

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING February 15, 2010

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: Larry G. Yoder, Chairman
 Ryan Mayberry, 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, February 15, 2010 in the CVCC / Alexander Center Multipurpose Room, in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Gail Drum, United Way of Alexander County Executive Director, gave the invocation and also led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Ms. Drum reviewed the 9 agencies funded by United Way which included Alexander County 4-H, Partnership for Children, YMCA, the Rescue Squad, American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America, Domestic Violence Resource Center, and the Girl Scout Council and noted that the Alexander International Center and Adolescent Mothers for Education were grant recipients. She discussed the annual Bark in the Park, the kickoff for the fundraising season for United Way. Ms. Drum stated that the goal for this past year was \$160,000 but that only 56% of that goal had been reached which drastically affected the agencies funded by United Way.

Larry Pollard, United Way President Elect, mentioned Ms. Drum's attributes to United Way, pointing out that she worked hard to collect donations to fund these agencies. He also discussed the importance of the commissioners' influence in the community.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

SOCIAL SERVICES 2008-2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Karen Hoyle, DSS Director, introduced several staff members including Shelly Elder, Cassie Killian, Carrie Head, Sherry Hart, Tim Lackey, Sherry Deal, and Susan Taffe who presented the 2007-2008 DSS Annual Report, which detailed the following information:

- 23,410 clients were seen at the reception desk and 105 work permits and 171 fishing licenses were issued.
- 896 reports of alleged child abuse, neglect, and/or dependency were received, of which 602 were actively investigated involving 1,150 children. 21 children were taken into custody by court order. The average number of children in foster care each month was 32.
- 26 foster homes for children were licensed.
- 7 children were placed in adoptive homes and 10 adoptions were finalized.
- Day care was subsidized for an average of 383 children per month, allowing clients to maintain employment or receive job skills training. The total value of day care vouchers issued was \$1,399,074.
- 166 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of elderly/disabled adults were investigated. Of those reports, 2 were provided protective services and 123 were provided outreach services. The agency served as court-appointed guardian for 2 adults.
- An average of 89 adults and 4 children per month were served through the Community Alternatives Program (CAP), enabling clients to remain in their own homes instead of being placed in nursing homes. Congregate Nutrition saw an average monthly attendance of 90 and a monthly average of families receiving home delivered meals was 43.
- \$2,179,365 in child support payments for children was collected, 77 paternities and 124 support obligations were established, and 5,023 enforcement actions were initiated. Alexander County was ranked 7th in the state in this department.
- An average of \$444,823 was issued per month in food assistance to an average of 1,756 households. The total value of food stamps issued was \$5,327,879. The number of families receiving food assistance as of June 30 was 1,954.

- An average of 51 applications per month was taken for Adult Medicaid as well as 253 applications for Family Medicaid. An average of 640 children per month participated in NC Health Choice. Each month, an average of 5,695 individuals was enrolled in the Medicaid Program.
- Special Assistance for individuals in Adult Care homes averaged 100 individuals per month with an average payment of \$489 per month.
- Through the Work First Family Assistance Program, 23 public assistance recipients obtained jobs and became self-sufficient.
- Total expenses for the year totaled \$43,704,622 for all programs, of which \$2,333,545 or 5.34% is allocation from the County.

Commissioner Bolick asked if these services were available to illegal aliens. Ms. Hoyle replied that they were not; however, she explained that if a child was born in the country to two illegal aliens, then that child could receive services.

2009 COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION TEAM REPORT

Holly Yongue, Children's Services Program Manager, reported that the Community Child Protection Team reviewed 15 cases in 2009 including 3 fatalities, 11 child welfare cases, and 4 other cases. She noted that substance abuse by parents along with untreated mental health issues were the most common factors related to the abuse or neglect of children in Alexander County.

Several accomplishments by the team to address deficiencies in the gaps of services and resources included:

- Improving communication between schools, law enforcement, and juvenile court counselors.
- DSS is providing training on Child Protective Services reporting to area schools, guidance counselors, school administrators, and law enforcement.
- A full-time nurturing facilitator is now employed to work with high risk families who have children ages birth to 17.
- Developed and approved a written set of Community Minimum Standards.

She discussed the need for timely mental health assessments and treatment, pointing out that waiting times for initial appointments currently ranged from 4 to 8 weeks. The team would like for mental health services to be improved in Alexander County so that all citizens can have the opportunity to obtain mental health services in a reasonable amount of time, at an affordable rate, and within a reasonable driving distance.

The need for better transportation services was discussed, specifically the need for longer operating hours for citizens who have appointments later in the day. Commissioner Robertson

asked that DSS staff provide the Board with a letter or statement discussing the importance of this service to be forwarded to individuals currently working on evaluations of public transportation.

SUMMARY OF INTENSIVE CHILD FATALITY REVIEW

Karen Hoyle, DSS Director, advised the Board that the state conducted an Intensive Child Fatality Reviews in the event of a child death. During the review of such incidents, any entity (schools, law enforcement, doctors, medical facilities, etc.) must provide information related to the involved individuals for the previous 5 years. Recommendations to strengthen policies and procedures are generated from the report.

She recalled an automobile accident that occurred in September 2008 where a child was killed and the parents charged with substance related issues. Prior to the accident, DSS had only received a couple of reports related to poverty issues such as no heat in this family's residence. During the investigation, several incidents involving law enforcement were discovered as well as issues with schools as well as pharmacies, doctors, and hospitals seeing the parents on many occasions for prescription narcotics. However, she informed the Board that the final report and its recommendations could not be released as long as there was pending court action, which could take years to finalize.

Ms. Hoyle felt that some recommendations, once released, would include a system to alert doctors or pharmacists of multiple office visits or filling of prescriptions to prevent drug abuse as well as changing the 911 system to list calls by name instead of address for incidents not occurring at the place of residence.

SENIOR CENTER UPDATE

Scott Ross, Senior Center Director, reported that the Alexander County Senior Center was a place for socialization of the senior community and where a lot of emphasis was placed on the health and wellness of senior citizens. The following were offered at the Senior Center during the past year:

- Health Fair – health screenings flu shots, information given to promote health lifestyles for over 200 seniors.
- Peripheral Artery Disease Screening – identified two individuals who were at extreme risk of a heart attack or stroke.
- Exercise and Yoga classes – over 2,300 participated in physical exercise classes during the year.
- Ask the Doctor – a local physician presents monthly sessions where health topics, education, and remedies are discussed and general health questions are answered.

- Medicare Part D – assisted over 500 seniors in comparing their drug plans which saved Alexander County seniors over \$310,000 this past year. Staff and volunteers spent over 800 on this task alone.
- Hearing Testing – provided 3 times per month.
- Senior Games – seniors can participate in a variety of categories including painting, woodworking, literary arts, dance, and instruments, to name a few.

Mr. Ross stated that in addition to focusing on health and wellness, other important services were provided throughout the year including free income tax return preparation and free legal aid documentation (simple wills, powers of attorney, health care powers of attorney, living wills). Approximately 100 scheduled activities take place at the Senior Center each month which appeal to a wide range of seniors. He pointed out that the over 15,000 seniors participated in these events last year.

UPDATE ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT CHANNEL & SOCIAL MEDIA

Greg Cronk, Information Technology Director, gave a slide show presentation related to the County Government Channel, which the County began operating in May 2009. He explained that the County owned and operated the equipment and controlled the content of the channel. He also discussed the following topics:

- Review of necessary equipment to operate the channel.
- Content – commissioners' meetings, public service announcements, departmental services and information, programs and resources, and webcam.
- RSS feeds including weather, CNN news updates, Animal Control pet adoptions, and County calendar.
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.
- Alexander County Blog for Sheriff's Department, Senior Center, Library, Recreation Department, etc.
- Current projects – YouTube Government branded channel, Flickr stream for the County, electronic bulletin boards at DSS and the Health Department through grant funding, in-house PSA development, broadcast of additional County meetings (DSS, Health, and Planning Boards), additional content for departments, and in-house video editing.

Chairman Yoder inquired about broadcasting the ACHS football games. Mr. Cronk replied that staff was currently looking into the matter but noted that in order to receive funding the County had to adhere to guidelines, such as no advertisements. Chairman Yoder mentioned that Watauga County broadcasted their high school games on the government channel and suggested Mr. Cronk contact them for more information on how it could be accomplished.

SMOKY MOUNTAIN CENTER PROPERTY RESOLUTION

Commissioner Robertson explained that the Smoky Mountain Center purchased two condos in Watauga County in December 2009. Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 122C-147(c), each county in the 15-county area must approve the purchase by resolution. Commissioner Robertson advised that the purchase was made entirely by Smoky Mountain and did not cost the counties in any way.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing the purchase of real property by the Smoky Mountain Center. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF WIDENING HIGHWAY 127 & REPLACEMENT OF THE 127 BRIDGE

Chairman Yoder discussed the need to widen NC Highway 127 to a 4-lane roadway and to replace the bridge crossing over Lake Hickory from Alexander to Catawba County. He stated this was needed to relieve the congestion along Highway 127 and prevent accidents.

Commissioner Bolick felt the Board should request that Catawba County consider approving a similar resolution since a small portion of Highway 127 remained two-lane after crossing the bridge entering into Catawba County.

Commissioner Mayberry urged citizens to contact their state legislators and possibly the Governor to voice their support for this effort.

Commissioner Robertson felt the resolution should specify widening Highway 127 and also the bridge to 4-lane. The Board agreed.

Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the resolution with stated amendments. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Rick French, County Manager, presented the following reappointments to County boards and committees:

Criminal Justice Partnership Advisory Board – Reappoint Tammy Lippard, Tony Jones, Rick French, and Sarah Kirkman for one year.

WPCOG Sister Cities Association – Reappoint Dwight Shook and David Icenhour (alternate) for one year.

Mr. French also noted that replacements were needed for Eric Fritz and Brian Walker on the Planning & Zoning Commission, Donald Robertson and Kathleen Gwaltney on the Town Planning Board of Adjustments, and Eunice Carr on the Joint Nursing & Adult Care Advisory Committee as soon as possible.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to approve the reappointments as presented. Commissioner Odom seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #32

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the purpose of Budget Amendment #32 to increase the Extension Service budget for United Way grant revenue received in December 2009.

Commissioner Bolick made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #32. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, informed the Board that staff had received word that Duke Energy / Pike Electric would begin replacement of an existing damaged cable at Middle Little River on February 17, 2010. He also requested the approval of the County Manager's Report.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the January 28, 2010 Work Session and the February 1, 2010 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.
- B. Tax Release Requests for January \$5,050.27 and Tax Refund Requests for January \$3,032.15.
- C. Resolution Authorizing Approval of Settlement of Contested Case: Coalition to Protect the Catawba vs. NC Environmental Management Commission.

Commissioner Robertson 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 THE DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL

Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 8:23 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 Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Bolick made a motion to adjourn at 9:25 PM. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board