

year they estimate they will collect \$11 million from absence parents. Steve Garrison, Office Manager for PSI said they were proud of their success and were dedicated to continuing their collection rates.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING

- **Naming of SR 3437 to SR 3439 "Lake Drive"**

The Chairman opened the public hearing at 4:42 p.m. Alan Ditmore expressed his opposition to this renaming. He felt the County should practice the skunk defense by using a bad name so citizens won't move there. No other comments were taken. The public hearing was closed at 4:44 p.m.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- **Presentation of Regional Water Authority Budget for FY 2003 (David Hanks, Interim Water Director)**

David Hanks, Interim Director of the Regional Water Authority of Asheville Buncombe and Henderson gave a brief overview of the Authority budget. There is no rate increase included in this budget. The total budget is \$22,082,000. No increase in consumption is predicted.

Commissioner Young moved to approve the budget as presented. Vice Chairman Stanley seconded and the motion passed 5-0. Commissioner Gantt encouraged Chairman Ramsey and Vice Chairman Stanley to continue working on the water agreement.

- **Presentation of Budget Message for County FY 2003 Budget (Wanda Greene, County Manager)**

Wanda Greene, County Manager, gave the 2003 budget message, which is attached as Exhibit B. She said that this was a difficult budget to put together due to cuts from the State and explosive Medicaid increases. The deficit caused by the State withholding of the County's reimbursements has been covered up to this point through a hiring freeze, a reduction in the work force, no cost of living for County employees last year, a freeze on capital expenditures and cuts to education and community development. To cut further will affect programs and services.

George Bond, Health Center Director, told how he had cut his budget as a result of the loss of State funds. He said that he has nothing left to cut but services which include cutting school nursing positions (out of nine school nurses, two will be cut); dental service for adults will end; the Health Center's hours will be cut back to 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the Health Center will stop taking new patients. They have 18,000 patients and each day take 25 new patients. ABCCM and other free clinics can absorb a few of these patients but the vast majority will go to the emergency room. Other small cuts include no more barking dog calls and drive through flu shots won't be available. Commissioner Keever said that this Board has worked hard to have a model health program and she wanted to find the \$500,000 to cover these cuts in service.

Greg Israel, Physical Facilities Assistant Director, said that his department has three frozen positions. This department provides maintenance for 61 sites in the County with 10

personnel and two supervisors. He said that this forces their focus on repair and no preventive maintenance.

The Manager mentioned other cuts including the DARE program; staff at fire stations; dairy services; grant positions have been converted to temporary, un-benefited positions; the law library will be closed and access will be electronic only; early voting is has been cut and Pack Library will be closed on Sunday.

Robert Logan, City School Superintendent, gave a power point presentation outlining his budget problems. His presentation is attached as Exhibit C.

Cliff Dodson, County School Superintendent, said that the State Department of Public Instruction has divided all schools into two categories—those under 10,000 students and those over 10,000 students. The County school system is ranked number one in the above 10,000 students category. He referenced Exhibit D which outlined how his budget had been effected.

Ray Bailey, President of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, said that this has been the hardest budget year in his 36 years at the College. His presentation is attached as Exhibit F.

Mandy Stone, Social Services Director, talked about the cuts that her department is facing as a result of State cuts. The cuts will eliminate Adult Care Home Case Management; Community Alternative Program will be cut; Intensive Family Preservation Services will be eliminated; social work prevention service program will reduce this reimbursement and program will be cut in half; subsidized child care will be cut.

The Manager recommended that two new programs being considered for funding by the Commissioners--Affordable Housing Trust and Land Conservation Trust be placed on the ballot in November. Trena Parker, Election Services said that a bond order would need to be prepared by September 27. The Manager recommended, in addition to these two issues, that a supplemental school tax be placed on the ballot as well.

Jon Creighton, Assistant County Manager said that the Enka Branch Library building houses the library and post office and the County has leased this building since 1997 and renovated the building. He recommended that the Board include the purchase of this building in the budget. He also recommended that the Board include the Detention Center addition, which will house EMS offices in the budget.

She said that this budget proposed a .695 tax rate

Gary Roberts, Tax Collector, said that the senior exemption would allow a reduction in property tax values, which could mean a loss to the county of \$1.2 million. To qualify citizens must be at least 65 years old or totally disabled, have an income of not more than \$18,000 and be resident of North Carolina. The exemption only applies to a permanent residence and a maximum of one acre. Deadline to apply is December 31, 2002. The County currently has 3,647 applications approved.

The Manager thanked her staff for their work on this budget message. She said that these recommendations make no one happy but have brought a budget that funds much of the necessities. If the County gets sales taxes reinstated, the rate would be reduced to 65.5 cents.

