

RE: RECESSED MEETING, MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2010, 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman.

PRESENT: Timothy W. Cotman, Sr., Chairman  
Gilbert A. Smith  
Sherri M. Bowman

RE: PUBLIC HEARING - PROPOSED FY2010 REAL ESTATE TAX INCREASE

The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to receive citizen comments on the proposed real property tax increase.

The County Administrator, John F. Miniclier, Jr., gave a PowerPoint presentation to provide all those in attendance a clear illustration of the current real property tax, the proposed tax increase, and the effects of the reassessment on the county tax rate and revenue.

The following individuals spoke at the public hearing:

1. Virginia Crabtree – She is a volunteer of Feed More, which is the umbrella organization of Meals On Wheels and the central Virginia Food Bank. Mrs. Crabtree informed the Board of Supervisors that these two hunger relief organizations joined forces to fight hunger in our community more effectively and efficiently. She explained that together these organizations are making a significant difference at a time when unemployment rates are at an all time high and our seniors are facing the difficult choices to purchase food, their medication or pay their utility bills. Every day we hear stories of children and working families and seniors who are struggling to make ends meet, she said. Mrs. Crabtree proclaimed that the combined organizations are committed to support the residents in need through this trying time. She thanked the Board for their support of their efforts in Charles City County.

She reported that last year Feed More provided over 10,500 meals to 55 unduplicated clients in Charles City County. She asserted that in this county 66% of meal recipients, live below the 2009 poverty level, most of which are seniors. After rent or mortgage, utilities, medication, and out of pocket expenses nearly 100% of these people need financial support in order to pay for their meals.

She emphasized that the fact of the matter is that Feed More volunteers are seeing people that once contributed to their organization are now in need of their services. Reiterating, these are difficult times. As a volunteer, she thanked the Board for recognizing that people are struggling to have their basic needs met, and for their continued partnership of Meals on Wheels and the Central Virginia Food Bank. Together, she declared, we are bringing a necessary service to the residents of Charles City.

2. Vince Brackett – He was adamant that it is not the time for an increase in the county tax rate due to current economic conditions. Per Mr. Brackett's notes, as of January 2010, there are 11.4% of Charles City residents unemployed. If you count those that have taken part-time work because full-time work was not available, the number is much higher.

Mr. Brackett explained he supports a \$0.01 real property tax rate increase designated to the Charles City EMT paid services to avoid loss of basic EMT daytime coverage but does not support the \$0.03 cent increase for contingency purposes. He recommended the Board not approve it.

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(CONTD)

He spoke of surrounding counties in most cases have kept their real property tax rate flat, and some such as New Kent actually decreased their rate by 1 cent, while Goochland, the 15<sup>th</sup> richest county in the United States, kept their tax rate even.

He concluded stating the Board of Supervisors needs to minimize any increase in the tax rate for FY2011.

3. John Reed – Mr. Reed concurred with Vince Brackett in that he does support a \$0.01 cent increase of the real property tax rate for EMS services as we need good EMS services. He continued saying that the schools, our sheriff's department, our public works department, and he and his wife need more funds but all have limited budgets and have to live within their budget. Mr. Reed cautioned that the county does not need the other three cents this year in particular, that we may not be able to deal with it next year. He asked the Board to reconsider the \$0.03 cent raise in taxes but held fast that the \$0.01 raise for EMS services was necessary to get it up and running.
4. David Adams – Mr. Adams expressed confusion over the proposed budget and increase of real property tax. He stated that he can understand needing money for the fire department and EMT services and can go along with that. He feels money from other projects should go to pay for that instead of raising the taxes. He recommended that the new library project be put on hold and those funds be used for these services, suggesting that the high school library could become a public library.  
He concluded asking that if the county is going to spend less money why the Board is proposing an overall increase.
5. Royce Paige – Mr. Paige offered kudos to the Board for the proposed \$0.04 cent real property tax increase stating he feels it may not be enough.  
He volunteered that the Charles City public high school library is not a publicly owned facility but owned by the Charles City County School system.
6. Charles R. Tench – He said he is against the four cents increase in real property taxes and cannot justify any increase. He informed the Board that he farms for a living and is on a budget just like the county. He expressed that he does not understand how the county can increase the taxes but will have less revenue. He advised the Board that his assessment went up 50% and that equals a 25% increase in his taxes if the rate goes up to \$0.70. He declared that that is more than enough.
7. Steve Fuhrman – Mr. Fuhrman declared he wanted to “join the choir” in support of the \$0.01 increase for EMS services as we have gone so long without adequate services in this county that it needs to be addressed as strongly as possible. He said, however, it would be unwise to raise taxes right now, and does not support the additional \$0.03 cent increase in taxes simply for contingency. He impressed upon the Board of Supervisors they need to develop a plan for the use of the contingency fund.

RE: PUBLIC HEARING - PROPOSED FY2010-2011 BUDGET

The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to receive citizen comments on the proposed FY2010-2011 Budget.

The County Administrator, John F. Miniclier, Jr., provided a presentation for all those in attendance a rundown of the county's expenses together with the current and proposed budgets.

