

PERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

DECEMBER 8, 2015
OTHERS PRESENT

Kyle W. Puryear

Heidi York, County Manager

David Newell, Sr.

B. Ray Jeffers

Brenda B. Reaves, Clerk to the Board

Jimmy B. Clayton

Tracey L. Kendrick

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Person, North Carolina, met in recessed session on Monday, December 8, 2015 at 6:30 pm for a joint meeting with the Fire Chief's Association in the Person County Office Building Auditorium.

Chairman Puryear called the recessed meeting to order.

In attendance representing the Fire Chief's Association was:

Wayne Wrenn, President Fire Chief's Association
Hal Oakley, Secretary Fire Chief's Association
Gary Dietz, Allensville Volunteer Fire Department Chief
William Simpson, Ceffo Volunteer Fire Department Chief
Martin Rimmer, Hurdle Mills Volunteer Fire Department Chief
Bruce Lynch, Moriah Volunteer Fire Department Chief
Steve Bray, Rescue Squad
Kenneth Torain, Roxboro Fire Department Chief
Bobby Dodson, Semora Volunteer Fire Department Chief
Charles Timberlake, Timberlake Volunteer Fire Department Chief
James Hughes, Triple Springs Volunteer Fire Department Chief

George Woody, Woodsdale Volunteer Fire Department Chief was absent.

DISCUSSION/ADJUSTMENT/APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Newell and **carried 5-0** to approve the agenda.

Mr. Wrenn led the discussion for the following items as proposed by the Fire Chief's Association:

1. STATUS OF A FIRE SERVICES TAX:

Mr. Wrenn told the Board of Commissioners that the Fire Chief's Association voted unanimously for the implementation for fire services tax. Mr. Lynch said the fire services tax would allow the volunteer fire departments to have a guaranteed funding stream that would be beneficial when the fire departments sought loans.

County Manager, Heidi York asked Assistant County Manager, Sybil Tate and the Tax Administrator, Russell Jones to present to the group information related to fire service district data as follows:

**Fire Service District Data (Surrounding county comparison)
Rate Types and Rates**

County	Revenue Type	Rate
Person	General Fund	N/A
Durham	Per district tax	Avg: .1102 (.0987, .1350, .0799*, .1065, .0995*, .1135, .1386)
Granville	General Fund	N/A
Orange	Per district tax	Avg: .0689 (.0736, .07, .10, .0945, .0799, .06, .15, .0406, .0736, .088, .088, .088)
Caswell	Vehicle fee	\$15 per vehicle
Alamance	Per district tax	Avg: .0981 (.0900, .1075, .1075, .0850, .0800, .1100, .0925, .1350, .1050, .0800, .0950, .0900)
Wake	District-wide tax	.08
Vance	District-wide tax	.04
Warren	Per district tax	Avg: .0437 (.0350, .0790, .0500, .0500, .0700, .0200, .0650, .0380, .0200, .0260, .0500, .0600, .0600, .0400)

How are fire funds allocated?

County	Formula? Or, variables considered
Person	# of stations, call volume, 2% increase every other year
Durham	No formula
Granville	No formula; distributed evenly
Orange	No formula
Caswell	No formula, distributed evenly
Alamance	No formula
Wake	No formula; currently considering variables for funding distribution
Vance	No formula; distributed evenly
Warren	No formula


Who recommends to the BOC how fire funds are to be allocated?

