

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MONTGOMERY
COUNTY, VIRGINIA, HELD ON THE 24TH DAY OF MARCH, 1998 AT 7:00 P.M. AT
BLACKSBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL, BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA:

Present:	Joseph V. Gorman, Jr.	-Chairman
	Larry N. Rush	-Vice Chairman
	Annette S. Perkins	-Supervisors
	Mary W. Biggs	
	Ira D Long	
	James D. Politis	
	Jeffrey D. Johnson	-County Administrator
	L. Carol Edmonds	-Assistant County Administrator
	Marty M. McMahan	-County Attorney
	Judy W. Kiser	-Administrative Assistant
Absent:	Joe C. Stewart	-Supervisor

CALL TO ORDER-PUBLIC HEARING FY 1998-99 BUDGET

Chairman Gorman called the public hearing to order for the purpose of receiving citizen comments with regard to the Advertised FY 1998-99 Budget in the amount of \$81,300,833. The Chairman provided a brief overview of the procedure by which the hearing would be conducted, stating that when each speaker is called, they state their name and address, and try to keep their comments to three minutes or less; and that the County Attorney would be keeping time and would raise his hand when there were 10 seconds left. The Chairman explained that a second public hearing would be conducted later in the evening with the regard to the proposed eight cents real estate tax increase.

Melvyn Huber spoke in support of the requested \$2500 supplemental salary increase for the deputies in the Sheriff Department. Concerns included losing county deputies to other localities and the need to keep experienced deputies in Montgomery County. He believes the first duty of government is law enforcement and urged the Board to supplement the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department salaries.

Bob Stuart spoke in favor of the increased budget, particularly the school budget, and the effort to make the salaries within Montgomery County more competitive.

Michael J. Cox spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the deputies in the Sheriff's Department. It is the state's responsibility to provide funding for the Sheriff's Department. If the funding is not adequate then it should be the county's responsibility to provide supplemental funding. Montgomery County starting salaries are far below surroundings localities and other agencies, such as the Town of Christiansburg, Town of Blacksburg, and Virginia Tech. The Montgomery County Sheriff's Department has dedicated employees who put their life on the line every day for the citizens. Mr. Cox urged the Board to consider the supplemental salary increase.

Sherri Box President of the Christiansburg Middle School PTA, spoke in support of the County Administrator's proposed budget and the tax increase; and supports the school budget. She commended and thanked the Board for past support. She expressed concern about the high teacher/student ratio, and the lack of supplies in the classrooms. She encouraged the board to support the financial needs for the schools and to approve the proposed eight cent tax increase.

Dick Gilbert spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff's Department. The Montgomery County Sheriff 's Department is his only source of protection. He believes there is a shortage of deputies for road patrol and a need for experienced deputies. He urged the Board to

provide funding for the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff's Department.

Jack Hawkins spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff's Department. He believes the security of the deputies is spread thin in Montgomery County. Other agencies around Montgomery County do not have the responsibilities that the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department have and their salaries are higher, therefore the Board needs to seriously consider the supplemental salary increase.

Lindsey West Chairman for the Lyric Theatre, spoke on behalf of funding for the Lyric Theatre, commending the Board for including funding in the proposed FY 98-99 budget for repairs and renovation for the Lyric Theatre. She spoke in support of the proposed budget and the tax increase. Montgomery County is growing and growth comes with a price. The Board has been always conservative in its tax rate and the proposed eight cent increase is still conservative. She encouraged the Board to support the recommendation on the budget and on the tax rate.

Melissa Hails PTA Treasurer at Margaret Beeks Elementary, spoke in support of the proposed budget and the school budget, specifically that teacher salaries need to be brought to competitiveness with other localities in order to keep experienced teachers in Montgomery County. She also expressed concerns about teacher/student ratio and about improvements within the schools.

Kelly Pleasant PTA President of Prices Fork Elementary School, supports the proposed school board budget. She spoke of the overcrowding of schools due to the population growth and the additional trailers for classrooms due to lack of classrooms in the schools. She commended the School Board on their efforts of trying to keep the teacher/student ratio low. Tax increases are not popular but she supports a tax increase of eight cents if it would maintain the quality of education.

Ernestine Frith spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff's Department. The County needs to provide adequate law enforcement patrol in order to create a safe environment for Montgomery County citizens.

Joe Painter a local attorney in Montgomery County, spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff's Department. All employees of the Sheriff's Department are under paid, not only patrol deputies, but the jailers, bailiffs, and dispatchers as well. He supports the tax increase to help supplement the salaries of the Sheriff's Department.

Rita Sullivan county employee spoke on behalf of the employees in favor of the fourth phase of the Salary Improvement Plan. She commended and thanked the Board in their efforts and support of the first three phases of the five year Salary Improvement Plan. Even with the past implementation of the plan, the County is still behind compared to other localities, starting salaries 17% below and 33% below the schools salaries. She encouraged the Board to continue their support of the fourth phase of this plan in the Fiscal Year 1998-99 Budget.

