

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

Thursday, June 13, 2005

4:00 P.M. Budget Worksession

**MINUTES**

Place: Commissioners' Room, second floor, Durham County Government Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC

Present: Vice-Chairman Becky M. Heron, and Commissioners Lewis A. Cheek and Michael D. Page

Absent: Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow and Commissioner Philip R. Cousin Jr.

Presider: Vice-Chairman Heron

**Opening of Worksession**

Vice-Chairman Heron called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the June 13, 2005 Budget Worksession.

**Motion to Excuse**

Commissioner Cheek moved, seconded by Commissioner Page, to excuse Commissioner Cousin from the June 13, 2005 Budget Worksession.

The motion carried with the following vote:

Ayes: Heron, Cheek, and Page

Noes: None

Absent: Cousin and Reckhow

Vice-Chairman Heron announced that Chairman Reckhow had been chosen by the NC Council of Community Programs Awards Committee as the 2005 Leadership Award winner in the category of County Commissioner. Chairman Reckhow was presently in Raleigh attending the ceremony honoring the Leadership Award winners, but would attend the County Commissioners' Regular Session at 7:00 p.m. (A motion had been made at the June 6, 2005 Worksession to excuse Chairman Reckhow from this budget meeting.)

## **DISCUSSIONS REGARDING BUDGET REQUESTS**

### **Volunteer Fire Departments—Lebanon Fire Department**

Jeff Batten, Fire Marshal, presented an overview of the requested tax rate increase for the above-mentioned fire department. Lebanon requested that its rate be set at 7.5 cents from the current 5.9 cents to hire three additional full-time fire fighters to supplement the seven existing fire fighters. The request also includes funding for: water points to be located outside the areas not served by fire hydrants; and, a thermal imaging unit to help locate a fire within a house or a person trapped within a house.

Mr. Batten introduced Fire Chief Mike Day, Lebanon Fire Department.

#### Questions/Discussion

1. Territory covered by the Lebanon Fire Department and the area annexed by the City Fire Department some time ago.
2. Location of the Department?
  - Russell Road—off Guess Road.
3. Does the department have volunteers and paid staff?
  - Yes.
4. The number of volunteers?
  - 22 active volunteers.
5. Are the new, requested positions due to present needs, the potential increase in needs, or because of increased population?
  - The three new positions are to meet present needs—Federal law requires three fire fighters on an initial truck.
6. What is the fire rating in the Lebanon District?
  - 5/9 split: residences within 1000 feet of fire hydrants are rated class 5; rural areas are rated class 9. The goal is to achieve a class 7 rating for the entire district. A class 5 increase to class 7 will result in a minor increase in homeowners' insurance premiums; class 9 reduced to class 7 will produce a significant decrease in premiums.
7. Have citizens been educated about the advantages of dry hydrants?
  - A couple of meetings were held with homeowners' associations to explain the potential decrease in homeowners' insurance premiums.
8. Water points and dry hydrants for rural areas for easier operations and for assistance with accomplishing the class 7 rating throughout the district.

Vice-Chairman Heron stated that the requested increase seems reasonable and would be considered.

### Redwood Fire Department

Mr. Batten introduced recently appointed Fire Chief Scott King, Redwood Fire Department.

Mr. Batten noted that Redwood Fire Department has requested a rate increase from 8.25 cents to 10 cents. The budget request includes additional fire fighters to maintain the station and its rating.

#### Questions/Discussion

1. The Department is considering establishing water points by utilizing Falls Lake.

Mr. Batten stated that the New Hope District is requesting an increase to 6.25 cents due to a revaluation in Orange County this year.

Vice-Chairman Heron stated that the County has an agreement with New Hope and Eno Fire Departments to cover portions of Durham County to place residences in a protected district.

#### **9-1-1 Emergency Communications**

County Manager Mike Ruffin informed the Board that changes that were made by City Council on City/County budgets will be presented today but are not reflected in the County Manager's recommended budget (presented May 23).

Jim Soukup, Director, 9-1-1 Emergency Communications, spoke about significant challenges to provide the Center with proper staffing and equipment. The Center's FY 2005-06 budget is an incremental step towards this goal, and future budgets will help satisfy that need.

Mr. Soukup stated that the City Council is recommending an increase in Telecommunicators from 36 to 40. In addition, the seven Call-Taker positions have been upgraded to Telecommunicator level so they can answer the radios, as well as the phones.

