



**MINUTES  
BUDGET WORK SESSION III  
FAIRFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL  
MAY 10, 2023**

**Present:** Shirley Greene, Peggy Swearingen, Doug Pauley, Clarence Gilbert, Dan Ruff (Council Members); Laura Johnson, Interim County Administrator; Synithia Williams (Deputy County Administrator); Dr. Kimberly Roberts, Clerk to Council.

**Absent:** Cornelius Robinson, Timothy Roseborough.

**Others Present:** Beverly Mozie

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (e), as amended, the following persons and/or organizations have been notified of the time, date and location of this meeting: The Independent Voice of Blythewood and Fairfield, The Country Chronicle and one hundred forty one other individuals.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Pauley called the Work Session to order at 10:04 a.m. He thanked everyone for attending.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion made by Councilman Gilbert, seconded by Councilwoman Greene, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried unanimously 4-0.***

Mr. Pauley stated Mr. Robinson and Mr. Ruff would be late.

**III. INVOCATION**

Councilwoman Gilbert led the invocation.

**IV. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**A. FY 2023-2024 Budget**

Mrs. Johnson thanked everyone for attending and introduced Interim Finance Director, Beverly Mozie. Mrs. Mozie said they would begin with the departments that were not able to present on April 19<sup>th</sup>. She referred to Section 1 of their budget books – budget implications that effected department budgets countywide. They included the retirement rate (increased by 1%), health insurance rate (expected increase by 5%) and liability insurance (expected increase by 5%). She referred to Section 3 – the budget summary. She said it showed the 2023 adopted budget, the 2024 County Administrator requests and the percentage difference between the two. It included

explanations for anything plus or minus a 5% difference. She referred to the last sheet – the budget worksheet report, which would be the main sheet they would use during the work session. It showed the 2023 adopted budget, the 2024 County Administrator requests and the percentage difference between the two. She said they would begin with the departments.

### **COUNTY COUNCIL**

Mrs. Johnson said the administrator recommended changes totaling \$76,195 – a decrease of 20.28%. The decrease was due to the revision of the Council's reimbursement policy. She referred to the sheet in front of them concerning other recommendations.

### **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

Mrs. Johnson said there was a 17% decrease. She said this did not just cover the County Attorney (Tommy Morgan) but any attorneys used during different litigations.

### **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Mrs. Johnson said there was a 20% increase due to the budget implications stated by Mrs. Mozie. She said the Interim County Administrator's budget was there but she kept the Administrator's salary in there because at some point they would hire an Administrator. At that time, the Interim position would be deleted.

### **FINANCE**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 25.98% due to the Grants Coordinator moving back to the Finance Department and they added a Staff Accounting position. Mrs. Swearingen asked if the added staff position would ensure that the audit would be completed in a timely manner and Mrs. Mozie said absolutely – they would have the resources in place and they were thankful to have Mrs. Johnson to help guide them through the process.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Director, Mary Smyrl, said they handled recruitment, personnel actions, benefits, retirement and risk management. They requested an increase in their medical services (drug testing), printing, binding and advertisements (working on the employee handbook), other professional and contractual services (salary analysis, legal services, third party recruiter), textbooks, and instructional services and supplies (additional staff training). Mrs. Johnson said their budget increased by 2.88%.

**PURCHASING**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 11.86% mainly due to the cost of living and related benefits. Director Cathy Washington said they did solicitations, contract management and purchasing of goods and services for the county. There were no further increase requests beyond what had already been presented.

**DATA PROCESSING**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 18.95% mainly due to software maintenance agreements and data processing software upgrades. Director Marvin Allen said the increase was for impending operating systems upgrades for servers and backup software used to support that. Regarding the acoustics, he had information about a treatment plan - a sound study done and the cost of that was about \$29,000 (six months ago). It was probable that the price increased since then. Mrs. Swearingen asked what they would do and he said they would place sound panels to absorb and redirect sound waves. The company guaranteed an approximate 85% reduction in the reverberation. Mr. Pauley asked how often the maintenance agreements and software upgrades were done - annually and he said yes. Mr. Pauley asked if they could expect similar charges next year and he said he anticipated larger costs. The equipment was aging and they were working on a plan to address that. Mrs. Williams said one of the reasons for the increase in data processing supplies was due to them deciding to lease printers instead of owning them - it decreased the costs of maintenance calls. Some departments would see a decrease in that area - the IT department would be responsible for the lease purchase of the printers. Mrs. Swearingen asked if they had something in place to avoid being hacked and he said they took the current best approaches with software and tactics to protect the county and he was proud to say to that point they had not been attacked and brought down. They were attacked daily but not stopped.

