

April 19, 2016

At the special meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County, held at the Court House, thereof, on Tuesday, the 19th day of April, 2016, at 7:00 p.m., there were present:

Pattie Cooper-Jones

Calvin L. Gray

Robert M. Jones

Odessa H. Pride

Howard F. Simpson

C. Robert Timmons, Jr.

Jerry R. Townsend

Jim R. Wilck

Also present: Wade Bartlett, County Administrator; and Sarah Elam Puckett, Assistant County Administrator.

Chairman Simpson called the reconvened meeting to order.

Chairman Simpson asked Mr. Wade Bartlett, County Administrator, for opening remarks.

Mr. Bartlett said, *“The proposed Fiscal Year 17 County Budget, to include the School Budget and the proposed 2016 Tax Levy, were advertised in the April 8th and 15th issues of THE FARMVILLE HERALD. The total budget for the County is proposed to be \$51,388,500.*

The dominant factor in developing the Fiscal Year 17 budget was how to solve a beginning budget deficit of more than \$1 million in the General Fund. The goal of the Board of Supervisors was to create a balanced budget that did not require the use of any reserves while at the same time, limiting any tax increases. With few exceptions, all expenses have been held level or have been reduced. This includes the Schools, Charitable Donations, and County Departments.

Three actions were taken to meet specific requests from the Board that were developed during the Strategic Planning Session. These are:

1) A program to increase the use of inmate labor. There was \$10,000 added in a part-time line item to help pay for the cost of officers to oversee an inmate work crew.

2) *Reduction of funds provided to outside agencies.*

3) *Aligning local funding for the Schools to average daily membership – or ADM – which is the number of students attending the Prince Edward County Public School System.*

The proposed budget provides \$8 million in local tax dollars for the Prince Edward County Schools. This closely aligns to the actual amount used by the Schools in Fiscal Year 15. After subtracting the \$110,153 for a debt service called QZAB, in Fiscal Year 15, the School spent \$7,992,419, and the ADM was \$2,035. Thus local funds expended per student was about \$3,949. The School used an ADM of 1,990 to create the Fiscal Year 17 budget; based on that ADM, the \$8 million will provide \$4,020 in local funding per pupil, or an increase of 1.8%.

The action to reduce expenditures eliminated approximately 70% or \$700,000 of the budget deficit. That still left a deficit of \$300,000. To eliminate that shortfall, the proposed budget assumes a two cent increase in the Real Estate Tax rate, making the rate 51 cents per hundred. No other tax rates are proposed to be changed. This tax rate represents an equalized tax rate as compared to the rate in effect in Calendar Year 2014, which was before the last reassessment. Even with that proposed tax rate increase, a majority of our tax parcels in our county will have a lower tax bill than they did in 2014.”

In Re: Presentation by School Board of Revised Budget Request

Dr. K. David Smith, Superintendent, reviewed the revised School Budget request. The original request was for \$1,599,221 in additional funding. The School Board was interested in doing what they could to begin restoring some of the programs that have been reduced and cut out over the years. Some of the programs include two foreign language programs, German and Latin, and in bringing Spanish instruction back to the Middle and Elementary grades. Also this includes a part-time community engagement coordinator, the two foreign language teachers, a physics teacher, a biology teacher, a part-time chorus instructor, two teachers at the high school to replace courses currently taught online and a request from Transportation for a new school bus. That’s how the School Board got to \$1,599,221. Based on information that Mr. Bartlett shared, the School Board revisited the request to focus on just the required increases. The concern was the impact on the children and not being able to restore some of the positions and programs.

Dr. Smith stated that based on information from Mr. Bartlett, the decision was made to revise and focus on the required increases. He stated his concerns were to minimize the impact on the children; to attract the best teachers, a signing bonus had been implemented. Dr. Smith said that depending on the budget, preschool funding is going to be reduced from 101 seats to 71 seats. The Early Childhood Special Education Program will blend with the PreK Program. This will mean a teacher and an aide can be reassigned; one additional teacher and three additional aides will be required.

Dr. Smith stated the health insurance will increase by 15%, and at last report, a two percent salary increase is to be implemented by the State December 1, 2016. Because the School applies pay increases equally to all employees, the funding that comes from the State would only pay for the increase for the SOQ funded positions, about half of the positions. He stated the total for the revised request is an additional \$752,402; with a revised total budget request of \$8,752,402.

Supervisor Gray stated that while these concerns are presented, if they do not come to fruition and action contrary to the request sends the wrong message to the Board, the students and the citizens. Dr. Smith said that without the additional funding, the aides will not be able to be funded without removing other positions or programs. The School Board has to decide which is most important and has priority in terms of the needs of the children; the School Board must find a compromise.

Supervisor Pride asked if he has looked at retirements and resignations and how that might affect the budget. Dr. Smith said it is difficult to know at this time; at the end of the summer, they will have a better idea.

Supervisor Timmons requested a line item detailed budget for review. Supervisor Gray stated all Board members need a copy.

