

An adjourned meeting of the City Council and Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County was held in the office of the Mayor, on Friday, May 9, 1952, at 4 o'clock p.m., to further consider and adopt budget appropriations for the joint governmental functions of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, for the fiscal year 1952-53.

Mayor Shaw presided, and Councilmen Albea, Baxter, Boyd, Coddington, Dellinger, Jordan and Van Every were present for the City.

Commissioners McAden, Beaty, McDonald, McEwen and Porter were present for Mecklenburg County.

INVOCATION.

The invocation was given by Dr. E. A. Beaty.

CHARITY HOSPITALIZATION APPROPRIATION ADOPTED.

Councilman Baxter requested that action be taken on the motion which he had presented and was under discussion when the joint session adjourned on Wednesday, May 7th. The motion was read from the Minutes of the meeting on May 7th, as follows:

"Councilman Baxter moved that the County take care of all charity cases and the City take care of all emergency-room cases within the City of Charlotte, and the costs of the cases from outside be billed to their respective counties. The motion was seconded by Councilman Van Every."

Councilman Baxter stated that his reason for presenting this motion was because in the past the City and County Governments have not had a clear understanding as to what their responsibilities are with respect to charity hospitalization, and now that it has been established that it is the legal responsibility of the County, the matter can be worked out in a more business-like manner.

In the discussion, Councilman Albea stated he would favor the motion if assured that it is a definite arrangement and the County will carry its share; that unless this is done the hospitals will be back about the middle of the year with requests for funds, which he would have to favor rather than have the hospitals closed to charity cases. Councilman Boyd stated that as the responsibility is primarily that of the County, the hospitals would simply be referred to the County if further requests are received from them. Councilman Coddington stated the County should assure the City they will meet the needs for charity cases and not go only half way.

Councilman Van Every requested permission to withdraw his second to the motion by Councilman Baxter, which was granted, and it was withdrawn.

The motion was then seconded by Councilman Boyd.

Councilman Van Every stated that since the City Attorney has advised the Council that charity hospitalization is a County responsibility, he cannot see why Mecklenburg County does not assume its legal obligation and pay the complete costs; that even then the residents of Charlotte would be paying 80% of the charity load. That under the present load the City resident "gets it in the neck" three times from the tax angle - he pays County taxes including taxes for charity hospitalization - he pays City taxes including charity taxes - and he pays an assessment if he is in a hospital as a paying patient to help take care of charity patients; that it is an unjust and unfair distribution of the tax load.

Commissioner McAden asked on what basis is the County responsible for all charity hospital care? Councilman Van Every replied that it is on a

legal basis and asked the City Attorney to give his ruling on the question. Mr. Shaw, City Attorney, stated that it is primarily the responsibility of the County, and it is permissible for the City to appropriate funds for this purpose.

Councilman Dellinger asked that the County Attorney rule on the question, to which Mr. Francis Clarkson, County Attorney, replied that the opinion of the Attorney General as to the County's responsibility in the matter is all we have to go on, that the question has never been decided by the Courts.

Councilman Boyd stated that under the City's permissible rights, the motion before the house, if adopted, would mean that the City would be contributing \$112,000.00, and asked what more the County could want. Commissioner McAden stated that the figures used by the City are wrong, and upon his request the County Auditor read their tentative charity hospitalization budget showing requested funds for expenses of the in-patient load.

Dr. Bethel, City Health Officer, advised that figuring a full reimbursement cost on all charity patients, the cost to the County should be approximately \$363,000.00, which figure is based on the number of patients handled during the past twelve months.

Mr. Yancey, City Manager, referred to the County questioning the legality of their responsibility for charity hospitalization and care, stating that history shows that in the early days the towns operated as a county unit, and as the towns grew and developed the counties were not willing to assume all of the needed expenses and the cities went to the Legislature and for permission to assist in taking care of their own needs, and now Mecklenburg County is more than willing to let Charlotte carry the entire load.

Commissioner McDonald expressed the opinion that the book-keeping of the hospital should be looked over and that items such as depreciation on buildings should not come under operating expenses. Commissioner McAden stated that in his opinion there is too much fancy stuff that is not entirely needed at Memorial Hospital.

Mr. R. Z. Thomas, Administrator of Memorial Hospital advised that 86 cents of the per diem cost is for depreciation on buildings, and that he is perfectly willing to go over the various items with the County. He stated further that he has no apology to offer for the so-called frills at Memorial Hospital, that their facilities are established with the view of their benefit to the patients; that their Cancer Clinic may be termed as a frill but the three lives it has been instrumental in saving proved its worth to the hospital.

The vote was then taken on the motion by Councilman Baxter, and was lost.

Councilman Baxter then asked that the County Commissioners offer a proposal. Commissioner McAden stated that the County is willing to give Good Samaritan Hospital \$2.00 more per patient-day and pay one-half of the actual cost of its emergency ward clinic and continue payment of one-half the clinic at Memorial Hospital.

Councilman Boyd stated that since the City Attorney states that the City has no legal obligation to adopt the joint budget today, that he moved for adjournment of the meeting. Mayor Shaw stated that this matter of hospitalization is important and should be settled today and, in his opinion, unless some action is taken today both governing bodies may be criticized.

Councilman Jordan asked that an understanding be had that before another joint budget is acted on, the County submit its recommendations to the Council two or three weeks before action is necessary instead of two or three days. He stated further that he would like the question of responsibility for charity hospitalization settled by the courts.

Councilman Van Every moved that we accept Plan A submitted by the City, and that the City include in its budget \$112,751.00 with the provision that the County will positively pay the hospitals the reimbursible costs less \$2.50, and that the terminology of an emergency case will be that when a patient is taken from the emergency room he then ceases to be an emergency case, and that the question of reimbursible cost be determined by these joint bodies at a later date. The motion was seconded by Councilman Boyd.

Commissioner McDonald stated that the County has a list from Memorial Hospital and many of the items should be broken down; that their record system is too detailed and expensive. Mr. Thomas, Memorial Hospital Administrator, stated that the entire cost of the hospital is averaged on a per patient-day basis and the charity patient is getting the benefit of the spread. That the governments reimbursible formula is used to arrive at their cost. Commissioner McDonald then asked Mr. Thomas if in his opinion charity patients are being paid for by charity who should not be paid for out of charity funds? Mr. Thomas replied that their charity patients are eligible for charity. That patients do not enter the hospital without a thorough screening, that, in fact, it has been charged that they are too strict in this respect.

Councilmen Baxter and Van Every complimented Mr. Thomas on his administration of Memorial Hospital and its excellent service.

Councilman Boyd asked Mr. Thomas if the motion before the house is adopted will it in any way hamper the operation of the hospital? Mr. Thomas replied that he would be entirely satisfied and that it will be the first time since he has been with the hospital that the City and County Governments have made adequate provisions for the charity load. He stated further that their records are open for inspection; that he would suggest that an impartial body, such as Duke Endowment or the Hospital Study Committee, be requested to investigate the hospital costs and advise the City and County Governments of their findings.

The vote was then taken on the motion by Councilman Van Every, and unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT.

Upon motion of Councilman Jordan, seconded by Councilman Van Every, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned.


City Clerk