Julia Landes representing members of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), spoke in support of the expansion of the RSVP, and would like for the Board to include funding for the expansion back in the budget. The RSVP saves county taxpayers each year in labor by working in various departments and agencies in Montgomery County.

Ester Jones member of RSVP, read several letters for the record commending the RSVP for their support:

“On behalf of the Montgomery County Christmas Store I would like thank you for the wonderful job you did in assisting the annual Christmas Store fund drive in laboring, sorting, stuffing of envelopes, representing an enormous job.” “your efforts are most appreciated. Sincerely ,Glyn Trydol, Montgomery County Christmas Store”

“ On behalf of all of us in the Commissioner of Revenue's office I want to express my appreciation for the help the Senior Volunteers gives to this office in the mailing of our tangible property forms. The 483 hours contributed, stuffing 38,000 forms of mailing certainly lifted the burden off our staff. Montgomery County is fortunate to have a program such as this who is willing to do the work, come

to the assistance of the office like ours. We thank you for your volunteer help and look forward to working with you next year. Sincerely Nancy Miller, Commissar of Revenue”

The RSVP also received a plaque from United Way for their volunteer time.

Dean Dowdy spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff’s Department. He found it a reasonable request on behalf of the Sheriff.

Ellen Ryan spoke on behalf of Thomas and Mary Beth Dunkenberger and their support of the proposed budget. She commended the Board on their actions during the past several years in providing funds for the construction of new schools. She asked that the Board move forward and become an economic leader. She urged the Board to accept the proposed budget.

Steven Lawrence a concerned citizen, student, and member of the next generation. He spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff’s Department. He was taught that the citizens come first and urged the Board to show the citizens in Montgomery County that they do come first.

David VanDerVleet spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff’s Department. He urged the Board to pass the minimal request for the supplemental salary increase. He expressed his concerns for the law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line everyday for the protection of the citizens of Montgomery County.

Connie Turner teacher at Christiansburg Middle School, spoke in support of the proposed budget and the proposed school budget. She expressed her concerns about the teacher/student ratio and urged the Board of Supervisors to approve the proposed budget.

James J. Owen member of the Smithfield Plantation, spoke in behalf of the Smithfield Plantation. He asked the board to contribute funding to the Smithfield Plantation for much needed repairs. He stated that any financial assistance would improve the ability to render service and improve the moral of the volunteers at Smithfield Plantation.

Leo Smith President of the Montgomery County, Radford, Floyd NAACP, and Co-President of the Human Relations Council, spoke in behalf of the Human Relation Council. He would like for the Board of Supervisors to reconsider restoring the funding for the Human Relations Council. He stated this funding would help educate and spread understanding of racial and sexual issues that threaten the division of the community.

Barbara Redican spoke in support of the supplemental salary increase for the Sheriff’s Department. She stated that the starting salaries for Montgomery County Deputies are far below surrounding localities and encourages and challenges the Board to fund this supplement.

Larry Linkous spoke on behalf of the silent citizens of Montgomery County. He reminded the Board of Supervisors that there are a number of citizens that are still making less than \$20,000 a year and/or on a fixed income. He asked the Board to keep them in mind when considering a tax increase and to use sound and good judgement in the decision making.

Andy Morikawa President of the Human Relations Council, spoke in support of the increase property tax assessment. He asked for the Board to consider reinstating funding for the Human Relations Council. He commended the leadership of the Board.

Debbie Minnick President of Christiansburg High School PTA, spoke in support of the proposed school budget. She stated that the burden of responsibility lies with the local government to find ways to meet the need of the schools and that there were many needs within the school system. She said the majority of the proposed budget is needed to meet the debt service from the construction of new schools. She urged the Board to adopt the budget as proposed.

Karen Trear President of the Montgomery Education Association and a teacher at Auburn High School, spoke in support of the county proposed budget and is in favor of raising taxes. She spoke of the increases in state mandates but a reduction of state funding within the schools, also of the

increased debt service due to the building of new schools. She asked the Board to consider voting yes to the tax increase for the future of the students and the citizens of Montgomery County.

Bruce Harper spoke in support of the school budget. He mentioned that the proposed budget is reported as a catch up budget and that it is time to adopt a realistic budget to support the schools and support the public safety. He supports the tax increase to fund the proposed budget.

Lynda Majors spoke in support of the county budget, school budget, and the eight cent tax increase. She also expressed her concerns about the school bus situation in Montgomery County. She said funding is needed in the budget to maintain proper mechanical working buses for the safety of the students.

Elizabeth Bowles teacher at Christiansburg Middle School, spoke in support of the school budget and the proposed tax increase. She stated that tax increases are not popular, however this is the only option available to maintain and hopefully improve the schools.

