

**MINUTES**  
**CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**BUDGET INPUT SESSION, MAY 11, 1998**

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The Board of Commissioners (the "Board") of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in special session for the purpose of receiving public comment on the Manager's Recommended Budget in the Superior Courthouse, Pittsboro, North Carolina, at 7:00 PM on May 11, 1998.

Present: Chairman Margaret Pollard; Vice Chairman Betty Wilson;  
Commissioners Uva Holland, John Grimes and Henry  
Dunlap; County Manager Charlie Horne; Assistant County Manager Reneé  
Dickson; Finance Officer, Vicki McConnell; and Clerk to the Board, Sandra B.  
Lee

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:04 P.M.

Charlie Horne, County Manager, reviewed Chatham County's growth and population projections resulting in increased demand for housing, education, the environmental impact and economic development. He also reviewed the Strategic, Land Use Development and Water Master Plans, Geographic Information System, employee performance measures, customer service focus, and citizen involvement as to what the County is doing.

Reneé Dickson, Assistant County Manager, reviewed the "Budget at a Glance", what taxes support, Commissioner priorities, and other highlights.

Vicki McConnell, Finance Officer, reviewed composition of the County tax base, sales tax trends, property tax base growth, General Fund fund balance trends, and County revenue.

## **EDUCATION**

### ***Public Input Session***

**Joyce W. Kachergrts**, 615 Stone Wall Road, Pittsboro, NC, stated that she appreciates the work that teachers do; that businesses are more interested in moving to the County if there is a good school system in the County; and that education should be a goal to attract new businesses.

**Greg Solomon**, 13, Polks Landing, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that as a parent with two children attending Perry Harrison School and member of the PTA Advisory Board, he feels that he has a good idea of the needs of the school system and how they are not being met. He stated that he is proud of the way the schools performed last year with two rated in the top twenty-five in the State in academic growth, six out of ten exhibiting exemplary growth, and the remaining four showing expected growth; that he is concerned about the proposed County budget, which based upon a formula, projects spending approximately \$500,000 less this year than what was spent last year; that the school board was denied its requested budget last year and was asked to spend their fund balance to meet their needs; and that he was concerned that education was omitted from the Commissioners' list of priorities

He read a list of the top ten priorities of each Chatham County school which he stated was compiled by site based improvement teams consisting of principals, teachers, specialists, and parents,

attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof. He stated that he does not understand why every time something for the schools needs to be done, that a property tax increase is recommended; that with an increase in tax revenue due to an increase in property tax values, he does not understand why the schools did not get part of it; that the amount of money being held in reserve funds such as the general fund balance, capital outlay fund balance,

waste management fund balance and utility fund balance appears to have approximately eleven million dollars; that this amount of money does not justify the fact of withholding basic needs from the children; that he had rather spend money now for the schools than to spend it later in the form of prisons, homeless shelters, and social programs. He encouraged the Finance Staff, School Board, and Superintendent to work out a more appropriate plan for the children's future. Written comments are attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof.

**Wallace Ambrose**, 2349 Andrews Street, Pittsboro, NC, stated that he wondered why the Board of Commissioners would consider cutting education funds; that he and his wife have bought supplies for schools; that one of the principals stated that the extra funds were going to meet older adults needs in Fearrington Village and Governors Club; that the children need to be looked in the eyes and told why they are not as important as the older people moving into Chatham to gain advantage of lower taxes; and that he would like to see the money kept where it will do the most good.

**Craig DeBussey**, 119 Tanager Lane, Big Woods Hills, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that North Chatham is a good example of how well schools can work together as a partnership; that teachers have energy and enthusiasm in their work; that families are involved in the school, that he is concerned that team members from the County do not seem to be willing to work together to get the budget right; that the School Board is not even in attendance at the meeting; that he is not blaming the School Board but that it does suggest that there are problems on the team; that he does not see how a budget that may cut personnel and programs in the schools can be passed; that he has learned of schools in Greensboro that open their facilities to the community in the evenings and on weekends; that these are examples of the county and community working together to make things happen; that as parents, they will be partners with the Board, if they can see that the Board is pulling together with them. He asked that the Commissioners listen to the teams of teachers who do the work, listen to the School Board who has told of the need for more money, and invest it in the kids. Written comments are attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof.

