

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING January 24, 2005

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: William L. Hammer, Chairman
 W. Darrell Robertson, Vice-Chairman
 Wesley E. Bolick
 W. Norris Keever
 Larry Yoder

STAFF: Rick French, County Manager
 Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

MEDIA: Gary Herman, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on January 24, 2005 in the Catawba Valley Community College / Alexander Center Multipurpose Room, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hammer called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

*****SPECIAL RECOGNITION*****

Catherine Burgess, Alexander Council on Aging Chair, recognized Max Smith for his volunteer service to the seniors of Alexander County. Ms. Burgess discussed Mr. Smith's many volunteer activities, which included Meals on Wheels, Bethlehem Food Pantry at Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church, N.C. Baptist Men Disaster Relief, Senior Center, Senior Health Insurance Information Program, Master Gardener Program, Regional Aging Advisory Committee, and Lakeview Baptist Church. Ms. Burgess also pointed out that Mr. Smith recently received the "Mickey Hanula Award" for his service to the Senior Health Insurance Information Program.

Chairman Hammer stated that he had served on both the Council on Aging and the Senior Center Advisory Board with Mr. Smith. Chairman Hammer asked Mr. Smith to elaborate on the Senior Health Insurance Information Program. Mr. Smith stated that he had signed up in excess of 400 people to the program and he noted that the potential drug savings in the county would exceed 1.5 million dollars. Chairman Hammer conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Smith for an outstanding job.

Commissioner Robertson inquired about Mr. Smith's work with the N.C. Baptist Men Disaster Relief. Mr. Smith stated that there were 3 mobile kitchens, the largest preparing 20,000 meals per day, that could be taken anywhere in the United States for disaster relief. Mr. Smith stated that he spent a week in Orlando after the hurricane disaster this past year.

Commissioner Yoder felt that volunteering was one of the greatest things a person could do and he noted that Mr. Smith had set a great example.

Commissioner Bolick conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Smith for all that he did for Alexander County.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Chairman Hammer recognized Richard Watts and O.T. Howard with the Watts, Alexander, Scott Museum and Full Faith Mission. Mr. Watts discussed the need to preserve homes in Alexander County that were built or occupied by former slaves. He informed the Board that he had written the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources Historic Preservation Office in regards to the Joseph and Harriet Alexander House and the Easter Hines House in Taylorsville being considered as historical sites and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. He also noted that he wished to restore the Patterson House in Taylorsville, which would cost approximately \$18,000 to \$25,000. Mr. Watts felt that the Historic Preservation Office staff was not putting their best effort toward helping him with these projects and he asked the Board of Commissioners to "put pressure" on this department. Mr. Watts also invited the Board to the organization's first annual banquet honor dinner to be held on February 26, 2005 at the National Guard Armory in order to raise funds to preserve these homes.

Commissioner Kever asked Mr. Watts to allow the Board time to review the information given.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Robertson gave the invocation and Commissioner Yoder led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chairman Hammer discussed events that occurred during the last few weeks including a "Listening Tour" with Representative Virginia Foxx that was held on January 12, 2005. The event was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the County, Town of Taylorsville, school system, and several business leaders were present. Chairman Hammer stated that the meeting allowed each to make Representative Foxx aware of the needs in the county.

Chairman Hammer stated that he, Commissioner Keever, and Rick French, County Manager, attended the N.C. Association of County Commissioners Legislative Goals Conference on January 13 and 14, 2005 in High Point. Chairman Hammer stated that he, as the Voting Delegate, was involved in discussion regarding Medicaid costs to counties. He explained that the NCACC had set several legislative goals which included the phasing out Medicaid to counties over a 6-year period as well as capping off the cost to counties this year. Another issue discussed was disposal of uninhabited mobile homes. Chairman Hammer stated that there were approximately 50,000 uninhabited mobile homes in the state that that could not be disposed of and he explained that a study group had been put together to come up with a solution to this problem.

Chairman Hammer stated that he met with representatives from the Carolina Land & Lakes RC & D in Hickory on January 18, 2005 to discuss grants for the Rocky Face Mountain Park project.

