

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Monday, May 17, 2021

9:00 AM

Commission Meeting Room

County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill
Vice Chair William Sands
Commissioner Chuck Olive
Commissioner Jerry D. Powers
Commissioner Jonathan Jordan*

BUSINESS SESSION**I. 9:00 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Courthouse**

Chairman McNeill called the Regular Meeting of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Ashe County Courthouse with all members present. Commissioner Jordan left the meeting at 11:48 a.m.

Present: 5 - Commissioner Chuck Olive, Chairperson Todd McNeill, Vice Chairman William Sands, Commissioner Jerry D. Powers and Commissioner Jonathan Jordan

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

Commissioner Olive led the Pledge of Allegiance and Vice Chairman Sands offered the opening prayer.

III. Approval of Minutes

[MIN 21-16](#) May 3, 2021 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [5-17-21 May 3, 2021 Regular Session Minutes.pdf](#)

Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to approve the May 3, 2021 Regular Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Olive seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

IV. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Olive made a motion to adopt the agenda with three additions: a Department of Social Services budget amendment, a resolution to accept money granted by the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, and a discussion regarding drafting a resolution concerning federal pandemic-related unemployment benefits. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Adopted

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

V. Public Comment

Chairman McNeill opened the floor for comments from the public.

Robert Brown, a resident of Candlelight Park, said that he previously spoke to the Board in July 2020 when the neighborhood POA thought that the Building Inspections Department was not following up with a person who built a shed and free-standing fireplace on his property in the community. Mr. Brown shared his frustration that, although the other property owner has obtained a permit, he still has a year or more to fix discrepancies and bring the constructions into compliance. Mr. Brown said the fireplace is a hazard to the woods on Mt. Jefferson, and he requested that a building inspector post a notice in a conspicuous place on the building to alert renters to the fire danger.

No further comment was offered.

VI. Presentations

[PRES 21-79](#) 9:05 AM - DSS Director Tracie Downer - Budget Amendment

DSS Director Tracie Downer presented the following budget amendment for the Board's approval. Commissioner Powers made a motion to appropriate the LIEAP funds as requested. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

*BUDGET AMENDMENT
May 17, 2021*

General Fund:

To increase the appropriation for the department of Social Services from \$8,702,707 to \$8,737,314; this increased appropriation to be made with \$34,607 in additional unappropriated LIEAP revenues.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[PRES 21-70](#) 9:05 AM - DSS Director Tracie Downer - Monthly Departmental Update

Attachments: [5-17-21 DSS Monthly Departmental Update.pdf](#)

DSS Director Tracie Downer presented departmental statistics for March 2021. She highlighted that there were 76 children in foster care and 54 adult wards, noting that both numbers are high and that DSS staff continue to work diligently to get these clients into more permanent situations. Ms. Downer also shared challenges that the Child Support staff have been facing over the last year, and she noted that, despite these hurdles, the employees had achieved a 5% increase in collections over the previous year.

[PRES 21-71](#) 9:15 AM - Generations Ashe Senior Center Director Glenda Luther and Senior Tarheel Legislative Representative Delegate and Alternate Charles and Louise Caudill - Older Americans Month Proclamation & Advocacy

Attachments: [5-17-21 Older Americans Month Proclamation.pdf](#)

Generations Ashe Senior Center Director Glenda Luther read a proclamation declaring May to be Older Americans Month. Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to adopt the proclamation as presented. Commissioner Powers seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Senior Tarheel Legislative Representative Delegate Charles Caudill and Alternate Louise Caudill shared with the Board information about local transportation challenges, which most severely impact older citizens and those with the least income. Ms. Luther shared cost information from the Ashe County Transportation Authority (ACTA) and noted that while ACTA does a good job keeping costs down, there is still a need for further transportation assistance.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[PRES 21-72](#) 9:25 AM - Priscilla Norris, CPA - Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Audit Contract Approval

Attachments: [5-17-21 FY20-21 Audit Contract.pdf](#)

