

Board of Supervisors - April 12, 2018 Regular Meeting

The Wise County Board of Supervisors met in a Regular Meeting on Thursday, April, 12, 2018 @ 6:00 PM in the School Board Education Center located at 628 Lake Street in Wise. The following members were present:

Honorable Dana G. Kilgore –Chair
Honorable Robert E. Robbins, Jr. – Vice-Chair
Honorable J. H. Rivers
Honorable John Schoolcraft
Honorable Bobby Cassell
Honorable Robert R. Adkins – members of said Board and
David L. Cox – Interim County Administrator
Karen T. Mullins – County Attorney
Annette Underwood – Executive Secretary

ABSENT

Honorable Fred Luntsford
Honorable Steve Bates

PRAYER

Bob Adkins led in prayer.

PLEDGE

All led in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

MINUTES

A motion was made by John Schoolcraft, seconded by Robby Robbins, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

AGENDA

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by John Schoolcraft, to approve the agenda as presented to include items in red. The motion was unanimously approved.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

Supervisor Rivers noted that since the flooding in February, there is still debris along the highway, the guardrails, and river banks that need to be cleaned up. He said he appreciated all the work VDOT has done but more cleanups are needed.

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED TAX INCREASE

A public hearing was duly advertised for this date to receive citizens' comments regarding a proposed tax increase of 2 cents on personal property and 2 cents on real estate property for FY 2018/19.

Lloyd Robinette Jr. stated that he does not support the tax increase because citizens cannot afford higher taxes with the loss of jobs, elderly on low income, and foreclosure on homes everywhere. He asked the Board to make cuts in spending. He felt the Board should have been preparing for a time such as this knowing that the school debt was forthcoming and the need for other services would increase.

Walter Crouse opposed the tax increase. Citizens cannot afford a tax increase due to loss of jobs, increase in health cost, gasoline, and groceries. Many are on fixed income with health issues. He suggested cutting administration cost. Reduce the Administrator positions to one. The County does not need three Administrators. Cut the school system, the Regional Jail, and make cuts to departments within the Courthouse.

Juanita Quillen opposed any tax increase. She referred to her Mom and the hard time she has in paying her bills and making ends meet.

Harold Greear opposed any tax increase. He stated that cuts could be made overall to balance the budget without placing a burden on the tax payers. He said it's not a good time to raise taxes when the economy is failing. There is no replacement for coal jobs that have been taken away, and people are leaving the area to find jobs. The school enrollment is continually declining, and cuts could be made to the school system and other departments to offset a tax increase.

Glenda Skeen voiced her opposition to raising taxes. She felt that the general fund budget could be cut to balance the budget. The people in Wise County are struggling with the loss of jobs, businesses have closed, and people are moving away to find work. She asked the Board to look for other means to balance the budget.

Claude Quillen stated that our economy is gone. People are leaving every day to find work. He said the Board should have had foresight in preparing for the upcoming school debt. There are many widows in Pound, and the surrounding area that are on fixed income, and it's a choice sometimes for them to decide whether to buy food or medicine. He opposed any tax increase.

There being no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Michelle Davalos, the new District Ranger for the Clinch Ranger District of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, addressed the Board with a brief overview on the mission of the Forest Service.

She explained that this will be a challenging year for the Clinch Ranger District's recreation Program. Staffing shortages and aging infrastructure are impacting the District's ability to provide the same recreation opportunities as in the past. More specifics will be forthcoming, but expect reduced services such as bathroom closures, reduced mowing, and temporary closures related to public health or safety issues at some sites.

Walter Crouse, Keep Wise County Beautiful Chairman, invited everyone to participate in the 21st Keep Wise County Beautiful cleanup for Wise County. He encouraged everyone to recycle and use the bins that are provided for recyclables. Recycling brings revenue to the County, and since Kmart has moved, that number has declined. If the County does not meet its quota for recycling, there is a large fee to be paid. He stressed the need to stop littering if tourism is to be an economic engine for this area.

There being no further comments, the public expression period was closed.