Chairman Hammer noted that a joint meeting was held on January 18, 2005 with the Board of Education. Senator John Garwood and Representative Mark Hollo were in attendance. Chairman Hammer stated that the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education discussed their needs with them.

Chairman Hammer stated that the Alexander County Branch of the American Red Cross held its grand opening on January 20, 2005. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments annual banquet was also held on January 20, 2005 at the Holiday Inn Select in Hickory.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Keever made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

STATE OF THE COUNTY MESSAGE

Chairman Hammer gave the following State of the County Message:

It is with great pleasure that I appear before you tonight with the State of the County Message. I would like to report that the State of the County is good. This is mainly due to many dedicated volunteers, a hard working County staff, along with the leadership and input from my fellow County Commissioners.

Alexander County continues to be blessed with many who give unselfishly for others in so many ways. We have uncounted volunteers who give their time and talents to make us feel safer and secure as well as better educated, healthier, more physically fit. This is truly a quality that money cannot buy. Alexander County is a better place to live, work, and play because of your contributions.

The fund balance of Alexander County's General Fund has improved to 9.8%. This is the first time in 3 years that the County has exceeded the Local Government Commission's recommendation of an 8% fund balance. During the past year, the County borrowed \$6,256,217 for 3 projects: 1) \$4,000,000 for an auditorium at Alexander Central High School, 2) \$1,056,217 to refinance prior debt for additions to Alexander Central High School, and 3) \$1,200,000 for additions to the County Social Services Building. In the coming year, the Finance Office will be purchasing new financial and personnel software and converting to the new system.

Alexander County became more directly involved in economic development in 2004. The 2 major focuses were retention of existing industries and recruitment of new industry. The Alexander County Economic Development Office worked closely with an expanding industry, Advantage Wood Products. This new company is a spin-off of an existing industry and a previously empty 26,000 square feet manufacturing facility was purchased by the company. Our Economic Development Office worked hard to secure a community development block grant to provide water and sewer to the industry. Our Economic Development Office also worked closely with The Mitchell Gold Company concerning a 62,500 square foot addition to their manufacturing facility and is current assisting the company concerning financing of another project through the Revolving Loan Fund. Between the 2 projects, The Mitchell Gold Company will add approximately 100 new jobs for Alexander County. These are just a few examples of our renewed efforts in economic development.

We are proud of the relationship we have with the Alexander County Board of Education. The Alexander County School System had an excellent year with academic achievement. They had 2 Honor Schools of Excellence, Wittenburg Elementary and Sugar Loaf Elementary, and 5 Schools of Distinction, Ellendale Elementary, Hiddenite Elementary, Stony Point Elementary, Taylorsville Elementary, and Alexander Central High School. Alexander Central ranked 5th of the 28 unifour high schools. The Alexander County School system had a teacher turnover rate of 8.96%, which is 5.5% lower than the state average. The Board of Education and County Commissioners have increased the supplement to 6% which helps attract and retain highly qualified teachers. The "No Child Left Behind" federal legislation, which required schools to make adequate yearly progress, was very successful in or school system. Alexander County Schools ranked 14 out of 115 school systems in the state with 90% of our schools making adequate yearly progress, which put them in the top 12% of school systems in the state. The Alexander County Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education agreed to build a 24,500 square foot auditorium on the campus of Alexander Central High School. The completion date is scheduled for July 2005 and we believe this will be a great addition for the school system and for the citizens of Alexander County to have a quality place for arts programs. By working together with the Board of Education, we have seen great academic progress to go along with our new facilities over the past year.

The Alexander Correctional Institution opened in March of 2004, located about one mile south of Taylorsville. This facility is a 1,000 cell close-security prison located on Old Landfill Road just off Macedonia Road. The state prison will employ approximately 400

people including correctional officers, administrative, food service, medical, dental, and maintenance staff. Alexander County's new correctional facility is one of 3 prisons constructed in the state.

