

**Wake County Fire Commission
MINUTES FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 1999
*ADOPTED 5/18/99***

Time:	7:10 PM - 9:53 PM
Location:	Wake County Commons Building Carya Drive at Poole Road
Present :	Cloyce Anders, External Facilitator Yevonne Brannon, Wake County Commissioner Ed Brinson, West Region/Primary Tony Chiotakis, West Region/Alternate George Mills, North Region/Primary Phil Mitchell, South Region/Primary Ned Perry, Citizen/Consumer Rodney Privette, East Region/Alternate A.C. Rich, North Region/Alternate Charles Sannipoli, Citizen/Consumer Nancy Schwarm, Citizen/Consumer Tom Vaughan, East Region/Primary Bonnie Woodruff, Citizen/Consumer Ray Echevarria, Director-Fire/Rescue Division
Absent:	Max Ashworth, Citizen/Consumer Ken Farmer, South Region/Alternate Blaine Parks, Citizen/Consumer(Alternate) Bill Stevenson, President of Firemen's Association
Topic:	<u>Discussion & Summary of Topics:</u>
Meeting Called to Order:	The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM.
Recognized Guests:	Mr. David W. Spencer and his Boy Scout Troop 301 were recognized as guests. They were attending a public meeting as part of earning their citizenship badge. David Cooke, Deputy County Manager, also attended Wake County Fire Commission meeting.
	The following handouts were distributed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wake County Fire Department Volunteerism - 1998 2. Wake County Fire Service Apparatus Inventory (April 1998) 3. Memo from Chief Vaughan reference <i>Fire Commission Budget Matters</i> 4. Memo from Ray Echevarria reference <i>Invitation to May 26th EMS Task Force Meeting</i>

	5. Memo from Charles Sannipoli reference <i>Leverage</i>
	Roll was taken.
Public Comments:	None.
Old Business:	Motion to adopt 3-16-99 minutes as read. Chief Mills requested amending the statement that Greg Grayson was with county 12 years to 4 or 5 years. Motion approved.
	Prior to report of the committees, Mr. Anders turned the floor over to Ms. Bonnie Woodruff. Ms. Woodruff stated she is a volunteer with the U.S. Fire Association and brought a video to share with the group. The video, "GET OUT & STAY ALIVE", is targeted toward college students. (Viewed video from 7:15 - 7:45.) There is a curriculum with the video. For those interested, she does have brochures about the program. This video is currently part of the freshman orientation at UNC-CH. Ms. Woodruff also stated she is an advocate for sprinklers. On May 5 th , she will go to Madison, Wisconsin, where a fire occurred at a college, to address the legislature to promote sprinklers.
COMMITTEE REPORTS:	
Budget Review:	Mr. Anders opened the meeting by stating the budget must be done. Will never know the total number of hours the Budget Review Committee has put forth working on the budget. Commended them for their work. The history of the budget is the rural fire departments previously used a rural fire tax system. The fire departments were entrusted to be good stewards with the citizens money. As of July 1, 1999, all will change. The rural tax district system will no longer exist as it will be replaced with a special service tax district. Have heard the concerns from the people involved. In the past, people basically paid for level of service they received in the rural tax district. One thing we have got to do under the new system is we must forget the old tax districts. You do not have a tax district anymore. Chief's must realize a single tax district. The goal of the special service tax district is to be revenue neutral. At the same time, fire departments are expected to increase service level and improve ISO ratings. Questions how can we cover additional areas and build new stations. Expenses have gone up. It is not reality to think fire departments can operate on a previous years budget. I don't know of anyone who provides a better service for the county. Wake County Fire Commission has been asked to present a budget. It is responsibility of the Fire Marshal to advise county on level of funding. This is difficult for Ray. This brings the question of unless we make a very good case, why should Wake County Fire Commission go through pain to prepare budget. Fire service in this county needs to have a say. Need to speak up and get involved. EMS and fire should operate together to plan. Next year,

hope planning can be moved along which will dictate level of service. If one department provides day time service, should all departments provide daytime service? I think it is critical for organization to be involved and have a strong say. I believe collectively in years to come, the Wake County Fire Commission can make a difference.

