

At a Virtual Special Meeting (Budget Work Session) of the Board of Supervisors
Held on Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 6:00 pm

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Debbie P. Jones
Susan M. Seward
Rufus E. Tyler, Sr.
Steve White, Tie Breaker

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

C. Eric Fly, Sr.
Marian D. Johnson
Wayne O. Jones

STAFF PRESENT

Richard Douglas, County Administrator
Ellen G. Boone, Commissioner of the Revenue
John Broderick, Public Schools – Director of Finance & Business Operations
Deste J. Cox, Treasurer
G. Reid Foster, Public Safety Coordinator
Ernest Giles, Sheriff
Kelly W. Moore, Director of Finance
Vincent L. Robertson, Commonwealth’s Attorney
Shilton R. Butts, Assistant to the County Administrator/Deputy Clerk

Item 1. Call to order/Determine Quorum

The March 25, 2021 Virtual Special meeting (Budget Work Session) of the Sussex County Board of Supervisors did not have a quorum. Chair Seward noted that there would be discussion only. No action could be taken.

Item 2. Agenda Amendment

There were no agenda amendments.

Item 3. Approval of Agenda

There was no approval of the agenda due to lack of quorum.

Item 4. Budget Discussions

Outside Agencies

1. Richard Bland

There was no one in attendance for a presentation

2. Sussex County Youth and Adult Recreation Association, Inc.

Mr. William Ricks stated that the Sussex County Youth and Adult Recreation Association, Inc. has requested \$6,000 from the Board of the Supervisors to be used to assist the organization with the following expenses: (1) Utilities: water, wastewater, electricity - \$2,000; (2) Lawn care: Grass cutting, grounds upkeep - \$2,500.00; (3) Equipment: Laptop, Hotspot and Monthly Services (finance software and other items necessary for ongoing activities) - \$3,000.00; (4) Programs: Seminars, Workshops, Trips, Off-premises (sponsored activities) - \$1,000.00; and (5) Insurance: Property, Liability for Grounds - \$3,000.00 for a total of \$11,500.00.

Mr. Ricks stated that there would be activities at the pool. He advised that Mr. Malcolm Manning, as well as Mr. Leon Brooks, were in attendance to help answer any questions.

There were inquiries as to whether the pool would be opening and the status of repairs.

Mr. Manning stated that SCYARA is still planning to reopen the pool. They are still seeking other resources to help financially, as well as putting together financial resources on their own.

There was inquiry regarding the type of activities the pool was planning. Mr. Manning stated that he needed to correct comments about the pool reopening. He stated that SCYARA was not planning on opening the pool. He stated that some of the activities included seminars for adults and kids; workshops and off campus trips for the kids.

Mr. Brooks stated that some of the seminars would be blood pressure control, nutritional programs, etc.

Mr. Ricks stated that the pool itself would not be open because they have not generated enough funds for the repairs. There are some things that they thought they would be able to do; however, they were unable to due to the pandemic and other things. Mr. Ricks stated that the pool repair is approximately a \$88,000 to \$90,000 job. They don't have that type of resources. The grounds will be open which may help to generate funds for reconstruction of the pool.

3. Sussex County Young Men's Athletic Club

No one was in attendance for a presentation.

4. The Jarratt Recreational Association

There was no one in attendance for a presentation. There was no request made.

5. The Senior Citizens from Eastern Sussex County

There was no one in attendance for a presentation

6. Southeast 4-H Educational Center

There was no one in attendance for a presentation

7. The Waverly Youth Association

There was no one in attendance for a presentation. There was no request made.

8. The Jessica A. Moore Foundation

Dr. Phyllis Tolliver was in attendance; however, she stated that she would not be making a presentation at this time.

9. The Jarratt Senior Citizens Center

There was no one in attendance for a presentation. There was no request made.

10. The James House

Ms. Augusta Wakapa, James House Coordinator, was in attendance. Ms. Wakapa stated that James House works with domestic and sexual violence. Their services have been in Sussex County for four (4) years. They work with other agencies to help get the families back situated with education and providing services.

