

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING** October 23, 2006

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

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

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

MEDIA: Micah Henry, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, October 23, 2006 in the Catawba Valley Community College / Alexander Center Multipurpose Room, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Yoder gave the invocation and also led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

*****SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS*****

The following special recognitions were acknowledged:

State Grant Update

Representative Mark Hollo discussed several state grants that had been received in the area for education, economic development, and health care including:

- Almost \$500,000 for the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center for each of the last 2 years
- \$300,000 grant for the N.C. Center for Engineering Technology
- \$500,000 infrastructure grant for Alexander County

- \$500,000 infrastructure grant for the Town of Taylorsville
- \$150,000 grant for a dental clinic at the Health Department

Representative Hollo felt that the distribution and receipt of these grants showed the good working relationship between local and state governments and he thanked the grant writers from the County and Town for their contribution.

Members of the Board thanked Representative Hollo for his assistance with these grants. Commissioner Bolick requested Representative Hollo's assistance with Medicaid.

NACo Appointment

Commissioner Keever pointed out that Commissioner Hammer had recently been appointed to serve as a member of the NACo Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee. The Board congratulated Commissioner Hammer on this appointment.

Bethlehem Branch Library

Commissioner Bolick announced that the Alexander County Library – Bethlehem Branch held a Grand Opening Ceremony on Sunday, October 22, 2006. He stated that many citizens from Bethlehem as well as other areas of the county attended the ceremony and he conveyed his appreciation to the public for their support of this service.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

JAIL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION FOR ARCHITECT

Robert Campbell, County Attorney and Jail Committee Member, informed the Board that the current jail had been constructed in 1970 with an inmate capacity of 26; however, he pointed out that, due to growth and changes in sentencing laws, the jail population had exceeded its limit and was now housing approximately 42 inmates per day. He also noted that the current jail did not have a separate housing unit for female inmates resulting in officers having to transport them to another county. Mr. Campbell stated that jail overcrowding created a security risk for jail personnel and other inmates as well as the public because, due to the need for space, incarcerated criminals were released early and some criminals that should be incarcerated were never placed in jail. He also mentioned that every county in the 22nd Judicial District had constructed new jail facilities within the last 10 years.

Mr. Campbell explained that the Jail Committee, consisting of Judges Kim Taylor and Dale Graham, Clerk of Court Seth Chapman, Sheriff Hayden Bentley, Town Commissioner Bob Phillips, County Commissioners Norris Keever and Darrell Robertson, and County Manager Rick French, had visited several jail facilities over the last few months such as Watauga, McDowell, and Lincoln Counties and the most recent tour being the Brunswick County jail. He

presented a slide show which included photos of each facility while he discussed the many differences in safety features when comparing the Alexander County jail with new jail facilities.

Mr. Campbell stated that the Jail Committee interviewed 4 architectural firms on August 18, 2006 and had recommended for approval the hiring of Hemphill-Randel Associates to first complete a feasibility study as to location, cost, and type of construction options for a new jail facility and to then serve as the architect for the construction of the jail project subject to entering into a written contract agreeable to both Alexander County and Hemphill-Randel Associates. He explained that Hemphill-Randel Associates stood out from the rest because of their specific hands-on approach and the recommendations from other counties.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to accept the recommendation made by the Jail Committee for the hiring of Hemphill-Randel Associates to first complete a feasibility study as to location, cost, and type of construction options for a new jail facility and to then serve as the architect for the construction of the jail project subject to entering into a written contract agreeable to both Alexander County and Hemphill-Randel Associates. Commissioner Keever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

The Board thanked the members of the Jail Committee for their time and effort spent on this project.

INTRODUCTION OF JAIL ARCHITECT

Commissioner Robertson stated that Hemphill-Randel Associates had extensive background in feasibility studies and had completed many jail projects in the area. He explained that Hemphill-Randel Associates was a smaller firm that focused on one large project per year as opposed to having many projects going on simultaneously, which stood out to the Jail Committee. He also pointed out that Hemphill-Randel Associates was willing to bring in staff to train employees on how to use the new security equipment once the jail facility was completed. Commissioner Roberson introduced Jack Hemphill, President of Hemphill-Randel Associates.

Mr. Hemphill presented several graphs which gave an overview of the timeline that could be expected with such a project and he discussed the phases of the project. He thanked the Jail Committee for the recommendation and stated that he was excited about working with Alexander County on this project.

ALEXANDER COUNTY EDUCATION UPDATE

Jack Hoke, Superintendent, gave a slide show presentation regarding the Alexander County School System Education Update for the past year which included the following information:

- The Blue Ribbon Study Committee was put to rest after 10 years of progress and recommendations.

