

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET WORK SESSION
MINUTES
APRIL 22, 2013**

Newberry County Council met on Monday, April 22, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. in the Courthouse Annex Conference Room, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a budget work session.

PRESENT: Kirksey Koon, Vice Chairman; Bill Waldrop, Councilman; Les Hipp, Councilman; Steve Stockman, Councilman; Scott Cain, Councilman, John Caldwell, Councilman

ABESNT: Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman

OTHERS PRESENT: Wayne Adams, Laurie Renwick, Debbie Cromer, Karen Brehmer, Ervin West, Jackie Bowers, Ben Chapman, Todd Johnson, Annette Davis, Donna Lominack, Gordon Johnson, Teresa Powers, Jeff Smith Audrey Henry, Joe Flemon, Thomas Flemon, Tenitha Hall, Sam Price and Craig Newton

The meeting was duly advertised as required by law.

Vice Chairman Koon called the meeting to order and led the invocation.

- 1. Discussion of FY13-14 County Operating Budget**
- 2. Discussion of FY13-14 Capital Budgets**
- 3. Discussion of FY13-14 Debt Service Budget**
- 4. Discussion of FY13-14 Community Service Budget**

Mr. Adams stated that he will address items 1-4 (above) and referred Council to his transmittal letter which he reviewed in detail (attached and part of the official minutes).

He continued his briefing on the operating budget, capital budgets, debt service budget, and community services budget (attached and part of the official minutes).

5. Craig Newton, Coroner – Request for Salary Increase

Vice-Chairman Koon stated that he had the Finance Director pull the salaries for coroners in comparable counties throughout the state to present to members of Council and asked the Coroner to take the floor.

Mr. Newton reported that he was requesting Council's approve of his submitted FY13-14 budget which includes a \$10,067.00 increase in personnel to adjust the outdated Coroner salary structure in Newberry County. He said this request is based upon many variables and he is the first

Newberry County Coroner that has devoted full-time service to this office. It takes someone dedicated to the job 24/7 to serve the people of this county and they deserve it. He noted that the Coroner is never off and he shared several instances where he was called back to Newberry to attend to a call that could not be handled by one of his deputies. He is asking for this increase in the upcoming budget and noted that with the retiree insurance benefit reduction (death of James O. Smith); his department will realize a \$5,450.00 savings per year. He said the Coroner's budget is ½% of the entire county budget and is a drop in the bucket that will not affect the county coffers whatsoever. In July of 2010, the qualifications for Coroner were elevated with changes to include a college education, law enforcement and death investigation experience with entail additional and more complex tasks. He said he met and exceeded all of these qualifications but he will not be around forever. He said if the salary structure stays as it is, it will be very difficult to attract qualified candidates in the future. The Coroner noted the training sessions that are required each year to stay abreast of laws, changes, policies and procedures and the cremation permits and certified death certificates the have to been done accurately and on a timely basis. Coroner Newton said there are probably very few people in the room who really knows what he does. The job is very complex, involved, taxing and demanding. He said there are also associated health risks involved with the Coroner position such as coming into contact with bodily fluids and biohazard materials. The case load in Newberry County runs about 250-300 cases per year with some cases taking 3 days to a week to complete. The Newberry Co. Coroner Office has been recognized as an award winning office on a state level which demonstrates professionalism and service to the citizens of this community. The request to redefine the salary structure is not only for the present but for the future. The Coroner is a vital department head whose actions have serious implications for county government and the people we serve and should be considered on a professional grade level but in his opinion, it is not. To insure that a competent and qualified Coroner is in place and stays in place, this must be a priority. He said the Association of Counties salary comparison has Colleton County's Coroner at \$48,600.00; a \$17,000.00 difference. The \$10,000.00 request will put the Coroner's salary at \$41,000.00 which is a more reasonable. He said his heart is in this position but we have to be fair and reasonable about the salary.

Vice Chairman Koon asked if Council wanted to take this as information and do some homework.

Mr. Hipp said that is the fair thing to do; we need to take it home and mull it over. We have the information and we have heard from Mr. Newton. He said he does not want to accept or deny this request at this point because we have more requests we need to consider.

Mr. Newton thanked Council for their consideration and urged them to seriously consider an increase in the Coroner's salary structure.

6. Sam Price, Chairman Voter Registration Office – Request for Salary Increase for Voter Registration Staff

Mr. Price thanked Council for their efforts and for listening. He said he comes tonight as Chairman of the Election Commission and his purpose is to request a 4% pay increase for their two employees. We have a total salary under the current budget of \$60,057.00 plus fringe of

\$22,016.00. We would like to bring Brenda up 4% to \$35,486.62 and Shanna up to \$26,972.00 for a total of \$62,459.00 with fringe to \$84,913.00. We have two employees that have handled themselves well and they stay on top of everything and we have been very fortunate to have these ladies.