County	Process description
Person	Commissioner rep. meets with VFD's and shares with County Manager
Durham	Fire Marshal meets with VFD's; Fire Marshal shares with County Manager
Granville	Commissioner rep. meets with VFD's and shares with County Manager
Orange	Fire Chiefs meet with Finance and County Manager directly
Caswell	Since distribution is equal decision is automatic
Alamance	Fire districts submit budget request to BOC
Wake	VFD's submit to Fire Marshal. Fire Marshal submits to the Fire Commission and County Manager. Fire Commission submits to BOC. Fire Commission members: Chief from each planning region (4), 1 Commissioner, President of the Fire Fighter's Assoc, and 5 citizens
Vance	VFD's submit to BOC
Warren	Finance sends out tax base info, VFD's respond with desired rates then share with County Manager

Estimated funding comparison

Current funding

Department	FY15	FY16 est.*
RESCUE SQUAD	\$44,106	\$44,988
ALLENSVILLE	\$43,533	\$44,404
CEFFO	\$87,046	\$88,787
HURDLE MILLS	\$87,073	\$88,814
MORIAH	\$86,956	\$88,695
SEMORA	\$13,958	\$14,237
TIMBERLAKE	\$45,107	\$46,009
TRIPLE SPRINGS	\$43,551	\$44,422
WOODSDALE	\$64,826	\$87,976
Subtotal	\$516,156	\$548,333
ROXBORO	\$373,964	\$373,964
TOTAL	\$890,120	\$922,297



=~\$269,654

- 3.4 cents provides equal funding for FY16 estimate.
- 4 cents = \$1,078,616, increase of \$156,319

*assumes a 2% increase for VFD's and flat for City of Roxboro, does not include adjustment for call volume

How does improving your rating affect your citizens?

This chart compares annual insurance premiums for a new wood frame home valued at \$100,000.00 with smoke detectors. This report was provided by an actual agent in Wake County.

ISO CLASS	AGENT 1	AGENT 2	AGENT 3
10	\$470	\$514	\$585
9S	\$376	\$411	\$469
8	\$353	\$384	\$438
7	\$318	\$347	\$394
6 (optimal rating)	\$259	\$283	\$320
5	\$259	\$283	\$320
4	\$259	\$283	\$320
3	\$259	\$283	\$320
2	\$259	\$283	\$320
1	\$259	\$283	\$320
Max Savings	\$117	\$128	\$149

Estimated Cost/Savings for resident with a \$100,000 home and a 9S rating over 5 year period

Year	Rating	Fire Tax Cost	Insurance Cost	Total Cost	Cost/Savings
Current year	9S	\$0	\$376	\$376	\$0
Year 1	9S	\$40	\$376	\$416	-\$40
Year 2	8	\$40	\$353	\$393	-\$17
Year 3	7	\$40	\$318	\$358	+\$18
Year 4	7	\$40	\$318	\$358	+\$18
Year 5	6	\$40	\$259	\$299	+\$77

Ms. Tate noted to implement a per district tax, 35% of the district residents (free holders) have to sign a petition with 50% of those residents in support for such to be passed. The individual district tax could range from .05 to .12 cents and may be, but not required to be on the ballot for referendum. Commissioner Jeffers inquired about a non-binding referendum to which staff indicated the County Attorney would have to respond. Mr. Jones added consideration must be given to the administrative function noting that one overall fire tax rate (City of Roxboro would be exempt as they already have a fire service tax) would be preferred and the easiest to manage as well as a decision to implement such would need to be made by March to be included in the ad valorem tax bills as a separate tax earmarked for fire services.

Commissioner Newell asked how the funds from a fire tax would be regulated. Mr. Jones stated a Fire Commission would be established through the authority of the Board of Commissioners to disburse funding to each of the fire stations. Commissioner Newell asked the Fire Chiefs if their group had consensus the Fire Commission would disburse funds in a manner acceptable by everyone. Mr. Hughes said yes.

Commissioner Kendrick noted he would like more time to research the topic. Chairman Puryear requested staff to place this item on the Board's retreat agenda.

2. FUNDING CONTRACTS WITH COUNTY:

Mr. Wrenn reiterated that without guaranteed funding, stations had trouble borrowing needed funds as banks do not recognize promissory notes. Mr. Lynch noted the across the board 5% cuts which was restored this fiscal year along with the proposed 2% increase in 2015 based on call volume is slow progress to the needed funding for the operations of a fire station.

