

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING** July 20, 2020

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: Ryan Mayberry, Chairman
 Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman
 Marty Pennell
 Ronnie Reese

ABSENT: 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, July 20, 2020 via Zoom in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Reese gave the invocation and Vice-Chairman Yoder led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Pennell recently toured the DSS facility and was pleased with progress made towards renovations. He thanked the Alexander County Maintenance staff for their hard work.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, read comments submitted by Craig McLeod regarding lack of code enforcement on Ridley Ranch Road and his numerous attempts to get these issues addressed by County departments. An email dated July 13, 2020 was sent to the Alexander County Commissioners and Planning Department with updated photos of accumulating household garbage, abandoned/untagged vehicles, old tires, miscellaneous junk/debris, etc. Mr. McLeod also reports many aggressive, uncontrolled dogs in the area that prohibit residents from safely accessing their property. He questioned why this situation continues to be overlooked, noting that laws and ordinances should be enforced on all citizens equally.

PUBLIC HEARING: REZONING CASE 20-2 – BALL

Seth Harris, Zoning Administrator, presented Rezoning Case 20-2 submitted by Frank Ball who requested rezoning of property owned by Farmers Oil, Inc. and located on Highway 90 East in Hiddenite from RA-20 (Residential-Agricultural) to H-C (Highway Commercial) to allow for automobile sales. The size of the property tract is 3.06 acres. Zoning districts and land uses within 100 feet include RA-20 on all sides along with L-I to the north.

After reviewing staff comments related to the size of the tract, compatibility of the disputed zoning action with an existing comprehensive plan, benefits and detriments resulting from the zoning action for the petitioning property owner / neighbors / and surrounding community, and the relationship between the uses envisioned under the new zoning and the current uses of adjacent land, Mr. Harris reported that the rezoning was consistent with the adopted goals and policies of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan which identifies this area as being designated for commercial use.

Letters were sent by first class mail to property owners within 100 feet of the parcel boundary, a sign was posted on the property, and a notice was placed in *The Taylorsville Times*. No comments have been received from the public either in favor or opposition to the request.

In addition to staff's recommendation for approval, the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the request on July 2, 2020 and after a public hearing, voted unanimously to recommend approval based on the following:

1. The rezoning request is consistent with the future land use map in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and its adopted goals and policies.
2. The request will not negatively impact the surrounding properties with regards to commercial development.

Mr. Harris advised that based on the information provided, the Board must determine whether the rezoning request meets the guidelines set forth and is reasonable in regards to public interest, considering all uses within the requested zoning district, not merely the use that the applicant proposes.

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

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve Rezoning Case 20-2 based on recommendations from staff and the Planning & Zoning Commission that the rezoning request is consistent with the future land use map, adopted goals, and policies in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and will not negatively affect the surrounding properties in regards to commercial development. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

WATER SYSTEM EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

R.J. Mozeley, McGill Associates Project Manager, provided the completion status of the following 8 areas included in the Water System Extension Project as of July 10, 2020:

- Wittenburg Springs Subdivision – 100% (regrassing and touchups remain)
- Fox Court – 100%
- Zeb Watts/Ned Herman/Liberty Grove – 78%
- Polly Bowman – 51%
- Teague Town – ranges from 0% to 3% depending on section
- Icard Ridge – 0%
- B&T Lane – 0%

He advised that Buckeye Bridge, LLC had 3 crews working and would complete construction by mid-September.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, reported that Alexander County's cumulative total for positive COVID-19 cases was now at 221 (75 active, 1 hospitalized, 2 deaths). She provided a slide show of statistics related to gender, race, age, etc. of positive cases, noting that our numbers remain much lower than neighboring counties. The Health Department is conducting drive-thru testing on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; however, testing can be scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays if needed based on demand. This format reduces risk to staff and preserves PPE. She thanked the public for their continued Wear/Wait/Wash efforts and commended Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director, and her staff for the extra hours worked during this pandemic.

Chairman Mayberry asked how Alexander County's death rate compared to the State's. Ms. Whisnant replied that those rates were similar (less than 1% in Alexander County compared to 1.64% statewide) and pointed out that although positive cases throughout the state were increasing (mainly due to more testing), death and hospitalization rates were trending down. Increased testing has caused delays in receiving test results with some taking up to 14 days.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, mentioned a significant increase in calls and that crews were encountering more positive/possible COVID cases. Many EMS shifts are understaffed due to delays in test results for employees who must remain in quarantine.

In response to an inquiry from Chairman Mayberry regarding reinfections and/or testing positive more than once, Ms. Walker explained that, according to NCDHHS guidelines, a second illness or positive COVID test within a 12-week period are not considered new infections.

Commissioner Pennell requested thoughts on the Alexander County Schools Re-Entry Plan. Ms. Whisnant felt the School System had developed the best plan possible when considering the many challenges and unknowns ahead.

Vice-Chairman Yoder asked how the contract tracing process was coming along. Ms. Walker explained that contact tracing was a lengthy process that required staff to spend approx. two hours on the phone with each person who has tested positive for COVID. Because the questions asked are very in-depth, some citizens are unwilling to cooperate but most have been very helpful.