An Alexander County Jail Task Force has been formed to study the needs of our jail, Sheriff's Department, and courthouse as well as related services. Visits to Wilkes, Surry, Caldwell, and Lincoln County jail and courthouse sites occurred during 2004. The next step for the task force is to start the interview process for architectural firms. County Commissioners, Sheriff, Clerk of Court, County Manager, County Attorney, several judges, and other officials are all part of this process.

Emergency services have continued to strengthen and get more organized during the past year. Communications and 911 were consolidated with leadership and support of the County Commissioners and Sheriff. The purchase of a totally new computerized communications system is under close study. A new Alexander County Branch office of the Catawba Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross has also been located in downtown Taylorsville to better assist our citizens during crisis. All emergency service agencies now play a direct role in the Emergency Management team. The Health Director, DSS Director, Red Cross has also met to better organize our emergency shelters. The process to purchase the old Wittenburg Fire Department will allow storage of new equipment and a potentially centralized training facility.

Our Social Services department continues to assist clients entering the work force thus reducing their dependence on government programs through the "Work First Plan." Construction is underway to add 8,800 square feet to the current DSS facility. This addition will house Job Link, ESC, and much needed office space for workers. Our new director has implemented many changes in an effort to assist clients in an efficient manner. A \$150,000 grant was also received in 2004 to add the County's first dental office in the Health Department. Construction of this facility should be underway by the second half of 2005.

Alexander County continues to develop its water customer base. Development of county water lines is highly dependent on state grants. Several water grants are in the works and the County is hopeful to extend the system. A water master plan is currently being studied by our engineering consulting firm and should be completed by spring 2005. The water study was funded with a state grant from the NC Rural Center.

We will continue to feel growing pains for the foreseeable future. It will be up to us to make sure Alexander County remains the best place to call home. Again, I want to thank my fellow County Commissioners, County Manager, and a very hard working staff, along with very dedicated volunteers for a successful 2004. We look forward to the challenges of 2005 and will do our best working together to serve all citizens of the county.

PUBLIC HEARING: CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 05-01: WATTS, BUMGARNER, & BROWN, INC.

Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development, presented Conditional Use Permit 05-01 submitted by Richard Bumgarner of Watts, Bumgarner & Brown, Inc. and Dale White of G.C. Construction. Mr. Bumgarner requested conditional use approval to expand a sawmill operation on property located at 9501 U.S. Highway 64-90 West. The size of the property is 18.4 acres and the existing land use is a sawmill and office, 6 accessory structures, and a cellular tower. Ms. Turnmire stated that the existing zoning was RA-20 (Residential-Agricultural) and she noted that zoning within 100 feet of the property was RA-20 to the north, south, east, and west. There is single-family site-built residential and an abandoned commercial building to the north of the property, agriculture (mainly wooded) to the south and east, and single-family site-built residential, a singlewide manufactured home, barn, and storage shed to the west.

Ms. Turnmire stated that Mr. Bumgarner proposed to expand the existing sawmill operation by constructing a new building, enclosed on one side, consisting of 2,400 square feet. She also noted that the proposed expansion would be adjacent to an existing structure.

Ms. Turnmire stated that the RA-20 zoning district allowed the proposed expansion as a conditional use permit with approval by the County Commissioners. She pointed out that the Board could place conditions on the proposed expansion in terms of dimensional requirements, landscaping or other conditions; however, she noted that, due to the nature of the established property, the Planning & Development staff did not recommend placing any conditions on the permit. Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that Planning & Development staff recommended approval of the conditional use permit as presented.

Chairman Hammer called the public hearing to order and requested any public comment. There being no public comment, Commissioner Bolick made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Keever made a motion to approve Conditional Use Permit 05-01 as presented. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

GRANT APPLICATION FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFICER

Hayden Bentley, Alexander County Sheriff, stated that it was estimated that 6 million women per year were assaulted by their partners and that 52% of female murder victims were killed either by a current or ex-partner. He informed the Board that in 2003, the Sheriff's Department served 121 Domestic Violence Orders as well as 110 in 2004. He explained that this did not include the number of calls received regarding domestic violence, only the orders issued by the courts. Sheriff Bentley stated that domestic violence was becoming such a problem that, beginning March 2005, the state would begin mandating an additional 4 hours of training for every full and part-time officer in order to be certified.

