

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, February 17, 2020

9:00 AM

Commission Meeting Room

County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill
Vice Chair Larry Rhodes
Commissioner William Sands
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.

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

Commissioner Perry led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Dix offered the opening prayer.

III. Approval of Minutes**MIN 20-6** February 3, 2020 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [02-17-20 February 3, 2020 Regular Session Minutes](#)

Commissioner Sands made a motion to approve the February 3, 2020 Regular Session Minutes as written. 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

MIN 20-7 February 3, 2020 Executive Session Minutes

Commissioner Sands made a motion to approve the February 3, 2020 Executive Session Minutes as written. 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

IV. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Sands made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Dix 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 comments were offered.

VI. Presentations

PRES 20-14 9:05 AM - Economic Development Director Cathy Barr - Public Hearing - Appropriation of Funds for Engineering Services to Develop an Industrial Park

Attachments: [02-17-20 Public Hearing - Industrial Site Engineering Services](#)

Economic Development Director Cathy Barr made a request for an appropriation of \$48,000 from the Economic Development Reserve Fund to be transferred to the Economic Development Department budget in the General Fund to pay for engineering services associated with the newly planned Ashe Industrial Park. Chairman Todd McNeill opened the public hearing at 9:06 a.m. Judy Bare questioned what services will be included in the study and if there are wetlands on the property. Cathy Barr answered that mapping of wetlands and agency review will be included as a basis for permitting and construction of the site. With no further questions, Chairman McNeill closed the public hearing at 9:08 a.m. Commissioner Sands made a motion to appropriate \$48,000 from the Economic Development Reserve Fund and transfer the funds to the Economic Development budget in the General Fund to pay for engineering services for the proposed industrial park site. Commissioner Dix seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

February 17, 2020

General Fund:

To increase the appropriation for the department of Economic Development from \$690,841 to \$738,841; this increased appropriation of \$48,000 to come from a transfer of funds from the Economic Development Reserve Fund.

Economic Development Reserve Fund:

To increase transfers to the General Fund from \$156,600 to \$204,600 with \$48,000 of unappropriated funds (fund balance) in the Economic Development Reserve Fund and increasing the Economic Development Fund budget from \$492,790 to \$540,790.

PRES 20-15 9:15 AM - Health Director Jennifer Greene - Appalachian District Health Department Annual Report & Ashe State of Health Report

Attachments: [02-17-20 Health Department Annual Report & State of Health Report](#)

Health Director Jennifer Greene presented the Appalachian District Health Department Annual Report. AppHealthCare is one of only three dual-entity public health departments in North Carolina. She highlighted the following areas in the annual report: finance, information technology, the dental department, nutrition, community health, public health preparedness and response, clinical services, and environmental health.

Next, Ms. Greene presented the State of the Community's Health Report for 2019. Information included demographics, public health priorities, mental and behavioral health, substance use and misuse prevention, physical activity and nutrition, and emerging issues and new initiatives.

PRES 20-16 9:30 AM - DSS Director Tracie Downer - Monthly Departmental Report

Attachments: [02-17-20 DSS Statistics-December 2019](#)

Department of Social Services Director Tracie Downer presented the monthly departmental report with statistics for December 2019. She stated appreciation for the work that the Health Department does for the community. Next, Director Tracie Downer updated the Board on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Health and Human Services. The decision was made that there will not be any corrective action plans allowed across North Carolina due to concerns with data collection. A new MOU is due out in April. Ms. Downer next reviewed monthly departmental statistics. She also highlighted the Safe Surrender Program for newborn babies through seven days old.

PRES 20-17 9:40 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Monthly Collections Report**Attachments:** [02-17-20 Monthly Tax Report](#)

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert presented the Tax Report for January 2020. With no comments or questions, Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the January 2020 Tax Report as presented. 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

PRES 20-18 9:45 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Approval to Advertise Tax Liens

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert presented a request to advertise delinquent tax liens as provided for under General Statute 105-369. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to allow the tax administrator to advertise tax liens as mandated in North Carolina General Statutes. Commissioner 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 20-19 9:50 AM - Sheriff Howell - Request to Change Pay Step/Grade for Employee**Attachments:** [02-17-20 Sheriff's Office Employee Grade-Step Change](#)

Sheriff Howell made a request to move employee Joe Francis to the correct payroll step from grade/step 67-1 to grade/step 67-3 to correctly reflect the employee's years of service. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the payroll step change for Joe Francis. 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

PRES 20-20 10:00 AM - Priscilla Norris, CPA - June 30, 2019 Audit Presentation

Priscilla Norris, CPA, presented the June 30, 2019 County Audit for approval by the

Board. She provided a detailed overview of the audit. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the audit as presented. 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

PRES 20-21 10:10 AM - Kevin Anderson & Toby Bennett - Parks and Recreation Online League Registration

Attachments: [02-17-20 Parks & Recreation Online League Registration](#)

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Anderson provided an update on a new feature being offered for league participants to register online. Computer Support Tech Toby Bennett provided an IT update on how the information is stored and how Parks and Recreation staff will retrieve the information.

