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Wanted: Donation  
*PE Weighs Through Budget  
Requests*

**By ROB CHAPMAN**

PRINCE EDWARD — One by one, community group and organization reps waited their scheduled turn before the County's board of supervisors Tuesday.

It's an annual budget season event and this year's edition included many who simply gave pitches for level funding. Here is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to County contributions and it's an opportunity to explain—within a five-minute allotted time-frame—what the organization or entity does and what the County's funding means to them.

Perhaps none, however, was more moving than the simple gesture from Melissa Ward, a Special Olympics athlete for 25 years.

Melissa, whose mom, Joyce, had just finished a presentation to the board, stretched out her hands to adorn a gold medal she had won in a state bowling competition last year around the neck of Board Chairman William "Buckie" Fore.

Fore would later tell *The Herald* that to accept the gold medal on behalf of the board from one of the Special Olympic contestants in token of their appreciation of support of the board to the Special Olympics was "a very touching experience."

The County chipped in \$200 last year for Special Olympics and her mom, Mrs. Ward, a long-time Special Olympics volunteer and Area 12 coordinator (which serves Prince Edward, Cumberland and Buckingham), asked the board for level funding. (Supervisors from each of the three area counties contribute annually.)

It doesn't seem like much in a budget the size of Prince Edward County's (\$46 million for this current fiscal year). Still, Mrs. Ward told the board that the requested funds will sponsor three athletes to go to state competition.

The largest expenses, she detailed, are transportation, registration fees for competition and uniforms.

"We provide a sports program that is unlike any other in the county," Mrs. Ward said, "because we serve a disability population. But it's not only a sports program, it's a program that gives self confidence, self esteem, and friendships, which is one of the most important things amongst our athletes."

Many competitions are held in the area, she said.

**Many More**

While it's early in the County's budget process and supervisors have yet to examine much beyond the school's request for level operational funds, the budget belt could well tighten a couple of notches given the national economic picture.

Yes, the Special Olympics stands a good chance of receiving funding and many have sought level funding, but there are a host of requests to weigh through—some small, some large.

And important to those making the request.

—Habitat For Humanity, for example, asked the County to increase its contribution from \$4,750 to \$10,750. Habitat Executive Director Jayne Johnson detailed that there are over 1,000 households in the county that cannot afford decent housing and that they receive over 360 inquiries a year about affordable housing. The volume has noticeably increased in the last few months.

—The Southside Center for Violence Prevention (Madeline's House), which has faced a decrease in expected funding, has asked the County to chip in \$750 more (for a total of \$7,000). It offers a crisis shelter for battered and abused women and their children fleeing from domestic and sexual assault (and, as space is available, housing for homeless women and children.

—The Farmville/Prince Edward Library, expected to open a new facility later this year, is seeking an increase in the County's contribution from \$152,059 to \$216,000, weighing the increased costs of operating in their dramatically larger facility (currently under construction).

—R. R. Moton Museum Director Lacy Ward Jr. discussed the Museum plans for 2011 and pledges and commitments. Six areas are planned to tell the story between 1951-64.

"We've begun making approaches...to people who we think are integral to the story at various stages in those years and we're getting great response as far as moving forward with this."

Museum officials are hopeful that the County would donate \$750,000 for one of the galleries in a project that is projected at \$5.25 million. It's a request, he cited, that they would hope to have fulfilled in the next three years. If they are successful, Ward pitched, citing an economic impact study, they would pump \$1 million a year into the economy.

Many needs, many requests.

Not all those who spoke asked for additional funds. The fire departments collectively were among a lengthy list of entities not seeking an increase in funding as was STEPS, or Southside Training and Employment Services.

STEPS Executive Director Sharon Harrup told supervisors that they "could definitely use an increase, but no, we're not asking for one. We're just looking to hold our own if we can keep our level funding in this year's budget. When the economy turns around, I'll come back with a wish list for funding."

STEPS needs a new roof and a new heating and cooling system. It's been estimated at \$1.5 million, which Ms. Harrup likened to a "Chevrolet" version.

Federal stimulus funds may be available. Ms. Harrup also noted that she'd like to work with county staff to see if a Community Development block grant or some other type of job creation/economic development funds might be available.

There will be some tough decisions for County supervisors as there always are when it comes to hammering out a budget. Still, as the board began to look forward, many of those addressing the board paused to look back to express their appreciation for past support.

Including Melissa.

"Thank you all so much," she would tell the board after the presentation.