

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING June 7, 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, June 7, 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 Peal led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Peal attended the annual Memorial Day service at the Alexander County Courthouse, which was not held last year due to COVID-19. He was sad to report the loss of 173 of our veterans within the last two years but encouraged the public to visit the County's YouTube channel for firsthand accounts and stories by many Alexander County veterans entitled "Our History, Our Heroes."

Commissioner Lail attended the 2021 ACHS Graduation on Friday, where his daughter served as a Junior Marshall, noting that he was very impressed with the ceremony.

Vice-Chairman Reese congratulated the 2021 ACHS graduates and also thanked all veterans for their service, pointing out that yesterday was the 77th anniversary of D-Day. He mentioned that the freedoms we enjoy today were possible because of a veteran's sacrifice.

Commissioner Pennell stated that, while many graduates would be attending college this fall, others would be going directly into the workforce. He encouraged local businesses and industries to take advantage of this opportunity.

Chairman Yoder attended the Memorial Day Concert performed by the Studio3 Orchestra, Community Concert Chorus, and several guest soloists on Saturday, May 29th at Taylorsville Savings Bank. He was pleased that so many young citizens participated to honor our service men and women as well as those lost to COVID-19 and he conveyed his appreciation to all veterans and their families.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one present to speak during the Public Comment Period.

PUBLIC HEARING: REZONING CASE 21-2 – RCSI PROPERTIES, INC.

Seth Harris, Zoning Administrator, presented Rezoning Case 21-2 submitted by RCSI Properties, Inc. (Royal Comfort Seating) who requested rezoning of property located on Alspaugh Dam Road from RA-20 (Residential-Agricultural) to L-I (Light Industrial) to allow for a 37,500 square foot manufacturing and storage facility. The size of the property is 10.45 acres, which is currently vacant. Zoning districts within 100 feet include L-I to the north and RA-20 to the south, east, and west.

After reviewing staff comments, Mr. Harris reported that the 2008 Comprehensive Plan future land use map showed this area as being commercial in nature; however, while not consistent with the map, it is within the intent of the Comprehensive Plan to expand industrial uses in those areas where they existed at the time the plan was adopted. The request is also consistent with the neighboring industrial use. He stated that letters were sent by first class mail to property owners within 100 feet of the parcel boundary, a sign was posted on the property, and public hearing notices were placed in *The Taylorsville Times*.

In addition to staff's recommendation for approval, the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the request on May 6, 2021 and voted unanimously to recommend approval based on the following:

1. The rezoning request is consistent with the intent of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and is compatible with adjacent uses.

Mr. Harris advised that based on the information provided, the Board must determine whether the rezoning request meets the guidelines set forth and is reasonable in regards to public interest, considering all uses within the requested zoning district, not merely the use that the applicant proposes.

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

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve Rezoning Case 21-2 based on recommendations from staff and the Planning & Zoning Commission that the rezoning request is consistent with the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and is compatible with adjacent uses. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

WIRELESS BROADBAND EXPANSION PROJECT REPORT

David Moose, Compliance & Procurement Specialist, informed the Board that Phase 1 of the Wireless Broadband Expansion Project was progressing but with some delays to the original timeline, mainly due to slow negotiations for the Moore Mountain tower site lease agreement. Three new hubs have been added (Rocky Face Baptist Church, Fairview Baptist Church, and a residential location on Rocky Springs Road) and a fourth will be installed this week. He advised that Open Broadband, LLC had modified the distribution of equipment proposed for Phase 1 and now planned to add equipment to the Ellendale tower site on Willie McLeod Road to reduce the load on the Linney's Mountain tower.

For Phase 2, several sites are being considered in the eastern and southeastern parts of the county. Due to the lack of affordable commercial tower sites in these areas, Open Broadband must be creative in their approach. Mr. Moose stated that acquisition of new equipment for tower sites would occur once the plans for Phase 2 were finalized in order to leverage savings in both labor and equipment costs by allowing staff to purchase equipment and schedule installations for all sites at once. To date, the cumulative total of Open Broadband customers is 150, with more than 50% of those considered unserved.

