

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALAMANCE COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS FOR ALAMANCE COUNTY**

**June 19, 2023, 6:30 PM
Commissioners' Meeting Room
124 West Elm Street
Graham, NC 27253**

Board Members Absent: Chairman John Paisley Jr
Vice-Chair Steve Carter
Commissioner William "Bill" T. Lashley
Commissioner Pamela Thompson
Commissioner Craig Turner

CALL TO ORDER - CHAIRMAN PAISLEY

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - COMMISSIONER THOMPSON

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Thompson moved for approval of an addition to the agenda with a presentation from Alamance-Burlington School System before item 6.a. The motion carried without opposition.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Lashley

APPROVED AS AMENDED

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jim Etheridge, resided north of Elon, spoke about extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJs) and ETJ authority. He asked the Board to represent the underrepresented property owners and find a way to achieve representation and meet the homeowner needs through a county-unified zoning plan.

Ed Priola, Mebane resident and County Commissioner candidate, urged the Board to pass a revenue-neutral tax rate.

Dan Ingle, former County Commissioner and ABSS Board of Education Member, discussed the working relationship between the two boards and noted the great strides in their communication. He mentioned that if the quarter-cent sales tax referendum had passed, he would not have stood

before them. Mr. Ingle suggested maybe looking at it again and getting everyone involved to pass it. He offered his appreciation for whatever help the Board could provide to ABSS.

Chris Crain, ACSO Captain, spoke about the high turnover in the Sheriff's Office and losing officers to other neighboring agencies due to compensation benefits. He continued that some officers were leaving the law enforcement profession altogether due to a perceived lack of support. Captain Crain emphasized there were 60 open positions in the Sheriff's Office currently. He commented the county had experienced an 8% increase in population and a 23.8% increase in new residential homes. Captain Crain noted that the increase in population and infrastructure brings an inevitable strain on public services; law enforcement, emergency services, social services, and the school system are being forced to do more with a whole lot less. He said now was not the time to go cheap because cheap gets expensive in the long run.

Ryan Bowden, Vice-Chair of the ABSS Board of Education, spoke about the superintendent's decision to cut \$7 million from their Central Services Budget. He said their goal was student safety, the ability to attract and retain talented educators and coaches. He requested that the Board fund ABSS properly, safely and reasonably.

Ann Jones, Graham resident, advocated for school funding.

Ebony Pinnix, Green Level resident and ABSS parent, advocated for school funding.

Tiffany Smith, resident and ABSS parents, advocated for school funding.

Bryant Crisp, Gibsonville resident, elected official, and ABSS parent, advocated for school funding.

Tameka Harvey, Burlington resident, advocated for school funding.

Barry Joyce, spoke about the revaluation and compared the discounts in property taxes for businesses and farmers. He alleged that homeowners were being taxed at rates to make up for the discounts provided to farmers and businesses from the recent revaluation.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Turner

APPROVED

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

New PTRC Workforce Development Board – Randy Perkins, Kevin Szostak, & Derrick Byrd

Graham Planning & Zoning/ Graham Board of Adjustment ETJ Member- Charles “Chad” Huffine

Recreation & Parks Commission- Mike Dunning & David Woody

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Budget Amendment-Lottery Funds

Budget Amendment-Year-End

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Closed Session Minutes of May 23, 2023

Regular Minutes of June 5, 2023

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Alamance-Burlington School System Presentation - Dr. Dain Butler, ABSS Superintendent

Dr. Dain Butler, ABSS Superintendent, asked for reconsidering and allocating the ABSS continuation budget of \$867,930. He said he appreciated what the Board had done for the school system. He said he was part of a new administration that inherited a fund balance of \$2.9 million, which was unhealthy. Dr. Butler explained that more funds would come out of the fund balance due to contractual obligations made by the prior administration. He continued that he had made \$7.5 million in cuts since starting in this position last year. Dr. Butler continued there was not much more to cut except for staff and specialty programs. He mentioned the Board of Education also had priorities such as athletic trainers and supplements for teachers and coaches. Dr. Butler noted that ABSS had been in the top 10 in teacher supplements but had fallen to 13th in the state. He mentioned that County Manager York had stated the county's obligation to the school system was capital. He said he respected that and took the initiative to find the 1% increase for teachers, coaches, and athletic trainers, which was about \$1.9 million. He said he did not want to go back on his word and have to cut that out of the budget. Dr. Butler said the continuation budget of \$867,930 included charter school increases, an additional School Resource Officer (SRO) at Southeast High School, a custodial contract at Southeast High School, and classified staff increases. He reiterated that the continuation budget had to be in place for that to happen. Dr. Butler asked that the current administration not be blamed for what was done wrong in the past. Further discussion ensued.

Commissioner Lashley inquired if Dr. Butler had already made cuts to ABSS's budget, then why were the County Commissioners being pressured if they did not fund ABSS, then there would be staff cuts anyway.

Chairman Paisley said he would make a motion to set the tax rate at 43 cents, temporarily hanging on to the extra \$1 million by moving it to the general fund initially, and defer hiring for

the open positions for 90 days. At a later time, revisit and decide where to put the extra \$1 million. Commissioner Thompson and Vice-Chair Carter asked if they could discuss this further under the adoption of the budget.