Supervisor Wilck stated the Board always contributes more than the surrounding counties, and Prince Edward County ranks 21st of 95 counties in Virginia in the amount spent per pupil; he said the Administration decides where the funding is spent, and asked why the Board of Supervisors is putting in so much and having all these requests for more.

Dr. Smith stated the cost of programs vary from one county to the next. Discussion followed on the per pupil expenditure. Dr. Smith stated Prince Edward County has a large number of special needs

students which can be costly. Prince Edward County Schools also pay the full costs of dual enrollment to encourage more students to take the courses.

Supervisor Cooper-Jones asked about the funding from SVCC; Mr. Bartlett stated the vast majority of the funds go back to the schools. He said the school pays it and then it is dependent on how many teachers SVCC must provide; the representative from SVCC stated there was only one teacher necessary to provide to Prince Edward County Schools, so most of the tuition was returned to the schools.

Dr. Smith stated the reimbursement is not the full amount and is dependent upon staff.

In Re: Public Hearing: FY 17 County Budget

Chairman Simpson announced that this was the date and time scheduled for a public hearing on the Fiscal Year 2017 County Budget. Notice of this hearing was advertised according to law in the Friday, April 8, 2016 and Friday, April 15, 2016 editions of THE FARMVILLE HERALD, a newspaper published in the County of Prince Edward.

Chairman Simpson opened the Public Hearing.

Ellen Wood, Hampden District, explained the term “per pupil expenditure” in regards to special education and the various mandates that provide for the students. She said the needs of the students are widely varied, and include Speech and Language Therapy, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and even personal hygiene. Ms. Wood said Prince Edward County Schools offer a good Special Education program which attracts other special needs students from other counties. She requested the Board fully fund the schools as they are taking care of Prince Edward County’s greatest asset, the children.

Eunice Carwile, Buffalo District, stated she is proud to serve on the Library Board; she reviewed the many services offered at the library, and asked the Board to consider the request for funding.

Adam Wolf spoke on behalf of the teachers, and requested the Board meet their request. He invited the Board to visit the schools, and said greater funding leads to more programs for the students. He stated that on average in Virginia, more than two and a half times as much money is spent per inmate than per pupil. Many have heard of the “school to prison pipeline.” One underlying cause of this pipeline is inadequate funding of schools. He invited the Board to come to the schools to see the teachers and students. Taking funding from the schools cannot fix or improve performance.

Joel Thomas, Junior at Prince Edward County High School, stated he is the Vice-President of the Class of 2017, a member of the Future Business Leaders of America, and President of the National Honor Society for the upcoming school year. He asked the Board members to recite the Board of Supervisors Mission Statement. He said cutting the School budget goes against the Mission Statement, and that 25% of the graduates are doing so with over a 4.0 GPA. Fully funding the schools will help all students; for some, the high school diploma may be the only form of education some children in this County will get. He requested the Board fully fund the schools.

Carolyn Rice, Senior at Prince Edward County High School, said she has never been exposed to students with more potential to make an impact in the future. She stated that the teachers have encouraged her to participate in extra-curricular activities. She added that if the budget is cut, others may not be able to live up to their full potential, and asked the Board to fully fund the schools.

Alana Calhoun, Senior at Prince Edward County High School, stated the changes the Board makes will greatly affect the students and urged supporting level funding. She stated the school is not an isolated entity and contributes to a larger economy. She said over 10% of the graduating class have already been accepted to UVA, William & Mary, and Virginia Tech; she added education is an investment and good schools attract business to the county.

Sam Dietrich, Seventh Grader at Prince Edward County Middle School, requested the Board not cut the school budget due to concern over electives being eliminated.

Carrington Dietrich, Fifth grader at Prince Edward County Middle School, stated the schools need the funding and said if funding stops, the schools could go downhill. She said the teachers work hard to keep the students happy and safe.

Isabel Edwards, Junior at Prince Edward County High School, requested the Board not cut the \$300,000 from the proposed School Budget. She stated the High School is fully accredited based on the SOL scores. All three schools have received at least partial state accreditation and the number of qualifying AP test scores has increased significantly. She asked what the Board is willing to give in place of \$300,000, and said that without the funding, the School Board can't hire new teachers or purchase new textbooks. She said the schools are progressing and now is not the time to cut funding.

Ben Edwards stated he is currently the Vice-President of the Middle School, expressed his gratitude for the good teachers he has had, and requested the Board fully fund the schools.

Mason Kinney, Sixth grader at Prince Edward County Middle School, requested the Board fully fund the schools, and reported on the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program. He stated one of the autistic students at the school received a perfect score on the SOL test, adding that cutting back on resources doesn't help the students.