Mr. Anders then turned the floor to Chief Mills:

Chief Mills recommended a 10 cent tax rate. Based on 8.3 million tax property value. The County Assessor has put forth 8.8 million tax evaluation. Recommend 9.5 cent tax rate of \$880,000 more. The \$880,000 is necessary to accomplish goals of Wake County Fire Commission. Necessary to achieve ISO rating of 6 by the year 2003. Most departments are currently a split 6/9S. Takes money and paper work to raise rating. Rural departments must deliver water whereas municipalities do not. It is necessary to extend fire insurance boundaries to those areas beyond five road miles from a station. These people will now pay a tax they never paid before. Eventually the persons living in the 10 rating area will get angry because they are paying fire tax and not getting the benefit of an insurance premium credit. The Wake County Fire Commission needs to extend money to departments asked to provide services such as first responder. My question is why first responder if fire and EMS are leaving from the same place. There are costs involved in providing first responder. The Tri-Data Study of 1994 suggested a 10 cent tax rate. The county has grown in population and traffic. Can have stations five to seven miles apart and response times have grown. The Budget Review Committee makes a recommended tax rate of 9.5 cents at \$880,000 more. The Budget Review Committee in its meeting also discussed level of service.

Mr. Anders then recognized Chief Vaughan:

Chief Vaughan asked Ray is staff recommendation before or after collection and Ray advised after collection. Chief Vaughan then referred to the fire collection fee. Since there are no longer individual rural tax districts, should not have a collection fee. Chief Vaughan then suggested that instead of maintaining 25% of fund balance, reduce amount of fund balance to 15%. This would also need to be changed in the contract. Could use the overage budget for emergency funding for fire departments to recruit volunteers and to pay for paid personnel. If the recommendation is at 8.5 cents and not 9.5 cents, will need to do these recommendations immediately to free up funds .

Mr. Anders then turned the floor over to Mr. Sannipoli:

Mr. Sannipoli referred to a spreadsheet titled LEVERAGE. Did this by old tax district because that was only available information. Part of the county will see tax savings and the other part will have a tax increase. Mr. Sannipoli recommended a 10 cent tax rate.

Ms. Schwarm asked what is the difference between 9.5 cent and 10 cent tax rate.

Mr. Sannipoli advised \$400,000.00

Ms. Brannon advised we are talking about the past. The decision to streamline to a special service tax district was a legal decision. A unified tax district was approved unanimously. Have to remember that we are talking about peoples money and paying almost \$1,400.00 in taxes and then tacking on a fire expense. In looking at Tom's and George's proposal, Tom's proposal bridges the gap. Don't want to revisit this for a long time unless increase in taxes. If we get through a tough budget year, then next year will experience a growth in revenue. I don't know all the details; I support Tom's proposal. There is a tremendous potential for growth in revenue. Must get something going for schools. Think about Tom's proposal.

Ray stated we are currently providing service to citizens beyond the 5 mile insurance district. Everyone in Wake County is in a response district and gets service. Fire departments are already providing service to areas outside the 5 mile district.

Mr. Sannipoli stated everyone will pay one tax. You are going to increase seven districts regardless. Don't want to see a decrease in the other twelve districts. Make 10 cents if it will not be changed in a year.

Chief Chiotakis asked how much money will a department get if one district? What basis are you going to use for individual districts for dollar amounts?

Mr. Anders stated that you are going to have a pot of money from all the citizens of Wake County. The Budget Review Committee reviews the budget requests and the amount in the pot is doled out to each department.

Chief Mills stated this is the Budget Review Committee's first year and it is a transition from the past. Despite fact forms used were the same, department's filled out forms differently. Next year, the budget process will be more definitive.

Chief Chiotakis requested to look at the LEVERAGE sheet again. Use Morrisville as an example. Are you taking 1998-1999 budget to use as basis.

Mr. Sannipoli stated the LEVERAGE sheet is for comparison and not for budget.

