determines how to spend the money.

Vice-Chairman Kirkpatrick stated that the cost to appraise property is approximately \$400. Haywood County has 55,000 parcels of properties so the appraisal process was completed according to state statutes. Vice-Chairman Kirkpatrick explained that the County's budget is itemized.

Commissioner Ensley clarified that rent for the use of the fairgrounds is paid for and by the cowboy church, which uses the facility.

Chairman Swanger stated that the County is not funding any church. Chairman Swanger shared that during fiscal year (FY) 2008-2009 the County's budget was \$70 million. The proposed FY budget is \$65 million.

ADJOURNMENT

The time of adjournment was 6:20 p.m. The DVD is attached by reference to the minutes.

CLERK

CHAIRMAN