

April 14, 2004

At a **budget workshop meeting** of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held in the Board Room of the Southampton County Office Center at 26022 Administration Center Drive, Courtland, Virginia on April 14, 2004 at 6:30 PM.

SUPERVISORS PRESENT

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman
Walter L. Young, Jr., Vice-Chairman
Carl J. Faison
Anita T. Felts
Ronald M. West
Moses Wyche

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

Charleton W. Sykes

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Assistant County Administrator
Julia G. Williams, Finance Director
Susan H. Wright, County Administration Executive Secretary

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Mrs. Jane Maddrey, Director of the Southampton County Department of Social Services, was the first to speak to her respective budget. She distributed handouts providing an overview of their budget situation and FY 2003 revenue production data. She stated that they were Southampton's safety net. When all else failed, individuals or families who had nowhere else to turn came to them. Citizens, churches, non-profit organizations, and other local government entities turned to them to assist those they believed to be in need of help. Their mandate was extraordinarily broad, from providing information on how to reach various agencies, to helping those displaced by Hurricane Floyd make permanent living arrangements, to providing various benefits such as Food Stamps, to the protection of children and adults 24/7. She advised that there was serious wear and tear on the safety net. They had sustained a 25% staff reduction since 1991, affecting all aspects of their operation. They had shrinking federal and state revenue streams. Recent reductions in funding from allocations that had remained basically unchanged since 1988 had created a very difficult operating environment. The cost of doing business was rising, as we knew just from looking at what was happening at the gasoline pumps and with the cost of hospitalization coverage. Mrs. Maddrey stated that they had limited options left to further contain costs. They operated under stringent federal and state requirements, some enforceable by federal court order and some by chargeback if actions were not taken on a timely basis and with accuracy. Some of their funding was performance based. They could not walk away or reduce service hours that in the case of child and adult protective services were all day. They may be the only source of survival for individuals and families. And their workloads were increasing. She informed that the strategic plan of the State Department of Social Services for FY 04 – FY 05 was to intentionally grow the Food Stamp and Medicaid caseloads, two of their largest programs. She advised that Southampton County was dramatically impacted because of their existence, as over \$14 million flowed through the county from clients, stores, vendors, and providers of services. Of that total, 98% came from federal and state sources. So they were getting very good return for their local contribution. She stated that they were requesting a very modest increase of \$3,258 in new money.

Mr. Buddy Mountjoy, Finance Director of the Western Tidewater Community Services Board (WTCSB), addressed the Board. He distributed a report of services provided to Southampton County in FY 2003. He advised that they served the counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight and the cities of Franklin and Suffolk. They provided mental retardation and substance abuse services. He thanked the Board for their contribution in FY 2004. He advised that they were requesting an increase of 7.7% or \$4,783. He reported that Southampton County received \$698,311 in services in 2003, a return of \$11.24 for every \$1 contributed. He mentioned that they received a State budget cut of 10% in 2003 that also continued in 2004, and they uncertain if it would be restored in 2005.

Mr. Eric Cooke, Commonwealth's Attorney, addressed the Board. He advised that the funding he requested and the funding that was recommended was not vastly different. The only real distinction was that the County Administrator did not recommend funding for equipment that he had requested. He stated that he was not contesting the difference. He understood where they were financially, and frankly, had asked for the same funding from the State Compensation Board. He was also pursuing other avenues. So there was a very real possibility that they would get some of that funding this fiscal

year. He advised that he was very appreciative of what had been recommended by the County Administrator and asked that they approve the budget. That would allow them to continue to provide the quality prosecution services the citizens of this County deserved and had come to expect. He thanked each Board member for their service and dedication to the community.

Mr. Vernie Francis, Sheriff, addressed the Board. He stated that he wanted to thank the Board for its actions in regards to the new radio system, and he supported any and all efforts in the budget concerning it. Also, all of the constitutional officers had met and he represented all of them in supporting the pay and classification study proposed in the budget. He advised that in regards to his budget, he wanted to thank Mr. Johnson and his staff who worked very hard in working with him in preparing the budget. He supported the recommendations they had made.

