

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Tuesday, June 2, 2020

9:00 A.M. Virtual Budget Work Session

**MINUTES**

Place: Commissioners' Chambers, second floor, Durham County Government  
Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, North Carolina

Present: Chair Wendy Jacobs, Vice-Chair James Hill and Commissioners Heidi Carter,  
Brenda Howerton and Ellen Reckhow

Presider: Chair Wendy Jacobs

**Discussion Items**

**Food Insecurity Position Discussion**

The Board discussed their concerns regarding the Food Insecurity Position and opened the discussion to determine if the position would be full-time and whether a fund was developed to incorporate the communities' feedback.

Commissioner Reckhow stated using an ICMA Fellow that could work with Donna Rewalt would be a great option. Chair Jacobs stated using an ICMA Fellow could be a transition into hiring a permanent full-time person into that position. She added this position was a top priority and funding would be designated.

Commissioner Howerton noted the position was originally planned to be a City-County position. Commissioner Carter added it would be great if the City could help fund the position however; it was in the County's wheelhouse and needed to be funded one way or another.

Keith Lane, Budget Director discussed the \$4.5 million of undesignated money for COVID related issues. He shared once a plan was developed and reviewed, there could be funds available that could include this position.

Donna Rewalt, Cooperative Extension Director stated there was no formal proposal pertaining to the food insecurity positions. She continued to say the person hired into the role would work on a comprehensive plan, which would include aspects of data and the supply chain, food policy and food insecurity work. Durham County's Food Policy Council was not active - which was a weakness in our system and incorporating a full-time position would help bridge the gap in our chain and also allow Durham County the opportunity to get on track with other communities.

Chair Jacobs stated that the Board was committed to fund the position.

**Directive: Staff to return to the Board on July 13<sup>th</sup> with information on demographics and analysis for the Food Insecurity position and food security for Durham County.**

## **Budget Discussion**

Keith Lane, Budget Director, presented the Board with a budget slideshow that captured the following key issues:

- The removal of all Sheriff replacement vehicles and some of the General Services replacement vehicles.
- Sheriff Birkhead request to reclassify 12 vacant Detention Officer positions include three (3) Administration Support positions and one (1) Detention Staff Sergeant.
- Increasing the of pay for Durham Public Schools employees to \$15 as well as adding an additional \$3 million to fulfill operational needs.
- Tax Relief projected revenue increase
- Audit Position
- Implement a Stormwater Utility Fund
- IT Broadband Study
- Hospitality/Restaurant Relief
- COVID Funding

Chair Jacobs references the Sheriff positions stating those 12 positions were designated specifically for the mental health pod. She added the restaurant relief was a part of the proposal to help small business needs.

Commissioner Reckhow recommended the removal of the audit position. She also proposed to consider compromising on the new vehicles, fund three (3) Administration Support positions and remove the other nine (9) positions from the Sheriff's office. Commissioner Reckhow stated the Durham Social Services last phase could be postponed, the housing relief proposals was pre-COVID and the property tax relief proposals would need further review due to families possibly suffering for unemployment.

Chair Jacobs agreed that there should be programs in place to help with property tax relief for homeowners.

Dwane Brinson, Tax Administrator presented the Board with the Tax Relief Program options which included the following:

- Elderly and Disabled Homestead Exemption
- Circuit Breakers Program
- Disabled Veteran Program

Mr. Brinson responded to questions regarding the programs, partials exemptions to farm use properties and historic properties and properties that included tax deferments.

Claudia Hager, General Manager presented the Board with highlights on the White Paper and shared an analysis regarding the fiscal impact on Housing and Voter Referendum.

Commissioner Reckhow asked if the need for the referendum went away if they limit eligibility to 30 AMI. Bryan Wardell, Senior Assistant County Attorney responded the program does not qualify for welfare relief. He added the programs a person with lower income was not eligible for welfare, so these individuals would receive assistance for tax relief.

Commissioner Howerton questioned if there were any other alternatives to help with property tax relief. Mr. Brinson stated the County could delay collections however; interest would still accrue. He added interest must be collected due to no local authority to waive the tax/interest. Mr. Brinson shared additional fees that could be waived.

Attorney Wardell responded to questions regarding foreclosure relief to residents; adding funds could come from the CARES Act funding, nonprofit funding, and/or the County could assist with the funding.

Commissioner Reckhow inquired about the audit position. Ms. Hager stated Internal Audit was based on a personnel work plan and filling the position would help retain employees and assist with covering Durham County risks.

Chair Jacobs recommended that the County continue with the Northern Durham IT Broadband Study to get high speed internet within the County limits.

Commissioner Howerton asked if money from the CARES Act could be used for Durham Public School funding. Jodi Miller, General Manager responded the schools would spend the money for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and submit it for reimbursement.

Chair Jacobs asked to start a fund to support small businesses during COVID and to check with the City of Durham to assist with the funds. She also asked that staff reach out to Duke to inquire about grants to assist with small businesses.

Ryan Eaves, Stormwater and Erosion Division Manager presented the Board with a Stormwater Utility Fund.

**Directives: Staff to provide the Board with the following:**

- **Suggestions on how citizens could pay their property tax interest and how to assist with foreclosure relief**
- **Delay Phase 3 of the Durham Social Service Staffing Plan**
- **Fund four (4) of the Administration Support positions**
- **Create a fund to help Small Businesses**
- **One Durham Fund - to accept charitable payments to support Small Businesses & Low-Income Families**
- **Begin Outreach for the Stormwater Utility Fund**

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaunecie Wardrick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shaunecie Wardrick  
Administrative Assistant