

CUMBERLAND COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 18, 2008, 4:00PM  
SPECIAL MEETING

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Commissioner Kenneth Edge, Chair  
Commissioner Jeannette Council  
Commissioner John T. Henley, Jr.

OTHERS

PRESENT: Commissioner Breeden Blackwell  
Commissioner Ed Melvin  
Commissioner Diane Wheatley  
James Martin, County Manager  
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager  
Cliff Spiller, Asst. County Manager  
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney  
Harvey Raynor, Deputy County Attorney  
Marsha Fogle, Clerk

1. Discussion of proposed increase in Environmental Health Department fees

The Board of Commissioners, at its meeting on August 4, 2008, referred this item to the Finance Committee for a recommendation.

Wayne Raynor, Director, Health Department, reviewed the fees and indicated that the fees are in line with our counties of our size. He noted that 16 of the 24 affected fees are at 100% cost (i.e., the cost for the service). Some of the fees are less and a few are more. Pursuant to a question as to whether or not this is a "money making" device for the Health Department, Mr. Raynor and the County Attorney noted it was not. Mr. Raynor noted that increased costs, such as travel have also affected fees. In response to a question regarding notification of the public about the fee increase, Mr. Raynor said his department would notify the Homebuilders Association and he felt sure that there would be an article in the newspaper in the morning regarding the increase. (Fee information attached to these minutes).

MOTION: Commissioner Council moved to recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the fee increases be approved as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Henley

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

2. Discussion regarding a request to approve a Resolution for Tax-exempt Loan from North State Bank to Stoney Point Volunteer Fire Department.

The Board of Commissioners, at its meeting on August 4, 2008, referred this item to the Finance Committee for recommendation.

Commissioner Kenneth Edge, Chairman of the Finance Committee, noted that the Board of Commissioners had some questions regarding this issue at its meeting on August 4 and that is why it was referred to the Finance Committee. He noted he was confident the request would be approved; however, there were a few questions that some of the board members wanted to address.

Mr. John Jackson, representing Neil Yarborough, Attorney for the Stoney Point Fire Department, said that this request is routine and if approved allows Stoney Point to save \$16,000 - \$18,000 per year interest on the loan. Mr. Jackson noted that this is the typical procedure followed by fire departments when loans are required for capital projects.

Commissioner Henley noted he was unaware that a new building was being built for Stoney Point. He said he felt the Board of Commissioners should have known this prior to a request regarding the tax-exempt status for the loan.

Commissioner Council noted she had reviewed the audit reports from the last two years and was concerned that some of the funds are not insured by FDIC (those over \$100,000). She suggested that the Fire Department take action immediately to assure all of the funds are insured. Mr. Freddy Johnson assured her he would correct that concern immediately.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Henley moved to approve the Tax-exempt Loan for Stoney Point Fire Department in the amount of \$1,200,000 for the purpose of building a new fire station.

**SECOND:** Commissioner Council

**VOTE:** UNANIMOUS

Commissioner Edge, Chairman of the Finance Committee, inquired of staff if all audits for all of the volunteer fire departments have been received. Ms. Cannon noted she would check but she believed the county had them all. Commissioner Blackwell noted some concerns regarding fire departments in general that need to be addressed. He said those concerns would probably be addressed with Item #3 on the Finance Committee meeting agenda.

3. Discussion of funding structure and issues for county volunteer fire departments

The Board delayed discussion on this item until it addressed Item #4, which is a Closed Session Item.

4. Closed Session – Attorney Client Matter

**MOTION:** Commissioner Council moved to go into Closed Session for Attorney Client Matter.

**SECOND:** Commissioner Henley

**VOTE:** UNANIMOUS

MOTION: Commissioner Henley moved to go back into Open Session.  
SECOND: Commissioner Council  
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

The Finance Committee discussed Item #3.

Kenneth Edge, Chairman of the Finance Committee, noted that the Board of Commissioners wants to have a more constructive role in budgeting and finance for the fire departments. He noted the importance of meeting the challenges in providing effective fire protection for all of the citizens of the county. Many of the concerns about fire protection and first responder issues come to commissioners directly and not to fire departments. Some of the issues that the Board is concerned about are providing funding for each fire department so that all citizens have the same basic level of fire protection, finding funds for EMS calls (some fire departments are first responders and answer more EMS calls than fire calls); how to provide appropriate personnel at fire departments during the day when volunteers are not available; and how to disperse funds in a way to assure departments are getting adequate funds to run the fire service. The County Attorney indicated the way to address these issues lies within the fire contracts. Commissioner Edge asked Freddy Johnson, President of the Fire Chief's Association if his organization could bring forth some recommendations on the above issues. Mr. Johnson indicated his group has been working on these issues and will be meeting again on September 11. Commissioner Edge said he would like to have feedback from the Fire Chief's Association so the Board of Commissioners can have something in place by January of 2009 that would address some of the commissioners' concerns.

Commissioner Blackwell, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, noted that the system as we currently know it is "broken" and needs to be fixed. He said it can only be fixed if everyone comes to the table and works together in addressing fire and first responder issues which ultimately affect all of our citizens. He urged everyone to work with the Board to make the system work to the advantage of all of the citizens of the county. He also noted that the Board of Commissioners does not want to "micro-manage" the fire departments. But, they do want to play a role in the budget and financing issues since the Board of Commissioners is the governing body for the fire districts and sets the fire tax rates.

MOTION: Commissioner Henley moved to adjourn.  
SECOND: Commissioner Council  
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Meeting adjourned: 5:55PM.