

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Monday, October 5, 2020

9:00 AM

Commission Meeting Room

County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill
Vice Chair Larry Rhodes
Commissioner William Sands
Commissioner Paula Perry
Commissioner Chuck Olive*

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

Chairman McNeill called the Regular Session of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Ashe County Courthouse.

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

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

III. Approval of Minutes**[MIN 20-28](#) September 8, 2020 Regular Session Minutes**

Attachments: [10-05-20 September 8, 2020 Regular Session Minutes](#)

Commissioner Sands made a motion to approve the September 8, 2020 Regular Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[MIN 20-29](#) September 21, 2020 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [10-05-20 September 21, 2020 Regular Session Minutes](#)

Commissioner Sands made a motion to approve the September 21, 2020 Regular Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[MIN 20-30](#) September 21, 2020 Executive Session Minutes

Commissioner Sands made a motion to approve the September 21, 2020 Executive Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

IV. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Sands made a motion to adopt the agenda with the following amendments: 1) Move PRES 20-48 to the last item in the Business Session; and 2)

Delete PRES 20-152 and PRES 20-153. Vice Chairman Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Adopted

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

V. Public Comment

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

VI. Presentations

[PRES
20-148](#)

9:05 AM - Appointment of Commissioner to Fill Vacancy on Board Created by the Resignation of Commissioner Larry Dix

Chairman McNeill read correspondence from the chairman of the GOP Executive Committee regarding candidates for the vacancy on the Board of Commissioners due to the resignation of Larry Dix. The recommendations are: Paula Perry, John Wheeler, and Chuck Olive. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to accept the recommendation of Chuck Olive to fulfill the position resulting from the resignation of Larry Dix. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-1, with Commissioner Perry voting in opposition.

[PRES
20-149](#)

9:10 AM - Public Hearing - Cory Osborne, Regional Planner with High Country Council of Governments - Application for 2020 Community Development Block Grant Funds to Assist Individuals with Utility Payments or Food Insecurity Resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Attachments: [10-05-20 Public Hearing - Application for 2020 CDBG Funds](#)
[10-05-20 Citizen Participation Plan for CDBG Funding](#)
[10-05-20 Resolution for CDBG Funding Application](#)

Cory Osborne, regional planner with High Country Council of Governments, was present for the second of two required public hearings regarding submission of an application for 2020 Community Development Block Grant funds that will be used to assist individuals with utility payments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The County will apply for \$900,000 from the NC Department of Commerce. The Department of Social Services will manage the grant funds. Chairman McNeill opened the public hearing at 9:16 a.m. No comment was offered and the public hearing was closed at 9:17 a.m. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to adopt a resolution for Community Development Block Funding for the Ashe County Direct Utility Assistance Project. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion and the motion passed with unanimous approval. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to adopt the Citizen Participation Plan for the 2020 Community Development Block Grant funding. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[PRES
20-150](#)

9:15 AM - Director George Santucci, New River Conservancy & Superintendent Joe Shimel, New River State Park - NC Highway 163 River

Access Information

Attachments: [10-05-20 NC Hwy 163 River Access](#)

New River Conservancy Director George Santucci and New River State Park Superintendent Joe Shimel presented information on the proposed NC Highway 163 river access upstream of Elk Shoals. George Santucci provided information through a PowerPoint presentation on services provided by New River Conservancy. Joe Shimel told the Board that New River State Park included 26.5 miles for 40 years. When Elk Shoals was added to the state park, it now includes 40 miles of river with the possibility for expansion in the future. There has been tremendous usage of Elk Shoals Park since it was added to New River State Park. There has also been a 42% increase this year in usage of all park sites due to the COVID-19 pandemic. George Santucci stated that there is not a location currently for river access into Elk Shoals Park. Negotiations are underway with two different land owners to obtain property on Highway 163 for river access. New River Conservancy has secured some funding for the project and may need an additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 funding for site acquisition and \$5,000 - \$10,000 for infrastructure improvements. The Wildlife Resources Commission may be able to assist with funding and the County could apply for Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) monies to assist with this infrastructure. George Santucci told the Board that they will be asking for 1) Continuation of a partnership in building river access infrastructure, 2) Assistance with management of the Highway 163 river access property, and 3) Willingness to apply for PARTF funds or the appropriation of several thousand dollars if needed. In answer to a question from Vice Chairman Rhodes, County Manager Adam Stumb stated that expense would be minimal regarding maintenance for this property. George Santucci answered that the timeline is approximately six months regarding purchase of the property. The presentation being made today is for informational purposes and more information will be brought before the Board in the future.

