

PERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**JUNE 4, 2020****MEMBERS PRESENT****OTHERS PRESENT**

B. Ray Jeffers
Jimmy B. Clayton
Kyle W. Puryear
Gordon Powell
C. Derrick Sims

Heidi York, County Manager
Brenda B. Reaves, Clerk to the Board

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Person, North Carolina, met in recessed session on Monday, June 4, 2020 at 10:00am in the Person County Office Building Auditorium.

Chairman Jeffers called the meeting to order. County Manager, Heidi York stated this was the first budget work session in which the Board would discuss any changes to the Manager's Recommended Budget.

Ms. York noted that Vice Chairman Powell had requested, following the budget public hearing, for the Manager to identify proposed cuts to reduce the property tax rate by one penny. Ms. York said the value of one penny in the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget is \$450,418. The property tax rate is currently set at \$.73.

Ms. York presented the following identified cuts for the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Recommended Budget to cover the one penny decrease on the tax rate:

-\$46,704	Fleet Fund vehicle for the Fire Marshal (earlier hire allowed for use of current year funds)
-\$102,035	Fleet Fund vehicles for the Sheriff (able to purchase 3 of the 6 recommended vehicles for the Sheriff's Department (covered with current year additional revenues received)
-\$4,003	General Fund allocation for JCPC lesser than budgeted amount
-\$226,547	Designated Contingency for Compression Study Implementation (covered with current year rollover funds from current year)
-\$71,129	Undesignated Contingency budgeted at \$100,000 (reduction for the remainder/leaves a balance of \$28,871)
\$-450,418	Equivalent of one penny on the tax rate

Commissioner Powell commended Ms. York for the good job reducing the budget in such a reasonable way.

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Ms. York noted that according to the Tax Appraiser, Russell Jones, the average median home value based on the last reevaluation is \$116,000; the reduction by one penny on the tax rate would equate to a savings of \$11.60 on the average median home.

Staff answered questions from commissioners about specific line item budgets.

The discussion turned to volunteer fire departments (VFDs). Chairman Jeffers asked Ms. York the status of the Woodsdale Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) to which she noted the State has not made an official decision as the hearing has been put on hold due to the coronavirus and changes within the State Fire Marshal's Office. Ms. York stated until the WVFD decision was made, she has been delayed in contracting with the City of Roxboro as well as Triple Springs and Ceppo VFDs to extend their coverage into the WVFD fire district. Ms. York stated expenses, i.e. debt payment for firetruck as well as electric bill, are being paid from the unallocated budget line at this time. Ms. York said she would ask the Emergency Management Director, Douglas Young, if there were any checking account funds left over from the previous organized WVFD.

Chairman Jeffers noted that Caswell County has a new VFD that will cover some uncovered areas within Person County, similar to how the second Semora VFD station is now covering area within Person County.

Chairman Jeffers asked the group to consider the Timberlake Volunteer Fire Department's request for additional funding for a paid employee to work Monday-Friday 6:00am-6:00pm and \$15,000 per ISO point dropped (9 to a 4). This model could be used to encourage other VFDs to lower their ISO fire rating. The group was not ready to start funding paid volunteers at this time.

Chairman Jeffers suggested a compromise for a reward to lower the ISO fire rating at \$7,500 per point. This model would set a precedent for other VFDs; TVFD would be eligible for \$37,500 additional funding using funds in the unallocated VFD budget line. There was consensus to place this funding in the FY2020-2021 budget.

Commissioners Puryear and Sims asked about the budget for Economic Development department. Ms. Wehrenberg stated there was \$493,139 budgeted in the operating budget and \$479,500 encumbered in the economic catalyst fund. The Catalyst Fund holds approximately \$1.2M.

Commissioner Sims stated that economic development had potentially \$1.4M in all funds and questioned should further consideration be given to the previously presented grant opportunity the Board voted down that required a \$2M local match for a grant of \$3M to be used for wastewater line construction to the Mega Park site.

Vice Chairman Powell posed consideration should the Economic Development Commission (EDC) desire to use its funding in all accounts and come up with \$1.5M, would the Board would consider allocating \$500,000 to complete the local match of \$2M. The Board consented. Ms. York contacted the Economic Development Director to request that the EDC call a special meeting to discuss grant opportunities and, if appropriate, assist in funding the local match. Should the EDC vote favorable to use its budget appropriations, the Board of Commissioners would advertise to conduct the required public hearing. Economic Development Director, Sherry Wilborn said the grant process was very competitive with the first review being held mid-June; the funds would be available until exhausted.

A **motion** was made by Chairman Jeffers and **carried 5-0** to direct staff to bring the Board a Budget Ordinance on June 15, 2020 reflecting the items the Board consented at this work session: 1) decrease the property tax rate by one penny, 2) appropriate \$37,500 to TVFD from the unallocated VFD budget line, and 3) appropriate \$500,000 from Fund Balance to be coupled with the EDC coming up with the \$1.5M for a wastewater line construction grant match, should the EDC pursue application for grant funds.

Commissioner Clayton stated he was not supportive of the one penny decrease in the property tax rate during the current pandemic but consented to vote in favor of the motion due to the progress for the VFDs and economic development.

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Sims and **carried 5-0** to adjourn the meeting at 11:07am.

Brenda B. Reaves
Clerk to the Board

B. Ray Jeffers
Chairman