**GENERAL OPERATIONS**

Mrs. Johnson said there was a decrease of 15.75% and encompassed the overall operations of the county. The main decrease was the longevity one-time allocation given in last year's budget. Mrs. Swearingen asked what that was and she said Council approved a bonus or longevity pay that was not reoccurring. She said the rental lease of the current Administration building cost \$600,000 annually (\$50,000/month). Those funds were moved to an account that already existed.

**TAX ASSESSOR**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 27% mostly due to the request for the GIS and temporary positions to be re-instated. Assessor, Guerry Hensley, said last year they did around 2,000 deed transfers. They had a huge increase in their workload and with two appraisers and himself, they could not keep up and that was the reason for the staffing request. Mrs. Greene asked if the temporary position would be seasonal and he said yes – it would be needed every five years.

**DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTION**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 3.95%. Lorraine Watkins said they received taxes around March 15<sup>th</sup> each year. They collected taxes on real estate, which included mobile homes and merchants. Their requested increase was mainly due to postage.

**BUILDING MAINTENANCE**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 8.48% due to the cost of living, benefits and a temporary position (re-instated after moving from Public Works back to Building Maintenance). Director Cynthia Trapp said they did repairs, ground maintenance and custodial work for all county buildings. They maintained 21 county buildings, 11 recycling centers, 8 EMS stations, 14 fire stations and 2 community centers. They were budgeted for 15 positions – 5 maintenance technicians, 5 custodians, 2 maintenance helpers, one HVAC tech, one administrative assistant and a director. Mr. Pauley asked what they did at the recycling centers and she said they maintained the buildings. He asked if they were fully staffed and she said no – they had five open positions. He asked if they were posted and she said yes.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Mrs. Johnson said she presented their budget at the last budget meeting.

**VEHICLE MAINTENANCE**

Mrs. Mozie said they presented at the last budget meeting.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget decreased by 1.66%. Director Ann Broadwater acknowledged Project Manager Zachariah Willoughby and announced his departure from his position. He accepted a position with the Central South Carolina Alliance as a Director of Research. She said they did not request any additional funds. She said they were a full service organization that supported existing industries and supplier outreach, employee recruitment and business expansion. They also assisted with new and expanding industries throughout

the site and building selection process. They developed product-ready industrial parks, sites and buildings through site development initiatives. They supported new and existing industries by offering financial and tax support and grant funding. They conducted economic and workforce research and they marketed Fairfield County as one of the best pro-business counties in the southeast. They also offered relocation support as needed. Mrs. Greene, Mr. Pauley, Mrs. Swearingen and Mr. Gilbert thanked Mr. Willoughby for his service to the county.

#### **DETENTION CENTER**

Mrs. Johnson said the Detention Center Director attended the April 19<sup>th</sup> budget meeting and presented her operating and capital requests. One request that was not presented was account number 5238 – juvenile housing. It was increased by \$28,500 – juveniles had to be housed by DJJ and the county paid them. Mrs. Swearingen asked if they would get more help. Mrs. Johnson said the positions were advertised but not many applicants. They were still short two employees.

#### **ROAD MAINTENANCE & SOLID WASTE**

Mrs. Johnson said both budgets were presented on April 19<sup>th</sup> with 2% increases for each departments.

#### **ANIMAL CONTROL**

Mrs. Mozie said they had a 7.97% increase with a request for two temporary positions and an increase in medical services and supplies for animals. Director Bob Innis said there were cost increases from the drug company, the vets they used increased their fees and the dog food company increased their prices. Mrs. Swearingen asked how many staff he would get. Mrs. Johnson said his positions were frozen and she recommended the two temporary positions be re-instated. Mrs. Swearingen asked if that would be enough to help him and he said they filled one position that week, another by the end of that week and it would help if the temp positions were unfrozen. Mr. Pauley said he thought all Council members toured the facility and had seen the number of animals coming in. They appreciated their work. He said the Public Affairs Committee was working on new policies/ordinances. It was not pleasant to tour the site and see the conditions. Mrs. Greene agreed with Mr. Pauley.

#### **PROBATE JUDGE**

There was no representative present but Mrs. Johnson said there was an increase of 11.22% due to Judge Renwick holding a temporary position to train the new Probate Judge. Mrs. Greene asked how long the temporary position would be needed and she said she was not sure.

### **TAX AUDITOR**

Mrs. Johnson said they had an increase of 6.98% due to printing, binding and advertising.

### **COUNTY TREASURER**

Mrs. Johnson said the Treasurer was in attendance but had to leave. She had a 7.22% increase in personnel services. Mr. Pauley suggested, if Council were in agreement, that those budgets be skipped that were increased due to COLA, benefits and things beyond their control. She said it was okay if it pleased Council but there were some departments present and she would like them to have the opportunity to speak since they were there. She said increases for the **CLERK OF COURT AND FAMILY COURT** were basically for personnel services as well.

