

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING June 15, 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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, June 15, 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

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

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Peal discussed a meeting he and County Manager Rick French attended, along with Taylorsville Mayor George Holleman, pastors Macy Jones, Joel Simpson, and Paul Sink as well as other citizens to discuss the recent protest held at the Alexander County Courthouse and other community issues. He felt the meeting was productive and a great starting point for improvement.

Commissioner Reese attended a recent Carolina Land & Lakes RC&D Board Meeting where the history of Rocky Face Mountain and Rocky Face Park was discussed, which he shared with the Board. He also took part in a conference call with Representative Jeffrey Elmore where Liledoun Road was mentioned. Rep. Elmore advised that Governor Roy Cooper and the NCDOT Board of Transportation were the decision-makers for Liledoun and other needed road projects. Commissioner Reese hoped all Americans, no matter color, could come together to resolve the current issues throughout the country.

Vice-Chairman Yoder attended the grand opening of The Vault in Bethlehem. He encouraged the public to visit the new business and welcome them into the area.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

After presenting a request from Sheriff Chris Bowman to surplus service weapons for Chief Detective Donna Clanton and Detective Sgt. Daniel Millsaps be added to the Consent Agenda, Chairman Mayberry made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Peal 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 51 (8 active, 2 hospitalized, no deaths). Confirmed cases throughout the nation continue to rise with 1,443 new cases yesterday in NC. She felt the public was tiring of wearing masks and social distancing, but urged citizens to not let their guard down yet and continue these efforts. Health Department staff are continuing the drive-thru testing once per day to conserve PPE and additional test kits have been ordered to have on hand when needed.

In response to several questions asked by Board members, Ms. Whisnant stated that several medical providers were providing anti-body tests but none are available through the State as of yet. The Health Department had conducted one anti-body test as a pilot but are not offering them to the public until accuracy can be determined. Positive cases over the last few weeks have been community acquired and included two front-line County employees. In regard to the 2020-2021 school year, she advised that the School System was considering 3 scenarios (minimal social distancing, moderate social distancing, and remote learning only).

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, stated that "push packs" were received from the State and delivered to long-term care facilities in early June. EMS is working on a plan for testing at these facilities if/when needed and Emergency Management is doing well with the PPE supply.

Rick French, County Manager, mentioned that County buildings would begin reopening in phases. The Administration Building and Services Center will be open to the public beginning tomorrow.

2020 OSFM GRANTS

Mark Earle, Fire Marshal / Assistant Emergency Management Director, recognized and congratulated the following Alexander County fire departments that received grants from the Office of the State Fire Marshal – Bethlehem Community Fire & Rescue, Central Alexander Fire Department, Hiddenite Fire Department, Stony Point Fire Department, Sugar Loaf Fire Department, Vashti Fire Department, and Wittenburg Fire Department.

Grant funding totals \$84,722.15 and will be used to help purchase firefighting and rescue equipment, PPE, communication radios, etc.

BETHLEHEM SEWER EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

Engineer Dan Shabeldeen reported that the Bethlehem Sewer Extension Project was well underway and that Two Brothers Utilities, Inc. was currently utilizing two crews. Crew #1 began at Wittenburg Access and has so far installed 1,600 linear feet of 20-inch and 21-inch pipe along with 4 manholes ranging in depth from 6-15 feet. They should begin open cutting Wildlife Access Road early next week. Crew #2 has completed Woodring Lane, installing 1,200 linear feet of 8-inch pipe and 4 manholes, and will be boring under Heritage Farm Road later this week. Detours will be provided in the coming weeks to allow crews to work.

He discussed several unexpected issues/conflicts that had arisen including:

- A sewage spill occurred at Wittenburg Access on May 14th which he felt was an act of vandalism. As the permit holder, the City of Hickory has reported the spill to the State; however, no word has been received on a possible fine.
- A manhole at the entrance to Wittenburg Access needs to be replaced because of a corroding/weakened interior.
- The bore under Highway 127 to Chigger Ridge Road must be approximately 30 feet longer than originally designed to avoid a water line.
- Due to one property owner refusing to sign an easement, pipe location will be moved and a manhole added.
- NCDOT withdrew approval of an open cut of Chigger Ridge Road because it was recently resurfaced. Therefore, the crew will need to bore under the road.
- Crew #1 cut two natural gas line connections on Wildlife Access Road last week due to incorrect location services.

Mr. Shabeldeen advised that there were currently \$256,000 in additional costs but after several deductions for unnecessary items and bore to open cut conversions, the increase will total around \$95,000. He also pointed out that approx. \$170,000 budgeted for rock excavation, special backfill, etc. may not be spent and a section of the project costing \$318,000 may be removed (property is for sale and owner won't sign an easement).

Chairman Mayberry suggested using Contingency funds to purchase the lot in question to be sold at a later date once the sewer line has been installed.

