

## *April 16, 2001*

The Johnston County Board of Commissioners met in special session in the Emergency Operations Center, Johnston County Courthouse Law Enforcement Center, Smithfield, North Carolina beginning at 6:30 p.m. with the following members:

Present: James H. Langdon, Jr., Chairman, Cookie Pope, Vice-Chairman, Thomas M. Moore, Allen L. Mims, Jr., Fred Smith and W. Ray Woodall  
 Absent: Wade M. Stewart  
 Also Present: Rick J. Hester, County Manager, Joyce H. Ennis, Clerk to the Board, J. Mark Payne, County Attorney, and John R. Massey, Finance Officer

The Chairman called the meeting to order and the following business was transacted:

### **1. Brogden Water District**

Chairman James H. Langdon, Jr. informed the Board that funding for the Brogden Water District has been approved by USDA Rural Development. The Commissioners need to meet no later than April 25th as the Brogden Water District Board to accept the letter of conditions on the loan.

The Commissioners agreed to recess this meeting until 5:15 p.m. on Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> prior to the special meeting scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. for presentations from County Departments and Agencies.

### **2. Additional Meeting Scheduled for Presentations - County Departments and Agencies**

The Board scheduled a 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting for presentations by County Departments and Agencies on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in the Emergency Operations Center.

### **3. Presentations - County Departments & Agencies**

The following County Departments or Agencies made presentations to the Board:

#### **A) Library**

Joyce Mitchell, Director of the Public Library, gave a brief history of the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield, and its affiliation with town libraries across the County. She provided statistics on the number of citizens served and outlined the following accomplishments for the past year:

- Additional computers for public use - With the help of two Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants, eight additional computers have been made available to the public in the various libraries in the County
- Improved Communications Network - The Library has expanded the communications network that connects the affiliated libraries for more efficiency.

Ms. Mitchell spoke briefly on the upcoming Library expansion project and the need this will create for additional personnel. In response to a question from Commissioner Fred Smith about funding, Ms. Mitchell stated the library receives approximately 50% of its funds from Johnston County, 21% from State Aid, and 20% from the Town of Smithfield. The remaining 9% comes from memorial gifts and donations.

#### **B) Emergency Management**

Dewayne West, EMS Director, informed the Board his department is divided into three areas: Emergency Management, Fire Marshal, and Emergency Medical Services.

- Emergency Management - This area of his operation involves pre-planning for, responding to and recovering from natural and manmade disasters. His office is responsible for having an emergency operations plan, a hazard mitigation plan and other guides and procedures for emergency situations. Currently he is working as a liaison for the Oil Safety Coop and the NC Ground Water Division and Corp of Engineers on the possibility of a dike that would protect the Neuse River in the case of a gas spill. Other projects include plans to address animal response, threats of Foot and Mouth Disease, school crises, and a countywide warning system.

- Fire Marshal - The fire marshal's responsibility is to review commercial plans, conduct fire investigations and promote fire prevention. This function of Emergency Management also works closely with and provides support to the volunteer fire departments. Fire district boundaries are being updated to conform with the extension of fire insurance districts to six miles. One of the major challenges for the future is daytime staffing for fire response, and cutting down on false fire alarms.
- Emergency Medical Services - This area of the Department is responsible for the Quick Response Vehicles (QRV) program and its staff of twelve paramedics, and also coordinates the billing, membership program and operations of the volunteer rescue squads throughout the county. Currently the billing procedures are being changed to reflect approved medicare and medicaid provisions, and in-county mileage is being implemented. It is the fastest growing area in the department and presents a tremendous challenge for the future due to the dwindling number of volunteers and the increasing volume of EMS calls.

#### **C) Communications - 911**

Jason Barbour, Communications Director, informed the Board his department staffs telecommunicators, trained to provide emergency medical dispatching, around the clock to answer and dispatch 911 calls throughout the County, as well as five of the small municipalities. Last year the department received 87,000 calls, dispatched 7,400 fire calls, 15,000 EMS calls and 6,330 law enforcement calls. He noted since he became director in July, the center has been completely rewired and redesigned, and the towers have all been brought up to FCC standards.