### **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Mrs. Johnson said they presented at the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting but she pointed out that a camera system lease was included in their request. Mrs. Swearingen asked if they requested any employees and she said they did not request any new positions – they were trying to fill their existing positions.

### **CORONER'S OFFICE**

Mrs. Johnson said they presented at the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Pauley asked regarding the Sheriff's Office if most of the SRO contracts were paid by the school district and she said yes – the school district and the STEM school.

### **MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE**

Mrs. Johnson said they had a 4.2% increase. Chief Magistrate Judge Russell Feaster said they had six magistrates – one full time and the rest part-time. They presided over criminal, traffic, civil and bond courts. In conjunction with the Solicitor's Office they operated two treatment courts – adult drug court and the Veteran's treatment court. Mrs. Swearingen asked about the Veteran's treatment court. Judge Feaster said it was similar to pre-trial intervention for Veteran's who pled guilty to minor charges. After completing an approximately one-year program, their record was expunged. Court Administrator Deanna Takach said their budget increases were mainly due to cost of living, printing and binding, data processing supplies and cost associated with training.

### **VOTER REGISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMISSION**

Mrs. Mozie said they had an increase of 10.94% mainly due to equipment maintenance agreement costs and poll worker pay. Director Debbie Stidham said they conducted federal, state and county-wide elections and voter

registration. She said their increase was mainly due to maintenance of their equipment.

### **DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Mrs. Johnson said they had a .80% decrease – utilities and janitorial supplies. It was maintained separately because at the end of the year, the state DSS did a calculation and a portion of Fairfield's money was returned.

### **VETERAN'S AFFAIRS**

Mrs. Johnson said they decreased by 2.74%. Director Albertha Woodard said their office consisted of two people and they served the veterans, their spouses and dependents in Fairfield County. Mrs. Swearingen asked how many veterans were in the county and she said over 3,000. Their interactions were about 1,000 per month. Mr. Pauley asked if they had any interaction with The Big Red Barn and she said yes, they had a connection with them.

### **DELEGATION**

Mrs. Mozie said that department housed Senator Fanning and Representative McDaniels' assistant. Their budget increased by 3.64% due to personnel benefits and costs.

### **AIRPORT**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 8.81% due to gas, supplies and contractual services. Director Denise Bryan said theirs was a one-person department and they had two companies that had leases at the airport to operate their businesses. They provided fuel, fuel hanger rental space, hanger tie down space, avionics, aircraft maintenance, crew car service, internet service, office and tenant space and a plethora of other provisions all done through maintenance of the airfield and facilities on the airport property. Mrs. Greene thanked her and said getting the youth involved in aviation was important. Mrs. Bryan said Fairfield was very forward thinking regarding their aviation program. They were one of the few counties in the state with an airport director.

### **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by less than 1%. Director Jennifer McGriff said their department was responsible for coordinating disaster preparedness, the 911 addressing and operating the 911-call center. Mr. Gilbert thanked her for hosting the preparedness session that he participated in. The public did not know what they went through in the event of a disaster and he appreciated how she ran the operation. She thanked him and said FEMA was impressed by their County officials and they could not do what they did

without the cooperation of all the county personnel and departments. Mr. Pauley thanked her and asked if she knew when her department would be moving into the Administration building and she said the next week.

### **RECREATION**

Mrs. Johnson said they presented during the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting and they had a 7.55% increase to reinstate an Athletic Coordinator position and associated medical insurance for the position.

Mrs. Johnson referred to page 65 – general distributions. She said they were all transfers out to other departments. When Council approved certain capital items and there were no outside funds available, the money was transferred from the general fund into a special revenue or capital projects fund.

### **TRANSIT, EMS AND FIRE**

Mrs. Johnson said they presented at the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **QUICK JOBS TRAINING FACILITY (MIDLANDS TECH)**

Mrs. Johnson referred to page 92 and said they paid the utilities, building maintenance agreements and supplies. They had a 27% decrease in their budget request.

### **MUSEUM**

Mrs. Johnson said they increased by 7.48%. Director Pelham Lyles said they advanced in genealogical research and that was the biggest “draw” for the public. Their mission was to learn and record more of the stories of the people in order to help them establish their connections to the past. The Historical Society partnered with them because they owned the collection. The Genealogical Society was very active and they had two volunteers. She had an open temporary position and she needed a collections management person to handle the database and the entry of inventory. Mr. Pauley asked the days/hours of operation. She said Monday-Friday they opened at 10a-5p and on Saturday’s from 10a-2p. Mr. Gilbert asked if the temporary position would be able to help on Saturday’s and she said yes.