Sheriff Bentley provided statistics from the local Domestic Violence Resource Center, which showed that 313 clients were served in 2002-2003. In 2003-2004, the number increased to 389 clients. Sheriff Bentley stated that the Sheriff's Department needed someone to provide services to citizens involved specifically in domestic violence. Therefore, he requested the Board allow him to proceed with applying for a grant through the N.C. Governor's Crime Commission for a Domestic Violence Officer.

Sheriff Bentley explained that the 2-year grant would provide \$43,777.40 during the first year, which required a \$10,944.35 match, and \$34,594 the second year, which required an \$8,648.50 match. He pointed out the grant would not allow the request of a vehicle for the officer; therefore, he noted that the officer would be allowed to use an older vehicle already in use by the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Bolick asked if the Board was obligated to continue funding of the officer after the grant expired. Commissioner Robertson pointed out that page 8 of the grant application did state that the commissioners would agree to continue funding of the position at the expiration of the grant period.

Commissioner Robertson asked if domestic violence calls taken by a preceding shift would be turned over to the Domestic Violence Officer once the officer returned to duty. Sheriff Bentley stated that was correct.

Commissioner Kever inquired as to the hours of duty for the officer. Sheriff Bentley stated that the shift would probably be set for 2:00 to 10:00 PM, which would allow the officer the opportunity to speak with citizens after they get home from work or school. He noted that the officer would be required to attend court, which began at 9:00 AM on scheduled court dates.

Commissioner Yoder expressed his concerns about having only one officer present during a domestic violence call. He stressed the need for 2 officers during the initial confrontation. Sheriff Bentley agreed that the most volatile time was during the initial separation of the individuals involved.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to allow Sheriff Bentley to proceed with the request for a N.C. Governor's Crime Commission grant for a Domestic Violence Officer. Commissioner Kever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

FINANCE SOFTWARE CONTRACT & RESOLUTION / DEBT REFINANCING

Jennifer Herman, Finance Director, stated that at the January 10, 2005 Commissioners' Meeting, the Board voted to proceed with contract negotiations for the MUNIS financial and personnel software. She noted that there had been no changes to the contract since that meeting; therefore, she recommended entering into the contract with MUNIS, Inc.

Commissioner Keever asked why interest had not been included in the budget amendment for the purchase of the software. Ms. Herman replied that would take place in another budget year.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to approve the contract with MUNIS, Inc. for the purchase of financial and personnel software. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Ms. Herman presented a summary of bank proposals received on January 12, 2005 to finance the software and hardware. She informed the Board that she mailed 7 notices to banks and financial institutions and received 5 responses. Ms. Herman stated that BB&T Governmental Finance had the lowest bid of 3.12% over 3 years with semiannual payments, which was valid until February 10, 2005. Ms. Herman presented a Resolution Approving Financing Terms with BB&T Governmental Finance for approval.

Commissioner Keever made a motion to approve the Resolution Approving Financing Terms with BB&T Governmental Finance as presented. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Debt Refinancing Update

Ms. Herman gave the Board an update of the refinancing of the Building Renovation Loan with BB&T. She stated that BB&T had proposed to refinance the loan at a rate of 3.62%, which would result in a net savings of approximately \$25,500 over the remaining life of the loan. Ms. Herman stated that staff was moving forward with the refinancing and she noted that a copy of the modification agreement would be mailed to the Local Government Commission.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #22

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendment #22, which included the following information:

Budget Amendment #22 – To increase the budget for additional federal funds for Crisis Intervention Prevention. To budget for the purchase of financial and personnel software. The budget for the purpose of equipment using the Automation Enhancement & Preservation Funds that are earmarked for the Register of Deeds. To increase the budget for an increase in autopsies and death investigations. The increase the budget for additional Family Planning State Funds – Title X Performance Bonus.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #22. Commissioner Keever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Chairman Hammer presented the following appointments and reappointments:

