CUMBERLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

CONNECTION

VOLUME VI, ISSUE IV JULY 2009

County Adopts Budget

The Cumberland County Commissioners adopted the Fiscal Year 2010 budget June 15. The county wide property tax rate required to support the recommended budget was reduced by 9.4 cents to a revenue neutral tax rate of 76.6 cents per $100 valuation. With revaluation conducted this year, the county was required by state law to publish the revenue neutral tax rate in the next budget.

The general fund budget of almost $273 million reflected a 6.4 percent reduction in departmental expenses. The budget provides for continuation of services at existing levels but does not include a cost of living allowance for employees.

County Manager James Martin briefed County Department Heads the following day alerting them that the county is entering the fiscal year with great caution. He cited reduced sales tax revenues and possible state budget actions that may move expenses to the county level or reduce county revenue sources in an effort to balance the state budget.

Martin requested that county departments limit travel and training; delay hiring for vacant positions for a minimum of 90 days; delay any capital outlay and vehicle purchases; and limit purchasing dispensable items.

Suspension of 401-K Contributions as a Precaution

After Martin's presentation, the Department Heads unanimously agreed that the county should suspend the 1 percent 401-K contributions. Martin notified county employees on June 22 that starting July 1 the county would suspend 401-K contributions to employee accounts in an effort to avoid harsher budget cuts in the future. This move could save the county $650,000 this year. If the money is not needed, the contributions may be reinstated.

Longevity pay for employees who have been with the county for three years or more were not affected by the suspension of the 401-K contributions.

Tax Collection Rate Remains High

The Tax Administration Office reports that it has had one of the highest collection rates in history. With two days left in fiscal 2009, the collection rate was at 99.19 percent for real and personal property.

— See BUDGET, continuted on page 2.

COUNTY MANAGER'S MESSAGE

James Martin

As we approach the beginning of the fiscal year with a newly adopted budget, there are many funding issues that remain unsettled. These include the actions of state legislators as they adopt the state budget, sales tax revenues that are dependent on the economy and property tax collection.

The FY 2010 budget reflects a lot of hard work and there is good news to share. In response to the Board of Commissioners' goals, an additional $250,000 has been allocated for automatic vehicle locators for our EMS Department and $491,906 for clean water projects.

No jobs were cut nor salaries reduced. At this time, no furloughs are recommended. For those of you who recall 2001, these are measures we hope to avoid. So, we have taken the preemptive measure of suspending the county's 401-K contributions to employee accounts starting in July. This move does not affect the longevity benefits already in place.

During these tough economic times, I am reminded of a quote from President Theodore Roosevelt: "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." You can help by being on the lookout for ways to reduce costs. Take your ideas to your supervisor or department head.

I also want to remind you to be safe as you travel during vacations and participate in various summer activities.

BUDGET, from page 1:

"Even in these current economic conditions, people are paying their taxes," said Tina Belanger, Assistant Tax Administrator.

Martin praised the department for the great job it has done in handling collections and dealing with the 14,000 tax appeals from property owners.

Fiscal Strength

In June, Cumberland County refunded existing General Obligation school bonds, yielding a net present value savings over the life of the bonds of $2.47 million, or 7.03 percent.

Amy Cannon, assistant county manager, said the savings will amount to an average of $347,000 a year over the remaining eight years of the debt. Cumberland County was able to achieve these savings because of recent upgrades in its bond ratings. In October, Standard & Poor's Rating Services upgraded the county's rating from AA- to AA+. Then in March, Moody's Rating Services in New York upgraded the rating from Aa3 to Aa2.

"This successful debt refunding is indicative of the county's high credit quality resulting from consistent, solid financial performance, strength in the local economy and prudent financial management," Cannon said.

Water Feasibility Study

In May consultants working on the Cumberland County Rural Water Feasibility Study presented their preliminary engineering report to the Board of Commissioners, Fayetteville City Council members and PWC board members. The report found that a central water system could be developed in an area by area basis in the county. They recommended starting in the southwest part of the county and estimated that would cost $28 million.