### **SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Mrs. Mozie said their budget increased by 5.46% mainly due to cost of living and associated benefits.

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### **FIVE-MINUTE RECESS (11:18AM – 11:37AM)**

**MIDLANDS TECHNICAL COLLEGE**

Mrs. Johnson said she asked them to come back to give a more detailed presentation - there were some things she felt Council needed to be aware of. She also referred to a revised packet from the college. Dr. Rhames, (College President), said the information before them was the same but was put in a simpler format. He said they were requesting \$143,000, which was requested and funded in the past. Based on questions Council had regarding the classes offered at the Fairfield campus, they provided a simplified list of those classes. The list included classes offered from fall 2020 and the number of students that attended. It also showed the classes with only one student attending and the free community interest classes (not academic or continuing education) that were offered in the spring 2022. The list also included classes that were offered but were not carried out. They spent an estimated \$400,000 offering services and programs in Fairfield County and the County contributed \$143,000 towards that. It did not account for the cost savings to the students in the dual enrollment at the high school. They spent a great deal of time in the community with their Advisory Board who met with local community leaders to discuss how to increase engagement. The college made a significant commitment to Fairfield County and would continue. Mr. Pauley said regarding the Promise Program, the County and the school district each gave \$75,000. His concern was that in the fall of 2019, the spring of 2020, summer of 2020, fall of 2022, and spring of 2021 and 2023 only eight students were in the program at the Fairfield campus. Dr. Rhames said the Promise Program included high school students that they were not looking at. The County's donation went towards those students that were eligible and any monies left went towards the County. The school district committed to fund \$75,000/year for five years to create an endowment for the Promise Program and the college matched it with \$125,000. Mr. Pauley asked if only eight Promise Program participants were able to take a class at the Fairfield campus in the past four years and Dr. Rhames said "at that campus - that was correct". Mr. Pauley asked if the dual enrollment classes were offered at Midlands Tech or on the high school campus. Dr. Rhames said they were mostly on the high school campus but some students were able to go to the campus if they were qualified and approved and they could also take virtual classes. Mr. Pauley said what concerned him was the fact that eight students took classes in four years and the dual enrollment students did not use the campus but instead went to the high school. He was appreciative that the students obtained a Midlands Tech degree but he was not sure how much the school was being used and he wanted to make it was being used as they should be using it. Dr. Rhames said they both agreed that it was not being used to its full potential, which was why he was there often with the Advisory Committee to try to figure out how to increase enrollment. He had the same challenges in Batesburg-Leesville. Mr.

Pauley said he would not only like to see more Fairfield residents utilize the campus but also citizens from other counties as well because it could have a positive economic impact. Dr. Rhames agreed and said when they offered welding classes and CNA classes, people came from other areas to take the classes. Mrs. Johnson referred to the packet and said it showed there were a total of 22 enrollments in 2021 and a total of 51 in 2022 and there were several free classes offered. She had questions about the number of students that received funding for the Promise Program. Dr. Rhames said the students might or might not use the Promise Program based on their qualifications. Mrs. Johnson asked if more Fairfield residents were taking classes in Columbia versus Fairfield and he said yes – some work in Columbia and would rather take classes there and some would rather be away from home to take classes. He said another challenge in Fairfield versus Batesburg-Leesville was that Lexington County provided a millage rate for their students. They expunge the difference between the in-county and out-of-county rate - it was a formula he would like to talk to Fairfield about. Mr. Pauley said he agreed and would love to see more people utilize the campus. He asked with the recent announcement of Scout, would there be more classes offered regarding that skill/trade. Dr. Rhames said he anticipated that happening and they were currently working with Scout to determine what they needed. They would also look at their curriculum to see what courses needed to be modified. He said Scout concerned him in terms of the demand (4,000 jobs) and at least 6,000 more for suppliers and the spin-off. He did not think they could meet the needs without including the Fairfield campus. He said they also needed to recognize the need for more training and be prepared to deliver such in order for the Fairfield residents to be competitive for those jobs. Mrs. Greene said she understood that Scout would have their own initial training program but would eventually turn that over to Midlands Tech. Dr. Rhames said typically, when a large company comes in they were jointly owned by the State Board for Technical Education and the State Board would be through the Ready SC Program. MTC would provide the training once Scout completed their portion. Mrs. Greene said she had concerns with small business development. If small businesses were going to do business with Scout, they would have to meet certain criteria. She asked if MTC was looking at the criteria to offer those small businesses the opportunity to develop the skills, business plans, to become bonded and insured, etc. so they could be major contractors instead of subcontractors. Some of the local contractors were paid less as subcontractors. He said they would have limited access to the actual construction on the facility but they would have significant input in the training center, which would probably be done through the state. He thought they could offer some community interests classes on how to compete on the state level. He said he

would like to meet with Council to discuss ways to make the program work more effectively.

