

The Fayette County Board of Health met on Tuesday, March 13, 2001 at 7:30 a.m. in the public meeting room in the Fayette County Administrative Complex, 140 Stonewall Avenue, Fayetteville, Georgia.

Board of Health Members Present: Dr. John DeCotis
Carol Fritz
Nancy Neff
Lynette Peterson
Lyn Redwood
Dr. Michael Strain
A.G. VanLandingham

Staff Members Present: Merle Crowe
Rick Fehr
Cynthia Grant
Laurie Cook
Wanda Scarborough
Dr. Michael Brackett
Dennis Davenport, Attorney

Dr. Strain called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

On motion made by Lyn Redwood, seconded by Nancy Neff to approve the Board of Health Minutes for January 9, 2001. The motion carried unanimously. Carol Fritz abstained from the motion because she was not in attendance at that meeting.

UPDATE ON LAKE EDITH SITUATION:

Environmental Health County Manager Rick Fehr reported that on February 1, 2001 representatives from the State Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division had come out to both the Marnell Mobile Home Park wastewater treatment facility and Lake Edith sites. He said they had collected several samples and would have test results within thirty days. He said Mr. Summerville of that department had assured him that the county would have the test results; unfortunately, despite those promises those results had not been made public. He remarked that since the last Board of Health meeting this matter had evidently reached the attention of State Representative Kathy Cox. He said she had asked to have a time line of the history of this problem so that she could look into it. He stated that he had drawn up the time line, a copy of which he had presented to the Board. He said the time line showed problems with Marnell Mobile Home Park since January, 1998, according to the Health Department's records. He said it had reached the point that the Department of Natural Resources had established a consent order with

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Marnell Mobile Home Park ownership, due to the fact that they had not been in compliance with State regulations for a long time. He said he understood that the consent order would be in place until they had gone for twelve months without having a single violation. He said to his knowledge this had not yet occurred. He said he would be glad to answer any questions the Board might have.

Lyn Redwood said she had forwarded to Mr. Fehr the name of a resident of the county who had contacted her personally. She said the resident lived in Marnell Mobile Home Park and had complained about being unable to brush her teeth in the morning due to the odor of raw sewage coming up into her sink. The resident said some of the lines in her yard had actually been disconnected. She said the resident had also told her that during the summer of 1999 her ***husband had an episode of Hepatitis, although it was a different strain of Hepatitis. She said she did not know if there had been any more research into that. She remarked that she had asked the resident to write a letter to Mr. Fehr. She asked him if there had been any follow up on that.

Mr. Fehr replied that he had several conversations with this resident, wherein he had informed her that he had checked with representatives of the State Environmental Protection Division about this question. He said the EPD indicated that they did have jurisdiction over problems such as sewage spilling out onto the ground next to her yard and other residents' trailers. He said that since these problems typically occurred on a week night, weekend or holiday, he had provided her with his home and office number so that she could contact him at any time should such an event occur. He said she was very appreciative. He said it had been several weeks since he had spoken with her and he had not received a single call on this situation. He said there was concern within the community about Hepatitis. He said that Water System Director Tony Parrott confirmed that the Water System did supply water to the mobile home park, and that he felt confident that county water was not a source of Hepatitis. He said there had been no further developments to determine the source of the reported case.

Ms. Redwood remarked that her second question regarded the sending of samples to the University of Georgia. She said she could arrange transportation of the samples.

Mr. Fehr responded that would be extremely helpful. He said that the Health Department staff shortage has created extreme difficulty in trying to arrange transportation.

Ms. Redwood asked if it would be easier for someone outside of the county to collect the samples independently and get those to Athens.

Mr. Fehr said he would need to make sure that this was acceptable, and if it was it would certainly be acceptable to him.

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Ms. Redwood asked Mr. Fehr to check on that and possibly samples could be collected this next week and taken to Athens. She said it was amazing to her that this situation had been allowed to continue for so many years. She said it was obviously a public health issue. She said there needed to be some resolution to this situation, but she did not see this happening independently.

Mr. Fehr remarked that he would be happy to arrange a meeting with the EPD, if that was the Board's wish.

Carol Fritz said that she had an e-mail forwarded to her from Representative Kathy Cox. She said Mrs. Cox had spoken to Mr. Summerville and he indicated that last year Marnell was instructed to make several improvements to their system, including a new chlorinator and other equipment repairs and upgrades. She said the last time the EPD went to Marnell there were also other orders for repairs. She said Mr. Summerville had stated that Marnell needed to build a new retention pond.

A.G. VanLandingham stated that five residents of the Marnell Mobile Home Park had come to his office. He said these residents had brought several concerns to him. He said the fine that was issued by the EPD was not working. He said they had reported a mobile home that had eighteen people living in it; sewer lines were broken outside the trailer and sewage ran onto the ground. He said there was no effort to clean up after this happened, that the break was just to relieve a back-up in the system. He said they had talked about residents' inability to bathe or brush their teeth in the morning. He felt that when residents were running water out of the faucet into the sink the water seal was broken, and this allowed odor to come out of the system. He said that if the system was backed up then this would happen. He asked if there was a law on the books that would get the attention of the owners of Marnell Mobile Home Park. He said the fine did not seem to be working. He felt it was atrocious for this system to operate for several years under these conditions. He said he was not advocating that 250 people be put out on the street, but only asked if there was some personal penalty to impose on the owner to get his attention. He felt six months in jail would do it.

Ms. Peterson interjected that \$10,000 did not get the owner's attention.

Mr. Fehr said there was a section of the State law that referred to a public nuisance. He said on rare occasions in the past the health department had used this.

Mr. VanLandingham suggested this law be dusted off and applied to Marnell mobile park's owner. He said apparently money was not a problem. He said he had obtained further information on how much money was paid to the owner every month from the residents, and that a \$10,000 fine would be easily paid. He stated that he did not think that the county would get the owner's attention through a fine. He felt that six months in jail and changing the violation from a public nuisance to a criminal nuisance might work.

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Mr. Fehr said he would be glad to get together with Attorney McNally and Attorney Davenport and discuss this issue to see what could be done. He said the Board was certainly aware that this problem had been a long-standing one.

Dr. DeCotis clarified that the results were still pending. He asked Mr. Fehr if there was any anticipated date on getting these results back.

Mr. Fehr replied that the samples were taken around February 1st, 2001 and he was told the county would have the results in thirty days. He said he had called several times after the thirty days and was assured that the county would have the results before this Board meeting; however, they have not been provided yet. He said he would make further contact in order to get a new date as to when the results would be provided.

Dr. DeCotis asked Mr. Fehr if there was anything the Board could do to help speed things along.

Mr. Fehr felt it might be helpful to send a letter indicating the Board's strong interest in those results being provided as soon as possible.

Dr. DeCotis suggested staff draft a letter for the Chairman's signature.

Ms. Redwood asked Mr. Fehr if there had been a response to the letter that had been sent out two months ago.

Dr. Strain remarked that he had received a call from Mac Collins' office. He said the Federal level had referred this issue back to local jurisdiction.

Ms. Redwood asked if there would be any opportunity for the mobile home park to be connected to a central sewer system.

Mr. Fehr replied that the City of Fayetteville's sewer system extended to the hospital area of State Road 54. He said there was still a substantial distance between this location and Marnell Mobile Home Park. He said the City felt the sewer was extended as far as it could be right now. He said if there was no other solution but to have sewer, then the City could be sounded out to see if they would consider it.

Ms. Redwood remarked there had been a previous situation in Fayette County where a development had numerous failing systems and it was actually the State who came in and required Fulton County extend sewer to that particular area. She said something had to be done, and a long term solution needed to be reviewed. She said even if the owner of the mobile home park built a new treatment holding pond this would not correct the fact that there was little to no biological treatment of this waste. She said this would be like putting a band-aid on a huge cut.

Mrs. Fritz asked Mr. Fehr whatever had happened with the testing to determine whether the fecal coliform was human or animal.

Mr. Fehr replied that it was extremely difficult to actually specify that a certain bacteria was only from humans and not any other organism. He said if there was fecal coliform and other contaminated bacteria, then this was a public health problem and the main issue. He said the YMCA's concern was what they would do for participants and visitors using the lake adjacent to their property. He said the county needed to determine if the Lake meets the current State requirements for recreational purposes or not.

Mrs. Fritz said she felt this was what the county was doing previously.

Mr. Fehr replied that in the event that this matter went to court, it would be scientifically all but impossible to state absolutely that a particular bacteria came from a human source and not from other organisms.

Mrs. Fritz remarked that when Mrs. Cox had spoken to Mr. Summerville they expressed concern that the fecal content of Lake Edith was affected by wildlife that resides on the Lake.

Mr. Fehr said that Marnell mobile home park management themselves were identifying that this treatment facility was not meeting State requirements. He felt it was not necessary to prove that they were not in compliance.

Dr. Strain said Mrs. Cox was in the best position to effect a positive change. He felt it would be more effective if Mrs. Cox was provided with information requiring answers. He said he could call Mr. Summerville today but would have no influence on him. He said if compliance could not currently be enforced, then laws needed to go on the books that would require compliance. He suggested Mrs. Fritz continue speaking with Kathy Cox. He felt the quickest solution would be one at the State Capitol.

Mrs. Fritz remarked this was the reason she had wanted to see the time line, but she felt it needed to go back even further. She said all of the documentation needed to be compiled for Mrs. Cox in order for this issue to be presented as a decent case.

Dr. Strain said Mrs. Cox should also investigate the issue of the chlorinator and how it was working. He said she could demand a report on this issue. He said one of the problems was that the county did not officially have jurisdiction over this. He stated this was classified as a multi use facility and not a permitted item through the Fayette County Board of Health. He said the county was involved because this was a health issue.

Mr. VanLandingham asked who did have jurisdiction over this issue.

Dr. Strain said that was what the Board had been trying to determine for the last six months.

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Mr. Fehr remarked the State DNR provides a permit for the facility.

Ms. Redwood felt in the event of a public health issue the county would have some jurisdiction, in order to protect the residents.

Attorney Davenport interjected that the county would have jurisdiction with respect to the nuisance issue. He said the Board must understand what it would be getting into if this issue were to be classified as a nuisance. He stated that if the problem was not abated, the park would be shut down. He said then there would be residents with no system whatsoever. He said he was not saying that what they have is better than no system at all, but this should be a remedy of last resort. He said if the Board could effect some type of change that would certainly be the most preferable position.

Mrs. Fritz said she had spoken to David Word, who is with the EPA, some time back. She said his response was that a resident of the mobile home park would have to file a lawsuit. She responded that it was outrageously ridiculous that someone would have to file a lawsuit to get the EPD to do its job.

Lyn Redwood felt that whatever the Board did on this matter, the Board should make sure that the EPA was aware of its actions. She felt that if the Board was going to get any movement out of the EPD it would come through pressure from EPA. She felt the Board should have communication with the EPA, not the EPD. She promised the Board that the EPA would provide more movement than the EPD in this issue.

Mrs. Fritz felt it was very important that the Board get a good package of information going back as far as possible on this issue.

Mr. VanLandingham asked Mr. Fehr if there was any criteria that would determine how much discharge that can put into a volume of water.

Mr. Fehr responded yes. He said that part of the permit allowed for a certain number of gallons per day.

Mr. VanLandingham asked if this had been checked to determine if the mobile home park was exceeding that figure.

Mr. Fehr responded that was one of the multiple violations as indicated in the time line.

Mr. VanLandingham said that the reason he had asked that question was because the mobile home park had been expanded over the years, to the point that there was the possibility of them being over capacity. He said that he did not feel like the nuisance itself could be jailed, but the responsible party could be jailed, and the park remain open. He said he believed if the owner was sitting in jail he would take action.

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Mr. Fehr said he would be glad to seek out what legal avenues the county would have put in place to effect that kind of change.

Mr. VanLandingham said he felt this situation was pitiful and Mr. Fehr agreed.

Ms. Peterson commented on the aerial photographs that she had taken and sent to Ms. Redwood. She said one could count the number of trailers from the air.

Ms. Redwood said she would bring those photographs in for the Board to see.

Chairman Strain asked the Board where it would go from here.

Ms. Redwood suggested a representative from the EPA such as Madeline Dominee, or whoever was over the State permitting program, should meet with Jim Summerville and members of the Board of Health who could attend. She said they could discuss the situation and what could be done to remedy it.

Mr. Fehr clarified that the Board wanted a letter composed to the EPA indicating that the Board would like to have them meet with an EPD representative in a Board of Health meeting.

Chairman Strain mentioned that if Representative Kathy Cox could set up that meeting and if the Board members had to, they could go to Atlanta for that meeting. He said there needed to be a meeting set up. He suggested the meeting be held in the evening. He felt the Board should show interest by a little sacrifice.

Mr. Fehr clarified that a special called meeting in the evening would be acceptable to the Board.

Chairman Strain asked Attorney Davenport how this should be approached.

Attorney Davenport replied it would be better to advertise this as a meeting and if there was no quorum it would be fine. He said the Board could still discuss the issues but it would not be an official meeting. He said alternatively if the Board did not advertise a meeting and a quorum showed up there would be a problem with the lack of advertising.

Chairman Strain clarified that even if the Board did not have a quorum it could still bring the issue back and take action.

Attorney Davenport remarked that the Board could not take official action if there was not a quorum.

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Ms. Redwood felt it might be a good idea to have some of the residents there as well. She said they could make a number of comments; that sharing their experiences and concerns might have a little more impact.

Ms. Peterson remarked that Kathy Cox had also indicated that there was a citizens advisory group that might be interested.

Nancy Neff asked if all of the residents in the mobile home park were aware of this problem.

Ms. Redwood said she would like to see the letter go out in the next week or so and Mr. Fehr replied that he would proceed with this.

DISCUSSION OF FISCAL YEAR 2002 BUDGET:

Wanda Scarborough remarked that on the right hand column of each member's copy of the budget was the expense section, beginning with salaries for the Health Department. She said this year salaries were \$725,329, for a staff of seven nurses, seven environmentalists and nine administrative staff. She said that there were three environmentalist positions currently vacant but still included in the budget. She said this included monies for the 3.5 increase that was proposed in the Legislature for all employees. She stated that there was also \$12,064 in the budget, which was for a part time secretary to be added to the environmental health staff. She said there was \$55,663 that was FICA expense for the staff. She said \$108,799 was paid into the retirement system and \$95,018 was paid for health benefits. She said equipment was listed as \$5,000 this year. She said an audiometer was requested for the nursing staff and a lancet for finger sticks. She said the audiometer was \$4,000 and the lancet was \$1,000.

Ms. Scarborough further remarked that supplies and materials were listed at \$45,000 and that this figure included office supplies, cleaning supplies and laboratory supplies. She said this year supplies and material costs went up \$26,000, based on what was being used this year; but \$14,300 was added to comply with the safety device law that goes into effect January 1, 2001. She said this was for needles that retract back into the syringe for the safety of the nurse and staff. She said \$100,000 was proposed for pharmaceuticals, which was an increase of \$30,000. She said this included travel clinic vaccines, pneumonia vaccine and other pharmaceuticals that are not covered by the State Formulary. She said the increase this year was due to travel vaccine. She said the Health Department recoups that cost from the patients when these vaccines are given. She said \$15,303 was budgeted for repairs and maintenance. She remarked there was a sheet in the budget packet listing repairs and maintenance costs. She said the list started with biomedical pick up and the rest of the expenses were for maintenance agreements on equipment in the Health Department: items such as copiers, typewriters and computers. She said \$10,000 had also been put into the fund balance/saving account for computer replacement. She said it was determined that when servers had to be replaced it was costing approximately \$48,000.

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She said they wanted to prepare for that cost so that it did not catch the department off guard. She said usually a server would last four to five years.

Ms. Scarborough further remarked that \$3,000 had been budgeted for printing; that this included any kind of pamphlet that was printed and any kind of information that needed to go out to the public. She said \$25,000 was budgeted for other operating expenses. She said this sum would cover expenses that come up during the year but were not specifically outlined in the budget. She said this could include cabling for computers or registration fees for meetings. She said \$5,000 had been budgeted for computer software, which included the anticipated expense of a new environmental health software package that the District was previewing. She said the exact cost had not yet been determined. She said \$7,450 was budgeted for travel and per diem was \$840. She said the per diem cost was for Board of Health member reimbursement for Board of Health meetings. She said \$13,079 was budgeted for the Mitchell and McCormick contract. She said this was the company that provides the Health Department's public health and accounting software packages. She said they maintained the software package as well as the computer. She said \$8,500 was budgeted for telecommunications, \$6,180 for postage and Intra/Inter was \$12,066. She said these were services that the Health Department purchases from the District offices; such as services for pharmacy, computer support and personnel support.

Ms. Scarborough remarked that the total Health Department budget this year was \$1,243,291. She called the Board's attention to the left hand side of the page. She said this was a list of the resources that the Department would use to pay for these expenses. She said the Health Department was proposing to ask the County for \$250,000 this year. She said last year the Health Department had asked for \$229,119 and was granted this amount. She remarked after the year got under way, it was realized that the Department had more monies that were being carried over than had been anticipated. She said the department was then able to reduce the amount to \$200,000.

Ms. Scarborough commented on prior year program income. She said there was a balance of \$516,887, which are fees that the Department would earn this year and not spend. She said this amount also included other local funds, which was money the Department earned as interest from its checking account. She said \$104,443 was put in for Environmental Health fees. She stated that these would be fees that would be earned next year. She said that spending current year fees in the year they were earned was something that the Department had tried to avoid. She said it looked like next year the Department would begin to spend current year fees. She stated that the WIC program would provide \$41,855 as a Federal program that operates out of health departments; that the Federal government gives money toward the operation of that program. She said Grant-In-Aid was \$330,106 and this was the same amount that the Department had received last year. She said it was still undetermined how much Grant-In-Aid would be. She said the Governor had proposed to cut public health Grant-In-Aid by \$3.5 million. She stated that if the Governor was successful in the cut, they would adjust back for the in-grade increases that were given

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to staff. She said it would pretty much work out to be about the same allotment as the previous year.

Ms. Scarborough remarked that resources to cover the budget amounted to \$1,243,291. She asked the Board members if there were any questions.

Carol Fritz asked if the Health Department worked in conjunction with the County as far as House Bill 489. She asked if there would be a benefit to the Health Department in doing this.

Attorney Davenport replied that they certainly could provide a closer relationship if they chose to do so. He said the way the relationship had worked in the past prior to House Bill 489 was that the Health Department was partially funded by the County based upon the needs of the Health Department. He said if there were other needs that had not been stressed in the past it could be better facilitated by a closer relationship and he was sure the County would be open to that relationship.

Mrs. Fritz remarked that she just wondered if with House Bill 489 it would help with supplies and materials that the Health Department needed to purchase.

Attorney Davenport remarked that the State's purchasing power for the Districts was probably just as good or better than the Health Department would get with the County.

Ms. Redwood asked if that information was included in the packets and Ms. Peterson replied no.

Ms. Redwood asked if the Board needed to vote on this today or was this just for information.

Wanda Scarborough replied that the Board would need to vote on it today, or if the Board did not feel comfortable voting today, then they could vote on this issue at the next meeting.

Ms. Redwood said she still had some issues that needed resolving.

Chairman Strain remarked there were still some questions about the request for \$250,000 from the County. He said he was concerned about the Health Department starting to dip into current year fees and basically the Department would have a \$104,000 loss.

Ms. Scarborough replied that there were some things that would play into that. She said with the three vacant Environmental Health positions, staff was considering keeping one or possibly two of those positions vacant. She commented on the \$250,000 County request. She said in fiscal year 2000 the County had given the Health Department \$278,000.

Mrs. Fritz asked for the justification in cutting back in the Environmental Health positions.

Ms. Scarborough replied that staff had looked at the work load and it was determined that the Environmental Health Department activity was declining.

Mr. Fehr remarked that the largest portion of the Environmental Department work load dealt with the onsite sewage disposal program. He said the number of those permit applications had dropped from previous years. He remarked that there had been some increase in the number of restaurants and so forth, but it was extremely difficult to give the Board an exact figure as to how much the department's work load overall had dropped--if any--with the fact that the Department has had a three full time staff member deficiency for some time. He said it was hard to guess what amount of work might have been done by staff had they been present. He stated the number of permit applications had dropped.

Ms. Redwood asked Mr. Fehr if this was a trend that he anticipated continuing.

Mr. Fehr remarked that was difficult to say. He said economics played a large role in that as with any community.

Ms. Scarborough remarked staff had reviewed onsite sewage evaluations and it had declined for several years.

Mr. VanLandingham said he had a question and an observation. He asked if this \$725,000 in salary reflected the raise that Mr. Fehr had requested.

Mr. Fehr replied to his knowledge it did not.

Ms. Scarborough remarked that staff did not know how the Board would vote. She said staff could do a budget revision if the Board voted to go with the proposal.

Ms. Redwood remarked on the prior year income being \$580,000 and it was down \$70,000 this year although expenses were up. She asked for the reason that this would occur.

Ms. Scarborough replied that the Environmental Health fees were less this year. She said staff had looked at the Environmental Health fees at the end of January, 2001, compared them to the year before and that they were \$45,000 less for the same period of time. She said it was projected that this would cause \$71,000 less in fees.

Ms. Redwood remarked that the budget she was looking at did not have the Environmental Health fees recorded.

Ms. Scarborough asked Ms. Redwood to look on the last page of the budget where it stated the Fayette County projection based on December, 2000. She said it showed the Health

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Department projected to take in \$212,950 in Environmental Health fees. She said last year the Department had taken in \$284,275 in Environmental Health fees.

Mrs. Fritz remarked that the Board needed to discuss the raise issue. She asked that if the Board were to approve that, where would the money come from and how would it be funded.

Ms. Scarborough remarked that in the proposal it was stated that the money would be taken from positions that would be held vacant. She said the money would be coming from current year fees. She said a position would be deleted from the budget which was probably \$33,000 and then put in the raises that were projected to be \$10,000 or \$20,000, depending on the proposal the Board accepts.

Ms. Redwood clarified that if the Board deleted a position, the salary that would have been dedicated to that position could be divided up to increase the salary and hopefully help retain personnel. She hoped not to have to deal with this problem again, where the Department was short of staff. She said she would be in favor of that.

Ms. Peterson felt it was better to raise salaries rather than do a one time bonus. She said she did not feel that one time bonuses had much longevity. She said that if such a bonus could not be offered again next year people might feel shortchanged.

Mr. VanLandingham said he also strongly recommended not doing a one time bonus. He said this would affect future raises. He said if there was a percentage increase it would mean going back from a two year old wage discounting the bonus and this would hurt the employee. He said he would vote against a bonus. He said he had made an observation. He remarked that in the letter that he received it was indicated that the salary increase was to retain personnel. He said now they were saying that they were not needed. He felt if a budget item was going to be turned in and a raise requested on that basis, then the Health Department would be turned down. He said the raise was not necessary to retain personnel, but it was needed to maintain personnel.

He strongly recommended a real budget. He said if the Health Department needed \$270,000 from the County, he strongly recommended they should request that amount. He said staff should not come before the Board and say if this and if that. He said that long range plans should be made based on the budget, and if the Health Department had to go back to the county he would support it--if it was a real need. He said if the staff told the Commission that a position would be held open and used for a bonus he felt this would be a deterrent to approval. He said if \$270,000 was needed then that was the amount that should be requested.

Dr. DeCotis remarked that he was in favor of not having a one time bonus, but was in favor of raising salaries to maintain personnel, as well as to recruit new people in the future.

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He said it was hard to recruit people and it was the same way in the school system. He said the environmentalists do a great job, and the Health Department should do all it could to maintain staff members who do the job. He remarked that since Fayette County was a wealthy county it was hard to get Federal funds. He asked if there was an opportunity to apply for those funds.

Ms. Scarborough remarked that the county rarely received Federal funds. She said sometimes there were programs in the District Office that were purely Federal fund, which are budgeted. She said she was not aware of any Federal fund grants available for the Health Department.

Ms. Peterson said that if Ms. Scarborough did not need approval today, she would like to see her take Mr. VanLandingham's suggestion and come back with another budget with the first line item 6001 raised and also not to use the vacant positions in any way.

Merle Crowe interjected that the county needed to have the budget put into the system by Wednesday.

Ms. Scarborough said staff could re-work the budget pretty quickly. She said this would depend on what action the Board takes with Mr. Fehr's proposal. She said she would need an understanding regarding current year fees being placed in the budget, and she asked the Board how high they would want the figure.

Chairman Strain felt the Health Department should have a handle on its expenses. He said the Board was discussing the portion of the budget that was potentially changing; staff salaries in particular. He felt the Board needed to look at the staff's proposal. He said if the staff did not want to go there then it needed to pick a working number to submit to the Board. He said he did not know very much about the salary structure and that information would be helpful for him to have. He felt the Board needed to determine if it wanted to approach these two issues separately or together. He said if the Board wanted to approach these together then it could discuss the salary issue first and then get a figure.

Ms. Scarborough remarked that for the last few years staff had received a 3% raise which was based on merit performance. She said those raises were given in October. She said this year the Governor had proposed a 3.5% for a Met Expectations rating, and for those employees who are rated Exceed Expectations, he has proposed a one time 2% bonus. She said this budget did not reflect any of the 2% bonuses that might be given.

Chairman Strain asked where that money would be found.

Ms. Scarborough responded that what had been done in the past was to give approximately 80% of that money, and the county has picked up the other 20%.

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Mr. VanLandingham said he would like to make a motion that the Board could actually deal with: he recommended that the Health Department budget reflect a 5% Environmental Health employee raise as presented by Mr. Fehr; it should also reflect the corrected amount requested from the county. He said this would be 5%, which would total \$10,056.

Ms. Scarborough asked Mr. VanLandingham if he was saying the county amount should be increased by the \$10,056 and he replied yes.

Dr. DeCotis asked if that was in addition to cost of living.

Ms. Scarborough responded that the cost of living was already included, and Mr. VanLandingham remarked this was given in October.

Ms. Redwood asked if the 5% was for the entire Health Department or only for Environmental Health.

Ms. Scarborough replied just for Environmental Health.

Dr. DeCotis seconded the motion, discussion followed.

Ms. Redwood clarified that there were three vacant positions.

Mr. Fehr said two of the three positions were Environmental Health Specialist II positions and the third one was for an Environmental Health Specialist I.

Ms. Redwood asked which position was needed the most.

Mr. Fehr replied that the two Specialist II positions were definitely needed. He said the Environmental Health Specialist I was an entry level position and the department could certainly go without that one easier than the Specialist II positions.

Mr. VanLandingham asked if these three vacant positions were permanent, or would they be filled at some point in the future.

Ms. Scarborough replied that these positions would still be set up. She said they could be taken out of the budget and not filled. She said if the Board decided later to fill them they would just be added back into the budget.

Mr. VanLandingham asked if the positions were going to be filled, why would the Board want to take them out of the budget and later have to go back and ask for money again?

Ms. Scarborough remarked if the positions were going to be filled then the Board would not want to do that.

Mr. VanLandingham said he was asking if these positions were going to be filled this year.

Laurie Cook interjected that staff would like to leave all of the positions available to be filled as needed. She said the Specialist II positions should be filled first because they required experienced personnel. She said she did not want to see these positions eliminated.

Mr. VanLandingham said he strongly recommended and would like to see these positions left in the budget.

Mrs. Fritz remarked there were a couple of options and Chairman Strain asked if she meant the 5% versus the 10%. Mrs. Fritz replied yes that was correct.

Chairman Strain remarked that the motion was for 5%.

Mrs. Fritz asked why Mr. VanLandingham was opting for a 5% raise and not a 10%.

Mr. VanLandingham replied he felt the Commission would accept a 5% increase. He said that was his personal feeling and he was not speaking for the Board now.

Ms. Peterson remarked that a while back Mr. Fehr had made a proposal for employee pay raises, and at that time the Board told him to come to the Board during budget time. She said the Board also told him to give the Board some figures of comparable positions and pay grades in other counties. She felt the Board really needed to consider that information since it was provided at the Board's request.

Mr. Fehr reviewed some figures with the Board comparing counties and similar staff positions.

Chairman Strain said he agreed that a 10% increase would be a stretch for the county, particularly with decreasing fee collection. He felt 5% recognized good work and that it puts Fayette County in a more competitive position.

Dr. DeCotis clarified that the increase did not have to be 5% or 10% but it could be somewhere in between.

Mr. Fehr remarked that these were just comparative amounts and the amount could be anything the Board desired.

Laurie Cook remarked she had run some figures and if the Board chose a 7.5% increase, the actual cost to the county would be \$15,084. She said since FY 2001 was being compared to FY 2002 she encouraged the Board to consider something between 5% and 10%. She felt this would keep salaries in line with surrounding counties with similar work activities.

Dr. DeCotis asked if these figures included the cost of living increase.

Ms. Cook replied that the figures presented included the cost of living increase for 2002.

Mr. VanLandingham said he recalled the cost of living increase being given in October, 2001.

Ms. Scarborough remarked the cost of living increase would come in October and it would be on top of the requested increase.

Mr. VanLandingham asked how employees could be falling behind if they get it at one time of the year and another one gets it at another time.

Laurie Cook reviewed salary comparisons with the Board.

Ms. Redwood said when she looked at some of the comparisons, salaries look fairly comparable with other counties.

Ms. Peterson said at this point it did not seem that the Health Department was able to retain or attract employees.

Ms. Cook remarked that was a good observation. She discussed some other positions and salary ranges in District IV.

Ms. Redwood remarked that this was not just a local problem but was state wide.

Mr. Fehr agreed that this was a state wide problem. He said the department had hoped the state would address this problem but apparently this is not so. He said this forces the department to see if the Board would assist them in addressing this issue.

Ms. Redwood remarked that it was not necessarily that the Fayette County Health Department was behind other counties but more that the entire State was lower.

Mr. Fehr said the department was trying to address this issue as best as it could since the State was not going to do anything at this time.

Chairman Strain clarified that Ms. Cook was recommending a 7.5% increase and Ms. Cook replied that she felt this would be a very fair increase.

Chairman Strain said in looking at the Health Department staff and the number of years of service, Fayette County was fortunate to have such dedicated staff. He commended staff on their presentation of the budget. He said the loss of one of the three key people in the Health Department would be detrimental in terms of services to the county.

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Ms. Peterson interjected that there was also a cost involved in hiring someone new with training and so forth. She said it was not just a threat that the county's personnel would leave if they did not get more money; it was a reality that the county would lose these people. She said then the Health Department would be faced with rehiring and all of the savings would be absorbed by training someone new, as well as offering the salary that it took to attract them.

Mr. VanLandingham said he firmly believed that it was easier to retain people than it was to re-train or keep a training program going. He said he wholeheartedly supports paying people what they are worth for the service they are performing. He said the trend seemed to be that a job has a definite worth. He said it did not matter if you were fifteen years on that job or twenty years. He said this was not counted. He said the only thing that was counted was the worth that the job rendered to the organization. He said this was sad and it did hurt in recruiting people, but this was reality. He strongly recommended putting in a 7.5% salary increase, to be included in the \$250,000 County request along with supporting documentation. He said there was a slim possibility that 7.5% would go through untouched. He said the Commission might look at a current salary and then feel that the projected increase was too much. He said he would withdraw his motion.

Dr. DeCotis remarked that he would withdraw his second.

On motion made by A.G. VanLandingham, seconded by Dr. DeCotis, to recommend that the salaries of the environmental health personnel be raised by 7.5%. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Redwood suggested that in the future the Board be given the proposed budget before the meeting starts.

Mr. VanLandingham suggested the Board of Health receive the proposed budget for review at least one month prior to adoption.

Dr. Brackett interjected in defense that staff had run into situations which were undefined such as what the final budget would be and so forth. He said the further back the Board would go the less clear the projection would be and the more nebulous the budget the Board receives would be.

Mrs. Fritz said the Board needed to be informed and brought up to date on the proposed budget. She said she was not happy getting the proposed budget during the meeting that it was to be adopted. She said she did not do things that way. She said in the City she gets her information long before the budget was adopted so that questions could be answered and research done.

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Chairman Strain said the Board needed to decide on the piece that would go to the county since that had to be there by tomorrow. He suggested \$265,100 be submitted to the county and said that this would reflect the difference the Board had just made. He said the Board could table the rest of the items until the next meeting, allowing more time to study the budget.

On motion made by Lynette Peterson, seconded by Lyn Redwood that the county's portion of the budget be increased by \$265,084. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Strain asked what the Board wanted to do with the remainder of the budget.

Wanda Scarborough remarked that the budget had to be turned in by July 1st.

On motion made by A.G. VanLandingham, seconded by Carol Fritz to table further discussion of the proposed 2001/2002 budget to the next Board of Health meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

TB CHANGES:

Cynthia Grant remarked the Board had received a memorandum from John Riggs and Dr. Brackett regarding changes proposed in charges for TB screening x-rays. She said before this could be put into policy and in the computer it would need to come before the Board for a decision. She said she was asking that the Health Department be able to charge clients who were not active TB patients, nor a person who was a known contact to a case of TB. She said this would probably cover people who were doing screenings for employment. She said the department would not charge the patients who had active cases of TB for their x-rays. She said the recommended charge was \$35.00 per x-ray which was the Medicaid reimbursement rate.

Ms. Redwood asked if the county was previously covering these x-rays.

Ms. Grant replied that it depended upon what the patients came out to be on the department's sliding scale. She said if they were 100% they could be referred to Fayette Medical and the patient could just pay Fayette Medical whatever their charge was.

Dr. Strain felt this was necessary.

On motion made by Carol Fritz, seconded by Dr. DeCotis that the Health Department start applying a fee of \$35.00 to the patients who are obtaining x-rays for pre-employment. The motion carried unanimously.