The following individuals spoke at the public hearing:

1. Vince Brackett – Mr. Brackett addressed the Board of Supervisors stating that upon looking at the outside funding requests, he noted that the Board is proposing to give \$50K to the Providence Forge Volunteer Rescue Service (PFVRS). He explained that he understands that the county has agreements and cross coverage but questioned that with the establishment of the county's own paid EMT service, would it be possible to fund PFVRS at this level. He shared that from his research of New Kent County, which gave \$72K to PFVRS in FY2010, is only giving \$25K for FY2011. He argues that Charles City should not give more to PFVRS than New Kent. Mr. Brackett suggested the \$50K be cut to \$20K and the additional funds be given to Charles City EMT service to help establish and run it 24/7. Moreover, he proposed, a portion of this savings (\$12-15K), could be earmarked for reestablishing the Middle School Athletic Programs that the School Board has cancelled. Mr. Brackett questioned two items of proposed spending under the Enterprise Fund budget line and asked for clarification. He encouraged both the Charles City Board of Supervisors and the School Board to move forward and investigate to see if Charles City can obtain substantial savings by combing the county and school employee health insurance program and continue to look at other areas where economy of scales can be employed to reduce cost in the county.

**Mr. John F. Miniclier, Jr.**, County Administrator, explained the fund Enterprise Fund line items are “flow through funds” - DHCD funds that are doing our special project in Gilfield.

**Mr. Jay Brown**, Assistant County Administrator, interjected and added that on the FY2010 budget the government utility did include county's portion that they were paying to the schools for utilities we moved those funds in a new category within the utility budget called Neighborhood Community Systems. The money is still there it has just moved into a different category.

2. Peter Churins – Mr. Chuirns addressed the issue of monies for Charles City schools. He suggested that the Board of Supervisors direct the School Board to seek the considerable amount of federal funds available to school districts deemed as underperforming, According to Roberta Schlitzer, with the Virginia Department of Education, Charles City County schools have been on the list for a while, he said. He expressed displeasure with the current School Superintendent's record of raising the quality of education in Charles City Schools and offered that the School Board should welcome an independent evaluation by professionals of how our schools are being run as it feels it is doing such a great job. Mr. Chuirns stated that the Board of Supervisors holds the key because they hold the money, so the Board should require this type of evaluation and the School Board must follow the model determined as appropriate if they want funds from the County.
3. Steve Fuhrman – Mr. Fuhrman stated that Charles City has one of the highest unemployment rates around at 11%. We really need to address that issue and the social services we have. The items in your budget that I would like to encourage you to increase are Bay Transit, The Central Virginia Food Bank, and Meals on Wheels, as we address as a county the real and pressing social problem created by unemployment.

Secondly, he continued, it appears that the budget shows decreasing the funds for the library while we are trying to obtain funding for a new one. Mr. Fuhrman asserted that it is a mistake, stating that we should at least maintain the level of funding we have in the past. He proposed decreases be made by consolidating services with the school to allow maintaining level funds for the library.

4. Charles R. Tench – Mr. Tench cautioned that increasing the budget was a mistake and proposed the Board decrease the budget instead.
5. Barbara Winters – The Director of Heritage Public Library addressed the Board of Supervisors requesting they reconsider the funding cut of ten percent (10%) below the current funding allocation in the Board's proposed budget.

Mrs. Winters expressed concern that the county is already starting from behind in terms of library services. She advised state funds received can only be used in specific areas; such as the purchase of books and other library materials, for purchasing equipment directly related to library services, for shelving and related materials and may not be used for regular operating expenses. She explained the Heritage Public Library (HPL) has only one full-time employee and she is it, with the director position mandated by the state. All the other positions are part-time with no health insurance or other benefits.

She shared her research on the number of books per capita comparing Heritage Public Library to two smaller counties illustrating HPL falls way below the state norms.

Mrs. Winters explained that to counter the area's high unemployment rate, the library offers a much needed job search service but does not have the funds to offer it more than one day a week for three hours.

She concluded that she knows the Board of Supervisors agrees that adequate library services are a responsibility of local government. She further stated, quality library services must be provided to all citizens whether they can afford it or not.

Her fear is without restoration of adequate funds from Charles City, the library will not have the resources to continue to provide those services.

To point out that the library is trying to raise money, she announced they are having a fundraiser on Saturday morning, inviting all in attendance to come and contribute.

She provided the Board a handout of the library's budget for July-Dec 2009 showing the expenses were over \$8,000 in excess of the library income.