Mr. Anders requested motion for Mr. Sannipoli's recommendation of 10 cent tax rate. Seconded by Chief Mitchell; motion passed.

	<p>Chief Vaughan referred back to his memo Item A. Recommended to eliminate the collection fee.</p> <p>Ms. Brannon stated that Raymond Boutwell is working on this item. She then referred to David Cooke.</p> <p>Mr. Cooke stated Raymond Boutwell looking at first two items of Chief Vaughan’s memo. The collection fee was valid when there were separate tax districts.</p> <p>Ms. Brannon stated there will be some charge, just like any other agency. You will be charged something. What does it cost legitimately for collection fees. It is not realistic that there be no charge; would charge the actual cost.</p> <p>Chief Brinson commented that Item C of Chief Vaughan’s memo, the overage fund, would be used for C.I.P. projects.</p> <p>Chief Chiotakis then commented that county would reduce amount in collection in amount equal to amount for real cost. Is in favor of.</p> <p>Ms. Schwarm then question if the approvals are separate.</p> <p>Mr. Anders answered yes.</p> <p>Chief Mills recommended to remove Item C since it was already voted on. Favor approved as amended.</p> <p>Motion to approve as amended seconded by Mr. Perry. Motion passed as amended.</p> <p>Ms. Brannon did comment that the county is working on these two items. When worked out, will bring back to the Wake County Fire Commission.</p> <p><i>(Break at 8:42 PM; Resumed at 8:47 PM.)</i></p>
Capital Improvement Program:	No report.
Contract & Performance Requirements:	<p>Met with the County Attorney yesterday reference the contract. Recommended 15% vs. 25% fund balance. We have a DRAFT now. As soon as it is cleaned up, will mail a DRAFT copy of contract to each Wake County Fire Commission member.</p> <p>Chief Vaughan requested that a copy also be mailed to each fire chief.</p> <p>Mr. Anders stated this could be done.</p>

Planning:

Mr. Anders then moved to the Fairview issue. Have tried to look at situation objectively. The land the station is on is owned by the Fairview Community Center. Talked about changing lease to use building for fire and EMS down the road. It is a known fact the building has to undergo major repairs. The second floor needs an additional exit and there are numerous code violations. Repairs could cost \$300,000 plus. The area will need two stations. Fairview currently has \$300,000 to do renovations. A potential land site to relocate the station was valued at \$90,000 an acre. If renovate current station, would have EMS bay for Apex. When will annex happen? Cary only annexes at request. Can not build one central location for area; will need two stations. If you renovate the station, the citizens in district would have an EMS in the district. May get a third station, *if* Cary builds. If Cary does what they say, down the road, Cary would save money with Fairview manning the third station. If you had to build, where would you build - primarily the area in concern. There is not a perfect solution for Fairview. Do think it is important that an EMS unit be located at the station, this may be a trend. Do not believe there is a perfect solution and it may be 5 to 10 years before Cary annexes.

Mr. Perry commented that he had met with Chief Donald Pierce again and there is no clear cut solution. Wanted to make additional comments. There are two acres behind property. This is extremely important since the property is in the Swift Creek watershed. Hate to see expansion in property that would not allow for future expansion.

Ownership of property is a concern. This area borders municipality that is annexing. It would behoove Commissioners on how mergers take place. How well does this meet insurance needs? Cary is interested in building a station and have volunteers man and provide fire protection.

Ms. Schwarm questioned would this mean keep the current station?

Mr. Perry stated would renovate current station.

Chief Brinson motioned to renovate with an ambulance at the site.

Seconded by Chief Mills.

Ray stated that we have not had opportunity to plan with other municipalities. EMS is currently undergoing a study. Do not know tax rate yet. Approved resolution for 10 cents tonight. May be putting the cart before the horse. Would like to wait to get tax rate set.

Chief Donald Pierce stated that he had a report from the Building Chairman. The current expense is \$80,000.

Ms. Brannon stated we are working and planning with other

municipalities. Like Ned's comment about land, there will be no exception in the Swift Creek watershed. It will not happen. Be very careful about possibilities. Might be better to get better site.

