



COUNTY OF HYDE

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Hyde County, NC News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 14, 2014

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Highlights from the May 5, 2014 Hyde County Board of Commissioners Meeting

Hyde County Manager, Bill Rich, and County Finance Officer, Corrine Gibbs, have created a balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2014-2015. The Manager presented the proposed budget to the Board of Commissioners during their regular monthly meeting on Monday, May 5, 2014. The Manager noted that the County's Fund Balance continues to grow at a healthy rate and explained the main proposed budget increases are intended for the Hyde County School System and the Department of Social Services.

The Commissioners scheduled a public budget workshop meeting for Monday, May 19, 2014 in order to discuss budget items in more detail. The meeting will begin at 6:00 PM via teleconferencing equipment in the Hyde County Government Center Multi-Use Room (30 Oyster Creek Rd., Swan Quarter, NC 27885) and the Ocracoke School Commons (120 Schoolhouse Rd., Ocracoke, NC 27960). A public hearing on the proposed budget is set for Monday, June 2, 2014 at 6:00 PM.

Recommendations from the Ocracoke Occupancy Tax Board for funding appropriations were also considered at Monday's meeting. Unlike most counties, revenue generated through occupancy tax in Hyde County may be used for "any public good". The Board of Commissioners voted to approve the Ocracoke Occupancy Tax Board's recommendations for funding 10 requests totaling \$440,640.

Occupancy tax funding for medical and lifeguard services on Ocracoke dominated the discussion. Hyde County EMS will receive \$180,000 to fund additional paramedic staff and ambulance coverage on Ocracoke. The Commissioners have also requested the Ocracoke Occupancy Tax Board meet again to allow the Ocracoke Health Center an opportunity to appeal their request of \$89,500 for extended office hours and an after-hours nurse triage phone service.

A majority of the Commissioners voted to approve special one-time funding of \$10,000 for summer lifeguard services on Ocracoke to supplement the partial coverage provided by the National Park Service this year. Every Commissioner expressed reluctance to fund services historically provided by the NPS. Chairman Swindell pointedly noted, however, that funding lifeguard services through Ocracoke's occupancy tax revenue would essentially funnel money generated from over-night visitors directly into a service utilized by tourists and constantly cited by visitors as a reason for vacationing on Ocracoke. The vote to provide funding passed 3-2 with Commissioners Fletcher and Pugh voting nay.

The evening closed with positive news from Manager Rich regarding a recent meeting with the NCDOT Ferry Division Director, Ed Goodwin. During their meeting the Ferry Division agreed to improve priority loading guidelines and to hold more regularly scheduled public meetings on Ocracoke with the purpose of informing the community about service updates, improvements, and projects. It was also announced that webcams on both docks for the Ocracoke-Hatteras Ferry will go live soon and the Ferry Division is testing out digital signage on Ocracoke. Ed Goodwin assured Manager Rich that the short route between Ocracoke and Hatteras will resume in the near future. Even with the longer route, the Ferry Division has moved to departures every 30 minutes as May 13th.

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