

Surry County Board of Commissioners  
Meeting of September 20, 2021

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m., September 20, 2021. The meeting was held in the Board Room, Historic Courthouse, Dobson, N.C.

Board members present in-person for the meeting were Chairman Mark Marion, Vice-Chairman Bill Goins, Commissioner Larry Johnson, Commissioner Eddie Harris and Commissioner Van Tucker.

Others present in-person for the meeting, at various times, were:

Dr. Steve Yokeley, Mount Airy Board of Commissioners  
Chris Knopf, County Manager  
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager  
Rhonda Nixon, Finance Officer  
Ed Woltz, County Attorney  
Johnny Easter, Development Services Director  
Mark Willis, Substance Abuse Recovery Director  
George Crater, Airport Manager  
Kristy Preston, DSS Director  
Susan Campbell, DSS Attorney  
Sheriff's Office Staff  
Nick Brown, 911 Center Director  
Eric Southern, Emergency Services Director  
Martha Brintle, MIS Director  
Denise Brown, Finance  
Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager  
Jeff Eads, Partners Health Management  
Bruce Crigger, Four Way Volunteer Fire Department Chief  
Modern Gardeners Garden Club

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Chairman Marion called the meeting to order. Commissioner Goins delivered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Chairman Marion requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the September 20, 2021 agenda.

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Chairman Marion requested the Board consider the minutes of the September 7, 2021 Board meeting as presented. Upon motion of Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Chairman Marion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

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Chairman Marion requested the Board consider the consent agenda. Chris Knopf, County Manager, described each item. Upon motion of Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Requests from the County Manager:

- Approve the following from the Tax Department:
  1. Total releases for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$34,209.43.
  2. Total refunds for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$50,586.45.
  3. Total NCVTS tag and tax refunds for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$3,585.17.
  4. Total real and personal property discoveries for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$161,848.61.
  5. Total motor vehicle discoveries for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$15.41.

6. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC additions for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$109,376.31.
  7. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC refunds for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$0.
  8. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC releases for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$826.80.
  9. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC collections for the month ending 8/31/2021 in the amount of \$16,246.88.
- Approve a solid waste collector non-exclusive franchise application/renewal form from Funkhouser Garbage Service.
  - Approve the transfer of a surplus mobile classroom unit from Surry County Schools, at Mountain Park Elementary School, to Surry County Parks & Recreation. The unit has been moved to Fisher River Park.
  - Approve for YVEDDI to apply for the Rural Operating Assistance Program (ROAP) funds from NCDOT on behalf of Surry County.

Requests from the Assistant County Manager:

- Approve to create a full-time position of Recovery Friendly Workplace Advisor and add to the Classification Plan at Grade 64.
- Approve to create a full-time position of Airfield Lineman and add to the Classification Plan at Grade 62.
- Approve to reclassify the Substance Abuse Recovery Director position from Grade 72 to Grade 76 on the Position Classification Plan.
- Approve for Health and Nutrition to contract with Emtiro Health for the Population Health Analytics and Care Management Documentation platform to ensure compliance with the prepaid health plan contracts under the Medicaid Transformation program. The Health and Nutrition Center budget will cover the \$2,160 monthly licensing fee, a \$3,000 initiation fee and a \$7,500 fee for data integration.

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The Board recognized the Modern Gardeners Garden Club for their efforts in having a Blue Star Memorial Marker placed on the Historic Courthouse grounds in Dobson. They were also recognized for the following work:

- Decorating the Mt. Airy Museum of Regional History and the exterior of the Antebellum Moore House at Christmas
  - Mt. Airy Mini Garden plantings
  - Designing, planting and maintaining the Pollinator Garden next to the Mt. Airy Post Office
  - Designing and maintaining the Oak and Market Street planters in Mt. Airy
  - Rotating with other garden clubs on the Northern Regional Hospital Lobby floral arrangements
  - Quarterly Garden Therapy projects with Tharrington Primary School students
  - Fall Bulb Sales
  - Annual Arbor Day tree plantings
  - Designing, planting and maintaining the Rotary Pup Memorial Garden
  - Coordinating with other garden clubs to host the Annual Mt. Airy Blooms Tour of Gardens.
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Chairman Marion declared the meeting to be an open forum and invited members of the audience to address the Board on any matters of civic concern.

Assistant County Manager Sandy Snow introduced Eric Southern, who was recently promoted to Emergency Services Director.

Mr. Southern lauded the great work and collaboration of Emergency Services staff and first responder agencies who work with Surry County to provide services to citizens.

Seeing there were no further speakers, Chairman Marion closed the open forum.

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Jeff Eads, of Partners Health Management, provided an assessment of the Substance Abuse Recovery Department. He detailed the history of the department, starting with Partners reaching out to their service area counties to see if they were interested in receiving funding for a position to address substance use problems. Mr. Eads said only Surry and one other county were interested, but Surry County elevated the position to director level, which was unique. He discussed the first email he received from Mark Willis, department director, which led to their first meeting.