Mrs. Shelley Huntington, Manager of the Walter Cecil Rawls Library, addressed the Board. She distributed a handout providing statistics and an overview of the materials, programs, and services they provided. She also distributed information about their long-range plan. She advised that in rural communities where budgets in local governments and homes were tight, free access to information and resources was imperative. The library provided citizens with educational and recreational tools needed to improve their lives. She reported that 65,984 materials were checked out of the library last year, a 37.5% increase over the last 3 years. The library also enjoyed 23,454 visits. They were providing technological support and access to people, as their 13 computers were used 6,138 times last year. People in the community without personal access to electronic resources depended on the library for such. She stated that numbers did not adequately reflect the real power of their library and how they served people. The Board may get a better sense if they were to imagine the hundreds of students who benefited from library visits to classrooms, where librarians delivered supplemental resources that helped teachers meet Standards of Learning. Or the hundreds of people who came to their library to get help with a resume, downloading an application, and submitting them online. It was clear that the library was helping people get jobs and thereby helping the economy. She advised that they had adopted and were currently working under a long-range plan. It was a way to guide them in implementing services and ensure that they were making the best use of their resources and energies. There was a real commitment to technology and offering high-speed access to electronic sources, which corresponded directly with their need for computer equipment replacement, which was in their budget. As people came to the library to use electronic sources, they simply could not have old, faulty computers; they needed new ones. She announced that in a few days, she would no longer be the manager at the library, as her husband was going off to business school and she was following him. She thanked the Board for their continued support and Mr. Johnson, whom she had learned a lot from. She had learned the most from the people during her daily visits with them at the library. She believed that they deserved the best library that the Board was able to give them.

Ms. Randi Blumenson, Managing Attorney with the Suffolk Office of the Virginia Legal Aid Society, spoke to her respective budget. She provided handouts of a PowerPoint presentation that was prepared by their administrative office, but did not actually present a PowerPoint presentation. She informed that they served low-income persons living in the counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight, and the cities of Franklin and Suffolk. They certainly appreciated the funding the Board had given them in the past. They were asking for an increase this year to \$3,883. She reported that last fiscal year they closed out 44 cases for Southampton County residents, in which they served 106 men, women, and children. She advised that their clients did not pay for legal services. For most of their clients, their agency was a last resort. It was either them or no one. Their clients had changed since she came there 20 years ago. A greater percentage of their clientele were now senior citizens. They were increasingly being ripped off by door-to-door salesmen. She reported that their agency recovered funds close to \$60,000 for Southampton County residents last fiscal year, primarily in benefits cases. She then gave real examples of some cases their agency had handled, as some people were not familiar with the services they provided. She stated that she hoped the Board would support them again this year.

Mr. Vince Holt, President of the Southampton County Fire and Rescue Association, addressed the Board. He stated that he represented 10 outstanding fire departments and 5 outstanding rescue squads that served this county. The Association wanted to thank them for the opportunity to serve the county. The county was also very blessed to have the members that served the various departments. He advised that those departments had indicated to him that they wished to honor Mr. Johnson's wishes in trying to maintain a level-funded budget. Their only request had been for the line item that addressed the mass casualty trailer to be adjusted to also mention their hazmat trailer, and a \$500 increase there to help with consumables on the trailer, trailer maintenance, etc. He spoke highly of the capital improvement program. He stated that because of that program, you could go to any fire or rescue department in the county and find modern equipment and building improvements. He thanked the Board for their willingness to fund a new radio system and advised that they were appreciative and

very excited about it. He informed that they were working on another partnership. Mr. Johnson came to their meeting last night and the Association agreed to work with him in exploring all alternatives possible to help recover revenue.

Supervisor West asked if he was referring to federal and state grants? Mr. Johnson replied, not specifically. They were talking about the possibility of studying EMS service fees.

Mr. Charles Turner, Superintendent of Southampton County Public Schools, was the last to speak to his respective budget. He presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Board. He introduced Dr. Roger Morris, Director of Administrative Services, who assisted him with the PowerPoint. He stated that he recognized the complexity of the budget situation, but nevertheless, thought that Southampton County was on the verge of greatness. He reported the progress of the schools and students. Writing scores at all levels were up significantly, reading scores of grades 3-5 had increased, and all Standards of Learning (SOL) scores had increased. Two schools were fully accredited, one met state standards, and three schools were provisionally accredited. Their dropout rate was one of the lowest in the state. He noted that facilities made a difference, and thanks to the Board, they had some of the finest facilities in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

He reported the following potentially negative factors on their budget:

- Escalated Virginia Retirement System (VRS) Rate Increase (42.1%)
- Virginia Pre-School Initiative Reduced
- K-3 Program Reduced
- Student Achievement Grant (Dropout Prevention & School Nurses Assistance Program Eliminated)
- School Resource Officer Position Not Available Through Current Funding

He noted that the Sheriff's Office had been carrying the school resource officer position through a special grant, but they did not have that grant anymore.

