



Chairman's Chat

Working together for progress

I hope the New Year is going well for everyone! It's hard to believe it's already mid-February.

In January, I began serving as your Chairman of the Alexander County Board of Commissioners. This is a position that I do not take lightly, and I promise to work hard for you throughout the year and beyond. We have already made some excellent progress this year by working together for the betterment of our community.

At our February 5th meeting, Commissioners approved bids for the Bethlehem Park project. This popular park hasn't seen upgrades since the 1990s, so we're excited to get the project underway. What's even more exciting is that we are spending ZERO local general fund tax dollars for the \$2,355,000 project as we will utilize state-appropriated money and sales tax dollars! I believe that enhancing quality of life is vitally important and this park will better serve all citizens of Alexander County once it's complete.

At the same meeting, we approved bids to extend sewer infrastructure at the Alexander Industrial Park off NC Hwy. 90 East. Again, this project will require ZERO local tax dollars as we leverage grant funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality totaling \$452,330. This exciting project will greatly enhance the 16-acre graded site at the industrial park with the expectation of attracting a major industry to Alexander County.

We have numerous projects underway, including a water line extension project that will benefit citizens and businesses across the county. We also know that housing is at a premium these days, so once again we are leveraging grant money to expand our sewer system for a significant housing project near Rink Dam Road and Bowman Court.

We expect to approve bids for this sewer extension project at our March 4th meeting.

We continue to work hand-in-hand with our legislators to secure funding for these projects, and others, including a new EMS building at station #1 in Taylorsville, an elevated water tank, additional water lines, and more. It is our goal to improve the county with a minimal usage of taxpayer dollars.

The improvements at Wittenburg Access Area are almost complete, with plans to open the new swim beach and other amenities on Memorial Day weekend this year. This is going to be a fun place for our families to swim, picnic, fish, boat, and more! Many thanks to Duke Energy for their investment in this project.

We're also looking into creating some pickleball courts at Jaycee Park in Taylorsville. In addition, part of the Bethlehem Park project includes converting two tennis courts into eight pickleball courts. This is the fastest-growing sport in the United States, so we're excited to offer this entertaining sport to our citizens.

We appreciate our emergency services personnel so much as they generously give of their time and talents to keep everyone safe. We're excited to soon see the completion of our new fire training facility at the Taylorsville Lions Club Fairgrounds. Our current and future firefighters will have the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on training at our new facility.

Of course, broadband internet access is essential for both productivity and entertainment these days. The county has been working with Open Broadband for a couple of years to provide internet access to unserved and underserved areas. We've also partnered with Zirrus/Yadtel to install fiber-to-the-home as part of a GREAT (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology) grant that

will fund about 300 connections.

In addition, we're working with Spectrum to provide broadband to 150 local homes through the Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) grant program. All of these initiatives have been implemented using grant funds and minimal county dollars. I'm proud of this teamwork!

We're also utilizing almost \$6 million in Opioid Settlement Funds that will be received over the next 18 years to help battle addiction and hopefully prevent overdoses. We've implemented a Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT)/Community Paramedic program which is already making a difference in our community. This is an excellent program that is being funded at no cost to the county.

I hope this edition of the "Chairman's Chat," which highlights Alexander County's history of recent partnerships and progress, has been helpful and informative.

On behalf of Commissioners Kent Herman, Marty Pennell, Ronnie Reese, and Larry Yoder, County Manager Shane Fox, and county staff, please know that we are always working on your behalf and for your best interests.

Our goal is to continue improving the quality of life for our citizens, and we are committed to making Alexander County an even better place to live, work, and play.



Josh Lail
Chairman, Alexander County
Board of Commissioners