

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING August 3, 2020

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman
 Dr. Jeff Peal
 Ronnie Reese

ABSENT: Ryan Mayberry, Chairman
 Marty Pennell

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, August 3, 2020 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

*****SPECIAL RECOGNITION*****

Vice-Chairman Yoder presented a Key to the County to Karl Lenz for 21 years of service to the Alexander County Board of Elections. During his tenure, Mr. Lenz served through 37 elections and was involved with the acquisition of new voting equipment, opening of a satellite early voting location, and consolidation of precincts.

Patrick Wike, Elections Director, advised that Mr. Lenz ranked 3rd out of 500 Board of Elections members statewide, noting that his experience and wisdom had been an asset to Alexander County. He also read a letter written by Karen Brinson Bell, NC State Board of Elections Executive Director, thanking Mr. Lenz for his dedication to the NC Elections Team.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Peal attended the grand opening of Kanupp Kennels in Bethlehem on July 30th, noting that he was pleased to see the long-time empty building finally occupied and offering a great service to the community.

Commissioner Reese attended the ribbon cutting for Mimi G's on July 31st. He discussed the boutique's history and conveyed his appreciation to the owners for choosing Alexander County.

Vice-Chairman Yoder attended the grand opening of the Bethlehem ABC Store on July 27th, pointing out that no County tax dollars had been spent on the new store (with the exception of a feasibility study conducted in 2017).

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

After requesting the removal of Budget Amendment #8 and the addition of a resolution related to the refinancing of the 2011 Law Enforcement & Detention Center loan as Agenda Item #8A, Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, read comments submitted by Dale Clary who was concerned with the lack of an official statement from the Alexander County Board of Commissioners on racial injustice. He encouraged the Board to show leadership by engaging in a public discussion and the passage of a resolution condemning racial injustice of any form.

Commissioner Peal advised that he and County Manager Rick French attended a meeting in June with local pastors, Town officials, and citizens to discuss these issues, also noting that he condemned injustice and racism of any kind. He felt God created one race and that ALL lives mattered but pointed out that decency required some type of conformity and that people must be held accountable for their actions. Commissioner Peal stated that, although this country was built on common sense, compromise, and placing value on differing opinions, the ability to sit down to a civil conversation with someone holding an opposing viewpoint was now unheard of. He also mentioned the importance of working together to build up our nation instead of tearing it down and creating division.

Vice-Chairman Yoder tuned into the Alexander County Clergy Alliance Facebook Forum held on August 2nd which provided him with a better understanding of the current issues and concerns. He agreed with Commissioner Peal that discussions could no longer take place without anger or violence and he felt this country would never make any progress until kindness and respect were shown to and by all human beings. He also mentioned how peaceful protests were being infiltrated by groups whose sole intentions were to create chaos and cause problems.

Commissioner Reese stated that he also condemned violence of any kind toward any race, noting that people should treat others the way they hoped to be treated. He felt law and order had been created for a reason and that all citizens should respect and abide by it. Commissioner Reese agreed with comments made during a recent speech by Ben Carson, U.S. Secretary of Housing & Urban Development, that we are all Americans regardless of color and that we should work together to solve problems instead of seeing each other as enemies.

STONY POINT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CDBG-I SEWER PROJECT REPORT

Benjie Thomas with West Consultants provided a progress report on the Stony Point Elementary School CDBG-I Sewer Project that included the following information:

- As of July 27th, Locke-Lane Construction, Inc. has installed 1,650 linear feet of 4” force main, pump station structures and some piping, and a grease trap near the school kitchen.
- Upcoming work includes installation of gravity sewer on school property, completion of force main and gravity sewer to cross Stony Point School Road, and boring under NC Highway 90 and the railroad.
- All major work on school property should be completed by the first day of school on August 17th.

Mr. Thomas advised that, although the contractor got a late start due to rain in early May, a lot of progress had been made since then and crews were ahead of schedule. He anticipates substantial completion by the end of September (deadline is November 11, 2020).

BETHLEHEM SEWER EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

Engineer Dan Shabeldeen provided a progress report on the Bethlehem Sewer Extension Project that included the following information:

- As of July 27th, Crew #1 has installed approx. 1,900 linear feet of pipe from Wittenburg Access to the intersection of Wildlife Access and Shiloh Church Road. In order to maintain progress, the Shiloh Church Road portion has been skipped over until an ordered manhole is delivered. They are scheduled to bore under the Highway 127 and Shiloh Church Road intersection on August 10th.
- Crew #2 has installed approx. 3,000 linear feet of pipe to the south end of Heritage Farm Road near Pleasant Garden Drive, which will be open cut next week. Once this section is completed, they will move on to Rink Dam Road and Highway 127.
- Change Order #1 is being prepared and will include the Wittenburg Access manhole replacement, conversion of Wildlife Access and Spencer Woods from bore to open cut,

along with the Huffman easement pipe relocation and additional manhole on Chigger Ridge Road.

