

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**      September 19, 2022

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

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

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, September 19, 2022 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioners Yoder and Lail discussed attending the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for Player's Ridge Restaurant on Saturday, September 17, 2022.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one spoke during the Public Comment Period.

## **PUBLIC HEARING: SCHEDULE OF VALUES / 2023 REVALUATION**

Doug Fox, Tax Administrator, discussed the Schedule of Values presented on August 1, 2022, noting that N.C.G.S. 105-317(c) requires a public hearing be held at least 7 days before the schedule could be adopted. Staff plans to attend the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Commissioners' Meeting to request approval.

After a motion by Chairman Reese, second by Commissioner Yoder, and unanimous vote, the public hearing was called to order and comments requested.

### Public Comment

Vickie Martin was concerned with how revaluation would affect senior citizens on a fixed income, pointing out that increased values would result in higher property taxes and homeowner's insurance rates. She stated that while many Alexander County residents receive Social Security benefits beginning at age 60, they could not apply for elderly tax exemptions until age 65. Ms. Martin felt current property values were inaccurate due to the COVID-19 pandemic and asked if the County could postpone revaluation until the market leveled out.

Jimmy Tanner with Tanner Valuation Group explained that counties were mandated by the State of NC to conduct a reappraisal every 8 years; therefore, the process could not be postponed. He suggested she or the public contact our General Assembly representatives with concerns.

Chairman Reese advised that an appeal process was also included with each revaluation.

There being no further comments, Commissioner Yoder made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **PUBLIC HEARING: 5310 GRANT ENHANCEMENT FOR SENIORS & THE DISABLED**

Thomas Mitchell, DSS Director, discussed the annual Federal Section 5310 Program (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) for FY 2024 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, mainly through Greenway Public Transportation. The project budget totals \$194,592 and requires a 10% local match that had been included in the FY 2022-2023 budget.

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

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the 5310 Program grant application for FY 2024 and the coinciding resolution. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously

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

Rick French, County Manager, submitted the following road names, which have met all required regulations and were checked for duplication and sound indexing, for approval:

<u>Road No.</u>	<u>Road Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
1515CJ	Old Sam House Lane	Off Hopewell Church Road
1404RD	Robert Deal Drive	Off Daniels Lumber Road

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

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

### **SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROPOSAL**

Sheriff Chris Bowman informed the Board that the Sheriff's Office currently employed 4 full-time School Resource Officers (two with permanent assignments at each middle school, one that is shared between two elementary schools, and one that teaches the DARE curriculum at all 7 elementary schools throughout the year). In light of events that have occurred across the nation, as well as increasing local incidents that require law enforcement intervention, Sheriff Bowman felt it evident that an SRO was needed at every school in Alexander County.

Dr. Jennifer Hefner, Alexander County Schools Superintendent, advised that the funding formula for the NC School Safety Grant Program had recently changed, making low-wealth counties eligible for substantially higher funding in the current cycle. Therefore, the School System submitted a grant application to fund salaries for 7 SRO positions, one at each of our 7 elementary schools, as well as vape detectors for East and West Middle Schools and vinyl screening at 3 elementary schools.

Sheriff Bowman explained that 6 of our 7 elementary schools fell under the Sheriff's Office jurisdiction, meaning the County would be responsible for first year costs not covered by grant funding, if received, for 5 additional SROs, estimated at \$530,000 (\$70,000 for fully-equipped patrol vehicle, \$15,000 for uniforms and other necessary officer equipment, \$65,000 per year for salary / benefits totaling \$150,000 per officer x 5 officers = \$750,000 minus the expected \$220,000 in grant funding). After the initial upfront costs, subsequent funding would total approx. \$325,000 annually for salary and benefits for these 5 SROs.

An announcement regarding funding awards is expected later this month.

### **RESOLUTION SUPPORTING OPERATION GREEN LIGHT FOR VETERANS**

Cherry Kilby, Veterans Service Officer, presented a resolution in support of Operation Green Light for Veterans, a nationwide initiative to show appreciation to veterans and raise awareness of services available to them to ease their transition back to civilian life. She encouraged the public to replace one light at their home or place of business, noting that the Alexander County Services Center and Courthouse Park building would follow suit from November 7-13, 2022.

