

June 7, 2011

The Randolph County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m. for a special budget session in the 1909 Randolph County Historic Courthouse Meeting Room, 145 Worth Street, Asheboro, NC. Commissioners Holmes, Frye, Haywood, Kemp and Lanier were present.

Randolph County Veterans Services

Terry Van Vliet, Randolph County Veterans Services Officer, gave information to the Commissioners regarding the number of contacts her office had with veterans in this fiscal year, as well as updates on what medical conditions have been added by the government that veterans can be compensated for. She also stated that the Veterans Office would like to work towards a paperless system and that their computers are reaching the end of their life span and would need to be updated in the near future.

Randolph County Board of Elections

Melissa Johnson, Elections Director, gave statistics on the number of registered voters and polling locations available in November, as well as the expense of a possible additional primary in May. She said that there is pending legislation regarding the voter ID program and a grant that had previously paid for coding of ballots that could have a negative financial impact on her department. Ms. Johnson also mentioned that two laptops for each precinct have been purchased in order to better serve citizens.

Randolph County Cooperative Extension Service

Carolyn Langley, Cooperative Extension Director—Randolph Center, thanked the Board for their continued support to the Cooperative Extension and the citizens of Randolph County. She said this is the fifth year that her department has had a “hold the line” budget. She said that she continues to seek grants and donations to help fill funding gaps. They have also added fees for program supplies, asked schools for funding and obtained sponsorships from local businesses for events and programs.

Randolph County Soil & Water Conservation District

Craig Frazier, Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisor, thanked the Board for the continued funding. He stated that the proposed State budget eliminates 10% in funding for that department.

Randolph County Day Reporting Center (DRC)

Pam Smith, DRC Director, said that the DRC has not received any increase in funding for several years from the State. She estimated that the DRC saved Randolph County \$810,400 last year in costs that would have otherwise cost the County for required jail bed space. She said that so far, the State has not proposed cuts to her programs; however, she said that she initially heard there may be a 10% cut. DRC has cut travel, contractual obligations and supplies where they can and continue to consider any other possible cost saving measures.

Randolph County Building Inspections

Paxton Arthurs, Chief Building Inspector, said that building permit issuances have steadily decreased for the past several years due to the bad economy. Building Inspections closed the Archdale office last year. Three inspectors were transferred to the Asheboro office and two property development technicians were eliminated (\$186,000 savings). Also, a plumbing inspector is now splitting time between inspection duties and helping Public Works with various grant programs. He

said that inspectors have been busy for the last two years with the renovation at the historic courthouse. The second floor is almost complete with only final touches remaining. With the conclusion of the project, two positions were eliminated in March: one electrical inspector and one building inspector.

Revenues for the current year have been \$25,000 less than expected, and he has adjusted the proposed budget to reflect that continued trend. General and building construction permits are down by 17%, while other permit requests are down 10%.

Mr. Arthurs said that the implementation of the new Central Permitting software may be challenging at first, but should eventually better streamline his office, and the department will be able to trace and track complaints for validation.

Randolph County Child Support Enforcement (CSE)

Damon Brown, CSE Director, thanked the other department heads and the Commissioners for their support during their first full year of transition into a County department. He reported that they have around 5,700 cases, which averages around 900 cases per worker.

Mr. Brown said that the State had determined that their agency should have an additional two agent positions, but shortly after the decision was made, a freeze on the transfer of positions, hiring and travel was issued by the State. As a State operated office, they were always expected to do more with less. Mr. Brown stated that they will continue to strive in that direction. Under the current economic conditions, he feels it would be inappropriate to request additional staff and will continue to call upon staff to work hard and work smart for the children of Randolph County and our state. He says they now have a better feel for what is needed to maintain the department, and cuts have been made in appropriate areas.

Randolph County Information Technology (IT)

Michael Rowland, IT Director, reported that the cost of software maintenance has increased; equipment and servers are aged to outdated and could be a security issue. He said that his staff have seen a dramatic increase in workload and the need to add personnel is becoming critical. The Technology Team will review the “technology needs list” and set priorities for consideration in the coming year.

Randolph County Planning & Zoning

Hal Johnson, Planning & Zoning Director, said that his department has begun to see some small subdivision zoning requests and hopes this is a sign of continued increased building. Due to the economic downturn, Mr. Johnson has consolidated positions and eliminated three full-time positions in his department. He said that the Zoning and Building Inspections offices have consolidated operations in order to save money and improve efficiency. He commended all County departments on the great job they do in working together.

