

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING June 25, 2007

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: W. Darrell Robertson, Chairman
 Wes Bolick, Vice-Chairman
 William L. Hammer
 Harold M. Odom
 Larry G. Yoder

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, June 25, 2007 in the Catawba Valley Community College / Alexander Center Multipurpose Room, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Hammer gave the invocation and also led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

Mitchell Clark, citizen of Caldwell County, was present to convey his appreciation to Brian Stafford who saved Mr. Clark's life last week in a boating accident. Mr. Stafford, a deputy with the Alexander County Sheriff's Department, was off-duty at the time but assisted Mr. Clark until back-up and a helicopter could arrive for transport. Mr. Clark felt that he would not be alive today if it had not been for Mr. Stafford.

Mr. Stafford stated that he could not have done anything to help Mr. Clark without God.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Robertson requested the addition of an appointment to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee as Agenda Item 6A.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

PUBLIC HEARING: 2007-2008 PROPOSED ALEXANDER COUNTY BUDGET

Rick French, County Manager, briefly reviewed the 2007-2008 proposed Alexander County budget. He stated that the 2007-2008 proposed budget for the General Fund was \$31,488,084 or 6.3% more than the current amended budget and he noted that he was recommending a tax rate of 53.5 cents, a 2.5 cent increase. He informed the Board that 23 North Carolina counties had adopted their budget thus far with 12 of those approving tax increases. Mr. French pointed out that Caldwell County had approved a 12 cent property tax increase and Catawba County had approved a 6.7 cent increase. He stated that the Board would meet on Friday, June 29, 2007 at 6:00 PM in CVCC / Room 103 to consider the 2007-2008 proposed Alexander County budget.

Chairman Robertson explained that the Board wanted to wait until Friday to adopt the budget to allow as much time as possible for the General Assembly to make a decision about Medicaid which could affect the recommended tax rate. He stated that there were currently 3 proposals being discussed and noted that Representative Ray Warren felt a decision could possibly be made by Friday.

Commissioner Yoder felt this was a good budget and stated that the Finance Committee had made an effort to keep the tax rate as low as possible. He reiterated that the proposed tax rate could be lowered if a decision regarding Medicaid was made by Friday. Commissioner Yoder stated that the County could not continue to provide services without some kind of increase and he commended Rick French, County Manager, and the Finance staff for putting this budget together.

Commissioner Hammer stated that this had been a tough budget and he also thanked everyone involved for their work. He felt the County provided a lot of services for the citizens with tax money and noted that those services would have to be cut if a tax increase did not occur; however, he explained that the Board was in favor of increasing sales taxes if the state allowed it because it was a tax that everyone paid.

Chairman Robertson pointed out that the County's growth rate for the past 4 years had only increased 6.5% or 1.6% per year which resulted in less revenue from property taxes. He also stated that the County had incurred some tremendous increases in insurance rates. He felt the County employees deserved a cost of living adjustment because they worked well together and performed efficiently and he also discussed the need for wages to be more in-line with other counties. He felt the tax increase was necessary to continue providing services for the citizens and he thanked Mr. French, Finance Director Jennifer Herman, the Finance Department, Representative Ray Warren, and Senator Steve Goss.

Commissioners Odom and Bolick stated that they would make comments at the meeting on June 29, 2007.

Chairman Robertson 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 Odom seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 07-1 – SPENCER / SWARTZ

Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development, presented Conditional Use Permit 07-1 applied for by Jeffrey Swartz to construct a bed and breakfast, which was initially discussed at the June 11, 2007 Commissioners' Meeting. The permit was tabled by the Board to give the property owner, applicant, and adjoining property owners an opportunity to discuss issues raised during the public hearing and to also address the Board's concerns relating to emergency access, the safety of the access road, and the number of bedrooms allowed by the septic system permit.

Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that Russell Greene, Emergency Services Director, had performed a site inspection and determined that emergency access was not impeded along Crappie Hollow Lane. Mr. Greene also offered that in the issue of sight distance and pull-offs, single lane traffic was not an issue as long as the speed limit of 10 mph posted along the road was adhered to. She also pointed out that she had received the septic system improvement permit today which allowed for 7 bedrooms. Ms. Turnmire stated that the property owner, applicant, and adjoining property owners briefly talked following the public hearing held on June 11th but she noted that no progress in reaching a compromise had been made since.

