

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING July 17, 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
 Shane Fox, County Manager
 Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, July 17, 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 Vice-Chairman Lail led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chairman Pennell mentioned Saturday's flooding in the Ellendale community that resulted in one swift water rescue and one loss of life. He encouraged the public to be mindful of their social media posts and how comments could impact those involved and their families, also noting that emergency warnings should be taken seriously.

In addition, Chairman Pennell asked staff to determine if NCDOT had investigated low lying areas on roadways, bridges, etc. following the flooding in November 2020.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Yoder 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: PARAGON FILMS CDBG-ED PROJECT

Ben Willis, WPCOG Community & Economic Development Director, advised that this was the second public hearing required to apply for a \$222,375 CDBG-ED grant through the NC Department of Commerce to benefit Paragon Films in construction of a rail spur at their expansion location on White Plains Road and refurbishment of an existing rail spur at their facility in the Alexander Industrial Park. Of the 14 new jobs that will be created, at least 9 will be for persons of low to moderate-income. Mr. Willis also presented several documents for approval:

- A resolution authoring a formal application to be submitted to the NC Department of Commerce for a \$222,375 CDBG-ED grant to benefit Paragon Films.
- A resolution adopting the Paragon Films CDBG-ED Grant Policies, Procedures, and Plans that includes the Optional Coverage Location Plan, Section 519 Certification, Code of Conduct, Section 504 Grievance Procedure, Section 504 Survey and Transition Plan Certification, Citizens Participation Procedure for Complaints, Drug-Free Workplace Policy, Procurement Plan, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy Statement, Recipients Plan to Further Fair Housing, Fair Housing Complaint Procedure, Section 3 Local Economic Benefit for Low and Very Low-Income Persons Plan, Residential Anti-Displacement Plan and Relocation Assistance Plan, LAP Plan, Housing Assistance Policy, and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing.

Vice-Chairman Lail stated that the Board gave serious consideration to any grant application requiring a local match, specifically the potential for new jobs and tax revenue that could be generated. Commissioner Yoder agreed and pointed out that Paragon Films was the largest taxpayer in Alexander County.

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

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing submittal of the CDBG-ED application for Paragon Films as well as the resolution adoption all grand policies, procedures, and plans. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

NC OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDING OVERVIEW & PORT COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC PROGRAM

David Moose, Compliance & Procurement Specialist, explained that in July 2021, NC Attorney General Josh Stein announced that a historic settlement agreement had been reached against several pharmaceutical distributors and manufacturers for their role in creating the opioid epidemic. The national settlement totaled \$26 billion with \$750 million awarded to NC (85% going directly to all 100 NC counties and 47 larger municipalities and remaining 15% to the state).

Alexander County will receive \$5,935,178 in settlement funding as a structured payment over the next 18 years, which must be used for specific evidence-based, high-impact strategies that address the negative impacts of opioid use on the population. The Alexander County Substance Abuse Disorder Coalition has served as a steering committee to gain insight into factors affecting the county's incidence rate for substance use and overdoses with the goal of making recommendations on which strategies would be the most impactful in Alexander County. Based on the Coalition's input, Mr. Moose presented 3 initial recommended strategies that can be found under Exhibit A to the NC Memorandum of Agreement:

- Adult Drug Treatment Court Program – Option A / Strategy #3
- Acquisition of Naloxone – Option A / Strategy #7
- PORT Community Paramedic Program – Option A / Strategy #8

Jeff Sigmon, EMS Director, explained that a PORT was an overdose follow-up program to provide support, education, and access to treatment options for individuals who have experienced an overdose, which he felt would be a great asset to Alexander County based on the following statistics:

- The CDC reports a 500% increase in overdose related deaths in the U.S. since 1999, with 75% of those due to opioids. Overdose related deaths in NC alone increased between 20-40% from 2019 to 2020.
- Alexander County overdose calls in 2022 totaled 90 calls compared to 60 in 2016. So far for 2023, there have been 70 calls with 120 expected for the year.
- Since January 2022, there have been 21 overdose related deaths in Alexander County, mostly between the ages of 24 to 40.