In response to questions asked by Commissioners Peal and Pennell, Nick Steward, Open Broadband Western NC Manager, explained that potential tower site locations must be elevated above the trees to provide a clear line of sight for wireless connectivity and the capability to reach 20-50 residences is necessary to justify the equipment investment at any specific tower location. In addition, Mr. Steward reported that once new hubs were installed, staff revisited addresses that previously were not serviceable; however, he mentioned the difficulty in providing service to homes that were completely surrounded by trees.

Mr. Moose asked the public to be aware that Open Broadband staff was currently working in several areas of the county. Door hangers may be left at residences where service is available.

Chairman Yoder suggested door magnets for all Open Broadband vehicles as well as shirts or lanyards that clearly identified employees.

ADOPTION OF 2021-2022 ALEXANDER COUNTY BUDGET ORDINANCE

Rick French, County Manager, presented the 2021-2022 Alexander County Budget Ordinance that totaled \$45,598,762 and requested approval.

Chairman Yoder thanked all staff involved in the budget process and for keeping the County in good financial standing. Although a few small fee increases were included, he was happy that a property tax increase was not necessary.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the 2021-2022 Budget Ordinance. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

SALES TAX REPORT

Rick French, County Manager, stated that a total of \$4,609,678 had been collected in sales tax revenue through May 2021 (\$1,267,410 is new sales tax for economic development, public education, and community colleges). This amount is 93.59% of the \$4,925,280 budgeted with 75% of the budget year expired and an increase over last year of 18.88%.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

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

Historic Preservation Committee – reappoint Helen Chestnut and Lee Sharpe for 3 years.

CVCC Board of Trustees – reappoint John Watts for 4 years.

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council – appoint Kathy Riddle, Jason Hughes, and Ashley Moretz and reappoint Chris Bowman, Krista Hiatt, and Ronnie Reese, all for two years.

Review Officer – appoint Ethan Grant.

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

Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the resolution required to appoint Ethan Grant as review officer. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #83 - #87 & PROJECT BUDGET ORDINANCE #P-3

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #83 - #87 and Project Budget Ordinance #P-3 as follows:

Budget Amendment #83 –To budget for accrued leave payouts through May 2021 for employees leaving during the FY 2021 budget year.

Budget Amendment #84 – To increase the EMS budget for estimated NCACC administrative fees for the annual Medicaid Cost Report. To increase Contingency and reduce Fund Balance appropriated based on sales tax revenue projections for the remainder of the budget year.

Budget Amendment #85 – To budget for a transfer of Article 44*524 sales tax revenue from the General Fund to the County Water & Sewer Fund to pay debt service for the Water System Extension Project.

Budget Amendment #86 – To budget for the DSS Representative Payee Fund, a Social Security Program that allows DSS to receive and manage money for minor children and certain adults (previously accounted for in another fund type that did not require an annual budget).

Budget Amendment #87 – To budget for fines and forfeitures received by the County to be remitted to the local Board of Education (previously accounted for in another fund type that did not require an annual budget).

Project Budget Ordinance #P-3 – To budget for the American Rescue Plan Act Fund, specifically to be used for water and broadband infrastructure.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #83 - #87 and Project Budget Ordinance #P-3. Commissioner Peal seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. Effective July 1, 2022, Cardinal Innovations will be merging with Vaya Health. Mr. French pointed out that 30 LME/MCO's existed at one time but that only 5 would remain after this consolidation.
- B. Two proposed house bills may have an effect on counties. HB 783 (Create a State Building Code Permit Certification) will require testing and (re)certifications for Inspections staff and HB 947 (G.R.E.A.T. Broadband Expansion Act) may provide assistance with broadband, water, and sewer projects.

- C. Lail Builders, Inc. plans to begin construction of the Courthouse Park soon, which will take approx. 120 days to complete.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$249.25) and Tax Refunds (\$691.58) for May 13-31, 2021.
- B. Home and Community Care Block Grant SFY 2021-2022.
- C. No cost lease for County-provided space for Probation & Parole.
- D. Alexander County JCPC Funding Plan for FY 2021-2022.

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

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4, 5, & 6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL

Commissioner Lail made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:41 PM to discuss economic development, contractual matters, and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4, 5, & 6). Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 7:19 PM. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board