

THE FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS HELD A BUDGET WORK SESSION ON TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2023, AT 3:00 P.M., IN ROOM B-75 LOCATED IN THE FRANKLIN COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 1255 FRANKLIN STREET, ROCKY MOUNT, VIRGINIA.

THERE WERE PRESENT: Mike Carter  
Tommy Cundiff  
Nick Mitchell  
Ronald Mitchell  
Lorie Smith, Vice Chair  
Tim Tatum, Chairman  
Ronnie Thompson

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Christopher Whitlow, County Administrator  
Michael Burnette, Assistant County Administrator  
Steve Sandy, Assistant County Administrator  
Madherleyn Torres, Clerk

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Chairman Tatum called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

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County Administrator Whitlow and Finance Director Carter opened the discussion of the proposed County budget. It was noted that the Board has received the proposed budget and a public hearing on the budget has been tentatively scheduled for March 28<sup>th</sup>. If the Board wishes to hold that public hearing regarding the tax rates for the coming budget, action will need to be taken today so that the appropriate advertising can be scheduled. Chairman Tatum called for questions on the proposed budget and noted that the presented budget is balanced and has no tax increases.

Board members asked questions of staff regarding increases in sales tax revenue, ability to absorb higher fuel costs, transient occupancy tax revenues, tourism and economic development staffing, the Roanoke Regional Partnership, and the private landfill at Omnisource. Supervisor Smith would like more information on contributions to external agencies and further evaluation. Board members discussed the possibility of creating a school funding formula. Supervisor Carter believes the funding of TLAC is not a good use of County tax dollars. Supervisor N. Mitchell addressed the need for additional paid EMS coverage at the Snow Creek Rescue Squad. Supervisors Cundiff, Thompson, Tatum, and R. Mitchell voiced support for the expanded EMS coverage at Snow Creek.

Discussion was held to look again at increases in the meals tax and implementation of a cigarette tax to bring in needed revenue. Supervisor R. Mitchell voiced support for the Franklin County Public School System and feels it is why many people move to the County. He wants to be sure funds are available for the schools to implement their pay plan. He noted that the County waived part of the assessment on vehicles this year, but did not do so on RVs or boats. He thinks there is money that has been collected from those items that could be used for other budget priorities. Mr. Brian Carter noted that our collection percentage on personal property is softer this year than in years past. Finally, Supervisor R. Mitchell wants to see SROs in every school in the County and that he thinks 900 kids are being homeschooled because parents don't feel their kids are safe in public school. David Terry of the school system estimated that County schools lose about \$6 million in state revenue per year due to homeschooling.

The Board took a five-minute break.

Chairman Tatum asked Mr. Whitlow if we have received an opinion from the County Attorney on the legality of doing a referendum on raising taxes to fund SROs in every school. Mr. Whitlow noted that the County Attorney is scheduled to address the issue at the Board's regular meeting next week.

Supervisor Smith inquired about costs in the budget for the radio system maintenance. Discussion was held on the proposed expense. Supervisor Smith also requested that the Board review the existing CIP budget and reprioritize it as the Board desires. The Board discussed the recent strategic planning work and Mr. Whitlow noted that the proposed budget has been tied to the priorities identified by the Board during that strategic planning process. Mr. Carter brought up the cost of renting the Westlake Library space and discussion ensued on how to be more cost effective in our facility locations. Other specific line items were brought up by Board members N. Mitchell, Cundiff, and Thompson and discussed. Mr. Whitlow thanked the Board for their questions, conversation, and input.

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**(RESOLUTION #06-03-2023)**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors to advertise the proposed tax rates for property as the same for the next fiscal year as the current fiscal year and to hold a public hearing on March 28, 2023.

MOTION BY: Ronnie Thompson  
SECONDED BY: Tommy Cundiff  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, Cundiff, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum, Thompson

\*\* Roll call vote was taken \*\*

**(RESOLUTION #07-03-2023)**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors to hold a public hearing on the proposed budget as presented on March 28, 2023.

MOTION BY: Ronald Thompson  
SECONDED BY: Tommy Cundiff  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, Cundiff, Smith, Tatum, Thompson  
NAYES: N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell

\*\* Roll call vote was taken \*\*

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Discussion ensued regarding the need for staff to look closer at the funding of external agencies, a potential school funding formula, and further prioritization of the capital improvement list. Mr. Whitlow asked for direction from the Board on the potential implementation of a cigarette tax and/or increases in the meals tax. The Board also directed staff to review potential funding strategies for staffing of the Snow Creek Rescue Squad.

Mr. Whitlow recognized retiring Public Works Director Don Smith.

Chairman Tatum recessed the meeting until March 21, 2023, at 12:00PM for the Broadband Authority meeting followed by the Board of Supervisors regularly scheduled meeting at 1:30PM.