

SPECIAL SESSION:

State of West Virginia, County of Jefferson, to-wit:

At a Special Session of the County Commission of said County and State continued and held at County Commission meeting room in the Old Charles Town Library located at 200 E. Washington Street, Charles Town, WV 25414 on March 13, 2014 at 7 pm (An audio file of the March 13, 2014 meeting is available through the Jefferson County Commission Office.)

PRESENT: Walt Pellish, President
 Jane Tabb, Vice President
 Dale Manuel, Commissioner
 Patsy Noland, Commissioner
 Lyn Widmyer, Commissioner
 Debbie Keyser, County Administrator
 Tim Stanton, Finance Director
 Jessica Carroll, Administrative Assistant

RE: **FY15 Budget – Community Forum**

Commissioner Pellish called the meeting to order at 7 pm and Ms. Tabb led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Pellish explained to the audience the procedure for the meeting, noting that those who wished to speak would be allotted two minutes. He urged those who wished to speak to provide suggestions as to how the County could restore funding levels for the organizations being cut. Mr. Pellish also gave a short time line to explain how the County found itself in its current financial situation.

Tim Stanton, Finance Director, gave a summary of the FY15 Budget Narrative, including the FY15 Revenue and Expenditures. Mr. Stanton explained the two main issues impacting the County's budget. First, the County has, in years past, relied heavily on gambling tax revenue; however, due to increased competition from Maryland and Pennsylvania casinos, gambling tax revenue has declined by approximately \$1.5 million dollars over the past year. Secondly, the County became dependent upon prior years' reserves to balance the budget for the upcoming year due to the State's unusual budget requirements. Mr. Stanton also explained to the audience the target based budgeting method used to determine the FY15 Budget. .

Public Comments were made by the following:

Vicki Eckert, resident and volunteer with the Jefferson County Youth Soccer League - spoke regarding the cuts to the Parks and Recreation budget and the affect the cuts would have on the Jefferson County Youth Soccer League.

Ginny Fite – President of AHA, spoke regarding AHA and how the proposed budget cuts would severely impact the amount of money AHA would be able to grant to artists within the community.

Curt Mason/Hali Taylor, Board member for the Libraries and Historic Landmarks Commission/Director of the Shepherdstown Library - spoke regarding the proposed 15% funding cuts for the county libraries and questioned how the second wealthiest county in the State could fail to provide for their citizens. Ms.

Taylor also provided the Commission with hand written letters from middle school students concerned about the closure of the libraries.

Jeffrey Bayliss, Vice President for the Summit Point Babe Ruth little league, spoke regarding the proposed cuts to Parks and Recreation, stating Parks and Recreation can barely afford to provide items needed and cuts would further diminish the opportunity for young children to be involved in team sports.

Martin Burke, Chair of the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission - spoke against the 50% cut to the Historic Landmarks Commission, stating the 50% reduction would leave barely enough money to cover the costs of their maintaining and insuring their properties and paying for their annual audit.

Emily Vaughn, resident – spoke against the proposed cuts to AHA and Parks and Recreation, stating she is a local artist who receives grants from AHA and teaches children’s art classes through the Parks and Recreation Summer Camp programs.

Tamra Trafford, paramedic in Jefferson County - spoke against the proposed cuts to the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency, stating the Commissioners would be putting the taxpayers lives at risk with a reduction in response time.

Regina Foster, resident – spoke against the proposed cuts to AHA, stating the county needs artistic and cultural programs to attract small businesses to the area to eventually produce more revenue.

Ernie Moore, Jr., resident – spoke against the proposed cuts to AHA and Parks and Recreation, stating the programs supported by both groups help to keep young people off of the streets and out of trouble.

Art Wineburg – member the Shepherdstown Community Club, spoke against the proposed cuts to Parks and Recreation and specifically addressed how those cuts would impact the maintenance of Morgan Grove Park in Shepherdstown.

Gil Garcia, resident – spoke against the proposed cuts to AHA, stating that AHA is a wise investment as residents want and need cultural and artistic events to improve their quality of life.

Nancy Keither, resident – spoke against the proposed cuts to the libraries, reminding the Commission that a reduction of funding on the county level would also result in a reduction of funding on the state level.

Edmond Uzan, resident – spoke regarding the proposed cuts to the library and read a letter from Jeffrey Cox, stating the libraries are especially important resources for those who aren’t able to afford computers or internet access.

Jeff Plautz, treasurer for the Independent Fire Company - spoke regarding the proposed cuts to the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency and expressed concerns over the disbursement of funds.

Linda Case, resident and Director of Craftworks at Cool Spring - spoke regarding the proposed cuts to AHA, stating the county needs to make an investment in the arts for the benefit of the citizens.

Katrina and Lillian Haskins – residents, spoke regarding the proposed cuts to the libraries, stating the libraries are vital to their everyday life as new Jefferson County residents.

Lillian Bauer , children’s librarian for the Shepherdstown Library - spoke regarding the proposed cuts to the libraries, providing the Commission with alarming statistics on children who struggle with reading during their formative years.

Alan Williams, President of the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency Board – spoke regarding the proposed cuts to the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency, urging the Commissioners to decrease the percentage of their reduction in order to maintain a fast response time for emergency situations.

Daniel Lutz, resident - spoke regarding the Public Utility Tax and stated that bigger businesses within the County should be taxed more heavily to provide an increase in revenue.

Mary Kellogg, resident – spoke regarding the county budgeting process and suggested the County consider taxing cigarettes and sugar sweetened beverages to increase revenue.

Ann Mountz, Vice President of Parks and Recreation, spoke regarding the proposed cuts to AHA and Parks and Recreation, stating people will not be interested in living and investing in Jefferson County if there are no programs or activities for their children.

Chuck Dunkerly, resident and former president of the Conservation Film Festival - spoke regarding the proposed cuts to AHA, stating many artists cannot afford to live or work within the county without the assistance of grants from AHA.

Rob Leeper, member of the Middleway Fire Company - spoke regarding the cuts to the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency, stating he would rather see the County support emergency services and infrastructure since the libraries and arts programs have the ability to seek partnerships with places like APUS and Shepherd University.

Melissa Kowolski, resident, small business owner, and teacher for Parks and Recreation – spoke regarding the proposed cuts to Parks and Recreation, stating she is frustrated with the fact that smaller organizations seem to be punished and cut the most and proposed all departments and contingency agencies receive an across-the-board percentage cuts.

There being no further public comment, each of the Commissioners addressed the audience and thanked them for their attendance and participation, giving special consideration to all of the volunteers who work to support groups such as the libraries and AHA. The Commission also stated that though the budget work sessions have been difficult and laborious, their outlook for the future of Jefferson County remained bright.

There being no further business, Commissioner Pellish adjourned the Community Forum at 8:47 pm.

WALT PELLISH, PRESIDENT

Respectfully submitted
Jessica D. Carroll

Executive Administrative Assistant