There was inquiry as to how many Sussex County residents James House has helped this year.

Ms. Anna Kroyer was present. Ms. Kroyer stated that over 2,600 residents, meaning that they have helped them learn about James House services, healthy relationships and how escape dangerous situations.

Direct services clients that they provide for service has been provided counseling, advocacy and support groups. She stated that they have three (3) and five (5) counties. The numbers are about the same. The past year has been more difficult. More clients are coming in with complex situations. She stated that 45% of the total that Ms. Wakapa has worked with are advocates for children. Their average is increase. Ms. Wakapa has worked with 66 school age children during the pandemic.

For direct services, approximately 100 people are served in Sussex County. Ms. Kroyer stated that approximately 900 people were helped last year. The 2,600 residents mentioned were pertaining to the reached information about healthy relationship, safe dating, etc.

There was inquiry of whether the James House received any COVID funding and were they eligible. Ms. Kroyer stated that no funding was received from Sussex County. They received funding in the amount of \$50,000 from Prince George County. She mentioned that their shelter

budget was over by \$90,000.00. Funding was received from PPE. She advised that the federal budget will be cut.

10. Waverly Youth Association – Green Machine Football

There was no one in attendance for a presentation. There was no request made.

11. Save A Seed

No one was in attendance for a presentation.

12. The Improvement Association

Ms. Loretta Miller, the Head Start Director of the Improvement Association (the “Association”), gave a brief presentation. Ms. Miller shared a brief update of the Association’s response to COVID-19 and thanked the Board for their contribution and continued support.

Ms. Miller stated that in attendance along with her presenting were Ms. Lawanda Tatum (Parents as Teachers supervisor), Faye Perkins (Project Discover Coordinator) and Erica Singleton (Workforce Development Coordinator and Virginia Housing Solution Program Manager).

Ms. Miller stated that together the Association are making a difference through all of their initiatives. Their initiatives include Saint Paul’s Child Development Center, Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, Head Start Program, Project Discovery, Workforce and Development, Two-Gen/Whole Family (Project SOS) and the Virginia Homeless Solutions Program.

Ms. Miller stated that the Association was proud of their leadership. The Honorable Charlie Caple, Jr., the Board Chairman, has been with the Association since the inception in 1968. The Honorable Rufus E. Tyler, Sr, the Association’s Executive Director. The list of the Board of Directors that provides governance was shared. Homage was paid for the late Kenneth Holmes, the Vice Chairman, and Valerie Seaborne who had recently passed.

Ms. Lawanda Tatum gave a brief overview of the MIECHV Program. Ms. Tatum stated the Parents as Teachers Program was eight years old. She stated the Parents as Teachers is an evidenced home-based curriculum, for parent educators to conduct home visits and help parents understand their role in encouraging their child’s development.

This achievement confirms that the Association exhibit the level of skill necessary to provide a quality home visiting program tailored to the needs of prenatal mothers and parents of young children.

Ms. Tatum stated that they are recruiting in the Sussex program. Ms. Darlean Whiting, the Parent Educator, is in the Association’s Waverly Office. Any parents interested should contact Ms. Whiting.

Ms. Miller shared that the Association provides high quality childhood education services. In Sussex County, currently there are 47 out of 50 enrolled due to COVID-19.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and staff were resilient and kept going virtually. Home visits were done virtually using tablets provided through the Association. Every child received an Amazon Fire Kindle. Teachers met with children and families everyday using best practices for virtual learning and teaching. One on one interactions and group learning activities were offered. Work packets and supplies were delivered weekly. They supported families with food and utilities throughout the school year. Assessments were conducted for data and school readiness supports.

Ms. Faye Perkins provided a brief overview of Project Discovery. Ms. Perkins stated that Project Discovery is an educational program implemented in Sussex County for nearly 30 years in partnership with Sussex County Public Schools.

Ms. Perkins stated that Project Discovery program was geared towards preventing dropouts and setting career paths for students going to college, trade school, and basically life after school. Grades Six (6) through 12 are served.

