

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING January 8, 2018

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: Ronnie L. Reese, Chairman
 Josh Lail, Vice-Chairman
 Milton H. Campbell
 Ryan Mayberry (arrived at 6:25 PM)
 Dr. Jeff Peal

STAFF: Rick French, County Manager
 Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, January 8, 2018 at the CVCC / Alexander Center in Room 103, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Reese gave the invocation and Commissioner Peal led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

Chairman Reese presented a Key to the County to Charlie Dale Killian in recognition of 35 years of service with Alexander County EMS. The Board wished Mr. Killian well during his retirement.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Reese requested that Agenda Items #3 (Broadband Feasibility Study) and #4 (Alexander County Schools 2017-2018 Budget Presentation) be switched for the sake of time.

Commissioner Campbell made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Glenn Mays, Friends of the Library President, announced that several local merchants were offering discounts to Friends of the Library members. The list includes Mays Meats, McLindon's Restaurant, Cline's Florist, Short Cuts, Adams Funeral Home, Town and Country Drugs, and Peoples Drug. In addition, Friends of the Library members are given early shopping privileges at the Annual Book Sale. He urged the public to consider joining the Friends who work hard to support programs that promote literacy.

PUBLIC HEARING – CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 17-1 – KIZIAH

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, gave an oath of sworn testimony to all individuals wishing to speak during the conditional use hearing.

Jon Pilkenton, Director of Planning & Development, presented Conditional Use Permit 17-1 submitted by Greg Kiziah (dba Ashley Brooke Property Group, LLC) who requested conditional use approval for a group multi-family development on property located on Highway 127 North in Bethlehem currently owned by Lynn Carlton (under contract with applicant). The size of the property is 9 acres, zoned RA-20 and H-C, and the current land use is vacant. Zoning and land uses within 100 feet of the property is H-C to the north, south, and west along with R-20 to the east and west.

This use is allowed in the current zoning with conditional approval from the Board. The applicant has applied for the conditional use permit under Section 154.186 of the Alexander County Zoning Ordinance titled Multi-Family Residential Planned Developments and plans to construct a multi-family development of approximately 110-115 units, developed in phases with the first units being constructed on the southern portion of the property. The first building will consist of retail space on the lower level facing Highway 127 and the residential portion will be located on the upper two floors, accessed by the rear of the structure. This particular building will be located on approximately 1.5 acres zoned H-C.

Letters were sent by first class mail to adjoining property owners, a sign was posted on the property, and a notice was placed in *The Taylorsville Times* to announce the public hearing.

Mr. Pilkenton reported that the Planning & Zoning Commission met on December 7, 2017 to consider the conditional use permit where they voted to recommend approval with the following conditions:

1. The project be constructed using the materials shown on the sheet labeled "construction materials."
2. NCDOT approval of driveway access to NC Hwy 127.
3. Landscaping be installed along the street yard (facing Hwy 127) of the "mixed use" building.

4. The remainder of the project be developed in accordance with the submitted landscaping plan.
5. A sidewalk be constructed along NC Hwy 127 for the entire length of the property (consideration to be given for possible impacts due to plan widening of the road).

After a motion by Commissioner Lail, second by Commissioner Peal, and unanimous vote, Chairman Reese called the public hearing to order and requested any comments. There being none, Commissioner Campbell made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve Conditional Use Permit 17-1 with the following conditions.

1. The project be constructed using materials shown on the sheet labeled “construction materials.”
2. NCDOT approval of driveway access to NC Highway 127.
3. Landscaping be installed along the street yard (facing Hwy 127) of the “mixed use” building.
4. The remainder of the project be developed in accordance with the submitted landscaping plan.
5. A sidewalk be constructed along NC Hwy 127 for the entire length of the property (consideration to be given for possible impacts due to plan widening of the road).

Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ALEXANDER COUNTY SCHOOLS 2017-2018 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Harry Schrum, Board of Education Vice-Chairman, gave a slide show presentation that included the following information related to the 2017-2018 School System budget:

- Breakdown of 2017-2018 budget by fund – \$30,783,154 in State Fund (State appropriation), \$7,326,284 in General Expense Fund (County appropriation and fines/forfeitures), \$2,977,706 in Federal Fund (Federal appropriation), \$828,570 in Capital Outlay Fund (most will be used for 1:1 initiative), \$3,250,000 in Child Nutrition Fund, \$261,804 in Child Care Fund, and \$2,674,935 in Local Fund (grants and flow through programs such as ROTC, Head Start, Medicaid reimbursements, activity bus funds, etc.) for a total of \$48,102,453.
- Expenses – \$40,503,827 or 84% of the budget covers salaries and benefits. The remaining \$7,598,626 accounts for operating expenses (8% for supplies and materials, 7% for purchased services, 1% for capital outlay, and less than 1% for other).
- Fund Balance – Totaled \$3,870,557 as of June 30, 2017 but the system plans to use \$1,170,012 during the 2017-2018 budget year leaving a balance of \$2,700,545 on June 30, 2018.

- Impacts on Fund Balance – \$126,794 for Title II, \$464,443 for textbooks, \$150,000 due to County’s fulfillment of auditorium agreement, \$98,864 for retirement costs, \$115,672 for health insurance, \$110,650 for certified staff increases, and \$25,232 in cuts to the Central Office totaling \$1,091,655.
- The number of employees has decreased from 1,140 in 2010 to 948 in 2017, a decrease of 192 positions which has changed the student to staff ratio from 4.9 students per employee in 2010 to 5.3 in 2017.
- County appropriation to the School System - \$4,900,000 in 2005-2006 to \$6,031,900 for 2017-2018.

Chairman Reese noted that a meeting had been scheduled for January 18th between County and School System representatives where this information would be discussed further.

BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY

Alan Fitzpatrick, CEO of Open Broadband, LLC, provided a summary report of the Alexander County Broadband Feasibility Study by slide show presentation as follows:

- Findings from the November 17, 2017 community workshop were that broadband was important for economic development, existing and new businesses (especially work from home businesses), and education (needed for homework).
- Key findings of the local broadband market assessment – Spectrum provides broad coverage but there are gaps and complaints about consistent speeds and upload/download symmetry, there are significant middle mile networks but the corners of the county aren’t reached, and copper providers such as AT&T and CenturyLink offer little broadband.
- Current county broadband capabilities – two mountains provide view sheds into NE and SW portions of the county and there are several ridgeline, cell towers, and water tanks that could be leveraged for fixed-wireless internet, each provider has a reduced cost program for qualifying households, and existing fiber routes and vertical infrastructure offer opportunities to extend broadband into some portions of the un/underserved areas.
- Public-private partnership options – HB129 prohibits municipalities from offering service directly to residents; therefore, a privately owned and operated network is the only viable option. The county can assist by leasing available fiber capacity, allowing access to County facilities such as water tanks at reduced rates, reducing barriers for private providers to utilize vertical assets, and making access to conduits and poles easier for new providers.

- Four new ISP's (NC Wireless, Skyline/Skybest, RiverStreet Networks, and Open Broadband) came to the November 16, 2017 provider meeting. No incumbents were in attendance.
- Options for getting broadband speeds of at least 25 mb include fixed-wireless (service directly to the home) and fiber (passes all properties regardless of usage). Fixed-wireless is an investment of approximately \$250 per user and up to \$10,000 per tower with a payback period of around one year. It is ideal for streaming, school work, telemedicine, and cloud applications and is much faster to deploy and less costly than fiber. Fiber costs between \$35,000 and \$65,000 per mile plus additional costs for connections to buildings with a 10-20 year payback period.
- Recommended broadband strategy includes 1) attract competitive ISP's by providing access to County-owned property such as radio towers, water tanks, poles, buildings, and any fiber assets, 2) seed the competitive effort by offering the County's internet contract to an ISP in return for covering gaps, making 100 mb+ speeds available where technically feasible, and offering 25 mb service for no more than \$30-\$40, 3) work with the State Broadband Office, State Legislature, and Golden Leaf to obtain grant funding for broadband infrastructure, 4) support entrepreneurship and small business with an innovation center or incubator space with high-speed internet, 5) fund a pilot program with a new ISP to deploy symmetric high-speed broadband in designated underserved areas, and 6) request incumbents to expand 25 mb coverage areas.

Kent Winrich, Open Broadband CTO, provided examples of equipment used to provide fixed-wireless service.

PROCLAMATION IN SUPPORT OF MARSY'S LAW

After reading the proclamation in support of HB 551 / SB 585 (Marsy's Law), Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the proclamation as read. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

SALES TAX & FINANCIAL REPORT

Rick French, County Manager, reported that a total of \$1,500,785.25 has been collected in sales tax revenue through December 2017 (\$482,976.60 is new sales tax for economic development, public education, and community colleges). This amount is 32.94% of the \$4,556,000 budgeted with 33.33% of the budget year expired and an increase over last year of 5.49%.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Rick French, County Manager, requested that Betty Long and Genny Masters be appointed to the Library Board of Trustees for 3 years.

Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the appointments to the Library Board of Trustees as requested. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #30 & #31

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #30 & #31 as follows:

Budget Amendment #30 – To budget for the estimated expenses and revenues for the April 2018 RockyFest event at Rocky Face Park.

Budget Amendment #31 – To budget for the FY 2018 payment to Alexander County Schools to help cover the cost of the 21st Century Program at Taylorsville Elementary for the 2017-2018 budget year.

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #30 & #31. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. A public meeting was held on January 4th at the Bethlehem Branch Library to allow for review of the draft sewer plan for the Bethlehem area. Approximately 20 residents attended.
- B. The 2018-2019 budget process will begin on January 24th with a Department Head Meeting scheduled for 2:00 PM.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the November 29, 2017 Work Session and December 4, 2017 Regular Meeting.
- B. Tax Release Requests (\$4,352.07) and Tax Refunds (\$11,138.68) for November 22 – December 31, 2017.
- C. Application for I-CARE CSBG funding for Iredell and Alexander Counties for 2018-2019.
- D. Surplus 4 truck bed insert dog boxes.

Commissioner Campbell made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4, 5, & 6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL**

Commissioner Campbell made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:31 PM to discuss economic development, contractual matters, and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4, 5, & 6). Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Campbell made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 PM. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ronnie L. Reese, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board