

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING September 20, 2021

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: Larry Yoder, Chairman
 Ronnie Reese, Vice-Chairman
 Josh Lail
 Marty Pennell

ABSENT: Kent Herman

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, September 20, 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

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

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

On behalf of the entire Board, Chairman Yoder presented a Key to the County to the family of Dr. Jeffrey Peal, whom he noted was an outstanding County Commissioner that studied and prepared for every meeting.

Commissioner Pennell presented a framed resolution honoring Dr. Peal's life and community service. He mentioned that Dr. Peal was an awesome public servant, his brother in Christ, and friend who would be missed greatly.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

No reports were given.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Pennell made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ACCEPTANCE OF KENT HERMAN TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Yoder reported that pursuant to N.C.G.S. 153A-27.1, the Alexander County Republican Party Executive Committee had selected Kent Herman to fill the vacant seat previously held by Dr. Jeff Peal. Mr. Herman, who ran for a county commissioner seat in the 2020 Primary Election, was the next highest vote getter. He will serve until the next election in November 2022.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to accept the nomination of Kent Herman to fill the vacant seat on the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Chairman Yoder mentioned that Commissioner Herman could not attend tonight's meeting due to a prior engagement.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke during the Public Comment Period.

PUBLIC HEARING: CHAPTER 160D ZONING & SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE UPDATES

Ashley Kale, WPCOG Senior Community & Regional Planner, briefly reviewed proposed changes to the Alexander County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances with the consolidation of Chapters 153A and 160A of the NC General Statutes into Chapter 160D, which was discussed in detail during the May 24, 2021 Commissioners' Meeting. Due to advertising delays and cancellation of the July Meeting, the required public hearing was postponed several times.

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

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the Chapter 160D changes to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances as presented. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Commissioners Pennell and Lail felt the Zoning Ordinance should be revisited, as many sections were outdated and hindered growth and development.

PUBLIC HEARING: 5310 GRANT ENHANCEMENT FOR SENIORS & THE DISABLED

Leeanne Whisnant, Consolidated Human Services Director, discussed the Federal 5310 Program (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) for FY 2023 that will provide Alexander County seniors age 65 and older as well as disabled citizens with transportation services to medical appointments and other life sustaining activities through Greenway Public Transportation. The project budget totals \$194,592 and requires a 10% local match. Ms. Whisnant advised that this grant had been utilized annually for many years and, if approved tonight, would be included in the 2022-2023 DSS budget request.

After a motion by Commissioner Lail, second by Vice-Chairman Reese, 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 Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the 5310 Program grant application for FY 2023 and the coinciding resolution. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

UNITED WAY OF ALEXANDER COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

Dr. Dianne Little, Alexander County United Way President, gave a slide show presentation with information related to current board membership and fundraising efforts, which have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of personnel. United Way could only fund local agencies at 50% this year and included Partnership for Children, 4-H, Rescue Squad, DSS, the Bridge Community, and Mobile Café.

In an effort to promote services provided by United Way and identify critical needs, the public is encouraged to complete a community needs survey available at www.unitedwayalexander.org. Dr. Little also discussed future plans to boost fundraising efforts such as a holiday decorating contest, individual and corporate campaigns, and the “365 Drive” asking small businesses to donate \$1 per day in exchange for a variety of benefits (display decal, special invitations to United Way events, and business exposure listings in print/web form).

ALEXANDER INDUSTRIAL SEWER PROJECT BID AWARD

Rick French, County Manager, reported that a bid opening was held on August 24, 2021 for the Alexander Industrial Sewer Project where 5 bids were received. The lowest responsive, responsible bidder was Two Brothers Utilities, LLC of Shelby, NC who submitted a total base bid of \$84,929.68. This project will expand the existing sewer system at the Alexander Industrial Park.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the bid submitted by Two Brothers Utilities, LLC in the amount of \$84,929.68 for the Alexander Industrial Sewer Project. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

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

Region E Aging Advisory Committee – appoint Angela Johnson for two years.

Animal Control Advisory Board – reappoint Dr. Hannah Shaffer, Leeanne Whisnant, Jason Moore, Whitnee Price, Mike Deal, Garrett Davis, and Maggie Dahlstrom for two years.

Council on Aging – appoint Kristy Hunt to replace Christine Gates whose term expires in May 2023 and reappoint Chris Howes for 3 years.

Jury Commission – reappoint Dale Fox for two years.

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

Commissioner Lail conveyed his appreciation to these and other citizens willing to serve on the County's various boards and committees.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #9 - #22

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #9 - #22 as follows:

Budget Amendment #9 – To increase the Information Technology budget for 1) a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement for \$45,000, 2) the Linney's Mountain tower upgrade for \$32,000, 3) core network switch replacement for \$90,000, 4) backup replication software for \$15,000, 5) VMware NSX Firewall for \$33,000, and 6) replacement of a camera DVR system at the Detention Center for \$26,500.

Budget Amendment #10 – To increase the Register of Deeds budget to add a part-time position for 6 months during FY 2022 and to increase the Animal Services budget to add a full-time Animal Control Officer.

Budget Amendment #11 – To increase the Register of Deeds budget for use of restricted funds from the Automation Enhancement and Preservation Fund.

Budget Amendment #12 – To increase the Sheriff's Office budget to replace a walkie radio destroyed in a house fire.

Budget Amendment #13 – To budget for a refund to the NC Department of Juvenile Justice for FY 2021 funds not spent by service providers due to the classification of juvenile cases and COVID-19 restrictions.

