

THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSION
OF
UNICOI COUNTY, TENNESSEE
August 13, 2015

BE IT REMEMBERED that the Unicoi County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session at the Unicoi County Court House on Thursday, August 13, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. Present and Presiding, the Honorable Greg Lynch, County Mayor, the Honorable Mitzi Bowen, County Clerk, Doug Shults, County Attorney, and the following Commissioners:

ROLL CALL: Esq. Bridget Peters “Yes”, Esq. Marie Rice, “Yes”, Esq. Kenneth Garland, “Yes”, Esq. Glen White, Yes, Esq. John Mosley, Yes, Esq. Walter Garland, “Yes”, Esq. Loren Thomas, “Yes”, Esq. Gene Wilson, “Yes”, Esq. Jason Harris, “Yes”.

9- Present

0- Absent

Esq. Rossanna Aldrich opened the meeting with Prayer and the Pledge to the Flag was led by Esq. John Mosley.

Agenda Item #4
Approve the Minutes of Prior Session

Motion made by Esq. Jason Harris, said motion seconded by Esq. Glen White to approve the Minutes from the Unicoi County Commission Meeting, July 27, 2015.

Motion unanimously approved
Copy in file

Agenda Item #5
Recognize Visitors and Citizens

Frank Rogers, a Unicoi County Citizen and employee with Unicoi County Sheriff Department for 10 years addressed the commission by asking them to fail this budget. I believe there are other adjustments that can be made in revenues that will produce the monies that are needed to fund the county family insurance, but not just in the sheriff’s department, clerks, secretaries, janitors, and everybody else that is the spokes, to hold this thing together. I feel strongly about this, because I have a family. I am familiar with the others here that have families that will be affected. These employees cannot afford this and you are taking away from their families that they are responsible for. In the June 22 2015, County Commission meeting, by a majority vote you approved for family insurance then in July you came back and undone what you said you would do. That is dishonest. It’s not to late to fail this budget. I am asking you to fund the insurance for these families.

Sheriff Mike Hensley addressed his concerns with his department by losing deputies because of losing their family medical insurance. I would be losing over 100 years of experience with these deputies. These deputies have time that has accumulated that the county will be responsible for paying. I do not have enough in my budget for overtime or to send new deputies to the Police Academy. We need to come together as a whole and not have 3 governments.

Gilbert H Morregia, I was reading the Erwin Record and it said a motion was made to dismiss law suit against Sheriff Adkins. I believe that if we had people that were police officers and not use brutality, we would not have half million dollars going to someone

and could use that to pay for their insurance. Esq. Kenneth Garland stated that he hated to interrupt him, but all we are here for is the budget.

Jonathon Farnor, a citizen from Unicoi County and lives in Clear Branch addressed the commission. I understand that you as a commission are looking at the budget and trying to do your job. I have a wife and three kids and two which go to school here in Unicoi County. Their safety could be at jeopardy here. We have a lot of people that this is going to impact in our Sheriff Department. I do not see how in good conscious you can defund this and put undue stress on these families, that they are going to have to leave. I work for the city of Johnson City and you will have problems finding people that will come here for that pay. I make fifty thousand a year and if you did this to me I would be looking for another job. Jonathan asked the commission to keep the family coverage and what price are you going to put on our family safety.

Esq. Kenneth Garland stated that we are paying individuals. All they are paying is thirteen dollars but family insurance is a different thing. I do not know any company that pays family insurance. We have been paying almost thirteen thousand dollars a year on each family and I don't think the taxpayers would like for us to be taken their money and pay this.

Jonathon Farnor stated he would rather pay another twenty five dollars on his land taxes.

Jim Bowman, who lives in Spivey, stated that this insurance here is a bit troubling. I do understand the budget process and some people here have used dishonest and I don't think none of you here are dishonest. In the course of your negotiations you said you had this much money and this much expenditures and that is what you have to work with. It was hardening to me to hear the Sheriff says, we can work together on this. There needs to be some of that, so I've got a challenge. I think half the people that want and need this family coverage have worked in the sheriff department. Give these folks their coverage this year and next year it may not be around. Here is the challenge, you stand up here and tell this commission that you will find the money in your budget for your people with family insurance and challenge the other office holders.

Jim Lingel, who stated he has spent most of his years in public service. I have watched our County Commissioners and know they have a tough job. Some county employees are receiving additional benefits and some are not. At the last County Commission I asked the Sheriff to look at two things, one in medical and the other in security and have not heard anything as of today. Give the county employees within their benefit package and give the best within budget restraints.