Mr. Soukup continued by stating that the budget supports City and County outcomes:

- All Durham citizens are safe.  
Provide the highest level of service possible utilizing the available resources.
- Durham citizens enjoy efficient and accountable City and County governments.  
Provide the citizens with the fastest and most efficient response to emergency calls possible while ensuring the safety of police, fire, and EMS personnel.

Mr. Soukup presented:

- the Center's major challenges—
  - implementing new systems that keep pace with changing technologies
  - increasing the level of bilingual employees
  - answering 911 lines in a timely manner
  - achieving accreditation as a "National Center of Excellence"
- 2006 priorities (what the budget will accomplish)—
  - implementation of a Computer-Aided Dispatch upgrade
  - redesign of the Communication Center to provide for increased workload

- implementation of increased 911 database features that will show improved detail of caller location
- major changes from FY 05 to FY 06—
  - seven Call-Taker positions reclassified to Telecommunicator level
  - increased level of funding for individual education initiatives
  - addition of four Telecommunicator positions
- revised goals, objectives, and strategies for the upcoming fiscal year
- Center's primary goal—to increase the percentage of calls answered in three rings or less to 98% - 99%
- Total County share: \$629,828 (less than last year; reflects the different percentage in the interlocal agreement)

#### Questions/Discussion

1. Mr. Soukup explained the difference in the duties of Call-Takers versus Telecommunications.
  - A Call-Taker cannot operate a radio for Police, Fire, or EMS; they can only answer 911 lines. By upgrading seven Call-Takers to Telecommunications, other Telecommunicators would get some relief from the radios, which should eliminate some stress.
2. What is the expected impact of the four new positions to the number of rings before a call is answered?
  - Minimal—a study has been developed by corporate call centers that states that the Center needs 16 additional positions for a substantial effect.
3. The number of bilingual employees (two Spanish, one Russian) and the difficulty involved in hiring them.
4. The amount of time to train the new employees?
  - Four to six months.
5. Does the number of questions, which must be posed by the Telecommunicator, delay the response time?
  - No. Emergency vehicles are dispatched within seconds, depending on the priority of the call. Questions are asked while the vehicle is in route. Calls are prioritized based on the information.
6. Are the educational incentives restricted to the 911 field?
  - No.
7. Is the educational benefit contingent upon a person remaining at the Center for a certain period?
  - No, not according to present City policy.

#### Directives

1. Suggestion that the Commissioners visit the 911 Center to see the complexity of Telecommunicator duties.
2. Suggestion that the City give greater consideration to the 911 Center and its staff.

County Manager Ruffin commended Mr. Soukup for his excellent work and the positive impact he has made in the organization over the past 11 months. He informed Mr. Soukup of his personal commitment to bring about the recommended improvements.

Vice-Chairman Heron echoed the comments of County Manager Ruffin.

### **City-County Planning**

Frank Duke, City-County Planning Director, presented the Planning Department's proposed FY 2005-06 budget, while highlighting the differences between this proposal and the County Manager's recommended budget.

Mr. Duke's presentation follows:

- Support of Board of County Commissioner Outcomes
  - Thriving Neighborhoods—Neighborhood Protection Overlays
  - Health Environment—Environmental Protection Ordinances & Open Space Plans
  - Aesthetic Beauty—Improved Enforcement
  - Efficient and Accountable Government—Streamlined Development Processes
- Major Challenges
  - Operational Costs Driven by Legal Requirements
  - Increased Emphasis on Enforcement
  - Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and UDO
  - Assignments Outside of the Planned Work Program
- 2006 Priorities
  - Completion of:
    - The Unified Development Ordinance
    - The Lick Creek Open Space Plan
  - Initiation of:
    - Gateways Plans
    - Neighborhood Protections Overlays
  - Increased Enforcement
  - Work Flow Automation
- Major Changes FY 05-06
  - Site Plan Inspector Added
  - Neighborhood Planner Transferred
  - Vehicle Expenses Increased
  - Travel and Training Funds Increased
  - Advertising, Mailing, and Printing Costs for the UDO Included
  - General and Administrative Funds Decreased
- Required Actions
  - Planning Commission: Recommended Approval April 12, 2005
  - Joint City-County Planning Committee: Recommended Approval with Changes May 4, 2005

- On June 9, 2005 City Council added funds for Appearance Commission, Durham Open Space and Trails Commission, Environmental Affairs Board, and Intern position
- Total County share: \$732,375 (approximately \$60,000 less than the Manager's recommended budget, because the fee changes providing additional revenue have been incorporated since the Manager's recommendation)

