

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA, HELD A CONTINUED MEETING FROM MARCH 28, 2016, IN THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING, 150 SOUTH MAIN STREET, LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA, ON THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2016 AT 4:30 P.M.

PRESENT: CHAIRMAN: JOHN M. HIGGINS  
MEMBERS: DAVID W. HINTY, JR., RONNIE R. CAMPBELL, RUSSELL S. FORD, ALBERT W. LEWIS, JR.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR AND CLERK TO BOARD: SPENCER H. SUTER,  
COUNTY ATTORNEY: VICKIE HUFFMAN  
FISCAL SERVICES DIRECTOR: STEVEN J. BOLSTER

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**Call to Order**

Chairman Higgins called the March 28<sup>th</sup> continued meeting to order at 4:36 p.m. He invited Commonwealth's Attorney, Chris Billias, to speak to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Billias acknowledged that the Board of Supervisors was already familiar with his previous request for additional funding for his staff. He commented that while the jobs of the Board of Supervisors are "unenviable", the efforts are appreciated on behalf of his staff. Mr. Billias remarked, "I humbly ask you to consider, again" funding the compensation increase request for the Victim-Witness Coordinator position. Partial funding has been provided from the Commonwealth to staff a part-time position to help with Victim-Witness follow up. He ended by stating that even though the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office has been short-staffed, it has not neglected services to its citizens.

Chairman Higgins informed the Board of Supervisors of his support to evaluate the transition of the Victim-Witness Coordinator into a supervisory role, to accommodate the addition of a part-time employee being added to the program.

Mr. Billias explained that funding for the Federal grant is created through fees that come directly from criminal offenders; those convicted of crimes are paying those who have been

victimized. The funding from the grant allows the office to refine services, provide support resources, and limit re-victimization. Supervisor Lewis thanked Mr. Billias for his explanation of this expanded aspect of the Victim-Witness Coordinator's position.

Chairman Higgins called on Fiscal Services Director, Steve Bolster, to present the latest update on the FY 2017 draft budget.

Mr. Bolster provided updates and discussed the current standing of the FY 2017 draft budget. General Fund revenues are anticipated at \$41,394,707.00, while planned expenditures are budgeted at \$42,123,189.00 - resulting in a current gap of \$728,483.00. He explained that every one cent increase on the real estate tax represents \$232,000.00 in additional revenue for the FY 2017 draft budget. The current level of increase needed on the real estate tax to balance the FY 2017 draft budget is approximately 3.5 cents.

Mr. Bolster highlighted some changes since the March 28<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. He provided an update on the State Compensation Board reimbursement levels expected in FY 2017 for our locality. Mr. Bolster was informed by the Victim-Witness Grant Manager that the approved increase in grant funding for FY 2017 is not expected to decrease in future fiscal years. The Victim-Witness grant increases from approximately \$36,000.00 in 2016 to \$71,978.00 in 2017, and is expected to equal \$73,417.00 in 2018. He was also informed by the grant manager that locality funding should not be supplanted by this increased funding.

Two further changes to the budget included sourcing restricted cash from the EMS Revenue Recovery account to cover planned FY 2017 expenditures of approximately \$12,540.00 for the

EMS billing and collection services, and an adjustment to the full-time wages line for the County Attorney's budget.

Mr. Bolster stated that there was a reduction of \$534,204.00 made to the Transfer to School Fund (Ops) budget line, but the transfer is only a projection until the School Board's official estimate of needs is received. With the above-mentioned changes presented in revenues and expenditures, Mr. Bolster informed the Board of Supervisors the current gap is \$728,483.00 for the General Fund.

Chairman Higgins confirmed that the gap includes previously discussed raises for County employees to occur on July 1, 2016, and Constitutional Officers and their staff to receive increases on December 1, 2016 to align with Compensation Board increases. He asked County Administrator, Spencer Suter, to clarify if any changes were required before Monday's budget advertisement meeting, with the exception of the School Board and Victim-Witness Coordinator budgets. Mr. Suter replied that there had been information received at 3:30 p.m. that day indicating that the replacement cost for the CAD (computer aided dispatch) system was going to be higher than expected, but he was not sure exactly by how much. He informed Chairman Higgins it would be a one-time expense.

Chairman Higgins provided a brief summary of the Victim-Witness Coordinator discussion that had taken place earlier in the meeting. Mr. Hinty stated that if the grant was federally funded with no ties to the County he would make a motion to accept the proposed budget changes. Supervisor Ford requested additional explanation for the \$45,000.00 listed in the budget for the position. Mr. Suter offered a breakdown, stating that the 2016 salary was \$39,000.00; in an effort to align the position with the market, the Board agreed to an increase to

\$41,000.00; and the federal grant supplies the remaining \$4,000.00 compensation increase. Mr. Bolster recommended that the Board readdress these compensation changes should the grant funding stream end. Mr. Billias informed the Board that if the grant dissolved, the part-time position would be eliminated and the base salary for the Coordinator position would also decrease by the amount supplied through the grant. He added that there is no promise of longevity beyond the two-year term (FYs 2017 and 2018) of the grant offered to the newly hired part-time position, and it will be advertised as such. Supervisor Hinty made the motion to approve the grant funding; it was seconded by Supervisor Lewis and unanimously approved by all Board members.

