

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING May 18, 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, May 18, 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

Vice-Chairman Yoder discussed the letter sent by the Board to Governor Cooper and the NCDOT Secretary of Transportation (was also copied to Representative Elmore, Senator Wells, and several key NCDOT staff members) regarding the need for the Liledoun Road bridge to be repaired and the road opened. He also reported that NCDOT had announced plans to begin furloughing employees.

Commissioner Peal felt many citizens were under the impression that counties funded, built, and maintained roads; however, he clarified that roads were solely the responsibility of the State of NC. Alexander County and the Board of Commissioners have no physical or monetary control or influence in that area and can only make contacts, send letters, etc. requesting for projects to be completed.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC HEARING: 2020-2021 ALEXANDER COUNTY PROPOSED BUDGET

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed several components of the 2020-2021 proposed budget as follows:

- The proposed General Fund budget for FY 2020-2021 totals \$42,892,442 and includes no property tax, fire tax, or fee increases with the exception of a 3.75% water rate increase by the City of Hickory.
- There are no new full or part-time employees budgeted, only two seasonal Elections workers. All departmental line items will be held at FY 2019-2020 amounts including salaries and travel.
- The following capital outlay items have been budgeted but placed in departmental contingency line items until January 2021 when staff can review revenue and determine feasibility:
 - Light poles at Bethlehem Park\$100,000
 - 4 vehicles for DSS.....\$90,000
 - Ambulance box on new chassis for EMS\$100,000
 - 4 vehicles / equipment for Sheriff’s Office\$230,000
 - DARE vehicle\$57,500
 - Emergency Services vehicle\$56,000
 - 911 radio transmitter\$25,000
 - Linney’s Mountain tower upgrade\$40,000
 - Off-site disaster recovery node\$98,500
 - Security cameras at both CVCC buildings\$20,000
 - Zero turn mower\$10,000
- The Alexander County School System requested \$7,065,060, an increase of \$265,060 over the current year’s funding.
- A total of \$2,852,285 will be utilized from the Fund Balance.

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

COVID-19 UPDATE

Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, advised that Alexander County had a cumulative total of 22 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19. Of the 7 new cases reported today, 4 are linked with the Tyson Foods outbreak, 3 were community acquired, and one has been hospitalized. There are currently 12 individuals quarantined and the remaining 10 have fully recovered. She added that staff was working with ACHS to prepare for graduation procedures and that antibody tests should be received very soon.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, reported a shortage in surgical masks/gowns, noting that staff was attempting to order more; however, there is a limited supply. Thanks to a staffing request made through NC Emergency Management, 5 recent graduates (2 RN's and 3 CNA's) are being sent to assist one of our long-term care facilities.

Rick French, County Manager, stated that Rocky Face Park hours would be extended to 8:00 PM on May 22nd and rock climbing will also be allowed. Court officials have requested additional cleaning, hand sanitizer, and signage at the Alexander County courthouse beginning June 1st.

Chairman Mayberry pointed out differences in how restaurants are interacting with the public, collecting payment, etc. and felt guidance was needed to better protect citizens. Ms. Whisnant mentioned that the CDC and NCDHHS had great resources for restaurants and business owners.

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE ALEXANDER COUNTY PARKS PLAN, DUSTY RIDGE PARK SITE SPECIFIC MASTER PLAN, AND RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

Rick French, County Manager, requested approval of a resolution that would adopt the Alexander County Parks Plan, the Dusty Ridge Park Site Specific Master Plan, and the Recreation Capital Improvements Plan, to be submitted as part of the Courthouse Park NC PARTF grant application.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COURTHOUSE PARK NC PARTF GRANT APPLICATION

David Icenhour, Economic Development Director, informed the Board that, after approval on May 4th, the Courthouse Park Master Plan was posted on the Alexander County Facebook page to gather comments for the NC PARTF's public participation requirement. The post reached 5,227 people and 131 comments were left. He also provided a resolution authorizing the submittal of a PARTF grant application for the Courthouse Park and requested approval.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the Alexander County Courthouse Park NC PARTF grant resolution. Chairman Mayberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN KEEPING OUR VOTING PROCESS SAFE FROM VOTER FRAUD

In response to the NC Board of Elections plans to ask the NC General Assembly to legislate a new law making absentee voting less restrictive due to COVID-19, Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve a resolution requesting the NC General Assembly to take an active role in keeping our voting process safe from voter fraud. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO ENACT LEGISLATION TO LIMIT THE POWERS OF THE GOVERNOR FROM ACTING UNILATERALLY

Chairman Mayberry presented a resolution requesting the NC General Assembly to enact legislation to limit the powers of the Governor from acting unilaterally, noting that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Roy Cooper made executive order decisions while the General Assembly was out-of-session and without the guidance of the NC Council of State.