Ms. York confirmed the fire services contracts do not list the amount of funding which can easily be changed. Ms. York noted the funding is adopted during the budget process and the proposed increase of 2% based on call volume is intended to take place every two years, (the alternating year of the City of Roxboro's contract.)

Chairman Puryear requested staff to place this item on the Board's retreat agenda for further discussion.

3. ASSISTANCE WITH PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE (PCC):

Mr. Wrenn noted the continuing education and certification requirements required by all fire personnel noting PCC has made some cuts that has affected fire personnel ability to obtain the needed classes. PCC has required a certain number of students in each class to justify the cost of the class and instructor. Mr. Lynch requested the Board's assistance with PCC. Mr. Bray noted the Rescue Squad holds monthly training and infrequent sessions are held at fire departments led by a PCC instructor. Mr. Bray stated he has been told some of the EMT training is being proposed to be held via satellite classroom.

Commissioner Jeffers asked about the EMS Compliance Officer position noting the job description includes volunteer fire department training. Wes Lail, Emergency Services Director stated the Compliance Officer was not hired to train or was certified to train volunteer fire personnel but to coordinate such training with the fire services personnel. Mr. Lail noted the Compliance Officer was certified for Level I and Level II training for EMS staff.

Chairman Puryear directed the County Manager to review the job description for the EMS Compliance Officer and amend the job description if required as well as encouraged dialogue with PCC for the needed fire services training.

4. FIRE MARSHAL- WHY WAS POSITION TERMINATED AND WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO RESTORE POSITION:

Mr. Wrenn and Mr. Lynch told the group the fire marshal position was vital to the Fire Chief's Association and asked why was the position terminated and what will it take to restore the position.

Ms. York shared the options available to the Board during the fiscal year 2012 budget to fund the Fire Marshal position once it had been vacated.

1. Fire Marshal at 60% (already in Recommended Budget)
Total Cost: \$33,000
Salary: \$22,822.20
Benefits: \$10,177.80
Operating budget: \$29,370 (this is currently supporting Fire Inspector as well)

2. Fire Marshal at Part-time (no benefits)
Total Cost: \$20,989.70
No benefits, can work a maximum of 1,000 per year
Salary: \$20,989.70 (Based on starting salary of F.M. of \$37,979 → 19.48/hr*1000 hrs*1.0775 SS)
Operating budget? \$29,370

3. Fire Inspector to take on additional duties of Fire Marshal
Requires increasing Fire Inspector from 60% to full-time, revising job description, contracting with City for investigations and after-hours on-call coverage
Total Cost: \$23,298
Plus additional contract costs?

4. Duties of Fire Marshal covered by volunteer
Potential conflicts of interest if also representing a fire department; lack of accountability
No Cost

5. Combine Fire Marshal and Emergency Management Functions

Ms. York stated the Board chose option #3 to increase the Fire Inspector position from 60% to full-time.

Mr. Lynch stated the fire marshal position will be vital should the fire tax be implemented to disburse the funding equally.

Chairman Puryear requested the County Manager to update the options for restoring the Fire Marshal and encourage the fire chiefs to be more vocal during the budget process, i.e., budget public hearing.

5. UPGRADE OF RADIO COMMUNICATIONS TOWERS:

Mr. Wrenn requested an update on the public safety communications towers project.

Ms. York stated the Board was updated at its November 17, 2014 meeting on the four current sites being studied to construct new communications towers. The Board of Commissioners has funded \$100,000 for the environmental studies to be completed at the following sites:

Bethel Hill,
Mt. Tirzah,
Bushy Fork, and
Woodland

Ms. York stated the state has offered to pay for the construction of the Woodland tower therefore Person County will construct three towers at an estimated costs of \$3.7M.

Chairman Puryear added that following the construction of the towers, the intent is to improve broadband access throughout the county as well.

