

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Monday, November 6, 2017

8:30 AM

Commission Meeting Room

County Commission

*Chairman William Sands
Vice Chair Paula Perry
Commissioner Jeff Rose
Commissioner Gary Roark
Commissioner Larry Rhodes*

WORK SESSION - 8:30 AM

Chairman Sands called the Work Session to order at 8:30 a.m. at the Ashe County Courthouse.

Discussion was held regarding the Public Forum that was held on September 25, 2017.

Chairman Sands opened discussion regarding the suggestion made by Bill Brown and Ms. Lopez on changing the time the commissioners meet from mornings to evenings. Commissioner Roark stated that the Board has held evening meetings and people still do not attend the meetings. Commissioner Rhodes commented that over the years he has found that the agenda determines attendance at meetings. He believes if there are special issues that citizens are interested in, that the Board can hold an evening meeting for the public to voice their thoughts and concerns. Vice Chairman Perry agreed, adding that many people that make presentations travel from other areas such as Wilkesboro and Asheville in conjunction with their jobs. Chairman Sands stated that the majority of presentations are made by county employees. The Board was in agreement to continue holding the meetings at 9:00 a.m. and to hold special meetings at night as needed.

Chairman Sands opened discussion regarding the suggestion made by Mr. Hartman to divide the County into districts and assign one commissioner per district to represent the County. Elections Supervisor John Shepherd told the Board that the state is redrawing voting precinct lines for all 100 counties. He explained that consideration has to be made regarding different factors, one of which includes population breakdown. In addition, the General Assembly has to approve moving a precinct line. The commissioners have no control over moving lines. Ashe County would have a Board made up of 19 commissioners if there was one assigned to each precinct. Mr. Shepherd told the Board that the state should have the precinct lines redrawn by 2019 in time for the 2020 Census. The Board was in agreement to not take action on this until after the state completes their work.

Next, Chairman Sands opened discussion regarding the suggestion made by Mr. Combs about adding a crosswalk at Ashe County High School and Wendy's. The Board directed County Manager Sam Yearick to talk with the School Board, representatives from the Town of West Jefferson, and Department of Transportation representatives regarding adding a crosswalk.

Chairman Sands then reviewed items on the agenda. Discussion was held about the proclamation regarding law enforcement. Concerns were stated with some wording in the proclamation, especially paragraphs 4 and 5.

With no further discussion, the Work Session was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Present: 4 - Commissioner Larry Rhodes, Commissioner William Sands, Commissioner Gary Roark and Commissioner Paula Perry
Absent: 1 - Commissioner Jeff Rose

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

Chairman Sands called the meeting of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Ashe County Courthouse.

- Present:** 4 - Commissioner Larry Rhodes, Commissioner William Sands, Commissioner Gary Roark and Commissioner Paula Perry
- Absent:** 1 - Commissioner Jeff Rose

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

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

III. Approval of Minutes

[MIN 17-46](#) October 16, 2017 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [11-06-17 October 16, 2017 Regular Session Minutes](#)

Commissioner Roark made a motion to approve the October 16, 2017 Regular Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

- For:** 4 - Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Roark and Commissioner Perry

[MIN 17-47](#) October 16, 2017 Executive Session Minutes

Commissioner Roark made a motion to approve the October 16, 2017 Executive Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

- For:** 4 - Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Roark and Commissioner Perry

IV. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Roark requested that the proclamation on the agenda be tabled until the next meeting to allow additional time for the Board to review it. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to adopt the agenda with the tabling of consideration of the proclamation regarding law enforcement. The motion passed 3 - 1, with Commissioners Rhodes, Roark, and Sands voting in favor of the motion. Vice Chairman Perry voted in opposition to the motion.

Adopted

- For:** 3 - Commissioner Rhodes, Commissioner Sands and Commissioner Roark

Against: 1 - Commissioner Perry

V. Public Comment

Chairman Sands opened the floor for Public Comment.

Rose Price of Creston stated that she believes the Board has let Ashe County down, adding that this is not the Ashe County that she grew up in. She does not believe the acting sheriff is a good candidate for running the Sheriff's Office because he has not been a citizen of Ashe County very long. She also spoke about how the public records

request made by WBTV has been handled.

Carolyn Johnson of Jefferson stated disagreement with statements made by Rose Price. Ms. Johnson told the Board that there are people in the County that believe Sheriff Buchanan did a good job. She brought a class with her to the meeting today and hopes the Board will support law enforcement in our county.

Joe Stanley stated that he worked for the Highway Patrol for many years. He believes that what is going on in Ashe County is a disgrace. Mr. Stanley stated that Sheriff Buchanan was appointed and he believes people immediately jumped on him. Mr. Stanley also spoke of times in the past when drugs were brought into Ashe County on planes and how this was handled under previous sheriffs. He stated that people need to leave Sheriff Buchanan alone.

Mary Stanley, wife of Joe Stanley, told the Board that she worked in Raleigh many years in governmental positions as a public servant. Ms. Stanley knows the three most recent sheriffs and stated that they all tried to do their job. She believes that citizens in the County need to support law enforcement and the commissioners, and that everyone needs to unite and work together.

No further comment was made.

