

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING September 14, 2020

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

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

ABSENT: Ryan Mayberry, Chairman

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, September 14, 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

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

*****SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS*****

Commissioner Reese presented a Key to the County to Chad Pennell who retired in July after 27 years of service to the Alexander County Sheriff's Office. The Board commended Mr. Pennell for his dedication and congratulated him on his retirement.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, recognized Alexander County EMS for receiving the American Heart Association 2020 Mission: Lifeline EMS Gold Plus Award for excellent ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) care.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Reese attended a meeting last week related to “opportunity zones” (an investment and redevelopment program for properties that qualify for investor tax incentives). Alexander County has one opportunity zone, a 20-square mile area that includes the Town of Taylorsville.

Vice-Chairman Yoder and other commissioners participated in a ribbon cutting at Appalachian Storage in Bethlehem on Saturday, September 12th as well as a building dedication ceremony on Sunday, September 13th where the Hospice and Home Care of Alexander County facility was dedicated to the first Alexander County Hospice Director, the late Nita Wagoner.

Commissioner Peal mentioned other recent grand openings including Bethlehem Eye Care and J&J Garage, noting that it was encouraging to see new businesses open and homes being built and sold in Alexander County in the midst of the current economy.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

After requesting the removal of Agenda Item #6 (Water System Extension Project Report), Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kris Knowlton discussed the following issues with the Alexander County Special Events Ordinance, which he felt were violations of the First Amendment right to peacefully assemble:

- Requirement that a permit be obtained for use of the Courthouse lawn (Chapter 2).
- The Review Committee can inquire into the nature or content of a speech to be held (Chapter 3, Section B).
- Requirement for events with 1,000 or more people to have a Crowd Control Manager for every 250 people (Chapter 3, Section C8).

He was also concerned that, even though Chapter 3, Section B prohibits the Review Committee from denying an application because of content or purpose, that events would not be allowed for such reasons. Mr. Knowlton also asked if crowds gathering at the Courthouse without a permit would be asked to leave and what consequences would be enforced if the crowd refused, pointing out a violation of Title 18, Section 242 of the U.S. Constitution.

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, read comments submitted by Craig McLeod related to continued code/ordinance violations on Ridley Ranch Road, which he first reported one year ago in September 2019. Although some progress has been made towards cleanup since his last email, he states that at least 3 abandoned/untagged vehicles remain with bags of household garbage piled on their rooftops along with a rusted mobile home frame, a junk camper trailer parked next to the road, and various piles of litter, trash, old tires, and debris. He also mentioned aggressive, uncontrolled dogs in the area that prohibit property owners and perspective land buyers from exiting their vehicles. Mr. McLeod’s attorney has sent letters to Ridley Ranch Road residents

asking them to keep the right-of-way clear for ingress and egress, a continued problem that prevents law enforcement and emergency personnel from responding if needed. He pointed out that these issues are unsightly, unsafe, and has led to the devaluation of property.

PUBLIC HEARING: PROPOSED REFINANCING OF 2011 LAW ENFORCEMENT & DETENTION CENTER LOAN

Bob Jessup, Attorney with Sanford Holshouser Law Group, discussed plans to refinance the 2011 loan for the Alexander County Law Enforcement and Detention Center at 1.10% for 7.5 years, which will result in a savings of approximately \$145,000. He advised that following the public hearing, a resolution would be presented that authorizes staff to proceed with the Local Government Commission application process.

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

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN LGC APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT & DETENTION CENTER LOAN REFINANCING AGREEMENT

Bob Jessup, Attorney with Sanford Holshouser Law Group, stated that the original 2011 loan for the Alexander County Law Enforcement and Detention Center was for approximately \$8.5 million, financed for 15 years at 3.19%. In order to refinance the remaining debt of \$3,396,000, approval must be received from the Local Government Commission.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the resolution supporting an application to the Local Government Commission for approval of the Alexander County Law Enforcement and Detention Center loan refinancing. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Jessup advised that he would attend the October Commissioners' Meeting to finalize the loan proceedings once approval was received from the LGC.

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 September 3rd, Locke-Lane Construction, Inc. has installed 1,650 linear feet of 4" force main and completed most of the work near the school (with the exception of abandoning the existing septic system and final connections). Gravity sewer has been installed from the school to the new pump station and from manhole #2 to the pump

station at Shurtape and, in addition, has been bored from manhole #2 under Highway 90 to the railroad. A valve vault was placed at the new pump station.