### **TOURISM PROMOTION & TOURISM RELATED**

Mrs. Johnson said these were State accommodation funds – not the general fund. According to State law, they went into to a separate account and they had to be used for tourism and tourism related activities. The organizations that received the funds were The Chamber of Commerce, Olde English Tourism and the Railroad Museum. The Ag & Art Director turned in a request for funds but withdrew the request and said she would apply thru the local accommodations and hospitality tax monies. She said her original request was to cut their budget by 10% but because they were funded through a different source, she wanted to leave them at their original request. Mrs. Greene asked about the Farmer's Market and Mrs. Williams said that request would come through the local accommodations and hospitality tax monies as well. They had an overall decrease of 41% due to contractual services that were never used.

### **SHERIFF CHILD SUPPORT**

Mrs. Johnson said they normally received funding upon delivery of child support papers but over the last several years, no monies went into the account. It was a transfer in from the general fund. There was one officer assigned to the position. They were working on putting the position back into the Sheriff's Office. Mrs. Greene asked if it was an appropriation that came from the State and Mrs. Johnson said it was not a set appropriation. They could turn in paperwork to the state to show the number of child support papers that were delivered. Based on that number, they would be reimbursed a portion and it was put into that account. It was never enough to pay a full time officer but it would help offset the cost. Mr. Pauley asked if they were still receiving the monies to offset the cost and she said they had not gotten any for a number of years. He asked why and she said she was told that the paperwork was not actually being delivered but mailed. Mrs. Greene said she would not want to leave money on the table due to forms not being filled out. Mr. Pauley said he worked in the Civil Process Division with the Sheriff's Office and they did serve child support papers on a regular basis. He agreed with Mrs. Greene in that he did not want to leave funding on the table that could offset some costs.

### **TRANSIT**

Mrs. Johnson said they saw Transit in the general fund but this section referred to grant funds, which had to go into a separate account. They had some costs that were not reimbursable and those went into the general fund. Any reimbursements they received went into that account. When monies were

spent or received from that account, it was coded from that account. Mrs. Swearingen asked if Transit was funded by the federal government and she said it was majority funded by the federal government. Some of the costs they incurred were only partially reimbursable. Mrs. Swearingen asked what percentage was reimbursable and Mrs. Johnson said she did not have that information at that time but typically, the personnel costs and capital requests were reimbursed at 100%.

#### **USED OIL AND WASTE TIRE FUND**

Mrs. Johnson said the used oil and waste tire funds were small grants received from the state for supplies for Public Works. They received the grant annually and they input an estimation based on historical data and did not require a match from the county.

#### **RAILROAD TRACK MAINTENANCE**

Mrs. Johnson said those funds were under an agreement between the County and the Railroad Museum. The museum received state tourism related monies and monies from the County via a contract.

#### **CLERK OF COURT**

Mrs. Johnson said those were called 4D Federal funds and pertained to child support and they were reimbursed. The funds were used at the Clerk's discretion. The law stated if the Clerk had any remaining funds at the end of the fiscal year, it would go into the general fund.

#### **VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

Mrs. Johnson said there were fees and fines collected by law regarding magistrate and clerk of court fees/fines and a portion had to be allocated to victim assistance. Over the past few years, those funds did not come in and they had no control over that. The transfers from the general fund was due to the fees/fines received were not enough to cover the salary of the employee.

#### **VEHICLE REPLACEMENT**

Mrs. Johnson said the funding for any vehicles that she recommended for approval had to be transferred from the general fund and placed in that account. Vehicles were capital items and had to be placed in a separate account.

#### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

Mrs. Johnson said those were transfers from the general fund. The main item was firefighter equipment at \$315,000 for the second payment for the air packs. The payments were scheduled in three installments. Senator Fanning

was able to secure funding for the first payment. They were waiting to see if they would receive funding for the second payment.

Mrs. Greene asked about the engineer position to be funded by the Rural Stabilization funds and Mrs. Williams said that was for a full time County Engineer/Project Manager.

### **911 TOWER**

Mrs. Johnson said those monies were surcharges affixed to phone lines. It had to be used specifically for 911 communication equipment. Those funds would be used for that department to move into the new administration building.

### **WIOA**

Mrs. Johnson said this department was 100% funded thru grants. The program assisted adult and dislocated citizens back to work by helping them find jobs. Mrs. Greene asked if the program was widely used and she said it had enough enrollees and she encouraged the department heads to contact the director if/when they needed help.