However, Ms. Turnmire stated that in an effort to move the project along, Connly Spencer, the property owner, created a new right-of-way along the southern edge of his property extending to B&T Lane. She explained that this new right-of-way and subsequent road was required to be designed and built to N.C. Department of Transportation specifications and would be revised to include a t-intersection or cul-de-sac, providing an appropriate turn-around and compliance with the Subdivision Ordinance and NCDOT standards.

Ms. Turnmire mentioned that with the new information, Planning & Development staff recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit 07-1 with the following conditions:

1. A maximum of 5 rented bedrooms.
2. Provide a 10-foot buffer in accordance with Section 154.039 (Landscaping and Screening Requirements) along the side and rear property lines (which could be achieved mostly by retaining some of the natural vegetation).
3. The subject property is accessed by the 45 foot right-of-way, built to NCDOT specifications, off of B&T Lane and the design approved by NCDOT.

Chairman Robertson requested the public hearing from the June 11, 2007 Commissioners' Meeting be reopened due to the new information relating to the right-of-way created extending to

B&T Lane. Commissioner Hammer made a motion to reopen the public hearing. Commissioner Odom seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Chairman Robertson requested any public comment.

Public Comment / Board Response

Connolly Spencer distributed photos of B&T Lane in relation to his property and the new right-of-way. He pointed out that the use of Crappie Hollow Lane would no longer be an issue.

Commissioner Yoder asked if the adjoining property owners had been notified of the new right-of-way. Ms. Turnmire replied that there was not a requirement to notify neighbors of right-of-way creation.

Commissioner Bolick stated that he had visited Crappie Hollow Lane since the last meeting and disagreed with Emergency Services Director Russell Greene's determination that emergency access was not impeded. He felt that that Crappie Hollow Lane was extremely too narrow for any emergency vehicle to enter. He also wanted to make sure that Crappie Hollow Lane would not be used by the bed and breakfast guests.

Katrina Swartz stated that all guests would be making reservations through her and would only be made aware of access by B&T Lane. She noted that access by Crappie Hollow Lane would not be needed and therefore not mentioned to her guests.

There being no further comment, Commissioner Hammer made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve Conditional Use Permit 07-1 to construct a bed and breakfast with the following conditions:

1. The subject property be accessed by the 45 foot right-of-way, built to NCDOT specifications, off of B&T Lane and the design approved by NCDOT.
2. A maximum of 5 rented bedrooms.
3. Provide a 10-foot buffer in accordance with Section 154.039 (Landscaping & Screening Requirements) along the side and rear property lines (which could be achieved mostly by retaining some of the natural vegetation).

Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted 4 in favor of the motion (Commissioners Hammer, Odom, Robertson, and Yoder) and one against the motion (Commissioner Bolick). The motion carried.

UPDATE ON NAC₀ PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAM

Leeanne Whisnant, Health Director, gave the Board an update on the NACo Prescription Drug Discount Program. She stated that 4,231 citizens had signed up for the program since it began in March 2006 and she noted that the program had saved those citizens \$52,878.05 since that time. She explained that the program would not help on prescriptions already covered by insurance but could be used as a back-up for something not covered. She also stated that one card served an entire family at no cost. Ms. Whisnant mentioned that the amount of saving depended on the actual medication.

Ms. Whisnant stated that these cards were available at several County departments as well as pharmacies, video stores, and laundromats in the county.

REPORT ON HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DAY

Josh Mitchell, Solid Waste Supervisor, discussed the Household Hazardous Waste Day held on Saturday, April 28, 2007. He stated that approximately 200 cars came through and he reported that the following items were disposed of:

- 3,157 lbs. of paint
- 550 lbs. of aerosols
- 2,516 lbs. of latex paint
- 2,117 lbs. of mixed solvents
- 201 lbs. of alkaline cleaning products
- 168 lbs. of acidic cleaning products
- 2,261 lbs. of non-hazardous solids and liquids
- 3,902 lbs. of paint related materials
- 2,245 lbs. of motor oil
- 288 lbs. of NiCad batteries
- 3,238 lbs. of electronics
- 79 fluorescent bulbs
- 25 propane tanks

Mr. Mitchell stated that disposal of these items cost the County \$13,439. He also stated that he spoke to many people that took part in the Household Hazardous Waste Day who were very appreciative to be able to dispose of these items.

