

**Wake County Board of Commissioners
Great Government Committee
November 4, 2019
3:00 p.m.
Wake County Justice Center, Room 2800**

Commissioners Present:

Susan Evans, Chair
Greg Ford, Vice-Chair
Sig Hutchinson
Vickie Adamson
James West
Jessica Holmes

Wake County Staff Present:

David Ellis, County Manager; Bill Greeves, Chief Innovation and Information Officer; Emily Lucas, Chief Financial Officer; Chris Dillon, Assistant County Manager; Ben Canada, Assistant to the County Manager; Scott Warren, County Attorney; Michelle Venditto, Budget and Management Services Director; Paarth Mehta, Senior Budget and Management Analyst; Margaret Murphy, Senior Budget and Management Analyst; Michelle Burgess, Budget and Management Analyst; Denise Hogan, Clerk to the Board; Yvonne Gilyard, Deputy Clerk to the Board; Portia Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Board; and Michelle Cerett, Executive Assistant to the Board.

Meeting Called to Order

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Commissioner Hutchinson moved, seconded by Commissioner Ford, to approve the September 30, 2019, committee meeting minutes.

Commissioner Evans said the next committee meeting is scheduled for December 9th. She said the Work Session scheduled for that day has been cancelled. She suggested moving the Great Government committee meeting to December 2nd at 10:00 a.m. since there are no other meetings now on December 9th. The committee agreed and staff was directed to change the next meeting to December 2nd at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Evans shared the agenda for today's meeting.

1. Approval of Minutes
 - o Great Government Committee Meeting of 9/30/19
2. Board of Commissioners Travel Policy
3. Community Nonprofit Funding Process

Board of Commissioners Travel Policy

Ms. Denise Hogan, Clerk to the Board, provided information on the Board of Commissioners travel policy. She shared the current process.

Current Authorization

- Commissioners submit travel requests to the Clerk's Office
 - o Out-of-County Travel
 - Electronic travel authorization completed before travel can occur
 - o Same-day out-of-County travel
 - Travel authorization is not required if it is not overnight
 - o In-County travel
 - No travel authorization
- Unusual or out of ordinary requests are shared with the Chair

WAKE COUNTY

4

She shared the current payment process for travel expenses.

Current Payment

- Commissioners submit travel requests to the Clerk's Office
 - o Out-of-County Travel
 - P-card and reimbursements for payment
 - o Same-day out-of-County travel
 - P-card and reimbursements for payment
 - o In-County travel
 - Monthly stipend
- Commissioners receive reimbursement through direct deposit for authorized expenses

WAKE COUNTY

5

She shared the current year budget information.

Current Budget

- Commissioners submit travel requests to the Clerk's Office
 - Overnight out-of-County travel
 - \$4,500/year non-Chair budget
 - \$4,757/year Chair budget
 - In-County travel
 - \$250/month stipend
- Clerk's Office works with Budget and Management Services to track expenses
- Chair reviews expenses quarterly



WAKE COUNTY

6

Ms. Hogan shared a resolution that was approved by the Board of Commissioners on January 7, 2019 related to travel. She noted that the Board of Commissioners adhere to the same policy as county staff.

Resolution Approved by BOC 1/7/2019

- **WHEREAS**, members of the Wake County Board of Commissioners are required from time to time to attend various conferences, meetings, seminars, and other trainings which relate to the County and the Board's goals, objectives, operations, and activities; and
- **WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners recognizes that attendance at such functions serves a vital form of exchange of ideas and methods of local government operations and advocating legislation for the benefit of Wake County; and
- **WHEREAS**, in order that attendance at such functions be made possible without unreasonable personal or financial sacrifice, while maintaining fiduciary responsibility toward County funds, policies and procedures need to be established and followed; and
- **WHEREAS**, Wake County has in place established policies and procedures for employees that may be adopted by elected officials and their respective departments;
- **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Wake County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the Wake County Travel and Transportation Policy and Procedures, as approved by the Wake County Chief Financial Officer, as its guidelines for travel authorization and travel expense reimbursement.
- This resolution shall take effect upon its passage and remain in effect until amended by the Wake County Board of Commissioners.

