

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CONTINUED SESSION
MAY 26, 2015
MINUTES**

Chairman Corbin reconvened the meeting at 5:08 p.m. as recessed from the May 21, 2015 continuation meeting and welcomed those in attendance. All board members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk and Finance Director were present, as were members of the news media and interested citizens. NOTE: Commissioner Higdon joined the meeting at 5:23 p.m.

The County Manager requested that the board members add brief presentations from Warren Cabe and Matt Mason to the agenda, and they did so without objection.

EMERGENCY SERVICES/FRANKLIN FIRE DEPARTMENT: Mr. Cabe, the county's Emergency Services Director, explained the need for the two additional telecommunicators (dispatchers) that are included in the current proposed budget. He also noted efforts to have five full EMT crews on duty (three in Franklin, one in Highlands and one in Nantahala) around the clock, as the call volume for emergency dispatch has increased to 32,000 calls last year. He also spoke to the request for the first increase in ambulance rates since the late 1990s. Switching his "hat" to chief of the Franklin Fire Department, Mr. Cabe then outlined the request for an increase of nine-tenths of a cent in the department's tax rate, as the department is looking to add one more full-time person. Mr. Cabe said the new position would be scheduled for an evening/early morning shift to ensure that someone is at the station at all times. He went on to explain that due to a good insurance rating, homeowners receive a good deal in terms of the taxes they pay. "For every dollar you give me, I give you two dollars back," he said, and later added, "We are still a good bargain for the money." Farrell Jamison, a Town of Franklin alderman, said the town board also supports the requested tax increase.

CLARKS CHAPEL FIRE DEPARTMENT: County Planner Matt Mason, who also serves as the chief of the Clarks Chapel Volunteer Fire Department, requested the board's support for a one-cent tax increase in his district. Like Franklin, Mr. Mason noted that Clarks Chapel is looking to add one more full-time person, and to make repairs to its substation and purchase new extraction equipment. Mr. Mason also told the board members that the department will continue to be housed at its current location and will not move to the substation.

LOTTERY FUND REQUEST: Following a brief explanation by the Finance Director, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the application for the North Carolina Education Lottery Public School Building Capital Fund in the amount of \$284,945.21. A copy of the application is attached (Attachment 1) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. The Finance Director pointed out that the Macon County Board of Education approved the application earlier that day.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS: Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Higdon, the board voted unanimously to approve the following budget amendments: #205 for Macon County Public Health to allocate \$6,259 in new funding received from the state for a tobacco grant; and #206 for Emergency Management to appropriate grant funds received from the N.C. Division of Emergency Management for a Tier II Grant in the amount of \$1,104, as the funds must be used by the Local Emergency Planning Committee for hazardous materials emergency response planning, training and related exercises. Copies of the budget amendments are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF THE RECOMMENDED FISCAL YEAR 2015-16 BUDGET: The County Manager used a PowerPoint presentation to review the proposed expenditure by category, including general government, public safety, transportation, economic and physical development, health and human services, recreation/culture and education. He also covered changes in the budget relative to capital outlay, debt service and non-departmental items. While the amount in the general fund's contingency line item had been increased by \$163,364, the County Manager explained that he did not include certain requests in the budget, including: an additional \$25,000 for the Community Funding Pool, \$81,382 for the Macon County Heritage Center at Cowee School, \$70,000 for Webster Enterprises in Jackson County, and \$50,000 for the School Resource Officer (SRO) at Highlands School. The discussion then turned to the revenue side of the ledger, issues with Jackson County, and possible legislation that would affect sales tax distribution statewide before returning to the issue of the unfunded requests. Those

requests were then discussed in detail. During this time, Chairman Corbin recommended using \$50,000 from next year's contingency fund for the SRO position at Highlands School, and he supported an additional \$25,000 for the Community Funding Pool, also from next year's contingency. Commissioner Beale recommended providing the heritage center with \$40,000 and then reviewing the center's status six months into the new budget year, with this money to also come from next year's contingency. The County Manager noted this would cut \$115,000 from his proposed contingency line item of \$273,739. This was followed by discussion of allowing the budgeted amount for a QZAB loan payment of approximately \$200,000 that would not be spent during the upcoming fiscal year to be used by the school system for capital improvements. That was followed by discussion of earmarking a certain portion of the contingency fund for the sheriff's department. The general consensus of the board was to direct the County Manager and Finance Director to amend the recommended budget to include the extra funding for the SRO, the funding pool and the heritage center. Chairman Corbin stated that he saw no need for another budget work session. The discussion then turned to the increasing amount of money in the general fund fund balance, which would be equal to 35 percent of the annual budget. The final comments focused on fire department budgets and the need to reduce environmental health fees.

ADJOURN: With no other business, at 7:12 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Kevin Corbin
Board Chairman