Chairman Reese made a motion to approve the Operation Green Light for Veterans resolution. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING COURTROOM AUDIO / VISUAL UPGRADE**

David Moose, Compliance & Procurement Specialist, reported that the NC Administrative Office of the Courts planned to install upgraded audio/visual equipment in both the District and Superior courtrooms at the Alexander County Courthouse. The County is required to provide adequate physical facilities for the courts, which includes cabling in courtrooms to conduct remote proceedings; therefore, NCACO has offered the option of allowing the County to utilize its vendor, ePlus, Inc. for our portion of the project (installation of low voltage cabling at a cost of \$17,226 for both courtrooms).

Chairman Reese made a motion to approve a resolution authorizing the County's intent to enter into an MOU with NCACO for the cabling installation and authorizing the County Manager to execute said document. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **WPCOG AGREEMENT FOR HOUSING OUR TEACHERS PROJECT GRANT ASSISTANCE**

Rick French, County Manager, recommended approval of an agreement with the WPCOG to provide grant management assistance for the Housing our Teachers Downtown Revitalization Project. This assistance will be provided for \$32,500 from October 1, 2022 through December 31, 2026.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the Housing our Teachers grant management assistance agreement with the WPCOG. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #7 - #13 & FY 2022-2023 NC COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM BUDGET**

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #7 - #13 as well as the FY 2022-2023 NC Community College System budget:

Budget Amendment #7 – To budget for the local matching funds required for the Housing our Teachers Downtown Revitalization grant to be paid from the Article 44\*524 sales tax proceeds.

Budget Amendment #8 – To increase the budget for estimated architect fees for a new courthouse.

Budget Amendment #9 – To increase the 1) Economic Development budget for receipt of \$12,500 from the Town of Taylorsville for their 50% share of the proposed consultant fee for the research and preparation of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Downtown Taylorsville Historic District, 2) Court Facility budget for the estimated cost of courtroom cabling for remote proceedings as part of the Courtroom Audio Visual Experience Project, 3) County Parks budget for Courthouse Park event expenses that are more than original budget estimates, 4) CVCC / Alexander Center budget for exterior cameras at the AEC and Applied Technologies buildings, and 5) Library budget for receipt of a Library Services & Technology Act Scholarship grant for a staff person to attend the Association of Rural and Small Libraries Conference.

Budget Amendment #10 – To increase the Health Department budget for 1) \$166,206 in Duke Endowment private grant funds received in FY 2022 but not spent by June 30, 2022 and 2) \$14,375 in unspent BCBS Foundation private grant funds received in FY 2021, both of which support the expansion of a comprehensive school-based oral health program.

Budget Amendment #11 – To adjust Health Department program budgets for funds carried forward from FY 2022 including 1) Communicable Disease local receipts of \$105,636, 2) Behavioral Health donations of \$837, and 3) Care Management for High-Risk Pregnancy receipts of \$32,054.

Budget Amendment #12 – To budget for the School System's use of Repair and Renovation Lottery Fund money for classroom renovations at Alexander Central High School.

Budget Amendment #13 – To budget for estimated expenses and revenues resulting from the County's agreement to sell water to EnergyUnited Water Corporation.

FY 2022-2023 NC Community College System budget – totals \$32,000.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #7 - #13 and the FY 2022-2023 NC Community College System budget. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS**

Rick French, County Manager, requested that Zach Shepherd with Vaya Health be appointed to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council to fill a vacancy with a term expiration of June 20, 2023.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the appointment. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Rick French, County Manager, provided the following upcoming events:

- September 24<sup>th</sup> – 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Hiddenite Celebration of the Arts
- October 1<sup>st</sup> – Plaque Dedication and Vertical Night Challenge at Rocky Face Park
- October 4<sup>th</sup> – National Night Out
- October 8<sup>th</sup> – Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band “Landslide” performs at Courthouse Park
- October 18<sup>th</sup> – 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Apple Festival
- November 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Run for the Dogs
- November 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Day parade
- December 3<sup>rd</sup> – Christmas parade