Mr. Eads shared notes from the first Opioid Response Advisory Council meeting, which is now called the Substance Abuse Recovery Council. In the meeting, those in attendance discussed how past efforts to prevent substance use in the county were not very well organized, or operating in concert, together. At that time, Mr. Eads said, there was only one treatment provider.

He said Dr. Joanna Linn, who was recently secured by Partners as a consultant, provided an assessment of the Substance Abuse Recovery Department following a meeting with staff. According to that assessment, Mr. Eads said Surry County is an anomaly, in that there really aren't any counties in North Carolina with a Substance Abuse Recovery Department at that level, and similar departments are almost non-existent in local governments across the southeastern United States.

Mr. Eads said the department's strengths are how services are provided based on community feedback, a data analyst that makes services data-driven, it's multi-faceted approach and that grassroots efforts are utilized. He said Dr. Linn said the department should continue with its same efforts and that it's following national best practices. Mr. Eads said that Surry County is far beyond what other counties are doing to address substance use issues in their communities.

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Mr. Eads provided a Mental Health Assistance Program (MHAP) update. He thanked the Board and County staff on their work in repairing the basement at the 130 Rawley Avenue office, where Mental Health Assistance Program services are being offered. Mr. Eads said the program assists behavioral health patients. He said consistent referrals have come in from the Mount Airy Police Department, which has expressed their satisfaction with the program. The Dobson Police Department has also referred someone to the MHAP. Mr. Eads said he would have the first quarter of data, based on the referrals, to provide to the Board in the future.

He said the Surry County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) was presented with an overview of the MHAP, receiving information on how the program functions. County Veterans Services Director Mike Scott will also be meeting with MHAP team members in October.

Hours for the office are Monday-Friday from 8-5 p.m. but may be adjusted going forward based on the needs of the community.

Commissioner Harris said he was at one of the first meetings with Partners in which a Federal Administration member attended. He said he appreciated Mr. Eads' comments about how organic substance use prevention efforts are in Surry County. Commissioner Harris said he thinks we're positioned very well in Surry County, there isn't a one size fits all to address substance abuse issues, the book is still being written on Surry County's efforts and he thanked Mr. Eads for his efforts.

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Kristy Preston, DSS Director, presented a departmental update.

Ms. Preston discussed annual fiscal monitoring, detailing how the department works on a reimbursement system. She said the department receives 55-65 percent reimbursement from Federal and State governments. Ms. Preston said the audit of April McMasters and her team's work showed no findings.

She said Board training from the UNC School of Government, which was previously postponed, has been rescheduled for November 16 and 17.

Ms. Preston provided an update on the Medicaid Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit (REDA). She said 10 cases that were approved for Medicaid and 10 cases that were denied for Medicaid are reviewed by the State to determine if they were handled correctly. Ms. Preston said that at 50 percent through the audit, Surry County DSS was at 98 percent accuracy in several categories.

She provided a Medicaid Transformation Update, providing a spreadsheet showing that 60.53 percent of Medicaid recipients in Surry County are enrolled in NC Managed Care. Ms. Preston said there are about 7,500 more citizens to enroll in the next year or two.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the remaining 7,500 people who are not enrolled. Ms. Preston said that population are people who need a little more assistance, like foster care children, developmentally disabled individuals and those receiving significant mental health assistance.

Commissioner Harris and Commissioner Tucker asked what acronyms for services mean, how many staff members provide in-take services and how many staff members DSS has.

Commissioner Tucker asked questions about un-documented aliens. He congratulated Ms. Preston on the clean audit.

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Johnny Easter, Development Services Director, presented a rezoning request for case ZCR1212 for applicant Millie L. Hanks at 1113 Klondike Road, Elkin. The applicant would like to rezone from Residential General to Highway Business.

Mr. Easter said the rezoning would be a general use rezoning and is served by private well and private septic. He said that the property has been a commercial property since the early 2000s but was missed in County-wide rezoning efforts, so has never been rezoned. Mr. Easter said the owner wants to lease the property for other commercial purposes. There are quite a few businesses around the property already zoned for business use.

He said the request was recommended for approval by the Planning Board and no opposition has been made against the request.

Commissioner Harris asked how often Mr. Easter sees parcels that have not been zoned properly. Mr. Easter said he sees this from time-to-time. Commissioner Harris said the parcel certainly needs to be rezoned.

There were no speakers for the public hearing.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the Statement of Consistency for case ZCR1212.

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve the rezoning, from Residential General to Highway Business, for case ZCR1212, 1113 Klondike Road, Elkin, tax parcel ID# 4954-03-00-8730.

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Mr. Easter presented a rezoning request for case ZCR1213 for applicant Christopher Snow at 470 Kapps Mill Road, Elkin, from Rural Agricultural to Rural Business.

He said the rezoned use would allow for equipment storage for an existing business and to create an office in an existing home on the property. Mr. Easter said this would be a general use rezoning. Most land use in the area is classified as Rural Agricultural, but there are some Rural Business classifications. It is served by private well and private septic. The property has direct frontage on Kapps Mill Road.

Mr. Easter said the request was recommended for approval by the Planning Board and no opposition has been made against the request.

There were no speakers for the public hearing.

