POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Budget Work Session
May 17, 2021 - 1:00 PM
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice Womack Building Columbus, NC
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Melton, Vice-Chairman Beiler, Commissioner Moore, Commissioner Overholt, and Commissioner Yoder. Also in attendance were County Manager Pittman, Clerk to the Board High, media and citizens. Attorney Berg was absent.

1. Call to Order - Chairman Melton.

2. Scheduled Departments

A. Public Schools

Aaron Greene, Superintendent of Polk County Schools, addressed the Board of Commissioners and requested no changes to the recommended budget.

B. Sheriff's Department

Sheriff Wright reviewed all the departments he is responsible for and requested no changes to the recommended budget.

C. Board of Elections

Cliff Marr, Board of Elections Director, explained he represents the five-person bipartisan Board of Elections. He said he is not requesting any changes to the recommended budget at this time; however, there are pending legislative changes that could cause the need for increased expenditures, and he may need to come back to the Board of Commissioners at that time for an increase to cover the mandated expenses.

D. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Michael Crater, EMS Director, said the three County ambulances can only be fully staffed during peak hours (Tuesday through Saturday, late morning to afternoon) with Managers taking shifts. He said the two new full-time positions included in the recommended budget would eliminate the need for Management staff to be included in the regular schedule allowing them time to complete their other required duties. Chairman Melton asked Mr. Crater and Jeremy Gregg, Green Creek Fire Chief, who was in the audience if they thought the two positions would solve the ambulance coverage problems for Polk County citizens. Mr. Gregg stated in his opinion, Polk County needs three ambulances, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Mr. Crater agreed that is what it would take to provide optimal service for the citizens of Polk County.

E. Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA)

Joshua Kennedy, HHSA Director, reviewed all the departments he is responsible for and requested no changes to the recommended budget.

F. Human Resources

Tommy Oakman, Human Resources Officer, was present and requested no changes to the recommended budget.

Chairman Melton called for a recess.

Chairman Melton called for the meeting to reconvene.

G. Maintenance

Mickey Edwards, Maintenence Director, was present and requested no changes to the recommended budget.

H. Management Information Systems (MIS)

Bruce Yelton, MIS Director, was present and requested no changes to the recommended budget.

I. Solid Waste

Larry Walker, Solid Waste Director, presented the new Landfill Fee Schedule to become effective July 1, 2021. He explained it included a five-dollar increase for the annual residential permit and a five-dollar increase per ton for the commercial dumping fee. He said the annual permit fee for residents has not been increased for several years. The Board did not make any changes.

J. Building Inspections

David Gosnell, Building Inspections Director, presented the current Building Inspections Fee Schedule. He said he is not asking for any changes to the current fee schedule and will be administering the fees as listed. The Board did not make any changes.

K. Emergency Management - Fire Marshal

Bobby Arledge, Fire Marshal, and Emergency Management Director, said a fee schedule is included in the Fire Prevention Ordinance of Polk County that was previously adopted. He said the fees are for permits, as well as for violations, and he will be using this fee schedule. The Board did not make any changes to the fee schedule previously adopted and agreed the County should be collecting the fees.

3. Other Departments, or Agencies

A. Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee (FRAC)

Manager Pittman said included in the recommended budget is the FRAC recommendation for increases for the Saluda and Columbus Fire Departments. He said with his projected tax rate, those departments will be very close to getting the increased amount they are requesting without an additional increase. He asked the Board for guidance, they all agreed to leave the rate at the FRAC's recommendation.

4. Revenue Neutral Property Tax Rate Discussion

Manager Pittman explained to be truly revenue-neutral, the tax rate will be .5038 and will only change if there is a major valuation adjustment. He said he would continue to watch the shifts and update them at the work sessions.

In Conclusion, Manager Pittman asked Mr. Crater, EMS Director, to return to further discuss the need for more positions and what it would take to fund them. Mr. Crater said the two positions in the recommended budget would allow them to be fully staffed during peak hours. He estimated needing an additional seven positions to have full coverage all the time, bringing the total to nine new positions but said he would need time to evaluate the schedule to determine the exact number. They discussed all the expenses incurred with new employees, and Mr. Crater suggested taking a more staggered approach for his department to prepare for all the changes the additional staffing will bring.

Sandra Hughes, Finance Director, said an estimated tax increase of slightly more than one cent would be necessary to fund the additional positions requested. Manager Pittman reiterated to staff three ambulances twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, an additional tax rate increase of over one cent on top of the revenue-neutral rate change will be necessary to fund all of the new positions being requested for EMS by the Board of Commissioners. The board's consensus was for Manager Pittman to include the additional new positions to provide twenty-four seven coverage.

5. Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

Attest:	POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
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Ange High Clerk to the Board	Tommy W. Melton Chairman