IN RE: CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by J. H. Rivers, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Attorney Mullins read the Proclamation Recognizing Wise County Public Library 60th Anniversary, and the resolution proclaiming April 8-14, 2018 as Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in Wise County.

Lou Ellsworth, Chairman of the Regional Library Board of Trustees and Julie Short Assistant Director of LP Regional Library, being present for the reading of the Proclamation, thanked the Board for its continued support of the Library.

IN RE: OPERATION KID SPECIAL FUND

Authorized Wise County to serve as fiscal agent for Operation Kid Special Fund

IN RE: PROCLAMATION WISE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNIVERSARY

Approved the Proclamation recognizing Wise County Public Library 60th Anniversary

IN RE: RESOLUTION RT 757 PROJECT ADJUSTMENT

Approved the resolution regarding Rt 757 Project adjustments

RESOLUTION # 2018

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: CIP PLAN FY 2019

The proposed CIP Plan for FY 2019 was given as a handout for Board members to review

IN RE: RESOLUTION CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL WARRIORS GIRLS BASKETBALL

Approved the resolution honoring Central High School Warriors Girls Basket ball Team

RESOLUTION # 2018

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: RESOLUTION PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

Approved the Resolution proclaiming the week of April 8-14, 2018 as Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in Wise County.

RESOLUTION # 2018

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

The motion to approve the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

IN RE: BUDGET COMMITTEE UPDATE

Finance Administrator Cox stated that the Budget Committee has met several times to provide a draft budget for the Board to review for further cuts and /or adjustments prior to setting a public hearing. He said with the proposed cuts that have been suggested by the Committee, and with the proposed tax

increase, he can balance the budget. There are some public safety items, the school debt, and other cuts that need to be considered. As of right now, no figures from the state and Comp Board have been received. The proposed budget does not include any raises for County employees.

The scheduling of a workshop for the full Board to review the proposed budget is on the agenda.

Mr. Cox noted that there is an exemption for the elderly and disabled that is administered through the Commissioner of Revenue's Office

Chair Kilgore explained that it creates a problem for the Board when the tax rate must be set prior to the budget being adopted. The Board moves forward on the best estimates and make adjustments when final figures become available from the state.

Mr. Cox stated that the School budget has been cut \$500,000 in the proposed budget because he understood that they have received additional funding from the state in the amount of \$2M. Mr. Mullins is preparing its proposed budget to be presented to the School Board in May.

Chair Kilgore noted that the total school budget has not been cut. The school got this additional money from the state because the state recognized the financial situation in this area.

Supervisor Rivers stated that the current budget shows a short fall in revenue. Revenue is going down approximately \$4.2M from last year. Last year the Board paid, in full, the debt on the Justice Center, which was about \$3.6M. With that debt being removed, this leaves the budget \$600,000 short. Revenue came in unexpected from a lawsuit in the amount of \$1.17M. By using a portion of this money, would provide a balanced budget as long as there is level funding. Also, another unexpected \$200,000 in revenue was received. Mr. Rivers felt that with this unexpected revenue, he could see no need for a tax increase this year.

Supervisor Schoolcraft stated that he was not aware of the additional funding that Supervisor Rivers spoke of, and he has not been given any figures or a draft of the proposed budget. With no former knowledge of the proposed budget, he could not make any constructive comments regarding the budget.

Finance Administrator Cox stated that there is an expense side of the budget too. Health insurance went up 5.1% and VRS went up 2.3%. Coal Severance has declined, machinery & Tools have declined, and property taxes are declining. He said he did not want to see a tax increase, but if taxes aren't raised in small increments, a large increase will be needed on down the road. He noted also that there are no raises included in the proposed budget for County employees.

Supervisor Schoolcraft was concerned that the whole Board is not being informed on what's in the proposed budget. Decisions cannot be made without all the facts.

Supervisor Cassell stated that he has not received any information regarding the proposed budget, and he was not aware of the additional funds that have been mentioned. Without a copy of the proposed budget and more information on the County's finances and operational expenses, he felt unprepared to discuss or ask any questions regarding the budget.