Randolph County Maintenance-Public Buildings

James Chriscoe, Maintenance Director, said they are continuing to make “green” changes to all the County facilities in hopes of saving costs in the future. He listed the following items of concern in his future budget that could be critical: aging equipment (chiller) at new courthouse, chiller at Shaw Building is at half capacity, new roof at the Ramseur ambulance base and two other roofs of other buildings. Maintenance had to purchase a “used” bucket truck because the old one would no longer pass inspections.

Maintenance personnel have also been helping with the renovation at the historic courthouse. Mr. Chriscoe said that his department does the best it can with its limited resources and appreciates the help it gets from other departments.

Randolph County Public Health

MiMi Cooper, Public Health Director, stated that the Public Health proposed budget includes an appropriation of \$4,909,886, which is a reduction of \$206,216 from last year. The reduction also is a result of \$10,000 less in state funding, and she is concerned that there may be more cuts at the state level. Ms. Cooper also said that currently, her department has received almost \$20,000 less in revenues from permits and fees; a little over \$76,000 less in Medicaid reimbursement; about \$54,000 less in budgeted Medicaid savings and almost \$46,000 less in general county revenue provided.

Ms. Cooper reported the following cost savings measures in personnel: 1) transferred an EHS to the Preparedness Coordinator position; 2) promoted a PHN II to a III position and did not fill the PHN II position; 3) did not fill the Environmental Health Director position when Mr. Walker retired; 4) abolished the Child Health Screening program; 5) cross-trained all Animal Control Employees so that they can serve in both the shelter and in the field.

According to Ms. Cooper, other cost-savings measures included: 1) continuing education only where licensure/registration needs must be met; 2) trainings done by webinar or conference call where available; 3) emails where applicable rather than regular mail; 4) requested that the county finance officer work out the details for the Health Department to be able to accept debit/credit cards; 5) cluster visits and send more than one employee to an area to do work when applicable; 6) citizens are asked to pick up animal traps from the shelter rather than having them delivered.

Ms. Cooper related her concerns about the following: 1) possible Federal cuts to important preventive health programs (CDC funding); 2) "Local Aid to County" money that may get caught in a regionalization plan through State Legislation; 3) cutting into reserves; 4) larger proportion of the county who is not eligible for Medicaid but cannot get health care; 5) more public health problems related to poor economy; failing septic systems not being repaired, abandoning animals when homes are in foreclosure, swimming pools left to breed mosquitos and create safety hazards (she is spending more time in court to attempt to resolve these problems); 6) for-profit companies like the Friendly Neighborhood Dental Van who come into the county with the blessings of the RC Schools to provide dental care to those who can pay (primarily Medicaid children) and then leave the children who cannot pay for other providers, such as the Health Dept.

Upon conclusion of her budget requests, Ms. Cooper submitted proposed changes to the Animal Control Ordinance. These are to be considered at a future regular meeting.

Randolph County Public Library

Ross Holt, Library Director, stated that they do not have any requests above or beyond the manager's proposed budget. The Library is looking at another year with another "hold-the-line" budget and expect to see State Aid cut by 13%. The Library has seen a jump in demand for library services over the past three years, including use of library computers for Internet access. Patrons also are using the library resources more intensively, and in particular, resources that assist citizens in their quest for employment. Mr. Holt said that the Library has seen significant reduction in their book budgets and magazine collections, and have held off on replacement for public computers, but

said that these would need to be replaced soon. He did mention that by virtue of our local governments holding the line, the Library met the Maintenance of Effort requirement for State Aid, which makes up about 13% of the budget. Since some other library systems did not meet this requirement, their allotments have been redistributed to other counties, with Randolph receiving some of this funding.

Mr. Holt said that through careful management, they have been able to save enough money to replace one of the aging vans that had almost 200,000 miles on it. However, their other vehicles are in dire need of replacing. Mr. Holt was happy to report that the library will see a decrease in Internet costs at the seven libraries as a new contract with our service provider has resulted in a significant increase in bandwidth at each library, but a \$7,500 per year decrease in cost.

Mr. Holt mentioned the increased demand for electronic books and said he hopes to begin offering ebooks in late summer.