Chairman Mayberry expressed his disappointment in Governor Roy Cooper and the NC General Assembly for seizing approx. \$2 billion in CARES Act funding that was intended for 94 counties.

ORDINANCE TO ALLOW ALCOHOL SALES BEFORE NOON ON SUNDAYS

Chairman Mayberry presented a request from The Vault Restaurant and Bar in Bethlehem for permission to serve alcohol on Sundays beginning at 10:00 AM. He explained that in 2017, the NC General Assembly approved a “brunch bill” that allows the sale and service of alcohol on Sundays two hours earlier than previously permitted. Senate Bill 155 requires municipalities to approve an ordinance before establishments with permits issued by the NC ABC Commission can sell alcohol before noon.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve an Ordinance Allowing the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages before Noon on Sundays. Chairman Mayberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Rick French, County Manager, advised that this action only applied to the unincorporated areas of Alexander County and that the Town of Taylorsville must approve a separate ordinance. In addition, he mentioned that businesses should contact the ABC Commission before moving forward with 10:00 AM Sunday alcohol sales.

SALES TAX REPORT

Rick French, County Manager, stated that a total of \$4,408,302.82 has been collected in sales tax revenue through June 2020 (\$1,357,594.34 is new sales tax for economic development, public education, and community colleges). This amount is 85.52% of the \$5,155,000 budgeted with 83.33% of the budget year expired and an increase over last year of 10.10%.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #1 & #2

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #1 & #2 as follows:

Budget Amendment #1 – To decrease the Planning Department budgeted revenues to match the approved FY 2021 contract with the Town to provide planning and zoning services.

Budget Amendment #2 – To increase the Detention budget for a revenue reimbursement from Paytel Communications for a software upgrade to the inmate telephone service program.

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #1 and #2. Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, did not present any items for Other Business.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the June 15, 2020 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.
- B. Forest Ranger Funding Agreement with the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services / NC Forest Service, District 2.
- C. Tax Release Requests (\$2,148.50) and Tax Refunds (\$981.97) for June 5 – July 10, 2020.
- D. Revised Home and Community Care Block Grant SFY 2020-2021 (adjustments to DSS reimbursement rates).
- E. Surplus a 2005 Ford Crown Victoria, VIN #2FAFP71W15X116436 with 207,224 miles; a 2010 Dodge Charger, VIN #2B3AA4CTXAH161792 with 195,766 miles; and a 1995 Chevy Caprice, VIN #1G1B152P4SR147159 with 191,308 miles.
- F. Request from Sheriff Chris Bowman to surplus a Pro-Guard prisoner transport petition used in a 2010 Dodge Charger that is no longer in service. The petition will be made available to the Town of Catawba Police Department.

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

CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD ACTIVITIES

At 6:59 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.
- Health Department Report – Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director, reviewed the following:
 - 2019 State of the County Health Report – required during the 3 interim years between Community Health Assessments to track priority issues identified in the CHA, determine emerging issues, and highlight new initiatives. Report shows leading causes of death in Alexander County (cancer, heart disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease), community priorities (Healthy Lifestyles Program that includes the Safe Kids Coalition, Faithful Families, and Speedway to Healthy, mental health, and substance abuse), and emerging issues (motor vehicle deaths and Alzheimer’s Disease). Other items include expansion of clinic rooms from 2 to 5 and a new behavioral health program.
 - Behavioral Health Program – a total of 12 assessments have been conducted and there are currently 8 active clients who participate in one-hour weekly or bimonthly therapy sessions. Telepsych appointments are available if needed to meet COVID-19 restrictions.
 - New Mid-Level Provider – Lauran Hill, P.A., who was hired on July 13, 2020, will provide client care in the form of diagnosing and treating acute/chronic illnesses, infections, and minor injuries as well as offering disease process and prevention education and counseling.
- DSS Report – Linda Clements, Assistant DSS Director, reviewed the following:
 - COVID-19 Update – a drop box has been installed allowing clients to provide needed information before/after hours, volume of new applications has changed (CPS reports are down 40% most likely because schools are closed, economic services vary by programs, adult congregate services and home delivered meals have quadruped), and previous holds on service recertifications ended on July 1, 2020 creating a significant workload increase.
 - Quality Improvements Projects – the Employee Retention QI Team focuses on the hiring process, new employee orientation, and reasons for turnover. The Community Value QI Team focuses on community awareness, understanding of DSS, and improved customer service. The DSS Safety Initiative includes updating the Emergency Action Plan and implementing safety procedures.
 - Electronic Records Update – significant progress has been made to reduce on-site records storage by scanning documents into electronic format and moving file boxes to an off-site location. Staff is also developing a records retention policy.

- Budget Update – Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, announced that all 3 of the Consolidated Human Services Departments came in under budget in County funding for 2019-2020 (almost \$300,000 in Health Department, over \$900,000 in DSS, and almost \$33,000 in Senior Center).

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

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:33 PM to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5 & 6). Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Reese made a motion to adjourn at 8:07 PM. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ryan N. Mayberry, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board