

**THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF CRAVEN
RECONVENED ITS REGULAR SESSION OF MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2009
ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009 AT 9:00 A.M. IN THE COMMISSIONERS'
ROOM OF THE CRAVEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 406
CRAVEN STREET, NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA.**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Perry Morris
Vice Chairman Johnnie Sampson, Jr.
Commissioner Lee Kyle Allen
Commissioner Jason Jones
Commissioner Theron McCabe
Commissioner M. Renée Sisk
Commissioner Steve Tyson

STAFF PRESENT:

Harold Blizzard, County Manager
Ray H. Moser, Assistant County Manager
Richard F. Hemphill, County Finance Officer
Gwendolyn M. Bryan, Clerk to the Board
Jim Hicks, County Attorney

Following an invocation by Chairman Morris the Board reconvened its recessed regular session.

County Manager, Harold Blizzard, announced receipt of three private contractor bids for operating Child Support Enforcement, two of which are very competitive in their presentation of best estimates. With additional time more accurate, estimates may be possible; however, there are only two weeks remaining for a submission of a Child Support Enforcement plan to the state. He asked the Board to make a decision as to whether to contract or bring Child Support Enforcement in house. If brought under DSS, there is much work to do. If the decision is to contract, he would like to go back to negotiate with the two competitive contractors.

Mr. Flowers presented the following updated list of pro's with both scenarios, and a comparison of cost estimates.

CHILD SUPPORT-CONTRACT OR SOCIAL SERVICES

Positives for Contract (Updated)

1. Contractor better capacity to start up new program
 - a. Experts in Child Support
 - b. Trained managers
 - c. Currently running Child Support in nearby counties (better support available)
 - d. Have sophisticated computer software and resources allowing them to be more efficient.
 - e. Have staff who have developed and managed a budget (State office budget developed and managed by State staff in Raleigh-no experience in local office).
2. Better service
 - a. Better able to transition
 - b. Better able to train staff
 - c. Successful in two nearby larger counties
 - d. Contractors have expressed that they would be willing to work with CCDSS to improve services for foster children
3. Contractor handles most of the large volume of calls and complaints

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4. Existing CCDSS staff have no child support expertise
 5. CCDSS short staffed and lacks the capacity to currently add another major program
 - a. Significant increases in public assistance programs in past year
 - b. Still dealing with issues in Foster Care and Children's Services
 - c. New Program Manager in Adult Services
 - d. No person currently available in house to manage Child Support
 6. Difficulty with another location for DSS services
 - a. No capacity in current building to house Child Support
 - b. Currently DSS services provided in four sites in addition to main building (Harlowe Senior Center, Vanceboro Senior Center, George Street Senior Center and Career Center)
 7. If Child Support staff employed by contractor employees would not fall under State merit system and poor performing employees could be replaced easier-staff more accountable for good performance.
 8. Contractors will interview current local child support employees and give serious consideration to employing them if given the contract.
 9. Monitoring and overseeing responsibility for Child Support in Craven County with a contractor would require significantly less time for CCDSS staff than running the program.
 10. Upfront costs such as computers, servers, desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets and other office equipment can be spread out over the length of the contract versus having to pay it all upfront.
 11. Contract cost is lower than County run office.
 12. If contract does not work out can change DSS running

Positives for DSS (Updated)

1. Better control with CCDSS running program
2. County ultimately responsible for Child Support
3. State staff has positive input about local Craven County Child Support Office and the lead supervisor.
4. Craven Child Support Lead Supervisor, Anitra Nelson, and Supervisor, Gwen Walston, appear to be very knowledgeable and have the ability to handle difficult issues.
5. If selected to fill positions, Anitra Nelson and Gwen Walston appear to be a good fit with Social Services.
6. Someone still will be needed to monitor contract program
7. CCDSS run Child Support may provide better services for foster children's parents having to pay support.
8. Existing staff at Child Support that would be hired would continue being part of the state/local government retirement system.

Contractors would prefer a five-year term in order to spread start-up costs over five years. The cost would go up for a three-year contract.

There are concerns about what will happen to current employees if the program is contracted. Mr. Blizzard stated that the employees would have an opportunity to apply for positions in both scenarios.

Commissioner Jones made a motion that Craven County negotiate with a contractor to take over the program, seconded by Commissioner Allen, there being five (5) "Ayes" and two (2) "Nays" from Commissioners McCabe and Sampson.

DSS agreed to prepare a response to the State that the County will contract out the program, to be submitted by January 1, 2010. Staff will proceed to negotiate with Young Williams and Policy Studies, Inc.

Mr. Blizzard announced that Mary Harris accepted the offer of the Convention Center Director position at a grade 80, step 6.

Mr. Hemphill announced the following bonds sold last week:

2001 – Craven Community College
2002 – School
1998 – Airport

The County will save \$50,000-\$60,000/year with refunding

At 9:40 a.m. the Board recessed until 10:00 a.m.

At 10:06 a.m. the Board reconvened.

Commissioner Tyson announced that he has received a lot of complaints in his district about flooding from a new development, and wanted to find out what recourse the County has to address this through planning & zoning. He suggested this may be the last opportunity to address these issues as the Twp. Corridor Zoning Plan is being finalized.

At 10:20 a.m. Commissioner McCabe moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Tyson and unanimously carried.

Chairman Perry Morris
Craven County Board of Commissioners

Gwendolyn M. Bryan
Clerk to the Board