

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING June 5, 2023

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

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

STAFF: Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney
 Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, June 5, 2023 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Yoder thanked everyone for the prayers, visits, calls, etc. during his recent illness.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC HEARING: 2023-2024 ALEXANDER COUNTY PROPOSED BUDGET

Chairman Pennell explained the annual budget process that begins in March with County department heads submitting their budget requests to Finance, includes several working sessions among staff and commissioners to establish budgetary priorities as well as a public hearing to allow citizens to voice their opinions, and ends with approval of a balanced budget by the Board. He reported that departmental requests for FY 2023-2024 totaled \$60,746,018, which would have required a fund balance appropriation of \$4,000,270 to balance the budget; however, the current proposed budget totals \$56,617,207 and includes \$3,784,979 from fund balance.

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

Public Comment

David Murphy moved to Alexander County from Colorado two years ago in search of a better place to raise his son and quickly found a sense of community at the Alexander County Library. He stated that library staff welcomed his family, helped him navigate his new surroundings, and provided a sense of normalcy through a variety of activities and classes. Due to lack of a recreation or community center, he was troubled that a commissioner had proposed cutting library hours or resources and he instead suggested the library be provided with more funding, more technology, and more outreach. Mr. Murphy urged the Board not to force our children to make sacrifices and to make cuts in other areas than the Alexander County Library.

Commissioner Herman stated that revaluation had hit taxpayers hard this year and that further reductions were needed to separate the wants from the necessities, noting that many years had passed since strong cuts were made. He felt the Board should be frugal with tax dollars, which sometimes required hard decisions that could prevent a future board from having to implement a tax increase. Commissioner Herman advised that he could not support the proposed budget as it currently stands.

Vice-Chairman Lail also wanted to see a smaller budget but was concerned that further reductions would be severely detrimental to the operation of County departments and services provided. He felt Alexander County was in good financial shape when considering we are a rural county that must depend heavily on property tax revenue. In addition, the only debt we have is for the Law Enforcement & Detention Center that will be paid off in early 2026.

Commissioner Reese stated that many mandated services were included in the proposed budget (such as Health and DSS programs) as well as crucial lifesaving services that no citizen should be without (such as EMS), all of which costs money to provide. He agreed that more adjustments may be needed but wanted input from the new County Manager before he made a decision.

Chairman Pennell was pleased that the County had added to the fund balance over several years while also providing new opportunities for citizens/families and financially assisting volunteer fire departments; however, he discussed the difficulty in balancing between providing services demanded by the public or cutting them to save taxpayer money, which could potentially affect the next generation.

Commissioner Yoder pointed out that the cost of doing business had increased across the country and said that Alexander County was no exception. He also felt the County was in good financial shape, noting that cost saving measures had been implemented over time (such as reducing water use at the splash pad) and that the Board would make sure departments spent their funding wisely.

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

PUBLIC HEARING: REZONING CASE 23-06 – LOUISE HERMAN TRUST

Brian Burgess, Director of Planning & Development, presented Rezoning Case 23-06 submitted by Alexander County, on behalf of the Louise Herman Trust, who requested rezoning of property located at the corner of Old Wilkesboro Road and NC Highway 16 North from RA-20 (Residential-Agricultural) to H-C (Highway Commercial) to allow for potential commercial and institutional uses. The size of the property is 3.75 acres and it is currently vacant.

After reviewing aerials of the property and criteria to be considered when conducting rezoning cases, Mr. Burgess reported that the Future Land Use Plan classified the subject property as commercial in nature and the request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Board held a public hearing on May 11, 2023 to consider this petition and unanimously recommended approval.

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

Due to involvement with multiple real estate transactions bordering the property in question, Chairman Pennell requested the ability to recuse himself from consideration of this rezoning case. In addition, Commissioner Herman requested the same, having previously leased the property.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve Rezoning Case 23-06 based on its consistency with the Alexander County Comprehensive Plan and compatibility with adjacent uses. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed 3/2 (two abstentions).

