

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING April 26, 2021**

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: Larry Yoder, Chairman
Josh Lail
Dr. Jeff Peal
Marty Pennell

ABSENT: Ronnie Reese, Vice-Chairman

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, April 26, 2021 in the Administration Building lower level conference room in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Peal mentioned that several Alexander County emergency organizations would take part in a statewide exercise on Wednesday, April 28, 2021 where a major weather event (hurricane) would be simulated.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

COURTHOUSE PARK PROJECT BID RECOMMENDATION

David Icenhour, Economic Development Director, stated that the original bid opening for the Courthouse Park Project was held on March 23, 2021; however, because less than 3 bids were received, the project was re-advertised and another bid opening was scheduled on April 8th where 3 bids were received. Lail Builders, Inc. of Hickory (no relation to Commissioner Lail) was the lowest responsive, responsible bidder with a base bid of \$581,000 along with an additional \$28,560 for Alternate #1 (ADA sidewalk connection to restrooms) for a total bid of \$609,560.

Taylorsville Rotary Club has pledged \$63,276 toward construction of the performance stage and also contributed \$4,000 for design work. Mr. Icenhour advised that after the contract with Lail Builders was executed, work would begin in late May and be completed in 4 to 5 months.

In response to a question by Commissioner Peal, Mr. Icenhour explained that Alternate #2 (sanitary sewer connection) was eliminated due to costs. The engineer feels this portion of the project can be completed for much less than quoted by Lail Builders (\$49,000) and plans to obtain other estimates.

Commissioner Peal made a motion to accept the bid submitted by Lail Builders, Inc. in the amount of \$609,560 for the Courthouse Park Project and authorize the County Manager to enter into a contract on behalf of the Board. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

WITTENBURG ACCESS PROJECT BID RECOMMENDATION

David Icenhour, Economic Development Director, reported that a bid opening for the County parking area portion of the Wittenburg Access Project was held on March 23, 2021 where 4 bids were received. Both Kemp Sigmon Construction Co., Inc. and J.T. Russell & Sons, Inc. submitted a low bid amount of \$90,000; however, J.T. Russell & Sons later withdrew their bid leaving Kemp Sigmon Construction Co. Inc. as the lowest responsive, responsible bidder.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to accept the bid submitted by Kemp Sigmon Construction Co., Inc. in the amount of \$90,000 for the County parking area portion of the Wittenburg Access Project and authorize the County Manager to enter into a contract on behalf of the Board. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

INDUSTRIAL TIMBER SEWER PROJECT ENGINEER RECOMMENDATION

David Icenhour, Economic Development Director, informed the Board that in addition to an \$80,000 NC Department of Commerce Building Reuse grant (Project Buckeye One), Industrial Timber had been awarded \$193,775 from the GoldenLEAF Foundation to extend sewer from White Plains Road into the Industrial Park to support their planned expansion. Four proposals were received in response to the engineering services RFQ for the Industrial Timber Sewer Project and after review, County staff is recommending West Consultants, PLLC be selected.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to allow for contract negotiations with West Consultants, PLLC for the Industrial Timber Sewer Project. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, reported that Alexander County's cumulative total for positive COVID-19 cases was now at 4,267 with 5 hospitalized and 86 deaths. Because older test results are continually being uploaded and duplication continues, the NCDHHS dashboard shows an inaccurate total of 4,319 when in fact, only 4 of the 62 tests performed in the month of April were positive and only one COVID-related death occurred. Testing continues on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays at 10:00 AM; however, due to the minimal number of requested tests, the Health Department is transitioning to an appointment system instead of drive-thru testing.

The Health Department has administered 19,393 COVID-19 vaccines (both first and second doses). In addition to medical providers throughout the county, several pharmacies are now giving shots and all 3 brands are available (depending on location). Ms. Whisnant advised that the number of requested vaccine appointments was also beginning to decline. Staff is planning a campaign to inform the public that plenty of vaccine is still available. Due to uncertainty related to long-term side effects in the younger population such as fertility issues, parental consent will be required for children under the age of 18 to receive the vaccine.

