

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING March 10, 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, March 10, 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. Ardeal Roseboro, Liberty Grove Baptist Church, gave the invocation and Katie Bennett, student at Taylorsville Elementary School, led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

The following recognitions were given:

Hometown Hero Awards

Steve Garland, Advertising Manager for *The Taylorsville Times*, and "Truman," mascot for *Kidsville News*, presented the Hometown Hero Award to the Alexander County Commissioners and to Rick French, County Manager, for their contribution to children's education by supporting *Kidsville News* which began in April 2006.

Gary Hoyle

The Board presented a plaque of appreciation to Gary Hoyle for his service to the citizens of Alexander County as Library Director from 2003-2008. Chairman Yoder explained that Mr. Hoyle had accepted the library director position in Lincoln County. He thanked him for his involvement with the Bethlehem Branch Library as well as his efficiency in budget preparation.

Commissioner Bolick also thanked Mr. Hoyle for his role in making the Bethlehem Branch Library a reality. He stated that Mr. Hoyle was also a member of the Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors and actively participated in the construction of homes for many citizens. Commissioner Bolick pointed out that Mr. Hoyle would be missed by the library patrons and staff as well as the community.

Commissioner Hammer reiterated the fact that the Board was always impressed with Mr. Hoyle's budget requests for the library, which were always on target or under budget. Commissioner Hammer thanked him for his leadership and wished him well.

Commissioner Robertson discussed the importance of teaching a child to read and the many programs offered to children at the library. He conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Hoyle for his contribution.

Phyllis Little, Library Board of Trustees Chair, stated that it had been a great experience working with Mr. Hoyle and that she would miss him. She thanked the Board for honoring him.

Rick French, County Manager, mentioned that Mr. Hoyle had great interaction with the public and noted that his expertise and advice helped greatly in the establishment of the Bethlehem Branch Library. He wished him well in his new position.

Gary Hoyle thanked the Board for its continued support of both the County Library and the Bethlehem Branch Library and for tonight's recognition. He thanked his staff, the Library Board of Directors, the Friends of the Library, and the patrons. Mr. Hoyle stated that he had enjoyed living and working in Alexander County.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC HEARING: CLOSEOUT OF 2005 CDBG SCATTERED SITE HOUSING PROJECT

Nancy Coley, WPCOG Community Development Administrator, stated that the purpose of this public hearing was to receive public comment before submitting the Closeout Performance Report for CDBG #05-C-1352, the 2005 Scattered Site Housing Project.

She explained that the purpose of the \$400,000 grant was to clear and relocate two severely substandard homes and to rehabilitate 5 homes. Those two homes were demolished and replaced with new doublewides, benefiting 6 persons. She stated that 5 homes were also rehabilitated which benefited 11 persons. All 5 households were female head-of-households. Ms. Coley informed the Board that all 17 beneficiaries of this project were low or very low income families.

Ms. Coley also pointed out that a local option was included in the project that allowed the appropriation of \$40,000 toward emergency repairs for low or moderate income families. The County committed to serve 8 families with this funding. She stated that 14 families, including 31 persons, were assisted with the local option, which exceeded the stated goal.

She also mentioned that after meeting the stated goals of the two clearance/relocations and the 5 rehabilitations, a total of \$21,802.82 remained in unspent funds; however, staff did not receive any applicants whose homes could be addressed for this amount. Ms. Coley explained that the funds would have to be de-obligated since the Division of Community Assistance did not permit any time extensions to seek other applicants.

Chairman Yoder called the public hearing to order and requested the Board be informed at this time if anyone had a hearing disability. 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.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to submit the closeout papers to the Division of Community Assistance, NC Department of Commerce. Commissioner Hammer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Susan Jenkins discussed her concerns with the lack of mental health services in Alexander County and the County's planned merge with Smoky Mountain Mental Health. She pointed out that many mental health facilities in the area were closing due to lack of funding and she noted that a Psychological Rehabilitation (PSR) center could not serve the needs of everyone with mental and emotional problems. Ms. Jenkins stated that Burke County took 70% of the available substance abuse programs with them when they pulled out of Foothills Area Program and she informed the Board that patients were forced to meet with a different therapist each time they were scheduled for an appointment. She also noted that many patients would rather go to jail where all of their basic needs would be met instead of being tossed from therapist to therapist. Ms. Jenkins asked that the County take a stand to keep mental health facilities open and to provide decent services.

James Workman stated that an assault had severely affected his motivation and other skills. He also discussed the importance of having mental health services in the county.

Ronnie Ramsey mentioned the importance of mental health services, stating that many programs offered group activities and social building skills to people with mental and emotional problems and disabilities. He informed the Board that a PSR only offered day programs and noted that, if both the clinic and PSR closed because of funding restraints, the police would be the only agency available to respond to mental health patients.

Commissioner Robertson stated that he had served on the Foothills Mental Health Board for 10 years and discussed the changes that occurred in Raleigh to change to LME's. He explained that the powers in Raleigh had made that decision without proper information and research; however, he felt that the process would begin moving in a positive direction to get mental health services back on track.

Chairman Yoder assured those present with these concerns that the Board was following the decisions made in Raleigh related to mental health very closely.

WESTERN PIEDMONT REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Patti Foster, Alexander County Transportation Director, introduced the new WPRTA Executive Director Ed Clifford who gave an update on the key objectives and approach of the implementation process to merge the counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba and the cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover to create the regional public transportation authority to serve the transit needs of the area.

Mr. Clifford discussed some of the benefits to creating a regional transportation system such as better efficiency and more transit dollars. He stated that best practices would be taken from each individual system and consolidated into the regional transit authority. He reviewed the process to create the regional system thus far including approval of the resolution to join the system by local governments in September 2007 and the hiring of the director in January 2008. He informed the Board that the key members of the management team would be named in February 2008. Mr. Clifford reported that a start date of July 2008 had been identified.

He discussed a grant that would allow office space to be leased for the authority and as well as future RFP's for maintenance, storage, and cleaning of transportation vehicles.

Commissioner Robertson asked if Alexander County citizens would have to schedule transportation services through a different person than what they were used to when the change occurred. Mr. Clifford stated that citizens would be asked where they resided during the initial call and would then be transferred to their regular scheduler.

The Board welcomed Mr. Clifford to the area.

RECYCLING REPORT

Josh Mitchell, Solid Waste Director, updated the Board on recent recycling efforts within the Solid Waste Department including the new Electronics Recycling program, the Household Hazardous Waste Day, and several other recycling programs. The following was discussed:

Electronics Recycling Program

Mr. Mitchell stated that the Electronics Recycling Program was created to allow citizens to dispose of electronics at the landfill for free. Items accepted include:

Computers and computer equipment
Phones, answering machines, pagers
Fax machines, adding machines, typewriters
Printers and copiers
Medical equipment
Rechargeable batteries
Circuit boards and components
Stereo equipment, record players, games
VCR's, DVD players, camcorders

He informed the Board that staff received a certificate of destruction from Creative Recycling Systems to confirm that the electronics collected from the landfill had been destroyed. He also noted that staff hoped to have the capability to receive electronics at all convenience centers in the future.

Household Hazardous Waste Day

Mr. Mitchell announced that the Household Hazardous Waste Day would be held on Saturday, April 26, 2008 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM in the County Administration Building parking lot. He explained that this would be an opportunity for citizens to dispose of household chemicals, cleaners, paint, kerosene, batteries, propane tanks, automobile fluids, etc. Mr. Mitchell reported that this service, which was free to the public, was being sponsored by Alexander County, the Cooperative Extension Office, and the Department of Agriculture.

Chairman Yoder asked that the Household Hazardous Waste Day be advertised in the *Catawba Valley Neighbors* in addition to *The Taylorsville Times*.

Commissioner Odom asked about the disposal of fluorescent light bulbs. Mr. Mitchell replied that bulbs taken from homes could be accepted; however, he noted that businesses were required to recycle fluorescent bulbs.

Paper/Plastic/Aluminum Recycling Program

Mr. Mitchell explained that a recycling program involving the school system and County offices would begin in fall 2008 to collect paper, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans. He stated that these items could be placed into one container instead of each item being separated.

He reported that all paper received at convenience centers would be accepted into one dumpster instead of having separate dumpsters for magazines and newspaper, etc. He also noted that a program to recycle plastic Wal-Mart and grocery store bags would be in effect in about a month.

Mr. Mitchell noted that businesses interested in a recycling program could contract with GDS for approximately \$25 per month.

Mr. Mitchell provided the Board with tonnage statistics for garbage collection since the 2004-2005 fiscal year and discussed the importance of recycling programs.

NORTHEAST WATER PROJECT UPDATE

Rick French, County Manager, informed the Board that a pre-construction meeting was held earlier today regarding the Northeast Water Project and that a groundbreaking ceremony would take place on March 26, 2008 at 6:00 PM. He stated that construction would begin on the water lines the first week of April and that crews would be working Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM and some Saturdays due to rock and rain delays.

He stated that the original project should be completed by February 2009 but noted that the additional lines made possible through the Rural Center grant would take several months to complete.

HIDDENITE SEWER PROJECT UPDATE

Rick French, County Manager, stated that a pre-construction meeting was held at the offices of HSMM on March 5, 2008 regarding the Hiddenite Sewer Project. He reported that construction of the sewer system was expected to begin in early April and that construction of the water lines connected to the project would be in approximately 60 days, depending on state approvals.

JAIL PROJECT UPDATE

Rick French, County Manager, suggested holding a work session with the Jail Committee and Jack Hemphill, Jail Project Architect, on April 14, 2008 at 6:00 PM at the CVCC / Alexander Center to discuss two potential jail sites.

He also suggested scheduling a public hearing for the May 19, 2008 Commissioners' Meeting also regarding the preferred site for the jail.

The Board agreed to both dates.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #39 - #41

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendments #39 - #41, which included the following:

Budget Amendment #39 – To budget for the purchase of the Bethlehem Library building and the issuance of debt for the purchase. To increase the Animal Control budget for the purchase of heaters for the animal shelter.

Budget Amendment #40 – To increase the budget for revised estimates for water revenues and administrative fees.

Budget Amendment #41 – To appropriate funding for the Northeast Area Water Project.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #39 - #41. Commissioner Hammer 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 Commissioner's Choice Awards Banquet is scheduled for Monday, March 17, 2008 at 6:30 PM at Alexander Central High School.
- B. A joint work session will be held with the Planning & Zoning Commission on Monday, March 31, 2008 at 6:00 PM at the CVCC / Alexander Center to discuss the comprehensive land use plan.
- C. The Alexander County Parks & Recreation Department, the Town of Taylorsville, and the YMCA will sponsor an Easter egg hunt on Sunday, March 16, 2008 at Matheson Park beginning at 1:30 PM.
- D. A surplus property sale is being planned for Thursday, April 24, 2008 at 6:00 PM. The County and school system will jointly provide surplus items at the old Dayton property.

Commissioner Odom 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 February 25, 2008 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.
- B. Tax Release Requests for January \$3,986.56 and Tax Refund Requests for January \$1,514.92.

Commissioner Hammer made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Robertson 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 THE DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:17 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 8:40 PM. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board