PUBLIC HEARING: REZONING CASE 23-07 – BILLY LOUDERMELK & OTHERS

Brian Burgess, Director of Planning & Development, presented Rezoning Case 23-07 submitted by Billy Loudermelk, Garrett & Ashlee Davis, Phillip Hoover Sr., and Phillip Hoover Jr. who requested rezoning of properties located at 623 Boston Road along with 37, 67, 76, 82, and 86 Carolina Lane from R-3 (Suburban Residential) and R-20 (Residential) to RA-20 (Residential-Agricultural) to align with current uses. The size of the entire collection of parcels is 14.81 acres and includes residential and agricultural uses.

After reviewing aerials of the properties and criteria to be considered when conducting rezoning cases, Mr. Burgess reported that these parcels fell within the jurisdiction of both the Town of Taylorsville and Alexander County. He explained that prior to the merger of the Town and County Zoning Ordinances in 2017, these tracts had been assigned a zoning district by the WPCOG (who handled the Town's zoning) based on the uses at the time, not the applicants' wishes or future plans. The request is consistent with the Alexander County Comprehensive Plan and the Planning Board unanimously recommended approval after holding a public hearing on May 11, 2023 to consider the petition.

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

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to approve Rezoning Case 23-07 based on its consistency with the Alexander County Comprehensive Plan and compatibility with adjacent uses. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

RECONSIDERATION OF TELEWORK POLICY FOR DSS SUPERVISORS

Chairman Pennell explained that Commissioner Yoder, who participated in the May 15, 2023 Commissioners' Meeting by conference call, had misunderstood the motion made regarding the Telework Policy for DSS supervisors and therefore did not vote the way he intended.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to revive consideration of the Telework Policy for DSS supervisors. Vice-Chairman Lail seconded the motion. The Board voted 3 in favor (Commissioners Lail, Pennell, and Yoder) and two against (Commissioners Herman and Reese). The motion carried.

Chairman Pennell made a motion to approve the Telework Policy for DSS supervisors. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The Board voted 3 in favor (Commissioners Lail, Pennell, and Yoder) and two against (Commissioners Herman and Reese). The motion carried.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #68 - #72

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #68 - #72 as follows:

Budget Amendment #68 – To increase the Health Department budget for additional Food and Lodging funds received from the State.

Budget Amendment #69 – To increase the DSS budget for American Rescue Plan funds for Adult Protective Services to develop, implement, and evaluate successful or promising interventions to prevent elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Budget Amendment #70 – To increase the Library budget for donations received that have not yet been budgeted.

Budget Amendment #71 – To increase FY 2023 budget estimates for the fines and forfeitures received by the County that must be remitted to the local Board of Education.

Budget Amendment #72 – To increase the General Fund and the Solid Waste Fund budgets due to the GASB No. 87 requirements that changed the accounting treatment of leases.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #68 - #72. Vice-Chairman Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, requested the following appointments and reappointments:

Council on Aging – appoint Jana Brown for 3 years.

Historic Preservation Committee – reappoint Betty Long for 3 years.

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council – reappoint Krista Hiatt, Zack Shepherd, Keri Jerrell, Eugene Smith, and Commissioner Reese for two years.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items discussed during Other Business.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Abatements & Adjustments (\$571.17) for Tax Refunds (\$1,392.76) for May 8-23, 2023.
- B. Minutes from the May 1, 2023 Regular Meeting.
- C. Resolution approving the Local Water Supply Plan for the Alexander County Water System, PWS 01-02-020.
- D. Facility Use Agreement with the Alexander County Family YMCA for a soccer field.
- E. Energy Programs Outreach Plan 2023-2024.
- F. Library Policy Update – music CDs.
- G. Home and Community Care Block Grant SFY 2023-2024.

H. Contract to purchase 14.675 acres on Old Wilkesboro Road (next to Jaycee Park) from Barbara Adams Mullis for \$21,000.

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

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

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:55 PM to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5 & 6). Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to adjourn at 7:50 PM. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Marty A. Pennell, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board