

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, October 5, 2020

8:00 AM

Special Meeting with Town of West Jefferson Aldermen

Commission Meeting Room

County Commission

Chairperson Todd McNeill

Vice Chair Larry Rhodes

Commissioner William Sands

Commissioner Paula Perry

Commissioner Chuck Olive

BUSINESS SESSION**I. 8:00 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Courthouse**

Chairman McNeill called the joint meeting of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners and the West Jefferson Town Aldermen to order at 8:00 a.m. at the Ashe County Courthouse. The purpose of the meeting was to hold discussion between both boards and to hold a public hearing to gain citizen input on an amended and restated incentive agreement for GE Aviation in exchange for the retention of capital investments and jobs which might otherwise be lost.

Town of West Jefferson Aldermen and staff present: Alderman Stephen Shoemaker, Alderman Calvin Green, Alderman Rusty Barr, Alderman John Reeves, Mayor Tom Hartman, Town Manager Brantley Price, and Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth.

Others Present: Wilkes Community College Vice President Chris Robinson.

Present: 4 - Commissioner Paula Perry, Chairperson Todd McNeill, Commissioner William Sands and Vice Chairman Larry Rhodes

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

West Jefferson Mayor Tom Hartman led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commission Chair Todd McNeill offered the opening prayer.

III. Discussion Between Boards

Chairman McNeill introduced Chris Robinson to explain an addendum to the incentive agreement between GE Aviation, the Town of West Jefferson, Ashe County Job Development, and the County of Ashe. He told the Board that the aviation industry has struggled since March 2020 due to COVID-19 and the extreme decline in air travel, which in turn has affected the GE Aviation West Jefferson plant. The Ashe County plant was a primary player in the development and production of new airplane engines. Work is underway to retool the existing plant in Ashe County so that it can be utilized for other areas in which there is a market. The addendum to the incentive agreement is to ensure long term viability of this facility. The initial agreement began in 2014 and GE Aviation has fulfilled the benchmarks of the agreement each year. The estimated investment by GE Aviation was a little over \$625,000 with their actual investment being \$140 million. The initial commitment by GE Aviation was to hire 105 employees, however they have hired 152 employees. The 2014 incentive agreement set forth an investment by Ashe County Job Development in the amount of \$350,000 for GE Aviation, an investment of \$615,000 by the Town of West Jefferson, and an investment of \$585,000 by the County to receive the added employment for Ashe County and \$140 million added to the County's tax base. One payment in the amount of \$295,000 is still owed to GE Aviation and is due in February 2021. A proposal is being made for an addendum to the existing incentive agreement under the following conditions: 1) to make the February 2021 incentive payment next week, 2) in 2021 the town and the county will each provide \$150,000 additional incentive, in 2022 each will provide \$100,000 additional incentive, and in 2023 each will provide \$75,000 additional incentive for a total of \$650,000. Chris Robinson explained new benchmarks and clawbacks in the addendum to the incentive agreement. He told the Boards that the management of GE Aviation is committed to the West Jefferson plant. The addendum will be an investment in the sustainability of GE Aviation in our county. At the conclusion of the presentation by Chris Robinson, the town aldermen and the county commissioners asked questions and discussed the proposal. Larry Coldiron, a business leader at GE Aviation, thanked everyone involved that are

working with GE Aviation. He spoke about GE Aviation serving their customers and developing processes to diversify the product mix for the plant in Ashe County.

IV. Public Hearing

Chairman McNeill then opened the public hearing at 8:30 a.m. Jimmy Blevins of Crumpler, an employee of GE Aviation, spoke in favor of supporting the West Jefferson plant. No further comment was offered and the public hearing was closed at 8:38 a.m. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to accept the proposal for the addendum to the original GE Aviation incentive agreement. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. The West Jefferson Town Aldermen voted 5-0 in favor of the incentive agreement addendum.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner Perry, Chairperson McNeill, Commissioner Sands and Vice Chairman Rhodes

Adjournment

Commissioner Sands made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 a.m. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

For: 4 - Commissioner Perry, Chairperson McNeill, Commissioner Sands and Vice Chairman 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.