

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING November 5, 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: Micah Henry, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, November 5, 2007 at 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

Rev. Scott Huffman, Hiddenite Baptist Church, gave the invocation and Autumn Younce, student at Alexander Central High School, led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

The Board presented a Key to the County to Suma Davidson for her service to the citizens of Alexander County. Commissioner Hammer explained that Ms. Davidson had recently retired from Burger Basket after working there for 40 years. He stated that it was an honor to recognize Ms. Davidson.

Ms. Davidson stated that she had enjoyed her time working at Burger Basket and that she had made a lot of friends. She thanked the Board for the recognition.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Hammer stated that members had been appointed to the 21st Century Transportation Committee, most of which were from the eastern part of the state. He mentioned that the committee would study the transportation needs of the state and report its findings in May 2008.

Commissioner Hammer also informed the Board that the construction of a new Highway 127 bridge had been moved up to top priority on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) last week at the WPCOG Transportation Meeting. He stated that the NC Department of Transportation would be doing an in-house feasibility study for the bridge.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Robertson requested the addition of the Christmas in Bethlehem declaration as Agenda Item #5A.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The Board recognized Lori Sipe, teacher at Wittenburg Elementary School, and three of her third grade students – Jessica Dunford, Luke Huffman, and Evan Fairchild. Chairman Robertson explained that the class had recently sent the Board an email expressing an interest in what commissioners did to help the community in conjunction with their studies of county government. Therefore, the Board asked the class to attend the meeting.

Each commissioner introduced themselves and discussed how they became a county commissioner. They also talked about their education and jobs outside of county government. The Board explained the budget process and what services the County provided as well as requirements to become a county commissioner. They also explained the process of enacting ordinances and policies.

The Board thanked the students for attending and presented each with a County lapel pin.

Public Comment

Brian Baker was present to discuss the need for water in the Vashti area. He stated that many wells and springs had dried up and that several residents and chicken farmers were being forced to haul water to their homes several times a week. He informed the Board that he had dug two wells, one 600 feet and one 1,000 feet without hitting any water. He asked the Board to consider a feasibility study to address the problem.

Chairman Robertson stated that the County would be opening bids on November 8, 2007 for water lines to be installed in the Vashti area. He explained that the plan was for a 26-mile loop along several roads in Vashti that future lines could be fed from.

Commissioner Hammer pointed out that most people didn't realize that it cost approximately \$150,000 to run one mile of water line. He stated that the Board was continually researching grant funding specifically to get water to the citizens and he noted that the County would be borrowing \$3.5 million for the Vashti project.

Rick French, County Manager, invited Mr. Baker to visit the County Administration Office to view a map of the planned water line installation in Vashti.

PUBLIC HEARING: AMENDMENT TO NC HIGHWAY 127 CONCENTRATED NEEDS CDBG PROJECT & 2005 SCATTERED SITE HOUSING CDBG PROJECT

Nancy Coley, WPCOG Community Development Administrator, informed the Board that some of the beneficiaries of the housing rehabilitation elements of the NC Highway 127 Concentrated Needs CDBG Project and the 2005 Scattered Site Housing CDBG Project had changed since the applications were written. She explained that three families who were targeted to receive housing rehabilitation from the Highway 127 Project had withdrawn as well as one family in the Scattered Site Project for which staff had found replacements. She pointed out that the grants representative from the NC Division of Community Assistance; NC Department of Commerce had requested a public hearing be held for the amendments.

Ms. Coley requested the Board approve the amendments and allow staff to submit them to the Division of Community Assistance for approval.

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 Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the beneficiary amendments to the NC Highway 127 Concentrated Needs CDBG Project and the 2005 Scattered Site Housing CDBG Project and to allow staff to submit the amendments to the Division of Community Assistance. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

ALEXANDER SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT REPORT ON DROUGHT CONDITIONS & GROUNDWATER INVENTORY

Bill Chapman, SWCD Board of Supervisors, discussed the serious drought conditions and the numerous reports of water wells, springs, and streams that have ceased to yield an adequate supply of water for the daily needs of farming operations. He stated that steps needed to be

taken to determine how severe the problem was and he therefore informed the Board that the Alexander and Iredell Soil & Water Conservation Boards were contemplating conducting a cooperative groundwater inventory to get a better understanding of the extent of loss of stream flow, dry wells, and drop in water tables throughout the two-county area.

Wendell Kirkham, SWCD Treasurer, stated that agriculture was a vital part of the economy in the area, contributing more than \$97 million in Alexander County and over \$100 million in Iredell County. He explained that groundwater issues critical to the needs of agriculture included static water levels, aquifer recharge rates, base flow of rivers and streams, location and water yielding capabilities of aquifers by watersheds, water withdrawal permitting, aquifer mapping, sustainable management of groundwater, and wellhead protection from surface pollution. Mr. Kirkham pointed that he had actively researched funding for this project and noted that USGS NC Water Science Center had expressed an interest in performing combined groundwater inventories throughout the state and that grant funding was available through the NC Rural Economic Development Center for rural communities dealing with critical infrastructure problems and dwindling water supplies.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to allow staff to draft a resolution to endorse the groundwater study project subject to approval of grant funding. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

REPORT ON CLEAN ALEXANDER DAY 2007

Josh Mitchell, Solid Waste Director, gave an update on the Clean Alexander Day held on Saturday, October 27, 2007. He reported that 459 loads of trash were received at the landfill along with 1,652 loads at the convenience centers, for a total collection of 180 tons for the day. He informed the Board that 262 more loads were received this year in comparison with last year as well as 45 more tons. Mr. Mitchell thanked the Solid Waste employees and the County Maintenance/Grounds staff for their assistance.

Mr. Mitchell also discussed plans to hold the Household Hazardous Waste Day on Saturday, April 26, 2007. He stated that it was customary to hold the Clean Alexander Day on the last Saturday in October and the Household Hazardous Waste Day on the last Saturday in April and he recommended the Board set those two dates aside each year. The Board agreed.

Commissioner Yoder commended the efforts of Mr. Mitchell and the Solid Waste staff on painting at the Highway 16 North convenience site and noted that the improvements had helped the appearance of the site tremendously. Mr. Mitchell replied that staff would be painting at other convenience sites in the future.

JAIL COMMITTEE REPORT

Chairman Robertson stated that the Jail Committee met on October 30, 2007 to discuss a recent letter from Superior Court Judge Michael E. Beale requesting a written report regarding the

County's plans for improvement of the courthouse and jail in light of the recent Medicaid relief provided to counties.

Rick French, County Manager, stated that plans for expansion or construction of a new jail facility had been put on hold this budget year due to the uncertainty of the hospital. He also explained that the Medicaid relief provided to counties was a swap for Article 42 and Article 44 sales taxes which would provide limited funding to counties; however, he noted that a referendum to enact a ¼ cent sales tax would be held in January 2008 which would aid in the cost of a new jail facility if it passed. He also stated that he planned to meet with representatives from the U.S. Marshall's Office to discuss renting space for federal prisoners.

Chairman Robertson stated that the Jail Committee planned to meet with Judge Beal in December.

CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM

Commissioner Bolick discussed the annual Christmas in Bethlehem events to include a dinner theater on November 16-18, 2007 sponsored by the Bethlehem Ministerial Association, the lighting of the Bethlehem Star on December 1, 2007, and the Christmas Drive-Through on December 7-9, 2007.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to declare November 16 – December 31, 2007 as Christmas in Bethlehem. Commissioner Odom seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #16

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendment #16, which included the following information:

Budget Amendment #16 – To decrease the Resource Center budget due to a decrease in state funding. To increase the Human Resources budget for the cost of pre-employment physicals and criminal background checks. To increase the Veteran's Services budget for the purchase of additional flag holders.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #16. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. The Catawba River Study Committee will be holding a meeting regarding drought conditions on November 14, 2007 from 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM at Lenoir Rhyne College. Duke Energy will be providing lunch.
- B. Cleaning bids for the Library and Bethlehem Branch Library will be opened on November 19, 2007.
- C. A special meeting will be held on Monday, November 26, 2007 in Bethlehem to discuss the possible annexation of several businesses in the Bethlehem area by the City of Hickory relating to beer and wine sales. The meeting will be held in the Bethlehem Elementary School cafeteria at 6:00 PM.
- D. Bids for the Northeast (Vashti) Water Project will be opened on Thursday, November 8, 2007 at 2:00 PM. Bids cannot be awarded until all necessary steps are approved by LGC which is anticipated by November 6, 2007. Staff is also investigating a \$500,000 Rural Center Grant for this project.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the October 22, 2007 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Bolick 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 7:42 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 Odom 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 8:25 PM. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

W. Darrell Robertson, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board