

Surry County Board of Commissioners
Meeting of March 1, 2021

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m., March 1, 2021. The meeting was held in the Board Room, Historic Courthouse, Dobson, N.C., virtually via Zoom and YouTube.

Board members present for the meeting were Chairman Mark Marion, Vice-Chairman Bill Goins, Commissioner Eddie Harris and Commissioner Van Tucker. Chairman Marion attended virtually. Commissioner Johnson could not attend and was excused due to a medical procedure.

Others present for the meeting, at various times, were:

Chris Knopf, County Manager
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
Rhonda Nixon, Finance Officer
Ed Woltz, County Attorney
Jessica Montgomery, Public Works Director/Interim Facilities Director
Martha Brintle, MIS Director
Johnny Easter, Development Services Director
Daniel White, Parks & Recreation Director
Mark Willis, Substance Abuse Recovery Director
Jeff Eads, Partners Healthcare Management (PHM)
Dr. Gary Walby, PHM and Complex Systems Innovations
Katherine Perkins, PHM
Dwayne Carter, Board of Elections Chair
Michella Huff, Elections Director
Dr. Kim Morrison, Mount Airy City Schools Superintendent
Jay Temple, Mount Airy City Schools
Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager

Dr. Walby and Mr. Woltz attended virtually.

Vice Chairman Goins, who presided over the meeting since Chairman Marion was attending virtually, called the meeting to order. Vice Chairman Goins delivered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Chairman Goins requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve the March 1, 2021 meeting agenda.

Vice Chairman Goins requested the Board consider the minutes of the February 15, 2021 meeting as presented. Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Vice Chairman Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

Vice Chairman Goins requested the Board consider the consent agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Requests from the County Manager:

- Forego participation in the Beaver Management Assistance Program.

Requests from the Assistant County Manager:

- Approve reimbursement for dental loupe goggles in the amount of \$2,592.67.

- Approve Parks and Recreation to waive reservation fees for several programs, as outlined, and to have up to 10 gift certificates for donation purposes. The programs include Cub Scout Day Camp, Cal Ripken State Playoffs Tournament, March of Dimes Surry County, all programs for schools in Surry County, Dirt Therapy and the National Interscholastic Cycling Association. The gift certificates would be provided for day-long shelter rentals to agencies that sponsor events for Yadkin Valley Senior Games and Special Olympics Surry County.
- Approve acceptance of funding from Partners Health Management, as outlined, for financial support of the Community Transportation Program. Partners Health Management will provide funding to purchase an ADA compliant 14 passenger bus, limited operational costs, salary and benefits for a full-time vehicle operator until July 1, 2021 and \$25,000 per year for two additional years to support a portion of the operator's salary. The total is approximately \$137,000 over three years.
- Approve for the Health and Nutrition Center to terminate their current contract with Patagonia Health and transition to Cure MD tentatively March 24, 2021 for a monthly savings of \$2,767.

Vice Chairman Goins declared the meeting to be an open forum and invited members of the audience to address the Board on any matters of civic concern.

There being no comments, Vice Chairman Goins closed the open forum.

Substance Abuse Recovery Director Mark Willis and Jeff Eads, Dr. Gary Walby and Katherine Perkins of Partners Healthcare Management presented slides and made a request to approve a Mental Health Assistance Program grant, which is federally funded. Surry County would not have to apply for the grant since it was relinquished by Iredell County. The grant will be administered by Partners Healthcare Management. Dr. Walby also represents Complex Systems Innovations.

Mr. Willis presented an Operation Vital Links slide, which details a roadmap for the success of substance abuse recovery efforts.

Mr. Eads reviewed a memo that was provided in the consent agenda about Partners Health Management providing financial support of the Community Transportation Program. He said Partners Health Management will provide funding to purchase an ADA compliant 14 passenger bus, limited operational costs, salary and benefits for a full-time vehicle operator until July 1, 2021 and \$25,000 per year for two additional years to support a portion of the operator's salary. The total is approximately \$137,000 over three years. Mr. Eads prefaced Ms. Perkins' presentation by saying that he felt the Mental Health Assistance Program is a great fit for Surry County.

Ms. Perkins discussed details of the Mental Health Assistance Program. She said it is a federally funded grant, totaling approximately \$933,000, for three years. Ms. Perkins also said that approximately 600 people would be served by the program. She discussed the hours and days of the program, which are flexible. Ms. Perkins said that the program aims to keep people out of jail to better recover. She said that the County-owned property at 130 Rawley Avenue would be a good building for the program.

Dr. Walby covered program costs, including EMS, transportation, out of county deputies, detainee housing and cost savings over three years. He discussed the importance of deputies and reviewed successful outcomes and findings.

Commissioner Harris and Dr. Walby discussed how there was no local funding match required.

Commissioner Tucker and Dr. Walby discussed other local governments' success rates in finding other funds to support the program once federal dollars run out. Dr. Walby said other local governments have realized success in acquiring future funding after three years.

Dr. Walby said a high number of participants will be successful utilizing the program.

The Board and Mr. Willis discussed briefing the Sheriff, other local law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney about the program following the Board's approval on the grant and use of the 130 Rawley Avenue property.

Discussion ensued about the Rawley Avenue property, law enforcement training and liability issues.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Goins, seconded by Chairman Marion, the Board voted unanimously to use the Substance Abuse Recovery Department's budgeted funds as an in-kind match and to allow usage of 130 Rawley Avenue for the program and brief the Sheriff, other local law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney about the program.

Development Services Director Johnny Easter presented a draft of revised definitions, violations and remedies to Surry County's existing Solid Waste Ordinance.

Details of the revisions, handling abandoned structures and deeming property as a public nuisance were discussed.