VI. Presentations

[PRES 17-106](#)

9:05 AM - Dr. Cox & Chris Robinson with Wilkes Community College - Ashe Campus Expansion

Attachments: [11-06-17 WCC Campus Expansion](#)

Chris Robinson with Wilkes Community College presented information regarding the expansion of Wilkes Community College - Ashe Campus. On January 3, 2017, the Board of Commissioners approved an appropriation of \$6 million for the expansion project. In addition, \$3 million of Connect NC Bond funds and \$1 million funding from the College Foundation will go toward the \$10 million project. Mr. Robinson provided a PowerPoint presentation which included a survey plat of the property that consists of 2.6 acres next to Ashe County High School. An agreement has been made to purchase the property for \$300,000. Another agreement was made to lease the parking lot in front of the property at a cost of \$1 per year for 20 years with an option to lease the property for an additional 20 years. There will be no site preparation necessary for the property and for the parking lot. The location is the best to maximize costs, to serve the citizens, and to continue a strong partnership with the public school system. Beginning in August, the early college high school program will get underway at the WCC campus. Students can obtain an associates degree at no cost to their parents. Up to 70 students will be accepted the first year and 40 students each year afterwards, with maximum enrollment of 200 students. Chris Robinson made a request for the Board to release \$300,000 to purchase the property. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to release \$300,000 for the purchase of property for the WCC expansion. Vice Chairman Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[PRES
17-108](#)

9:20 AM - County Manager Sam Yearick - Request for Fund Balance Appropriation - Bare Creek Convenience Center Paving

Attachments: [11-06-17 Bare Creek Convenience Center Funding Appropriation Request](#)

County Manager Sam Yearick explained a request for funding to build a retaining wall at Bare Creek Convenience Center. The Board appropriated \$133,000 in the FY2017/18 County Budget to pay for paving of the Bare Creek Convenience Center site and for construction of a retaining wall at the Environmental Services building in West Jefferson. A request is being made today for the Board to approve a funding appropriation of \$70,000 to build a retaining wall at the Bare Creek Convenience Center site. He told the Board that there are sufficient funds in the Environmental Services fund. Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley told the Board that by building the retaining wall, an additional 20 feet of space will be gained at the convenience center. He provided a PowerPoint presentation showing the new retaining wall built at the West Jefferson site and pictures of the Bare Creek site where the proposed retaining wall would be built. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to appropriate \$70,000 from the Environmental Services Fund to build a retaining wall at the Bare Creek Convenience Center site. Commissioner Roark seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[PRES
17-109](#)

9:30 AM - DSS Director Tracie McMillan - Request to Change a Part-time Position to a Full-time Position

Attachments: [11-06-17 DSS Position Change Request](#)
[11-06-17 DSS Position Change Proposal](#)

Department of Social Services (DSS) Director Tracie McMillan made a request to change a part-time position to a full-time position due to the resignation of two staff in DSS. The proposal she is requesting approval for includes the elimination of a part-time Social Worker II position and the upgrade of a full-time Social Worker I position to a Social Worker II position. The proposed change would help to centralize intake work. Ms. McMillan explained the increased education, training, and experience required for the position. A total of \$4196 will be saved by combining the positions. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to approve the proposal as presented. Commissioner Roark seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

GENERAL SESSION

Appointments

[APP 17-15](#)

Appointment to Ashe County Library Board - JoAnn Crawley

Attachments: [11-06-17 Library Board Appointment-JoAnn Crawley](#)

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to appoint JoAnn Crawley to the Ashe County

Library Board. Commissioner Roark seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Appointment(s) Approved

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

Proclamations

[PRO 17-4](#) Proclamation in Appreciation of All Ashe County Law Enforcement Agencies

Attachments: [11-06-17 Proclamation Thanking Law Enforcement](#)

Tabled

Other Items for Consideration

[MISC 17-28](#) Discussion Regarding Public Forum Comments

Chairman Sands discussed comments and suggestions made by citizens during the Public Forum that was held on September 25, 2017. There were three suggestions made regarding the operation of county government. Wayne Hartman suggested that voting precincts be divided into districts and for a commissioner to be assigned for each district. Elections Supervisor John Shepherd spoke to the Board regarding this. He told the Board that the state is currently redrawing precincts and will be done prior to the 2020 Census. The Board believes it would be best to not make any changes until after this takes place. Bill Brown and Ms. Lopez asked that the meetings of the Board be held in the evenings. The Board discussed this in the Work Session held this morning. The Board has tried this before several times and found that the driving factor for citizens to attend is not the time of the meeting but rather an item of interest to them that is on the agenda. Also, a majority of the agenda items involve staff presentations, not to mention the number of county staff that are required for the meeting. This would result in a lot of compensatory time for employees. The Board decided to make no changes to the time that meetings take place. When there is an item of citizen interest, the Board has the ability to hold a forum in the evening for the specific purpose of allowing citizens the opportunity to speak. Rodney Combs suggested that a crosswalk be installed from the high school to Wendy's for the safety of students. The Board believes this suggestion should be brought before representatives of the School Board, the Town of West Jefferson, and the DOT. County Manager Sam Yearick will head up the work on this suggestion.

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Rhodes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:55 a.m. Commissioner Roark seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

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.

William Sands, Chairman

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