

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING May 6, 2019

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

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

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, May 6, 2019 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Vice-Chairman Reese announced that a portrait hanging ceremony honoring Tressie Pierce Boyd, Alexander County's first practicing female attorney, would be held at the Alexander County Courthouse on May 16th at 5:00 PM. He also urged the public to attend the 2nd Annual Draft Horse Pull on Saturday, May 11th at H&H Arena.

Commissioner Pennell thanked the owners of Bethlehem Hardware, Randy and LaShae Bock, for their investment in Alexander County, noting that the grand opening held on May 3rd was well attended. He also urged citizens to shop local and support Alexander County businesses.

Chairman Peal mentioned the following:

- Several commissioners toured CEF (Custom Educational Furnishings) located in the former Fashion House facility on Highway 16 South who manufactures high-end furniture for schools across the country.
- He attended the 4th Annual Apple Blossom Festival this past Saturday, noting that festivals, parades, and other special events attracted many people to the county.
- County staff and the Finance Committee are working hard on preparing a reasonable budget for 2019-2020. There are many financial mandates and unavoidable increases to consider with a limited amount of funding. Options available to counties with more demand than resources is to cut costs or increase revenue by way of property or sales taxes.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lana Davidson spoke on the beauty and sightseeing opportunities in the Brushies, also mentioning the many curvy roads, churches, and extracurricular activities in Alexander County. She also read a poem entitled Alexander County that she wrote in 2002.

*****SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT*****

Chairman Peal announced that pursuant to N.C.G.S. 153A-52, speakers for the following public hearings would be limited to 5 minutes and should refrain from personal attacks, naming of employees, or specific personnel issues.

PUBLIC HEARING: REZONING CASE 19-3 - FERGUSON

Jon Pilkenton, Director of Planning & Development, presented Rezoning Case 19-3 submitted by Landon Ferguson who requested rezoning of property located at 5646 Highway 16 South from L-I (Light Industrial) to H-C (Highway Commercial) to allow for retail sales of guns and ammunition. The size of the property tract is 9.023 acres. Zoning districts and land uses within 100 feet include RA-20 on all sides along with H-C to the east.

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. Pilkenton 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. Long-term patterns also suggest that Highway 16 South will develop into a commercial corridor. He added that Mr. Ferguson may open an indoor shooting range in the building at a later date, which will require conditional use approval by the Board.

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*.

In addition to staff's recommendation for approval, the Planning & Zoning Commission held a public hearing on April 4, 2019 to review the request and 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. Pilkenton 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 Vice-Chairman Reese, second by Commissioner Mayberry, and unanimous vote, Chairman Peal called the public hearing to order and requested any comments. There being none, Commissioner Yoder made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve Rezoning Case 19-3 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 would not negatively affect the surrounding properties in regards to commercial development. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Chairman Peal providing the following benefits associated with consolidation of human services agencies:

- Positive opportunities for County staff and citizens.
- Improves service delivery because many clients cross over between DSS, Health Department, and the Senior Center.
- Unified personnel system for all County staff.

- Improves communication between programs, departments, and the Board of Commissioners to be better informed on citizen needs.
- Provides an opportunity to identify more efficient systems and processes.
- Allows staff to work together to reduce redundancies and improve knowledge of resources.
- Greater grant opportunities.
- Will not eliminate staff but assist them in providing services more efficiently.

After a motion by Commissioner Mayberry, second by Commissioner Pennell, and unanimous vote, Chairman Peal called the public hearing to order and requested any comments.

Public Comment

Former DSS employee T'Neal Herman discussed problems she experienced during her nearly 5 years with the department such as not being able to advance although qualified, lack of oversight, petty power struggles and vindictiveness by employees in higher positions. She reported that over 53 employees had resigned in Child Welfare alone during her tenure and provided several online Glass Door reviews that cited the following issues – high turnover, overworked, underpaid, understaffed, egotistical management, bad working environment and low morale, cold and rude supervisors, clients not getting service needed, policies and procedures not followed, advancement depends on who you rub shoulders with, retaliation by management if challenged, etc. Ms. Herman added that a lack of training by leadership and a backlog of cases could lead to neglected, abused, or dead children. She felt improvement would never be seen without a major overhaul that included a leader that would restore credibility and create an environment where employee morale is improved, employees are allowed to succeed, and policies that protect the county's children are followed.

Barbara Hayes, DSS Board member, was concerned by Ms. Herman's comments, having never been made aware of or contacted by anyone regarding these issues, as well as how quickly the Board was moving forward with consolidation. She spoke of another side of things such as hard working employees and a department that was under budget each year. Ms. Hayes urged the commissioners to be transparent during this process through radio and/or newspaper outlets and challenged the public to get involved in their government.