- \$25,790 raised by schools for Hurricane Katrina relief.
- 101 events held at the auditorium from October 23, 2005 to May 31, 2006.
- First 2 graduates from the Homegrown Teachers Program this year.
- Award of honor given to Dr. Warren Hollar last year and Sally Hartis this year.
- American Cancer Society recognized Alexander County schools for collecting the most donations for Relay for Life.
- Saryn Hooks from West Alexander Middle School won third consecutive county spelling bee, her first and second regional spelling bee, and finished 3rd in the national spelling bee.
- Betsy Curry from Stony Point Elementary School named the Wachovia Principal of the Year.
- 17 local teachers received National Board Certification, the highest honor and credentials as a teacher.
- Jonathan Williams from West Alexander Middle School placed 2nd in the state science fair and was one of 6 from North Carolina to participate in the national science competition.
- Michael Ratchford from Alexander Central High School named Counselor of the Year.
- Karen Emerick from Bethlehem Elementary School named Teacher of the Year.
- Alexander County School System named Chamber of Commerce Business of the Month.
- Sponsored Joint Legislative Luncheon with Alexander County and the Town of Taylorsville to meet with Representative Mark Hollo and Senator John Garwood.
- Amy Hittle from East Alexander Middle School named Corning Cable Math and Science Teacher of the Year.
- Tony Daniels named as Bus Driver of the Year.
- Chris Meade from Wittenburg Elementary School named Administrator of the Year and Kay Jarvis from Stony Point Elementary School named Education Office Professional of the Year.

- \$1.6 million in scholarships given to graduating seniors, a \$658,000 increase from the previous year.
- 10 Alexander County students recognized as Teaching Fellows, the most of any high school in North Carolina.
- Lydia Gwaltney from Stony Point Elementary School named as First Year Teacher of the Year.
- Energy Management Program reduced kilowatt usage by 14.5% in first 3 months for a 9% savings.
- Football team recognized for having highest grade point average in state out of 372 schools.
- New gym floor installed at Hiddenite and Bethlehem Elementary Schools.
- ACHS rated 5th out of 25 high schools for meeting growth and adequate yearly progress.
- Teacher turnover rate is 9.05%, the lowest in the Unifour.

Commissioner Bolick stated that the Board of Commissioners and Board of Education had a great working relationship that he appreciated. He also felt that Mr. Hoke and the entire school system worked hard for the interest of the students.

Chairman Yoder stated that he was proud of the school facilities in Alexander County and was very impressed with the school system staff.

Commissioner Robertson felt a good working environment and a higher teacher supplement had contributed to the low turnover rate. He also thanked Mr. Hoke, the Board of Education, and school system faculty for a good working relationship.

Commissioner Keever conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Hoke and the job he did for the students.

Commissioner Hammer felt that Mr. Hoke and his staff had used the half cent sales tax monies very wisely and he thanked the maintenance staff for always keeping the facilities well maintained.

Rick French, County Manager, stated that most Board of Educations and Boards of Commissioners across the state did not get along and had conflicts that sometimes ended in lawsuits. He felt that people working together were how things got accomplished and he mentioned that he also appreciated the positive relationship between these boards in Alexander County.

CVCC UPDATE

Jack Hoke, Superintendent, introduced Dr. Garrett Hinshaw, the third President of CVCC. Mr. Hoke informed the Board of Mr. Hinshaw's educational background as well as his experience with community colleges, the most recent serving as Executive Vice President and CEO of Caldwell Community College.

Mr. Hinshaw gave a slide show presentation which included a mission statement, administrative organization, history of the CVCC / Alexander Center, information regarding the Huskins / concurrent enrollment program, a 5-year strategic plan, and future growth. Mr. Hinshaw discussed the learning assistance center at the CVCC / Alexander Center which provided free tutoring, a computer lab, small business resources, a writing lab, etc., all of which was available to the public. He also reported that the 5th floor of the new Cuyler A. Dunbar Building at the main campus in Hickory would eventually be transformed into a simulated hospital floor for student clinicals.

Mr. Hinshaw also took this opportunity to announce that this year he would be giving a full 2-year scholarship to an ACHS graduate chosen by Mr. Hoke. He stated that he was excited about this new position and looked forward to working with Alexander County.

The Board thanked Mr. Hinshaw for his report and discussed ways to inform the public about services offered at the CVCC / Alexander Center.

CONCORD & KANNAPOLIS INTER-BASIN TRANSFER REQUEST REPORT

Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development, gave an update on recent activities relating to the Concord & Kannapolis Inter-Basin Transfer request. She stated that the public comment deadline had been extended to October 31, 2006. She also explained that the City of Hickory had spearheaded weekly conference calls to discuss updates, budget, public relations, and any litigation that could take place in the Unifour area. Ms. Turnmire pointed out that several municipalities had already agreed to participate in litigation.

Ms. Turnmire also mentioned that the public comment on Duke Power's Hydrorelicensing would end on October 30, 2006. She pointed out that Alexander County as well as several others had sent a letter to Duke Power requesting comment on the Concord & Kannapolis Inter-Basin Transfer request and she noted that formal comment, although expected as a neutral position, would be released this week.

Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that the Environmental Management Commission was scheduled to hear the Concord & Kannapolis Inter-Basin Transfer request on January 11, 2006; however, she noted that the decision could be postponed until the General Assembly was in session.

Commissioner Robertson stated that approximately \$950,000 had been pledged toward litigation of this injustice.