6. Diane Lane – A teacher at the Charles City Middle School, she pointed out to the Board that the middle school has gotten accreditation over the past two years. She asked the Board to consider the many teachers that drive from outside the county to teach the Charles City children and how cutting pay will not ensure high quality teachers working with the children, the future leaders of this county.
7. Almeda Tyler – She stressed she does not approve of any decrease in the budget. She reasoned that we need good teachers and good people everywhere to ensure a good future. She impressed upon the Board that to keep good people here, the county has to have something to offer. Mrs. Tyler asserted Charles City County needs to have some large industrial business.  
She finished with saying, everyone is working hard and trying to provide for their children, their families – going up on our rates is hard on us.
8. Brenda Green - Member of the Providence Forge Volunteer Rescue Squad and resident of Charles City County for 28 years. Ms. Green

explained that PFVRS is 100% volunteer and they come from the surrounding areas, not just New Kent and Charles City. She emphasized that any funds or donations received go to pay for equipment and utilities. She reiterated that the volunteers receive no pay, are asking for none, wanting only to provide the needed service.

9. Michael Buchanan, Captain of Providence Forge Volunteer Rescue Squad – Captain Buchanan acknowledged that it's a concern everywhere that budgets are being cut and that PFVRS is not alone in that their budget is extremely important. He explained that the operating costs of PFVRS last year were \$144,000 – some going to training. Last year PFVRS ran 244 calls and this year have already answered 44 calls. For every three calls that come in, two are in Charles City he explained. He made clear the requested funds will pay for utilities and diesel for the ambulances and are not even a third of the PFVRS overall operating costs.

**Timothy W. Cotman, Sr.** expressed the Board's appreciation for the services that PFVRS has provided for Charles City County for many years and continues to provide.

10. Roy Campbell – The Chair for the School Board said the schools do need funding, that the schools are not a source of revenue. He confirmed that all Charles City County schools are accredited and that doing so took a lot of work and dedication. Mr. Campbell reasoned that the schools should be given the money they need in order to continue to operate in a positive manner. He quoted (Psalms 29:18) *People without vision will perish* and added our county should have the vision of a good school system.

He shared that he has been noticing Fort Lee is busting at the seams and begging for a place to expand. He related those at Fort Lee are looking at all the counties around with expansion in mind and one of the things they are looking at are the school systems. The school system is going to be one of the contributors to bring businesses into this county.

He pointed out the community is getting older and stated that for our economy we need an industry to come to Charles City. What is going to give us the biggest bang for our buck? Surely education is that bang, Mr. Campbell said.

He declared adamantly we need to give our children more than just an education, saying they deserve the highest education they can get. He advised this should not be based on dollars but on our commitment to do what is right.

11. Dr. Janet Crawley – The Superintendent of Schools expressed her concern that it has been a hard year for everyone. She expressed that we need to look out for the students and to do that we need to look out for the staff. She pointed out the Virginia Department of Education has recognized Charles City schools as having been closing the achievement gap and the three schools are now accredited by the state. In addition, she continued, two schools have received the additional rating of AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

She implored the Board to give what help they can to the schools and work with them both financially and morally. If the schools do well, the county will do will, she surmised.

Dr. Crawley agreed with Mrs. Tyler, saying it is time we look at what businesses we can attract to Charles City. She suggested ruralness isn't lost just because you bring in businesses, saying further that this county can be as livable and lovable as you like but the county cannot continue to live on taxes.

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12. Roy Carter – Mr. Carter said he supports a \$0.01 tax increase for EMS but does not support any more increase. He asked what tax relief may be considered instead of the contingency fund. He said unemployment is high and will likely grow, affecting Charles City residents and the county as a whole even further. He advised the Board to consider this.

There being no further comments, the public hearings were closed.

**Gilbert A. Smith** thanked participants of the hearing and everyone that came out for the hearing and for their input. He offered that he wished he could give everyone what they want, but that's not the way of life. He asked everyone to keep in mind that when you want services they don't come cheap or free.

**Timothy W. Cotman, Sr.** assured those in attendance the Board of Supervisors listened to their comments and would strongly consider them prior to adoption of the budget.

RE: COMMUNITY AND CITIZEN RECOGNITION

Timothy W. Cotman, Sr. stated that many of our citizens who are doing some things that are very important and getting accolades for their accomplishments. The Board is a body that should participate in that. He said there should be criteria established for groups or individuals that perform exceptionally in and out of the county but are Charles City County people. He directed the staff to include this topic on the upcoming Board of Supervisors' regular meeting agenda so a description may be discussed and they can vote on this issue.

RE: EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Gilbert A. Smith to go into executive session to discuss the sale of county real estate under Section §2.2-3711.3 of the Code of Virginia, as amended. The motion carried as follows:

Gilbert A. Smith	Aye
Sherri M. Bowman	Aye
Timothy W. Cotman, Sr.	Aye

Motion was made by Sherri M. Bowman to return to regular session. The motion carried as follows:

Gilbert A. Smith	Aye
Sherri M. Bowman	Aye
Timothy W. Cotman, Sr.	Aye

Motion was made by Sherri M. Bowman that the Board of Supervisors discussed only public business matters lawfully exempted from statutory open meeting requirements and public business identified in the motion to convene the executive session. The motion carried as follows:

Sherri M. Bowman	Aye
Gilbert A. Smith	Aye
Timothy W. Cotman, Sr.	Aye

There being no further business before the Board, it hereby adjourns to meet again on Tuesday, **April 27, 2010** at 7:30 p.m. for the Board of Supervisors' regular meeting.