

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JUNE 2, 2021 – 5:30 PM  
117 DICK STREET, 5TH FLOOR, ROOM 564  
FY22 BUDGET WORK SESSION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioner Charles Evans, Chairman  
Commissioner Glenn Adams, Vice Chairman  
Commissioner Jeannette Council  
Commissioner Jimmy Keefe  
Commissioner Larry Lancaster  
Commissioner Toni Stewart  
Amy Cannon, County Manager  
Tracy Jackson, Assistant County Manager  
Sally Shutt, Assistant County Manager  
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney  
Jermaine Walker, County Engineer  
Keith Todd, Chief Information Services Director  
Brenda Jackson, Social Services Director  
Vicki Evans, Finance Director  
Deborah Shaw, Senior Budget and Management Analyst  
Heather Harris, Budget and Performance Data Analyst  
Andrew Jakubiak, Budget and Management Analyst  
Candice H. White, Clerk to the Board  
Kellie Beam, Deputy Clerk

ABSENT: Commissioner Michael Boose

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Evans called the special meeting to order and stated the purpose of the meeting is for a FY22 budget work session. Chairman Evans provided the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Lancaster moved to approve the agenda.  
SECOND: Commissioner Stewart  
VOTE: UNANIMOUS (6-0)

3. FY2022 RECOMMENDED BUDGET

Amy Cannon, County Manager, asked the Board how it wished to proceed with the FY22 recommended budget.

4. ADDITIONAL REQUESTS

Commissioner Lancaster asked the cost to move the beginning salary for a Sheriff's Deputy up to around \$41,000 a year; the Hoke County Board of Commissioners set the starting salary for an officer without any experience at \$41,127. Ms. Cannon stated first the 3% COLA would be added to the salary of an entry level deputy and then with the addition of another 3.5%, the entry level salary would be \$41,200. Ms. Cannon stated if the same philosophy that was used for the Law Enforcement salary provisions in March 2020 is applied again for sworn and unsworn officers, another \$1,400 would be added to currently employed law enforcement officers and detention officers on top of their 3% COLA. Ms. Cannon stated this would keep the spread which is part of the county's pay plan. Ms. Cannon stated this would bring the total to \$1,062,500 including salary and fringe benefits. In response to a question from Commissioner Keefe, Ms. Cannon stated in 2020, \$2,300 was added to the entry level pay and detention officers and to keep the spread, \$1,700 was added to the pay of captains on down but not those above the rank of captain.

Commissioner Adams stated he has been pushing for a living wage for all county employees and asked where the county was in this process. Ms. Cannon stated the process is in its third year and the proposed FY22 budget moves salary grades 55, which is the bottom tier, through 59 to \$12.18 per hour. Commissioner Keefe asked the number of employees in grades 55-61. Ms. Cannon stated Grades 55-61 are less than \$15 per hour and including the 3% COLA, are as follows: grade 55, average \$12.67 per hour/76 positions; there is no grade 56; grade 57, average \$13.45/66 positions; grade 58 average \$13.66/90 positions; grade 59, average \$13.97/15 positions; grade 60, average \$14.58/165 positions; and grade 61, average \$14.56/64 positions. Ms. Cannon stated some of the positions are not filled and the hourly amount for all grades is an average.

Commissioner Keefe stated the averages appear to be at the minimum for each grade. Ms. Cannon stated there has been turnover and COLAs have not been consistently provided; COLAs are what help employees move up within the range for their grades. Ms. Cannon stated there has also been a lot of turnover across the board, regardless of the grade. In response to several questions, Ms. Cannon stated COLAs are the only thing, from a salary perspective, that the county provides that moves employees within their range; there are no merit increases. Ms. Cannon stated over the last twelve years, there have only been five or six COLA adjustments and wages are probably a part of the turnover. Commissioner Adams asked whether the county's starting salaries were too low compared to other places, although other places may not provide the same benefits. Commissioner Adams stated the county needs to look at the salary it is offering if it wants individuals to seek employment with the county. Ms. Cannon stated she does not disagree and the only reason this has been done incrementally is because if grades 55-61 are moved up to \$15 per hour, then they are right against grade 62 which is an average of \$16.21 per hour. Ms. Cannon stated the Board has engaged staff over the past couple of years about this particular issue and from an equity standpoint, adjustments would have to be done to the higher grades 62 and above which would become expensive.

Commissioner Adams stated it may be time for the Board to bite the bullet and think about putting money into these salaries now. Commissioner Stewart asked what the problem would be if grades 55-61 were right against grade 62. Ms. Cannon stated in grades 55-59, job qualifications are much less, such as only a high school diploma; at grade 62, job qualifications include an associate degree or a financial background. Ms. Cannon stated it comes down to equity and the county tries to keep a 4.5% spread between each grade. Ms. Cannon stated if grades 55-61 are moved up to \$15 per hour, there will not be a spread of 4.5% and if the spread for grade 62 is moved to 4.5%, then it will have to be done for grades 63 and 64. Ms. Cannon stated the incoming Human Resources Director will be asked to look at the pay plan in general and if not done this year, how these grades can be addressed in a rapid fashion without turning the county's pay plan upside down.