Solid Waste Saves $20,000 on Truck Purchase

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR BOBBY HOWARD reports that his department saved $20,000 by winning a bid to purchase a 24-foot 2008 International box truck for $45,000 through GovDeals, an online auction site. A new 2008 International Box truck, equipped exactly the same as the used one found on GovDeals, would have cost $65,000. The truck had 3,271 miles on it and will be used by the recycling division.

The county entered into an agreement with GovDeals in November. The site is open to the public to bid on surplus property. The county has used it primarily to auction off surplus vehicles, but it may be used to auction any items that have been declared surplus.

Help Animal Services with Online Votes

Please take a minute to help our Animal Services Department. It takes just a few clicks of your mouse. The Animal Rescue Site is offering $20,000 to an animal shelter that can get the most e-mail votes before July 26. The site is also offering $1,000 to the shelter that gets the most online votes in a week.

Go to www.theanimalrescuesite.com/clickToGive/shelterchallenge.faces. Scroll down, choose N.C. and type in Fayetteville. Click the "Vote" box by Cumberland County Animal Control and then answer a simple question. There are just a few days left so please take a minute to help. You can vote once per day from work and then again from your home computer.

New Ordinance Will Unchain Pets

Effective Aug. 1, Cumberland County residents will no longer be allowed to tie or chain their pets outdoors. The County Commissioners passed the ordinance in February, and the Animal Services Department has been working to inform the public about the new law.

Chaining dogs is cruel, especially in inclement or severe weather, and it can contribute to accidental choking or strangulation. Chaining may also cause dogs to become anti-social or aggressive, which increases the risk of attacks on other animals or people. Such a risk is a threat to the public health, safety and welfare.

An exception to the prohibition of chaining an animal is when the dog's caretaker is outside and within eyesight of the animal; or after taking possession of a dog that appears to be a stray and having contacted Animal Services about the stray.

You can read the entire ordinance at the county's homepage, www.co.cumberland.nc.us.

DSS Offers Relief from The Heat

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES is offering a measure of relief to people who have no other way to escape the oppressive summer heat. The main DSS office at 1225 Ramsey St. is opening its auxiliary lobby area from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday throughout the summer when a heat advisory is issued or the heat index reaches 100.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM COUNTY PAYROLL:

If you close or change your bank account, please give a new Direct Deposit Form to Payroll at least one week before payday.

If you close your account without notifying the County Payroll Office, you will not be able to receive your funds for that payday until your funds have been returned from your bank and deposited back into the County's Payroll Account.

COURTHOUSE TRANSITIONS

Margaret Weaver

Marie Colgan

Candice White

MARGARET WEAVER is retiring on July 1 with 35 years total service. She worked 16 years with the state, 14 years with Fayetteville City and five years with Cumberland County. For the last two years, Margaret has been a human resources analyst.

MARSHA FOGLE is also retiring on July 1. She has served Cumberland County for more than 34 years, the last 28 years as the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners. At their June 15 meeting, the commissioners proclaimed June 30 as "Marsha Fogle Day" and presented her with a framed proclamation.

Congratulations to Maggie and Marsha. We will miss you.

MARIE COLGAN, who has worked for the county for 10 years and as the Deputy Clerk to the board for more than two years, will take over as Clerk to the Board of Commissioners on July 1.

CANDICE WHITE will be the new Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners. She joins the county staff after serving as the Clerk to the Fayetteville City Council.

SALLY SHUTT is the new Communications Manager for the county. She transferred from the Cumberland County Public Library & Information Center, where she was the marketing and communications manager for three years.

Current and former County Commissioners surround Marsha Fogle during a June 25 reception. Fogle retires July 1 as Clerk to the County Commissioners. She was presented the Order of the Long Leaf Pine and recognized for her contributions to the county and state.

Crown Center Welcomes New Chief

KAREN LONG is the new general manager of the Crown Center. She served eight months as the interim General Manager prior to being named to the position in May.

Long is a native of Galax, Va., and has been a resident of Fayetteville for more than 20 years. She served four years in the Air Force and then worked in hotel/motel management before joining the Crown Center in various roles over the last 13 years.

