

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

**June 17, 2024, 6:30 PM
Commissioners' Meeting Room
124 West Elm Street
Graham, NC 27253**

Board Members Present: 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 - VICE-CHAIR CARTER

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by: Commissioner Lashley

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

RECOGNITIONS

Presentation of FY2023-2024 Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

The Board of County Commissioners recognized staff from the County Manager's Office, Budget and Management Services, and the Finance Department for receiving the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for fiscal year 2023-2024.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stuart Smith, a Mebane resident, spoke that he understood citizens were financially challenged with paying property taxes. He encouraged residents who felt burdened to research the Homestead Act. Mr. Smith continued that when the Board fails to adjust the tax rate to meet the county's needs, an undue burden is placed on county employees, the Sheriff's Office, EMS, and

the school system. He stressed the importance of school social workers to help homeless students. He asked the Board to fund the school system fully.

Henry Vines, a Snow Camp resident, suggested the Board fund the necessary things and defund the unnecessary things to balance the budget. He shared concerns about the volunteer fire districts requesting tax increases, which would affect the rural parts of the county.

Joseph Florio, an ABSS student, spoke about teacher and staff shortages and the cancellation of summer school. He also expressed concerns about the condition of the school buildings.

Peter Morcombe, a Graham resident, commented that the school system continued to have more scandals due to a lack of appropriate disciplinary actions. He called upon school officials to make a statement and ensure this does not continue.

Donna Vanhook, a Burlington resident, encouraged the Board to stop the "finger-pointing" and get down to business and do what was best for the students by fully funding the school system.

Medora Burke-Scoll, ABSS Association of Educators Representative, spoke that research showed that increased spending in education raised the graduation rates, boosted adult income, and lowered crime rates. She continued that the funding choices made that night would have repercussions for everyone in Alamance County. Ms. Burke-Scoll said it was a disappointment that funding for schools had fallen on the county level when it was the job of the State of North Carolina. She advised that eliminating teacher supplements would cause teachers to flee to the neighboring school districts.

Camille Mikkelsen, an ABSS parent, advocated for fully funding the school system and shared concerns about the condition of school buildings.

Lily Mikkelsen, an ABSS student, spoke that the budget cuts to the school system needed to stop. She said school morale was low due to the loss of teachers and administrators.

Deborah Smith, a Burlington resident, spoke about the condition of school buildings and the past mold incidents.

Lavon Barnes, a Mebane resident, spoke that citizens wanted to know if they were going to fully fund the school system. He said despite personal feelings, there was an obligation to ensure every future leader in this county had what they needed to be successful.

Daniel Ayers, a Graham resident, spoke that he wanted a pro-life county and a budget that reflected a lifeline to education. He said the funding of public schools could not be neglected. He said that education was a fundamental part of life, and the budget reflected the county's values.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter
Seconded by: Commissioner Turner

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

ACC Board of Trustees – Bill Gomory

Mebane Board of Adjustment ETJ- Genice Akins

Recreation & Parks Commission - Peter Dahl, Kelly Ronnow, and Lisa Wolff

Village of Alamance Planning Board ETJ- Charles Couch, Jr

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Budget Amendment 16

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program-SCAAP Grant - Sheriff's Office

Office on Violence Against Women Grant Application Approval - Family Justice Center

Vaya MOE Funding Amendment and Subrecipient Agreement

Approval to Collect Occupancy Taxes for Members of the Alamance County Municipal TDA.

Resolution for Year-End Procedures - Finance Department

Elon/Alamance Review Officer Resolution - Planning Department

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Minutes of May 6, 2024

Closed Session Minutes of May 6, 2024

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Mebane Planning Board ETJ Appointment

Moved by: Chairman Paisley
Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

Chairman Paisley, seconded by Vice-Chair Carter, moved to reappoint Gale Pettiford to the Mebane Planning Board as an extraterritorial jurisdiction member (ETJ) Member.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Ordinances

County Manager York introduced the budget ordinance for fiscal year 2024-2025. She said the legal requirements for the budget process, including the public hearing, had been fulfilled. She advised that the staff was prepared to help them with this process or take further direction. County Manager York reminded the Board that a vote on the budget ordinance was required before July 1.

Chairman Paisley advised the Board had met in four work sessions and a public hearing. He said they could continue further discussion or entertain a motion and a vote. He added that they had received bills for utilities from the school system. Vice-Chair Carter suggested Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, speak on the most recent ABSS meeting with some ABSS staff.

Mr. Baker said he and County Attorney Stevens had reviewed a year's worth of utility bills, which came to an estimated \$5.8 million for the year, similar to what the school system had provided. County Manager York said there was currently \$3.3 million in the Manager's recommended budget, so they would need an increase of about \$2.5 million to meet that \$5.8 estimate for all utilities for next fiscal year.

Chairman Paisley, seconded by Commissioner Lashley, moved to adopt the Manager's recommended budget with no changes. That motion failed 2-3, with Chairman Paisley and Commissioner Lashley voting in favor. Vice-Chair Carter and Commissioners Thompson and Turner voted in opposition.