A. EQUALIZATION & REVIEW BOARD

Reappoint Patsy Little	1-year terms
Reappoint Darrell Adkins	
Reappoint David Odom	
Reappoint Sue Watts	
Reappoint Commissioner Robertson	

B. CRIMINAL JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP ADVISORY BOARD

Appoint Kelly Wicker	2-year term
Appoint Cathy Brown	2-year term
Reappoint Camilla Newland	3-year term
Reappoint Dale Graham	3-year term
Reappoint Susie Barkley	2-year term
Reappoint Crystal Sain	2-year term
Reappoint Hayden Bentley	2-year term
Reappoint Tammy Lippard	1-year term
Reappoint Ingrid Townsend	1-year term
Reappoint Tony Jones	1-year term
Reappoint Rick French	1-year term
Reappoint Sarah Kirkman	1-year term
Reappoint Kimberly Taylor	1-year term

C. LIBRARY BOARD

Reappoint Jan Austin	3-year terms
Reappoint Kay Bebbler	
Appoint Commissioner Bolick	

D. WESTERN N.C. POLITICAL CAUCUS

Appoint Commissioner Keever

E. PARK & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Appoint Commissioner Yoder

Chairman Hammer stated that there were still 3 appointments needed on the Animal Control Advisory Board including a rural area member, and urban area member, and a member at large. Chairman Hammer noted that these would be filled as soon as possible.

Chairman Hammer made a motion to approve the appointments and reappointments as presented. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the following issues during Other Business:

- A. The Chamber of Commerce annual banquet will be held on February 3, 2005 at Davis Hall in Taylorsville. Mr. French stated that the President's Reception would begin at 6:30 PM and dinner would follow at 7:00 PM. Mr. French also pointed out that Ned Jarrett would be the guest speaker.
- B. Alexander County will receive a \$98,664 COPS Technology Initiative Grant. Mr. French stated that these funds would be used in conjunction with the Communications Project.
- C. Staff has not received any additional noise ordinances from surrounding counties. Mr. French stated that Catawba County approved an updated noise ordinance on January 18, 2005. He pointed out that staff should receive a copy of that ordinance soon.
- D. Mr. French presented several changes to the Alexander County Personnel Policy based on new federal amendments to FLSA and FMLA. Mr. French stated that these changes would simply bring the County policy up-to-date.

Commissioner Keever made a motion to approve the changes to the Alexander County Personnel Policy as recommended. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

- E. Mr. French suggested holding a work session on February 28, 2005 to discuss the communications project, an ozone funding concern with the WPCOG, and to hear a presentation from the YMCA. Commissioner Keever stated that he would be unable to attend a work session on that date. Mr. French stated that staff would consider another date for the work session.
- F. Mr. French requested the Board declare 2 pieces of equipment surplus including a used mobile storage trailer located at the Health Department and a gas space heater salvaged from CVCC prior to renovation. Mr. French stated that the Ellendale Volunteer Fire Department could use the space heater in the new addition.

Commissioner Keever made a motion to declare both items surplus. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

- G. Chairman Hammer discussed a letter recently received from the N.C. Department of Transportation regarding Bridge Project #70 on Little River Church Road. Chairman Hammer pointed out that the letter included a section for comments and he recommended the Board use this section to request a public hearing for explanation of the project. The Board agreed.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from January 10, 2005 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Keever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 5, & 6) TO PREVENT DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL

Chairman Hammer made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:05 PM to prevent the disclosure of confidential information as well as to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 5, & 6). Commissioner Keever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

CONDOLENCES REQUEST

Commissioner Robertson informed the Board that Rick French, County Manager, had passed him a note during the meeting that stated that Johnny Chapman's mother had passed away at approximately 6:00 PM. Commissioner Robertson stated that Mr. Chapman was employed at the County Garage and he requested the Board and staff remember the Chapman family.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Robertson made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 PM. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

William L. Hammer, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board