Mr. Hipp asked if any of this funding comes from the state.

Mrs. Cromer responded that the state funds the Election Commission and the two employees are paid by the County.

Mr. Waldrop commented that they do a great job and this is not much money. He said he would like to consider this as well as the Coroner's request before third reading.

Mr. Hipp said we should take it as information this week until we see what our total is going to be because right now we are talking about three (3) different salaries structures. We have to consider our budget for all of our other county employees and it is not a salary increase but a one-time 2% increase. Now, we have a request for 4% and a request for \$10,000.00 which is 25%. We are all over the board right now. We need to continue to get the information together and decide what our options are going to be for all of our requests.

7. Annette Davis, Newberry County Soil and Water Conservation District – Request for Increase in Salary and Benefits Appropriation

Mrs. Davis thanked Council for allowing her to speak tonight. She briefed Council on the NSWCD booklet that states the duties, responsibilities, and laws that govern their agency. She reminded Council that the NSWCD Commissioners are not paid elected officials; they make zero dollars. Their basic travel is not paid unless they elect to get reimbursed from the funds but they do not. Their hotel accommodations for annual training is paid for as well as their TORTE liability and worker's comp insurance.

Mrs. Davis reported that they are in partnership with DNR and through a state proviso they are awarded \$15,000.00 a year but in recent years have only received \$13,674.00. They also work in partnership with USDA and although they do not receive any funding from them they are provided with free housing, internet, telephone, fax and storage. Mrs. Davis stated that they also receive \$28,000.00 from the county each year which goes back to 2004 and they have not received an increase since then.

She said in 2010, they presented the KNCB Program before Council and they are continuing to learn and grow. They had their first litter pick-up in Silverstreet and picked up 1500 lbs of trash. Their expenses with the KNCB Program have expanded with postage, paper, and office supplies but mostly they are looking at gas and fuel to operate these litter programs. She said she is the only employee of the conservation district and she will take on anything and do anything but she is barely keeping her head above water with the added duties of the KNCB Program. She is working late hours at night and having the Sheriff's Office escort her out of the building because she is afraid, working weekends, and continually taking work home because of the KNCB Program. She said she is writing as many grants as she can to pay for the materials to educate

the citizen about the litter that impacts our economic development. Basically we are asking the county if they will support her salary and allow the rest of the retaining money they get to support the KNCB Program. The trailer they recently purchased was funded by a Palmetto Pride grant in the amount of \$3,098.00 which benefits the county. We get inside grant opportunities and we are jumping on them. We have received \$21,000.00 in grants to date but they only pay for specific items. They will not pay for gas and some of the other supplies we need. If Council would like for us to move forward with the KNCB Program and really work on the litter issues then we will need some help and support.

Mr. Koon asked Mrs. Davis to verify her salary.

Mrs. Davis responded that out of her \$30,000.00 salary she is paying \$10,000.00 in taxes for her property.

Mr. Waldrop stated that Annette is doing a good job.

Mr. Hipp concurred and said that the KNCB Program is a very important program. He said she had certainly taken ownership of something that no one else stepped up to do.

Mrs. Davis said it will make a difference throughout the county. It comes down to a lot of education and teaching our citizens that our roadways are not dumps. She is excited that the KNCB Board members who are all volunteers are willing to do it. The key is getting active people to do active things.

Mr. Waldrop asked if she asking for help.

She said if the county would support her salary then we can use the remaining \$15,000.00 along with \$5,000 from affiliate memberships to help support the KNCB Program and the other district programs like Camp Conservation. She said out of that money she would like for someone to come in and help out during their busiest time; just a couple of hours every once in a while.

Mr. Koon asked Mrs. Cromer about the item on their budget work sheet for personnel in the amount of \$36,671.00

Mrs. Cromer stated that we pay her salary so that she can be a part of the retirement system and that amount is totally 100% reimbursable; they submit us a check every quarter.

Mr. Hipp commented on the \$21,000.00 received in grant money and asked if these were one-time grants or could they be applied for every year.

Mrs. Davis responded that they can reapply every year.

Mr. Hipp said then next year you may not get \$21,000.00 but could get \$41,000.00.

Mrs. Davis stated that she was hoping to get a lot more but the sad part is they never include labor or fuel. We burned an entire tank of gas Saturday on their pick-up.

Mr. Hipp mentioned the \$28,000.00 the county has been funding and his understanding that Mrs. Davis shows up as a county employee so that she can get benefits. He asked Mrs. Davis if she was requesting an increase in funding but not for an increase in salary.

