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Wadesboro Town Manager Discovers Major Financial Problems Facing Town

This is Wadesboro Town Manager Alex Sewell's report from the town council meeting Monday, May 6: Regarding our current fiscal year ("FY") budget that was created in 2012, I recently discovered two major problems. First, non-existent revenue was apparently used to balance the budget. Specifically, a line-item entitled "Alumsludge State Grant" was budgeted for \$100,000. In my investigation, an auditor confirmed the Alumsludge funds were exhausted in FY 2009-2010. The second problem is there may be significant revenue overestimations. While revenue estimations are not an exact science, overestimations combined with the non-existent revenue is concerning.

While 2012 estimates predicted \$200,000 of fund balance would be spent, our current situation means we may have to spend our entire combined appropriated fund balance and still have a budget deficit at fiscal year-end ("FYE"). Worst-case scenario is over \$1.4 million must be used from fund balance to offset a budget deficit. The Town has about \$2.4 million in General Fund total fund balance but only about \$1 million in unassigned fund balance.

Given these numbers, this is a potentially catastrophic development for both the current and future budgets. As a result, I have taken immediate action. I ordered an immediate spending freeze on all unnecessary expenditures. All Department Heads understand the situation. Further, I am significantly altering my FY 2013-14 budget proposal and developing a long-term plan.

Regarding the General Fund, about \$1.026 million separates projected revenue and actual revenue to date. If the \$593,000 fund balance appropriation is used to close this deficit, there is still about a \$433,000 deficit. The next two months of revenue may or may not offset this deficit. In comparison, about \$450,000 was received in the last two months of the previous fiscal-year. However, if this deficit is not completely offset by the next two months of revenue, the fund balance appropriation will need to be increased to offset the difference.

Turning to the Water/Sewer Fund, about \$954,000 separates projected revenue and actual revenue to date. If the \$127,000 fund balance appropriation is used to close this gap, there is still about an \$827,000 deficit. If water and sewer revenues continue at their current pace, this deficit should be about \$277,000 at FYE. Fund balance from the General Fund will need to be used to offset this deficit.

In conclusion, this situation is potentially devastating financially. You can rest assured that Town staff and I will continue working tirelessly until this problem is contained and a solution is developed. I will keep you keep abreast of all updates.

Unemployment Rate at 10.9% for March

Anson County's unemployment rate for March was 10.9%, the lowest rate since April 2012 when the rate was 10.6%. The state of North Carolina's unemployment rate for March was 8.9%.

In March 2012 Anson County's unemployment rate was also 10.9%.

Anson's total labor force in March was 10,910. Of that number 9,723 were employed and 1,187 were unemployed. In February the total labor force was 10,938, with 9,664 employed and 1,274 unemployed.

Unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in 99 of North Carolina's counties in March and remained the same in one. All 14 of the State's metro areas experienced rate decreases.

Graham County had the highest unemployment rate at 17.8 percent while Orange County had the lowest at 5.6 percent. Among the Metro areas, Rocky Mount at 12.5 percent experienced the highest rate and Durham-Chapel Hill at 6.7 percent had the lowest. The March not seasonally adjusted statewide rate was 8.9 percent.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates fell in 78 counties, increased in 14 and remained unchanged in eight. Twelve metro areas experienced rate decreases, while one experienced an increase and one remained the same.

The number of workers employed statewide (not seasonally adjusted) increased in March by 17,248 to 4,273,673, while those unemployed fell 26,855 to 419,546. Since March 2012 the number of workers employed statewide increased 32,155, while those unemployed decreased 22,262.

NCDOT Emphasizes "Safety on Two Wheels" This Month

May is National Bike Month; Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

"Safety on two wheels" is the theme for the month of May, during which two different two-wheeled forms of transportation - the bicycle and the motorcycle - are taking center stage. May is officially known as both "National Bike Month" and "Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month."

"As the weather gets warmer, it's the perfect time to remember the importance of safety, whether on a bicycle or a motorcycle," said Transportation Secretary Tony Tata.

There are more than 194,000 motorcycles registered in North Carolina. In 2012, there were 4,157 motorcycle crashes that resulted in 162 fatalities and 3,970 injuries. Each year, more than 900 bicyclists are injured or killed by cars on North Carolina streets.

NCDOT offers the following important safety tips to bicyclists, motorcyclists and other drivers:

Bicycles and Motorcycles:

- Always wear a helmet. The law in North Carolina requires children on bicycles under the age of 16 to wear a helmet, and it also requires motorcyclists of all ages to wear a Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218 helmet.
- Be visible at all times. This includes wearing bright or reflective clothing.