"I am excited to have an opportunity to continue serving the Crown Center family, patrons and fans as General Manager. The management team is committed to continuing to provide a professional entertainment and sports complex that will create memorable experiences for the citizens of Cumberland County and surrounding areas," Long said.

Karen Long

New Director Headed to Health Department

BUCK WILSON will become the new director of the Cumberland County Health Department in July. Currently the local health director for the Rutherford-Polk-McDowell Public Health District, Wilson replaces Wayne Raynor who retired in January.

Wilson, 40, has worked in public health for more than 13 years. His first public health job was as a registered dietitian and nutrition director in Iredell County. He then served as the district nutrition director for the Department of Health and Environmental Control in South Carolina. He was the local health director in Madison County before accepting the job as local health director for the Rutherford-Polk-McDowell Public Health District in September 2005. Prior to his public health experience, he worked in the private sector for several years.

Wilson received a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of South Carolina and a master's degree in nutrition from Winthrop University. The Health Department has 264 employees and is expected to move into its new facility on Ramsay Street in the fall.

Hank Debnam Wins 2009 Allan D. Spader Award

Hank Debnam

HANK DEBNAM, Area Director of the Cumberland County Mental Health Center - Local Management Entity (LME), received the N.C. Council of Community Programs 2009 Allan D. Spader Award honoring his outstanding leadership on behalf of those in need of mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse (MH/DD/SA) services. Debnam was honored at a special awards banquet in Raleigh on June 1.

The N.C. Council of Community Programs is the State Association for Local Management Entities that manage the treatment and rehabilitation services for more than 325,000 people disabled by mental illness, developmental disabilities and alcohol and drug abuse each year.

"Hank's leadership has impacted the success of the Cumberland County Mental Health Center to the point his peers throughout the state look to Cumberland County as a model," said Rev. Dr. Floyd Johnson, Cumberland Area Board vice-chair and N.C. Council board member. "Through his leadership, support and direction, remarkable changes have occurred."

Sharon Sanders

Joanie Rodriguez

News from Veterans Service Office

SHARON SANDERS has been named interim Veterans Service Office manager effective July 6. She has also been elected secretary of the North Carolina Association of County Veterans Service Officers. Sharon also received a letter from Gov. Bev Perdue commending her for the exceptional care and service she provided to a widow who needed assistance in navigating the pension application process.

On June 19, the Veterans Service Office hosted a coffee and information session for spouses of veterans who are clients at the Vet Center, which is a counseling center for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Staff members met with 25 people, educating them on spousal benefits available through the Department of Veteran Affairs.

JOANIE RODRIGUEZ is serving as the membership committee person for the North Carolina Association of County Veteran Services Officers for Districts 5 and 13. She and Sharon Sanders are also hosting an hour-long radio show the second Thursday of each month on WFNC "Sound Off" 640-AM. They discuss veteran benefits and field calls from veterans and family members. The duo also hosted three round table discussion shows on WIDU 1600 AM. Their guests have included staff members from Employment Security Commission and the VA Medical Center.

Helping the Community:

Planning & Inspections Department Donates Old Phones to Benefit Soldiers

THE PLANNING & INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT held a Cell Phones for Soldiers collection drive during April. Tom Lloyd, Planning & Inspections Director, was very proud of his department's participation in this project which takes old cell phones and converts them into minutes on prepaid calling cards for U.S. troops stationed overseas. The 20 phones collected through the program will provide 2,000 minutes of calling time for the soldiers.

Friends of Library Receive Grant

The Friends of the Cumberland County Public Library & Information Center have received a $20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to host The Big Read. The group is one of 269 non-profit organizations to receive a Big Read grant for projects between September 2009 and June 2010. The Big Read in Cumberland County is set for late March through April and will focus on "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter" by Carson McCullers. The book, published in 1940 to wide critical acclaim, was McCullers' first novel. McCullers, who became a literary star at age 23, has a strong connection to Fayetteville since she began the novel when she and her husband lived here.