Vice-Chair Carter discussed having guard rails in place due to the financial conditions of ABSS over the past year. He said it had limited their ability to have confidence in the numbers that were provided. He suggested having something in place where if ABSS believes they need a specific dollar amount and then they do not use all of those funds, he wanted the county to be able to recover the excess. He referred to Mr. Baker again for further discussion. Mr. Baker advised there were discussions around ensuring spending met the Board's priorities. He emphasized that the county had minimal discretion on how the school system spends its allocations. Mr. Baker suggested asking for additional information on spending as the year goes on or asking them to provide spending updates at the monthly Oversight Committee (OSC) meetings.

Commissioner Lashley asked if the county could request the utility bills from the school system starting in July. Mr. Baker answered that the school system had agreed to provide that information to the OSC and during quarterly presentations.

Vice-Chair Carter asked County Attorney Stevens to review what the county was required to pay for school expenditures and operational expenses. He asked County Attorney Stevens to expand on whether ABSS employees were funded entirely from local dollars rather than state or federal dollars. He answered if there was an increase in the required contribution to that employee's state retirement, whether that came out of county or state dollars. Mr. Stevens said it would

come out of local dollars, so if they were locally funded, local government dollars would have to fund the increases in retirement contributions.

Vice-Chair Carter estimated there were 121 locally paid employees. He asked Dr. Harrison, ABSS Interim Superintendent, to confirm those numbers. Dr. Harrison responded that those numbers were in the ballpark. He provided some totals on those locally funded positions. Vice-Chair Carter said the county was paying for those positions and they were not aware of it. He said those jobs would be cut if they cut that funding.

Commissioner Turner spoke that ABSS leadership staff present last year were not there now. He said it was time to turn the page, and he hoped they could turn the page. He reviewed some of the line item requests and made funding suggestions. Commissioner Turner discussed a \$5 million increase to ABSS's budget request, which would be a 2-cent tax increase. He said he thought it was a reasonable place to land especially getting the \$1.4 million for the technology requests. Based on other conversations, he said this would avoid school employees' reduction in force (RIF).

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Thompson, moved to accept the Manager's recommended budget with the following amendments:

- Increase the property tax rate to .472 cents
- Fund ABSS's technology and software equipment totaling \$1.388 million with the Davenport Capital Reserve Plan
- Fund an additional \$5 million in ongoing operating expenses to ABSS
- Add \$200,000 to ABSS's fines and forfeitures line item
- Remove Section 13 Economic Development Policy from the Manager's Recommended Budget

Chairman Paisley said too many residents had told him they were fighting to pay medical bills and mortgages, so he could not vote for a 4-cent tax increase. Commissioner Lashley said that was too rich for his blood when they would be raising taxes almost three times the inflation rate.

Vice-Chair Carter offered an amendment to round that number down to a rate of .465 cents. Chairman Paisley advised that the motion maker would have to make the amendment. Commissioner Turner did not accept that amendment.

Moved by: Commissioner Turner

Seconded by: Commissioner Thompson

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Thompson, moved the following amendments to his original motion to the Manager's Recommended Budget:

- Increase the property tax rate by 3.657 cents to a property tax rate of 0.469 cents per \$100 valuation
- Fund ABSS's technology and software equipment totaling \$1.388 million with the Davenport Capital Reserve Plan
- Fund an additional \$4.5 million in ongoing operating expenses to ABSS
- Add \$200,000 to ABSS's fines and forfeitures line item
- Remove Section 13 Economic Development Policy from the Manager's Recommended Budget

The motion carried 3-2 with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Turner and Thompson voting in favor of the motion. Chairman Paisley and Commissioner Lashley voted in opposition.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

No report given.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

No report given.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Turner said this was a decision that would not make anyone absolutely happy. He commented some folks wanted everything ABSS had requested, and residents wanted no tax increase. He mentioned that he was not one to recommend a tax increase, but the county had needs, and there was a need for services. Commissioner Turner said they had to decide to fund the needs of the county, and they could not have provided less money to ABSS in order for it to function. He said even though they had to raise taxes, Alamance County still had one of the lowest tax rates in the state. He thought it was the best choice for Alamance County, and he understood others would disagree.

Vice-Chair Carter concurred with Commissioner Turner. He said that no one would be happy because of the people who wanted more who received a lot less. He continued that this put the onus back on ABSS to get their act together.

Commissioner Thompson said it was an honor to have seconded Commissioner Turner's motion, and she appreciated him. She said it took leadership to go against the grind. She continued that she had been in public office since 2012, and conflict went with the territory. Commissioner Thompson stressed that they had to work together as a county. She encouraged them to take this

moment, move forward, and focus on the future. She said she was proud of this county. She thanked her fellow Board members for working so hard.

Commissioner Lashley addressed a comment from the public comment period. He said the Alamance County Commissioners did not cancel summer school. He complimented Lee Johnson for his work at Cummings High School. Commissioner Lashley said that Alamance County, compared to counties its size, always contributes higher than its ability to pay. He said that it was true that night they would be contributing higher than their ability to pay.

ADJOURNMENT

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

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 8:51 P.M.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board