PRES 20-22 10:20 AM - Librarian Suzanne Moore - Mobile Library Request

Attachments: [02-17-20 Mobile Library Request](#)

County Librarian Suzanne Moore provided a PowerPoint presentation on a new proposal for a mobile library service plan in outlying areas of the County. Community focus group meetings were held in Creston, Peak Creek, and Todd to determine how citizens would benefit from mobile library services. Information was provided on barriers to using the main branch of the library in West Jefferson and needs that would be addressed through a mobile library service. Ms. Moore provided information on the Sprinter van that would be used to provide mobile library services. The library has a delivery vehicle that needs to be replaced in the near future and would not be needed if the Library receives the Sprinter van. The suggested timeline for the project includes hiring a full-time outreach specialist in July 2020, reapplying for the grant to purchase the van in January 2021, purchasing and customizing the van in the spring of 2021, and implementation of mobile library services during the summer of 2021. The request for staffing includes moving a part-time outreach position to a full-time position which would increase the library's personnel budget by \$18,880, including benefits. The request will be considered during budget work sessions.

PRES 20-23 10:35 AM - Judy Bare - Agricultural Center Feasibility Study

Attachments: [02-17-20 Ag Center Feasibility Study](#)

Judy Bare presented information regarding a proposal with the Magellan Strategy Group, LLC to provide feasibility consulting services for a proposed Agricultural and Event Center in Ashe County. The Agricultural Center project was started approximately two years ago and a facility will handle all aspects of agriculture within the County. An application for a grant was submitted to the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. That group requested a feasibility study for the project be submitted with the grant application. The Magellan Strategy Group has prepared a proposal to provide Ashe County with feasibility consulting services related to the proposed agricultural and event center. A grant will pay the cost for the study, but the County will be the conduit that funding passes through. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the proposal 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 20-24 10:50 AM - Charlie Brady - Blue Ridge Conservancy Update

Director Charlie Brady provided an update on Blue Ridge Conservancy programs. The Blue Ridge Conservancy is a regional land trust for seven counties in northwest North Carolina. They partner with landowners and local communities to protect land with special natural resource values. The Conservancy has earned the four star Charity Navigator non-profit rating which is the highest rating for non-profits in the United States. They are listed as the #2 non-profit in the country. Eric Hiegl, land protection director with Blue Ridge Conservancy, spoke about land protection projects in Ashe County. They have conserved approximately 6000 acres in Ashe County which includes 23 conservation easements in the County. The Conservancy recently acquired 1000 acres on Three Top Mountain that will be transferred to the Wildlife Resource Commission. There were 75 acres purchased on Paddy Mountain last year. The Pond Mountain gamelands is a success story which includes 3700 acres. Another recent project is the purchase of Elk Knob State Park and the master plan is almost complete. The Conservancy is in the process of acquiring land around the Peak. Also, the Blue Ridge Conservancy is taking the lead on development of the Northern Peaks Trail.

PRES 20-25 11:05 AM - Sheriff Phil Howell - Approval of Unappropriated Grant Funds for Law Enforcement

Attachments: [02-17-20 Sheriff's Office Unappropriated Grant Funds](#)

Sheriff Phil Howell presented a request for unappropriated grant funds in the amount of \$10,000 that had been deposited into the General Fund to be appropriated to Law Enforcement for the purchase of body cameras. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the request as submitted. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS
February 17, 2020

General Fund:

To increase the appropriation for the department of Law Enforcement from \$2,932,493 to \$2,942,493; this increased appropriation of \$10,000 to be made from unappropriated grant funds that have previously been deposited into the General Fund – fund balance.
Approved

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

GENERAL SESSION

Appointments

APP 20-4 Local Emergency Planning Committee Appointments

Attachments: [02-17-20 LEPC Appointments](#)

Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to appoint Bailey Little and Jeff Dryer to the Local

Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Appointment(s) Approved

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

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

ES 20-4

G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (5) - Acquisition of Property

G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6) - Personnel

G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3) - Legal Issues (Opioid Litigation)

Commissioner Sands made a motion to enter into Executive Session as provided for under G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (5) to discuss the acquisition of property, G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6) to discuss personnel issues, and G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3) to discuss legal issues regarding opioid litigation. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Chairman McNeill declared the Board into Executive Session at 10:22 a.m. and out of Executive Session at 12:12 p.m. with no action taken.

Approved

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

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Dix made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:13 p.m. 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

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.