This is the fourth The Big Read grant for Cumberland County in as many years. Past titles selected on the local level have been "Their Eyes Were Watching God," "Fahrenheit 451," and "The Maltese Falcon."

FORT BRAGG REGION COMMUNITY FORUM

Infrastructure: How to Grow it in Your Community

JULY 16, 2009
1:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

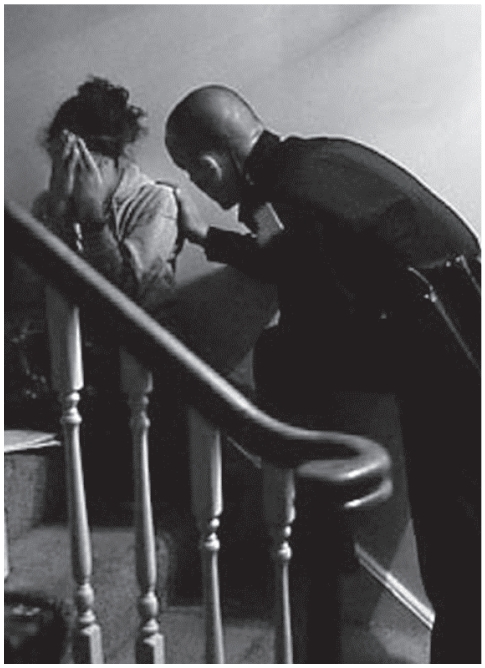
METHODIST UNIVERSITY'S YARBOROUGH AUDITORIUM
5400 Ramsey Street • Fayetteville, NC 28311

Please join us as we discuss options for developing the infrastructure to support the region's extraordinary population growth projections due to Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).
Featured Speakers include: Paul Dordal, executive director, BRAC Regional Task Force; Scott Dorney, executive director, NC Military Business Center; Rick Heicksen, director, Fayetteville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization; Tim McNeill, commissioner, Harnett County

The Forum is free and open to the public, but space is limited so please register now to reserve your place!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

Law Enforcement Officers Receive Specialized Training for Dealing With Mental Health Issues



THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER conducted the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) class for law enforcement officers in Cumberland County in June. The CIT program is a law enforcement based, pre-booking jail diversion project that trains law enforcement officials to better understand and break down barriers related to mental illnesses. The team is trained to recognize and divert individuals with mental health issues from jail into appropriate treatment. More than 20 members from the Fayetteville Police Department, Hope Mills Police Department and the VA Medical Center Police Department participated in the 40-hour course.

The Cumberland County CIT program was developed as a collaborative effort between the Mental Health Center, the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, the Fayetteville Police Department, Cumberland County District Attorney's Office, the Cumberland County Consumer and Family Advisory Committee (CFAC), National Alliance on Mental Illness, Fayetteville Technical Community College and others.

Tune in to the Community Access Channel

(Time Warner Cable channel 7) to watch:

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
which airs live the first Monday of each month at 9 a.m. and the third Monday at 6:45 p.m.

THE INFORMATION PLACE
(Cumberland County Library & Information Services)
airs every other Wednesday at 7 p.m. on Channel 7 and every Thursday at 9:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Channel 60.

DSSPATCH
(Department of Social Services) airs every other Friday at 8 p.m.

SUCCESSFUL GARDENER
(Cooperative Extension Service) airs every other Friday at 6:30 p.m.

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH airs every other Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Hurricane Season is Here: Be Prepared

It is hard to believe another hurricane season is here. Hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30, and it is time we all take a look at our emergency plans and make sure that our Emergency Kits are well stocked.

For planning purposes, and to aid your own sense of self sufficiency, Emergency Management Agencies recommend adequate supplies be set aside to support each occupant of your household for a minimum of 72 hours. This means having water, food, and emergency supplies stockpiled for each member of your family. A good idea is to store your supplies in a backpack or duffel bag so that if you are forced to evacuate your residence, you can take these items with you to a shelter area.

ITEMS YOU SHOULD STOCKPILE ARE :

Water : At least one gallon per person per day. Also have boxed, bottled, powdered juice and drink mixes; boxed, powdered, canned milk; breakfast drinks, soda.

