

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on Monday, June 27, 2011, at 6:30pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

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 called the public hearing to order at 6:30pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance and a silent prayer.

Chair Richardson talked about the budget process and how the process starts in February then March/April the Board starts to learn about the State budget. He talked about the budget for 2011/12 and the amount that is ad valorem taxes and about half of the tax bills go outside of Alleghany County. He further talked about the Commissioners' responsibility concerning the budget.

Chair Richardson asked for public comments.

Steve Mitchell said he has trust in the Board's judgment.

Libby Bagby talked about her support for the library.

Dr. Denise Bryant talked about her support for the Hospital and the Wellness Center.

Chris Huysman said that every debate needs to be looked at from both sides. He further said that he has looked at the data from the surrounding counties and could make the argument for a 53¢ tax rate to fund all of the County's needs. He talked about the unemployment rate, poverty rate, and mean age of citizens, which all translates to a delicate situation in funding the needs. He further talked about funding for the Hospital and how much does it cost citizens of Alleghany County. He provided an example of the difference of a 53¢ rate and then going from there looking at 43¢. He talked about ways to save money; employees go to 4 days a week then take them to 36 hours per week and what if we just pay the interest and the Hospital pays the principal on their request. He said he is torn on the Hospital idea.

DW Miles talked about the money that is paid on tourism to Cascade Highlands and/or High Country, and he would like to see this money go into the BDC or the Chamber. He further talked about the request to reallocate how the tourism money is spent. He said that he expects some of the taxes to increase.

Pat Polley, Chair of the Alleghany County Library, stated that the Library is the one thing that everyone in the County can participate in and is very important. She said that she supports the budget proposal before the Board. She talked about the Hospital request and everyone knows that the Hospital doesn't operate well if there aren't any physicians. She further talked about the Hospital can be considered economic development, health care needs, population is aging, and she wants to live in a place where if she has a heart attack or a stroke then she can get the care she needs. She stated that they need the money to help recruit physicians. She asked for the Board's support.

Warren Taylor stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Alleghany Memorial Hospital Board, and it is essential that we recruit and retain the physicians that we have. He explained that their budgetary request is far more reaching than just economic development.

Dean Choate said he doesn't think we should raise taxes the way the economy is now.

Susan Reinhardt talked about looking at the surrounding counties and their large tax increases. She further talked about looking at the 2¢ proposed. She said that she has been to budget meetings and has watched the Board's discussions. She talked about the county needs things like Alleghany Memorial Hospital and Alleghany in Motion. She provided an example of how much of additional taxes would be on \$100,000, and citizens shouldn't give up services for 2¢.

Crystal Absher talked about being a local person and a farmer's daughter. She explained that Alleghany Memorial Hospital saved her father and mother. She urged the Board to support the Hospital.

Dr. Arocha talked about the need for a hospitalist for the survival of the hospital and the need for a primary doctor that will see new patients. He explained that there are only two doctors who will see new patients. He further explained that if there isn't a hospitalist then there is no hospital. He talked about they have saved many people.

William Bill Stevens asked, for those on fixed income, how are they to pay for the increases that keep occurring. He said that he hasn't seen a cost of living increase in two years, and most County employees haven't seen a cost of living increase in three years. He talked about everything we buy costs more money. He said he wants the Board to do their best.

Brandon Hawks asked the question of who plans for whom, and that is what you have to ask yourself.

Patty Jarrett said she is here in support of Alleghany Memorial Hospital. She explained that she thinks when someone is looking to move into the community the first thing they look at is the Hospital then the school system. She talked about the importance of the Hospital.

Sherry Cahn said she doesn't envy the decision before the Board, and she can see both sides. She further said that government in general needs to lead by example. She talked about health care, education, employees, and if we put all of our money into things that aren't necessities there won't be money left for the necessities. She said that she doesn't know what to do about the tax increase because we need it but it seems like there are more and more foreclosures in the newspaper. She asked if people can't pay their taxes, then how much better off are we.

Chris Huysman reminded everyone during the last election cycle taxes were voted down and to remember that.

Susan Reinhardt talked about the ¼¢ sales tax would have been spread across the board to everyone that was in Alleghany County not just the property owners. She said she thinks that wasn't explained well enough at that time.

Chair Richardson said he is going to ask the Board to recess this meeting until tomorrow in order for the Commissioners to absorb the comments that have been said tonight.

The Board talked about dates/times for the recessed meeting and agreed on 8:00am on Tuesday, June 28.

Chair Richardson recessed this meeting until 8:00am on Tuesday, June 28.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Ken Richardson
Chairman