John Day, as a taxpayer I would like to make a suggestion, 4 years ago I did a lot of research and one of the things I was asked to do, look at the medical insurance for the employees. I contacted a lady at the state to find out if they have a local insurance for government employees and they do. It's a huge employee pool that is less expensive, than going with a small private company. When I looked at this 4 years ago, it was at a 17% increase facing use here under the current provided. I asked the lady from the state what the last five year policy increase was. She said at 1/2 percent every year. I did a schedule for ten years and what it would save the county on premiums would be at \$350,000.00. I contacted the lady by email about 2 weeks ago and asked her again what are the premiums increasing and at what rate. She stated for the last five years a 1/2 percent except for the last two years at zero increase. I would suggest paying their insurance. I would be glad to pay it as a tax payer. We need to take care of the employees. I would ask Ms. Rice to form a committee now, to get on this now to get on it for next year. Contact Shannon Lynn Brandonear at the State and get started on pricing insurance for next year.

Jacob Marshall an employee with the Unicoi County Sheriff Department addressed the commission on the family insurance. I recently found out my wife is 8 weeks pregnant and it was right before this last budget was passed. I want to tell everybody here, I love working here, I love the citizens here in Unicoi County and I love protecting you all. I pray that you all will fail this budget and go back and look at this insurance. That will give me the ability to provide for my family and work in the county I love.

Bobby Hensley, I'm a citizen in Unicoi County that lives in the South end of the county. I think it's an absolute travesty that we are willing to give up trained officers for \$115,000.00. There are more ways than one that can be cut from this including the waterline.

Esq. Glen White stated that the money for the waterline is coming out of the Mountain States money.

Lynn Duquenne, from Erwin stated that Mr. Garland made the statement earlier that he didn't know any department that pays family insurance. WJHL reported just a couple of days ago that Washington, Sullivan and Johnson City and Elizabethton all pay for their employees insurance. Our county employees have not received raises and not asked for one. They just want what they already have. If we lose that many officers, what do you think will happen?

Nick Hughes, a drug officer stated, what all we give to this county (named the officers) there's time we give and don't get paid for it. Please think about what you are doing and we need to work something out.

Ted Dwomick, a citizen of Unicoi County and I pay taxes. I would like you to know I'm a volunteer for the sheriff department. I can attest to the time that is given freely to the county. The gentle and woman that work with in our country depend upon the monies that are contributed to their insurance as part of their pay package. We have been to long as a training ground for other agencies. I ask you to vote this budget down and reconsider.

Jerry Hughes stated I'm a taxpayer here in Unicoi County. First man I worked for here in Unicoi County was Junior Garland in 1974. We did have much back then and we are still climbing the ladder. I'm asking any of you, have you looked at the state and their budget or any of their packages?

County Mayor Greg Lynch stated no just at the rates when they were quoted.

Jerry Hughes advised the commission to look a little further before you cut people out. I love Unicoi County it's a place to come back to. We need to work this out. Once we lose these people we are not going to get them back. You cannot bring people just off the streets in here. These people have paid their dues; take care of them and their families.

Agenda Item #6

Approve Unicoi County Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2015-2016

Motion made by Esq. John Mosley, said motion seconded by Esq. Loren Thomas to rescind the vote on last month budget.

ROLL CALL: Esq. Bridget Peters, "No", Esq. Marie Rice, "No", Esq. Kenneth Garland, "No", Esq. Glen White, "Yes", Esq. John Mosley, "Yes", Esq. Walter Garland, "No", Esq. Loren Thomas, "Yes", Esq. Gene Wilson, "No", Esq. Jason Harris, "No".

3-Yes

6-No

Motion Fails

Motion made by Esq. Kenneth Garland, said motion seconded by Esq. Jason Harris to approve Unicoi County Operating budget fiscal year 2015-2016.

ROLL CALL: Esq. Bridget Peters, "Yes", Esq. Marie Rice, "Yes", Esq. Kenneth Garland, "Yes", Esq. Glen White, "Yes", Esq. John Mosley, "No", Esq. Walter Garland, "Yes", Esq. Loren Thomas, "No", Esq. Gene Wilson, "Yes", Esq. Jason Harris, "Yes".

7-Yes
2-No
Motion approved (copy in file)

Agenda Item #7
Set County Property Tax Rate for Fiscal Year 2015-2016

Motion made by Esq. Kenneth Garland, said motion seconded by Esq. Gene Wilson to set the County property tax rate for the fiscal year 2015-2016 at \$2.6838.

ROLL CALL: Esq. Bridget Peters, "Yes", Esq. Marie Rice, "Yes", Esq. Kenneth Garland, "Yes", Esq. Glen White, "Yes", Esq. John Mosley, "No", Esq. Walter Garland, "Yes", Esq. Loren Thomas, "No", Esq. Gene Wilson, "Yes", Esq. Jason Harris, "Yes".

7-Yes
2-No
Motion Approved (Copy in File)

Agenda Item #8
Motion for Adjournment

Motion made by Esq. Kenneth Garland, said motion seconded by Esq. Jason Harris to adjourn the meeting of August 13, 2015.

GREG LYNCH, COUNTY MAYOR

MITZI BOWEN, COUNTY CLERK

MARIE RICE, CHAIRMAN