Commissioner Peal expressed concerns with the number of problems thus far and additional expenses, especially when considering that the project is only 20% completed and quite a bit of Contingency will be spent. He felt some of the issues mentioned could have been avoided and suggested diligence and cost saving measures where possible. Mr. Shabeldeen explained that crews were currently working in the most difficult parts of the project so he anticipates less problems moving forward.

AGREEMENT EXTENSION WITH THE TOWN OF TAYLORSVILLE FOR BILLING & COLLECTION OF PROPERTY TAXES

Rick French, County Manager, presented a 4-year extension to the agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for the billing and collection of their property taxes effective July 1, 2020, noting that the County began collecting the Town's taxes in 2010 for a 3% fee.

Commissioner Pennell made a motion to approve the extension to the agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for the billing and collection of property taxes. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWN OF TAYLORSVILLE FOR PLANNING & ZONING SERVICES

Rick French, County Manager, presented a one-year extension to the agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for planning and zoning services effective July 1, 2020 for a \$16,000 annual fee (paid biannually).

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve the extension to the agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for planning and zoning services. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT JULY 20, 2020 MEETING USING ZOOM

Due to his surgery scheduled for July 6th, Rick French, County Manager, requested the July 20th Commissioners' Meeting be held via Zoom, which would allow him to participate remotely. The Board agreed.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #62 - #63 & PROJECT BUDGET ORDINANCE #P-3

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #62 - #63 and Project Budget Ordinance #P-3 as follows:

Budget Amendment #62 – To increase the Detention Center budget for 1) estimated inmate medical bills through 6/30/2020, 2) estimated expenses related to COVID-19 (also for Sheriff's Office budget), and 3) revenues based on revised projections for the remainder of FY 2020.

Budget Amendment #63 – To budget for 1) United Way funds for Adult Services Food Program, 2) Families First funds through the WPCOG to assist with the Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Program, and 3) for a Meals on Wheels grant from the State Employees Credit Union to assist with home delivered meals during the COVID-19 crisis.

Project Budget Ordinance #P-3 – To budget for Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant (\$860,089).

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #62 - #63 and Project Budget Ordinance #P-3. Chairman Mayberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

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

Region E Aging Advisory Committee – reappoint Shirley Mays for two years.

Western Piedmont Regional Transportation Authority Board – reappoint Rick French and appoint David Moose as alternate, both for 3 years.

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council – appoint Alisha Cloer and David Moose and reappoint Douglas Bowman, Carrie Nitzu, Jon Presnell, Kim Cowart, Dan Wanta, Nikki Kahill, Erica Lowe, and Mike Millsaps, all for two years.

Tax Office appointments – appoint Doug Fox as Tax Administrator / Tax Assessor and Guy Kerley as Assistant Tax Administrator / Tax Collector for 4 years effective July 1, 2020.

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve the appointments and reappointments. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. During last week's NCACC county manager's conference call, it was noted that the State is only appropriating 4% of the CARES Act funding to 97 counties instead of 45% as anticipated. He urged the Board to contact Representative Elmore and Senator Wells to request their support and assistance.
- B. The Stony Point Elementary School CDBG-I Sewer Project has officially begun. The next monthly meeting is scheduled for June 23rd at the Services Center.
- C. The Hickory City Council approved a 3% water rate increase effective July 1, 2020.

Chairman Mayberry nominated Vice-Chairman Yoder to serve as the Voting Delegate for the virtual NCACC Annual Conference in August. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes from the June 1, 2020 Regular Commissioners' Meeting.
- B. Request from Sheriff Chris Bowman to surplus a Glock Model 45 caliber 9mm, serial #BLAS651 with case and 5 magazines, along with badge for retiring Captain Chad Pennell.
- C. Tax Release Requests (\$690.72) and Tax Refunds (\$610.82) for May 22 – June 4, 2020.
- D. Request from Sheriff Chris Bowman to surplus a Glock Model 45 caliber 9mm, serial #BLAS661 with case and 5 magazines, along with badge for retiring Chief Detective Donna Clanton.
- E. Request from Sheriff Chris Bowman to surplus a Glock Model 45 caliber 9mm, serial #BLAS660 with case and 5 magazines, along with badge for Detective Sgt. Daniel Millsaps (not retiring).

Commissioner Yoder stated that, while it was customary to surplus a retiring officer's duty weapon/magazines/badge in appreciation of their service to the County, the Board had never authorized these items to be deemed surplus and given to an officer simply leaving employment.

Rick French, County Manager, suggested postponing consideration of the surplus request for Detective Sgt. Millsaps until the next meeting to allow time for him to speak with the Sheriff for clarification.

Chairman Mayberry made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda to include the surplus of only retiring Captain Chad Pennell's and Chief Detective Donna Clanton's service weapons/magazines/badges as requested. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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 7:09 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, Commissioner Peal made a motion to adjourn at 7:44 PM. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ryan N. Mayberry, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board