The following letters are included into the record :

“Tuesday, March 17, 1998

Joseph V. Gorman Jr., Chairman
Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

Dear Joe:

Please read the following statement into the record at the budget hearing next week. A long standing conflict prevents me from attending the hearing in person.

Members of the Board of Supervisors, I am Jim Johnson, Chair of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library Board and member of the CIP Committee. I strongly recommend your passage of the advertised tax increase. Being a member of the CIP Committee has made me painfully aware of the critical capital needs of the county from ambulances, fire trucks, waste disposal equipment, emergency generators, and building repairs to a new county computer system. The need for new schools has been well established. The cost of these items will likely increase at a rate higher than inflation. It makes business sense to raise taxes to purchase these items at today's prices. It is time for the citizens of Montgomery County to “bite the bullet” and fund these critical needs. Please take the lead for the future of our county and vote for the advertised tax increase. Thank you!

Thank you for your assistance. Sorry I could not be at the hearing in person.

Sincerely,
(s)Jim Johnson

cc: Jeff Johnson”

“March 19, 1998

Dear Mr. Gorman:

I am the chairperson for the RSVP Advisory Council and have been an active volunteer member for the past 10 years.

This year, RSVP requested additional funds from the county for the upcoming year. I have learned that this request is to be denied and the suggestion has been made that the program not expand. I would like to urge you to reconsider our request before deciding not to help RSVP.

RSVP has over 200 volunteer members in Montgomery County. We have been able to remain a vital

and active part of our community through our volunteer work. Our work stations are all non-profit or government organizations and agencies. They all depend heavily on volunteer support to provide services to the citizens of Montgomery County.

RSVP presently has a staff of a director, secretary, and part time van driver to coordinate all of the activities of the existing 200 members and 40 stations. We truly enjoy the work that we do and feel that we play an important role in our community. Our council had discussed projects that we feel would have a great impact on Montgomery County. Some projects have not been possible due to the demands on the staff's time. Recruitment and follow-up activities are necessary to maintaining our membership and to maintain the quality of services we provide. Each year we contribute thousands of dollars to the program through various fundraisers. RSVP is doing all we can do to make this the best program it can be. I hope you will consider helping us help others.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

(s) Irene Scaggs,
RSVP Volunteer
RSVP Advisory Council, Chairperson”

“March 24, 1998,
To: jkiser@naxs.com, jdjohnson,naxs.com
Subject: Meeting Tonight

Please convey to the supervisors my strong endorsement of the complete tax package before the board, INCLUDING the proposed tax rate increase.

Support for the County schools has been eroding for a number of years to the point where they are desperate to provide the physical infrastructure and the personnel to educate our children. We must also make up for the cuts in state funds or risk compromising the future of our most valuable resource. I ask that county government act responsibly to provide the necessary resources.

Sincerely,
Roger W. Ehrich
1407 Locust Avenue
Blacksburg”

“March 15, 1998,
To: jkiser@naxs.com, jdjohnson@naxs.com
Subject: Tax increase

Dear Board of Supervisors Members,

I applaud our administrator, Jeff Johnson, for his courage to propose an 8-cent tax increase for the county budget. I ask you to support his proposal.

I am blue collar, I was born in Christiansburg, and I have been a long time resident of Montgomery County. I do not like tax increases, but I have observed the following concerns, which I like even less.

I do not think our law enforcement personnel should be among the lowest paid in the state. The numbers of modular units behind the Elliston-Lafayette schools are embarrassing and other schools are in need. County buildings and properties (some historic) remain in a state of disrepair or are modified in a hodge-podge manner. Neighborhood integrity and residential property values in some areas of the county and town are at risk because of the lack of a code enforcement officer who could enforce ordinances, recognize complaints, adapt landscaping policies, and zoning practices. Practices that elevate the likelihood of neighborhoods and business' to co-exist.

To the supervisors who are going to support our administrator, I say good for you. To those supervisors who are on the fence, I ask you to please support our administrator. And to the supervisors who continue to say no, I say that is extreme.

Citizens can opionated from experience now. Citizens have observed, while those who continue to say no have gotten their way in the past. We've tried it their way, but now it is time to move on.

Sincerely,
Gary Harkrader
312 East Main Street
Christiansburg, Virginia, 24073"

"March 17, 1998

Another County Tax Increase--What Else Is New?

It's time once again for the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors to scrutinize budget requests for the 1998-99 county budget. The Board of Supervisors is elected by the citizens to perform this arduous task, but they shouldn't do it alone. Ultimately, the people of Montgomery County pay the bill via taxes, and it is their responsibility to carefully study the proposed budget.

The entire 1998-99 county budget should be analyzed and not just the school portion. The school system, however consumes approximately 75% of the county budget and, therefore, deserves particular attention.