Mr. Davis stated she would not turn down an increase in salary but she is not asking for any direct salary increase. She said if she was honest, she needs help more than an increase. She mentioned that she has not had an increase in 5 years and the board finally gave her one but she just needs help in the office to accomplish the goals and objectives.

Mr. Hipp said this question may sound a little odd but he was wondering if we were getting into another example of another salary action that was a different percentage again for another employee versus funding to support an organization.

Mrs. Davis stated at one time the district presented to County Council to take her position on which would cut out the additional \$28,000.00 in funding. She said the board is willing to work it anyway to meet the objectives.

Mr. Hipp verified that their request at this point is for the county to increase funding to the NSWD for \$17,000.00.

Mr. Koon said the confusion is that the agenda states that the request is for salary and benefits; not anything you have mentioned here.

Mr. Hipp said that is why he asked his question. He said his recommendation is that we continue to assemble all of these request so we can see what the overall effect is going to be.

8. Jeff Smith, Chairman Library Board and Audrey Henry, Friends of the Library – Request for Additional Operating Funding

Mr. Smith said that sometimes the library is viewed as a leisure time institution for citizens but he does not see it that way. He said it is the most educational facility in Newberry because it educates people from the time they are 2 years old and into their 90's. It is an educational facility for people of all ages and all economic levels and nurtures smarter and better citizens. The library gives access for all ages and prepares children to do well in school and also supplements their education during the summer. The computers at the library are giving a lot of people access who would not otherwise get it. Newberry has recently made progress with its buildings thanks to the penny sales tax for Newberry Library and to a Community Block Grant for the Whitmire Library but good buildings is only a start. We need to put our concentration now on fully utilizing buildings. Newberry County lags behind most other counties in South Carolina in per capita operating budget; it ranks 5th from the bottom in rankings of 41 counties. He said good buildings without adequate operating funding is just window dressing and will not live up to its potential. We can show investors what our priorities are in Newberry County. A good library system can increase tax revenue by making the citizens better and by bringing in more citizens. He shared a handout with council that shows where Newberry County ranks among the other counties in per capita operating budgets.

Mrs. Henry said this is her third year as President of the Friends of the Newberry County Library System. She believes very strongly in our libraries in Newberry County and said that libraries mean different things to different people. They can be a safe haven for children and adults as well as a place to get good information. She said she is so proud of the new library and is amazed every time she walks in; it is always so clean and neat and the ladies at the circulation desk are so friendly. We had our annual meeting in the auditorium on a cold Sunday in January and it was rather chilly inside. Mr. Ziady said with the tight budget, the thermostat was set on a timer that did not include Sundays. We understood, but it is a shame that we have a lovely auditorium that is used a lot for it to be cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Another need in the auditorium is technology. We do not have the equipment needed to accommodate a PowerPoint presentation and we could use a large TV to show DVD's for our book discussion groups, for children's programs, and for educational classes. The Friends of the Library pay for things that are extras and some of these things are basic and outside of what we should be doing. It was never their intention to pay for things that came from the state and county budget. They did donate \$30,000.00 when the new library first opened to be used for things over and above the cost of the library. She would also like to see the library stay open an extra evening or for a few hours on Sunday. A library is a service and should fit into the schedule of the patrons. We are down at the bottom in terms of per capita funding for libraries. She would like to urge Council as they work with the budget to increase the libraries funding, not to get us to the halfway point but start a step to get us to average. She thanked Council for listening.

Mr. Hipp asked how much they were asking for.

Mr. Ziady responded they were asking for \$1 per capita.

Mr. Hipp commented that would be \$36,000-\$37,000.

Mr. Smith said even with that it will only get us 10th from the bottom.

Mr. Waldrop said he thought we should consider this during our budget process.

Mr. Hipp said we will continue to assemble requests and once all the horses are in the corral we will see which ones get fed.

9. Tenitha Hall, Hope School Community Center – Request for Basketball Court and Big Screen TV Funding

Mrs. Hall said she is the director of the Hope School in Pomaria. We are doing great things and we would like to put a basketball court behind the school so children can get some physical activity outside. They would like to request a donation from the county for \$5,000.00 to help with the construction of the basketball court; they already have the poles, goals and nets. Mrs. Hall said the Hope School host a monthly mentoring program for boys and girls they plan to start a summer program to include a meal for children. She thanked Council for the opportunity to present their proposal and for any donations the county can give.

Mr. Hipp said they do a wonderful job and have raised a good many funds on their own. We should consider this and put it in with our other request.

10. Other Comments from Elected/Appointed Officials.

No comments.

11. Questions/Comments from Council Members

No comments

12. Public Comments

No. Comments

13. Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Koon adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Newberry County Council

APPROVED:

Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman

Laurie N. Renwick