

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, April 20, 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 April 20, 2020 meeting to order at the Ashe County Courthouse at 9:00 a.m. Vice Chairman Rhodes participated via teleconference phone call. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Cooper's Executive Order No.121 issued on March 27, 2020 limiting mass gatherings to no more than 10 people at a time, the public was not allowed to attend the meeting in person. The meeting is broadcast live on the Ashe County website and is available to be viewed at any time after the live broadcast.

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 20-12](#) March 16, 2020 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [04-20-20 March 16, 2020 Regular Session Minutes](#)

Commissioner Sands made a motion to approve the March 16, 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

IV. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Dix made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of Emergency Management Coordinator Patty Gambill making a request for approval of an appropriation of \$80,000 from the Contingency Funds to be set aside to utilize as needed for items needed for the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner 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.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order No.121 that went into effect on March 27, 2020 limiting mass gatherings to no more than 10 people, the following guidelines were set and advertised as required by the Open Meetings Law regarding the opportunity for citizens to make public comment at meetings of the Board

of Commissioners. "The meeting will include a Public Comment session where the public may speak. A toll free number will be provided for anyone that wishes to make a public comment. The number to call is 888-788-0099. You will be asked to enter the following meeting ID number 96995353668. When you are asked for a participant ID, press the # key on your phone. This will allow you to join the meeting. Another option is to make a public comment via email to the Clerk to the Board at aclark@ashcountygov.com. The comment will be read by the Chairman during the public comment session. The email will need to be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 17, 2020."

VI. Presentations

[PRES 20-53](#) 9:05 AM - DSS Director Tracie Downer - Monthly Departmental Update

Attachments: [04-20-20 Monthly DSS Departmental Report](#)

Department of Social Services Director Tracie Downer presented the monthly departmental update for February 2020. She reviewed departmental statistics highlighting a decrease in foster care due to adoptions, an increase in adult wards, and information on payments from the federal government for Food & Nutrition Services recipients. Director Tracie Downer also provided information on changes in the Child Support Program and how DSS is handling home visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[PRES 20-54](#) 9:15 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Monthly Tax Report

Attachments: [04-20-20 Monthly Tax Report](#)

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert presented the Monthly Tax Report for March 2020. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the report as presented. 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 20-55](#) 9:20 AM - Sheriff Howell - Request to Move Existing Funds in the Budget to Purchase Viper Radios & Replace a Booking Control Panel

Attachments: [04-20-20 Sheriff's Office Request to Move Existing Funds in Budget](#)

Sheriff Phil Howell made a request to move \$29,000 from the Sheriff's Office budget line item for Maintenance/Repair Equipment to Capital Outlay/Equipment to purchase viper radios (\$14,186) and to replace the control panel in the Booking Department (\$13,997). After questions and discussion from the Board, it was determined that the sheriff and the finance officer will meet regarding the request. If a motion is required from the commissioners, the request will be brought back before the Board.

[PRES 20-56](#) 9:25 AM - Patricia Calloway, Executive Director of Ashe Services for Aging - Designation of Ashe Services for Aging as Lead Agency for the Home & Community Care Block Grant County Funding Plan

Attachments: [04-20-20 H&CCBG County Funding Plan Lead Agency Designation](#)

Patricia Calloway, executive director of Ashe Services for Aging, presented a request for the approval of Ashe Services for Aging as the lead agency for the Home & Community

Care Block Grant (H&CCBG) County Funding Plan. Commissioner Dix made a motion to approve the H&CCBG County Funding Plan lead agency designation as requested. 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 20-57 9:30 AM - Patricia Calloway, Executive Director of Ashe Services for Aging - Approval of the Home & Community Care Block Grant Committee Membership for 2020-2021

Attachments: [04-20-20 H&CCBG Committee Membership 2020-2021](#)

Patricia Calloway, executive director of Ashe Services for Aging, asked for approval of the Home & Community Care Block Grant (H&CCBG) Committee membership for 2020-2021. Commissioner Dix made a motion to approve the H&CCBG membership for 2020-2021 as requested. 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 20-59 9:35 AM - WCC Vice President Chris Robinson - Pay It Forward Grant Information

Attachments: [04-20-20 Pay It Forward Grant Program](#)

Wilkes Community College Vice President Chris Robinson presented information to the Board on the Ashe Advantage Pay It Forward Grant program which was created during the COVID-19 pandemic to help small businesses in Ashe County. Ashe County Job Development (ACJD) and the Chamber are partners in the grant program. Funding in the amount of \$100,000 has been provided by ACJD and the community has donated \$22,000, bringing the total funds available to date at \$122,000. Grants up to \$3,000 are available for businesses that employ up to 10 full time employees and the business must be in a brick and mortar building. Grant funds can be used for any operational costs. An application for the grant can be found on the Ashe Chamber of Commerce website. The community can also support the program through a donation via the Ashe Chamber website.

