



Chairman's Chat

Busy time in Alexander County

Welcome to this edition of "Chairman's Chat," where it is my honor to provide updates to the citizens of Alexander County.

I'm sure most of you have heard that County Manager Shane Fox has announced his resignation, as he will return to Blowing Rock where he worked for four years before coming here. We have enjoyed Shane's time here, but completely understand that he needs to do what is best for him and his family.

On a related note, Commissioners have appointed County Attorney Ben Faulkenberry to serve as Interim County Manager. Ben is a great guy who is very knowledgeable about county business and we look forward to working with him in this new capacity. The board will utilize the services of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) in the search for a new County Manager. We hope to have a new leader in place by September.

County project updates

The new swim beach and associated amenities at the Wittenburg Access Area will open on Tuesday, May 21. The beach area will be open six days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (closed on Wednesdays for maintenance) with an attendant on duty. I do want to stress that there will be no lifeguard on duty, so please keep an eye on your children while enjoying this awesome new recreational area. We're currently making plans with Duke Energy for a grand opening, so stay tuned!

Work continues at Bethlehem Park as we transform this outdoor space for our citizens. Most recently, the concession/restroom building has been demolished, grading is underway, and the old field

lighting has been removed. The project, which will be completed by spring 2025, includes a new (much larger and nicer!) building, playground, soccer field, pickleball courts, basketball area, lighting, repaving, and more. These improvements have been a long time coming, and we're looking at our other parks to continue our progress!

Commissioners recently approved the purchase of land off Rink Dam Road for a new elevated water tank to help with water pressure and to accommodate future growth in that area. The county is currently awaiting results from a geotechnical survey on the land, and if the results are favorable, we will proceed with the land purchase. The water tank itself is currently being designed and will hopefully be sent out for bids soon.

FY 2024-2025 budget

County Manager Fox has been working diligently with department heads to develop the 2024-2025 county budget. Our goal is to have a very lean, realistic budget that provides funding for necessary expenses and projects. The Board of Commissioners met with the Board of Education during a joint session on March 28 to discuss the school system's budget and strategy to eliminate a \$1.5 million shortfall. Moving forward, we hope to have more discussions to help avoid future school system budgetary issues. Commissioners will have a public work session on Monday, April 22 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the proposed county budget and any items that may need to be revised or changed. We hope to adopt the new budget at our June 3rd or June 17th meeting. We appreciate the hard work and effort that has gone into the budget process so far.

Upcoming events

Alexander County has some quality entertainment options for you and your family this year! Make plans to attend RockyFest on Saturday, April 20 at Rocky Face Park. We'll have six old-time and bluegrass bands performing under the big tent, along with food trucks, free kids' activities, arts & crafts vendors, and maybe even a special surprise later in the day.

We are also proud to announce the 2024 Alexander County Summer Concert Series. All concerts will be held at 7:00 p.m. on the Rotary Performance Stage at Alexander County Courthouse Park. This year's bands include: Alabama Sunset – May 11, The Whisnants – June 1, The Extraordinaires – July 20 (followed by fireworks at Alexander Central High School!), All My Rowdy Friends – September 14, and Tribute: A Celebration of The Allman Brothers Band – September 28. We hope you'll make plans to attend these concerts!

I hope this "Chairman's Chat" has provided some valuable information and gives you a broader understanding of some county projects that are currently underway. We're always looking for ways to positively affect the quality of life for our citizens here in Alexander County.



Josh Lail
Chairman
Alexander County
Board of Commissioners