Commissioner Yoder stated that he had received a phone call at home from a citizen who wanted to thank the Board for holding the Household Hazardous Waste Day. He also felt it would be beneficial to hold a similar event to allow citizens to have personal or confidential items shredded at no cost.

Commissioner Odom asked if Mr. Mitchell felt it would be beneficial to hold this event twice a year. Mr. Mitchell replied that he felt annually would be sufficient for a couple of years to allow citizens that were not aware of the first Household Hazardous Waste Day to dispose of stockpiled items and then every other year after that.

MEDICAL INSURANCE / CONTINUATION AT RETIREMENT POLICY

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the County's current Medical Insurance / Continuation at Retirement Policy which provides continued medical insurance for retirees with 20 or more consecutive years with Alexander County. He explained that this policy applied to full-time and part-time budgeted positions (50% or greater). However, Mr. French recommended a revision to the policy to require retirees hired on or after January 1, 2008 to work for 30 or more consecutive years before continued medical insurance would be provided. Mr. French pointed out that the revision would not apply to current employees or those hired before January 1, 2008.

Mr. French asked for approval of the revised policy subject to review by the County Attorney.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to approve the revision to the Medical Insurance / Continuation at Retirement Policy as recommended. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

DESIGNATION OF VOTING DELEGATE FOR NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Chairman Robertson informed the Board that a Voting Delegate needed to be designated for the N.C. Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference to be held August 16-19, 2007 in Cumberland County.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to nominate Chairman Robertson to serve as the Voting Delegate. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BOARD APPOINTMENT

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to appoint Ronnie Reese to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board. Commissioner Bolick 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. Governor Mike Easley designated 47 counties as natural disaster areas following the Easter weekend freeze including Alexander and Burke. Farmers in disaster counties are eligible for low-interest emergency loans through the Farm Service Agency, as are adjoining counties such as Caldwell and Catawba.

- B. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments, who was recently designated as an Economic Development District, is in the process of preparing a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Alexander County submitted the following projects for possible Economic Development Administration funding:
- Purchase and renovation of Alexander Community Hospital
 - Construction of Alexander County Aquatics Center
 - Extension of Church Road water lines
 - Construction of Alexander County Jail and Law Enforcement Center
 - Barrett Mountain water tank
 - Teague Town Road water line
 - Sugar Loaf south side water main
 - Vashti Road water line
 - Black Oak Ridge Road / Pleasant Hill Church Road water lines
 - Alexander County Courthouse renovations
- C. Concord and Cabarrus County officials have approved concept plans and incentives for a \$100 million indoor water park and hotel resort for Concord. Cabarrus County commissioners approved a 5-year incentive package worth nearly \$2.7 million, even though the developer has not decided whether to come to Concord.
- D. The County was forced to purchase a replacement compressor for the courthouse at a cost of \$20,000. Mr. French stated that staff should have the installation completed and air conditioning running by tomorrow morning. He also noted that the air conditioning units at the Library and old Dayton property would have to be replaced very soon.
- E. A retirement reception for Betty Payne will be held on Thursday, June 28, 2007 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM at the Health Department.
- F. Applications for the first Hiddenite Half-Marathon are available. The event will be held on Saturday, September 22, 2007 in conjunction with the Hiddenite Celebration of the Arts.

Commissioner Bolick mentioned that a petition was circulating around the Bethlehem area to request the NCDOT to construct another bridge across Lake Hickory into Catawba County.

Chairman Robertson reminded the Board about the applications for the N.C. Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the June 4, 2007 Work Session and the June 11, 2007 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to adopt 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

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:15 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)(6). Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Hammer made a motion to adjourn at 7:50 PM. Commissioner Odom seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

W. Darrell Robertson, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board