

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CAROLINE COUNTY

Preston Volunteer Fire Company
3680 Choptank Road
PRESTON, MD 21629

**Minutes
March 14, 2023**

Present: President J. Travis Breeding, Vice President Larry C. Porter, Commissioner N. Franklin Bartz, III.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

There was no public comment.

1: Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Hearing for Operating and Capital Budget Requests: Commission President, Travis Breeding introduced himself and the fellow Commissioners, as well as the County Administrator, Jeremy Goldman and the Executive Assistant, Kaleigh Leager. Commissioner Breeding stated that the purpose of this hearing is receive public testimony and comment on the proposed FY24 Caroline County Capitol Budget. This meeting/hearing was advertised in the Star Democrat newspaper as well as on the Caroline County website.

The following oral and written testimony was received:

Ross Harper, Chair of the Caroline County Recreation and Parks Advisory Board (Oral):

Mr. Harper thanked the Commissioners and congratulated the members of the Board for their election wins. Mr. Harper stated that he supports the partial reallocation of funds for full time positions for the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Debby Bennett, Executive Director of the Caroline County Public Library (Oral): Ms.

Bennett stated she is looking for the funding increase she submitted and discussed during the budget roundtable. Ms. Bennett reiterated that the request stems from the need to increase salaries to recruit and retain good staff. In addition, to assist with phase II of the reconstruction project, and the continuation of funding for the Imagination Library for \$6,000.

Trista North, Caroline County Soil Conservation District (Oral & Written): Ms. North

stated she is requesting funding (\$50,000) and advocating for the “tax ditch” managers. The Public Drainage Associations promote drainage for 91,560 acres (43.89%) of Caroline County’s 208,600 acres. Ms. North is asking the County for funding for the much-needed maintenance for the tax ditches. This includes replacement of pipes, mowing and dipping ditches. Ms. North stated that there are 68 separate PDAs in the County and the \$50K would be used and spread across those based on a formula of need.

Nicholas Tindall, Director of Caroline County Arts Council (Oral & Written): Mr. Tindall

thanked the Commissioners for their continued support. He has requested an increase in funding

in the amount of \$3,500. He hopes the County will continue to financially support local artists and promote arts county-wide.

Blair Carmean, Chicken Bridge Public Drainage Association (Oral): Mr. Carmean thanked the Commissioners and stated that he supports Ms. North's request for funding.

Pastor Stanford Ricks & David Ricks, Men for Change (Oral): Pastor Ricks thanked the Board for their funding in the past and through COVID. Pastor Ricks is asking for an increase in funding as the work is increasing and there is a need to expand. Pastor Ricks stated that Men for Change is basically a volunteer program. Men for Change has hopes to expand and continue to keep kids out of the criminal justice system. Currently, they have 75 kids on the waiting list. Mr. Ricks stated they need transportation and more people (hopefully hire a few paid employees) which results in an increase of funding. Mr. Ricks stated he is having trouble getting reimbursement from the State for their construction project. Mr. Ricks mentioned that they cannot get anywhere with the GAO and the Treasury Department at the State.

Susan Simmons, (Former Director of Recreation and Parks) - Resident of Greensboro (Oral): Ms. Simmons stated she wanted to discuss the funding of the arts council. Ms. Simmons gave an example of the budgetary process and the importance of the elected officials jobs. Ms. Simmons spoke about the great talent within the County employees and stressed the importance of investing in them. Ms. Simmons asked the Board to please consider the significant positive impact that providing increased funding for the departments within the County has on the communities. Ms. Simmons also stressed the importance of supporting the \$3,500 small increase for the Arts Council.

Dr. Joseph McCarthy, Founder & Director of the Friends of the Caroline County Public Library (Written): Dr. McCarthy requested that the Imagination Library be fully funded for the FY24 budget. In addition, Mr. McCarthy requested that the Commissioners consider funding for the library itself.

Commissioners Closing Remarks: The Commissioners thanked the staff for their hard work and dedication to the County and the constituents. Commissioner Porter explained to the crowd that they will take every funding request under consideration and explained that there are unfunded mandates that are passed down from the State to the County that are very expensive.

2: FY24 Municipal Tax Differential Budget Hearing: Mr. Fox, Director of Finance stated that the tax differential code is a MAY not a SHALL. The Current Board is opting to participate in the municipal tax differential for FY24. Mr. Fox stated that there has been no public comment has been received by the Office of Finance. Mr. Fox then read the following differential rates for the municipalities within Caroline County.

Caroline County FY 2024 Differential			
Towns	Assessable Base ¹	Held Differential Rate	Taxpayer Differential
Denton	\$ 437,296,119	0.060	262,377.67
Federalsburg	\$ 163,191,349	0.080	130,553.08
Greensboro	\$ 115,213,242	0.060	69,127.95
Hillsboro	\$ 11,001,299	0.000	0.00
Marydel	\$ 7,012,378	0.000	0.00
Preston	\$ 72,616,581	0.010	7,261.66
Ridgely	\$ 131,183,256	0.050	65,591.63
Goldsboro	\$ 13,646,793	0.000	0.00
Henderson	\$ 5,267,410	0.000	0.00
Templeville	\$ 1,786,734	0.000	0.00
	<u>\$ 958,215,161</u>		<u>534,911.98</u>

Kim Abner, Mayor of Federalsburg: Mayor Abner thanked the Commissioners for their continued support and for continuing to give the towns a tax differentia.

Commissioner Porter made a motion to adjourn the public hearing. Commissioner Bartz seconded. All three Commissioners voted to adjourn the public budget hearing.

With no more discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:52 pm.



Kaleigh Leager
Executive Assistant to the County Commissioners