There being no further comments, Commissioner Mayberry made a motion to close the public hearing. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE CREATION OF A CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY & ASSUMING CONTROL OF THE ACTIVITIES OF A CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

Chairman Peal presented a resolution approving the creation of a Consolidated Human Services Agency in Alexander County effective July 1, 2019 that included with the following actions:

- Creates an Alexander County Consolidated Human Services Agency having authority to carry out the functions of the local Department of Social Services, Health Department, and Senior Center.
- Abolishes the DSS Board, Board of Health, and Senior Center Advisory Committee.
- The Board of Commissioners will become the Consolidated Human Services Board having the powers conferred by subsection (c) of G.S. 153A-77 and assume all powers, responsibilities, and duties of said board upon notice duly given of a public hearing conducted this day.
- Consolidates the provisions of human services in Alexander County under the direct control of the Consolidated Human Services Director appointed and supervised by the County Manager.
- Creates an advisory committee consistent with the membership described in G.S. 130A-35.
- Withdraws all affected employees of the Consolidated Human Services Agency from the State Personnel Act and places them under the Alexander County personnel system.

Commissioner Mayberry stated that moving forward with this option was only to provide better service to the citizens and a more efficient way to spend taxpayer dollars.

Chairman Peal reiterated that current employees should not fear losing their jobs and that members of the DSS Board, Senior Center Advisory Committee, and Board of Health would be eligible to serve on the advisory committee.

Commissioner Yoder explained that the Board was ultimately responsible for any fines or penalties incurred by departments as a result of not meeting mandates. He added that, while on the DSS Board, he received only one complaint and he felt the State was not providing proper training.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the resolution approving the creation of a Consolidated Human Services Agency. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

NATIONAL EMS WEEK PROCLAMATION

Doug Gillispie, EMS Director, requested approval of a proclamation declaring the week of May 19-25, 2019 as National Emergency Medical Services Week with the theme EMS Strong is “Caring for the Community.”

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the National EMS Week proclamation. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ROAD NAMING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Rick French, County Manager, presented amendments to the Alexander County Road Naming Ordinance that included deletions on pages 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11 as well as additions to Sections 85 and 86 related to address display requirements. These amendments will make the ordinance more streamlined and customer friendly.

Commissioner Mayberry made a motion to approve the amendments to the Road Naming Ordinance. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

NC DHHS FY 2019-2020 MOU FOR SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS

Rick French, County Manager, provided the 2019-2020 MOU with the NC Department of Health and Human Services for Social Services Programs for information, noting that consideration by the Board would be needed in June to become effective July 1, 2019.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #42 - #48

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #42 - #48 as follows:

Budget Amendment #42 – To increase the Governing Body budget for estimated workers compensation claim deductibles for the remainder of the FY 2019 budget year and for receipt of \$2,500 from a local business for the Independence Celebration fireworks display.

Budget Amendment #43 – To increase the Detention Center budget for estimated medical bills and supplies for the remainder of the FY 2019 budget year due to serious medical conditions that require treatment beyond that provided in-house.

Budget Amendment #44 – To increase the Library budget for State grant funding in excess of original estimates.

Budget Amendment #45 – To increase budgeted revenue for a Senior Center Operations Grant due to a reallocation of funds from the Home & Community Care Block Grant.

Budget Amendment #46 – To adjust the Bethlehem Water Fund budget based on data from year-to-date revenue reports from the City of Hickory.

Budget Amendment #47 – To adjust the County Water & Sewer Fund budget based on data from year-to-date revenue reports from the City of Hickory.

Budget Amendment #48 – To budget for accrued leave payouts for employees leaving during the FY 2019 year.

Commissioner Mayberry made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #42 - #48. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. A total of \$3,165,189.37 has been collected in sales tax revenue through April 2019 (\$1,015,079.50 is new sales tax for economic development, public education, and community colleges). This amount is 67.37% of the \$4,698,000 budgeted with 66.67% of the budget year expired and an increase over last year of 5.29%.
- B. Staff has decided not to move forward with financing of the Alexander County Services Center due to interest costs associated with bank proposals ranging from \$275,000 to \$415,000 over the life of the loan. Total costs for the building stand at approximately \$2,227,000 (bought in August 2016 for \$350,000).
- C. A public bid opening was held on May 3rd for the former Chamber of Commerce building located at 16 West Main Avenue. Only one sealed bid was received totaling \$25,500. Mr. French advised that the assessed tax value of the property was \$73,501; therefore, he recommended the bid be rejected.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to reject the bid of \$25,000 submitted for the former Chamber of Commerce building. Commissioner Mayberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

- D. The Register of Deeds will be moving into the Alexander County Services Center on May 29th.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the April 15, 2019 Regular Meeting.
- B. Tax Release Requests (\$1,199.93) and Tax Refunds (\$702.76) for April 6-26, 2019.
- C. 2019 Records Retention & Disposition Schedule for Local Government Agencies.
- D. Procurement Policy for the CDBG-I Program.
- E. Unifour Consortium Contract Renewal.

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

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

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:58 PM to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5 & 6). Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Mayberry made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Jeffrey P. Peal, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board