The proposal for the Alexander County PORT includes a Community Paramedic working 8:00 to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday (possibly some nights and weekends), that will provide initial response and follow-up care to every patient that has experienced a non-fatal overdose within 24-72 hours of the incident. The Community Paramedic will connect the patient with resources for addiction treatment, recovery support, harm reduction services, primary healthcare, and other services they may need to improve their health and wellbeing. In addition, outreach and education programs can be provided to local schools and civic organizations.

Mr. Sigmon advised that implementation of the PORT Community Paramedic Program would require \$202,000 to cover salaries/benefits, uniforms, vehicle, radio/medical equipment, computer, and office supplies. Because the County's Opioid Settlement funds will be utilized, there will be no cost to the taxpayers.

Mr. Moose presented a resolution authorizing an allocation from the Opioid Settlement funding for the PORT Community Paramedic Program only, noting that pre-planning activities were still underway for the Adult Treatment Court Program and final funding needs have not yet been established. Therefore, a separate resolution will be needed in the future once details for this program are finalized.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing \$202,000 in Opioid Settlement funding to implement the PORT Community Paramedic Program. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS

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

Courthouse Committee – appoint Shane Fox, County Manager.

WPCOG Unifour Home Consortium – appoint Shane Fox to fulfill an unexpired term that ends in October 2024.

Vaya Health Region 3 Board – appoint Shane Fox.

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council – appoint Kaitlyn Gansrow for two years.

Consolidated Human Services Advisory Committee – appoint Chris Howes and Vickie Rogers for 2 years and reappoint Barbara Hayes, Dr. Richard Williams, Dr. Jennifer Hull, Betty Long, Macy Jones, Doug Howes, Phillip Sprinkle, and Crystal Adams for 3 years.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Abatements & Adjustments (\$825.11) for Tax Refunds (\$701.96) for June 9 – July 9, 2023.
- B. Minutes from the May 18, 2023 Budget Work Session and June 5, 2023 Regular Meeting.
- C. Public Health bad debt write off (Accred. 33.6).

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

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

Shane Fox, County Manager, reviewed the following:

- Several County departments (Inspections, Planning, Emergency Services, and Environmental Health) are participating in SmartGov software training, which will streamline the permitting process and enhance customer service.
- According to the Building Inspections Annual Report submitted by Bill Rogers, Chief Building Inspector, inspections for FY 2022-2023 totaled just shy of 3,900, up from 3,500 in FY 2021-2022. In addition, the fail rate for FY 2023 was only 3.3% compared to 11.5% the previous year.
- Mr. Fox thanked Inspector Brian Davis who potentially saved a life this week during a routine furnace inspection. Mr. Davis smelled propane when he entered the home and upon further inspection, a gas leak was discovered. Emergency personnel were dispatched and the leak was repaired.
- Planning continues for the Highway 127 Widening Project. Right-of-way acquisition is expected to begin in March 2024 and construction in March 2026.
- The bid opening for the Alexander Housing our Teachers Project has been scheduled for Friday, August 11, 2023. If a minimum of 3 bids are received, staff will provide a recommendation at the September Commissioners' Meeting.
- Survey work has been completed on the Bowman Court Sewer Project and staff hopes to solicit bids in late fall / early winter.
- The final design phase for the ARPA Water Line Expansion Project is approx. 60% complete. This project will install 42,000 linear feet of water line in 12 areas throughout the county and will work in conjunction with the Bethlehem Water Tank Project to address pressure issues.
- As part of a GREAT grant, Zirrus / Yadtel is currently working in Iredell County and should begin installation of fiber-to-the-home broadband in Alexander County in the next month or two.
- The Bethlehem Park Improvements Project is still in design phase and will be bid out later this year.
- Plans for a new courthouse are underway and in the programming phase. Jenkins-Peer Architects will be holding a kick-off meeting and breakout sessions with stakeholders in early August.

- Mr. Fox commended all agencies and volunteers involved in the search and rescue during the weekend flooding including Sheriff Chad Pennell and staff, Alexander County Emergency Services, Alexander County EMS, Alexander Rescue Squad, NC Highway Patrol, NC Forestry Service, Taylorsville Police Department, NC Department of Transportation, as well as Ellendale, Hiddenite, Bethlehem, Sugar Loaf, Taylorsville, and Wittenburg Volunteer Fire Departments and Little River Fire from Caldwell County.

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

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:53 PM to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5 & 6). Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Reese made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 PM. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Marty A. Pennell, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board