Priscilla Norris, CPA, presented the audit contract for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 for the Board's approval. Ms. Norris highlighted two new governmental accounting standards that will change the way in which trust funds are reported. The total cost for the audit will be \$46,000, with the annual financial information report costing \$1,500. Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to approve the 2021 County Audit Contract as presented. Commissioner Olive seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[PRES 21-73](#) 9:35 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Monthly Tax Report

Attachments: [5-17-21 Monthly Tax Report.pdf](#)

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert presented the monthly tax report for April 2021. Commissioner Powers made a motion to approve the report as presented. Commissioner Olive seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[PRES 21-74](#) 9:40 AM - Finance Officer Sandra Long - Budget Amendments

Attachments: [5-17-21 Budget Amendments.pdf](#)

Finance Officer Sandra Long presented the following budget amendments for the Board's approval. Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to approve the budget amendments as presented. Commissioner Olive seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

May 17, 2021

General Fund:

To increase the appropriation for the department of Elections from \$287,037 to \$352,425; this increased appropriation to be made from \$22,000 in Elections Cares Act Funds to be transferred from the CDBG Grant Project Fund and by appropriating \$43,388 in additional unappropriated reimbursement revenues which came from the NC Board of Elections.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Law Enforcement from \$2,974,724 to \$3,080,974; this increased appropriation of \$106,250 to be made by decreasing the Contingency Fund by \$21,250 from \$200,000 to \$178,750 and by appropriating an additional \$85,000 in unappropriated NC Law Enforcement Grant revenues.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Medical Examiner from \$21,750 to \$31,750; this increased appropriation of \$10,000 to be made by reducing the Contingency Fund from \$178,750 to \$168,750.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Debt Service from \$5,934,718 to \$5,952,223; this increased appropriation of \$17,505 to be made by reducing the Contingency Fund from \$168,750 to \$151,245.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Economic Development from \$1,374,161 to \$1,476,411; this increased appropriation of \$102,250 to be made with additional unappropriated occupancy tax revenues.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Cultural Arts from \$180,500 to \$385,000; this increased appropriation of \$204,500 to be made with additional unappropriated occupancy tax revenues.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Legal from \$157,675 to \$332,675; this increased appropriation to be made by appropriating an additional \$175,000 from unappropriated funds (fund balance) in the general fund.

To increase the appropriation for the department of Register of Deeds from \$469,226 to \$477,226; this increased appropriation to be made by increasing unappropriated deed stamp revenues by \$8,000 to cover required transfers to the Automation Fund. This increase necessitated because of additional unbudgeted deed stamp revenue receipts.

CDBG Grant Project Fund:

To increase the appropriation for the department of Human Services from \$1,220,556 to \$1,242,556; this increased appropriation of \$22,000 to be made with additional unappropriated revenues from the NC CARES Act Election Fund. These funds will be transferred to the General Fund department of Elections to cover additional unappropriated required elections expenses from the last general election.

Register of Deeds Automation Fund:

To increase the appropriation for the department of Register of Deeds from \$29,000 to \$37,000; this increased appropriation of \$8,000 to be made from a transfer of funds from the General Fund.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[RES 21-3](#)

9:40 AM - Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of 2021 American Rescue Plan Act Funds

Commissioner Olive made a motion to adopt as presented the resolution authorizing the acceptance of federal grant funds as designated by the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Adopted

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[PRES 21-75](#) 9:45 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget Presentation

County Manager Adam Stumb read the Budget Message for the Fiscal Year 2021/22 County Budget. Commissioner Olive made a motion to schedule the Public Hearing for the FY21/22 Budget on June 21, 2021, and the FY21/22 Budget work sessions immediately following the June 7, 2021 Regular Session Meeting until 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 10, 2021, as needed. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Jordan

[PRES 21-76](#) 9:55 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Tire Disposal Discussion