Ms. Whisnant discussed the possibility of reopening Senior Center and Library branches in the near future, noting that COVID-19 protocols would still apply and activities would be altered somewhat.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPLICATION

Rick French, County Manager, presented an application to be submitted to NC State Historic Preservation Office requesting Certified Local Government status for Alexander County. Benefits of becoming a CLG include eligibility for grant funding to benefit various development activities as well as the ability to review all new nominations to the National Register of Historic Places within the government's boundaries.

Chairman Yoder, who is also a member of the Historic Preservation Committee, pointed out that submitting a CLG application did not guarantee approval as many new groups normally sent several applications before being accepted.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the Certified Local Government application. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

2021-2022 ALEXANDER COUNTY BUDGET DISCUSSION

Rick French, County Manager, provided a brief overview of the departmental requests for 2021-2022, noting that he intended to present a proposed budget to the Board at the May 10, 2021 Commissioners' Meeting. Information discussed included:

- The difference between expenses (\$48,009,438) and revenues (\$41,174,260) for the 2021-2022 budget equals \$6,835,178.
- The original approved budget for 2020-2021 totaled \$42,892,442 and currently stands at \$48,131,832 after budget amendments, COVID-19 funds, and higher than expected sales tax revenue.
- Departments with the highest requested increases include the Sheriff's Office/Detention/911 Communications, DSS, and Health Department:
 - Sheriff's Office/Detention/911 – requested \$1,786,193 more than current year.
 - DSS - requested \$462,447 more than current year.
 - Health Department – requested \$377,442 more than current year.
- Twenty new employees were requested, 8 of which are paramedics needed for a new 24-hour shift due to the increase in call volume. Six new employees were requested by the Sheriff.
- Items that have contributed to the overall budget increase include the April 2021 COLA for County employees (\$410,000), new water and sewer debt (\$600,000), and increases in State Retirement System contributions.
- Capital items requested include replacement of the floor at the landfill transfer station (\$180,000), Sheriff's Office vehicles (\$230,000), a Bear Cat wheeled armored personnel carrier for the Sheriff's Office (\$170,000), evidence storage facility HVAC system (\$100,000), new restrooms/concession area and replacement of light poles at Bethlehem Park (\$375,000), technology needs (145,000), a new ambulance (\$100,000), and 35 deputy body cameras (\$87,570).
- A tax increase will not be proposed for 2021-2022; however, several fee increases will be recommended for water and sewer users, EMS transports, and landfill disposal.

Mr. French also reported that Alexander County would receive \$7.2 million from the American Rescue Plan Act over two budget years. Half is expected in May 2021 and the remainder in May 2022. Staff hopes this funding can be used for water, sewer, and broadband projects; however, guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department has not yet been received.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #72 - #77 & PROJECT BUDGET ORDINANCE #P-2

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #72 - #77 and Project Budget Ordinance #P-2 as follows:

Budget Amendment #72 – To budget for reimbursements to Mooresville Fire & Rescue (\$9,890.17) and Sawmills Fire & Rescue (\$2,944.35) for damages to equipment while assisting Alexander County during the November 2020 flooding event.

Budget Amendment #73 – To increase the Health Department budget for additional Federal grant funds for the COVID-19 ELC Enhancing Detection Program.

Budget Amendment #74 – To budget for increased expenses and revenues at the landfill due to higher volume than expected.

Budget Amendment #75 – To adjust the multi-year Park Improvements Project Fund for revised cost projections from the Courthouse Park Project bid opening.

Budget Amendment #76 – To budget for a transfer from the General Fund to the Park Improvements Project Fund for revised cost projections from the Courthouse Park Project bid opening.

Budget Amendment #77 – To budget for the required local match for the Industrial Timber Building Reuse grant.

Project Budget Ordinance #P-2 – To budget for the Industrial Timber Sewer & Building Renovation Project.

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #72 - #77 and Project Budget Ordinance #P-2. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, informed the Board that NCDOT recently completed some early conceptual design work for the future NC 16 South project that would straighten out curves and add shoulders and turn lanes. One alternate plan also replaces signalized intersections at the Highway 64 interchange and Carrigan Road with roundabouts. This project is not scheduled for funding until 2029.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$435.67) and Tax Refunds (\$1,278.66) for April 1-15, 2021.
- B. Agreement with the WPCOG for the Provision of Grant Management Assistance for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program for May 1 – October 31, 2021.

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

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

Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:10 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 Peal made a motion to adjourn at 8:13 PM. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board