

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in recessed session on Tuesday, June 9, 2009, at 6:00pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chair Ken Richardson, Vice-Chair Randy Miller, Commissioner Doug Murphy, Commissioner Milly Richardson, Commissioner Steve Roten, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans.

Chair Ken Richardson reconvened the recessed meeting. He talked about going through these three days of meetings before deciding on any issues.

Darlene Douglas with Alleghany Group Homes came before the Board to discuss their budget request. She explained that all of their programs are full and have waiting lists. She talked about the services provided. She said that she doesn't understand why they received a 35% cut and some others were only cut 5%. She talked about how they have the bare minimum staff. She further talked about the cut is \$15,750. She explained that the loss of funding over the next three years would devastate them. She further explained that they would have to cut back on their meals, provide their own transportation instead of using AIM, reduction in the number of clients, reduction in benefits and salaries. She said that they understand that times are hard right now. She further said that they are here speaking for their clients because they are the only people that can talk for them.

Duane Davis, Chairman of Alleghany Group Homes board, stated that he is aware of the very difficult task before the Commissioners. He talked about the adults serviced by their programs. He explained that they are willing to look at this year for cuts, and the problem is that they could get by with one year of cuts but if all of the funding was cut it would devastate them. He talked about how these citizens are depending on the Board to support them to make sure they that have a place to stay and a place to work. He thanked the Commissioners for their consideration.

Commissioner Doug Murphy asked about the required employee/client ratio.

Darlene Douglas explained that there is a ratio and they cannot eliminate a position.

Commissioner Doug Murphy talked about if a position is eliminated, services are eliminated and funding is decreased.

Darlene Douglas agreed. She explained that when the County cuts 5% from Smoky's funds it cuts their funds because they get money from Smoky. She talked about the State funding they receive. She reiterated that cuts to Smoky are filtered down to them.

Commissioner Steve Roten and Darlene Douglas talked about how they don't know what kind of cuts are coming from the State at this point. She explained their funding levels from the State over the past years.

Commissioner Doug Murphy and Darlene Douglas talked about how the phase out is the problem. She stated that they are willing to take the hit this year but can't handle the phase out.

Ted Orton with the Wellness Center came before the Board to discuss their budget request. He talked about how a lot of the money that comes from the County goes towards additional programs offered like at-risk teen programs. He further talked about additional programs he is working on through the insurance companies, the Schools, and the Recreation department. He explained that he is looking at the aging population to offer more services. He further explained that they run on a shoestring budget and are trying to get more self-sufficient. He talked about how they currently have two people who are certified for lifeguard classes. He further talked about the children obesity problems and working with them to get their lifestyles changed as a kid rather than an adult. He explained that he is planning on working with EMS for classes for workers to reduce their workers comp claims.

Commissioner Milly Richardson and Ted Orton talked about the Wellness Center's utilities with the main expense being propane.

Commissioner Doug Murphy and Ted Orton talked about a cover helping with utilities costs and other ideas for the pool area.

Commissioner Milly Richardson, Commissioner Doug Murphy and Ted Orton talked about a building structure being substantial and looking for different energy grants and the use of solar panels.

Commissioner Milly Richardson and Ted Orton talked about the employees at the Wellness Center being one full time person and 28 part time people. He talked about having to have certified employees to work in certain areas of the Wellness Center. They talked about relying on volunteers.

Commissioner Randy Miller and Ted Orton talked about the \$15,000 for maintenance and repair being primarily for the bubble over the pool.

County Manager Don Adams talked about having a meeting today regarding the energy grants about grant applications availability and deadlines.

Ted Orton thanked the Board for listening.

Chair Ken Richardson talked about how he and Don attended a regional tourism meeting on Friday, and Allegheny County was a main topic of the conversation. He further talked about attending the grand opening of the stage at Crouse Park. He talked about the Marine Band coming to Allegheny County later this year.

The Board of Commissioners talked about the stage being built by volunteers and materials donated at costs. They further talked about people vacationing at home.

David Higgins came before the Board to discuss the request of the fire commission which is the fire departments/rescue squad. He talked about the issues that they have. He explained that the original increase was 10% across the board. He talked about a grant through the State for equipment that they have all have been approved for \$50,000 each leaving \$25,000 for the Volunteer Fire Departments to raise. He talked about how they are requesting the County to pay \$15,000, and the fire department to pay \$10,000 to cover the \$25,000 required match. He said that the request is for \$90,000 total being \$15,000 for each department. He talked about how the grants may not be there forever. He explained that the turnout gear is only good for 10 years, and the State has come up with new guidelines for safety vests now everyone has to have new safety vests. He further explained that every man has to have a safety vest on for insurance coverage. He said that all of the departments need air packs that run around \$9,000-\$12,000. He talked about Steve Allen's report and read a portion of the report. He talked about how the departments have people that are qualified to do the job they just need the equipment to do it with. He further talked about the recent tornados, town manager's house burned, EMS building burned and all of this was done without a dime because people are not asking for money for themselves just want the proper equipment. He thanked the Commissioners for what is provided and is thankful that the fire departments/rescue squad wasn't cut. He explained that the needs are there this year. He talked about how if you had to hire people to do this, that amount wouldn't touch it. He stated that they don't want to lose these grants, and want equipment for the people.