### **SPECIAL REVENUE/PLANNING GRANTS**

Mrs. Williams said those were funds received from the Central Midlands Council of Governments (COG). They assisted the County with different planning needs and revising the Comprehensive Plan. They received funds from the COG and then returned it to them for services rendered.

Mrs. Johnson referenced a small grant given to the Public Works Department for solid waste/recycling.

### **JAG GRANT**

Mrs. Johnson said that grant was one the Sheriff's Office received every year. They filled out and submitted the application and it was for the needs of the department. There was no match from the County.

### **FAIRFIELD FORWARD**

Mrs. Williams said several years ago (2019/2020) Fairfield County agreed to be the backbone agency for the non-profit agency. The County received the monies the agency received through grants to house their program manager within Fairfield County. It was not general fund money. They were working with them to come up with an end date because Fairfield Forward completed a strategic plan and were working towards becoming their own backbone agency.

**FORFEITED LAND COMMISSION**

Mrs. Johnson said those funds were a portion of the employee's salary. He worked at the Tax Assessor's office but he also worked for the Forfeited Land Commission.

**DEBT SERVICES**

Mrs. Johnson said they had a millage for debt service and those were all the bonds they had to pay. When monies were collected, those amounts on that millage went into that account and then they paid the bonds on an amortization schedule. Mrs. Greene asked if that was the Dominion settlement money that caused the decrease in debt services and she said yes - they restructured that bond and some bonds fell off.

Mrs. Johnson said the next section were funds transferred in from the general fund as it related to their capital. The biggest request was for bridge repairs - \$500,000 and that was for one bridge. The requested locks for the Detention Center were included as well. Mrs. Greene said she heard it would be 3-4 years before the bridge on Camp Welfare Road would be fixed and that seemed ridiculous since there was a business on that road and she agreed. Mrs. Swearingen said that was a lot for one bridge and she said Director Burroughs was looking into other alternatives.

**WATER & SEWER**

Mrs. Johnson said they had a cost sharing agreement (75/25) percent with the Joint Water System. Engineering costs were still being incurred as well as other costs that may come up so monies were put into that account for those purposes.

**PUBLIC WORKS**

Mrs. Johnson said it was a capital request for equipment. They had monies in the fund balance left, which was why she recommended approval. Typically, when equipment cost less than anticipated, it created more in the fund balance.

Solid Waste requested to replace an old roll-off truck and two 40-yard roll off cans @ \$248,000. They had funds left in their balance so she recommended the approval of their request.

**ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

Mrs. Johnson said that was the lease for the new Administration building (\$600,000). She added an additional \$50,000 for any major building uplifts. They were still experiencing difficulties with the front door locking appropriately. Mrs. Greene asked if it was still under warranty and she said

yes – they should not have to pay for that. Mrs. Williams said there were some other repairs/issues and they were working with the owner to resolve them. Mr. Gilbert asked he was responding to their satisfaction and she said the owner was but the contractor was not.

### **HOSPITAL EMERGENCY**

Mrs. Johnson said that was a contract with the emergency room. They paid them \$250,000 per quarter (\$1 million annually) and they had a separate millage for that. Mr. Pauley asked when the contract would end and she said she did not know exactly but it was getting close and she would verify.

### **LIBRARY**

Mrs. Johnson said their millage increased by one. Historically, they were under the County's umbrella regarding health benefits but they were going to handle their own. As a result, they had to hire someone to be responsible for that and were requesting an additional \$50,564. She suggested the monies come from the fund balance and not increase their millage again.

### **LUNCH BREAK (12:43PM – 1:40PM)**

#### **COUNCILMAN RUFF ENTERED AT 1:30PM**

#### **VICE CHAIR GILBERT CALLED THE MEETING BACK TO ORDER AT 1:40PM**

Mrs. Johnson said they would go over the budget worksheet report and would go over where the money would come to fund the expenditures/recommendations. She talked about the taxes the County collected, the bank collections, the court fees and fines, any other fees/fines collected by the County and state collections. She said they charged the Town of Winnsboro \$3,000 to lodge their inmates in the Detention Center. It was set over 20 years ago and did not cover the costs for the services. She said it was on her list to re-negotiate that fee.

She said monies paid via contract revenue to SRO's was reimbursed. It was tracked separately for billing purposes. Monies paid for EMS transports were partially reimbursed and Transit had Medicaid collections. Any unused funds from the Clerk of Court office were transferred to the general fund.

Mrs. Johnson said regarding her budget letter, with all of the requests and her recommendations, in order to make the budget balance it would take \$4.2 million of fund balance. She said she had options to avoid that and they were included in her budget letter, which she read.

