

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, April 15, 2019

9:00 AM

Commission Meeting Room

County Commission

Chairperson Todd McNeill

Vice Chair William Sands

Commissioner Larry Rhodes

Commissioner Paula Perry

Commissioner Larry Dix

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 Rhodes left the meeting at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Present: 5 - Commissioner Todd McNeill, Commissioner William Sands, Commissioner Larry Rhodes, Commissioner Paula Perry and Commissioner Larry Dix

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

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

III. Approval of Minutes**MIN 19-19****March 18, 2019 Executive Session Minutes**

Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to approve the March 18, 2019 Executive Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

IV. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Dix made a motion to adopt the agenda with the following additions: 1) Extension Director Travis Birdsell - Children's Trust Endowment Funds Appropriation; and 2) Chief Deputy Danny Houck - Request for Reinstatement of Sick Leave for Two Employees. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Adopted

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

V. Public Comment

Chairman McNeill opened the floor for comments from the public. No comment was offered.

VI. Presentations**PRES 19-74****9:05 AM - Amber Dixon, A Safe Home for Everyone (ASHE) Program Director - Sexual Assault Awareness Month Proclamation**

Attachments: [04-15-19 Sexual Assault Awareness Month Proclamation](#)

Amber Dixon, A Safe Home for Everyone (ASHE) Program Director, presented a proclamation recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month in an effort to bring public awareness to the issue and to find ways to prevent sexual assault. Ms. Dixon

provided information and statistics surrounding sexual assault telling the Board that last year their agency served 30 survivors of sexual assault. She also updated the Board on the "Chalk the Walk" event that will be held on April 27th. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the proclamation as read. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-75 9:15 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Monthly Tax Report

Attachments: [04-15-19 Monthly Tax Report](#)

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert presented the March 2019 Monthly Tax Report. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the report as presented. Commissioner Dix seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-76 9:20 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Offer to Purchase Surplus Property

Attachments: [04-15-19 Tax Administration-Offer to Purchase Surplus Property](#)

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert presented an offer that was made to purchase surplus property. He explained that the property is available due to foreclosure on the property for non-payment of taxes. A bid in the amount of \$250 to purchase the property has been received from Alan Briggs, president of the Home Owners Association in the development that the lot is located in. The bid amount will not cover the cost to advertise the property or to prepare the deed. Once the property is advertised, an upset bid can be placed on the property. The Board has the opportunity to accept or reject the bid. Commissioner Rhodes asked how long the property has been open for bids. Mr. Lambert answered that the property has been available since June 10, 2018 and this is the only bid that has been received. Chairman McNeill stated that this is not a buildable lot due to its size. Mr. Lambert stated that the lot size is 6/10th of an acre and is not large enough for a structure. Vice Chairman Sands stated that due to the aforementioned circumstances, he believes it would be wise to accept the bid rather than invest money into the property. Mr. Lambert stated that if the Board accepts the bid, the property will be advertised bringing it to the attention of the public which could spark other interest in placing a bid on the property. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to accept the \$250 bid for the property and if upset, the Board will have the opportunity to consider a higher bid. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. Commissioner Dix stated concern that taxpayers could lose \$500 and there is no guarantee the County could get a higher bid. Commissioner Dix questioned what the tax value on the property is. Mr. Lambert answered that the tax value is \$15,000 but the County is not receiving any tax benefit at this time. Commissioner Dix believes that the bid is too low. With no further comment, Chairman McNeill called for a vote to the motion on the floor. The motion passed with Commissioners McNeill, Sands, Rhodes, and Perry voting in favor; Commissioner Dix voted in opposition.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes and Commissioner Perry

Against: 1 - Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-77 9:25 AM - Emergency Management Coordinator Patty Gambill - Surplus Property Resolution

Attachments: [04-15-19 Surplus Property Resolution](#)

