

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY
SPECIAL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2001, 8:30 AM**

Present: Kenneth Edge, Chairman
Breedon Blackwell, Commissioner
Jeannette Council, Commissioner
James Martin, County Manager
Cliff Spiller, Assistant County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Howard Abner, Assistant Finance Director
Tonya Harris-Council, Public Information Director
Jerry Thrasher, Library Director
Rhonda C. Raynor, Deputy Clerk to the Board

Others: Jim Hankins, Library Board of Trustees
Richard P. Higgins, Library Board of Trustees
Dr. Joseph F. Johnson, Vice Chairman, Library Board of Trustees
C. Kim Nazarchyk, Chairman, Library Board of Trustees
Gail A. Riddle, Library Board of Trustees
Press

Chairman Edge called the meeting to order.

1. Invocation

Chairman Edge offered the Invocation.

2. Approval of Minutes: January 4, 2001

MOTION: Commissioner Blackwell offered a motion to approve the January 4, 2001 minutes of the Finance Committee.

SECOND: Commissioner Council

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

3. Consideration of a Request for Funding for the Resumption of Normal Hours at the Headquarters Library.

Mr. Nazarchyk, Chairman of the Library Board of Trustees made the presentation to the committee. He introduced other members of the Board of Trustees. He advised they were at the meeting to ask for funding to resume normal operating hours at the Headquarters Branch Library. The Library System has received many negative comments from patrons over the reduced operating hours. They want to bring the Headquarters Branch back up to its normal 70-hour operating schedule. The costs to hire staff and obtain the materials needed to open the branch at its normal hours for April, May and June of this year would be \$64,500.00. If approved, staff would be hired in March. The proposal includes using \$33,000 of anticipated fees generated from the recent increase and \$31,500 in additional new money from the County. They hope to continue this operating schedule into the 2002 fiscal year. He noted the Library is doing an excellent job collecting fees. They bring in more than what is budgeted and that money goes into the County's general fund. They have built an excellent library system

Chairman Edge stated he recognized the importance of the Library System and appreciated the Library Board's spirit. He also recognized that Mr. Thrasher has done an excellent job. The County is currently in a financial situation that it has never been in. Several new facilities have come on line at the same time and we have just had a large tax increase. He has heard several comments from citizens that they do not, nor can they bear another tax increase. He feels the Library should try to make their current situation work for the remainder of the fiscal year. He is hoping some of their funding can be restored for the next fiscal year. He noted the Commissioners will be having a retreat soon and they have all agreed that they need to set priorities and that they need to work toward those priorities. They also need to let departments know what those priorities are. He doesn't mind the Library making these requests, but he does not want to set a precedent. He is hopeful the Commissioners can help the Library System next fiscal year.

Commissioner Blackwell stated that as the Liaison to the Library, he would work for the Library as hard as he can. He stated the Library Board understands the financial situation that the County is in. If the Finance Committee does not approve this request, he does not feel it should be presented to the full Board of Commissioners for consideration. He thinks the Library took a major "hit" last year. He was hopeful that the recent tax increase would allow more funding to go to the Library, but it did not work out that way. The Library Board of Trustees are volunteers and are a very hard working group. He believes Cumberland County has the best Library System in the state. He stated that he would continue to remind the Commissioners that the Library has suffered this fiscal year. He noted he heard concerns that if this was approved and the Headquarters resumed its normal hours and then had to cut them back again in 2002, that it would cause a public relations problem. He noted the public has a problem in not knowing when the branches are open now. He then thanked the Library Board of Trustees for attending the meeting.

Commissioner Council noted the press is doing a good job with publicizing the Library's request, but there are other County agencies that are suffering as well and they are not getting the same positive press.

VOTE: Favor: Commissioner Council and Chairman Edge
Oppose: Commissioner Blackwell

Mr. Nazarchyk stated they fully understand the responsibility that the Commissioners have and know that the Commissioners understand the Library Board's responsibilities as well. He asked that the Commissioners please keep them in mind because they have a fantastic Library System and want to improve it.

4. Other Committee Concerns.

No other committee concerns were raised.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.