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Chairman Higgins moved the discussion to the School Board needs and invited School Board Chairman, David McDaniel, to explain the School Board's budget update to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. McDaniel informed the Board there was a request to present a more accurate estimate of tuition revenue from Lexington City; an estimate of \$1,435,217.00 was presented as the closest, most accurate estimate that could be calculated. He also informed the Board that the City of Lexington's tuition was "volatile", depending on the number of students relocating from the City to the County and vice-versa. The City of Lexington provides approximately \$8,700.00 per student in tuition revenue per year. After deducting the estimate of needs (\$29,651,713.00) from the total revenues, and eliminating the eight (8) requested positions (\$474,000.00), the shortage equals \$72,158.00; "that's our request" concluded Mr. McDaniel.

Chairman Higgins inquired about the FY 2016 fiscal year use of the VRS supplement account that is now depleted. Mr. McDaniel informed him the School Division immediately applied

\$176,000.00 of the local VRS supplement towards the School Division's cost for paying their share of VRS payments in FY 2016.

Chairman Higgins asked if there was an option to fund three or four of the eight positions requested - and which would be chosen. Mr. McDaniel answered the question personally and not on behalf of the School Board: he indicated that the most critical positions are the two ITRT (Information Technology Resource Teachers) and the two STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the elementary schools. After Mr. McDaniel gave a brief explanation about the two types of positions, Supervisor Campbell inquired about the need for the ITRT position at the high school level and the possibility of lag time until current seventh graders with Chromebooks reached ninth grade. Mr. McDaniel informed him a lag time is possible, but currently the technology staff at the high school are understaffed to manage the current workload efficiently. Supervisor Ford wondered why there was inefficiency if 400-500 Chromebooks are currently in use. Mr. McDaniel responded that they were being used as PCs in a computer lab setting and not as teaching tools. Supervisor Ford agreed that there is a need for more technical resource staff, as he has been aware for years that it is hard for teachers to get the expertise to come from the Effinger Central Office for tech support in light of their other responsibilities.

Supervisor Ford asked why the ITRT positions were given priority over State-mandated positions such as Physical Education (PE) and Art. Mr. McDaniel informed the Board that the School Division currently has an art program in place, but it could be improved, and measures could be taken to address the requirement to increase physical activity, such as using

planning periods for recess. Chairman Higgins asked Mr. McDaniel to explain the STEM positions. Mr. McDaniel replied that those positions were added in anticipation of receiving grants specified for STEM programs.

Chairman Higgins asked if anyone had had the chance to speak with the President of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC), Dr. John Rainone. Supervisor Hinty stated that he had spoken with Dr. Rainone about the possibility of a restricted account for dual enrollment funding. He was informed that DSLCC currently pays seventy-five percent of tuition rates, and that there was an option for the School Division to be direct billed to ensure where the funds are going.

Chairman Higgins announced that his constituents are split on funding the School Board's needs; some are for more funding and some are for less. He proposed funding the approximate \$72,000.00 shortage and approving partial funding of new positions; he asked the Board for their recommendations.

Supervisor Lewis asked Mr. Bolster if he thought there was anywhere else in the General Fund budget to find a reduction in order to support the education-related funding request from the School Board. Mr. Bolster informed him that County departments have all trimmed their budgets one percent to fund the proposed cost-of-living increases and that nearly all Department/Division Heads submitted budget requests below FY 2016 levels.

Supervisor Ford considered the Sheriff's budget as a possibility; the compensation request totaled an approximately 9.7 percent increase, "far above any other salary requests." Mr. Suter reminded the Board that the County is facing a \$194,279.00 gap within the General Fund budget, exclusive of the additional funding request from the School Board. Supervisor Lewis proclaimed to the Board that even though the sentiment

exists to do better by our schools than in the past, there was a penny rate projection from 2013 that predicted that the 2016 real estate tax levy would be nearly seventy-four cents per \$100.00 of assessed values.

Supervisor Campbell felt the School Board's \$72,000.00 shortage was not a huge issue, but added that he was not sure the Board of Supervisors had always received honest information when inquiring about remaining expenditures during last year's budget discussions. He confirmed that he felt comfortable giving the \$72,000.00 and possibly funding four positions. Mr. Suter calculated four positions as potentially equaling approximately \$236,500.00 in additional funding for the School Division. Mr. McDaniel informed the Board that all of the eight positions were not weighted equally, but that Step 15 is the average salary category for the critical positions under consideration. He concluded, "\$534,000.00 is a large request, but we have been asking for some of these positions for three years."

Supervisor Ford stated that he is willing to move for a one penny increase on the tax rate in support of the School Board request. Supervisor Lewis believed that one and a half cents would be more suitable. Chairman Higgins requested to consider an overall two cent increase to the real estate tax and to commit one cent to the School Division. Mr. Bolster calculated a two cent increase to equal \$464,000.00 in revenue, with a surplus of \$269,721.00 remaining after balancing the County's budget, exclusive of any potential use for increased funding for the School Division.

Supervisor Ford asked Mr. McDaniel for the confirmed FY 2017 insurance rates for the school system. Mr. McDaniel informed him the broker is looking into it, but all indications

are an 8.6 percent increase for FY 2017. The final figure will be confirmed in mid to late April. Chairman Higgins requested the School Board to subtract the insurance savings from the funding request if the costs are lower than anticipated. Supervisor Campbell made the motion to approve an increase in funding of \$232,000.00 for the School's budget; this was seconded by Supervisor Lewis. The motion was approved unanimously by all five members. Mr. McDaniel thanked the Board of Supervisors for their support.

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There was a request for Mr. Suter to add an agenda item to the next scheduled budget meeting on April 4, 2016 concerning the 911 Center.

Chairman Higgins made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Supervisor Hinty. All five members of the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:47 p.m.

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Chairman

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
County Administrator