#### Questions/Discussion

1. What is the impact of the Neighborhood Planner being transferred to Housing?
  - No impact on the Planning Department. The employee was simply to be housed at the Planning Department. Responsibilities of the Neighborhood Planner are to consider the variety of programs and plans approved for northeast central Durham and move those to implementation in a unified fashion; the position was funded by the City.
2. Mailing of 96,000 letters regarding the UDO.
  - The required notice is regulated by North Carolina General Statutes.
3. Will the interns be solicited from local universities?
  - That is Mr. Duke's preference.
4. Do many people of color choose the Planning profession?
  - Since Mr. Duke's employment, the number of African-Americans employed has been increased, but the number is not reflective of the population as a whole. African-Americans in the profession are highly recruited by the private sector that offers larger salaries.
5. Number of positions, number of vacancies, and are they funded?
  - 42 positions, seven of which are administrative
  - 2 vacant positions
  - The positions are funded.
6. The City is pursuing opportunities for grant funding for Planner positions.
7. How important is the Site Plan Inspector position that was not funded by the City?
  - The Planning Department will attempt to do the job with the two existing Inspectors.

#### Directives

1. Special "pet" projects not included in the workplan should be monitored. These projects take time away from Planning Department priorities designated by the City and County. The issue could be discussed at a Joint City-County Planning Committee meeting.
  - Mr. Ruffin recommended that projects not included in the workplan could be brought before the Joint City-County Planning Committee for its decision regarding the project's priority.
2. Increase Durham Open Space and Trails Commission funding from \$950 to \$1000; Environmental Affairs Board—fund at \$500; and contribute \$6000 for one intern.

### **Funding Request for Matching Funds for Special Transportation Planning Projects**

Mark Ahrendsen, Transportation Manager, City of Durham, stated that he serves as staff to the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO). Mr. Ahrendsen introduced Jeremy Raw, Transportation Systems Engineer, City of Durham, and Transportation Planner for the MPO.

He highlighted the request for local matching funds to match federal transportation dollars for certain initiatives as follows:

#### Overview

- DCHC MPO is requesting \$81,876 from Durham County
- Local match secures Federal transportation funds for transportation projects important to Durham County
- The special transportation projects are:
  - Triangle Regional Model Update and Enhancement
  - Land Use Model/Data Automation
  - Collector Street Plan
  - Congestion Management System
  - Durham Comprehensive Bicycle Plan
  - Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Deployment Plan Update
  - Durham Greenhouse Gas Inventory Update and Action Plan
- Federal funds (80% approved by the Transportation Advisory [TAC] of the DCHC MPO)
- Requests for local matching funds have been made to the City of Durham, Durham County, and Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

#### Project History

- Current MPO program (FY 2004-2005) proposed undertaking some of these planning initiatives
- Durham County budgeted \$35,168 in FY 2004-2005 for these projects
- The urgency and short time-frame of Air Quality and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) requirements prevented these projects from starting in FY 2004-2005
- Additional funds of \$46,708 requested in FY 2005-2006 fund new projects.

Mr. Ahrendsen concluded his presentation by referencing a chart showing a breakdown of the special transportation projects and funding distribution among the various partners.

#### Questions/Discussion

1. Why is Orange County not a partner?
  - Orange County chose not to participate financially.
2. What is the meaning of MPO and FHWA?
  - Metropolitan Planning Organization and Federal Highway Administration
3. Is this a one-time request?

- This request if expected to be a one-time expense, but it may not be the only time. The request is beyond the ongoing administration of the program.
4. What is the status of the ITRA (Institute for Transportation Research and Education) model?
    - The regional model is an ongoing activity. ITRA serves as the service bureau for four different entities.
  5. How does the modeling fit into land use planning?
    - Transportation has worked closely with the Planning Department to coordinate efforts. The new comprehensive plan and UDO influence 30-year projections. Forecasts will be useful for the transportation planning community and land use planners.

#### Directives

1. Place on the Transportation Advisory Committee agenda—discussion about establishment of a program whereby all entities have a financial stake in regional initiatives.
2. Include Durham County's portion (\$81,876) in the FY 2005-06 budget.

Mr. Raw explained that the DCHC MPO is more interested in non-motorized forms of transportation and transit; therefore, the priorities (special transportation projects) would not be well represented by the regional service bureau model. The plan presented today provides enhancements to this model to address specifically the policy needs of the DCHC MPO. Eighty to ninety percent of this proposed budget will be spent on travel surveys and data collections to ensure that the modeling and forecasting is based on the most accurate information possible. Mr. Raw restated various information that had been presented by Mr. Ahrendsen.

#### Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Heron adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda C. Sessoms  
Clerk to the Board