PRES 20-60 9:45 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Presentation of Mowing Bids for County Facilities

Attachments: [04-20-20 Mowing Bids](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb presented mowing bids for County facilities received for the FY2020/2021 mowing contract. Bids received were: Mountain Advantage LLC at \$126,574.50, Phoenix Mountain Properties at \$49,800, High Country Landscaping at \$89,800, and Elite Grounds at \$62,000. The lowest bid received is from Phoenix Mountain Properties at \$49,800 and will be included in the June 2020 budget approval.

PRES 20-61 9:50 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Approval of Wilkes Community College Financing Project

Attachments: [04-20-20 WCC Financing Project](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb presented information submitted from Robert W. Baird and Co., Inc., as senior managing underwriter for Ashe County for financing the new middle school project and the WCC Ashe Campus expansion. He explained that the Ashe County School Board is two months behind on the middle school construction project which affects financing for both the middle school building project and the WCC expansion project. The County would save money on fees if both projects are financed together. Since the middle school project is running behind, the projects will need to be financed separately. By financing separately, the WCC expansion project will not be delayed and can remain on schedule. The commissioners will need to approve the County working with Robert W. Baird and Co. on the financing projects. Commissioner Dix requested that a Zoom meeting be scheduled with the School Board so they can provide an update on the middle school construction project. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to grant the county manager the authority to accept the proposal and to receive an update from Robert W. Baird and Co. with their findings. 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 20-62 9:55 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Information Regarding State of Emergency Orders**Attachments:** [04-20-20 State of Emergency Orders](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb asked for comments, feedback, and information from the Board regarding the State of Emergency Order issued on March 20, 2020 pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained that the order is in place until May 8, 2020 unless it is rescinded before that date. Commissioner Perry wants the order to end on April 30 instead of May 8, or to be rescinded on restrictions on short-term rentals. Commissioner Dix does not want to be premature opening things back up within the County and wants to wait until May 8, 2020 as recommended by our health officials and emergency officials. He cannot gamble with the health and protection of our citizens even though he knows our County is suffering financially. Commissioner Sands wants to keep the order in place through the end of the month unless there are additional COVID-19 cases. Vice Chairman Rhodes stated concern with opening too early and stated agreement with Commissioner Dix to keep the order in effect until May 8th. He would like to have input from Health Director Jennifer Greene and hear Governor Cooper's decision on his executive order. Chairman McNeill believes we need a coordinated effort within the region, the Health Department, and the tourism industry to reopen. Current reports are favorable to begin safely and responsibly getting back to normal. He is drafting a letter that will be sent to the governor advocating for counties to be allowed to make their own decisions. Commissioner Perry stated that she has begun work on a letter to the governor to not extend the order. The County's order is in effect until May 8 and she believes that the County's order should expire the same time the governor's order expires.

PRES 20-63 10:00 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Information Regarding Time-Limited Emergency Bonus Leave**Attachments:** [04-20-20 Emergency Leave](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb highlighted information on the Time-Limited Emergency Bonus Leave policy that has been implemented for County employees. The County is

offering 40 hours of emergency bonus leave for employees due to the many changes and requirements resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. He also told the Board about changes that have been made to the Emergency Family Medical Leave Act and emergency paid sick leave if an employee has been quarantined due to the virus or has contracted the virus.

PRES 20-65 10:10 AM - Emergency Management Coordinator Patty Gambill - COVID-19 Response Update & Request for Funding to Use for Response to COVID-19

Emergency Management Coordinator Patty Gambill provided an update on emergency response and preparedness on the COVID-19 pandemic. A request was made for the commissioners to set aside \$80,000 from the Contingency Fund to utilize on an as-needed basis for medical surge operations, temporary morgue operations, donations, management of volunteers, and unanticipated needs during the COVID-19 event. The funds would only be used if and when they are needed. The request included that the same amount of funding be carried over for FY2020-21 as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and utilized only if needed. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to appropriate \$80,000 from the Contingency Fund to use for emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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

GENERAL SESSION

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Sands made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m. 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

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.