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**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**     May 10, 2021

**ALEXANDER COUNTY**  
**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**PRESENT:**    Larry Yoder, Chairman  
                  Ronnie Reese, Vice-Chairman  
                  Josh Lail  
                  Dr. Jeff Peal  
                  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, May 10, 2021 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Peal announced that all regular library programming and services, including the summer reading program, would resume on June 1, 2021. All library branches are now open to the public with COVID protocols in place.

Vice-Chairman Reese attended the National Day of Prayer assembly held this past Saturday at the Alexander County Courthouse. He quoted the event theme, 2 Corinthians 3:17 "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," noting that prayer was definitely needed during these uncertain times.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

After requesting the removal of Agenda Item #4 (Resolution supporting the MOU with the State of NC for opioid litigation settlement proceeds) to be discussed at a later date, Chairman Yoder made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, read comments submitted by Craig McLeod related to ongoing code/ordinance violations on Ridley Ranch Road, which he first reported in September 2019. He advised that no progress had been made towards the cleanup of the Webster property where household garbage, debris, tires, and car parts still exist. He felt this property needed to be condemned. In addition, the neighbors (Drums) have moved a large junk boat, along with other trash and debris, from their property onto the abandoned Webster property and still have a travel trailer and other items along the roadside, which hinders ingress/egress. Mr. McLeod questioned when the Board of Commissioners and County staff would do their jobs and correct these violations, noting that junk and trash continues to accumulate on Ridley Ranch Road due to the County's lack of action. Several photos were also shown.

## **PUBLIC HEARING: APPROVAL OF ROAD NAMES**

Rick French, County Manager, submitted the following road names for approval:

<u>Road No.</u>	<u>Road Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
1468TB	Bookwright Drive	Cross street Pisgah Road
1579RM	Retta Lane	Cross street Country Road

In addition, a petition has been received to rename Wike and Parks Lane to Israel Hill Way. All names have met required regulations and have been checked for duplication and sound indexing.

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

Commissioner Peal made a motion to approve the road names as presented. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **NATIONAL EMS WEEK PROCLAMATION**

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, requested approval of a proclamation declaring the week of May 16-22, 2021 as National Emergency Medical Services Week with the theme EMS Strong is "Caring for Our Community."

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the National EMS Week proclamation. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS**

Rick French, County Manager, presented the following appointments:

Code Enforcement Officers – appoint Bill Rogers and Cody Bowers.

Library Board of Trustees – appoint Eleanor Mallard for 3 years.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the appointments. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **2021-2022 ALEXANDER COUNTY PROPOSED BUDGET MESSAGE**

Rick French, County Manager, provided the following Budget Message for the 2021-2022 Alexander County proposed budget:

*The proposed General Fund budget for Alexander County for fiscal year 2021-2022 totals \$45,598,762. Requests from County departments for the upcoming budget year totaled \$48,009,438. The original budget for fiscal year 2020-2021 totaled \$42,892,442 and currently stands at \$49,082,437. There is no property tax increase proposed in the 2021-2022 budget.*

*The recommended General Fund budget for 2021-2022 includes the following major items:*

- *4 Sheriff's Office vehicles / equipment . . . . . \$230,000*
- *EMS ambulance box on new chassis . . . . . \$100,000*
- *HVAC system at evidence storage facility . . . . . \$100,000*
- *Linney's Mountain tower upgrade, core network routing switches, and software licenses for mission critical application servers . . . . . \$145,000*
- *35 Sheriff's Office body cameras . . . . . \$87,570*
- *New debt on Bethlehem Sewer Extension Project . . . . . \$306,478*
- *New debt on Water System Extension Project . . . . . \$316,243*
- *2 replacement vehicles for DSS . . . . . \$48,000*
- *Full year of 2.5% COLA approved in April 2021 . . . . . \$410,000*

*Of the 20 new employees requested, only 13 are being recommended and include 8 EMS paramedics, one IT help desk / administrative assistant, one garage mechanic, one staff attorney, one revaluation data entry clerk, and 1 DSS income maintenance trainer / quality assurance supervisor.*

*The City of Hickory is proposing a 3% increase for the new budget year effective July 1, 2021. This is subject to approval by the Hickory City Council. Water connection fees were reduced in June 2019 and will remain in effect until January 2022. New water taps must connect to the Alexander County water system and may not be purchased and held for future use.*

*A \$5 increase in both C&D (construction and demolition) and MSW (municipal solid waste) at the landfill is proposed. An amount of \$180,000 is needed for a new floor at the transfer station, which was constructed in 1996-1997 and still has original flooring. There have been no landfill fee increases in over 10 years.*

*Fee changes are recommended by EMS Management & Consultants because of lost revenue from Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurance companies that we will not be able to collect. The recommended charges are at 150% of Medicare allowable. There have been no EMS fee increases since 2013.*

*The next step in our budget process is the public hearing scheduled for 6:00 PM on May 24, 2021 at the CVCC / Alexander Center.*

Greg Cronk, Information Technology Director, discussed the 3 capital items requested by the IT Department for 2021-2022 that included:

- Linney's Mountain tower upgrade (\$40,000) – a recent assessment by a structural engineer identified the need for additional bracing between the 20ft. and 60ft. leg joints to keep the tower loading under 100% and allow for placement of future equipment.
- Backup replication software licenses (\$15,000) – efforts to deploy redundancy for mission critical servers through use of advanced backup software began this year. Staff has the ability to quickly restore systems during a ransomware attack and remotely run a server in the off-site backup center if an on-site failure occurs. The IT Department would like to add coverage to 15 servers with the same technology that will require additional licenses.
- Core routing switch replacement (\$90,000) – the core network switches at the County's two data centers are 6 years old and experiencing technical issues, resulting in downtime for systems and staff. Replacing the switches is a critical need to deliver required connectivity.

Doug Gillispie, Public Services Director, explained that the request for 8 new paramedics was due to the significant increase in call volume over the past few years, which continually creates situations where all EMS units are tied up at once. This has caused delays in response times and the need to rely on the Rescue Squad and out-of-county EMS for backup and support. The new paramedics would provide a 5<sup>th</sup> crew that would be housed at Base #3 (former Sugar Loaf Fire Department) along with the new requested ambulance. He also reviewed the proposed increase in EMS fees for ALS rates, BLS rates, mileage, treatment / no transport, and public assist / repeated use.

Mr. French also mentioned that funding received through the American Rescue Plan Act could possibly be used for a variety of items included in the proposed 2021-2022 budget such as water, sewer, technology needs, an ambulance, etc. depending on guidelines and restrictions.

### **BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #78**

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed Budget Amendment #78 to adjust the Bethlehem Water Fund and County Water and Sewer Fund based on data from year-to-date revenue reports from the City of Hickory.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #78. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

No items were discussed during Other Business.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$1,038.02) and Tax Refunds (\$967.96) for April 16-30, 2021.
- B. Minutes from the April 12, 2021 and April 26, 2021 Regular Meetings.
- C. No cost lease for County-provided space for Probation & Parole.

Vice-Chairman 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)(4, 5, & 6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL**

Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:48 PM to discuss economic development, contractual matters, and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4, 5, & 6). Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to adjourn at 8:14 PM. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

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Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board