WAKE COUNTY

7

She shared options for the Board of Commissioners to consider.

Considerations for the Board

- Formal policy or resolution revision?
 - What types of conferences and professional development are appropriate for County expenses?
 - How does the Board want to govern the budget for travel?
 - Plan conferences and professional development in advance to allocate funds?
 - Use personal funds when exceeding budget?
 - Ability to use fellow Commissioners' budget based on expected lack of use
 - Eliminate individual budgets and instead manage total Commissioners budget?
 - How would Commissioners like to receive information on travel budget remaining?
 - How often would they like to receive information on travel budget remaining?
 - Is the current budget adequate?

WAKE COUNTY

8

Commissioner Evans said the Clerk's office tracks the expenses for the commissioners, but there is no guideline for reporting the budget information to the Board of Commissioners. She asked for recommendations from the committee on the need for a new policy and/or clarification of the existing policy. She said this board is more active than previous boards, but it is important to stay within the budget.

Commissioner West said it is important for the commissioners to stay within their budget.

Mr. David Ellis, County Manager, said the board travel budget was increased in FY 20. He asked how much of the FY travel budget has been spent to date. Mr. Paarth Mehta, Senior Budget & Management Analyst, said as of the end of September \$10,000 has been used from the commissioners travel budget.

Commissioner Hutchinson said when commissioners travel, they learn of new opportunities. He said it helps leverage relationships and is a good way to learn how other counties operate. He said this board is taking on more of a leadership role in the state and across the county than past boards have. He said professional development is important. Commissioner Hutchinson said he serves on the Upper Neuse River Basin committee, the Large Urban County Caucus board, Park, Open Space, and Recreation committee, Healthy Communities Task Force, and the One Water Initiative. He said he also serves as Chair of Growth and Sustainability Committee. He said as a result of his leadership, he is expected to attend these conferences.

Commissioner Evans said the value of the conferences is not in question, but commissioners need to stay within their budget. She said when she served on the Board of Education, there was a small budget for conferences. She said the board decided who would attend which

conference. She said Board of Education members would bring conference information back to share with the full board.

Commissioner West said there are other extenuating factors. He said better communication would be helpful. He said there could be unnecessary duplication of conference attendance.

Commissioner Evans said having a list of regular annual events and their respective cost would be helpful. She said communication among board members is necessary.

Commissioner Ford said this is a very active board and leadership opportunities are important. He said the county is growing quickly and the intensity of issues has increased. He said the travel policy needs to be revised. He said the existing practice no longer fits with the reality of where the county is going. He agrees with the need for better communication among board members.

Commissioner Ford asked Commissioner Evans if the Board of Education had a specific policy to follow or if the board members made it their practice to stay within the travel budget.

Commissioner Evans said it was the practice of the Board of Education to stay within their budget. She said the intent of this discussion is not to restrict what commissioners can do in their area, but it is important to stay within the budget.

Commissioner Ford asked for feedback on increasing the budget for this year. He said he hopes for guidelines, not hard policies that restrict the commissioner's ability to travel.

Commissioner Holmes said the lack of a hard policy puts the Chair of the Board in a position of having to approve or disapprove travel and that is not a good position to be in. She asked Ms. Hogan for a general amount that would be sufficient for each commissioner's travel budget. She said commissioners should not be restricted on what they can attend, but they should pay the expenses out of their own pocket once their travel budget is exhausted. She said each commissioner should have the ability to attend the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners conference (NCACC), the National Association of County Commissioners conference (NACO), the Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC), and the Chamber of Commerce conference. She said the cost per commissioner for those four conferences is \$6,400.00. She suggested having the Clerk come up with a more reasonable budget amount based on this information. She said once the FY 20 budget is increased, commissioners should not be able to go over their budget. If they do, they should be responsible for paying the expenses themselves.

Commissioner Hutchinson agreed there should be a list of appropriate conferences. However, he feels if a commissioner is serving as Chair of an organization, the county should cover the expenses.

Commissioner Adamson said all the conferences she has attended have been beneficial, but she is willing to chose which ones to attend in order to stay within the budget.