The Board reported having received numerous complaints from citizens regarding the removal of tire disposal trailers from the convenience centers. Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley explained that Ashe County was previously the only county in North Carolina to allow scrap tire disposal at convenience centers and that the trailers had been removed to reduce operating costs in fuel, maintenance, and labor. Mr. Hurley shared that the majority of scrap tires came from commercial tire businesses that were not paying a solid waste fee for their businesses to use the convenience centers. Finance Officer Sandra Long added that in years past, the County received approximately \$36,000 per year from the disposal fee paid when new tires are purchased, but in the previous two years, the County received 10% of the prior refunds from the state. The Board requested that County Manager Stumb, Mr. Hurley, and Ms. Long work to possibly reinstate the tire trailer service at one or two of the convenience sites, talk with the state government about two current bills that would return more tire disposal tax to Ashe County, and also look at potentially billing users for tire disposal.

[PRES 21-77](#) 10:10 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Solid Waste Ordinance Discussion

Attachments: [5-17-21 Solid Waste Ordinance.pdf](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb presented proposed Solid Waste Ordinance amendments designed to make the solid waste fees more equitable. Under the proposed amendments, there would be two different fees: one annual fee similar to the existing solid waste residential fee, and another availability fee for those who may not use the convenience centers on a regular basis. Mr. Stumb noted that exclusions would still apply, albeit with a more involved process for disqualifying houses not regularly inhabited. He offered to coordinate with the Tax Administrator to project potential revenues based on the ordinance as amended.

[PRES 21-78](#) 10:25 AM - Ashe Backs the Badge Representative Michele Baldwin - Law Enforcement Advocacy

Attachments: [5-17-21 Ashe Backs the Badge.pdf](#)

Ashe Backs the Badge representatives and supporters shared with the Board concerns regarding appreciation, compensation, and equipment for Ashe County law enforcement officers. Several wives, mothers, and significant others of Ashe County officers spoke, including Diane Blevins, Amanda Howell, Beulah Stout, Amanda Williams, Kristy Houck, Ann McClure, Angie Wingler, Michele Baldwin, and Sara Milam. They shared their

perspectives on what it is like to be the family of law enforcement, as well as the severe stress and emotional toll that law enforcement takes on officers. Ashe Backs the Badge requested a commitment from the Board for pay increases and competitive compensation for all positions, better protective equipment, and a declaration that law enforcement officers would remain a well-equipped and respected priority for the County. Chairman McNeill invited all law enforcement relatives to discuss concerns with the Board at any time and said that the Board would give attention to this matter in the upcoming budget work sessions.

GENERAL SESSION

Other Items for Consideration

[MISC 21-7](#) Discussion Regarding Drafting a Resolution Concerning Federal Pandemic-Related Unemployment Benefits

Commissioner Powers said that he would like for the Board to go on record encouraging Governor Cooper to decline the federal pandemic-related unemployment programs because labor is needed throughout the county. Commissioner Powers made a motion that County staff draft a resolution to this effect. Commissioner Olive seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands and Commissioner Powers

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Jordan

[MISC 21-6](#) Employee Retirement Recognition

Chairman McNeill announced that June Weaver is retiring from the Register of Deeds office at the end of May, and he thanked her for her years of dedicated service.

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

[ES 21-2](#) G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3) - Legal Issues (Opioid Litigation)

Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss legal issues pertaining to opioid litigation as provided for under G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3). Commissioner Powers seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Chairman McNeill declared the Board in Executive Session at 12:31 p.m. and out of Executive Session at 1:19 p.m. with no action being taken.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands and Commissioner Powers

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Jordan

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Olive made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:19 p.m. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner Olive, Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands and Commissioner Powers

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Jordan

Citizens with disabilities requiring special needs to access the services or public meetings of Ashe County Government should contact the County Manager's Office three days prior to the meeting by calling (336) 846-5501.

Todd McNeill, Chairman

Ashley G. Honeycutt
Clerk to the Board