Commissioner Turner spoke that to continue to meet the priorities that were identified in the last budget work session and fund the request from ABSS; the responsible way would be to increase the tax rate to 43.2 cents, which would provide \$500,000, take out \$165,000 that they already had and take out the \$200,000 from the fund balance. Commissioner Turner emphasized that was not what he wanted to do, but it was the responsible way.

Chairman Paisley asked Dr. Butler if the county could allocate those funds if he promised not to divert the funds to bonuses, as previously done. Dr. Butler said it was ineffective, so he would not do that. He noted that it did nothing for long-term retention.

Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Ordinance

Commissioner Lashley offered, instead of making the rate 43.2 cents, to take funds out of the fund balance and set the tax rate at 43 cents. Vice-Chair Carter agreed, having pondered that several times over the weekend. Commissioner Lashley thought that would be the easiest way.

Susan Evans, Finance Officer, explained what a 43 cents tax rate would provide with some cuts and adjustments and that 43.2 cents would equate to an additional \$502,862. She explained they had added the ABSS request of an additional \$867,930. She said that if they set the tax rate at 43.2 cents, adding the other \$502,862 would leave \$188,807 coming out of the fund balance.

Commissioner Lashley voiced there were still some numbers they did not know and could only assume what those numbers might be. He asked if there was any way to issue a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for 60 days to see what would be passed in the state budget.

Commissioner Lashley stated that the county did not have the \$867,930 to give even though there were other ways to allocate it. He suggested waiting for those numbers because the impact on the county could be less. Ms. Evans responded the school system would need to know upfront what the teacher supplement and salaries would be to prepare their annual pay for teacher contracts. Ms. Evans said once they received their allocation, it would be up to the school system to allocate the funds. Commissioner Thompson said she remembered being on the School Board and in that same situation while waiting for the state budget to pass.

Commissioner Thompson inquired if the open position for the Veterans Service Office had been added back to the budget as unfrozen.

Chairman Paisley justified wanting to keep the Veterans Service Office position frozen for 90 days. Commissioner Thompson countered that the increased traffic to the Alamance County Veterans Service Office was likely due to the smaller offices and fewer staff in the neighboring counties. Vice-Chair Carter mentioned that some smaller counties did not even have a Veterans Service Office, which was one of the main reasons they came to Alamance County.

County Manager York advised that the 43.2 cents tax rate would help prevent hitting the fund balance for a significant recurring expense.

Moved by: Commissioner Lashley

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

APPROVED

Commissioner Lashley, seconded by Vice Chair Carter, moved setting the tax rate at 43.2 cents. The motion carried 4-1 with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Lashley, Turner and Thompson voting in favor of the motion. Chairman Paisley voted in opposition.

Moved by: Commissioner Turner

Seconded by: Commissioner Thompson

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Thompson, moved amending the motion setting the tax rate at 43.2 and unfreezing the open Veterans Service Office position. The motion carried 4-1 with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Turner, Lashley, and Thompson voting in favor of the motion. Chairman Paisley voted in opposition.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

No report was given.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

No report was given.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Turner thanked everyone who had expressed a position on the budget and came out to the work sessions and public hearing. He commented that this year had been a very difficult budget year from the revaluation to the cuts from the Manager's recommended budget. Commissioner Turner said the budget was not perfect but it was a good compromise. He mentioned that he did not want to be above the 43 cents tax rate, but was the responsible choice to make to get the school system the funding it needed.

Vice-Chair Carter mentioned the goal was revenue-neutral, but they had compromised at the 43 cents tax rate. They found out there was another need. He said he was proud of Dr. Butler and his efforts on behalf of the students and staff. Vice-Chair Carter mentioned when he came on the Board five years ago, he had worked four years trying to get an SRO in every school. He said he was proud to say that finally happened. Vice-Chair Carter stated the School Board had a challenge to keep the kids safe and maintain the schools. He discussed how inflation had caused a rise in gas for school buses and the Sheriff's cars, equipment, repairs and maintenance, and

salaries. Vice-Chair Carter reminded them that law enforcement needed their staff. He commented that was why they implemented the salary study plan. He applauded the budget, it was not where he wanted it to be, but it was an unbelievable compromise in light of what everyone was doing. He agreed with Commissioner Turner's comments. Vice-Chair Carter spoke that the government was about working together, not bumping heads to solve the community's needs. He said that evening they had demonstrated a real effort in getting that done. He thanked his fellow board members for their work.

Commissioner Lashley thanked everyone. He said it was important to take your liberty at heart and let your government know what was and was not needed. He thanked the School Board for their willingness to stand up for what they believed. Commissioner Lashley thanked County staff, Ms. Evans, and the County Manager York for their hard work. He mentioned he would keep a close eye on the education system going forward to make sure they were seeing things the right way with no more surprises. Commissioner Lashley thanked the Board for their hard work because it had not been easy. He commented that if he could have changed the outcome he would have. He reassured the taxpayers that he would keep a close eye on spending going forward so they would not have to deal with this next year.

Chairman Paisley thanked all of the staff including the school system's. He said the Board had worked very hard on the budget trying to come up with the correct numbers to save the taxpayers. He shared they had many people having real difficulty in paying their bills, much less their property taxes, and trying to hang onto their homes, and cars. Chairman Paisley said he voted against the budget not because of the school system, but because he was against anything above the 43 cents. He supported the School Board and the superintendent. He gave a shout-out to the Principal of the Year for the fantastic job done at Smith Elementary.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lashley, seconded by Vice-Chair Carter, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board