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Tax Release Requests (\$31,936.80) and Tax Refunds (\$5,214.80) for July 25 – September 8, 2022.
- B. Minutes from the July 25, 2022 Special Called Meeting and August 1, 2022 Regular Meeting.
- C. Surplus a 1998 Boston Whaler High Impact boat, hull ID #BWCPA057G899, a 2011 Evinrude E-TEC 250HP outboard motor with blown engine, a 2011 Load Rite boat trailer, VIN #5A4ZF3R2XB2010587, and a 2007 Ford F150 4x4, VIN #1FTRF14W17NA46802 with 218,647 miles.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD ACTIVITIES**

At 7:18 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.
- Public Health Report – the following information was discussed:

- Accreditation Update – Kimberly Edmisten, Health Educator, announced that the Site Visit Team passed 100% of categories on September 1<sup>st</sup> and the Alexander County Health Department has been recommended for accreditation with honors. She reviewed noted accomplishments since the 2016 survey that included the human services consolidation, new administrative building, new handicap accessible front door and clinic room, new front walk, renovated/expanded clinic lobby, new/improved WIC department, addition of 3 clinic rooms, new immunization and family planning clinic rooms, new behavioral health and Med-South Lifestyles programs, and a new dental program in schools, most completed while preparing for or conducting COVID-19 response.
- Communicable Disease Report – Emily Vick, RN / Communicable Disease Nurse, presented the Annual Communicable Disease Report starting with the most prevalent communicable disease in Alexander County for 2021-2022 which was COVID-19 at 97%. Hepatitis A and syphilis cases increased from the previous year; however, there was a decrease in chlamydia and gonorrhea cases. Ms. Vick 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. Current COVID-19 cases total 11,693 with 3 hospitalized and 151 deaths. There are 399 cases of monkeypox in NC but none in Alexander County.
- Bad Debt Write-Off – Billie Walker, Health Director, discussed the bad debt write-off process that typically occurs twice per year for services rendered but not paid; however, this is the first needed write-off since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to write off \$3,163.18 in bad debt for the Health Department. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

- Senior Center Report – Kristy Hunt, Senior Center Director, reported that participation remained up at all 3 branches along with record attendance at this year's ice cream social and Grandparent's Day events held in Taylorsville on August 25<sup>th</sup> and Bethlehem on August 26, 2022. A total of 130 seniors attended the Senior Center sponsored health fair on September 16<sup>th</sup> and to date, staff has assisted seniors in saving \$147,836 on their Medicaid plan costs. Ms. Hunt announced that the Senior Center was turning 30 this year and would have a celebration party on October 7, 2022.
- DSS Report – Thomas Mitchell, DSS Director, stated that 17 new employees had been hired since June and the current vacancy rate is 12%. Employee engagement gatherings are being held monthly to encourage teamwork and build stronger work morale. An anonymous local farmer is donating produce to the community twice per week and staff is planning a fundraiser to make improvements to the DSS playground. Mr. Mitchell also reviewed the following:

- Shelter Operations – shelter agreements are in place with Stony Point, Bethlehem, and East Taylorsville Baptist Churches and staff is preparing for a live simulation to test the agency's procedures and effectiveness.
- Foster Care / Adoptions – there are currently 63 children in foster care, down from 68 at the last CHS Meeting, and there are 19 children eligible for adoption. Of those 19 children, 11 are in adoptive placements. A permanent adoption committee is being formed to focus on getting the adoption process finalized for the majority of these children, with the goal of 3 per month.

**CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 4, 5, & 6) HIPAA PRIVACY RULE 45 CFR PARTS 160 & 164 / N.C.G.S. 132-12, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL**

Chairman Reese made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:51 PM to discuss bad debt write-offs, economic development, contractual matters, and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 4, 5, & 6). Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairman Reese made a motion to adjourn at 8:53 PM. Vice-Chairman Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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Ronnie L. Reese, Chairman

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Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board