"As we present this upcoming budget, I acknowledge it isn't unusual to prepare a budget without having fiscal year 2022 audited financial statements to verify the balances in each fund. While my preference is not to present a budget prior

to the finalization of a prior year audit, the County must have an approved budget by June 30<sup>th</sup>. However, I do remain confident in the financial stability of the County. The County approves a balanced budget – what that means is that budgeted revenues must equal budgeted expenditures. Estimated expenditures and anticipated revenues are budgeted and if your estimated expenditures exceed your anticipated revenue, fund balance has to be used to balance the budget or some other source of revenue. At the close of the fiscal year, if there is a surplus in revenue or the actual expenditures are less than budgeted, the amount of fund balance used is either less than budgeted or not needed at all.” She stopped reading and referred to an attachment in their packet, which was information from the financial audit report. In 2017, the beginning fund balance was \$19.9 million. Excess of revenues over expenditures, if it was positive, meant more revenue came in than what was expended. They took in a surplus of \$2 million, which made the ending balance in 2017 \$21.9 million. She used 2017 as an example – \$460,000 was budgeted but they did not have to use it because they had a surplus. In 2018, \$2.5 million was budgeted but they only used \$407,000. In 2019, \$3 million was budgeted but they had a surplus of \$507,000 so they did not use any of the fund balance. In 2020, \$4.2 million was budgeted and they used \$4 million. In 2021, \$5.3 million was budgeted and they used \$2.1 million. She said just because there was an amount budgeted in the fund balance did not mean it would all be used. She referred back to her letter – “The County’s main source of revenue has always been Avalon, which is property taxes. The County had also been a recipient of some major funding sources over the past two years, such as the ARPA monies (over \$4.3 million in 2022 & 2023). The County allocated some of these funds for capital equipment, building renovations, and park upgrades. The Rural Stabilization Fund was received in 2022 totaling \$330,000 and was allocated to the land development study, housing study, class and comp study, and signage design. Fairfield County was a recipient of these funds from the general assembly because of zero population growth. Also, the Dominion settlement in 2022 of over \$99 million. Some of the projects funded by the settlement are still in progress. Although some of these additional funds were used to cover the costs of some capital equipment, the County did not budget for capital equipment in 2022 or 2023. This year, departments have submitted capital requests totaling over \$5.7 million of which over \$4 million of the requests are from our safety sensitive departments to replace equipment that has exceeded its useful life. In addition, several departments have requested to unfreeze suspended positions and to return to the prior year 10% cut. Even though positions and budgets were frozen or cut, the services and the workload associated with those positions did not decrease. This impacted the level of service provided and increased employee workload. Department managers are still expected to provide the same service to our

citizens with less support. Some departments have such small budgets, a 10% budget cut impacted them more severely than a department with a much larger budget. With the announcement of Scout Motors and the anticipation of accelerated growth in Fairfield in both areas of commercial and residential, it is imperative we move quickly toward finalizing the logistics surrounding the location and operation of the wastewater treatment plant. We also need to have land and speculative buildings readily available in our industrial parks to accommodate the needs of industries expected to locate to the area. Providing our staff with the tools necessary to increase efficiency in their operations to better serve a potentially growing population is equally important. The County must create space for additional training and growth within the departments, develop a capital equipment replacement plan and develop an employee incentive and retention plan. With that being said, the budget being presented before you includes over \$3 million in capital needs, unfreezing several positions and the addition of new positions. Items currently not included in the recommended budget but I present for your consideration to improve employee recruitment and retention are: the addition of a County holiday, which is Veteran's Day, implementing a 3-5 percent cost of living increase for all employees (5% for employees making \$60,000 and below and 3% for employees making over \$60,000). This allows the lesser paid employees to benefit more from the cost of living increase." She said the reason she recommended that was because it had not been approved yet, the state was looking at a three and five percent pay increase. Regarding longevity pay, it would be determined to include temporary employees and would take a bit more time to come up with something equitable. She read, "It is imperative that we are proactive in implementing strategies to improve morale and retain our employees. We continue to lose valuable employees due to pay and we are receiving a low number of applications for several key position. How should we fund this budget? The County has not increased property taxes since 2016 with the exception of a .5 millage increase for the library in 2023. Even though a millage increase has been requested to Council each year, we're now at a point where we need to increase taxes in order to replace aging fleet, adjust salaries to be competitive with surrounding counties and consistently provide cost of living increases in order to retain staff. The County's obligations continue to increase despite us not increasing taxes. For example, the County pays \$600,000 annually for the Mt. Zion Administration lease. The approved millage cap percentage for 2023-2024 (this upcoming year) is at an unprecedented high of 8%." She said that meant they could increase their millage by 8%, which calculated to total 12.92 of a tax increase. The general fund millage was currently 161.58. Increasing taxes by 12.92 would increase the tax revenues by almost \$2 million with a 96% collection rate. They did not budget for 100% collection because they never collected 100% in the same

