

April 11, 2011—Special Meeting

The Randolph County Board of Commissioners met in special session at 7:00 p.m. at The Exchange, located at 204 S. Fayetteville St, Asheboro, NC. The Board accepted an invitation by the Randolph Tea Party to participate in a “town-hall-style” meeting. Since a quorum of the Randolph County Board of Commissioners attended, the meeting was considered an official meeting of the Board. Commissioners Holmes, Frye, Kemp, Lanier and Haywood were present, as well as County Manager Richard Wells; Assistant County Manager/Finance Officer Will Massie; County Attorney Ben Morgan; Cheryl Ivey, Clerk to the Board and Amanda Varner, Deputy Clerk to the Board.

Bob Youngblood, Tea Party member, welcomed everyone, gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Chairman Holmes called the meeting to order for the County.

Lynn Lancaster, Director of Information and Voter Education for the Randolph Tea Party, moderated the meeting and thanked the Commissioners for participating in the question and answer session. He asked the Board what was going on with the County’s budget.

Commissioner Haywood said that the budget process is ongoing, with agency and departmental information being reviewed by County staff. Budget meetings will commence in May, continuing into June, with budget adoption scheduled for late June.

Commissioner Frye said that the County’s budget will depend greatly on what the State approves in its budget. However, Commissioner Frye stressed that they will be as conservative as possible. So far, the only department budget they have seen is the Sheriff’s, who is requesting additional deputies and equipment. Also, there is much uncertainty about the distribution of Lottery funds for schools, with rumors of the State withholding Counties’ portions for schools’ capital needs. The State has also proposed transferring the responsibility of secondary roads to Counties.

Mr. Lancaster asked if the Commissioners had taken an official position on the Governor’s proposed budget.

Mr. Frye said that they do express their concerns to the State, primarily through the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC).

Mr. Lancaster said that the Randolph Tea Party opposes three of the fifty goals of the NCACC. They are

1. Opposition to conceal/carry laws
2. Support for privacy rights for public employees
3. Right to participate in private business ventures like providing broadband access

Commissioner Frye said that he has had many disagreements with Time Warner Cable over the years because they won’t provide service to remote areas. He said that the goal to support privacy rights for public employees is driven from a legal standpoint regarding teachers who had committed crimes against students. He was not familiar with the conceal/carry issue. He also mentioned that the NCACC represents all 100 counties, so naturally, there may be a few issues that this Board would vote differently on.

Commissioner Kemp said that he was for the conceal/carry opposition, stating that if someone takes the required class, he should be able to take his weapon anywhere.

When asked about the Board's position on lifting the cap on charter schools and merging our two school systems, Commissioner Kemp said that there were only three ways to merge the systems: the state can mandate it; both systems can agree to it; and, forced merger by the County. The latter would be very expensive because the County would be forced to fund the entire merged system at the highest teacher subsidy currently in place, which is the Asheboro City Schools; the City Schools also has a supplemental tax. Commissioner Kemp said that a prior study estimated that a merger could cost as much as 12¢ on the tax rate. Commissioner Frye said that another added complication was the Archdale-Trinity supplemental tax that would have to be dealt with.

Mr. Lancaster mentioned the disparity between the City Schools' higher drop-out rate compared to the County Schools, when the City Schools' teachers are paid more. He encouraged the Commissioners to "think outside the box" to find a solution to make a merger work, and at the same time, saving taxpayers money and providing a quality education for students.

The Commissioners voiced their support for Charter schools.

Regarding the County's debt, Mr. Lancaster said that the County should be holding referendums on any future debt. Commissioner Frye assured everyone that there would not be another debt issue without a vote.

Commissioner Lanier said that he had served on the County Board of Education for eight years before he became a County Commissioner. He knows that there is a lot of "fat" in education, with many new jobs added, such as lead teacher positions, that may not be needed. He said that local and state government need to come together to make decisions based on what citizens can afford.

Commissioner Haywood said that they asked County departments to cut 3% out of their budgets for the last two years. Last year, they cut the schools by 3%. He assured everyone that they will do everything possible to protect citizens.

Ed Morgan asked the Commissioners if they were being paid to be at this meeting.

Chairman Holmes said that they would not receive any additional money for this meeting.

Commissioner Lanier added that the Commissioners imposed a 10% pay cut on themselves last year.

Other questions came from the audience by citizens who did not identify themselves.

Someone asked why 30% of students enrolled in the schools were allowed to attend "scott free," and added that these families paid no taxes.

Commissioner Frye responded by saying that unless she was referring to federally funded lunch programs, he didn't know where that 30% figure came from.

Another citizen asked why people who receive welfare are not required to take drug tests.

Commissioner Kemp said that there is a bill being introduced that would require a blood test of welfare recipients; he said he would support this legislation.

In response to a citizen's inquiry about what the Board would do if the State makes cuts to the Cooperative Extension Service budget, the Board indicated that they would do everything possible to fund what the State cuts since agriculture is so important to this county.

Janet Pate asked Commissioner Frye about Guil-Rand Fire Department's request to raise its fire tax two cents and why Guil-Rand bought land at two times the tax value.

Commissioner Frye said that more study will be done about Guil-Rand's request to become a service district and their requested rate increase. Also, he said that if she was referring to the land the fire department owns at Hwy 62 and I-85, he became aware of this only recently, adding that he thought the land had been purchased about five years ago. He said that each fire department's board of directors oversees each fire department's budget. Budget adoption is held at an open meeting of the fire department, and he encouraged everyone to get involved with their fire departments and voice their concerns. He also said that he believed more citizens were concerned about the possibility of their fire insurance rates increasing than with a fire tax increase.

When asked what the Commissioners are doing to ease unemployment rates, Commissioners Kemp and Frye said that there are some economic development projects currently on the horizon. He assured everyone that any incentives granted by this Board are performance-based and were agreed upon due to job creation.

Regarding a question on the re-opening of gold mines in the northwest side of the county, Commissioner Frye said that he understands that only testing is being done right now; any drilling would have to be approved by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Lanier spoke again about education, saying that only about 28% of State Lottery proceeds are going to school construction.

The Board thanked the Tea Party for the opportunity to speak and the audience for their respectful manner.

Hearing no further comments, the Board adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

J. Harold Holmes

Darrell L. Frye

Phil Kemp

Stan Haywood

Arnold Lanier

Cheryl A. Ivey, Clerk to the Board