- Upcoming work includes force main and gravity sewer to cross Stony Point School Road, tying gravity sewer into the Shurtape pump station, testing the gravity sewer and force main, and installing pumps, spiral screen, and valves.

Mr. Thomas anticipates the contractor to finish up ahead of schedule (the substantial completion deadline is November 7, 2020).

BETHLEHEM SEWER EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

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

- Crew #1 with Two Brothers Utilities, LLC has completed installation at Wildlife Access Road and is now past Steel Bridge Loop approaching Highway 127.
- Crew #2 has completed Heritage Farm Road and Shiloh Church Road (north) near Dollar General as well as bores under Highway 127 at Mt. Pisgah and Shiloh Church Road.
- Approx. 8,600 linear feet of pipe has been installed.
- The Chigger Ridge Road portion will begin within 30 days.
- Due to a request from Dee Browder with NCDEQ, additional information related to time, labor, and costs is needed from the contractor for Change Order #1, which will then be finalized and submitted.

Mr. Shabeldeen reported that 35% of construction was complete at 54% of the project timeline; however, he noted that progress would increase once crews finished the current sections (the most difficult and time consuming portion) and began installing force main.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, reported that Alexander County's cumulative total for positive COVID-19 cases was now at 452 (58 quarantined, 3 hospitalized, 4 deaths, 387 recovered). The 4th death occurred several weeks ago but further medical review was needed before confirming COVID-19 as the cause of death. She explained that the NCDHHS dashboard frequently reported a higher number of positive cases because of duplicated entries by various medical providers as well issues with county of residence vs. workplace or where tested. Ms. Whisnant felt the reopening of schools had gone well and, although there have been a few confirmed cases among students and staff, no outbreaks have occurred. Drive-thru testing

continues on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (other days if needed). Due to a higher demand, she encouraged the public to get their flu vaccinations earlier this year.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, advised that more part-time EMS staff was being utilized due to contact with positive COVID-19 cases or household exposure. PPE supply continues to be adequate with the exception of gowns, which continue to increase in price and demand.

COVID-19 RESPONSE GRANT TO FIRE DEPARTMENTS & RESCUE SQUAD

Rick French, County Manager, presented a resolution authorizing a one-time \$2,000 grant to all 8 volunteer fire departments and the Alexander Rescue Squad & EMS to assist with the purchase of equipment, supplies, and other expenses for COVID-19 response.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing the COVID-19 response grants. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS

Vice-Chairman Yoder presented a recommendation from the Historic Preservation Committee to update the wording of the Historic Preservation Design Review Standards to coincide with the newly approved Chapter 160D (consolidation of N.C.G.S. Chapters 153A and 160A).

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the updated Historic Preservation Design Review Standards. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWN OF TAYLORSVILLE FOR PLANNING & ZONING SERVICES

Vice-Chairman Yoder mentioned that the agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for planning and zoning services approved on June 15, 2020 also needed updating due to Chapter 160D which would allow for enforcement of the Alexander County Historic Preservation Ordinance within Town limits. He mentioned that no additional fees would be collected from the Town for this revision.

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

RESCHEDULE OCTOBER COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Rick French, County Manager, requested the October 5th Commissioners' Meeting be rescheduled for October 12th to allow additional time for receipt of the PARTF grant decision regarding the Courthouse Park Project.

Commissioner Pennell made a motion to reschedule the October 5th Commissioners' Meeting to be held on October 12th. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Rick French, County Manager, requested the following appointments:

LEPC – Appoint Douglas Bowman and Jon Miller for 3 years and Linda Clements for two years.

Review Officer – Appoint Bill Rogers.

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

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the resolution appointing Bill Rogers as Review Officer. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #8 - #16

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #8 - #16 as follows:

Budget Amendment #8 – To carry forward a portion of the CARES Act EMS grant received in April 2020 to be spent in the 2020-2021 budget year.

Budget Amendment #9 – To increase the Health Department budget for additional first quarter WIC and Maternal Health Innovation State funds.