Emergency Management Coordinator Patty Gambill presented a surplus property resolution for approval by the Board. The property to be surplus is a generator left over from the old jail that was located on Academy Street in Jefferson that will be donated to the Warrenton Volunteer Fire Department. The fire department's generator went out during Hurricane Florence and they are in need of a generator. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the resolution as written. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. Commissioner Dix questioned if the current jail facility could use the generator. Ms. Gambill answered that the current jail facility is much larger than the old jail and the generator is not large enough for the new facility. With no further questions, Chairman McNeill called for a vote to the motion on the floor. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-78 9:30 AM - Kelly Coffey, Senior Planner with High Country Council of Governments - Farmland Preservation Plan

Attachments: [04-15-19 Farmland Preservation Plan](#)

Kelly Coffey, Senior Planner with High Country Council of Governments, presented the Farmland Preservation Plan for approval by the Board. Mr. Coffey explained that in 2017 the County received a grant from the North Carolina Agricultural Development Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to develop a Farmland Preservation Plan. The High Country Council of Governments was asked to develop the plan. A steering committee was formed to assist with developing the plan and a survey was sent to gain input from farmers that receive Present Use Value taxation. Mr. Coffey highlighted responses from the survey that led up to the 20 recommendations that were developed in the plan. Commissioner Dix stated appreciation for the work done on the plan and stated the importance of the plan to farmers. He asked if there is a one-page summary for citizens. Mr. Coffey answered that he will develop one and provide it to Commissioner Dix. Next, Commissioner Dix asked for clarification of Present Use Value taxation for the public to understand. Mr. Coffey explained that property is valued for taxation purposes according to how the property is being used. Commissioner Dix asked what the next steps are in the plan. Mr. Coffey answered that a recommendation list is included in the back of the plan. Commissioner Dix asked for an explanation of the Farmland Preservation Program. Mr. Coffey answered that a county can adopt a Farmland Preservation Ordinance and if someone is enrolled in the program they are given a degree of protection from nuisance lawsuits regarding agricultural activities. Commissioner Dix made a motion to approve the Farmland Preservation Plan as presented. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. Commissioner Rhodes stated that the report provided was very good and farming is the number one industry in the County. He particularly liked the detail and comments from individuals included in the plan. With no further comments from the Board, Chairman McNeill called for a vote to the motion on the floor. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-79 9:40 AM - Interim County Manager Adam Stumb & Finance Officer Sandra Long - Ashe County Middle School & WCC Expansion Financing Projects

Attachments: [04-15-19 Reimbursement Resolution-WCC & Middle School Projects](#)

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb presented a reimbursement resolution for the Wilkes Community College (WCC) and Ashe County Middle School expansion financing projects. He explained that approval of the resolution will allow the County to be reimbursed for upfront costs associated with the construction projects. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-80 9:45 AM - Interim County Manager Adam Stumb & Health Director Jennifer Greene - Oral Health Expansion Grant

Attachments: [04-15-19 Oral Health Grant](#)

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb introduced Health Director Jennifer Greene who presented information regarding the Oral Health Expansion Grant. Ms. Greene explained the opportunity to apply for the Oral Health Expansion Grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration. The grant provides for minor renovations to an existing structure that will allow for better oral health access. Plans are to renovate and add three operatories because due to the number of patient bookings, the earliest appointments are now being made in October. More space is needed for the dentist to expand services. Ms. Greene also told the Board that dental students will be working at the clinic this summer. The grant could be for up to \$300,000 and could be used to address long term maintenance issues for the roof or HVAC system. There is no match required from the County. Commissioner Dix asked how many more people could be served through the grant. Ms. Greene answered that during the first quarter of this year 1300 patients were served which is half the number of all clients served last year. Commissioner Rhodes asked if the grant monies could be used toward adding another dentist. Ms. Greene answered that adding staff is not an option with the grant. Vice Chairman Sands asked about making appointments at the clinic and taking walk-ins. Ms. Greene answered that new patients are being scheduled for October appointments and emergencies are worked in as quickly as possible. Commissioner Dix questioned that since the grant is provided through a federal agency if funding for training and consultations are included. Ms. Greene answered yes and there is the possibility to explore tele-dentistry with grant monies. With no further questions, Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the grant as presented. Commissioner Dix seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-81 9:50 AM - Interim County Manager Adam Stumb - Animal Control Department After Hours Procedures

