

**COUNTY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING  
FEBRUARY 10, 1993, 9:15 A.M.**

**PRESENT:** Tom Bacote  
John Keefe  
Billy King  
Lee Warren  
Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager  
Pat Jones, Personnel Director  
Gary Moss, Fayetteville-Observer Times  
Rhonda R. Davis, Deputy Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

2. Set Regular Meeting Date

The members selected the second Wednesday of each month at 8:15 A.M. as their regular meeting date.

1. Elect Chairman

**MOTION:** Committee Member Lee Warren nominated Billy King as chairman of the committee.

**SECOND:** Committee Member Billy King

**VOTE:** Unanimous

Commissioner King was elected Chairman of the committee.

3. Discussion: Establishment of following positions:

- A. Public Information Officer
- B. Risk Manager
- C. Benefits Coordinator

Cliff Strassenburg - He was asked by one of the commissioners to report to them what needs there are at the management level. He then listed the three positions. These are not new ideas. They have never moved on these items because of budget restraints. He made the decision to place the manpower in the departments and did not push these positions. We are shorted at this level and are not performing in this area.

Risk Manager: Information from Sedgwick James on Cumberland County Risk Control Recommendations was presented.

Cliff Strassenburg - His recommendation is that we need a full time Safety Administration or Risk Manager due to the new governmental regulations and laws recently passed. There is now more emphasis on this. The county currently has all types of liability coverage for all sorts of things. It is another duty that is assigned to Cliff Spiller along with safety procedures, etc. Mr. Spiller does not have enough time to handle all these duties. Cape Fear Valley Medical Center has two people to handle this work. This would not be a part time assignment. He believes that by having a risk manager, it will save the county money in the long run. This

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person would help us to cut down on incidents and accidents and we will have someone who will be taking the time and will understand insurance and be able to give us the best protection for the money.

Questions were asked by the committee members and answered by Mr. Strassenburg.

Commissioner King - How are these duties currently being handled?

Mr. Strassenburg - They are currently being handled by our Assistant County Manager, Cliff Spiller.

Questions were then asked by the committee about worker's comp. claims.

Pat Jones - We currently have approximately 200 worker's comp. claims per year. Our premiums currently exceed \$250,000.

Mr. Strassenburg - The county has alot of injuries in the jail, landfill, ambulance, etc. These are on-the-job injuries and have very little follow up because of the lack of staffing. We need a person whose duties are to concentrate on these areas eight hours a day, five days a week. The City of Fayetteville currently has three people with these duties.

Commissioner Warren - How much support staff would be needed in addition to these positions?

Mr. Strassenburg - If the committee would like him to go ahead on these positions, he could get the specifics on the support staff, etc. and report back to them with a proposal.

Commissioner King - We should look into the possibility of the realignment of clerks and current staff positions and having them restructured to give support to these new positions.

Commissioner Keefe - We need to look at these areas carefully due to the fact that other government entities are currently reducing.

It was the consensus of the committee that they move on this position.

Tom Bacote arrived at 8:52 AM.

Commissioner Keefe - He has a problem with the current selection of applicants. The county needs to establish a wellness program.

Public Information Officer:

Mr. Strassenburg - The need to communicate well with the public is great. We need the media to know all the good things we do. If the media had a single point of contact within the county, it would keep them from having to go to several different people in order to get the information they need. He then presented the minutes of the November 18, 1992 Personnel

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Committee Meeting as well as the information presented at that meeting concerning the function of a Public Information Office for the county. This person would be the spokesman for the county. County Government Week would be organized through this office. The City of Fayetteville, Fayetteville Technical Community College and Cape Fear Valley Hospital all have Public Information Officers.

Commissioner King - A person in this position would have helped tremendously during the promotion of the bond issues.

Commissioner Bacote - He feels we need a Public Information Officer badly. In looking at all we are doing with water, sewer and other areas, it is almost impossible to accomplish the things we want to without someone in this position. We need to communicate with the people. We had numerous problems with the last revaluation because the public did not have the proper information.

Commissioner Keefe - The county needs to have it's position stated clearly. We have an obligation to the citizens to do this.

Mr. Strassenburg - We need to think of this position as public information, not public relations.

Commissioner King - The County Manager and Chairman of the Board are often faced with these duties and don't always know how to put information out to the public.

Commissioner Warren - The presentation from Dare County last November was impressive. He mentioned the items such as pamphlets and brochures they presented that had been produced in their office.

Commissioner King - We must balance the wants and needs question in view of the tight budget constraints.

Commissioner Keefe - He thinks that these three positions, with the right person in them and a hold on that person, would pay for themselves.

Mr. Strassenburg - He has not asked for the positions in prior budget years due to the budget problems. He has foregone them in the past, but feels he must now bring them to this committee and get their feelings.

He wants this committee to advise him whether or not they want him to look into these positions and gather additional information.

Benefits Coordinator:

Mr. Strassenburg - Some of the duties that would be done by someone in this position are currently being handled by Pat Jones, Payroll and John Nalepa. These people are essentially processing paperwork right now. We have had high jumps in health benefit premiums and need a person to look at working on ways to cut current costs.

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Commissioner King - Again stated he feels there could be some realignment of current staff to help with these positions.

Mr. Strassenburg - The Payroll section not only does payroll, but keeps up with all of the reporting that must be done to the government. He will look into these areas to see if there can be some realignment.

Commissioner Bacote - We must look at the total picture. This is the fourth largest metro in the state. We currently have over two thousand employees. He cannot see how we can expect our people to keep going on with more responsibilities and still expect them to be efficient.

Commissioner King - We must see if current positions could be more efficient. We should realign and upgrade positions if possible.

Commissioner Bacote - He does not want to put more on employees who are already overworked. One of the county's biggest costs is personnel.

Mr. Strassenburg - The positions they are discussing are specialized areas and have specialized training. On one of the positions, he feels clerical support could be handled by existing staff.

Commissioner Warren - If you want someone to make their salary, you need to get an expert in the field. If we move forward on these positions, it needs to be done right.

Pat Jones - In the area of safety and personnel, they had a worker's comp. program in coordination with the County Attorney. This area is getting bigger and bigger. Due to new laws in other areas, staff is continually being pulled away. They had established a Safety Committee, but it was terminated due to other involvements. It will take three years to get this area turned around.

We must pay for exposure no matter what. What increases our exposure is our experience rate (number of accidents). The county's experience rating is 1.16. The year before it was 1.13. The average for a county our size with a good rating is 1.0.

Mr. Strassenburg - We need someone that will shop for the best insurance full time. If the duties of this position are performed correctly, it will pay for itself. Health insurance premiums must be looked at constantly.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Keefe offered a motion to direct the County Manager to gather background on these three positions and look at the possibility of using in-house staff as support staff and report the findings to this committee and, at that time, they will decide whether or not to recommend these positions be added to the next budget.

**SECOND:** Commissioner Warren

**VOTE:** Unanimous

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Future discussion topics were then presented to the committee and briefly discussed. They were:

1. Request from the Register of Deeds for two additional positions.
  2. Impact of the Federal Family Leave Law.
  3. Status of the county's merit pay plan.
  4. Proposal for the county wellness program.
  5. Proposal for an employee awards and recognition program.
- Mr. Strassenburg - He would like to have George Tatum present at the next meeting in order to discuss the two positions he is requesting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 AM.