[PRES
20-151](#)

9:25 AM - Elections Director John Shepherd - 2020 Elections Update

Elections Director John Shepherd provided an update on the upcoming 2020 elections process including early voting procedures and what to expect to maintain social distancing due to COVID-19.

[PRES
20-152](#)

9:30 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Request to Advertise for Vehicle Registration Clerk I Position

Attachments: [10-05-20 Vehicle Registration Clerk I Position](#)

Tabled

[PRES
20-153](#)

9:35 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Request for Reclassification of Employee

Attachments: [10-05-20 Tax Office Employee Reclassification](#)

Tabled

[PRES
20-154](#)

9:40 AM - Tax Administrator Chris Lambert - Request for Untimely Property Tax Exemption Application

Attachments: [10-05-20 Untimely Property Tax Exemption Application](#)

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert submitted a request for the Board to approve an

Untimely Property Tax Exemption Application submitted after the application deadline. General Statutes mandate that the Board of Commissioners must approve or deny the application. Richard Blackburn and Bill Burkett, members of the board of trustees of Fletcher Baptist Church, were present to offer information on the request. Mr. Blackburn explained that Attorney Grady Lonon sold his property adjacent to the church in November 2019 and he handled the property closing paperwork. The church did not realize they had to apply for a non-profit tax exemption for the property. Because of this, a request is being made for the Board to consider a waiver of those taxes in the amount of \$252.95 for 2020. Vice Chairman Rhodes stated that the Board has always been consistent regarding decisions on untimely requests but there have not been any requests from a church. Chairman McNeill added that the church was not notified of the need to submit an application and he would be in favor of voting to approve the request. Vice Chairman Rhodes agreed and made a motion to accept the request for Fletcher Memorial Baptist Church to submit the Untimely Property Tax Exemption Application for 2020. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[PRES
20-155](#)

9:50 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Update on Golden Leaf Grant - Community-Based Grants Initiative

Attachments: [10-05-20 Golden Leaf Community-Based Grants Initiative](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb updated the Board on the Golden Leaf Foundation and North Carolina Rural Center grant initiative to provide funding to the Northwest Prosperity Zone in the amount of \$11 million with up to \$1.5 million in funding for each county in the zone. The grant will provide funding for four projects in each county. Applicants will submit a letter of intent to be on the October 19, 2020 Board of Commissioners' meeting agenda in time for the October 22, 2020 grant submission deadline. Projects have been identified for Ashe County Schools, Wilkes Community College, the County of Ashe, Ashe Memorial Hospital, the Partnership for Children, Ashe Services for Aging, the Agricultural Center, and Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts. Five applications have been submitted to date.

[PRES
20-156](#)

9:55 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Mt. Jefferson Child Development Center Update

Attachments: [10-05-20 MJCDC Update](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb told the Board that the lease with Mount Jefferson Child Development Center has been renegotiated and payment has been received for the past due balance and also payment has been made to complete the lease through June 2021.

[PRES
20-157](#)

10:00 AM - County Manager Adam Stumb - Okrepky Upset Bid Request

Attachments: [10-05-20 Okrepky Upset Bid Request](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb updated the Board on the upset bid process regarding a request to purchase landfill property by Peter and Wanda Okrepky that would be used to install a well and septic tank on their existing property. The process to purchase public land from the County began with the upset bid process. After required advertisement, no

further bids were submitted on the property. Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to approve the bid for \$5,000 from Peter and Wanda Okrepky. Commissioner Sands seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

GENERAL SESSION

Appointments

[APP 20-13](#) Commissioner Appointment to Fulfill the Term of Larry Dix on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council

Commissioner Sands made a motion to appoint Chuck Olive to fulfill the term of Larry Dix on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. Vice Chairman Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Appointment(s) Approved

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

[APP 20-14](#) Commissioner Appointment to Fulfill the Term of Larry Dix on the Appalachian District Health Board

Commissioner Sands made a motion to appoint Chuck Olive to fulfill the term of Larry Dix on the Appalachian District Health Board. Vice Chairman Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Appointment(s) Approved

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

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

X. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Rhodes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m. Commissioner Sands 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.

Todd McNeill, Chairman

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