Chairman Evans stated at some point the Board is going to have to bite the bullet and asked why it could not be done during this budget process. Ms. Cannon stated the total amount to move 476 positions, of which 383 are filled, to \$15 per hour with benefits would be \$1,319,000. In response to a question from Commissioner Stewart, Ms. Cannon stated with whatever the Board decides to do, her recommendation is to do it for grades 55-61 together. Commissioner Adams asked how this would affect grades 61 and 62. Ms. Cannon stated that would have to be computed. Commissioner Council asked how this would affect the overall pay plan. Ms. Cannon stated \$1,319,000 would resolve the Board's concern about employees being paid less than a living wage. Ms. Cannon stated an effort was made to try to do this incrementally as rapidly as possible because the county did not have the recurring dollars to do it, but if the Board wants to accelerate it, staff will start looking for recurring dollars to do it.

Commissioner Keefe stated he respects the fact that Ms. Cannon came to the Board with a balanced budget and understands how difficult it is to ask her to find another \$3M to \$4M; however, employee pay and benefits are going to be instrumental for years to come to retain employees. Commissioner Adams stated rather than being driven by surrounding counties, Cumberland County needs to do the right thing from the beginning because recruiting/training new employees is more difficult than retaining those already employed. Ms. Cannon responded to questions about the incremental process to date and stated with this being the third year of the process, positions at DSS will be affected. Ms. Cannon stated the county loses social work positions routinely to other counties due to increase pay and a reduced workload.

Chairman Evans asked whether there was consensus to move forward with \$15 per hour for grades 55-61 and law enforcement increases as discussed. Consensus followed. Commissioner Keefe

stated he would like to know the final numbers because although he supports these increases, he does not want the Board to get to the point that it becomes unrealistic with what is asks of the manager and the money.

Commissioner Keefe asked the budgeted figure for health care. Ms. Cannon responded \$28M and asked whether the Board wanted staff to look into the possibility of reducing the deductible and the impact it would have on the county's health insurance plan. Commissioner Council stated the cost of healthcare is astronomical everywhere, but the Board cannot do everything at one time. Commissioner Council asked what was doable. Ms. Cannon stated the deductible for individual coverage is \$2,000 and \$6,000 for family coverage, and when staff reached out to the USI broker, USI believes without doing any detailed underwriting, that reducing the deductibles to \$1,000 and \$3,000 would probably cost the county \$1.1M. Ms. Cannon stated health insurance is not in the General Fund but is self-contained and has its own fund balance. Ms. Cannon stated last year the county underspent its budget a little over \$2M so there is fund balance available.

Commissioner Keefe stated he would like Ms. Cannon to see what needs to be done to bring the deductibles down to at least \$1,000 and \$3,000. Chairman Evans asked the Board for a consensus. Commissioner Adams stated he would favor the health insurance deductible reductions but not in lieu of the 3%. Commissioner Stewart concurred. Commissioner Lancaster stated he was in favor of the 3% and the health insurance deductible reductions. Ms. Cannon stated revenue projections cannot be increased and although sales tax revenues have been strong, no one knows what the impact of COVID will be because of the stimulus funding that has enhanced unemployment benefits and child credits that have stimulated the economy. Ms. Cannon stated she is not comfortable increasing sales tax projections, but staff will check on what can be tightened up and cut so recommendations can be brought to the Board at its next meeting.

Commissioner Keefe asked whether it would be possible to increase the amount budgeted for the Fayetteville-Cumberland County Economic Development Corporation since they have been budgeted at the same level for many years and have done a great job with economic development. Ms. Cannon stated the FCEDC is budgeted at \$384,000 and receives \$20,000 in-kind. Ms. Cannon stated Robert Van Geon, FCEDC President & CEO, sent a letter requesting an additional \$96,000 which would bring the total cash appropriation to \$480,000. Ms. Cannon noted Mr. Van Geons detailed how the FCEDC would spend the additional \$96,00. Commissioner Adams stated his hesitancy is whether the city and the county should determine together whether the FCEDC receives an increase, the amount of any increase and what is done with any amount increased. Commissioner Keefe asked whether the city had given the FCEDC an increase. Deborah Shaw, Senior Budget and Management Analyst, stated the FCEDC asked the city for a recurring \$21,000 to equal \$430,000, a one-time \$25,000 for a marketing campaign, and \$35,000 for two years for the innovation center. Ms. Cannon stated a caveat is that the city has already given the FCEDC money this year for the marketing campaign and the innovation center, so the amounts the city and county give the FCEDC are not equal because the city gives more. There was consensus for the county to fund the FCEDC an additional \$96,000.

## 5. OTHER ITEMS

There were no other items.

## 6. CLOSED SESSION

### A. ATTORNEY-CLIENT MATTER(S) PURSUANT TO NCGS 143-318.11(A)(3)

### B. PERSONNEL MATTER(S) PURSUANT TO NCGS 143-318.11(A)(6)

MOTION: Commissioner Adams moved to go into closed session for Attorney-Client Matter(s) pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) and Personnel Matter(s) pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6).

SECOND: Commissioner Stewart

VOTE: UNANIMOUS (6-0)

MOTION: Commissioner Adams moved to come out of closed session.  
SECOND: Commissioner Council  
VOTE: UNANIMOUS (6-0)

MOTION: Commissioner Adams moved to adjourn.  
SECOND: Commissioner Lancaster  
VOTE: UNANIMOUS (6-0)

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Approved with/without revision:

Respectfully submitted,

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Candice H. White  
Clerk to the Board