Attachments: [04-15-19 Animal Control After Hours Policy & Procedure](#)
[04-15-19 Animal Control After Hours Policy & Procedure Update](#)

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb presented the Animal Control Department After Hours Procedures Policy for approval by the Board. Manager Stumb passed out an updated handout that is different from what was included in the agenda packet. He explained that the new procedures will allow for better understanding by the Administration Department, the Sheriff's Office and Communications Department, and for Animal Control regarding after hours calls. Chairman McNeill stated that his main concern is that Animal Control staff not miss family activities, etc., when on call. Commissioner Dix asked how after hours calls are received. Mr. Testerman answered "by phone". Chairman McNeill stated that the procedures will clarify what Animal Control officers need to be called out for. Commissioner Dix asked for the number of after hours calls taken last year. Mr. Testerman answered that he does not have the numbers in front of him. Commissioner Dix asked if more than one officer is needed since he is concerned for both public safety and the safety of Animal Control officers. Commissioner Dix asked that when there is a situation where more help is needed, who is called. Mr. Testerman answered that two officers share on-call duty each week and drive County vehicles home. Sometimes law enforcement personnel will be called to assist. Commissioner Dix stated that Ashe County is a large county and asked if there are situations where someone could get to a location quicker stating that he is thinking about what is best for the County and for public safety. Mr. Testerman answered that officers respond to emergency calls but some calls cannot wait. Chairman McNeill stated that Ashe County has a limited tax base and studies show that driving a County truck home costs taxpayers \$8,000 - \$10,000 per year. He added that deputies are available and that very rarely is a second person needed according to call sheets. Vice Chairman Sands stated that the Sheriff's Office is available for emergencies. Commissioner Dix asked if the policy states to have two officers on call. Mr. Testerman answered that it does not but the on-call schedule has two officers assigned each week. Chairman McNeill stated that he is proud of what Ashe County offers compared to neighboring counties. Vice Chairman Sands stated that the policy looks good. Commissioner Dix agrees but stated his belief that Ashe County should not compare itself to other counties as public safety is important. Interim County Manager Adam Stumb will monitor all calls for the next several months and bring back to the Board. Chairman McNeill stated that a majority of calls could be handled over the phone. Mr. Testerman stated concern for someone with no animal control training giving advice on animal control calls. Commissioner Dix and Commissioner Perry would like to revisit vehicles being driven home by Animal Control officers. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to accept the Animal Control After Hours Procedures as presented. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes,
Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

PRES 19-83 10:00 AM - Interim County Manager Adam Stumb - Agricultural Center & Cattle Scales

Attachments: [04-15-19 Agricultural Center & Cattle Sales](#)

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb introduced Micah Orfield, Travis Birdsell, Kelly Coffey, and Judy Bare who have been working on the Agricultural Center and Cattle Scales project. Agricultural Extension Agent Micah Orfield told the Board that she works predominately with livestock in the County. She explained that a location is needed for

farmers to weigh and sell cattle in the County. By having a facility in the County farmers will be able to get a premium price for their cattle. She explained what is involved with having to go off the mountain to sell cattle. Extension Director Travis Birdsell explained the role that Cooperative Extension plays in working to get a facility in the County. He spoke regarding the importance of agriculture in Ashe County and told the Board that Micah Orfield is currently working on a document detailing the economic impact that a facility would make to Ashe County. Mr. Birdsell stated that Cooperative Extension helps to facilitate meetings and told the Board that a facility would support the needs of farmers regionally. A grant was recently resubmitted to the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Committee that would pay for a feasibility study for a new agricultural facility in Ashe County. He added that a facility would help to serve the educational purposes for adults and children involved in 4-H. Commissioner Dix asked for information about the feasibility study. Mr. Birdsell answered that Cooperative Extension resubmitted a grant to conduct a feasibility study which should be completed in the spring of 2020. Commissioner Dix stated that Ashe County needs scales and he has been contacted by many farmers wanting to know when a facility could be ready. He is glad that the County is moving in the direction to get what our farmers need stating that agriculture is the number one economic driver in the County and agriculture needs to be showcased. Chairman McNeill stated that he met with Senator Ballard and Judy Bare regarding this project and told them that a feasibility study would be important for receiving funding and assistance. Judy Bare told the Board that she is the lead person to contact for information on this project. The goal is to educate and help farmers and youth with needs and education which can be accomplished by having an agricultural facility in Ashe County.

