

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING April 7, 2025

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

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

ABSENT: Josh Lail

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, April 7, 2025, 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

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

COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

Chairman Pennell and Commissioner Reese took part in today’s “Bring Your Legislator to School Day” attended by NC Senator Eddie Settle and Representative Blair Eddins. The group toured several school facilities, including new projects made possible by lottery and state grant funds (Sugar Loaf gym and media center renovation; turf and track at ACHS).

Chairman Pennell announced that Commissioner Lail was attending tonight’s 100th Year Celebration at Bethlehem Elementary.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tennille Baker expressed her opposition to the proposed incorporation of the Bethlehem community. As a business owner, educator, and lifelong citizen, she felt incorporation would bring more taxes, fees, and red tape that would affect every citizen in Alexander County. She also pointed out a lack of transparency from those pushing the effort as well as with challenges in getting answers. Ms. Baker urged the Board to advocate for a referendum allowing the citizens of Bethlehem to have a say in the future of their community rather than a select few to make the decision.

Paul Kelly once again encouraged the Board to participate in the Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund designed to promote permanent placements for hard-to-place foster children. He stated that he and his wife currently foster an 8-year-old boy with special needs. The additional time required for home-schooling, medical appointments, and other needs has reduced their income by approx. 30%, a situation he believes cannot be sustained without additional assistance that could be provided by the SCAIF Program.

PUBLIC HEARING: COUNTY-INITIATED REZONING CASE CIRZ-25-01

Patrick Creech, Senior Planner, explained that following approval of the new Land Development Code in May 2024, staff has been fielding requests from citizens who wish to change the zoning of their property. Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 160D-602(b), a large-scale zoning map amendment can be considered once 50 requests concerning 50 parcels are received. Therefore, he, along with County Planner Amy Bucknum, presented County-Initiated Rezoning Case CIRZ-25-01 to rezone 67 parcels as follows:

Category A – 40 parcels to be rezoned from R2 to R2R to permit future placement of singlewide mobile homes.

Category B – two parcels to be rezoned from R1 to R2 to permit future placement of doublewide mobile homes.

Category C – one parcel to be rezoned from R1 to R2R to permit future placement of a singlewide mobile home.

Category D – two parcels to be rezoned out of WR (Waterfront Residential) due to recent subdividing.

Category E – requests fell entirely within the jurisdiction of the Town of Taylorsville.

Category F – 9 parcels to be rezoned to MU (Mixed Use) due to existing uses.

Category G – 6 parcels to be rezoned to I (Industrial), OI (Office Institutional), or CC (Community Commercial) due to existing uses and previous approved zoning changes.

Category H – 7 parcels located in Urban Services Areas to be rezoned to R2 or R2R to permit future placement of singlewide mobile homes.

After reviewing aerial maps and criteria to be considered when conducting rezoning cases, Mr. Creech explained that all rezoning requests were consistent with the 2045 Comprehensive Plan with the exception of Category H; however, he advised that the recommended inclusion of manufactured homes aligns with the Comprehensive Plan's objective to expand affordable housing opportunities within areas equipped with necessary urban services. In addition, the rezonings do not conflict with existing neighborhood character as manufactured homes and similar affordable housing types are already present in these areas.

The Planning Board held a public hearing on in March 2025 to consider these rezonings and voted unanimously to recommend approval.

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

Chairman Pennell made a motion to approve CIRZ-25-01 based on its consistency with the Alexander County Comprehensive Plan and/or its objectives. Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

MULTIMODEL PLANNING GRANT UPDATE

Patrick Creech, Senior Planner, announced that Alexander County had been awarded a Multimodel Planning Grant from the NC Department of Transportation to develop a comprehensive Multimodel Network Plan that will establish a clear strategy for enhancing transportation for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. The plan will analyze infrastructure and safety concerns, develop detailed recommendations, prioritize projects, and provide implementation steps. Feedback will be collected from the public through surveys and other means.

To develop the plan, staff is seeking community members to join the 12-person steering committee that will play a critical role in shaping this project. Those interested in should contact Mr. Creech at pcreech@alexandercountync.gov.

VAYA HEALTH PRESENTATION

Zack Shepherd, Vaya Community Relations Regional Director, gave a slide show presentation that included the following information:

- Vaya Total Care is responsible for the physical and behavioral health along with pharmacy care for adult and youth plan members that have been diagnosed with a moderate to severe mental health or substance use disorder or have an intellectual or developmental disability. Vaya's network of providers includes hospitals and health systems, FQHCs, health departments, primary and specialty care practices, behavioral health residential and community providers, and pharmacies across the state. Plan members can receive a Tailored Care Manager to help them connect to services and resources.
- Eligible plan members receive Vaya Total Care Perks that are designed to support members with a variety of health and wellbeing services beyond the regular scope such as wellness, pregnancy, GED, safety, and non-medical transportation supports.
- The Healthy Opportunities pilot administered by Impact Health can provide additional supports for eligible plan members in areas of housing, food, transportation, and for members experiencing interpersonal violence.
- NCDHHS announced that Blue Cross Blue Shield would be the single Health Plan serving youth and families involved in the child welfare / foster care system. The implementation period began in August 2024 and will sunset in November 2025.
- A Hope 4 NC Grant Program is being used to fund mental health assistance and training activities in areas affected by Hurricane Helene.