Randolph County Public Works

David Townsend, III, Public Works Director, said that he continues to see a reduction in solid waste at the transfer station. He said that they continue to utilize CDBG and Federal Stimulus housing grants and the Federal Stimulus Energy Efficiency grants but is concerned that those may be going away. He also stated that the General Assembly continues to issue new guidelines that cause additional expenses to the County. Mr. Townsend stated that he was proud of the hard work the four employees do to serve the citizens, but if the Commissioners approve the reopening of a landfill, additional personnel will be necessary.

Randolph County Register of Deeds

Krista Lowe, Randolph County Register of Deeds, said they are still busy converting paper to digital images. There will be statewide changes January 1 when Register of Deeds have to adapt to minimum standards that will require the indexing of documents. The State is also considering standardizing fees across the state.

Randolph County Tax Department

Debra Hill, Tax Supervisor, said that the Tax Department has added a lot of information that a citizen can now access on the web. She also stated that they have 32 positions, two less than last year. They will begin the 2013 revaluation the summer of 2011. The department has saved postage costs by contracting with an outside provider. Tax Department has some positions that require continuing education classes to maintain certification, which adds to travel expenses, but they try to find classes close to Randolph County or online to avoid overnight stays and traveling great distances.

Randolph County Sheriff's Office/Jail

Allen McNeill, Sheriff's Office Business Manager, said that the Sheriff's Office budget has been a "hold the line" budget for the last several years. Operating costs have increased, especially automotive, largely due to gas prices and is currently several thousand dollars short in funding the May fuel invoice with the June invoice to come.

He asked for four new deputies plus all the equipment needed to outfit them in order to help fill the gap proposed by the Randolph County Schools in the funding for the School Resource Officers (SROs). The proposed budget from Randolph County Schools has recommended a \$175,000 cut in the school resource officer budget. Mr. McNeill argued that this is not an accurate presentation on

the actual costs of the program. The County School's projection of \$175,000 cut is actually more like a \$220,000 cut. When all things are accounted for, a fully funded SRO budget for the upcoming year would have been \$775,000. Their last proposal allotted \$555,000, which is a difference of \$220,000. They arrived at their figures by using actual costs for the 2009-2010 budget, which did not include a full year of SRO salary for Wheatmore or Archdale-Trinity Middle. When they then determined what they wanted to pay for the school resource program, they subtracted that amount to arrive at a \$175,000 cut. Our figures use real budget projections for the 2011-2012 budget year. The schools' proposal is to sign a contract with the Sheriff's office which pays for only the actual days the officers are in the schools. This only works if some other source of funding is found, or if the Commissioners fund the remainder of the salary costs not funded by the schools. Captain Azelton also spoke regarding the SRO positions and their full year responsibilities. In the event that the school system does not restore funding to the school resource program, the Sheriff would like to make the following proposal to the commissioners. Because of his desire to insure a safe learning environment for our county students and staff the sheriff would be willing to withdraw his request for two new detective positions at \$162,715 if the commissioners would apply that \$162,715 toward the school resource budget. Though this does not completely make up the cuts from the school system, Mr. McNeill said they would do their best to make it work.

In addition, Mr. McNeill asked the commissioners to fund the other four patrol deputy positions and equipment that were requested in their budget proposal. The salary and fringe costs for four patrol deputy positions would be \$188,348. The costs for vehicles, vehicle equipment, and officer equipment would add another \$128,332 for a total of \$316,680.

Sheriff Maynard Reid stated that there had been no positions added to patrol since. He stated that his office has been fortunate to have had some drug seizure money to finance equipment and a facility, but the Federal government regulates what it can be spent on. Sheriff Reid complimented his officers for the many volunteer hours they give to their community when not on duty.

Department of Social Services

Beth Duncan, DSS Director, thanked the Board for their support of continued automation and technical support efforts and for employee benefits. Ms. Duncan, via PowerPoint presentation, showed how the recession is impacting Randolph County citizens and her department. Increased demand for services with inadequate staff is becoming more and more difficult to manage. She also said that State budget cuts and unfunded mandates continue to be passed down to counties and there are fewer local dollars to cover essential services at the county level.

Ms. Duncan said that the latest data on food stamp participation from January 2011, shows that it continues in a steep incline even though the unemployment rate is declining. To manage this incline, DSS has reallocated a position to the Intake unit to handle the significant increase in people applying for food assistance; and reallocated a position to the Medicaid unit to handle the applications that Social Security began forwarding to DSS in January. A position was reallocated to the unit and filled in November to more readily meet the demand for critical medical services. Changes to technology include: 1) implemented SharePoint system – conducted training; 2) implemented the new e-CMS system to support the front desk/agency (client wait time); and 3) continued work on automating Program Integrity Services.

