

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING** June 29, 2007

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: W. Darrell Robertson, Chairman
Wes Bolick, Vice-Chairman
William L. Hammer
Harold M. Odom
Larry G. Yoder

PRESENT: Rick French, County Manager
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

MEDIA: Micah Henry, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a special called meeting on Friday, June 29, 2007 in the Catawba Valley Community College / Alexander Center Multipurpose Room, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Robertson called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #47 - #53

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendments #47 - #53, which included the following information:

Budget Amendment #47 – To increase the budget for expenditures in all County departments for the 2006-2007 budget year.

Budget Amendment #48 – To increase the budget for expenditures in all County departments for the 2006-2007 budget year.

Budget Amendment #49 – To transfer funding from the General Fund to the Capital Improvements Fund for school system funding.

Budget Amendment #50 – To increase the budget for additional funds for Fire Districts.

Budget Amendment #51 – To amend the Wireless 911 Fund expenditures.

Budget Amendment #52 – To transfer funding into the General Fund from interest on investments.

Budget Amendment #53 – To amend the Water Fund expenditures.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #47 - #53. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

CONSIDERATION OF THE 2007-2008 ALEXANDER COUNTY BUDGET ORDINANCE

Chairman Robertson explained that the Board had decided to wait until tonight to consider the budget because staff had been informed that a decision regarding Medicaid relief for counties would possibly be made today, which would affect the proposed property tax increase for Alexander County. However, he noted that a decision had not been made as of yet.

Rick French, County Manager, presented the 2007-2008 Alexander County Budget Ordinance for consideration, which totaled \$31,454,284. He stated that he was recommending a property tax rate of 53.5 cents or a 2.5 cent increase. Mr. French mentioned that 61 counties had already approved their budget, pointing out that 29 of those had enacted tax increases.

Mr. French briefly discussed the many options and plans discussed by the General Assembly to provide Medicaid relief, including the plan to phase out Medicaid over a 3-year period with the state taking half of the Article 40 and Article 42 sales taxes from counties, and he noted that many General Assembly members were now against the proposal to provide counties with a land transfer tax for infrastructure, which had resulted in today's delay. He also noted that the County shared proceeds of the Article 40 and Article 44 sales tax with the school system, which raised some concerns with funding replacement.

Commissioner Hammer reiterated the fact that 29 North Carolina counties had approved tax increases. He stated that he disliked paying taxes as much as anybody but noted that a tax rate increase was necessary in Alexander County this year for many reasons including increasing Medicaid costs and no help from the state, an extremely low growth rate, and the uncertainty of the hospital / emergency room. He discussed the state's budget process and noted that the state wasn't mandated by law to adopt a balanced budget by July 1st as counties were, which he felt was unfair. He urged anyone interested in viewing the budget to visit the County Administration Office where copies were available.

Commissioner Bolick expressed his appreciation to the staff involved in the budget process including County Manager Rick French, Finance Director Jennifer Herman, and the Finance Committee consisting of Chairman Robertson and Commissioner Yoder. He also thanked the citizens for their understanding in the Board's decision to increase the property tax rates. He felt the Board was accountable to the citizens and needed to do what was right to provide services to the satisfaction of the property owners.

Chairman Robertson briefly discussed the property value growth rate in Alexander County, which had increased less than 6.5% in the past 4 years or 1.6% a year. He explained that the growth rate had not kept up with inflation which had played a tremendous role in the need for extra revenue.

Chairman Robertson made a motion to approve the 2007-2008 Alexander County Budget Ordinance as presented. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted 4 in favor of the motion (Commissioners Bolick, Hammer, Robertson, and Yoder) and one against the motion (Commissioner Odom). The motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the following issues during Other Business:

- A. Mr. French presented the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority Potential Board Composition discussed by the regional steering committee that included 4 options for board representation. The option recommend by the steering committee includes one member from each financial partner (Hickory, Newton, Conover, Alexander County, Burke County, Caldwell County, and Catawba County) for a 7-member board with the possibility of an 8th floating member. Mr. French mentioned that the Board would need to consider the regional plan in July or August.
- B. Planning & Development staff received a request from a local family to create a private family cemetery on property located on Stikeleather Road. Mr. French explained that family cemeteries were allowed in RA-20 zoning districts as a conditional use; however, he noted that the request was granted and arranged by staff because the request came in after the family member had passed and a decision was needed immediately.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Bolick made a motion to adjourn at 6:46 PM. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

W. Darrell Robertson, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board