Richard Altice, Hampden District, stated the median income in Prince Edward County is between \$25,000 and \$35,000, and reviewed the many taxes citizens are required to pay. He requested the Board remember that they act on delegated authority of the people of Prince Edward County to protect them, their property and to carry out the business and County affairs. Mr. Altice asked the Board not to increase taxes on people that are struggling. He said it is well known that the schools are in poor shape and is doing a better job of losing students and teachers than gaining them. He said each year, the School requests more funds to fix problems but the problems continue. He suggested the Schools set up a fund for volunteer donations to the schools, adding the schools are not bringing the results the taxpayers and children deserve. Mr. Altice said it is too easy for the Board to spend the taxpayer's money, and expects honesty and openness from the Schools and the County and that the expenditures are well thought out and balanced to the absolute need.

Barbara Arieti, Hampden District, stated that years ago, the Board of Supervisors had the reputation of only funding the public school at the minimum required by State and Federal mandates. She stated the most important thing the governing Board of the County can do is think that these children are their children too. Public education must be supported. She said funding the modest addition of approximately \$750,000 is not "asking for the moon." This revised budget gives back some of what was lost several years ago. She said there are approximately ten teachers that are leaving for better working conditions and better salaries. She said the citizens look to the Board for leadership and judgement to make wise decisions; if the schools produce an educated work force, commerce and industry will come.

Lowell Frye, Farmville District, spoke on behalf of strong funding initiatives both for the schools and for the library. There is no greater moral and legal responsibility than to provide for the education of its citizens. The challenges faced by the School cannot be addressed if funding is cut; he stated the Board

needs to have the foresight to fund those initiatives even if it means modestly raising taxes in a county which has one of the lowest tax rates in the state. Mr. Frye said he also supports the library, adding he is deeply grateful for the programs offered there.

Alex, Diane and Gwen Werth, Hampden District, expressed their support for the proposed school budget. Gwen, a seventh grader at Prince Edward County Middle School, stated when she found out the teachers may not get the small raise, she had to speak on their behalf. She stated all of her teachers are role models and a raise is a way to say “thank you” for all their hard work.

Caroline Shoenthal, Farmville District, spoke in support of the proposed school budget, adding that many parents are willing to pay a tax increase. She said the PTA has been requested by teachers to provide pencils and tissues and questioned the Board of Supervisors’ continued insistence that the schools run on “bare bones.” She stated there are problems in every school system in the country, and Prince Edward County also has a complicated history that has affected the schools here. She questioned the “per pupil expenditure” being a bad thing, and stated the SOLs which are a very poor bit of evidence on which to base an opinion of the students and what they are capable of.

Ellie Shoenthal, Sixth grader at Prince Edward County Middle School, requested the Board not cut funding to the schools; she stated electives make students smarter and spoke about her interest in the robotics elective.

Sally Thompson stated for the economic development reasons alone it is important to have good schools and the Board’s support. She spoke about the importance of Preschool and the need for aides in the classrooms.

Carolyn DeWolf, Hampden District, spoke in support of the school budget and the importance of working together to make the schools better. She said funding isn’t the only support that the school needs, and asked that the Board does not diminish the funding now when they are seeking a superintendent.

Nate Lane, teacher at Prince Edward County High School, stated unfunded mandates have a much larger impact in rural districts because there are a lot of infrastructure needs, such as technology and enhanced testing. He said he is an advocate for teachers’ pay and there are lots of infrastructure needs in the schools. He stated he has never worked in a public school that has a better CTE program which will be a boon to this local school system. He said his department with five teachers has a budget of \$300; he has

125 students and must share a \$300 budget. The students in the school need passionate teachers; if the Board wants to attract them, there is a need to work at funding the school. He asked the Board to fully fund the schools and added he was proud of the students that stood to speak and the civic participation.

Supervisor Pride stated this is not the first year of accreditation over consecutive years.

Chairman Simpson thanked everyone that attended and stated the children did a wonderful job, having the courage to speak. He stated he will continue to support the schools.

Supervisor Gray stated he appreciates the presence of the audience; being a former educator, he understands what has been presented to the Board, which now must make a very important decision which will impact the current students but also the future.

Supervisor Pride thanked all for their comments; she stated she listened and understands the concerns. She said that when the Board looks at the budget, there are over 23,000 citizens in Prince Edward County, and there are a lot of initiatives that are being reviewed, not just the School Budget.

Supervisors Jones, Townsend and Wilck thanked all that came out to speak.

Supervisor Cooper-Jones thanked all that came out. She said this is not a popularity contest but this is a Board that has to rightfully divide the taxes in this county, and not just consider those that say "I will pay more." There are less fortunate that cannot afford an increase in taxes. Education is important but is not the only concern. The decision must benefit all taxpayers, not just the school.

There being no one further wishing to speak, Chairman Simpson closed the public hearing.

On motion of Supervisor Cooper-Jones, seconded by Supervisor Gray, and adopted by the following vote:

Aye:	Pattie Cooper-Jones	Nay: None
	Calvin L. Gray	
	Robert M. Jones	
	Odessa H. Pride	
	Howard F. Simpson	
	C. Robert Timmons, Jr.	
	Jerry R. Townsend	
	Jim R. Wilck	

the meeting was recessed at 8:40 p.m. until Thursday, April 28, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Room for the Adoption of the County and School Budgets and Tax Rates.