6. FEMA DENIAL OF REIMBURSEMENT FOR WORK DONE DURING ICE STORM:

Mr. Wrenn requested that the letter from FEMA denying reimbursement be shared with the Fire Chiefs. Ms. York stated there was no formal letter but a string of emails to which she passed out copies to the Fire Chiefs.

Mr. Lail stated upon a declaration of the State of Emergency, fire services personnel donated services was listed on the application for grant funding from FEMA for any eligible reimbursement to which there was none.

Finance Director, Amy Wehrenberg stated the contractual obligation between the County and the volunteer fire departments did not have the specific language in place to be considered eligible for reimbursement by FEMA. Ms. Wehrenberg noted the direct reimbursement received by FEMA related to county facilities.

Ms. York presented the Fire Chiefs and the Board of Commissioners a proposed addendum to the fire services contracts to allow reimbursement under particular circumstances, i.e. a declaration for a state of emergency as follows:

PROPOSED CONTRACT ADDENDUM:

WHEREAS, the County and the Fire Department desire to enter into this contract for the Fire Department to furnish fire protection and during times of emergencies/disasters provide services as outlined below and in Section II C (9) of the current version of the Person County Emergency Operations Plan and provide other lifesaving and property protection measures as necessary for and within the District.

Reimbursement for Fire Department services provided in this section only applies when the state and/or federal governments issue a declaration of disaster for the affected areas of Person County, and only those services deemed reimbursable under the disaster declaration are eligible per rates as determined by the state and federal governmental agencies issuing the disaster declaration.

These additional duties listed below may become eligible for reimbursement if and when the state and/or federal government have a declaration of disaster, depending on what terms and services they allow reimbursement:

Section II C (9) County Volunteer Fire Departments

- a. Assists law enforcement with warning and notifying the affected population of an existing or impending emergency.
- b. Plans for coordination of firefighting activities throughout the County during disasters.
- c. Supports rescue operations.
- d. Provides support personnel to assist in traffic control.
- e. Provides direction and control during hazardous materials incidents.
- f. Provides fire protection for shelters.
- g. Assists in search and rescue operations during emergency/disaster situations.
- h. Identifies equipment and manpower limitations, and develops mutual aid agreements for the procurement of needed resources during emergency and disaster events.
- i. Assists with debris removal.

Ms. York explained FEMA determines the eligible rates. Mr. Lail noted 75% of the eligible rates are paid with federal funds and 25% paid with state funds when reimbursements are deemed eligible.

Chairman Puryear stated the importance to have the contract addendum in place for a future disaster and asked for a motion to approve the addendum to the current fiscal year fire contracts as presented.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Jeffers and **carried 5-0** to approve the contract addendum for Person County volunteer fire departments and rescue squad through June 30, 2015.

7. EQUIPMENT NEEDS FOR DEPARTMENTS AND FUNDING:

Mr. Wrenn and Mr. Lynch stated interest in the county's consideration for bulk purchasing for the volunteer fire departments for purchasing power, purchasing at the state's contract rate for vehicles and supplies, as well as pursuing a county lower interest rate.

Ms. York gave the Fire Chief's information for a resource for interest-free loans through the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program. Mr. Lynch commented that the Moriah Volunteer Fire Department was in the process of such a loan for a fire truck. Mr. Timberlake and Mr. Hughes stated their fire stations' expenses were double the county funding.

Commissioner Jeffers stated interest in the Board revamping the County's Revolving Loan which may be of assistance to the fire stations. Ms. Wehrenberg noted the Revolving Loan line item was at approximately \$200,000, further noting there are eligibility requirements as well as an interest applied to such loans.

Chairman Puryear requested the County Manager and the Finance Director to bring back to the Board more information about the options the county can provide as a borrowing stream to volunteer fire departments at the retreat.

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Clayton and **carried 5-0** to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 pm.

Brenda B. Reaves
Clerk to the Board

Kyle W. Puryear
Chairman