He reported the following things they had done to help their situation:

- Eliminated all new personnel requests, except 1 special education position
- Froze all non-personnel expenditures, except regular tuition and required maintenance
- Reduced school bus request
- Reduced car request
- Through internal measures, worked to keep the Pre-School Program in tact
- Introduced no new initiatives

Mr. Turner advised that he planned to provide a salary increase of 4%. It was critical in order for them to stay competitive with other localities and to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel. He showed a comparison of teacher salaries for first-year, ten, fifteen, and 20-year teachers for Southampton County and neighboring localities. Southampton County lagged behind, considerably as the tenure increased.

He informed that they were requesting an increase in local funding of \$668,642, primarily attributable to the VRS Rate Increase of 42.1%, which equated to \$454,695. Also a factor was the proposed 4% salary increase, which was critical.

He stated that they had come a long way and the momentum must continue. He thanked the Board for their consideration.

In regards to the requested and proposed budgets of the organizations/agencies that addressed the Board, Mr. Johnson advised that they fully funded the Department of Social Services and proposed 4% of the 7.7% increase requested by the WTCSB. They withheld \$14,000 of equipment funding from the Commonwealth's Attorney, and proposed 4% of the 6.85% increase requested by the Walter Cecil Rawls Library. Most of the operational budget of the Sheriff's Office was met, but funding was not proposed for their self-funded retirement system. For the Virginia Legal Aid Society, they proposed about \$500 of the \$1300 requested. The Fire and Rescue Association was fully funded. He noted that they included modest increases for Franklin Fire and Rescue. The School Board requested an increase of \$668,442, and they proposed \$205,672.

The Board indicated that overall they were pleased with the proposed budget. Vice-Chairman Young indicated that he was very concerned about the 3¢ increase in the real property tax rate, especially in

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light of trying to look out for the farmer. However, he did not know what else to do. All the Board members agreed that it was something that had to be done unless they cut expenses by \$290,000, the amount that the real property tax increase would bring in. They thought all the expenses were necessary and did not see any leeway. The Board discussed and agreed that they needed to start exploring additional revenue streams. Twice a year billing for taxes, waste generator fees, and EMS fees were mentioned. They acknowledged that they needed to rethink the way the county currently handled solid waste, as they were spending big money and not solving the problem. Supervisor West again mentioned the idea of manning a dumpsite in the county to see if the amount of solid waste disposed of there would decrease. The Board agreed that since they were pleased with the proposed budget, they did not see the need to have another budget workshop prior to receiving public comment. It was the consensus of the Board that the County Administrator be authorized to advertise the proposed FY 2005 Budget, as directed, for public comment on Monday, May 17, 2004, at 7:00 PM.

Unrelated to the budget, Vice-Chairman Young asked Mr. Johnson if the muzzleloading topic could be put to a vote in November as a referendum? Mr. Johnson replied that he did not know but would check on that for him.

Mr. Johnson indicated that their 5-year contract with Draper Aden for general engineering services was coming to an end. Accordingly, they had advertised to receive Requests for Proposals and received 10 such proposals. Cindy Cave, Economic Development Director, Waverly Coggsdale, Assistant County Administrator, and Julien Johnson, Public Utilities Director, would serve on the committee to evaluate those proposals. He stated that he would also like for two Board members to serve on that committee. Supervisors Felts and West advised that they would serve.

Regarding the Land Development Task Force, Mr. Waverly Coggsdale and Chairman Jones advised Supervisor Felts, who had shown prior interest in serving on that committee, that 3 Planning Commissioners would serve, so there was no reason to limit the number of Board members. They extended an invitation to her to serve if she was still interested. She indicated that she would serve.

Supervisor West mentioned that he and Waverly Coggsdale would be representing the Board of Supervisors at the WTCSB golf tournament on Friday.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk