

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**     January 6, 2020

**ALEXANDER COUNTY**  
**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**PRESENT:**    Ryan Mayberry, Chairman  
                  Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman  
                  Dr. Jeff Peal  
                  Marty Pennell  
                  Ronnie Reese

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, January 6, 2020 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**\*\*\*SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS\*\*\***

The Board congratulated the NC Cooperative Extension / Alexander County Center staff who won both the South Central and Overall State Search for Excellence Team Awards for the many group programs conducted throughout the year including Wake Up to Agriculture, Commissioners' Choice Awards, Speedway to Healthy, annual plant sale, 4-H Junior Livestock Show, Embryology in all elementary schools, Third Grade Ag History Tour, Real Money Real Word, Farm City Banquet, and 4-H Summer Fun camps.

Rick French, County Manager, mentioned that this group also organized the annual Christmas Parade.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Vice-Chairman Yoder traveled to Washington D.C. in early December with the NC Association of County Commissioners Board of Directors where meetings with members of Congress and U.S. Department Heads of Staff took place. Discussions included issues specific to NC such as broadband access, needed disaster relief funding on the east coast, etc. and the group participated in a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Vice-Chairman Yoder mentioned that the NCACC worked for the good of all 100 NC counties.

Chairman Mayberry wished everyone a Happy New Year and requested prayers for the victims of the Australia wildfires.

### **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kathy Riddle with the Friends of the Library promoted the Friends membership drive, noting that efforts to recruit new members and renew current ones will take place during the month of January. There are two Friends of the Library organizations (Alexander County and Bethlehem Branch) that support library activities and provide extras such as book discussion series, scholarships, and materials/equipment/programs beyond the resources available within the Library budget. Ms. Riddle stated that members also received special discounts at 10 local businesses.

Shari Wetherspoon, Alexander County Republican Women’s Club President, read and asked for support of a proclamation declaring Alexander County a Second Amendment Constitutional Rights Protection County.

### **PUBLIC HEARING: APPROVAL OF ROAD NAMES**

Rick French, County Manager, submitted the following road name for approval, noting that it met all required regulations and had been checked for duplication and sound indexing:

<u>Road No.</u>	<u>Road Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
3860AR	Chetola Ridge Drive	Off Rocky Face Church Road

After a motion by Vice-Chairman Yoder, second by Commissioner Pennell, and unanimous vote, Chairman Mayberry called the public hearing to order and requested any comments. There being none, Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the road name as presented. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **NC HIGHWAY 127 WIDENING PROJECT SIDEWALK / MULTI-USE PATH OPTIONS**

Brian Horton, WPCOG Transportation Planning Manager, was present to discuss pedestrian path options for Highway 127 in conjunction with the NCDOT widening project, originally reviewed in July 2019. Although NCDOT has not yet finalized plans and designs, they are requesting direction on Alexander County's wishes concerning in-road bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or multi-use paths. Real estate acquisition is scheduled to begin in 2021 and construction in 2023.

The Board viewed a slide show presentation with visual representations of path options. Mr. Horton pointed out that the Bethlehem Community Plan recommended a multi-use path along the southern portion of the project area (from bridge to shopping center at intersection of Highway 127 and Rink Dam Road) as well as bike accommodations along the entire corridor (to Richey Road). He advised that in-road bike lanes were not as popular when safer options were available and noted that the preference of multi-use paths over in-road bike lanes had been mentioned in the Bethlehem Plan. In addition, due to a recent change in the cost share policy, NCDOT will now pay for all capital costs of pedestrian paths if local governments will provide future maintenance.

After discussion, the Board agreed to a 10-ft asphalt multi-use path (for walking, running, and biking) on the west side of Highway 127 and a 5-ft concrete sidewalk (pedestrian traffic only) on the east side along the southern project area. However, the Board felt a decision could not yet be made for the northern portion without reviewing maps to determine what impact paths would have on property. Mr. Horton informed the Board that NCDOT would hold another community meeting in the spring or summer to present maps and preliminary designs.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION SALARY INCREASE REQUEST**

Chairman Mayberry reminded everyone that the Board of Education's salary increase request had been tabled from the December 2019 meeting so it could be placed on a printed agenda instead of being considered last minute. The increased requested is as follows:

<u>Current</u>	<u>Requested</u>
Monthly meeting - \$120 / \$240 for Chair	Monthly meeting - \$600 for all
Special called meetings - \$40	No change
Other school system functions - \$20	No change

Commissioner Peal felt this was a School System budgetary issue, not the County's, noting that he found it unusual for a state statute to require counties to approve the salaries of Board of Education members.