Budget Amendment #14 – To increase the Health Department budget for a Duke Endowment grant to support expansion of a comprehensive school-based oral health program.

Budget Amendment #15 – To increase the Health Department budget for Federal grant funds for the Reopening Schools Health Liaison Program.

Budget Amendment #16 – To increase the Health Department budget for Federal grant funds for the Advancing Equity Program.

Budget Amendment #17 – To discontinue the practice of charging the Emergency Telephone System Fund for IT staff costs to provide street addressing and database provisioning for 911 operations that are no longer considered an eligible use of 911 funds.

Budget Amendment #18 – To reimburse the Emergency Telephone System Fund for FY 2020 expenditures that were reclassified to the General Fund.

Budget Amendment #19 – To decrease the Emergency Telephone System Fund budget to match the NC 911 Fund revenue distribution approved by the State for FY 2022.

Budget Amendment #20 – To adjust the multi-year Parks Improvements Project Fund for revised costs from the bid opening for the Courthouse Park splash pad and picnic shelter elements.

Budget Amendment #21 – To increase the budget for the FY 2022 General Fund transfer to the Park Improvements Project Fund for revised costs from the bid opening for the Courthouse Park splash pad and picnic shelter elements.

Budget Amendment #22 – To increase the School Capital Improvements Fund budget for the use of Public School Building Capital Fund grant monies by the School System for approved technology purchases.

Commissioner Pennell made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #9 - #22. Vice-Chairman Reese the motion, which passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

- A. The Stony Point Elementary School CDBG-I Sewer Project is officially closed and staff has received the final audit letter from the State. Of the \$864,750 grant awarded, a total of \$741,863.25 was spent.
- B. On September 30th, FEMA will begin accepting applications for their Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant Program. This funding could be used for a flood warning siren system as well as some potential radio antennae upgrades. A 25% local match will be required.
- C. Effective October 1, 2021, the Federal Administration on Community Living will require additional training for new and current members of Long-Term Care Community Advisory Committees, which could have a huge impact on the recruitment of volunteers. Training hours for new members will increase from 15 to 36 hours and from 10 to 18 hours of continuing education for current members.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$29,695.72) and Tax Refunds (\$5,777.05) for July 26 – September 8, 2021.
- B. Minutes from the July 19, 2021 Cancelled Meeting and the August 2, 2021 Regular Meeting.
- C. Renewal of Agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for Planning and Zoning Services.

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

CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD ACTIVITIES

At 6:58 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.
- Senior Center Report – Kristy Hunt, Senior Center Director, discussed a variety of activities now offered by the Senior Center such as exercise classes, card games, wood carving, needlework, arts and crafts, line dancing, card making, scrapbooking, and jigsaw puzzles. Open enrollment for Medicare recipients begins on October 15th and runs through December 7th. She urged senior citizens to contact the Center either by phone or in person to discuss drug plan options, noting that her staff had assisted in saving Alexander County seniors approx. \$1 million each year by providing unbiased opinions and facts.
- DSS Report – Linda Clements, Assistant DSS Director, informed the Board that, because the resurgence of COVID-19 was impacting staff (quarantines and illness), the department had reverted to a work from home schedule rotation to reduce exposure, especially in

shared offices. There is an increase in staff vacancies (mainly in Child Welfare and Medicaid) and lack of applications has caused positions to be reposted; however, a candidate has been selected for the Training/Quality Assurance position and a modified Administrative Assistant position has been posted. Ms. Clements also explained that DSS was at risk of losing Federal funding for several foster care cases due to repeated continuances of court hearings (either because parents were no shows, attorneys were late, and COVID-19), but noted that she has begun to see some movement thanks to recent pressure placed on the courts. She also mentioned that water payment assistance would be available through the LIEAP Program later this year.

- Public Health Report – Billie Walker, Assistant Health Director, reviewed the following:
 - Annual Communicable Disease Report – the most prevalent communicable disease in Alexander County for 2020-2021 was COVID-19 at 86% and chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis cases have increased from previous years (also statewide). Ms. Walker provided a 5-year comparison of all reported communicable diseases, noting that the Health Department focused on education to prevent them and surveillance to help contain the spread.
 - COVID-19 Update – the cumulative total for positive COVID-19 cases as of today was 5,911 with 13 hospitalized and 107 deaths. There have been 155 new positive cases over the past 7 days and 398 in the past 14 days. To date, 37% of Alexander County citizens are fully vaccinated and 41% have received one dose. Ms. Walker was happy to report that the percentage of positive cases (both county and statewide) was trending down. The Health Department is currently administering third doses for immunocompromised citizens and has received CDC clearance for boosters.
 - COVID-19 Fees Approval – Ms. Walker requested approval of additional codes for third doses and boosters, allowing the Health Department to bill patient insurance for a \$45 administrative fee for the vaccines, which are free to all citizens.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the additional COVID-19 fees as requested. Vice-Chairman Reese 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 7:48 PM to discuss economic development, contractual matters, and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4, 5, & 6). Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION APPROVING MOA FOR OPIOID LITIGATION SETTLEMENT

Upon returning to Open Session, Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve a resolution to join the Opioid Litigation Settlement Memorandum of Agreement with the State of NC which should result in Alexander County receiving approx. \$3 million to address the local opioid epidemic. Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Lail made a motion to adjourn at 9:05 PM. Vice-Chairman Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board