Other drivers:

- Share the road. Bicyclists are considered vehicles in North Carolina and therefore have the same rights and responsibilities as cars and trucks; and motorcyclists have the right to a full lane.
- Stay alert. Be aware that bicycles and motorcycles can be easily hidden in a car's blind spot, therefore; take an extra moment to thoroughly check traffic when changing lanes.
- Keep a safe distance. Allow plenty of room for passing bicyclists, and plenty of following distance behind motorcycles.
- Be cautious. Be aware that turn signals on a motorcycle are not self-canceling, thus some riders sometimes forget to turn them off after a turn or lane change.

Annual Picnic in the Park is Friday

Grace Senior Center will hold their annual Picnic in the Park this Friday, May 10 beginning at 11 a.m. If you are interested in joining in on the fun and fellowship call the center at 704-694-6616.

Citizens Law Enforcement Academy Wraps Up 11th Session



The next Sheriff's Citizens Law Enforcement Academy has been tentatively set to start on February 27, 2014. Details for applications will be made through the local papers and on the Sheriff's Office website at www.ansonsheriff.com after the first of next year.

On Thursday, April 25th, nineteen individuals graduated from the 11th Anson County Sheriff's Citizens Law Enforcement Academy. This Academy was sponsored and put together by the Sheriff's Office for participants who applied from all over Anson County. The purpose of the Academy was to expose participants to the many different aspects of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

This Academy began on March 7th and met each Thursday night from 6 to 9 p.m. Participants heard presentations from the Sheriff, the District Attorney's Office, Magistrate's Office, Sheriff's Detectives, FBI, US Secret Service, ATF, Federal Wildlife, state Forest Rangers and others from the law enforcement community. They saw a K-9 demonstration, a demonstration of the Sheriff's SWAT team, a TASAR demonstration, toured the 911 Operations Center, the Sheriff's Office, Magistrate's Office, Detective's Office and the county Jail. They saw a display of illegal drugs, watched videos of undercover drug buys, participated in a mock crime scene; saw Sheriff's Office vehicles and firearms and equipment, and actually fired weapons on the Sheriff's Office's firing range. They also participated in the Sheriff's "Ride-A-Long" Program.

Graduates from the Academy were Sherri Allen, Taylor Allen, Shaniqua Bennett, Jessica Brunson, Jason Clarke, Diane Goodwin, John C. Crawford, Vionita Legrande, Carly Little, Barbara Lowe, Matthew Morris, Chris Morton, Jamie Richardson, Shanda Shaw, Erica Tarlton, Bruce Taylor, Rowena Thibodeaux, Erin Tillman and Jonathan Williams.

Sheriff Tommy Allen said, "This was a really good Academy class. These participants did a great job. We had very good attendance and good class participation. At the end of the program the most common comment was 'don't change a thing; and make it longer, or wished it didn't end.' I think the fact that they did not want it to end speaks highly of the program. We have now graduated around 260 citizens from our eleven academies."

Anson County Adopts Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Pee Dee Lumbar Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan will help Anson County and all the municipalities better prepare for natural disasters

The unincorporated areas of Anson County, as well as the towns of Ansonville, Lilesville, McFarlan, Peachland, Polkton and Wadesboro are all better prepared for disasters with the recent approval of their local hazard mitigation plan, which is a long-term strategy to reduce the community's vulnerability to natural disasters. This plan identifies hazards and potential hazards in Anson County and all the municipalities and it creates a framework to help community officials make decisions that may ultimately protect lives and property.

The plan also outlines a strategy for implementing mitigation projects. Projects such as purchasing property that floods repeatedly are a part of the plan's proactive steps to lessen the impact of future disasters and the costly expenses associated with them.

History shows that the physical, financial and emotional losses caused by disasters can be reduced significantly through hazard mitigation planning. The planning process encourages communities to integrate mitigation with day-to-day decision making regarding land-use planning, floodplain management, site design and other activities.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reviews and approves state, tribal and local hazard mitigation plans, which are required as a condition for states and communities to receive certain types of disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. State mitigation plans must be approved every three years, and local and tribal mitigation plans must be approved at least once every five years.

As Recreational Boating Season Begins Boating Safety Required

Being a safe boater isn't just smart, it's the law. Regulations are in effect to protect the boating community in North Carolina. Wildlife officers with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission want to increase awareness of the regulations to prevent accidents by offering pre-launch courtesy inspections at various public access areas throughout the summer.

"But boaters can do their own pre-launch inspection," said Maj. Chris Huebner, the state boating safety coordinator. "We provide a checklist, a vessel operator's guide and other useful information online at www.ncwildlife.org."