- Negotiations with the contractor are underway to determine additional costs to bore Chigger Ridge Road instead of open cut as planned (due to recent road resurfacing).

Mr. Shabeldeen reported that, due to an oversight in water line location, the additional 30 feet bore under Highway 127 to Chigger Ridge Road discussed at the June 15th Commissioners' Meeting will no longer be necessary.

In response to a question by Vice-Chairman Yoder, Mr. Shabeldeen stated that only 22% of the project had been completed; however, he pointed out that crews were currently working in the slowest and most difficult parts of the project and that progress would increase once this section was finished. He felt the contractor would have no issues with meeting the substantial completion date of March 11, 2021.

Commissioner Peal mentioned continued concerns with slow progress and additional costs that he felt could have been prevented.

ALEXANDER COUNTY PREPAREDNESS MONTH PROCLAMATION

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, presented a proclamation declaring the month of August 2020 as Alexander County Preparedness Month and encouraging citizens to plan/prepare for weather related and manmade disasters by assembling emergency supply kits and updating their emergency plans. Information regarding emergency kits and plans is available at www.readync.gov or by calling the Alexander County Emergency Services Offices at (828) 632-9336.

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve the Alexander County Preparedness Month proclamation. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director, reported that Alexander County's cumulative total for positive COVID-19 cases was now at 272 (26 quarantined, 3 hospitalized, 2 deaths, 241 recovered). She reviewed statistics related to gender, age, symptoms, etc. of positive cases, noting that newly-issued guidance suggests citizens remain isolated for 10 days from their first symptom until 24 hours symptom-free without medication; however, known exposed individuals should remain in quarantine for 14 days or until receiving a negative test result.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, discussed a continued increase (approx. 20%) in EMS call volume as well as issues with area hospitals declaring "diversion" which closes off emergency rooms to new patients arriving via ambulance (even though NC's hospitalization rate has seen a significant decrease over the last 5 days). EMS and Emergency Management continue to receive

calls from citizens complaining about restaurants or businesses not wearing/requiring masks, which they relay to the Health Department and/or Sheriff's Office.

Rick French, County Manager, advised that sign-ups for baseball, softball, and t-ball began today through August 24th and games will begin on September 14th.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Rick French, County Manager, requested the following appointment and reappointment:

ABC Board – Reappoint Judy Caywood for 3 years.

Future Forward Economic Alliance Board – Appoint Larry Yoder.

Vice-Chairman Yoder explained that the WPCOG had requested each Unifour county/city to appoint their WPCOG Policy Board representative to the FFEA Board in order to dissolve the Future Forward Economic Alliance, which had been inactive for many years.

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve the appointment and reappointment. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #3 - #7

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #3 - #7 as follows:

Budget Amendment #3 – To budget for estimated 2020 Elections grant funds from the CARES Act and HAVA grants.

Budget Amendment #4 – To increase the Sheriff's Office budget to purchase and deploy portable metal detectors for use on Alexander County Schools' campuses with Federal grant funds passed through the NC Department of Public Safety / Governor's Crime Commission.

Budget Amendment #5 – To increase the Health Department budget for Federal grant funds for COVID-19 preparedness and response activities.

Budget Amendment #6 – To restore amounts to the Contingency appropriation due to line item transfers that have moved funds into COVID-19 expense line items.

Budget Amendment #7 – To adjust the Coronavirus Relief Fund based on revised guidance regarding eligible expenditures.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #3 - #7. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, did not present any items for Other Business, but informed the Board that refinancing of the loan for the Law Enforcement & Detention Center would save the County approx. \$95,000.

RESOLUTION SCHEDULING A PUBLIC HEARING TO REFINANCE THE 2011 LAW ENFORCEMENT & DETENTION CENTER LOAN

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve a resolution to schedule a public hearing on September 14, 2020 to refinance the 2011 loan for the Law Enforcement & Detention Center. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$247.91) and Tax Refunds (\$135.85) for July 11-24, 2020.
- B. Revisions to the Alexander County Historic Preservation Ordinance pursuant to N.C.G.S. 160.
- C. MOU between the USDA/NRCS, NC Department of Agriculture, and Alexander County Soil & Water Conservation District.

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

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

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:02 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 7:28 PM. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Vice-Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board