Vice-Chairman Yoder stated that, although he did not agree with all decisions made thus far, he had concerns with asking the General Assembly to limit the Governor's decision-making authority, especially under certain circumstances. He also felt this action could impact future NC governors.

Commissioner Peal was not in favor of restricting the Governor from making crucial decisions when needed but pointed out that our state was 60 plus days into Governor Cooper's executive orders that were made without consulting with NC legislators and NC Council.

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion which passed 4 in favor (Commissioners Mayberry, Peal, Pennell, and Reese) and one against (Commissioner Yoder).

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #57 - #59

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #57 - #59 as follows:

Budget Amendment #57 – To budget for receipt of the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund Grant for EMS to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 and reimburse EMS for healthcare related expenses or attributable lost revenues.

Budget Amendment #58 – To budget for 1) Home & Community Care Block Grant funds provided to DSS for Housing & Home Improvement Funds, 2) additional LIEAP funds released by the State for FY 2020 applicants, and 3) a Meals on Wheels grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC to assist home delivered meal programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Budget Amendment #59 – To adjust the Landfill budget for increased expenses due to higher volume than expected (revenues have also increased) and to decrease convenience site revenue due to waiver of fees.

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #57 - #59. Commissioner Peal the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. The Water System Extension and Bethlehem Sewer Extension Projects are well underway. The Stony Point Elementary School CDBG-I Sewer Project will begin this week.
- B. The Board will be asked to reinstate convenience site fees at the next meeting, which were waived due to COVID-19. Approximately \$5,100 per week in revenue is being lost from the waiver.
- C. The Vertical Mile Challenge scheduled for June 20th will be rescheduled for August 15th.
- D. Mr. French requested approval of the SFY 2020-2021 Home & Community Care Block Grant that supports a variety of services at DSS and the Senior Center as well as Greenway Transportation.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the SFY 2020-2021 Home & Community Block Grant. Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the April 20, 2020 and May 4, 2020 Regular Commissioners' Meetings.
- B. JCPC Certification for FY 2020-2021.
- C. JCPC Annual Plan for FY 2020-2021.
- D. Surplus the following items as requested by Sheriff Chris Bowman to be traded to a local firearms dealer for equipment:
 - Mossberg model 500 shotgun, serial #JY62082
 - Remington model 870 shotgun, serial #W242937V
 - Remington model 870 shotgun, serial #T032423V
 - Remington model 870 shotgun, serial #V603084V
 - Remington model 870 shotgun, serial #W338541V
 - Remington model 870 shotgun w/no barrel, serial #C289298M
 - Maverick model 88 shotgun, serial #MV52056J
 - Daniel Defense model DD5V1 AR-10, serial #DD5001904
 - Remington model 700P sniper rifle, serial #G6466853 with Leupold 4.5x14x40 scope, serial #183156D

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 6:57 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 – Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, reviewed the following:
 - Rabies – there were no confirmed rabies cases in 2019, but there are currently two positives this year, both of which are cows (one in Stony Point and one in Sugar Loaf). She reminded the public to vaccinate pets and stay away from wildlife (especially bats and raccoons).
 - Recognitions – March was Social Work Month, April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Public Health Month, and May is National Foster Care Month. She thanked her staff for their hard work and dedication.
- DSS Report – After an introduction by Ms. Whisnant, the new Assistant DSS Director Linda Clements gave an update on the Foster Care Program that included the following information:
 - Current number of children in foster care by age and gender (46 total).
 - Types of placement (trial home, kinship, foster home, group home, FC 18-21).
 - Number that left foster care in 2019 due to reunification, placed with guardian or relative, adopted, or aged out (25 total).
 - Reasons children are placed in DSS custody/foster care and conditions/diagnoses experienced by children in foster care that lead to the need for higher levels of care.
 - An overview of the individualized FC 18-21 Program that assists those aging out of foster care with transitioning to independence with DSS supervision and services along with current participation (3 total).

Ms. Clements added that DSS was always in need of additional foster homes, which allowed staff to place a child with the most suitable home instead of the only one available.

- Senior Center Report – Ms. Whisnant advised that, in an effort to protect our senior population, all 3 Senior Center branches would remain closed through Phase 2 of the state's reopening and possibly Phase 3 depending on trends and statistics. Staff will continue to monitor the situation and open the Senior Center's doors when it is safe, but in the meantime is staying in contact with senior participants and assessing needs if any.

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

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:32 PM to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5 & 6). Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 7:54 PM. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ryan N. Mayberry, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board