Commissioner West said common sense should be a factor in deciding which conferences to attend. He said he supervised 1,000 people at the Cooperative Extension, and he managed those budgets. He said he attends county functions that he doesn't seek reimbursement for. He said accountability for attending a certain conference should be justified.

Commissioner Adamson asked Mr. Ellis how budgets are created for staff travel. Mr. Ellis said each department submits a request for professional development funds. He said when he went to a conference a few weeks ago, he heard good comments about Commissioners Holmes and Hutchinson participating in various events. He said Wake county is on the radar and people want to hear about new ideas. He said a more reasonable budget request is needed. He said commissioners should be able to travel.

Commissioner Holmes said she gets more requests to speak due to being the Chair of the Board. She said the Chair needs more than the additional \$250 for speaking opportunities. She said it is important to walk a fine line when serving on committees that require travel.

Commissioner Hutchinson agreed that the Chair of the Board needs a larger travel budget, but he said serving as Chair of a committee requires you to attend their conferences.

Commissioner Holmes said the Chair of the Board is elected by the board. If anyone is representing the board, it should be the Chair. She said a commissioner serving as a committee chair is not voted on by this board and should not be a county expense.

Commissioner Evans said she supports staying within the budget. She said she is not in support of one pot of money or of commissioners using other commissioners expense money. She said she doesn't support Commissioner Hutchinson expecting the county to pay for something he volunteered for. She said he will need to set priorities or pay those expenses out of his own pocket.

Commissioner West commented on accountability and slippery slopes. He said good communication is necessary, and commissioners need to be accountable for tax payer money.

Commissioner Adamson asked what expenses are included in the travel budget.

Ms. Hogan said all conferences are included in addition to registrations for local events such as the Chamber of Commerce luncheons.

Commissioner Holmes said it is important for the commissioners to adhere to the budget the same as staff is expected to.

Commissioner Holmes said professional development should be budgeted separately from conference travel. She used the School of Government courses for new commissioners as an example of professional development.

Commissioner Evans asked what staff needs from commissioners to develop a policy.

Ms. Hogan said guidelines need to be established so staff knows how to appropriately handle expense requests.

Commissioner Holmes said commissioners should receive quarterly reports showing the status of their travel budget. She requested that the Clerk notify a commissioner if they are nearing their budget limit.

Commissioner Evans said it would be helpful for staff to provide an estimated cost of all regular annual conferences. She said this would allow commissioners to decide which conferences are the most beneficial for them to attend.

Commissioner West asked if training for new commissioners would be exempt. Mr. Ellis said they add additional money to the budget when newly elected officials are taking office.

Commissioner Hutchinson left meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Evans asked for input from Mr. Scott Warren, County Attorney, on the best way to implement the changes. Mr. Warren said it would be appropriate to amend the resolution that was passed in January.

Commissioner Evans said the new policy should specify that staff should not make travel arrangements for a commissioner's spouse or anyone else accompanying them to a conference.

Commissioner Holmes agreed and stressed no county time should ever be spent making travel arrangements for commissioner spouses.

Ms. Hogan shared the next steps.

Next Steps

- Gather feedback from the Committee
- Staff draft a policy/resolution for presentation at a future Work Session

Following further discussion, it was decided that staff will bring back revised budget information to the December 2, 2019 Great Government Committee meeting. After perimeters are set, a revised resolution will be considered at a later meeting.

Commissioner Ford said it is important to be mindful with tax payer dollars. He said some conferences are simply money makers for the organization.

Community Nonprofit Funding Process

Mr. Bill Greeves, Chief Information and Innovation Officer, shared the purpose of today's presentation.

Today's Purpose

- Staff is seeking Commissioner input on exempting FY20-funded public agencies from a new submission process.

He shared the staff recommendation for the Smart Start funding.

Smart Start

- Staff recommends moving Smart Start, and its associated funding (FY20 - \$1,688,028), to the Education budget, where it will undergo a review process similar to what we use for WCPSS and WakeTech requests.

Commissioner Holmes said all education is important and she is supportive of this change.

Mr. Greeves shared how the change would affect the budget, if approved.

What Does “Exemption” Mean?