Ms. Duncan listed the positions that DSS is in need of but knows that it is not possible to fund them all right now: 1) need to fund 3 full-time and 2 part-time unfunded positions that are currently

filled; 2) Project/Quality Manager; 3) Food Nutrition IMC; 4) Social Worker – CPS; 5) Food Nutrition IMC; and 6) Adult Medicaid IMC

Randolph County Emergency Services (ES)

Donovan Davis, ES Director, said that the past three years have been challenging for the Emergency Services Department, but his department has made changes to accommodate a stagnant budget, all while maintaining the services the citizens expect. Each service area within the department has made changes to help reduce expenses; some of these include: 1) reduction, or in some cases elimination, in travel; 2) supplementing classroom training with online continuing education; 3) evaluating medical equipment, medications, and supplies inventory to find cheaper alternatives; 4) waiting another year to purchase new personal protective equipment, cardiac monitors, and more.

Mr. Davis presented details about the number of incoming calls to 9-1-1, administrative lines, and making calls, which showed an increase of 4,902 calls from 2009. They radio dispatched over 73,000 calls to public-safety agencies and made nearly 1,000,000 radio log entries – keeping up with every movement the field units make. Telecommunicators are often overwhelmed during peak times because they have to simultaneously answer telephones and radios. It is especially difficult when they have to remain online with a caller providing instructions on CPR or other medical related instructions or if they remain on the line with a robbery or assault in-progress. All while keeping up with non-stop radio traffic from the field.

EMS has had a nearly 30% increase in call-volume since the last time four 12-hour positions were added in 2005 to cover the prime-time 12-hour ambulance in Archdale. With the same number of employees and the same number of ambulances on the road, they have responded to 6,708 more calls and transported 4,811 more patients. As indicated in our performance measures, average response time is 14 minutes; however, when you remove routine transfers from Randolph Hospital, the average response time increases to almost 16 minutes. Response times are almost doubled when responding to the southern end of the County.

Paramedics are not getting adequate time for rest during their 24-hour shifts and 9-1-1 Telecommunicators are no longer capable of efficiently and effectively answering the telephones and radios at the same time due to the high call-volume and radio demand. Complaints from citizens and field agencies in both service areas have increased dramatically over the past three years. Employee mistakes have also increased to a higher level. Sleep deprivation and on-the-job fatigue are serious issues.

In this depressing economy, it's also important to recognize that 47% of the employees work second jobs to supplement their income. This only adds to the stress of their employees and aggravates related issues.

In order to make positive changes to eliminate some of these pressures, at a minimum, Mr. Davis said he needs to add six Paramedic positions that will allow one additional 24-hour ambulance to the service, and four Telecommunicator positions to begin separating the dispatch and call-taking functions. However, adding these positions will only band-aid the situation for a short period of time. The total additional cost for the upcoming year would be: six Paramedic positions at \$341,382 (E3-3) and four Telecommunicator positions at \$193,887 (T2-2) for a total of \$535,269.

Another important issue is the increasing need for a new consolidated facility to house a larger 9-1-1 Center, Asheboro EMS base, emergency operations center (EOC) and offices for the administrative staff and Fire Inspectors. To get a general idea of the size and cost for such a facility, Chief Building Inspector Paxton Arthurs developed a preliminary draft plan for a 12,000 sq. ft. building with an estimated cost of \$2.2 million just for the facility (not including parking, fencing, interior infrastructure, etc.). Total project cost would probably be in the neighborhood of \$2.5 to \$3 million. Mr. Davis said they need a facility in the range of 15,000 sq ft to accommodate current needs and to provide room for limited future growth. He said that he has applied for the 2011 federal emergency operations center (EOC) grant for an amount up to \$1 million, but it's unclear when the award announcements will be made. Mr. Davis said that if a new facility may be possible in the next couple of years, it will be helpful to know because of pending plans to expand the 9-1-1 Center and add equipment rooms for the new VIPER and 9-1-1 telephone system equipment at the current building. Mr. Davis concluded by saying that putting more money in the current 9-1-1 building will only delay an unavoidable move.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

J. Harold Holmes, Chairman

Darrell L. Frye

Phil Kemp

Stan Haywood

Arnold Lanier

Amanda Varner, Deputy Clerk to the Board