Project Discovery is required to follow each student for six (6) years after they graduate from high school to ensure they are on the right career path.

Starting in the sixth (6th) grade is called early intervention.

Project Discovery works with the parents as well. There are workshops and tutoring.

Ms. Perkins stated that everything was virtual. College tours were virtual.

Sussex County Schools are \$9,000 per child per Sussex County School System. Ms. Perkins noted that if one (1) child was saved from drop out, it would save the schools and Sussex County \$45,000.

Ms. Perkins stated that they are geared towards first generation, low to moderate income, and ten percent can be over income.

Ms. Perkins stated that this past year there were nine (9) seniors graduating. Six (6) students enrolled in college. One (1) student joined the military. Two (2) obtained immediate employment. One (1) senior was honored as Salutatorian and received an Associate's Degree upon graduation, went to the National Guard and is now back in college. The total combined scholarships were \$700,000.

Ms. Erica Singleton gave a brief overview of the Workforce Development Initiative. The Workforce Development Initiative is geared towards individuals who are unemployed or under employed to get into career advancement. The COVID-19 health crisis impacted work development initiatives. The Association was able to provide workforce services virtually to their participants. There were nine (9) new households enrolled in Sussex County in which 55% were successfully employed. In Sussex County, \$10,910.00 was expended for the Workforce Development Services.

The Association provided relief to renters experiencing financial difficulties due to the pandemic through the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP), as well as those who were facing imminent homelessness through the Virginia Homeless Solutions Program (VHSP). Over 90 individuals were assisted in Sussex and \$81,365 was expended.

Senior services were provided to 51 households during the shutdown with toiletries and cleaning supplies.

13. Blackwater Regional Library

Mr. Ben Neal, the Blackwater Regional Library Director, gave a brief overview. Mr. Neal stated that in 2019-20 in review for Waverly, Wakefield and the outreach of the broader Sussex County, over 19,000 patrons were served. There were 28,002 items circulated. In-house, PC, Wi-Fi, MiFi hotspot usage combined was 5,572. There are 45 MiFi hotspots circulating in the area. There were 226 programs servicing over 7,500 citizens. There are 46 outreach stops in the community and at community organizations including Stony Creek, Sussex Courthouse area, and Waverly reaching over 1,000 members in the Community.

The Blackwater Regional Library partners with 16 organizations within the County. Some of which are the Public Schools System, the Commonwealth's Attorney's Association and the Improvement Association.

Mr. Neal stated that when he's out in the community, to adapt to the COVID pandemic, social distance measures are in put in place to protect staff and visitors. This includes directional guidance, plexiglass barriers, and distanced computers.

For those uncomfortable with going inside, concierge curbside service continues to be offered and utilized. Proactive measures for staff including daily temperature checks are done.

Mr. Neal stated that there are a lot of offerings in the community. Efforts have been doubled with E-Books so that citizens can do things from home. He stated that people can now register for a digital library card online. Hoopla, Mometrix Test Preparation, Chilton Library, Libby by Overdrive and Bookmobile Stop Schedule are available online. The Bookmobile stops every other Thursday at Sussex Department of Social Services.

He stated that Blackwater Regional Library is very involved in the community. Ms. Latham, Manager at Wakefield and Waverly Branches, organizes a Farmer's Market on Saturdays from May through August at the Waverly. This brings communities together and offers the opportunity for fresh produce for citizens.

The Blackwater Regional Library has been doing Drive-Through Holiday Programming which is holiday-themed programs that brings some semblance of normalcy to keep holiday traditions in the community in a COVID-friendly "drive-through" format.

Events average 300+ attendees and partnerships with Sheriff's Office, Commonwealth's Attorney and School system.

Mr. Neal stated that they have community involvement in signing up over 250 students at Sussex Middle and High Schools with virtual library cards. There was distribution of back to school information at the Easter Parade Drive-Through. Blackwater Regional Library donated 400 gently used books to Sussex II State prison and started dialogue with their lead librarian on ways to collaborate in the future.

