

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Thursday, January 7, 2016, at 6:00pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chair Tom Smith, Vice-Chair Karen Leys, Commissioner Larry Davis, Commissioner Mark Evans, Commissioner Bobby Irwin, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans. County Attorney Donna Shumate was absent.

Chair Smith called the meeting to order and explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the expanded sales tax.

County Manager Don Adams said that the expanded sales tax is estimated to be \$224,000 next fiscal year. He explained that we will receive the entire allotment in the fiscal year because the auditors will back in the amounts for the months received after the end of the fiscal year. He said we won't know the July amount until October so it makes it hard to estimate the actual amount. He said that the money can only be spent on 3 purposes; K-12 education, community college and economic development. He talked about separating the issues. He said he advises the Board to wait until after the election because of the bond referendum and sales tax referendum. He stated that he recommends Wilkes Community College (WCC) come in February and open it up for economic development, if needed, and have K-12 come late March and keep that meeting open for economic development too. He reiterated his recommendation for 2 meetings.

Chair Smith asked if WCC comes before the bond referendum how will that affect it. The County Manager explained that it is contingent upon the bond; Dr. Cox and Dr. Hauser are coming to explain they are discussing what amount of money from the bond will be going to the Alleghany location.

Chair Smith said that WCC's money comes through the bond, and asked is there some of it a match. The County Manager said his understanding is it has some matching requirements, and they are developing a plan about the match portion.

Commissioner Davis and County Manager Don Adams talked about what we get is for the Alleghany location from their proposals and a portion of these monies could be put up for a match.

Commissioner Irwin explained WCC's amount is \$5,200,000 and the match is determined by the tier status, and asked which county is used for the match. The County Manager said he doesn't know but he can collect questions and let them know so they can be answered at the meeting. The County Manager said the Board doesn't have to decide in February. Commissioner Irwin talked about the importance for people to know the information before the election.

Commissioner Irwin and County Manager Don Adams talked about the money is for 3 areas, and it can be spilt in any way the Board wants. Commissioner Irwin asked about the interest that is paid on the school debt. County Manager Don Adams said to look at the most recent loan, the federal government is reimbursing the interest, and have to look at the 8-classroom addition. The County Manager explained the QZAB and QSCB loans. The County Manager asked does the Board want to supplement or supplant existing programs. Commissioner Irwin said he pays off the highest interest loans first. County Manager Don Adams stated there are no rules except the money must be spent in the 3 areas. Commissioner Irwin said he is not saying do it that way.

County Manager Don Adams said today is about the process. He stated that those type of conversations about deciding what to do with the money can be later. He gave an example of ongoing programming costs. He stated that's the debate for this Board, and the Board needs to think about capital and programming costs.

Chair Smith said if the Board choses to put the money towards the debt, why should the people come. Commissioner Evans said he wants to hear the requests about what they would use the money for then have the conversation about what to use the money for.

Commissioner Irwin said when looking at the \$5,200,000 the need to see how much money is coming to Alleghany. Commissioner Evans said that's why we need to hear them. Commissioner Irwin asked what about the money we currently give them. The County Manager talked about they feel like they have doubled down on the funding for Alleghany and that is the type of information that is going to be presented including capital needs and what they have done here.

Commissioner Leys said she thinks it is going to be difficult to have a serious conversation until we hear from the groups. She stated that she toured the local WCC, class was occurring in the basement, she believes they have put additional resources in, and it is working.

Commissioner Irwin says he wants to know what is spent in Alleghany and what is spent in Ashe.

Commissioner Leys said the match has to be affordable.

Chair Smith talked about listening to the people, economic development committees and some of their recommendations are going to cost money. He said that he feels like the Board is obligated to listen.

Commissioner Leys asked do we have groups ready to present budgets. County Manager Don Adams said he thinks youth will be ready at the second meeting and marketing could be but he needs to check on it. He explained the BDC process of taking the elements in the plan, ranked them and seeing what the priorities are. He talked about the business development side, and February would be hard but April wouldn't. He said that the BDC has to figure out how to get more time from Dale, and Dale will be bringing concepts to the Board.

Chair Smith talked about staying open minded on the conversations because he first thought it should be capital but not sure now. He said he wants to hear the people.

Commissioner Leys said she is totally uninformed about K-12 needs. She stated that she saw the paper from the Board of Education and talked to Jason Williams. Commissioner Evans said that was a rough draft that was presented.

Commissioner Irwin talked about the bond requirements including the required match. County Manager Don Adams said that Dr. Cox is working on a package that is fair to all of the counties because they are proposing renovations of the facility and asking for a match.

Commissioner Irwin talked about the economic development area and asked could any money go towards communication. County Manager Don Adams said no. Commissioner Evans said it would have to get creative. County Manager Don Adams said the only way would be to get in the tower business and lease out to cellphone companies.

Commissioner Irwin said he has to hear the requests.

Commissioner Evans and County Manager Don Adams talked about the special meetings.

County Manager Don Adams said he wanted to get Dr. Cox and Dr. Hauser here at the same time, so he got some tentative dates.

Chair Smith said for the K-12 people it will be after March. County Manager Don Adams said he recommends the end of March or early April.

Commissioner Davis said when it is all said and done dividing it up among all. Commissioner Irwin said that's an option.

Chair Smith stated that the Commissioners don't have to do it all. He said we are in agreement to set the meetings up, start with WCC and whatever economic development group is ready for February.

The County Manager provided the dates from WCC. The Board of Commissioners discussed dates in February and decided on February 11 at 6pm. The County Manager said they have stated they appreciate this.

Chair Smith and County Manager Don Adams talked about the Manager hasn't talked to the Superintendent about dates. The County Manager mentioned dates near the end of the March.

The Board of Commissioners talked about dates and times in March. They decided on March 24 at 6pm for K-12 and economic development.

County Manager Don Adams said from WCC's standpoint, any questions the Commissioners have he can pass them along to Dr. Cox so he will be prepared to answer them.

Commissioner Evans said he will have more questions after the presentation.

Chair Smith mentioned that the Council of Government and Sparta Town Council voted on a resolution in support of the bond, and asked if the Board is willing to consider something similar. He said he will put a copy of the resolution in the Board's mailboxes.

Commissioner Irwin said there is going to be a lot of meetings statewide about the bond and a private committee that is going around the state to explain the bond and the closest one to us is Caldwell County. He further said that the state bond intertwines with the expanded sales tax and ¼¢ sales tax come into play at budget time.

Commissioner Davis and County Manager Don Adams talked about a meeting next Tuesday where Amy Lucas is taking a van to Wilkes County about the bond. The County Manager said she is leaving at 10:00am, and he will send an email out.

Commissioner Irwin talked about we could have a group come to Alleghany. Commissioner Leys said we need that. Chair Smith said he doesn't have a problem with them coming, and encouraged Commissioner Irwin to talk with the people.

County Manager Don Adams said that he has a 4-page summary from NC State, and he will put it in the Board's mailboxes. He stated that it's the best he has seen.

Commissioner Irwin talked about there is money it in for veterans, disabled children, state parks. Chair Smith mentioned the recent article in the Winston-Salem Journal about the state bond.

Commissioner Irwin explained the breakout of the state bond.

Commissioner Irwin gave everyone copies of the list that the schools gave him and Commissioner Evans, and said he doesn't think there is very much interest coming from the school board.

Chair Smith asked for any other comments. No one spoke.

Being no further business, Commissioner Leys made a motion to adjourn at 6:49pm. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Tom Smith
Chair