Commissioner Hammer remembered there being some discussion regarding Concord & Kannapolis taking transferring 10 million gallons instead of the entire 38 million gallons from the Catawba River Basin and he asked Ms. Turnmire if this type of compromise was possible. Ms. Turnmire replied that there had been some discussion regarding the approval of 10 million gallons until after Duke Power's relicensing was approved; however, she noted that she was not aware if that option was being pursued.

Jim Jennings announced that the Chamber of Commerce would be hosting a "Lunch and Learn" on Friday, October 27, 2006 at the CVCC / Alexander Center from 12:00 Noon to 1:30 PM to allow Attorney Bob Epting, former EMC member, to share facts, input, and the status of the Concord & Kannapolis Inter-Basin Transfer request. He urged the public to attend this meeting. Mr. Jennings also thanked the County and the Chamber of Commerce for providing a link to the City of Hickory website where many information sources regarding this issue could be found.

Mr. Jennings did not feel a compromise of 10 million gallons should be allowed and he urged everyone involved to vote for NO transfer.

WATER LINE EXTENSION REPORT

Jason Williams, Utilities Development Director, presented an updated water extension request form which included a signature collection section, costs associated with installing water lines, and monthly charges that citizens should expect in each of the water districts. Mr. Williams explained that the form asked the community requesting water extensions to designate someone as their contact person so that staff could better communicate with the parties involved and he noted that the form also stated that, due to costs and other factors, collecting signatures and submitting the request form did not guarantee that a water line would be installed at the requested location.

Mr. Williams informed the Board that 3 water line extension requests had been received during the last quarter which totaled \$42,000; \$181,000; and \$195,000 including material, installation, and engineering costs. He stated that the City of Hickory was willing to install water lines less than one half mile in length for Alexander and those water lines exceeding one half mile would be installed by contractors. He reported that only one of the 3 requests was less than one half mile in length; therefore, he asked the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to research grant funding for the other requests; however, he noted that early feedback received indicated that those households may be above the income requirement for grant funding to be issued.

Mr. Williams stated that staff was still waiting to hear from the N.C. Public Water Supply prior to beginning the Northeast Water Project. He also pointed out that EnergyUnited Water Corporation had received approval the N.C. Public Water Supply and was waiting for final approval from the state to begin installation of water lines along Black Oak Ridge Road and Jolly Cemetery Road. Mr. Williams also indicated that EnergyUnited would be installing water lines on McClain Road as well.

Mr. Williams reported that there were currently 2,111 customers in the Bethlehem Water District, 1,321 in the Highway 16 South Water District, and 649 in the Sugar Loaf Water District. He also stated that there were 4,081 City of Hickory taps countywide for a total of 10,350 customers, which had increased by 4% during the past year.

Commissioner Robertson pointed out that the fact sheet attached to the updated water line extension request form stated that a fire hydrant was required approximately every 800 feet. He requested that staff investigate that requirement to make sure hydrants were, in fact, required at that footage or closer to 1,000 feet.

Commissioner Bolick stated that he received complaints from residents along Richey Road to Fellowship Church Road regarding low water pressure and he asked Mr. Williams to look into that issue.

PUBLIC HEARING: INSTALLMENT FINANCING AGREEMENT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

Rick French, County Manager, stated that this public hearing was being held regarding the filing of an application for approval of a financing agreement authorized by N.C.G.S. 160A-20 for the financing of the 911 Communications Project, renovation of the former Employment Security Commission for the new Elections Office, and renovations to the County Administration Building, all of which had already been completed or were currently underway. Mr. French stated that the Local Government Commission required approval of a resolution, which was approved at the October 9, 2006 meeting, as well as a public hearing to consolidate action already taken by the Board.

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

Commissioner Keever made a motion to approve the documentation provided to prove that a public hearing was held to be submitted to the Local Government Commission regarding the installment financing agreement. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #19

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendment #19, which included the following information:

Budget Amendment #19 – To increase the Adult Health budget for estimated local receipts. To increase the Recreation Department budget for the purchase of aluminum bleachers.

Commissioner Keever made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #19. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Commissioner Hammer recommended that Dr. Librado (Lee) Gonzales be appointed to the Future Forward Economic Alliance to replace Chip Swinnie. He also stated that there were vacancies on the Council on Aging, Joint Nursing & Adult Care Community Advisory Committee, and Transportation Authority Advisory Committee that needed to be filled if any commissioners had suggestions.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to appoint Dr. Librado (Lee) Gonzales to the Future Forward Economic Alliance. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS

The following items were discussed during Other Business:

- A. Rick French, County Manager, stated that the "free day" at the landfill and convenience sites was scheduled for Saturday, October 28, 2006 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Flyers have been distributed at all convenience sites.
- B. Commissioner Robertson announced that Commissioner Keever and Mr. French attended the N.C. Association of County Commissioners Tax & Finance Steering Committee Meeting in Raleigh on October 11, 2006.

Commissioner Keever made a motion to approve the County Manager's Report. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the October 9, 2006 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.

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

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 4, 5, & 6) TO PREVENT DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL

Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:50 PM to prevent the disclosure of confidential information and to discuss economic development, contractual matters, and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 4, 5, & 6). Commissioner Keever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Bolick made a motion to adjourn at 8:23 PM. Commissioner Keever seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board