14. Community Coalition

Mr. Millard "Pete" Stith gave a brief overview for the Community Coalition ("Coalition"). He thanked the Board for making it possible for the Coalition to get Jefferson Elementary School. They have been in a state of revamping the school. Mr. Stith stated that the Coalition was asking the Board to consider at least a \$10,000 investment in the school.

Mr. Stith stated that some of the things the Coalition has done includes helping six (6) families that were burned out. Food, money and clothing were provided. The Coalition works with the 7th Day Adventist Food Bank once a month. They participate in Toys for Tots. They help the Middle School girls with some of their personal needs. They want to create for the Sheriff and his people for when they are working in the Jarratt area and outer skirts of Greensville County to have a place for a break, as well as doing the same for the State Police, the Health Department and Social Services. They will also have rooms should the County need a meeting space at an offsite campus.

Mr. Stith noted that they were having some roof issues. Mr. Stith stated that to date, the Coalition have raised over \$100,000 for the building from the Robins Foundation at the University of Richmond, Atlantic Waste Disposal, Inc. and the Stith Family Foundation and monthly contributions from individual members. The Coalition was given rental property that can be used to raise funds.

Ms. Stith stated that the Coalition wanted to build a track on an outer perimeter of property for the kids to have to walk for exercise instead of the roads.

He stated that the Coalition is looking to get additional State and Federal funding and private funding to continue things for the Coalition.

There was inquiry of whether the Coalition has a breakdown of how manpeople they have assisted.

Mr. Robert Hamlin, with the Community Coalition, stated that they serve on an average approximately 210 families a month at the food bank. Mr. Hamlin stated that they also have a delivery service. They partner with the Community Transformer Foundation and has received help from the Improvement Association. They deliver to elderly families that are not able to come to the food bank. Mr. Hamlin discussed the Coalition's need to get their own vehicle in the event those they partner with vehicles are no longer available for use. He stated with the vehicles they have, 14 families in the Waverly area are serve. They serve 21 families in the Stony Creek area.

In the Jarratt proper area, thirty-one (31) families are served. In another of area of around Chapel Hill, they serve 21 families. These families receive their assistance using their delivery service.

Mr. Hamlin stated that masks are distributed while volunteering at the vaccination sites.

Mr. Hamlin stated that most of the Coalition's funds are received from outside of the County. He stated that they are requesting the County to partner in helping the Coalition, not to provide everything as they are active in trying to raise funds.

They discussed grants received to purchase food for the food bank.

15. Virginia's Gateway Region

Mr. Keith Boswell, President and CEO, gave a brief overview of Virginia's Gateway Region (VGR) and some of the things that were important to them as a community and as a region. He stated that their mission was to foster regional prosperity, business growth, powerful partnerships, delivering innovative resources to their community partners which the County is one (1) of the seven (7).

Mr. Boswell stated that everything they do at Gateway Region is to advance a region where businesses and families can prosper and thrive. Their current work revolves not only around getting sites ready for prospects and to have businesses to consider them as a potential home, but they have also work in a joint relationship with John Tyler Community College with Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA) to form a position around workforce. Gateway Region decided that they needed someone that could carry the messages not only from businesses to the workforce entities but the entities back to the businesses. Mr. Boswell stated that they pivoted from in person meetings to virtual meetings.

Mr. Boswell briefly mentioned the pharmaceutical cluster in the Gateway Region. He stated that in regards to sites, a lot of projects are looking at the mega site. There have been nine (9) very significant, as far as investments as in dollars and jobs, looking at the site. He stated that while none has chosen the Sussex Mega Site, the big issue continues to be if you're a high volume water user, there is a deficiency at that particular site to have the capability to get into the million to three million gallons a day water usage. Mr. Boswell stated that one (1) of the things that VGR wanted to do in concert with the community and maybe another community is the County's next door neighbor to do a study on delivery of water to the mega site. He stated that they have started to investigate the potential cost and or timing for that particular study and maybe seek a grant to mitigate some the cost.

