

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on Tuesday, June 26, 2012, at 6:30pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina. The purpose of this public hearing is to here public comments regarding the proposed FY 2012/13 budget.

Present: Chairman Ken Richardson, Vice-Chair Tom Smith, Commissioner Larry Cox, Commissioner John Goudreau, Commissioner Steve Roten, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans. County Attorney Donna Shumate was absent.

Chair Richardson opened the public hearing at 6:30pm. He talked about how the public hearing will go including everyone will have 10 minutes to speak, and this is the Commissioners' opportunity to listen.

Kim Atwell talked about her support for the library. She further talked about the library is an asset to everyone, and the library is a foundation for a community. She gave examples of how critical services are for the library. She talked about the library's programs that are offered for everyone to come. She urged the Board to please consider every avenue possible to benefit the library.

Chair Richardson said that he forgot to mention to ask people to come to the podium and if there are questions pose them to the County Manager.

Nancy Hall explained that she is representing council on aging. She explained her personal history of if not for the senior center she would have not made it when her mother died. She talked about people at council on aging are like family, and she has found a lot of friends there and extended family. She said that she still drives and cooks but to think about the people that cannot drive or cook and can't get there. She talked about those people don't see anyone and the senior center provides someone to help them. She presented a petition with 52 names requesting to not cut too much.

Gene Jones talked about increased taxes. He talked about comments made by the Commissioners during budget meetings, and one commissioner stands firm. He asked the Board what they not understand about our economy. He further asked what they not understand about citizens having a hard time paying their bills. He asked did the Board read the US Constitution. He further asked is it unjust taxes for unjust funding. He said that a tax decrease is what is needed. He further said that this Board is tax and spend spend spend which is a mindless theory, and this is backwards. He provided examples of going forward. He said yes it takes money to run government but cannot believe the Commissioners entertain the idea of more taxes in this economy. He talked about having blind leadership for 20 years and some of you have joined this. He said that this is their choice. He further said that this type of county government is near its end.

Kay Luffman, JCPC, explained that this is a matching grant program where the State provides 80% and local 20%. She explained that if the County cuts \$3,404 it is a cut of 33%. She further explained how it is a 33% cut. She talked about if the County needs to cut 5% then the appropriate cut would be \$503. She explained that if the Board cuts \$3,404 then it will be difficult to operate.

Hoyt Sparks talked about with the economy today people can't afford a tax increase without having to cut the other necessary expenses. He said that he is against a tax increase of any kind regardless what it is for. He said he hopes the hospital strives but hopes that no money goes to the hospital without accountability occurring. He said that needs to be understood. He urged the Board to not vote for a tax increase. He talked about making them straighten it up.

Brandon Hawks asked about the people that are not here including how can the elderly pay. He talked about the damage to the economy if taxes are increased. He further talked about we have to start cutting things like the wellness center and recreation center. He asked are these the responsibilities of the County. He further asked about the inflated DSS. He talked about we need to get serious about our fiscal health.

Duane Davis talked about he came here to support each of you as the Alleghany Board of Commissioners and knows that the Board is faced with a difficult task. He talked about the hospital situation including they haven't been able to collect money because people don't have a job. He said that he is advocating that the Board support the hospital, and he understands that there will be cuts. He talked about supporting programs to keep them going. He talked about his history of being in the school system. He said that he will support the Board in whichever direction is decided. He further said that he is willing to pay more taxes.

John Irwin talked about needing \$340,000 and the amount of delinquent taxes since 1998. He reviewed the criteria of getting on the delinquent list and gave examples. He talked about the Tax Office is working on collecting the taxes, and we need the money now. He talked about the food closet has 10% of the county signed up for assistance, estimate that 22% citizens miss meals because no food, and 14% unemployment rates. He asked has the Commissioners looked at the number of children that have backpacks on Friday; that is food for them over the weekend. He talked about the money that is given to the wellness center. He further talked about don't want the Board to tax the citizens who sell their clothes to get money for food. He said that we are hurting. He asked what the Board is going to do when revaluation comes. He said cuts are coming. He talked about the tax increase for the hospital, and he personally knows the value of the hospital. He further talked about the forum was a cheerleading squad. He asked where the hospital is, George White told the Commissioners the amount of the payment where they are only paying interest. He said that one thing he requests of the Board is he would like to see this county implement a drug/alcohol test for all school and county employees. He further said that right now Allegheny County is at the top of the heap, we have challenges and the Commissioners cannot put more on the taxpayers. He further said we have our pride.

Sharon Stovall, Group Homes, came here to speak for the people that they serve that cannot speak for themselves. She talked about the simple things that everyone takes for granted. She said that she hopes the Board will consider this.