Treasurer Smith spoke to the Board stating that the Treasurer's Office must know the tax rate each year in March or the first of April for her to get the tax tickets out on time. If not, the tax due date will have to be changed.

IN RE: RESOLUTION SETTING THE PROPERTY TAX RATE

A motion was made by Bobby Cassell, seconded by Robby Robbins, to approve the resolution setting the property tax rates for FY 2018/2019, which raises personal property tax 2 cents and real estate property tax 2 cents. The votes were as follows:

Aye- Bobby Cassell
Bob Adkins
Robby Robbins
Dana Kilgore

Nay- J. H. Rivers
John Schoolcraft

ABSENT: Steve Bates
Fred Luntsford

Motion carried.

RESOLUTION # 2018

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: SOFTWARE ENGINEERING FUNDS

A motion was made by John Schoolcraft, seconded by Bob Adkins, to approve the use of Software Engineering Funds in the amount of \$15,000, which will be used for the Miles Space CubeSat Program. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: TENNIS COURTS FUNDING – EAST SIDE HIGH SCHOOL

Finance Administrator Cox stated that the Town of Coeburn has received \$21,000 in private donations toward the repairs of the East Side High School tennis courts. The town is requesting \$5,000 to be used as matching funds for this project.

It was noted that the School Board should be taking care of the school needs. If one request is approved by the Board, other requests from other schools will follow.

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Dana Kilgore, to appropriate \$5,000 for the Town of Coeburn to be used as matching funds for repairs to the East Side High School tennis courts. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: RESOLUTION OPIOID ADDICTION

It was agreed that the resolution on Opioid addiction be tabled until the May meeting.

IN RE: BUDGET AMENDMENTS

A motion was made by Bob Adkins, seconded by Robby Robbins, to approve budget amendment #15 as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – LENOWISCO PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by John Schoolcraft, to appoint Robert Bloomer to fill the unexpired term of James Stone on the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission Board of Directors. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: POLICY – ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Bob Adkins, to approve the Policy for Electronic Participation in Meetings from Remote Locations. The motion was unanimously approved.

(Said Policy is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: CHANGE OF BOARD MEETING DATE

A motion was made by Bob Adkins, seconded by Robby Robbins, to change the May Board of Supervisors meeting from May 10, 2018 to May 3, 2018 @ 6:00 PM in the School Board Education Center. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: BUDGET WORKSHOP

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by John Schoolcraft, to set the budget workshop for Wednesday, April 25, 2018 @ 10:00 AM in the conference room of the County Administrator's Office located in the Wise County Courthouse. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: CLOSE SESSION

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Bob Adkins, to go into close session as permitted by the Code of Virginia per the following Code Sections:

- Section 2.2-3711(A)(6) Investing of public funds
- (A)(7) Consultation with legal counsel
- (A)(1) Personnel

After close session, a motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Bob Adkins, to reconvene the regular meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: RESOLUTION CERTIFICATION FOR CLOSE MEETING

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by Robby Robbins, to approve the resolution certifying that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements as were identified in the motion convening the close meeting were heard or discussed by the Board of Supervisors. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION # 2018

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: RADIO TOWERS UPGRADE

A motion was made by Bobby Cassell, seconded by Bob Adkins, to approve the request from the Sheriff's Department for the purchase of emergency radio equipment needed to upgrade the two existing radio tower sites in Big Stone Gap and in the St. Paul area of Wise County for a total cost of \$21,754.36. The motion was unanimously approved.

BOARD COMMENTS

There was some discussion on the problem with setting the tax rate prior to having sufficient information to prepare a budget, which places a burden on the administrative staff and Board of Supervisors in making a decision as to whether or not a tax increase is necessary.

RECESS

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by Bobby Cassell, to recess the meeting until Wednesday, April 25, 2018 at 10:00 AM in the conference room of the County Administrator's Office located in the Wise County Courthouse. The motion was unanimously approved.

ATTEST:

WISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

David L. Cox, Interim Clerk

Dana G. Kilgore, Chair