Mr. Boswell stated that another project that the County may not be fully aware of is in their region, they are looking to create retail, to have someone to come, as a consult, to every community a retail strategic plan. VGR wants to give a strategic plan to each of their community partners as part of an additional service in this time of COVID.

16. Crater Planning District Commission

Mr. Alex Revnew, the new Executive Director for Crater Planning District Commission introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Revnew replaced Mr. Denny Morris.

Mr. Revnew stated that the Crater Planning District Commission provides regional planning services and helps with topics such as transportation, environmental planning, Hazard mitigation planning and other topics important to the region. As the census starts, CPDC will be providing that information for local governments that are redistricting. He stated that they had the mapping GIS system at CPDC.

17. Crater Business Development Center of Longwood University

Ms. Ellen Templeton, with Crater Business Development Center of Longwood University, gave a brief overview of their services.

Ms. Templeton stated that they work with small businesses and help businesses develop their business plan and getting started. They also work with existing small businesses to help them grow and develop. It is done by a multitude of resources and knowledge.

Ms. Templeton stated that they were one of the key contacts during the pandemic for the Payroll Protection Program, as well as the Economic Injury and Disaster Loan. It shared with the SBA and a multitude of allies and stakeholders.

They prepare companies for lenders and investors. They provide 3-year projections or longer and business valuations. They help with industry reports and in-depth demographics that are about 104 pages that includes socioeconomic profiles. It is provided to their clients at no cost to the clients. Ms. Templeton also stated that at no point do they charge the clients because the clients invest in them. There resources are also available to the clients.

Ms. Templeton asked the County to continue to support them.

18. David Rowe, County Health Insurance Benefits

Mr. David Rowe gave a brief overview County's health insurance for the employees. Mr. Rowe stated that three (3) plans are offered to the employees. The County is currently a part of the Local Choice Health Insurance Plan. The County is currently funding \$843 for the employee cost in full. He stated out of approximately 116 people that are insured through the County, approximately 100 people participate in this plan. The employers cost to fund the 116 employees currently is approximately \$1.166 million dollars. If the County continues to fund the current plan, Key Advantage Expanded, the County will receive approximately a 3.68% increase from Anthem. The increase will cost \$42,912 which County funding will increase from \$843 per participant on the plan to \$874 per participant to spend on the plan.

Mr. Rowe stated that he shared Option 3. Option 3 is the Local Choice Key Advantage 250. This plan will decrease from \$843 per participant on the plan to \$805 per participant on the plan which would save the County approximately \$49,824. This represents a -4.27% decrease in County costs.

Mr. Rowe discussed enrollment breakout by plan. The Key Advantage 250 is a copay based plan. He stated that copay will increase minimally for employees. It includes the same dental plan and same pharmacy benefit as the expanded plan. Office copay would increase.

Mr. Rowe stated that the main differences in the Key Advantage Expanded Plan and the Key Advantage 250 Plan are (1) annual deductibles that are currently \$100 will increase to \$250; (2) out of pocket of \$2,000 in the current plan will increase to \$3,000; (3) copays for PCP are \$15 and \$25 for specialist which will increase to \$20 and \$35, respectively. He stated that inpatient per stay will increase from \$300 currently to \$400 under the proposed plan. Outpatient procedure will increase from \$100 to \$150 under the proposed plan. Emergency services will increase from \$250 to \$350.

Mr. Rowe gave a brief summary of what employees spend on healthcare services. He stated that the County is penalized for offering the rich plan.

It was recommended to have Mr. Rowe do a side by side comparison of both the Key Advantage Expanded and the Key Advantage 250.

In summary, Mr. Rowe stated that if the County fund the Key Advantage 250, there would be a savings of \$92,000. Most communities have moved away from the Key Advantage Expanded because of excessive costs.

19. Sussex County Public School System

Dr. Arthur Jarrett, Superintendent of the Public School System, and Mr. John Broderick, the Director of Finance and Business Operations, were in attendance.

Dr. Jarrett stated that the schools didn't have a specific presentation. Their request has been made and they were there to try to answer any questions the Board may have.

Dr. Jarrett was requested to share the school's reopening plan.