Leann Joines talked about working at the group homes and new river cottage for years. She said that she hopes the funds will not be cut. She talked about they like going on a trip.

Brenda Kay Irving stated that they need food to eat.

Alice Keighton thanked the Board for this opportunity. She explained that she is a library supporter. She talked about the DVD that she sent to each Commissioner last week that was made by Charlie Scott about the importance of the library including the first speak spoke very well. She talked about it is not fluff; it is something we need. She explained that things have been cut cut cut. She talked about sometimes you have to talk about raising taxes. She stated that the more they cut the less they have to give the citizens of this county. She said that she wished any one of the Commissioners would have walked into the library to see the program that was offered to a packed room. She talked about any of us who have moved here would not have come if there are not some of these programs.

Vernon McConnell talked about collecting unpaid taxes but asked has the Board considered every other way to raise revenues except raising taxes. He talked about charging taxes on Christmas trees like Burke County did. He gave an example of what Burke County did. He stated that the tree tax brings in over \$500,000.

John Hedrick thanked the Board for listening. He talked about it's for the welfare of the citizens. He said that he knows the funding for the libraries for all of the other areas and some will exceed/some will maintain. He further said that he knows that the Board is looking at hard times. He talked about having to go with what is best and respects the Commissioners' decisions. He said the Board has heard people before him about the need for the library. He explained that they can do with less but if there is a way to make the decrease 2%-3% and then they wouldn't have to look at personnel/book money/supply money. He asked the Commissioners to please consider the public library.

Dennis Smith talked about taking people back in time to the 1700's where there was a king. He read from the declaration. He talked about taxes on his family's farm and how much the taxes have gone up. He talked about the king was imposing taxes. He stated that he doesn't give his consent to pay more taxes. He talked about people at the hospital forum. He explained that people can't pay their taxes, and people are going to reach a point where they will break. He asked the Board not to raise taxes.

George White thanked the Board for the privilege to speak. He explained that he is here about the money for the hospital, and he thinks we all recognize the importance of the hospital. He said that he doesn't know what value anyone could put on a human life. He talked about they have a \$4,300,000 payroll with 160 employees. He further talked about that many people losing their jobs and taking that amount of payroll monies out of the local economy could be devastating. He talked about having a very good accredited hospital here. He said that he would recommend leaving that in the budget.

Warren Taylor thanked the Board for considering the hospital in your budget discussions. He informed the Board that Dr. Greenfield is here which is a direct result of the recruitment money last year. He talked about this being a vital part of the hospital.

Pat Polley talked about library and if the Board will provide only a 2%-3% cut they will keep their maintenance of effort agreement. She talked about the amount of money in the book line for new books. She encouraged the Board to support the library the best the Board can. She talked about they are at the point they have cut and talked about prices going up. She talked about council on aging and the two main things that they do; meals on wheels/congregate meals and assistance with housecleaning services. She further talked about the Home and Community Care Block Grant funds are to provide those types of services to keep the elderly in their homes. She talked about supporting the hospital and the proposed \$250,000, which will help. She further talked about she supports the tax increase.

Peg Brown explained she is a recent resident moved here from Las Vegas, and she wanted to join and be part of the community. She said that she is here about our library. She explained what she was looking for when she was looking to relocate. She asked the Board to think seriously about the library and the other organizations. She read a letter from Amanda Wiles about supporting the library.

Kathy Murphy stated her appreciation for all of the hard work on the budget. She explained that she looks at taxes as paying for services and to provide services, you have to have money. She talked about some people say we want the services but don't want to pay more taxes. She said that she thought about people who pay taxes, property owners, in essence the more you have the more pay. She explained that she has talked to several people and the library has been talked about a lot tonight. She explained that if the library is cut a certain percentage then they would be cut a percentage from the State, and the arts council is the same way. She talked about people look at it if they don't use a service then it wasn't needed. She further talked about listening to the organizations when presented the information about how the cuts will affect them. She explained the need to look at the budget and don't want a tax increases but she is willing to pay more taxes to keep the services that we have. She used Grayson County as an example when there is no tax increase. She talked about small increases don't hurt as bad in order to keep the services. She talked about looking at the budget and she is willing is pay taxes and more taxes if the money is spent wisely.

Chair Richardson thanked everyone. He talked about one thing that this Board talked about was an orderly public hearing which was accomplished. He asked if any one would like to speak.

Betty Roupe talked about she works with the ADAP facility through the college. She further talked about she wishes the County had enough money for everyone. She talked about the money is well spent and provided examples. She thanked the Board for what they do.

Chair Richardson asked if there is anyone else that would like to speak. No one spoke.

Chair Richardson closed the public hearing at 7:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Ken Richardson
Chairman