Commissioner Reese disagreed, stating that if the School System ran out of operational funds, they would request more money from the County. Although he was not opposed to the Board of

Education receiving an increase, he felt the amount requested was excessive, also noting that he had received comments from many citizens who agreed.

Chairman Mayberry also expressed concerns with the statute and felt this decision should not be made by the Board of Commissioners. He added that he had not received any comments from the public.

Rick French, County Manager, informed the Board that N.C.G.S. 115C-38 read “the tax-levying authority for a local school administrative unit may (not shall) under the procedures of G.S. 153A-92 fix the compensation and expense allowances paid to members of the board of education of that local school administrative unit.” He explained that this had been done by practice in the past but was not required.

Vice-Chairman Yoder stated that he had originally planned to suggest an increase of \$420 per month per member instead of the requested \$600 but, after learning that the statute did not require county commissioners’ approval, he felt the Board of Education was held accountable to the citizens for their actions and should therefore be able to set their own salaries.

Commissioner Peal advised that one reason for the proposed increase was to encourage more people to run for the Board of Education.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to send the salary increase request back to the Board of Education for their determination. Commissioner Pennell questioned the validity of the wording of the motion. After discussion, Chairman Mayberry asked Commissioner Reese to withdraw his motion and restate.

After withdrawing his previous motion, Commissioner Reese made a motion to send the salary increase request back to the Board of Education with authority given for them to set their own salaries. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **NATIONAL RADON ACTION MONTH PROCLAMATION**

After reading, Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve a proclamation declaring January 2020 as National Radon Action Month. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **BETHLEHEM SEWER EXTENSION PROJECT RESOLUTION**

Rick French, County Manager, advised that a Resolution of Tentative Award was required by the NC Department of Environmental Quality to approve the low bid submitted by Two Brothers Utilities, LLC for the Bethlehem Sewer Extension Project Resolution.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the Resolution of Tentative Award for the Bethlehem Sewer Extension Project. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #29 - #33**

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #29 - #33 as follows:

Budget Amendment #29 – To increase the JCPC budget for FY 2020 expansion funds from the NC Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act that include the “raise the age” provision allowing most 16 and 17 year olds charged with crimes to be served in the juvenile justice system instead of being charged as adults.

Budget Amendment #30 – To increase the budget for a transfer to the School Capital Improvements Fund based on FY 2019 school sales tax revenues in excess of FY 2019 school debt service payments.

Budget Amendment #31 – To reduce the General Fund for the portion of Code Red user fees to be paid by the County Water & Sewer Fund.

Budget Amendment #32 – To increase the DSS budget for the cost of a shingle roof replacement and the purchase of two new vehicles through the NC Sheriff’s Association vehicle procurement program.

Budget Amendment #33 – To adjust the budget for a 2.5% COLA effective with the 2/14/2020 pay date, a transfer between departments, and the year-end payroll accrual that will affect the first two pay dates in July 2020.

Commissioner Peal felt the costs associated with Budget Amendment #32 should have been included in the 2019-2020 DSS budget but noted that he would support given the immediate need and circumstances.

Commissioner Pennell made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #29 - #33. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS**

Rick French, County Manager, requested the following appointments and reappointments:

Region E Aging & Adult Care Community Advisory Committee – Reappoint Donna Aubuchon for 3 years.