Dr. Jarrett stated that their reopening plan is in two (2) phases. Dr. Jarrett stated that students came back to the school on March 15th. Those students who were enrolled in outside facilities such as Rowanty, the Governor's School, Brick, Rivermont, and CodeRVA.

Elementary school students will return April 26th. Teachers will return April 13th. Pre-K, 1 and 2 will start April 19th, 4 days a week. Middle and High Schools will start May 3rd.

Dr. Jarrett stated that they were also including in their plan an extensive Summer Program for some support—social and emotional initiatives, as well academic—for the students. It is proposed to have school the remaining two (2) weeks in June and the month of July as the extended school.

Summer School will be voluntary and mandatory. Those students in the bottom quartile and need the most help will be required to attend the summer school program.

There was inquiry regarding submitting the reopening plan to the State Superintendent. Dr. Jarrett spoke to the reference of the Governor's statement in March at one of the Press Conferences of Sussex not submitting a Reopening Plan. Dr. Jarrett stated that he wasn't aware of why the statement was made. Sussex had submitted a Reopening Plan to return to school on November 9, 2020 and had been approved by the Virginia Department of Education. An update to that submitted plan was also done when the schools didn't reopen on November 9th. This update was in the office of the Virginia Department of Education in February 2021, approved by the Board. Dr. Jarrett stated that there were a number of apologies received from the Governor through his Communication Team and the Virginia Department of Education behind the scenes.

There was mention of a decrease in the Average Daily Membership (ADM) of 19 children. Dr. Jarrett stated that COVID affected some of the families as to where some students were not living in the County. Some students were also lost to private schools with parents needing daycare.

There was discussion of lump sum and categorically appropriations/funding. There was inquiry of some cost savings due to the school's closing. There was also inquiry of any federal funding/CARES Act Funding received and the amount, as well as the amount of anticipated funding to be received.

Mr. Broderick stated that they do not know the exact amount of funding of the new plan. The other plans have various timeframes they have to expend the money. The first timeframe is December 2021 and goes out to near September, ending with the federal years of 2022 and 2023 with assuming the new money is 2024.

Mr. Broderick stated those funds are used for new funding and is not meant to supplant anything that they have. He stated there will be funding available for the schools to upgrade facilities, PPE, and technology for students choosing to remain virtual. Funding is available in staggered terms for the next three (3) years. He stated that there are specific uses for which they can use the funding.

Mr. Broderick stated that the first award of the CARES Act Funds received was \$424,000 of which they had to set aside money for Tidewater Academy. Mr. Broderick reviewed the remaining COVID-19 Federal award.

Dr. Jarrett stated that some of the money was spent to update/upgrade the internet system to allow the students to be able to get on the internet at one time. Over 600 laptops were purchased. Over 700 hotspots and MiFis were bought for the students. Air Filtration Systems are being installed in all of the buses. Air Filtration Systems are being installed in all the buildings, starting with the schools. PPE was purchased for students and staff which includes masks, face mask shields, and disposable gowns. Plexiglass moisture barrier have been purchased for all of the students' desks and the staff. The defogging/sanitation equipment was upgraded. Training was paid for the custodians and maintenance staff and bus drivers as it pertains to COVID to properly clean effectively. Temperature scanners were purchased. They are making plans to extend their summer and afterschool offerings. Additional health care workers (CNA) will be brought in to help at the schools.

There was inquiry of health care workers at the schools.

There was inquiry as to whether Sussex would be receiving ESSER funding of the projected amount of \$6 million or do they have any idea of what that funding would be.

There was discussion/inquiry of the required local effort number of possibly being one of the highest in the State of Virginia. There was inquiry as to how the County got there.

Mr. Broderick stated that he came to Sussex County in 2010. The County has funded Sussex schools \$8 million within a few thousands for approximately 15 years. Mr. Broderick stated that it was higher than the required local effort and higher than it needed to be.

There was discussion of reviewing this matter in the budget.

Item 5. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizens' comments.

Item 6. Adjournment

Chair Seward adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.