- Exempted agency does not have to compete for funds in the newly-created submission process
- Agency is funded in the FY21 budget at its FY20 level
- If agency wishes to pursue an *increase* in funding, agency will follow the new submission process
- Funding for exempted agencies will be removed from the total “pot” allocated for public agencies (\$1,806,000)

He shared a list of current publicly funded agencies and their respective allocations. He asked for feedback on removing additional agencies from the competitive process.

Public Agency Funding

Agency	FY20 Funding	Funding Purpose
North Carolina Symphony	\$ 100,000	General operational funding
United Arts Council	\$ 511,000	General operational funding
East Wake Education Foundation	\$ 50,000	General operational funding
Communities in Schools	\$ 100,000	General operational funding
Marbles Kids Museum	\$ 650,000	General operational funding
Universal School Breakfast Program	\$ 258,000	Funding for universal breakfast at Wake County schools
Interfaith Food Shuttle	\$ 25,000	Food pantry program in certain Wake County schools where high percentage of students qualify for free and reduced lunch
InterAct	\$ 100,000	Funding to support an e-filing initiative
Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC	\$ 12,000	Food pantry program in certain Wake County schools where high percentage of students qualify for free and reduced lunch
Total Public Agency Funding		\$1,806,000

Does the Board wish to exempt any of the above agencies from the competitive submission process?

WAKE COUNTY

14

Commissioner Adamson commented on the North Carolina Symphony. She said they travel around the state doing performances and the symphony should be paying those expenses. She said other counties do not fund their local symphony.

Commissioner Ford asked if staff has clarification on what the NC Symphony funding is used for. Ms. Margaret Murphy, Senior Budget and Management Analyst, said the county funding is used for school students to participate in field trips to the symphony.

Commissioner Holmes said she is in support of a complete reset of the process and having all agencies go through the new process.

Commissioner Ford commented that Triangle Family Services is funded but is not on the list of public agencies receiving funding. Commissioner Adamson said Triangle Family Services is funded through Human Services budget.

Ms. Emily Lucas, Chief Financial Officer, said some agencies are contracted because it saves the county money. She said contracting is cheaper than having internal staff provide the service.

Commissioner Adamson said she is in support of all agencies following the new process.

Commissioner Holmes said agencies supporting board priorities will take preference, but the commissioners will make the decision as a board.

Mr. Greeves shared the next steps. He suggested a "no contact" clause and asked for feedback.

Next Steps

- Based on feedback received at the September GG Committee meeting, staff will issue an open call for qualified public agencies to submit funding requests for any funds remaining in the public agency funding allocation (Jan)
 - Would the board prefer we include a “do not contact” clause in the submission instructions?
- Staff will review funding requests against objective criteria and forward requests and summary sheets to Commissioners for consideration (Feb)
- Commissioners will use an affinity exercise to allocate remaining public agency funds (March)
- After completion of FY21 budget process, staff will collect feedback from Commissioners regarding the revised process

WAKE COUNTY

15

Commissioner Ford said the “no contact” clause is a gray area and asked if it can be enforced.

Commissioner Adamson commented on the Arts Council. She said the state recently eliminated their funding, but the ABC Board funding picked up the difference.

Commissioner West asked staff to research the agency funding process that was used during the recession and provide the information to the Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Michelle Venditto, Budget and Management Services Director, said she will look for the criteria, but she isn't sure it is still available.

Commissioner West also asked staff to obtain the City of Raleigh criteria on public agency funding. He said it would be helpful to review it.

Mr. Ben Canada, Assistant to the County Manager, said the City of Raleigh has a rigorous process for public agency funding. He said they have several staff members dedicated to managing the process.

Commissioner Evans asked for feedback on offering the opportunity to all agencies, or just the current legacy organizations.

Commissioner Ford said the legacy organizations were all notified last year that the process was changing. He suggested using community notice that the process is open and explaining the process.

Commissioner Evans said she would like additional direction from staff before a decision is made.

Mr. Greeves said the new criteria will include a minimum and maximum amount to be requested. He said the new criteria will also outline how the request will relate to the board goals.

Adjourn

There being no further business Commissioner Evans adjourned the meeting at 4:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle L. Cerett
Executive Assistant to the Board