Chief Brinson then asked if the County approved the site plan.

Chief Pierce responded yes.

Chief Vaughan questioned will there be a rescue squad. Concerns about Cary annexation and how close a rural fire department to a town department. What is the time table on the new station. If Cary is already planning to hire for the new station, do not see a merger happening. County should contract with municipality when merger pushes out rural station.

Chief Mitchell questioned where is money going to come from?

Ray advised that he prepared staff recommendations with overage moneys used for Capital Projects.

Chief Mitchell concerned if there is a cut in the budget. Need to approve the budget first.

Chief George Mills commented we are here now and we need to make a decision. Someone will find fault regardless of when decision is made. We will never know all the unknowns. Ready to make a decision.

Chief Pierce advised he has proposal from Apex. We will plan for that. Investigated the two acres, the county staff has approved site plan as is. Wake SO already has access to the station. Have been working a minimum of two years in budget. This is a critical time, if we pull out now, will have to pay \$80,000 expense. Renovation will cost \$300,000 but cut space. Have done years worth of planning. Funds are there, plan in place. We have already postponed for 30 days.

Chief Brinson questioned what are the provisions for apparatus during renovation.

Chief Pierce responded some would go to station two and other pieces can be stored in area.

Chief Brinson commented that timing is critical.

Recognized Thomas Allen Pierce, a member of the Fairview Board of Directors, and he assured Wake County Fire Commission that there would be no problem to include EMS into the Fairview Community Center contract. Will be a long time before annexing.

Chief Chiotakis then commented that when municipalities annex

	<p>properties, there will be provisions. If Town of Cary builds in Fairview, then Cary would respond in rural area. Don't end up with Western Wake situation. Ridiculous to have volunteer station in a municipal area. Can not say you get what you pay for. Glad Ned is talking to municipality about fire protection in the rural areas. Agrees with concept.</p> <p>Ms. Schwarm then questioned is the building being renovated.</p> <p>Chief Pierce stated that part of the old building would be torn off and would make an addition. Would cost between \$900,000.00 and one million to renovate and expand.</p> <p>Mr. Anders then advised a motion had been made and to vote. Motion is to approve renovation of Fairview Station with an EMS bay Five in favor and four opposed. Motion approved.</p>
<p>Y2K Update:</p>	<p>Ray stated that a Y2K Southern Bell update had been mailed to all Wake County Fire Commission members.</p>
<p>FY99-2000 Budget Discussion:</p>	<p>Ray advised the Wake County Fire Commission that a decision needs to be made on how to do payments to departments. Recommended giving 12 equal payments to fire departments based on distribution. It appears that 15% is about two months worth of expenses if departments should not get their money.</p> <p>Chief Vaughan motioned for 12 equal payments. Motion passed.</p> <p>Mr. Sannipoli then questioned what is the process by which we can tell individual departments what their budgets are.</p> <p>Mr. Anders stated could go back to Budget Review Committee recommendation, could go back to Ray's recommendation or could re-do the whole thing.</p> <p>Ray advised that it is the board's discretion to work out the distribution.</p> <p>Chief Mills suggested that the County Commissioners know approximately how much money to distribute to departments first. Then in the subsequent meeting, work on detailed break-down. There are flaws with both recommendations.</p> <p>Ms. Brannon then commented that 8.5 cents is a very preferred decision.</p> <p><i>(Mr. Anders left at 9:50 PM; turned meeting proceedings over to Ray.)</i></p> <p>Ms. Brannon stated wanted to look at ways to bring fund balance</p>

	<p>down. There are good opportunities to bridge gap of funds between 8.5 cents and 9.5 cents. Will work hard to support what has been suggested here. Committed to EMS and fire to have and get what they want, but it may take a year or two to do.</p> <p>Ray then stated that the Wake County Fire Commission makes recommendations to the Board. The Wake County Fire Commission is not a policy making board.</p>
Meeting Site for the Tuesday, May 18, 1999, Wake County Fire Commission Meeting:	Wake County Commons Building Carya Drive off Poole Road
Adjournment:	Meeting adjourned at 9:53 PM.

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