In the coming year, all fire and EMS personnel will have the new 800 MHz radios, and hopefully a backup 911 center will be established away from the Courthouse for emergency situations.

In response to a question from Commissioner Fred Smith, Mr. Barbour stated his department is funded by wireless and 911 wired line surcharges, and the County's general fund. The surcharge funds are restricted as to use, with most cost of personnel being paid from the general fund.

#### **D) Register of Deeds**

Cecil M. Massengill, Registrar of Deeds, gave a brief history of his office and noted it was established in 1665 to provide a local place for people to register important documents and obtain vital records. The office is funded by fees collected for recording real property documents, UCC security agreements, and other important documents that need to be preserved indefinitely.

The office now provides ten computers for the public's use: seven personal computers for general use, two additional computers for searching records on the County's GIS, and one Tax computer for searching tax records. The office also gives the oath to all Notaries in Johnston County.

A major focus in the future is scanning equipment to provide easier computerized accessibility to the public and eliminate a hard copy of books stored in the vault area. The department has limited space left and scanning appears to be the only answer. Due to the increase in work load, Mr. Massengill stated he needs an additional employee in order to keep pace with and comply with the General Statutes that govern recording in a timely manner.

#### **E) Cooperative Extension**

County Extension Director, Ken Bateman, stated that having recently addressed the Board on the accomplishments of his agency, he decided to use this opportunity to present some pertinent facts about Cooperative Extension in the County. He reviewed 16 points of interest including the fact that the primary mission of Extension is education. He spoke of the education programs that are offered on agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development and community and rural development. He noted one of the major concerns is the lack of building space which is hampering the agency's ability to expand their programs.

In response to a comment about his budget, Mr. Bateman stated he is funded by both the State and the County. He voiced concern, however, about the State's budget shortfall and how this might impact his programs for the coming year.

**4) County Attorney**

Attorney Mark Payne informed the Board he handles all litigation on both claims against the County and claims brought by the County. He selects outside counsel when needed, drafts policies and ordinances, and reviews all contracts. He noted that in the three years he has been with the County, he has worked to establish more consistency and better tracking of contracts for the various departments and agencies. The County now has a contract bank to draw from.

Mr. Payne noted the case load has reached a point where he is having to contract for more outside counsel services and paralegal assistance. At present, he has no full time staff. He noted much of his work is focused on preventive law - working out potential problems before they become lawsuits.

**5) Finance Department**

Finance Officer, John R. Massey, stated his department provides finance support services for all other County departments and agencies. His office processes accounts payable for all departments except Mental Health, HAPP and Job Training, handles all receivables, invests the County's money, prepares financial reports, processes purchase orders and processes payroll monthly for the County employees. He works with the County Manager each year to prepare the FY budget to be presented to the Board of Commissioners, handles all amendments to the approved budget throughout the year, and has all books ready to be audited at the end of the year.

Mr. Massey stated his office has been most impacted in the last few years by the volume of work on the County water districts, the child care program in Social Services and school construction and borrowing. He noted his goal for the near future is to again prepare for and seek a CAFR award. In 1993 and 1994 the County received the prestigious award for financial reporting, but since 1994, due to the heavy workload and limited staff he has not been able to do this. He stated with his additional staff member, hopefully he can again pursue this recognition for the County.

Concerning future audits, Mr. Massey explained there will be some significant changes in the way financial reporting will be done. Johnston County, based on gross revenue, is one of the seventeen counties in the first phase of implementation of the GASB Statement 34 requirements. Effective June 30, 2002, the County's audit report will resemble a corporation or other private business report rather than the traditional governmental report. These new requirements will require considerable changes in the way staff has been preparing financial information over the years. Currently he and two of his staff are attending classes and workshops to learn more about how to make these changes effectively and efficiently.

In conclusion, Mr. Massey stated he would like to see the County, at some point, consolidate the water districts, especially as far as accounting and billing are concerned. He noted the way they are set up individually, it is like a financial nightmare that continues to grow.

There being no further comments, Commissioner Cookie Pope moved the Board recess until 5:15 p.m. Monday, April 23, 2001. Commissioner W. Ray Woodall seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

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*James H. Langdon, Jr., Chairman*

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*Joyce H. Ennis, Clerk*