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the Statement of Consistency for case ZCR1213.

Upon motion of Chairman Marion, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the rezoning, from Rural Agricultural to Rural Business, for case ZCR1213, 470 Kapps Mill Road, Elkin, tax parcel ID# 4966-00-38-4730.

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Chris Knopf, County Manager, presented a request to revise the Frontier Natural Gas line extension that is being installed in the vicinity of the Mount Airy-Surry County Airport, as part of Project Depot Builder.

Mr. Knopf described the proposed location changes of the revision in relation to the Airport. He said the revision comes at no extra cost to Surry County - the original project came in under budget and the remaining funds can be used.

Commissioner Johnson said he likes the changes, commenting that the area has future growth potential.

Upon motion of Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Frontier Natural Gas line extension revision as part of Project Depot Builder.

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Mr. Knopf presented a request to purchase VIPER radios from Motorola for Emergency Services, the Sheriff's Office and 911 Center staff at a cost of \$1,093,302. The purchase would use \$125,000 in budgeted funds and \$968,302 in additional fund balance.

When originally budgeted, the County's intent was to lease the radios, but after meeting and looking at the numbers more closely, the recommendation was made to purchase, Mr. Knopf said.

Commissioner Tucker and Rhonda Nixon, Finance Officer, discussed financial numbers for the project.

Nick Brown, 911 Center Director, said the current VIPER radios that staff have are from 2007 or 2008. Major Larry Lowe from the Sheriff's Office said the VIPER radios must update to Phase II, which Mr. Brown said doubles the capacity of radios on the system.

Commissioner Harris and Mr. Knopf discussed how it's a better financial decision to purchase the radios, despite the original intent to lease, which was funded in the budget. Commissioner Harris said he has never liked leasing, saying it would be better, long-term, for the County to purchase the radios.

Commissioner Tucker and Major Lowe discussed another radio provider that sells an inferior product compared to Motorola. The other radios would not communicate well enough for first responders. Major Lowe also said that Yadkin County is on an old system and they are having a tough time communicating.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve the purchase of VIPER radios from Motorola at a cost of \$1,093,302. The purchase would use \$125,000 in budgeted funds and \$968,302 in additional fund balance.

Bruce Crigger, Four Way Volunteer Fire Department Chief, presented a request to refinance the department's fire station. The refinance would lower the interest rate from 4.1 percent to 2.25 percent and knock six years off the payments.

Chief Crigger said that the term of the refinanced loan from First Community Bank would be reduced to 20 years total on a fixed rate. He said the payment would change from annually to monthly, which helps save more money on the interest.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Chairman Marion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the refinance of the Four Way Volunteer Fire Station from 4.1 percent to 2.25 percent, utilizing a loan from First Community Bank.

Mr. Knopf presented a request from the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) to file for a grant application that would expand Route 6 in Surry County. He said no County funding would be required for the request.

Chairman Marion discussed with Mr. Knopf how the route has been cut two or three times.

Commissioner Tucker questioned the ridership on the buses, saying they don't appear to be used much. Commissioner Goins also questioned how much the buses are used.

Commissioner Johnson said he doesn't want his federal tax dollars, which is the funding source, going to a bus system with poor ridership.

Commissioner Harris said a request from PART was made in the past to require Surry County citizens to pay a license plate fee to help fund the bus system, but citizens did not want to pay it.

The Board asked Mr. Knopf to request PART ridership numbers for Route 6 in Surry County.

Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager, presented a request from the Northern Regional Hospital Board of Trustees to reappoint Dr. David Shockley.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to reappoint Dr. David Shockley to the Northern Regional Hospital Board of Trustees.

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In General County Business, Chairman Marion said he attended the Blue Star Memorial event on September 10 at the Historic Courthouse and heard a lot of compliments. He said he attended a Carolina Panthers football game in Charlotte on September 19.

Commissioner Harris said he enjoyed a September 11 event on the same date in Yadkin County.

Commissioner Tucker thanked Mr. Eads, Mr. Willis and Substance Abuse Recovery Department staff for their efforts. He said he has been very pleased with the efforts of Mr. Willis and staff.

Commissioner Tucker said he received a call from someone interested in purchasing the Westfield Community Center property, which has been surplus. The person shared their intent for the property with Commissioner Tucker, who said he would connect the person with Ed Woltz, County Attorney, and County staff to start the upset bid process.

Commissioner Harris said he received calls asking about the "Available" sign that was placed outside the Jones Resource Center, which was also surplus.

Commissioner Harris praised the work of the Master Gardeners, who oversee the beautiful gardens outside the Historic Courthouse. Commissioner Tucker said he received many compliments about the gardens at the Surry 250 Kickoff Celebration.

Commissioner Johnson echoed all the same comments from his fellow commissioners. He added that he and his friends recently returned from a 4,000-mile baseball trip. He said that when he returned, he noticed that Surry County roadsides appeared to have less litter than in previous months and that he was pleased to see the progress.

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Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to enter closed session.

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The Board exited closed session and returned to regular business.

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Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:47 p.m.

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Nathan Walls  
Clerk to the Board