VIII. BOARD APPOINTMENTS

- **Adult Care Home Community Advisory Committee**
 - Reba Sharpe

Commissioner Young moved to appoint Reba Sharpe to the Adult Care Home Community Advisory Committee. The motion passed 5-0.

- **Land of Sky Regional Council Advisory Council on Aging (1 vacancy)**
 - Mary Alston, (reappointment)

Commissioner Keever moved to nominate Mary Alston for an additional term on the Land of Sky Regional Council on Aging. The motion passed 5-0.

- **Averys Creek Sanitary District Board (1 vacancy)**
 - Angel Banks
 - James Holbrook

Commissioner Gantt moved to appoint angel Banks to the Avery's Creek Sanitary District Board. The motion passed 5-0.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- **The complete agenda can be accessed on the County's web site at www.buncombe.org/agenda**
- **The next meeting of the Board is July 9 beginning at 4:30 p.m. with pre-meeting beginning at 4 p.m.**

Commissioner Keever moved to continue this meeting to Saturday, June 29 at 8 p.m. Vice Chair Stanley seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

The Chairman called the continued meeting of June 29, 2002 to order at 8 p.m. with the following members present:

- Nathan Ramsey, Chairman
- Bill Stanley, Vice Chair
- Patsy Keever, Commissioner
- David Gantt, Commissioner
- David Young, Commissioner

Staff present were: Wanda Greene, County Manager; Jon Creighton, Assistant County Manager/ Planning Director; Kathy Hughes, Clerk to the Board; Donna Clark, Finance Director; Mamie Scott, Budget Officer; Jerome Jones, Assistant County Manager/Tax Director. Media present were: Tracy Rose, Mountain Express; Geoff Cantrell, Asheville Citizen Times.

The meeting was duly constituted and the following business was transacted to-wit:

1. **ORDINANCE LEVYING ONE HALF CENT SALES TAX IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY (AUGUST 1, 2002)**

Commissioner Keever moved to approve this ordinance which would allow the Board to implement the half-cent sales tax in August, 2002 if approved by the General Assembly.

Commissioner Young seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

2. BUDGET AMENDMENT: (Internal Service Fund to cover claims for the month of June 2002)

Donna Clark, Finance Director, said that this request would transfer \$401,556 from the general fund to cover insurance claims that were higher than anticipated. Commissioner Young moved to approve this budget amendment. Commissioner Gantt seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

3. ADOPTION OF THE COUNTY FY 2003 BUDGET

Commissioner Stanley said that this has been the most difficult budget in this 14 years as a Commissioner. He said that he had considered the public's input on the budget and their input at all the community meetings. He felt that it was important to return calm to citizens stating that he will not vote for county wide zoning but would support an ordinance that would allow citizens in every community to address the needs of their communities. He also said that he would support ordinances that would address the issues that were brought to the Commissioners' attention during the community meetings. He felt that the most positive thing for senior citizens is to keep the tax rate low. He moved to set the tax rate at .59 cents.

Commissioner Young seconded the motion for a .59 cent tax rate.

Commissioner Keever questioned the tax distribution method to the schools as outlined in the attached Exhibit AA.

Commissioner Gantt moved to go over the cuts on the Exhibit AA one by one.

Commissioner Stanley asked that the citizens direct their frustration to the legislators asking that they return the reimbursements to the local government.

The Manager reviewed the cuts on Exhibit AA that would take the County down to the .59 cent tax rate.

Commissioner Keever said that a low tax rate was good but the County must have enough money to function and she didn't see how morally the County could set a .59 cent tax rate.

The County Manager said that different cuts could be made and a budget amendment made at the July 9 meeting.

Following some confusion, the original motion to set the tax rate for FY 2003 at .59 cents passed as follows:

AYES: Chairman Ramsey, Vice Chairman Stanley and Commissioner Young


NOES: Commissioners Gantt and Keever


Commissioner Gantt expressed his concern that this tax rate, cutting out all community development funds, would hurt the community as a whole. He felt a moral obligation to find affordable housing and to find jobs and neither of these issues were included in this budget.

Commissioner Young said that he support Commission Stanley at .59 cents because of the number of citizens that called about their taxes being too high.

Commissioner Keever was outraged and felt that too many services that help people were eliminated. The County Manager said that she would bring to the Board an amendment on July 9 that included any changes made by the Board to the budget as presented.

Commissioner Stanley moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Commissioner Young seconded and the motion passed 5-0.


KATHY HUGHES, CLERK TO THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


NATHAN RAMSEY, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS