

May 19 meeting of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners

FY 2014-15 Budget discussion and public hearing; Transportation Advisory Committee reports, new bike map; New Chatham Food Council; FY 2014-15 Budget details, new 300-ft. cell tower planned for west Chatham

FY 2014-15 Budget snapshot

Total property value in Chatham is \$9.3 billion

One-cent in property tax rate generates \$908,664 in revenues

Tax rate remains at \$0.6219 per \$100 valuation on property (eg. a property valued at \$100,000 pays \$621.90 in taxes)

Total Revenue from property taxes was \$57,562,000

[NOTE: Duke Energy's Moncure coal-fired plant has retired, reducing County tax collection by \$113,000 (coal ash ponds remain)]

Fees are generated from various permits and departments; a 34% increase is anticipated next year

Sales tax collections are expected to increase 6% next year

Education budget includes \$575,000 incentive pay for teachers and teacher's assistants next year

General Fund projected for next year is \$94 million, a 1% increase over this year

General Fund current balance is \$2,958,705

May 19, 2014 Work and Regular Sessions Walter Petty, Brian Bock, Mike Cross, Jim Elza; Pam Stewart

1. Transportation Advisory Committee annual report. Matt Alexander said the committee of 8 voting and 6 non-voting members meets bimonthly and includes a person from the Health Dept. They review NC DOT studies, and discuss and

prioritize Chatham projects under the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO plan. They work in partnership with Chatham Transit. The TAC revised and published the Chatham County Bike Path brochure. Elza asked the status of Chatham's Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Alexander said it will be out for public comment this summer. Asked about DOT's progress with unpaved roads in the county, Alexander said about half have been pulled back from funding.

2. Formation of Chatham Community Food Council. Lexi Wolfe (Chatham Partnership for Children) said this would be a new 12-15 member community-based council and is an initiative of the County Health Dept. and Cooperative Extension. The Council's mission is to assess the food situation in Chatham, make recommendations on how to improve it, and help shape County policy. The Council is also seeks involvement of small organic farms food and recovery opportunities for composting. She said some partners might be CORA and food banks, as well as county agencies that are concerned with food, and volunteers. She asked for a facility and some government support. A Resolution to create this was passed.

3. Budget Work Session. See numbers above, other highlights:

County employees will receive salary adjustments to bring them up to full market rates in October payroll (study was completed 1 year ago), or 2.5% raise if they are already at market rates.

Sheriff adds one administrative assistant for new jail facility at old landfill.

Animal Services budget increased, added one staff, buying truck, washer-drier.

Capital Improvements include a joint county and school bus garage, and the borrowing for the new Agricultural Center in Pittsboro.

Renovations on the County Annex building will be delayed another year.

The \$1 million Siler City megasite preparation grant from County pays for site-engineering study, no utilities will be constructed.

Chatham Economic Development Corp receives \$50,000 to market megasite; Jim Elza opposed this expenditure.

County will pay \$120,000 of \$200,000 required in DOT costshare to upgrade the Siler City airport; assumed to benefit the megasite.

The Chatham Land Use plan: Renee Paschal said money is needed for further work on the Economic Development Corp. map that does not include land use. Since there is no county zoning, the map would have to rely on parcel data for existing uses, and staff are not sure of scope of work. Jim Elsa said Chatham needs to make a real land use plan; this isn't it.

County is pursuing interlocal partnerships with Pittsboro and Siler City for sedimentation and erosion control, and perhaps recreation.

The Land Records department has been recombined with County Tax Administration.

Health Dept. had cuts of \$154,000, but will not effect services, since some positions vacant, others transferred to other service areas.

Non-profits saw \$11,000 reduction from total allocation since BOC voted NOT to award their discretionary \$10,000 to committee recommendations.

Water fund has operating losses, more customers but water use down due to conservation.

Education: Dr. Jordan, Superintendent of Chatham Schools, says they are waiting on the state budget to reveal school teacher pay and whether they reverse their 2013 action that denied teachers higher pay for advanced degrees. The \$575,000

in incentives for teachers next year will give teachers at the 8 schools “exceeding” growth projections a one-time bonus of \$1,000; and teachers at the 4 schools “meeting” growth projections will receive \$500. Teaching assistants get half the teacher’s amount at those schools. Teachers and teaching assistants at the four schools that do “not meet” growth projections will not receive the incentive pay, but are working on development plans. Chatham has a 30% turnover in teachers. Dr. Jordan said the first 9 years a teacher works in Chatham, the salary is competitive. If they stay 10 years and longer, the pay is not competitive with other school districts. He said Chatham schools would need an additional \$1.3 million, phased over 3 years, to pay these senior certified and classified instructors at competitive rates. There was discussion about “Communities in Schools” to help reduce drop-outs, and mentorship programs thru Chatham County Together. Chatham schools currently have a \$5.7 million fund balance and a child nutrition fund balance of \$1.3 million.

At the end of the education budget discussion Brian Bock said it had been reported to him that the current Chair of the Board of Education, Karen Howard [the Democratic candidate for Sally Kost’s District 1 seat], had stated in a public venue that this BOC does not care about minority children. *[NOTE: Bock had specifically asked Karen to attend this Work Session.]* He challenged her about this remark. Karen Howard replied: (a) she was speaking for herself, not as an official, at a documentary screening about teachers; (b) her remarks were directed at for-profit private companies now running public schools and their reluctance to take minority children; and (c) minority children, like hers, are served by public education. Bock insulted her for a comment she did not make.

4. Public Hearing: 300-ft. cellphone tower in west, off White Smith Rd near Henderson-Tanyard. This is first of six cell phone tower requests from American Tower Corporation and AT&T Mobility. The tower will be 250-ft. off the road on a half-acre, with a flashing white light (daytime) and red pulse light (nighttime) following FAA lighting requirements. The permit request sought a waiver from the 199-ft. height restriction, and met the 5 findings of a conditional use permit as outlined in the County's amended Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Ordinance. Speakers for and against. Operator said the signal coverage of 300-ft. tower is 4 to 5 miles in all directions, and would eliminate the need for two 199-ft. towers to cover that distance. Other carriers can co-locate services on the tower. Referred to Planning Board.

Reported by Diana Hales, Candidate, District 3, Chatham County Commissioner