Chair Ken Richardson and David Higgins talked about how they are requesting an additional \$4,000.

Commissioner Doug Murphy and David Higgins talked about how these grants are hard to come by, and they are a matching grant through the State. David Higgins said that this equipment is to update each department to put the people in the proper equipment, build up moral and keep the professionals safe.

Chair Ken Richardson talked about gathering all of this information tonight, tomorrow night and the night after, before the Board starts discussing the budget. He

asked what can the Board do communications' wise.

David Higgins said that he would like to have each chief say their own opinion but as for Chief for Glade Creek, he would like to see dispatch moved and not have the dispatch be the greeter for the Law Enforcement Center. He talked about the need to be in a separate room where they can dispatch without interruptions.

Brandon Jones, Captain with the Rescue Squad, agreed with David on communications. He talked about how the dispatchers have to be the greeter and the secretary if the full time secretary isn't there. He said if you go to other counties to see their communication center, Alleghany County is way behind. He talked about the need to get it totally out of the sheriff's department control. He further talked about how he feels like a lot of times that is a pot for the Sheriff to pull money out of for his department.

Chair Ken Richardson talked about the importance of these discussions. He explained that Commissioner Milly Richardson represents the fire commission well. He talked about the county is in a situation to do something now. He further talked about the possibilities of using a portion of the EMS facility for communications.

Jimmy Church, Chief for Laurel Springs, talked about how there is a lot of need out there. He stated his appreciation for the Commissioners taking this time to get into these discussions. He said communication-wise, Laurel Springs is hearing calls fine, as for dispatching calls if there is money out there for the dispatch office to be outside of the sheriff's departments they need to find it. He talked about how it has gotten better but dispatch is still the main point. He further talked about the need for dispatch to be at another place. He reiterated that the Board's support is greatly appreciated. He talked about trying to prioritize needs. He further talked about if the State requires them to have the new equipment they only pay for half and the fire departments have to pay for the remaining half.

David Edwards with Sparta-Alleghany fire department talked about attending the recent program for the CAD system demonstration. He further talked about their amount of training. He said he doesn't know how much training dispatchers receive.

County Manager Don Adams talked about the training in the beginning then set up a schedule. He explained that the County is getting ready to update the 911 system, and they recently had a demonstration of the CAD system. He further explained that there was a misunderstanding about our current 911 system capabilities. He talked about how the County has always had good equipment and the technology is there they just need to be able to use the capabilities.

Chair Ken Richardson and David Edwards discussed having one department that handles all emergency calls properly.

Chair Ken Richardson talked about how the Board depends heavily on the fire commission and the need for input from you to guide us in the right direction.

David Edwards talked about Steve Allen's presentation and following through with his recommendations. He further talked about keep going with the plan, and everyone has to work together. He stated his appreciation for your time listening to us.

Larry Adams, Chief with Piney Creek, talked about this opportunity before us through the Department of Insurance (NCDOI). He explained that he read some stuff yesterday from Wayne Godwin with NCDOI that made him concerned for fire/rescue. He talked about the new regulations regarding the air packets that made the price double. He further talked about the new regulations for the safety vests, and how they only have a few. He talked about how their air packs are aging and not passing inspections. He further talked about having to meet the regulations. He explained that they do a lot of fundraising to try to cover their costs.

Commissioner Doug Murphy, David Higgins and Larry Adams talked about the deadlines for the grant. Larry Adams stated that everyone was notified May 15.

Chair Ken Richardson asked about establishing a communications department.

Larry Adams stated that he hadn't thought about the EMS building, but it is a great idea. He further stated that the dispatchers are the line to safety for the people in the field. He talked about how the information has to be filtered in a quick, accurate manner. He further talked about relying on them heavily. He said it would be great to have their own location.

Brandon Jones stated that they greatly appreciate that they didn't get cut in the budget. He talked about how every department but Cherry Lane has debt. He explained that the rescue squad has an annual truck payment of \$11,000 due in a couple of month. He further explained that he has a spreadsheet of every dollar that comes out of the department of \$80,000 spent with \$70,000 coming in. He reiterated that every penny is greatly appreciated.

David Higgins reiterated their appreciation. He explained that everyone is here for the same reason. He talked about Glade Creek's truck payment and insurance being \$35,000 with everything else has to be fundraising. He thanked the County for not cutting the fire departments/rescue squad and for listening.

Chair Ken Richardson recessed the meeting at 7:05pm until Wednesday, June 10, 2009, at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Evans  
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Ken Richardson  
Chairman