

Gates County Board of Commissioners
Budget Public Hearing Minutes
June 12, 2008

The Gates County Board of Commissioners met in a special Public Hearing to review the 2008-2009 budget on Thursday, June 12, 2008 at 10:00 AM in the County Commissioners' Room, 202 Court Street, Gatesville, NC. Commissioners Pierce, Askew, Jernigan and Nickens were present.

Chairman Pierce stated the Board will have a budget work session after the Public Hearing. He also stated Mr. John Whitehurst, the consultant hired to complete the budget, was unable to be in attendance.

Chairman Pierce opened the floor to the public. The following comments were received from the public.

Roy Weaver, presented eleven (11) steps for the county to use to save money: terminate longevity bonuses, terminate the paid birthday holiday, justify five employees in the Water Department Collection Office, where practical school buses pick up students at every third stop, no employee cost of living raise, retire employees at 65 years of age and replace with surplus employees from other departments with a lower pay grade, reduce the number of Sheriff Department deputies to ten (10), remove all county furnished vehicles and pay employees for official travel, the Commissioners and School Board should accept only one-half of their normal fees and hire a consultant to justify each of the county employees' positions.

Dr. Zenobia Smallwood, Superintendent of Gates County Schools, stated that when the 2008-2009 budget was originally submitted there was no requests for increases in salary or energy cost and there was not an emergency line item. Any emergencies that arise will have to be paid out of Fund Balance. The State requires a specific amount to be maintained in Fund Balance. The school system has installed more efficient thermostats and are monitoring them closely. They are currently doing all they can to meet their expenses.

Commissioner Jernigan questioned if the State was still paying for the fuel cost for the buses.

Wendy Forseman, Board of Education Finance Officer, responded the State was paying for the fuel cost but it would not be completely covered this year. Local funds would also have to be used to pay for bus fuel cost. They have already had to put in \$140,000 from Fund Balance to meet expenses. The State is now considering a two and one-half (2 1/2) percent salary increase not in the requested budget.

Mike Connor, Assistant Superintendent of Gates County Schools, stated twelve (12) new classrooms are being brought into operation that was not included in the 2008-2009 budget along with heating the new gymnasium next year.

Susan Scurria, Director of Aging, stated a \$152,564 grant had been accepted by Gates County with matching funds. If Gates County cuts any of the matching funds, \$15,264 in services will be decreased from the Grant. If we do not accept the grant it will be awarded to other counties and she is not sure if it will be offered to Gates County again.

Linwood Sills, questioned if the current tax rate of 97.5% is to remain the same but would assessments go up.

Renee McGinnis, County Tax Assessor, responded the new assessments will not go on the books until 2009.

Chairman Pierce stated if we re-appraised every four (4) years it would be much more accurate than every eight (8) years.

Roy Weaver, had a question regarding the increase in the Sheriff Department's budget.

Sheriff Webb responded the budget increase included a three (3) percent salary increase, equipment placement and repair.

Mr. Weaver questioned the Department of Social Services' Child Day Care budget.

Colleen Turner, Director of Social Services, responded the Child Day Care budget is supported 100 percent by State funds, no county money is used.

Roger Smith questioned if the budget could be put on line.

Sandy Pittman, Finance Officer, responded the budget is for sale in the County Manager's Office and will be posted on line once it has been accepted.

Chairman Pierce suggested the Board take a short break before going into the budget work session.

The Board will reconvene on Friday, June 20, 2008 at 1:00 P.M.