

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING August 20, 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

MEDIA: Stephanie Cass, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, August 20, 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

Senator Steve Goss gave the invocation and Boy Scouts members Jake and Luke Grogan led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

The Board recognized Margo Mosley, Extension Agent, who discussed the Growing Healthy Bodies demonstration project. She explained that two raised bed gardens were prepared by local Master Gardener volunteers that were planted and maintained by 30 youth from Taylorsville Elementary School's Learning Center. She stated that children were likely to choose healthier snacks, such as fruits and vegetables, if they were able to take part in the growing process. She also introduced Janae Bailey who participated in the Growing Health Bodies project.

Ms. Mosley stated that the project was supported by donations of money and supplies from 10 community partners totaling \$1,200. She also thanked the Board for the use of County property adjacent to the Cooperative Extension Office as the site for the gardens.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Hammer stated that he, Commissioners Robertson and Odom, and Economic Development Director David Icenhour attended the NC Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference in Fayetteville last week.

Chairman Robertson mentioned that it was beneficial for commissioners to attend these conferences because it presented an opportunity to network with other counties to discuss similar issues.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Robertson requested the addition of discussion regarding the Northeast Water Project during Other Business.

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

SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF REPRESENTATIVE RAY WARREN & SENATOR STEVE GOSS

Chairman Robertson, on behalf of the Board, presented Keys to the County to Representative Ray Warren and Senator Steve Goss for their efforts in the General Assembly. He explained that both Representative Warren and Senator Goss had welcomed suggestions from the Board and citizens regarding needs of the county and had continually kept County staff and commissioners informed as to what was taking place in Raleigh. The Board conveyed its appreciation for their representation.

2007 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Senator Steve Goss discussed Medicaid relief and the option for counties to enact a land transfer or sales tax by referendum. He stated that he was committed to helping facilitate economic development and seeking out opportunities for growth. He also gave a report on several important components of the state budget, which included:

- \$120 million was appropriated to protect natural resources through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Senator Goss encouraged the County to seek these grants to clean and restore creeks, streams, and rivers.

- The state will invest \$115 million over a three-year period for a state of the art cancer center at the UNC Chapel Hill hospital system. Senator Goss stated that he was thankful that the General Assembly was committed to fighting this disease and had appropriated these funds.
- \$420,000 was set aside for three family assistance centers for the National Guard. Senator Goss explained that these would help military families with financial, material, or psychological needs. He also noted that he had requested a center in this district.

Senator Goss stated that he and Representative Warren had worked hard for Alexander County and he mentioned the importance of being able to cooperate with Representative Warren. He noted that he appreciated the opportunity to serve.

Representative Ray Warren discussed several appropriations made by the General Assembly for 2007-2008, including the following:

- \$13.2 million for a 252-bed minimal custody prison unit, creating 65 jobs and spinoff income for suppliers.
- \$750,000 for a judicial district split providing a district attorney, 11 assistant district attorneys, two superior court judges, and five district court judges (two from Alexander County and three from Iredell County). Representative Ray Warren stated that four judicial splits had been requested but that this one was the only one approved.
- \$750,000 for a NC Sheriff's Association grant for immigration enforcement training.
- \$1.2 million for the Engineering Technology Center at CVCC to provide training in math and engineering skills.
- \$100,000 for a hosiery technology center to train individuals in a new type of knitting process called seamless knitting for form-fitting ladies' undergarments, sportswear, and hosiery to compete with China.
- \$300,000 over a two-year period for the Catawba Science Museum, which is used by the Alexander County School System on a regular basis.
- \$40,000 from the Speaker's Emergency Fund and \$75,000 from the President Pro Tem's Emergency Fund to provide funding for a turning lane at Sugar Loaf Elementary School. Representative Warren informed the Board that he and Senator Goss planned to request these funds again next year for turning lanes at Hiddenite Elementary School.

- \$162,000 for two special agents to investigate child abuse.
- \$2 million to help farmers clean up hog lagoons and bring about new technology to make them work rather than pollute.
- Teacher's salaries were increased by 5%, retired teacher's pay was increased by 2.5%, and state employees' salaries were increased by 4%. Representative Warren also mentioned that there would be 54 more school nurses hired.
- \$28 million for need-based financial aid at universities.
- \$5.7 million to hire 100 tutors to help struggling 8th graders and keep them from dropping out of school.
- \$127 million to provide \$4,000 per year in scholarships to 25,000 community college and university students.
- \$100 million from Billy Ray Hall, NC Rural Center, to help build water lines and sewer infrastructure. Representative Warren encouraged the Board and staff to contact him and Senator Goss when filing for grants.
- \$8 million for farmland preservation.
- Approved an income tax credit for 800,000 taxpayers to keep them working.
- Approved tax credits for citizens that purchase long-term care insurance or adopt children.
- Approved stricter penalties for individuals found guilty of possession and distribution of stolen vehicles as well as those who steal copper from church air conditioning units. Guidelines for the purchase of copper will also be required.
- Enacted regulations to stop school bus drivers from using cell phones while children are occupying the bus.
- Increased the Homestead Exemption limit to \$25,000 for citizens 65 and older.
- Strengthened laws governing inter-basin transfers.
- Approved Medicaid relief and opportunity for counties to enact a land transfer tax or sales tax by referendum. Representative Warren also noted that the fiscal research within the legislature was showing almost twice the amount of revenue to be

generated for Alexander County from the sales tax than what the NCACC was projecting.

Representative Warren conveyed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve Alexander County in the House of Representatives and noted that he had enjoyed working with Senator Goss on many issues.

Bob Epting was present to give an update on the inter-basin transfer legislation. He stated that the new legislation provided for a fairer process for public hearings and more notice to all parties throughout the basin when a request was filed. He discussed several of the new guidelines included in the legislation as follows:

- Applicants must give 90 days notice prior to filing for a transfer.
- Applicants must sponsor a public hearing.
- Applicants must prove that the benefits of the transfer outweigh the detriments and that the detriments can be mitigated.
- Communications will take place with all local governments.
- Any party throughout the basin can request mediation.

He pointed out that under these guidelines, the Concord and Kannapolis inter-basin transfer request would have been denied. He also mentioned that the Concord and Kannapolis permit was currently on appeal and that this issue would be contested to the Supreme Court if necessary, a process that could take 5 to 8 years.

DISCUSSION OF NEW COUNTY AUTHORITY REFERENDUM

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the authority given to counties by the General Assembly to levy either a .4% land transfer tax or a ¼ cent local sales tax by referendum to replace funds taken from the state (Article 44 and Article 42) for the Medicaid swap. He explained the land transfer tax could be effective as early as December 2007 and April 2008 for the sales tax and he noted that some counties already had these options placed on the ballot for November.

Mr. French stated that the NCACC had projected that Alexander County would generate \$451,304 from the land transfer tax and \$467,394 from the sales tax; however, he noted that information provided to Representative Ray Warren was showing much higher projections for the sales tax.

The Board discussed whether to place either or both of these options on the ballot for November or wait until next year. Mr. French explained that action would need to be taken by the end of the month to have something placed on the November ballot. Chairman Robertson preferred the referendum be held in November. Commissioner Bolick felt both options should be placed on the ballot so that the citizens could decide which one they wanted to pay.

Linda Mundy, Elections Director, stated that the election scheduled for November was a Town election requiring only one polling place to be open. She explained that placing these options on the ballot for November would require all polling places in the county to be opened and staffed at an additional cost of approximately \$18,000. She also stated that absentee ballots needed by be mailed out 50 days prior to the election – or September 17, 2007.

The Board felt that, due to the difference in revenue projections from the NCACC and information provided to members of the General Assembly, a decision to proceed should not be made until a definite revenue projection was established. The Board agreed to hold a work session once these numbers were determined to decide whether these options should be placed on the ballot for November or next year.