Food : Ready-to-eat (non-perishable). If you cannot open the container with a bottle opener, manual can opener, pull ring, by twisting or unwrapping -- Do Not buy it for your stockpile. Include: canned fruit, vegetables, soup, pudding, potted meats, stew, hash, tuna; produce (potatoes, thick skinned fruit); baby formula and food (pre-mixed only); instant hot cereals; bread products; granola bars; complete pancake mix; crackers; graham crackers; cookies; and miscellaneous food items such as pet food, mustard and ketchup, peanut butter, jelly, ground and instant coffee, hot cocoa/chocolate mix, tea bags, cooking oil.

Communications, Lighting, Safety Items : Battery operated radio/TV; flashlights; extra batteries; lantern and fuel; matches; fire extinguisher; work gloves; shovel.

Clothing and Bedding : One complete change of clothing for each person (suitable for the season); extra socks, underwear; outer-wear (rain gear, poncho, sweater, jacket or coat); pillows; sleeping bag or two blankets per person.

Personal Hygiene Items : Soap; toothpaste; toothbrush; dental floss; washcloth; towel; shaving kit; hair care items; sanitary napkins/tampons; diapers.

Miscellaneous Items : First aid supplies, including prescription medications; charcoal/lighter fluid; hand can opener; baby wipes; toilet paper; paper towels; trash bags; disposable plates/bowls and silverware. One miscellaneous item often overlooked is cash. ATMs are convenient but in the case of a power outage they are inaccessible; and so are check approval agencies accessed through telephone lines. Set aside a realistic (for your situation) amount of cash to facilitate purchase of critically needed items. You should add to this list as you deem necessary. But remember, the intent is to be self sufficient for at least 72 hours after a storm or other disaster. Preparedness begins at home.

2009 Master Gardener Training Class

Cumberland County now has 21 new Master Gardener interns. The group, under the guidance of Shauna Haslem, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent, graduated from their training courses in May. Now they are embarking on their 40 hours of volunteer pay-back time to the Master Gardener Program.

The interns will be answering the Master Gardener Hotline, assisting Cooperative Extension walk-in clients, working at the Botanical Garden, providing educational programs, and working in the community on horticulture issues.

They are also restoring the Cooperative Extension Garden. Vegetables from the garden will be used in the popular "Kids in the Kitchen" workshop offered by Candy Underwood, Family and Consumer Extension Agent, and Haslem.

County residents can call the Master Gardener Hotline at 910-321-6882 for assistance with lawn and gardening questions. Master Gardener volunteers provide a valuable service to the Cumberland County Cooperative Extension Service and to the citizens of Cumberland County.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT... WORKING FOR YOU!

JAMES MARTIN, COUNTY MANAGER
COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE
117 Dick Street
Courthouse, Suite 512
Fayetteville, NC 28301
Phone: 910-678-7723
Fax: 910-678-7717
Email: jmartin@co.cumberland.nc.us

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Cumberland County Government to assure all our citizens a better quality of life by providing for the public safety, public health, quality education, clean environment and economic development while being fiscally responsible.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for Cumberland County is that it be characterized by progressive leadership that provides for a prosperous, affordable, safe, and culturally inviting community.

VISIT US ON THE WEB: HTTP:/ WWW.CO.CUMBERLAND.NC.US/

There When You Need A Friend

Everyone needs a real friend now and then. The kind of friend that can be trusted to keep a confidence, the kind of friend that truly wants you to be untroubled and unperturbed.

THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) can be a friend to you and your family members. Whether you are being overwhelmed with a personal or a work-related concern, let your EAP professional work with you to solve your issues. Your supervisor does not have to be made aware you are using the program, unless you choose to share that information.

To initiate the assistance of the Employee Assistance Program, please call 222-6157. If you call, you'll find a friend who wants to help.

Coming Up @ the

JULY 25

A Soulful Evening

with The Whispers, The Stylistics & Anthony Watson
Crown Coliseum
7:00 pm