PRES 19-84 10:05 AM - Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley - Reclassification of Landfill Operations Supv-Equipment Operator II Position

Attachments: [04-15-19 Reclassification of Landfill Operator Supv-Equipment Operator II](#)

Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley presented a request for approval of a reclassification of the Landfill Operations Supervisor-Equipment Operator II position. He explained that the request is due to a revision to the job classification. The old position was a Primary Equipment Operator and the new position will carry more responsibility and will be a supervisory position. Commissioner Dix asked how many people would be supervised by the person in this position. Mr. Hurley answered five at the landfill. Commissioner Dix asked what the additional cost would be. Mr. Hurley answered that there would be no additional funds needed for the position this year due to the retirement of an employee. Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to approve the position reclassification as requested. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Rhodes

PRES 19-85 10:10 AM - Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley - Update on Single Stream Recycling

Attachments: [04-15-19 Single Stream Recycling Project](#)

Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley provided an update on single stream recycling that will be installed at convenience center sites. He told the Board that the

recycling equipment is at the landfill and two convenience center sites are ready to have the equipment put into place. These sites should be ready in two weeks. There are two other sites that are waiting to have three-phase power installed. The containers will be used to recycle everything except for cardboard and glass. Vice Chairman Sands asked if there will be space for the new equipment at the convenience center sites. Mr. Hurley answered that they will be moving out some of the recycling containers which will make space for the new equipment. Commissioner Dix asked if there is still a market for cardboard. Mr. Hurley answered that there is.

PRES 19-86 10:20 AM - Extension Director Travis Birdsell - Children's Trust Endowment

Extension Director Travis Birdsell explained management of the Children's Trust Endowment Fund which is included in a line item in the 4-H Activities Fund within the Cooperative Extension budget. The Endowment Fund was set up in partnership with the Partnership of Ashe, Cooperative Extension, and the independent board that manages the fund. The Children's Trust Endowment Fund Board wants to manage the funds and Mr. Birdsell explained to the commissioners that there are no County funds in the monies. The request is for the Board to approve the County Finance Officer to write a check to the Children's Trust Endowment Board from the fund balance in 4-H Activities Fund, line item 13-5394, in the amount of \$21,817.35. Commissioner Dix made a motion to appropriate the balance of funds in the amount of \$21,817.35 to the Children's Trust Endowment Board. Vice Chairman Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Rhodes

PRES 19-87 10:30 AM - Chief Deputy Danny Houck - Reinstatement of Funds

Chief Deputy Danny Houck made a request for reinstatement of time for 53.5 sick leave hours for Deputy Curtis Elliott and 91 hours of sick leave for Deputy Daniel Cox. He explained that both were employees of Ashe County assigned to the Detention Center. They left employment with the County during July 2018 to attend Basic Law Enforcement training and were sworn in as deputies with the County in January 2019. Commissioner Dix asked if this is common practice. Vice Chairman Sands answered that it has been done in the past and that the commissioners need to be consistent. Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to approve reinstatement of sick leave hours as requested for Curtis Elliott and Daniel Cox. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Rhodes

GENERAL SESSION

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements**IX. Executive Session****ES 19-8****G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (5) - Aquisition of Property**

Vice Chairman Sands made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss the acquisition of property as provided for under G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (5). Commissioner Dix seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Chairman McNeill declared the Board into Executive Session at 10:39 a.m. and out of Executive Session at 11:10 a.m. with no action taken.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Rhodes

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Dix made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:11 a.m. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

Excused: 1 - Commissioner Rhodes

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

Ann J. Clark, MMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board