The 1998-99 school budget request was a whopping 58.1 million dollars--a 9.8% overall increase and an 18% local increase over the 1997-98 approved budget. County Administrator Jeff Johnson is to be commended for recommending a reduction to 56.2 million dollars. This still represents an approximate 6% overall school budget increase and a 10% local increase when inflation has been in the 2-3% range. For example, a Social Security recipient who received \$1,033 in 1997-98 is now receiving \$1,055--a 2.5% increase.

The Montgomery County school system budget has risen tremendously during the last few years despite the annual outcry that the Board of Supervisors has once again "cut the budget." The truth is that the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors has never "cut the budget." It has only reduced the amount of the original request. Only once in history has the Board of Supervisors come close to cutting the school budget. In 1976, it froze the school budget at the previous year's figure.

If the recent upward trend continues, taxpayers can expect school budgets to topple over the \$100 million figure within a few years. Will Montgomery County citizens be able to afford and/or be willing to support such a budget? Or are we headed for a future catastrophic tax revolt? The time to think and act is now--before Montgomery County taxes get further out of hand.

Montgomery County Taxpayers Association"

"March 23, 1998
Revised

The School Board Season Again...Same Story, Same Outcome.

The time for local governments to present their budget is here again and initial agency requests suggest that a significant increase in the cost of government may be in store for Montgomery County taxpayers. This will require increases in local tax rates. Taxpayers ought to examine thoroughly any spending increases that exceed the growth in CPI that now hovers around 1%. Actually, it has been near zero or slightly negative for recent months.

Government officials at all levels have traditionally been unwilling to recognize that taxpayers are the owners and shareholders in the enterprise. The annual budget should therefore serve the same purpose for taxpayers as the annual corporate report supplies for share holders of a business activity, i.e. a picture of the current status of the agency. This should include review of the past year's operations, its achievements, failures, unsolved problems and new programs to address these

difficulties. Each of these activities should be justified by a statement of projected benefits for the community.

This year the Montgomery County budget for general government operations has used a new, much improved format that is far more comprehensible than in past years and could eliminate many of the difficulties covered in the comments that follow. But the school board budget still uses a format that precludes a meaningful review by citizens. It is totally unusable for public use.

The school budget provided to the public consists entirely of pages of one-line statements with associated dollar amounts that add up over \$8 million in new spending.

As to the current status of the schools, there is no explanation of why increased spending is needed. Nothing is said about acute problems or priorities for which new money is urgently needed for education. The programs that will receive the increased funding are neither described nor explained, and not one of the expected benefits identified.

The public knows that a significant number of K-12 students are failing to acquire the proper level of skill in reading and in working with mathematics. This has been cited both by Virginia's governors and the U.S. presidents as a major national problem. Shouldn't the public demand that new spending proposals explain exactly what is being done about these problems? But there is not a single reference or mention of any educational deficiency in the budget document.

Certainly educators are aware of the problem, but is it possible that policy makers for the public schools actually don't understand these problems, and thus don't know how to correct them? On the other hand, could it be that they know the solution, but find it unacceptable because it conflicts with current educational dogma?

The present slap-dash approach to budgeting for education will never adequately inform the public about the current situation in its schools and is no longer acceptable. If the budget were made more readable and interesting the citizens could learn what is really going on in public education and would start to participate actively in the decision processes. Maybe that is the reason why educators treat the public like mushrooms: just keep them in the dark and feed them horse manure.

If requests for spending increases were shown to be the result of a thorough analysis of problems followed by carefully designed solutions, taxpayers would be far more likely to support the budget and agree to pay higher taxes, if, of course, the proposals made good sense.

We can't allow the present questionable performance pattern to continue. The time has come for the public to stand up and demand that the required changes be made. Taxpayers cannot afford to continue to reward failure with annual increases in the educational spending that promise neither improvement nor accountability. Meanwhile, school policies promote social experiments in schools that are equivalent to an attempt to grow oranges in Alaska.

(s)Charles F. Roberts
3-23-98"

"March 23, 1998
P.O. Box 512
Christiansburg, Va 24068

Board of Supervisors
c/o Jeffrey D. Johnson, Administrator
1 East Main Street,
Christiansburg, VA 24073-0806

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Reference the public hearing on the proposed \$81.9 million county budget, Tuesday, March 24, 1998.

Inform the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors that I do not support any increase in the county tax rate.

Sincerely,
(s)Harold G. Shelton”

There being no further speakers, the public hearing was closed.

PUBLIC HEARING TAX RATE-FY 1998-99 BUDGET

Chairman Gorman called the public hearing to order for the purpose of receiving comments on the proposed tax rate FY 1998-99 budget.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing was closed.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ira D. Long, seconded by Larry N. Rush and carried unanimously, the Board adjourned to Monday, March 30, 1998 at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

ATTEST

—
CHAIRMAN

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR