



County Board of Commissioners

Chairman

Brownie Newman

District 1

*Jasmine Beach-Ferrara
Al Whitesides*

District 2

*Ellen Frost
Mike Fryar*

District 3

*Joe Belcher
Robert Pressley*

October 11, 2017

Commissioners:

In the Commission budget 2016-2017, the Commission approved funding to increase pay raises for the County's lower paid workers. Unfortunately, much of this funding was used to provide bonuses for higher paid employees. These excessive bonuses, coupled with inaccurate responses to public information requests, are eroding public trust.

The Commission's approval of revised Personnel Policies to eliminate undue bonuses and to create independent internal auditing procedures will prevent many such problems in the future. Nevertheless, additional action is necessary to restore equitable compensation of County employees and accountability for taxpayer dollars.

Based on input and feedback from the Commission, I ask for Commission consideration of the following at our October 17 meeting:

- 1) Amend the Personnel Ordinance to enact a 12 month freeze on cost of living adjustments for Department Heads and Senior Leadership.
- 2) Commission direction to our County Manager to create a plan to reduce the overall cost to taxpayers for compensation of the senior management team through restructuring, adjustments to salary, attrition or other approaches. These adjustments should be sufficient to recover the salary bonuses received by members of senior management.
- 3) Timely completion of a county employee compensation study for higher and lower paid County employees. The Manager is instructed to update the Commission on the status of the salary study within 90 days. The former Manager was instructed to direct the 1.5%



to the lowest paid employees last year. It is the intent of this Board that the plan include consideration of retroactive adjustments to 1.5% increases for lower paid employees.

- 4) The Commission has changed the Personnel Ordinance to remove the discretion of the County Manager to award bonuses or incentives except performance bonuses not to exceed \$1000 that will be publically awarded and recognized.

- 5) Effective July 1, 2017 the Commission directed the County Manager to eliminate all supplemental and dual role pay supplements.

- 6) The Commission has directed the County Manager to ensure salaries are posted and accessible to the public.

- 7) The Commission will annually review the salaries and performance of all positions that report directly to them and publically report any contractual changes in regard to these positions.

Funds saved from the above steps may be used to increase compensation for the County's lower paid workers.

The Commission should consider adjustments to our compensation as well. I have asked the County Manager to provide updated figures on the compensation levels for Commissioners in the 10 largest North Carolina counties. Buncombe County is the 6th largest county in North Carolina. Current compensation places Buncombe closer to the top of the list.

Further review also indicates that none of the other top ten Counties pay a differential salary for the position of Vice-Chair; therefore, recommendation is made to reduce the amount paid for that position to the same amount paid to Commissioners. A reduction in compensation for the Chair position of 25% and the other Commission positions by 17% would bring these positions more in line with similar sized counties.

Thank you for your consideration.

Brownie Newman, Chair