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council – Appoint Linda Clements to replace Kristen Icard as DSS representative whose term expires on 6/30/2021.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the appointment and reappointment. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

The following issues were discussed during Other Business:

- A. Rick French, County Manager, stated that a total of \$1,711,200.55 has been collected in sales tax revenue through December 2019 (\$542,936.30 is new sales tax for economic development, public education, and community colleges). This amount is 33.47% of the \$5,113,000 budgeted with 33.33% of the budget year expired and an increase over last year of 10.88%.
- B. Staff is working on getting signatures for the last 3 easements needed for the Bethlehem Sewer Extension Project, the Stony Point Elementary School CDBG-I Sewer Project will be bid soon, and Buckeye Bridge is finishing up in Wittenburg Springs with plans to move on to Fox Court.
- C. Vice-Chairman Yoder mentioned he had been asked several times about a grand opening and tours of the Services Center.
- D. Commissioner Reese thanked Jack Simms for attending the grand opening of the Burke County Detention Center on behalf of the Town of Taylorsville and Alexander County.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Minutes from the December 2, 2019 Regular Meeting.
- B. Tax Release Requests (\$3,472.48) and Tax Refunds (\$3,323.47) for November 23 – December 27, 2019.
- C. Personnel Policy Revisions.
- D. Application for I-CARE CSBG funding for Iredell and Alexander Counties for 2020-2021.
- E. NC Community College System Budget for 2019-2020.
- F. JCPC Funding Plan for FY 2020.
- G. FY 2020 Audit Contract.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD ACTIVITIES**

At 7:17 PM, the Board transitioned into the Consolidated Human Services Board Meeting and proceeded as follows:

- Public Comment – there was no one signed up to speak.
- Senior Center Report – LEEANNE WHISNANT, Consolidated Human Services Director, reported that the staff had assisted Alexander County seniors in saving \$816,725 in Medicare costs for 2019. She also stated that participation had decreased slightly since October, which she felt was due to holidays and weather.
- Health Department Report – Ms. Whisnant advised that staff was gearing up for the accreditation process that occurs every 4 years and includes 41 benchmarks/147 related activities. Those reviewed included:
  - New electronic sign – a Duke Endowment Grant was used to implement a Behavioral Health Clinic as well as purchase a new electronic sign to assist in forms of communication to meet benchmarks 5, 7, 9, and 13.
  - Evaluate need for new rules – benchmark 34 and activity 34:4 applies to the local board of health's authority to evaluate/adopt/enforce rules or ordinances to protect and promote the public's health. Ms. Whisnant was not aware of any necessary rules that needed approval but noted that staff would revisit yearly to determine need. In addition, she provided copies of N.C.G.S. 130A-1.1 that applies to the Health Department's mission and essential services.
- DSS Report – Ms. Whisnant reviewed the following:
  - Director vacancy/recruitment – in order to move forward with the recruitment process, Ms. Whisnant asked for verification that the Board wished to advertise for Assistant Director positions when director vacancies occurred within the Health Department, DSS, and the Senior Center as discussed when the Consolidated Human Services Agency was created. She advised that an Assistant DSS Director would manage day-to-day operations but that she, as CHS Director, would sign all documentation such as NCDHHS contracts.

Commissioner Peal expressed concerns with the recruitment process given the change in rank and salary. Ms. Whisnant felt applicants would not be current directors, but people in management positions hoping to step into an advanced role; however, she stated that the title could be changed and re-advertised if no qualified applications are received.

- Interim DSS Director – Ms. Whisnant has spoken with Susan Osborne, NCDHHS Assistant Secretary for County Operations, to report the vacancy and inquire about requirements for an Interim DSS Director. Because there are no qualifications for an interim, the position could be held by whomever the Board chooses.

Based on a recommendation by County Manager Rick French, Chairman Mayberry made a motion to allow Leeanne Whisnant, CHS Director, to serve as Interim DSS Director. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

- Energy Assistance Programs – funds are still available in both the LIEAP (one-time vendor payment for heating bills) and CIP (heating/cooling related emergencies) programs. Staff is advertising through several media outlets.
- Medicaid Audits – beginning this month, DHHS will randomly pull 20 records each month for 10 months (200 total) in Medicaid specific programs to review eligibility determinations and compliance standards. Any discrepancies will subject the County to overpayment recoupment and a joint accuracy improvement plan will be required if the MOU accuracy standards are not met.

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

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:44 PM to discuss economic development and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4 & 6). Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Commissioner Pennell made a motion to adjourn at 8:31 PM. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

---

Ryan N. Mayberry, Chairman

---

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board