INJECTION ADMINISTRATION FEE:

Cynthia Grant remarked that she had previously presented Dr. Brackett's memorandum to the Board regarding the injection administration fee. She stated that the Board was looking at using current year fees in the next budget cycle. She said part of that would be to consider what the Department was charging the public. She said for some time the public had been charged a \$10 administrative fee for injections. She said staff had looked at this, as well as safety needs. She said the Department gives approximately 22,000 injections in the course of a year. She said if the administrative fee was increased, the Department would positively impact what was being taken in and this would offset the use of some of the current year fees. She said currently the public was being charged \$10.00 for pneumonia shots. She said this was the same charge for flu vaccine. She said this injection cost the Department \$9.78 to purchase per dose. She said the Department was losing money on that vaccine. She said the Health Department did not want to price itself so that citizens would not be able to afford it and therefore not come in. She said the Board needed to look at increasing some of the administrative costs. She felt a \$5.00 increase would not put things out of citizens' financial reach.

Chairman Strain suggested Ms. Grant review all of the injections and come back with a current scale and a proposed scale that would include the cost. He felt most businesses double the price. He said if a vaccine cost \$10.00 then someone would charge \$20.00 which would include some for administration and some for the needle assistance. He said all injections needed to be reviewed as well as processes. He felt the Health Department should be appropriately reimbursed for services.

Ms. Grant said she could go back and review each one and other administrative fees as well and bring a list of charges from this Health Department as well as for other health departments.

Chairman Strain said the new costs should be compared too. He asked Ms. Grant to bring that information to the Board for review.

SAFETY/NEEDLE-LESS SYSTEMS:

Cynthia Grant remarked that each injection had cost the Health Department \$1.83. She said even with the most inexpensive safety needle system, that cost was going up to \$2.33 per shot. She said the retractable needle would be \$4.58 per shot. She said staff had a lot of information to review. She said it had been decided that staff wanted to use the laser lancet. She said that system would prick a finger with a laser, instead of a needle. She said the only problem with that was that it could not be done on a heel. She said sticks on infants were done on their heels, and this machine could not be used for them, since it only had a slot for a finger. She said disposables for the laser lancet cost less than for a regular lancet. She said the Department would have effectively paid for that in less than one year. She said they were going to go ahead and purchase that machine. She said they had not quite worked out the other systems yet. She said they needed safety systems for blood drawing as well as for administering injections, and this covered a lot of ground.

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She said she would also bring the conclusion back to the Board at the next meeting, as to what exactly had been chosen.

Chairman Strain said this would also be helpful in budget planning as well.

STAFF REPORTS:

PLAQUE PRESENTED TO NANCY NEFF: Merle Crowe remarked that staff would be presenting a plaque to Nancy Neff for all of her years of service on the Board of Health.

Ms. Neff said it had been her honor to serve and she had enjoyed working with everyone.

INFORMATION ON THE WEST NILE VIRUS: Lyn Redwood stated that she had received a memorandum from the Georgia Municipal Association that had gone out to Mayors and Councils of the GMA regarding an informational program on the West Nile Virus. She said the meeting was going to be held on March 17th at Stone Mountain. She said there was a representative from the DeKalb County Board of Health and the Georgia Division of Public Health who were providing the content for the program. She said items such as what is the virus, when is it expected to hit Georgia, what will local governments need to do to reduce the risk of an outbreak within their communities and what is the virus, when it is expected to hit Georgia, what will local governments need to do to reduce the risk of an outbreak within their communities and what services can local governments expect from their local health departments. She said she was curious to know what the health department's plans were for this program and if there were any members from Fayette County who are going to attend. She felt this was very interesting, especially if they were expecting the local boards of health to react to this threat in some way.

Carol Fritz said she had already faxed this to the department and Cynthia had responded. She said she could tell the board who was going from Peachtree City.

Cynthia Grant remarked that she had forwarded the flier to EMA Director Pete Nelms, who was not aware of the program either. She said Mr. Nelms may be sending someone or going himself. She said staff had been briefed several times at director's meetings, regarding the West Nile Virus and the possibility that it may be here this summer. She said they had discussed what was going on right now: which was the possibility of someone finding a dead bird and reporting it to the Health Department. In this event, someone from Environmental Health had gone out and picked up the bird and sent it to the State Laboratory for testing. She said there had been no virus detected in tested birds, which had happened twice. She said staff had been briefed on this for awhile. She said the department had not planned on sending any one to the meeting and she did not know about it until the flyer was sent to Merle.

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Ms. Fritz felt that the program was directed more toward government officials. She felt the health department staff had already received briefings and training. She said she was aware that a fire chief and assistant fire chief would be attending. She said Pete Nelms may be attending as well but did not know for sure.

Ms. Redwood asked if staff who was involved in these meeting would share some of the concerns and what can be expected with the Board.

Dr. Brackett replied that at this point it was just a theoretic and probably very low risk. He said the Health Department was aware of this and he had made staff aware of it. He said there was an expert district person who was available to make presentations if desired.

Ms. Redwood remarked that the flyer indicated what could be expected from local health departments and she was curious as to what was expected.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Strain adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Merle Crowe, Director of Administration
Prepared by: Karen Morley

Dr. Michael Strain, Chairman