**Owen Crankshaw**, 215 Tanager Lane, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that he is extremely concerned about the funding for Chatham County Schools for the next year and about how the funding decisions are made; that the School Board receives specific input from each school before making their decisions; that all schools have a list of funding needs that are presented to the School Board; that the Board and the Superintendent must decide which needs are valid priorities and which are less critical to the success of their school; that this year, the School Board did not include critical programs requested by schools, and the County did not see fit to endorse the School Board's already trimmed budget; that instead, the County further trimmed the budget requested by the School Board by 11%; that instead of looking at the specific funding needs of the schools, the County relied on formulas that use the wrong input to deliver the wrong solution; that many school programs needed by the schools and requested by teachers and principals have been pared down by the School Board in hopes of getting the school budget passed by the County; that many valid requests have been denied; that funds for schools based on their need is a necessity; that the schools have people who are trained and qualified to determine the needs of the schoolchildren and the schools; that the children are growing up in a competitive and technical world; that the County must make the education of the children a priority; that the tax base exists to do this; that there are adequate

funds in the County and a growing tax base to deal with the needs of the schools; that the County should be substantially increasing the funding to the schools, not decreasing it; that the resources and the responsibility to provide the children with an exemplary education, not just an adequate one, exist; that it can be done without new taxes and without cutting other County programs; that the quality of the children's education and the future of Chatham County is at stake; that well educated students are the best

investment this County can make. Written comments are attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof.

**Jonathan Daniel**, 101 Pine Forest Drive, Siler City, NC, stated that there is a great deal of discussion about the importance of K-12 education and about improving the quality of public education; that the Chatham Education Foundation supports excellent, not adequate, public schools for the County; that some of the current issues are: 1) Reduction in pupil to teacher ratio; 2) Teacher pay; 3) Services for academically at-risk children; 4) Provision for counselors, social workers, and school nurses; that schools need to expand services, reduce class size and reasonably compensate teachers and staff to provide the children with an excellent education; that the School Board was forced last year to spend \$810,000 from reserve built over a twenty year period, leaving only \$150,000 in the school system reserve; that the difference in the request from the Board of Education and the proposed County funding formula for the school year is 1.3 million dollars; and that the County government currently has a reserve of 7.8 million dollars. He asked that some of the reserve be committed to education, for, without additional funding, teaching positions and other services will be cut which will mean the difference in adequate and excellent schools. Written comments are attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof.

**Timothy D. Kent**, 701 Wooded Lake Drive, Apex, NC, stated that he moved to Chatham County for the quality of life; that Chatham County is inheriting growth from the Triangle area; that there are more and more students coming; that industry will not move into the County without quality education; that the goal should be to provide exemplary school system, not just an adequate one.

**Robert Grant**, 21 Fearrington post, Pittsboro, NC, stated that he enjoys the quality of life in Chatham County; that there are five points that need to be made: 1) The funding formula is hogwash. 2) Tax rates are not important. 3) Board of Education does not provide their budget on time. 4) Economically, it is not viable to balance the budget by cutting the school's budget. 5) There needs to be more accountability by the County and the Board of Education.

**Jason Johnson**, 5 Arborfield Lane, Durham, NC, stated that he attended the meeting on behalf of the school kids, that the best way for a bright future for the children is to fund the schools; that it is hard to work with little resources; that the kids cannot compete with surrounding counties when other counties do more for and have programs that prepare kids to work; that as a teacher, he is often asked why he doesn't go to another county to work

**Sharon Kirkman**, 502A Deer Mountain Road, Pittsboro, NC, Perry Harrison PTA President, stated that parents have raised \$42,000 for the school this year and that County Staff and the Board of Education need to work together. She asked: 1) At what meeting did the Board of Commissioners approve the funding formula? 2) Why is the public expected to accept the funding formula instead of requests? 3) Why, in a year that with a \$1.2 million increase in tax revenue, is there not an increase in the education portion of the budget?

**Michael E. Burke**, 751 Windsor Road, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that the Board of Commissioners

and the Board of Education's relationship is the real problem; that justifications for the school's budget were given; that the School Board has done its job and their budget proposal is not out of line; that fund-raising funds should not be used for operating expenses; and that their budget needs to be passed as requested.

The Chair thanked everyone for their enthusiasm and comments. She stated that she is not aware of conflicts between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education and that discussions and meetings between the two have been amicable.

### **Recreation**

Tracy Burnett, Recreation Director, reviewed the mission of the Recreation Department, total revenues, expenditures, highlights, and the Recreation Master Plan.

Unidentified people asked questions from the audience. Some of the needs for recreation expressed were : a County park, community swimming pool, another soccer field, more funds for extra recreational programs

**Tom Miller**, spoke in favor of the recreational program stating that it had been superb. He expressed concern over the cap placed on the number of basketball participants in a program and its waiting list.

**Barry Horton**, asked for Commissioner support in the recreational program. He stated that one of the school principals had encouraged parents to get involved because the budget was going to be cut.

**Mark Poe**, stated that the expense is an investment in the children.

**Louis Caraganis**, stated that he has been working with other interested people to organize a program in the Town of Pittsboro; that seed money needs to come from the County or town; and that they intend to ask for help and/or an expression of support.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Grimes moved, seconded by Commissioner Wilson, to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Wilson seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

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Margaret Bryant Pollard, Chair

ATTEST:

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Sandra B. Lee, Clerk to the Board  
Chatham County Board of Commissioners