One important state regulation requires anyone younger than 26 operating a vessel powered by a 10-horsepower or greater motor must complete an approved boating safety education course and carry their certification, or otherwise be in compliance. The Wildlife Commission offers free boating safety education courses throughout the year.

National Safe Boating Week May 18-24 and safety advocates will encourage wearing life vests, both when it's required and those times it's common sense. "Wearing a life vest is one of the most effective and simplest life-saving strategies there is," said Maj. Huebner. "Life vests are no longer the bulky, cumbersome models of years past, with plenty of options available. Finding which model works best for you - then wearing it - can mean the difference between life and death."

Both state and federal regulations require that a Type I, II or III personal flotation device in good condition and of appropriate size be accessible for each person onboard a recreational vessel, including canoes, kayaks, rowboats and other non-motorized craft. Sailboards, racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes and racing kayaks are exempt from this requirement. North Carolina law requires children younger than 13 to wear an appropriate life vest whenever they are on a recreational vessel that is under way. It must be U.S. Coast Guard approved and be a proper fit, with youth sizes corresponding to weight. The law also requires all personal watercraft riders and anyone being towed to wear proper life vests.

For more information on where to boat and public access areas, as well as registering and titling, navigation rules and safety, go to www.ncwildlife.org or call 919-707-0031.



Tickets Still Available for Ansonia Play

Don't miss the upcoming performance of "The Trip To Bountiful," at the Ansonia Theatre. Join your friends and experience this touching community play. Bring Mother for Mother's Day or bring a group. (discount offered)

Performances are Friday, May 10, Saturday May 11, Friday May 17, and Saturday May 18. Showtime is at 7:30 p.m.

In addition, there will be two Sunday matinees on May 12 and May 19, beginning at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12, (reserved, assigned seating) and are available now at the Arts Council (ACAC) or Lacy's. Call 704 694-4950. You may even pay with PayPal at www.ansoniateatre.com.

Garden Club Springtime Tea is Saturday

Come join the fun! The Wadesboro Garden Club is hosting a Springtime Tea at 1:30 p.m. this Saturday, May 11 at Calvary Episcopal Church. Come enjoy seeing the variety of table settings, and enjoy tea and a choice selection of goodies with your friends. This is a terrific way to relax and celebrate Mother's Day!

Tickets are just \$10, available from any Garden Club member. Members will arrange table decorations of various sorts for your enjoyment, as well as serve tea, sandwiches, pastries and other delicious foods.

Please invite your friends to join you in this festive occasion.

Wadesboro Post Office Food Drive is this Saturday

The United States Postal Service is having it's 3rd Annual Food Drive on Saturday, May 11. If you receive mail in Wadesboro, you are asked to please donate canned foods by setting them out beside or in your mailbox for the Saturday mail delivery on May 11. Postal Carriers will collect the canned food and donate all of it to a local food bank.

This is convenient way to help many families in need in Anson County. Even one can of food will help, but the carriers will collect as many as you will donate. For more information contact Tracy at 704-572-8406.

Relay for Life is this Friday

Everyone is encouraged to come join in the activities planned for Relay for Life on Friday, May 10 at Anson High School. Cancer survivors are invited to come participate for free (you can bring your caregiver). There is a \$5 charge for anyone not with a team.

Opening ceremonies begin at 6 p.m. There will be entertainment and a kids zone with games. Luminaries are available for \$10 each or three for \$25.

All proceeds go to Relay for Life. For more information call Carrie Bunn at 704-294-0071.

50+ Club Meeting Features Musical Program

The Hampton B. Allen Library's 50+ Club will meet on Monday, May 13 in the Little Theatre at 10:30 a.m. Gina Clark and Allison Cameron will present a musical program of vocals and guitar. Everyone is invited to join them for this special program.

Any questions please call 704-694-5177.

Bone Marrow Motorcycle Ride for Minister Larry Whitley

There will be a bone marrow motorcycle ride for Minister Larry Whitley on Saturday, May 18th at Centenary A.M.E. Zion Church in Lilesville, beginning at 10:30 a.m. with registration. The official ride will begin at 11:45 a.m. All proceeds will go to Larry Whitley's bone marrow procedure.

The public is asked to come together as a loving community and please get involved. To participate in the ride or to make a donation, please contact Thedis Spencer at (704) 475-2695 or Commissioner Vancine Sturdivant at (704) 848-4412.

Brown Creek Soil & Water Conservation District Meeting

The Brown Creek Soil & Water Conservation District monthly board meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 28 at 10 a.m. at the BCSWCD office located at 1758 Morven Road in Wadesboro. For more information call 704-694-3516.