

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING January 7, 2008

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

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

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, January 8, 2008 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

Rev. Howard Smith, Bethlehem Church of God, gave the invocation and Morgan Whisnant, student at West Alexander Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

The following recognitions took place:

Alexander County Map Book

George Brown, GIS Coordinator, announced that the map book project, a joint effort between the County GIS Department and the Alexander Central High School GIS class, was complete. He stated that the books had been printed and were now available to the public at the following locations:

County Administration Office

Sipe's Lumber Company

ACHS
County Library & Bethlehem Branch
Town Hall
Chamber of Commerce
Main Street Tire
All Star Realty

Mecimore Auto Parts
The Hiddenite Center
Porky's BBQ
Register of Deeds Office
Tax Office

Eric Walker, GIS Class Instructor, introduced three students involved in the project – Clinton France, Tyler Stafford, and Patrick Wike who presented copies of the map book to each commissioner. Each student briefly commented on their experience in creating the map book. Mr. Walker thanked the County for partnering with the GIS class to make this project a reality.

The Board congratulated Mr. Brown, Mr. Walker, and the entire GIS class on their accomplishment.

Key to the County

Commissioner Hammer, on behalf of the entire Board, presented a Key to the County to Gary Morrell who was recently named the 2007 Small Farmer of the Year. Mr. Morrell is the owner of Greengo Orchards which produces apples, nectarines, Asian pears, white peaches, Chinese chestnuts, and persimmons.

Mr. Morrell thanked the Board for the recognition and noted that the Alexander County Cooperative Extension Office was the best in the state.

Lenny Rogers, Cooperative Extension Director, stated that Mr. Morrell was a very progressive and proactive farmer with a lot of tree fruit knowledge and he congratulated Mr. Morrell on his accomplishments. Mr. Rogers also introduced Bill Hanlin, Tree Fruit Agent for Alexander and Wilkes Counties.

Commissioner Hammer's Birthday

Chairman Yoder announced that today was Commissioner Hammer's 58th birthday. Commissioner Hammer was presented with a birthday cake.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Robertson and Commissioner Hammer briefly discussed the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center and the Engineering Center and the opportunities they provided to students and older citizens alike. Commissioner Robertson explained that the center provided the ability for students to receive a 4-year technical degree as well as continuing education to those already in the workforce.

Commissioner Bolick thanked the Board for their continued support for and recognition of Christmas in Bethlehem each year. He stated that approximately 1,700 citizens visited the Christmas Drive-Through in December 2007.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Yoder requested that Agenda Item #6 (Courthouse / Jail Project Update) be moved up as Agenda Item #1.

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

SUPPORT OF ¼ CENT SALES TAX

Kim Taylor, Superior Court Judge, spoke in favor of the ¼ cent sales tax referendum to be held on Tuesday, January 8, 2008. She discussed the needs of both the courthouse and jail and stated that the County could be given a court order or lawsuit to construct a new facility if actions were not taken soon on this project. She explained that additional sales tax revenues would be used to help fund the project instead of property taxes being raised and she urged the public to support the sales tax.

Dale Graham, District Court Judge, commended the efforts of the Board as well as the Jail Committee thus far. He felt it was important that the public be informed of the responsibility of the County to provide an adequate courthouse and jail facility, noting that revenue generated from an additional sales tax would aid the County in doing so.

Chairman Robertson thanked both Judge Taylor and Judge Graham for endorsing the sales tax.

COURTHOUSE / JAIL PROJECT UPDATE

Commissioner Robertson stated that members of the Jail Committee met with Superior Court Judge Michael Beale on December 31, 2007 in response to a recent letter from Judge Beale expressing his concerns with the current jail and courthouse facility and requesting a progress report on action taken to remedy the problem. Commissioner Robertson reported that Judge Beale was informed about steps taken by the Jail Committee and commissioners including visiting surrounding counties to determine the type of facility needed in Alexander County and hiring an architect. Jack Hemphill, Jail Project Architect, was present at the meeting to discuss his findings related to population projections and construction timeframe and to review his plans for a downtown site, a remote site, and a hospital property site. Commissioner Robertson also pointed out that the Medicaid swap was explained in detail to Judge Beale.

Commissioner Robertson also discussed the importance of voting in favor of the sales tax. He stated that, if the sales tax was approved on January 8th, the County would begin receiving revenues from it in April 2008, which would allow the architect to begin the project design phase and the County's fund balance to reach over the LGC's required level of 8% for borrowing money. He thanked the Jail Committee along with several individuals who had served on a

committee to promote the sales tax referendum which included Phil Icard, Harry Robertson, Hurschel Teague, Joel Harbinson, and John Watts.

Commissioner Hammer stated that an adequate jail facility was something the County was responsible for providing, noting that the state had the authority to force the County to construct a new jail. He also pointed out that the project could create the need for an additional 4.5 cents on the tax rate. Commissioner Hammer discussed the need for sales tax revenue and stated that it was not fair to place the burden on property owners alone.

Chairman Yoder agreed that a sales tax increase was a fairer tax than property taxes.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present to speak during the Public Comment Period.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KATE B. REYNOLDS CHARITABLE TRUST GRANT

Leanne Whisnant, Health Director, announced that the Alexander County Health Department had recently received a \$100,000 grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for capital funds to improve the dental care of financially needy children in Alexander County. She stated that these funds would be used to purchase a panoramic x-ray machine for the dental clinic.

She explained that Dr. Alan Grant had been working with the dental clinic and providing x-rays when needed; however, she stated that transporting children to a separate location from the Health Department could create a transportation hazard. Ms. Whisnant noted that the new x-ray machine should be received in approximately two months, eliminating the need to transport children to another office.

Ms. Whisnant also informed the Board that the ACHS GIS class recognized earlier for the Alexander County Map Book had assisted the Health Department on an alcohol related research project. She explained that the research included statistics on alcohol related crashes including the location, time of day, age and status of the driver, etc. to determine the best prevention tactics.

RESOLUTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH MERGER

Rick French, County Manager, presented a resolution to enter into an affiliation with the Smoky Mountain Center for the provision of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services. He explained that this issue had been discussed for some time and noted that he and Commissioner Robertson along with other staff had visited several LME's to determine the best option for Alexander County.

Mr. French informed the Board that the Smoky Mountain Center was the best fit for Alexander County, consisting of a very experienced staff and a range of 86 cents to \$4.23, comparable to that of Foothills Area Program. He also noted that the Foothills Area Board had unanimously recommended partnering with the Smoky Mountain Center effective July 1, 2008.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to approve the resolution to enter into an affiliation with the Smoky Mountain Center for the provision of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

NORTHEAST WATER PROJECT UPDATE

Rick French, County Manager, gave an update on the Northeast Water Project, a \$3.6 million project that will provide approximately 28 miles of water line in the Vashti area. He noted that he would like to begin giving a monthly update on this project.

He stated that the County had also applied for a \$500,000 Rural Center grant and mentioned that staff was negotiating an agreement with EnergyUnited Water Corporation for maintenance of the water lines that would be considered by the Board in February. Mr. French stated that he hoped installation of water lines would begin in late March or early April.

EMERGENCY SERVICES BID FOR AMBULANCE

Russell Greene, Emergency Services Director, presented bid results for a replacement ambulance. He informed the Board that staff mailed out specifications and bid requests to 9 sales representatives for 14 separate manufacturers. Bids were opened on January 4, 2008 at 4:15 PM at the Emergency Services Office.

He presented the following bid results for a GM 4500 chassis with a 164 inch box:

TaylorMade	\$127,080
American Emergency Vehicle	\$136,787
McCoy Miller	\$141,784
Marque	No Bid

Mr. Greene pointed out that staff additionally requested an alternate bid for a similar unit on a GM 3500 chassis; however, he noted that Northwestern stated that they could not meet the weight requirements. TaylorMade provided a bid of \$116,100 for the GM 3500 chassis with a note that the unit would be overweight or very close to overweight.

Therefore, Mr. Greene recommended approval of the bid of \$127,080 submitted by TaylorMade for a GM 4500 chassis as a replacement ambulance.

Chairman Yoder asked if the oldest unit would be replaced. Mr. Greene replied that the oldest unit, a 1999 model, actually had fewer miles than a 2000 model unit. He felt the County mechanic should make the decision on which unit needed to be replaced.

Commissioner Odom made a motion to accept the bid of \$127,080 submitted by TaylorMade for a GM 4500 chassis replacement ambulance. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #22 - #28

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendments #22 - #28, which included the following information:

Budget Amendment #22 – To increase the Information Technology budget for the Alexander County Map Book Project. To transfer funds to the Recreation Department for additional maintenance responsibilities and for the purchase of playground equipment at Bethlehem Park. To increase the Bethlehem Library budget for a donation received.

Budget Amendment #23 – To increase the Health Department budget for Family Planning bonus funds, Pandemic Flu state monies, Restaurant Heart Health Survey monies, and Kate B. Reynolds private grant funds for a dental clinic x-ray machine. To increase the DSS budget for an additional allocation of Crisis Intervention payment grant funds.

Budget Amendment #24 – To increase the Landfill budget for an extensive ground water assessment and additional revenue budget as a result of the \$5 per ton fee increase that became effective with the 2008 fiscal year.

Budget Amendment #25 – To budget for transfers needed to close out the 911 Communications Equipment Project.

Budget Amendment #26 – To budget for transfers needed to close out the 911 Communications Equipment Project.

Budget Amendment #27 – To budget for engineering fees associated with water and sewer projects in the Hiddenite area.

Budget Amendment #28 – To increase the appropriation to the Economic Development Corporation for additional funds needed for the Industrial Development Incentive Grant Program.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #22 - #28. Commissioner Odom seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS

The following issues were discussed during Other Business:

- A. A public meeting has been scheduled on January 28, 2008 at 5:30 PM to discuss the pending PARTF grant for construction of an aquatics center. Mr. French stated that the \$500,000 grant was applied for two years ago.
- B. The Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Banquet has been set for February 18, 2008.
- C. The Western Piedmont Council of Government Annual Meeting will be held on January 22, 2008 at 6:30 PM.
- D. An NCDOT Transportation Improvement Plan Meeting will be held on January 23, 2008 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM at CVCC in Hickory.
- E. Mr. French informed the Board that staff was currently working on scheduling a legislative luncheon with Representative Ray Warren and Senator Steve Goss on either January 29th or January 30th.
- F. Chairman Yoder mentioned that Mr. French would be giving monthly updates on the Courthouse / Jail Project as well as the Northeast Water Project. He asked that a monthly report be given on the Hiddenite Sewer Project as well.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the November 26, 2007 Special Called Meeting and the December 3, 2007 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.
- B. Tax Release Requests for December \$7,779.46 and Tax Refund Requests for December \$5,243.24.
- C. Plans for the CDBG 2004 Infrastructure Water Hook-Up Project, 2005 Scattered Site Rehabilitation Project, and 2005 Concentrated Needs Highway 127 Project.

Commissioner Bolick 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 7:40 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 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 8:20 PM. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board