Mr. Easter said the basis of the revisions were gleaned from Henderson County's solid waste ordinance. He said other counties have similar solid waste ordinances.

Discussion occurred about how the Development Services Department would investigate complaints to determine violations.

Commissioner Harris read section K of the draft and asked how violations are determined. County Attorney Ed Woltz said those determinations are judgment decisions by staff.

Commissioner Tucker said he would like to see more differentiation between farm and residential properties in the draft ordinance. Mr. Easter said he knows of no instances in the past where a farm was cited for a violation.

Mr. Easter discussed with Commissioner Tucker a property in the past that had too much trash accumulated at the curb. The property owner was in Connecticut at the time. Had Surry County had correct language in its ordinances, Mr. Easter said the property could have been deemed a public nuisance.

Mr. Woltz recommended a public hearing at a future Board meeting to adopt the finalized solid waste ordinance.

Commissioner Tucker asked if the proposed changes in the draft ordinance would abate a Galax Trail property that neighbors have complained about. Mr. Easter said yes.

Vice Chairman Goins requested that Mr. Easter differentiate between farm and residential properties, further revise the draft and bring the draft ordinance back for discussion at the March 10 Board Retreat. Chairman Marion concurred with Vice Chairman Goins' request.

Board of Elections Chairman Dwayne Carter brought a request to the Board to approve COVID-19 hazard pay for salaried Elections staff members, to include four full-time staff members and the Director.

Mr. Carter discussed 2020 Election facts and details and seven different Election grants in detail. He said that the combined grant funding has saved the County over \$180,000. Mr. Carter also described the CARES Act Board of Elections grant of \$89,970 that was received - this grant is where any hazard pay for salaried Elections employees would be derived.

Mr. Carter said that AV equipment has been purchased through grant funding for installation in the Service Center Farm Bureau Training Room.

He then provided details about why the Board of Elections believes salaried Elections staff members should receive COVID-19 hazard pay from the CARES Act Board of Elections grant.

Vice Chairman Goins asked Mr. Carter how he arrived at the hazard pay totals. Mr. Carter said the Board of Elections had a \$20,000 lump sum of money that was to go dead Dec. 31, 2020.

Vice Chairman Goins said the Elections staff members hazard pay would be a hard pill to swallow for other County employees, who he feels are very deserving. Other Board members concurred and discussed the other departments who were exposed to COVID-19 that would be more justified in receiving COVID-19 hazard pay.

Board members and Mr. Woltz provided their input on the hazard pay.

Vice Chairman Goins said the hazard pay request could have been presented to the Board of County Commissioners earlier.

Commissioner Tucker said he needs more legal interpretation on the request.

Chairman Marion discussed his issues with how Elections staff were notified they were going to get the hazard pay. He said he also wrestled with how other deserving County employees won't get hazard pay.

Commissioners Tucker and Harris discussed with Mr. Carter grant funding received from two sources believed to have ties with Mark Zuckerberg and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both commissioners said they do not want to receive funding from the two associated organizations.

Vice Chairman Goins said that the County Attorney and staff would research the topic further.

Mr. Carter provided closing remarks.

Mount Airy City Schools Superintendent Dr. Kim Morrison and Jay Temple of Mount Airy City Schools presented a request to transfer project savings from a geothermal exploration project to a water heater replacement project at Bruce H. Tharrington Primary School.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to transfer project savings totaling \$22,722 from a geothermal exploration project to a water heater replacement project at Bruce H. Tharrington Primary School.

County Manager Chris Knopf presented a request from YVEDDI about the Home and Community Care Block Grant for Older Adults. YVEDDI was requesting to move \$6,648 from General Transportation funds to Congregate Nutrition funds. The funds are part of the County allocation to YVEDDI.

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve the transfer of \$6,648 from YVEDDI's General Transportation funds to YVEDDI's Congregate Nutrition funds, as part of the Home and Community Care Block Grant for Older Adults.

Public Works Director Jessica Montgomery presented a request to seek Request for Qualifications for solid waste consulting, engineering and environmental monitoring services.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Chairman Marion, the Board voted unanimously to approve advertising for Request for Qualifications for solid waste consulting, engineering and environmental monitoring services.

Mr. Knopf presented a request to approve a bid prequalification policy to be used for selected projects.

Upon motion of Vice Chairman Goins, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve the bid prequalification policy to be used for selected projects.

Mr. Knopf requested the Board reschedule the Board Planning Retreat to March 10 and amend Board Meeting and Budget calendars.

The Board also confirmed they would still like for Board members from Surry County municipalities to come to the Board Retreat lunch.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to reschedule the Board Planning Retreat to March 10 and amend Board Meeting and Budget calendars.

Assistant to the County Manager Nathan Walls presented a request to reappoint Chris White, Josh Watson, Mark Bender, Walter White, Daphne Tucker and Tony Davis to the Surry County Board of Adjustment.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Vice Chairman Goins, the Board voted unanimously to reappoint Chris White, Josh Watson, Mark Bender, Walter White, Daphne Tucker and Tony Davis to the Surry County Board of Adjustment.

In General County Business, Commissioner Harris condemned the Equality Act, which recently passed in the United States House. Commissioner Tucker echoed his sentiments.

Chairman Marion thanked the Board, staff and citizens who sent cards and showed support for his family following the death of his brother.

Chairman Marion also updated the Board on Commissioner Larry Johnson's recent medical procedure. He said Commissioner Johnson is doing well.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to go into closed session.

The Board came out of closed session and resumed regular business.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve but not release closed session minutes from the January 19, February 1 and February 15, 2021 Board meetings.

Upon motion of Chairman Marion, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve a controlled burn at Fisher River Park.

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:31 p.m.

Nathan Walls
Clerk to the Board