Vice-Chairman Yoder asked Mr. Shepherd to work with PIO Gary Herman to advertise and promote the many services offered by Vaya Health.

SELECTION OF BROKER/AGENT FOR PROPERTY / LIABILITY & WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, reported that 4 proposals were received in response to an RFP for a broker/agent for the County's property & liability and also workers' compensation insurance. Staff reviewed each proposal and ranked them according to service capability, local government experience, fee structure, proposal completeness, etc.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to select Surry Insurance from Dobson, NC based on staff recommendations. The motion failed due to lack of a second.

Commissioner Reese felt it was too late to change brokers at this time and recommended remaining with Hiller-Ringeman for another year. Chairman Pennell agreed and asked staff to start the RFP process earlier in the upcoming budget year to prepare for FY 2026-2027.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to remain with Hiller-Ringeman as broker/agent for FY 2025. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed 3 in favor (Commissioners Herman, Pennell, and Reese) and one opposed (Commissioner Yoder).

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #32 - #34

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #32 - #34 as follows:

Budget Amendment #32 – To increase:

- the 911 Communications (Emergency Management) budget to use Catawba Valley Community Foundation grant funds to purchase a utility terrain vehicle, equipment, and accessories.
- the 911 Communications (Emergency Management) budget for deployment travel and emergency assistance needs funded by a FEMA grant for Hurricane Helene response.
- the Human Resources Department to purchase tables for the annual Wellness Fair with funds received from an insurance rebate.

Budget Amendment #33 – To increase:

- the Health Department budget for receipt of federal grant funds for performance management activities for the accreditation process.
- the DSS budget for additional Rental Assistance Funding allocations from the state.
- the Library budget for receipt of a Library Services & Technology Act scholarship grant for two staff members to attend the Association of Rural & Small Libraries Conference.
- the Library budget for an additional allocation of ARP-State Fiscal Recovery Funds grant funds.

Budget Amendment #34 – To budget for the FY 2025 interfund transfer from the County Water & Sewer Fund to the Bowman Court Pump Station Project Fund to provide for construction contingency and engineering costs since the grant funding is less than the total estimated cost of the project.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #32 - #34. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE & DOCUMENT DESTRUCTION DAY

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, stated that the biennial Household Hazardous Waste & Document Destruction Day would be held on Saturday, May 3rd at the Alexander County Administration Building parking lot from 8:00 AM until 12:00 PM. Alexander County residents will be allowed to dispose of environmentally harmful materials found around the home as well as personal documents for free. Farmers are welcome; however, businesses will not be allowed.

Items that will be accepted include household cleaners (drain openers, toilet bowl cleaners, oven cleaners, and disinfectants), paint products (latex and oil-based paint, solvents, thinners, shellacs,

varnishes, wood preservatives, and sealers), automotive products (lead-acid batteries, used motor oil, antifreeze, brake fluid, and starting fluid), pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides in the form of aerosols, liquids, granular, etc.), and miscellaneous items (acids, bases, kerosene, household batteries, photographic chemicals, fluorescent bulbs, electronics, aerosol cans, pool chemicals, propane gas cylinders, and metallic mercury).

A document destruction truck will also be on-site for residents to securely dispose of personal documents.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Tax Abatements & Adjustments (\$1,512.31) and Tax Refunds (\$723.83) for March 3-30, 2025.
- B. Minutes from the March 10, 2025 Regular Meeting.
- C. Line-Item Transfer Report for March 2025.
- D. Board / Committee Appointments – Planning Board.
- E. JCPC Annual Funding Plan for FY 2025-2026.
- F. Line Worker Appreciation Day Proclamation.
- G. National Day of Prayer Proclamation.
- H. Request to surplus a 2004 Volvo garbage truck – VIN #4V2DC6UE43N340452 with 307,864 miles and a 2013 Dodge Charger – VIN #2C3CDXAT6DH642327 with 179,229 miles that was totaled by insurance.
- I. Engineering agreement with West Consultants for the Sterling Road CDBG Project.

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

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3 & 6) ATTORNEY/CLIENT PRIVILEGE & PERSONNEL

Commissioner Reese made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:54 PM to allow for attorney/client privilege and to discuss personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3 & 6). Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Reese made a motion to adjourn at 7:28 PM. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Marty A. Pennell, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board