George Holleman, Town Commissioner, was present at the meeting and approached the Board at this point to state that the Town of Taylorsville would be opposed to the referendum being held in November. He explained that holding the Town election separate was easier and more convenient for town residents and he noted that placing these options on the agenda would force these residents to visit more than one polling place to vote. He agreed that the revenue was needed but felt the Board should allow enough time to properly plan and hold the referendum next year.

DISCUSSION OF COMPREHENSIVE CLASSIFICATION & PAY STUDY PROPOSAL

Rick French, County Manager, informed the Board that the County's Classification and Pay Plan had not been updated in 9 years. He presented a proposal from Management and Personnel Services Group, who also developed the County's plan in 1998, to again update the plan beginning in October 2007. He pointed out that completion of the plan was expected around January 2008.

Mr. French stated that the updating of the County's Classification and Pay Plan had not been budgeted for in fiscal year 2007-2008; however, he noted that staff would be able to rework some numbers to provide for this much-needed service in time for Management and Personnel Services Group to begin work in October as planned.

Chairman Robertson asked Mr. French to determine if Management and Personnel Services Group could still keep the three-month timeframe if work began in December 2007 or January 2008 instead of October 2007 so that the service could possibly be paid for with 2008-2009 budget funds.

Commissioner Yoder asked if there were any governmental agencies that provided this service for free. Mr. French replied that there was not.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS #5 & #6

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendment #5. He requested the Board not take any action on Budget Amendment #6 due to a concern with the grant funding. He presented the following information for Budget Amendment #5:

Budget Amendment #5 – To reduce the Register of Deeds supplemental retirement line item due to a reduction in the County matching rate from 4.5% to 1.5%. To increase the Public Buildings and Sheriff's Department budgets for the purchase of a used van from Foothills Area Program. To reduce the Medicaid budget as a result of the State's assumption of 25% of Medicaid costs for the last 8 months of fiscal year 2007-2008 from NCACC estimates.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #5. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Commissioner Hammer presented the following appointments and reappointments to County boards and committees:

A. WPCOG REGION E AGING

Reappoint Phyllis Douglas 2 years

B. TOWN PLANNING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS

Appoint Donald Robertson 1 year

C. SENIOR CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Appoint Jan Schoeppler 2 years

Appoint Teri Petzold

Appoint Emmett Pruett

Appoint Alfred Dooley

Reappoint Gerry Koning

Reappoint Ardeal Roseboro

Reappoint Kathleen Rowe

Reappoint Margo Mosley

D. TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Appoint Sara Loudermilk 2 years

Appoint Lewis Murdock

Reappoint Hal Bond

Reappoint Angela Johnson

Reappoint Leah Chapman

Reappoint Patti Foster
Reappoint Russell Greene
Reappoint Rick French
Reappoint Mark Odom
Reappoint Jody Church
Reappoint Bradley Earp
Reappoint John McCurdy
Reappoint Susan Taffe
Reappoint William Hammer
Reappoint Dana Robertson
Reappoint Leeanne Whisnant
Reappoint Karen Hoyle
Reappoint Scott Ross
Reappoint Mary Hussain
Reappoint Jamey Anders

E. JURY COMMISSION

Reappoint Garrett (Bud) Yost 2 years

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to approve the appointments and reappointments as presented. Commissioner Odom 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 "Opening Session" for the Alexander County School System is scheduled for Tuesday, August 21, 2007 at 8:30 AM at ACHS.
- B. Mr. French, WPCOG Grant Planner Leah Martin, and Benjie Thomas from West Consultants will be meeting with the Local Government Commission on August 28, 2007 to discuss financing for the Northeast Water Project. County staff received a letter from the NC Division of Environmental Health which stated that the project had sufficient priority points to receive a loan and had met the "ready to proceed" criteria. The project will be bid this week and the bid will be awarded in 30 days.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the August 6, 2007 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.
- B. Agreement with Institutional Medical Services for inmate medical care.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Odom 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 Hammer made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 8:03 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 Yoder 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 9:05 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