year. The impact of a 12.92% millage on a \$200,000 assessed valued house would be \$103.40. Even though they could increase by that amount, her recommendation was for an 8-millage increase, which would increase tax revenues by approximately \$1.2 million with a 96% collection rate. The impact of an 8% millage increase on a \$200,000 assessed valued house would be \$64.00 – this would be prior to the local option sales tax being applied, which would decrease that cost. She also recommended the County dedicate a portion of the millage increase towards a lease-purchase option for capital purchases. The option would not impact the County's debt and it would allow them to purchase approved capital items and pay them over time. A \$4 million lease purchase would result in an annual payment of approximately \$750,000/year for seven years with a five mill increase. She was not requesting any additional mills – the portion dedicated to capital purchases would be included in the eight mill request. In addition, they had a reserved fund balance of approximately \$8.9 million. It was done many years ago and she did not feel as though it made sense to continue because it did not serve a purpose. She asked that Council consider moving it to unreserved. She wanted to keep the Mt. Zion Administration lease to remain reserved and at the end of seven years, they would have the option to buy the building or continue to lease. If Council agreed, keeping the \$4.2 million for the Mt. Zion lease and releasing the remaining reserved funds would result in \$4.2 of unreserved found fund balance. The County could use the fund balance for capital and other purchases and not increase taxes or enter into a lease purchase agreement, however, County Council would eventually have to increase taxes. The County could not expect to provide additional services, fund outside agencies, pay \$600,000 in an annual lease payment and other things without additional funding. If Council elected not to increase taxes that year, the upcoming budget would exclude all capital purchases, which would be detrimental to the safety of their citizens. She said those were her recommendations and it was up to Council to have their considerations in a motions list for their vote. Mr. Pauley asked if the five millage increase request would cover all of the capital requests and she said yes. She recommended \$3.5 million in capital requests but did her estimate on a lease purchase of \$4 million. She suggested Council review the capital request list given to them and reminded them that the cost of living increase was not in the budget and would have to be approved by Council. If approved, it would equal a \$694,828 increase in the budget. She went over some personnel requests that were not included in the budget but were in their packets. The delegation, per Representative McDaniel, made a request for a temporary staff to assist with her duties and the fire department requested four additional full-time firefighters and a full-time Fire Marshall and they were not included in the budget. The Chief Magistrate requested a court security office (bailiff). She

said without the new positions, what they put in the budget was \$599,339. If everything was included, it would be \$1.1 million. She said their homework assignment was to look at the capital request sheet (and agree or disagree), determine if they were okay with the lease purchase option, decide if they agreed with the millage increase, decide on changes (if any) to the personnel and agencies requests.

Mrs. Greene asked if there were any plans for the Hans Building since 911 moved out. Mrs. Johnson said they would continue to use it as a training center. Mrs. Greene also asked about the old Administration building. Mrs. Johnson said they needed to decide if the old Administration building would be torn down or put under the forfeited land commission for sale. Mrs. Greene said they also needed to know if the building was encumbered in any way and Mrs. Johnson said they would look into that. Mrs. Greene also mentioned the staff (engineer) to be hired with the stabilization funds. Mrs. Williams said they would check to make sure the position number was created but they contracted with a firm to assist with the land development update (zoning ordinance) and they recently sent out letters regarding the housing study. Mr. Pauley agreed with Mrs. Greene's concerns regarding the old Administration building and did not want it to sit and deteriorate and ruin the community. He encouraged Council to look closely at the budget and do what was best for Fairfield County. If there were cuts to be made, make them with the consideration that they still had services to provide to the citizens of Fairfield County – it was what they were elected to do.

Mrs. Johnson said that concluded their presentation and the next meeting was scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> with the time being determined by Council. She would like to start a motion's list at that meeting. The motion's list would be voted on at a Council meeting and once approved, they would make the necessary changes to update the numbers and spreadsheets. She would ask Interim Fire Chief Jamie Webb to attend in case there were questions for his department.

Mrs. Greene asked if the assignment list would be sent to the Council members who were not able to attend the meeting and Mrs. Johnson agreed.

Mr. Pauley thanked everyone for their attendance.

**V. ADJOURN**

At 2:41 p.m., motion made by Councilman Ruff, seconded by Councilman Gilbert, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim W. Roberts', written over a horizontal line.

KIM W. ROBERTS, Ed. D.  
CLERK TO COUNCIL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Pauley', written over a horizontal line.

DOUG PAULEY  
CHAIRMAN