Budget Amendment #10 – To adjust the Health Department budget to transfer \$25,000 in State funds originally budgeted in Behavioral Health revenue to the Primary Care Program revenue and to increase the Behavioral Health budget for 1) Duke Endowment grant funds carried forward from prior years that must be used to establish an integrated behavioral health program and 2) a \$1,000 Glaxo Smith Kline award.

Budget Amendment #11 – To carry forward prior year Medicaid funds for the Care Management for High-Risk Pregnancy Program to the 2020-2021 budget year.

Budget Amendment #12 – To increase the Health Department budget for Federal grant funds for COVID-19 Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Enhancing Detection activities.

Budget Amendment #13 – To increase the Sheriff’s Office budget for Federal grant funds to reimburse expenses related to combating human trafficking / child exploitation.

Budget Amendment #14 – To budget for one-time grants of \$2,000 to each of the 8 volunteer fire departments and Alexander Rescue Squad & EMS to assist with COVID-19 related expenses.

Budget Amendment #15 – To increase General Fund departmental budgets for extra cleaning, PPE, hand sanitizer dispensers, and other potential COVID-19 related needs.

Budget Amendment #16 – To adjust the multi-year Coronavirus Relief Fund project budget for 1) receipt of a second round of CRF funds, 2) the 25% share of CRF funds to be allocated for eligible expenses of municipalities pursuant to SL 2020-80; and 3) adjusted estimates of expense reimbursements to be claimed based on revisions to CRF guidance.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #8 - #16. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

SALES TAX REPORT

Rick French, County Manager, stated that a total of \$5,404,908.63 has been collected in sales tax revenue for the 2019-2020 budget year (\$1,629,150.20 is new sales tax for economic development, public education, and community colleges). This amount is 104.85% of the \$5,155,000 budgeted with 100% of the budget year expired and an increase over last year of 10.87%.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, requested approval of an agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for the management of Coronavirus Relief Funds established by the CARES Act. The Town will be allocated \$396,957 of the \$1,587,828 distribution to Alexander County.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the CRF management agreement with the Town of Taylorsville. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$39,327.20) and Tax Refunds (\$3,021.51) for July 25 – August 31, 2020.
- B. Minutes from the July 20, 2020 and August 3, 2020 Regular Commissioners’ Meetings.

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

CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD ACTIVITIES

At 7:32 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.
- Announcement – Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, announced that the Alexander County Dental Clinic had partnered with CVCC to pursue a Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation grant to expand the dental health program into the school system, which was awarded last week. The preliminary planning grants totals \$65,000 and will allow CVCC dental students to visit and provide dental care at schools to un/underinsured students. This will benefit students by providing clinical training as well as parents who will not have to leave work for a child's dental appointment. Grant funding will continue for another two years if the plan proves successful.
- Health Department Report – Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director, reviewed the 2019-2020 Communicable Disease Update that showed COVID-19 at 32% in Alexander County followed by Hepatitis C at 21% and Salmonellosis at 4%. Chlamydia was the most prevalent STD at 24% followed by Gonorrhea at 14% and NGU at 1%. For vaccine preventable diseases, the County saw one case of pertussis, one Haemophilus influenza case, and one influenza death. Ms. Walker provided a 5-year comparison and added that gastrointestinal illnesses were the most frequent.
- DSS Report – Linda Clements, Assistant DSS Director, reviewed the following:
 - 2019-2020 DSS Highlights – the fiscal year began with the Consolidated Human Services reorganization that led to leadership changes and building improvements including a renovated lobby, automatic doors, outside drop box, laundry room, and a new visitation room for family meetings.
 - New Mission Statement – to administer Federal, State, and County programs focused on improving the well-being and self-sufficiency of our citizens, to protect vulnerable people (children, older adults, and disabled) from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and to advocate for those in need.
 - Annual Program Review – Ms. Clements provided the average number of citizens served and/or fiscal year program costs for Medicaid and Medicaid Transportation, Food & Nutrition Services, Adult Assistance (in-home aid, guardianship, home improvements, adult care homes, placement assistance, and rest home supplements), Work First, Crisis Intervention, Day Care Subsidies, Child Support Services, and Child Protective Services (in-home services, assessments and investigations, foster home licensing, and adoptions).

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

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 8:01 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 Reese made a motion to adjourn at 8:45 PM. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Vice-Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board