MINUTES – JANUARY 30, 2019

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in special session at the Caswell County 911 Center in Yanceyville, North Carolina at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 30, 2019. Members present: Rick McVey, Chairman, Jeremiah Jefferies, Vice-Chairman, Sterling Carter, Nathaniel Hall, Steve Oestreicher and David Owen. Absent: William E. Carter. Also present: Bryan Miller, County Manager, Brian Ferrell, County Attorney and Gwen Vaughn, Finance Director. Paula P. Seamster, Clerk to the Board recorded the minutes.

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER

Chairman McVey opened the meeting with a moment of Silent Prayer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner S. Carter to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Insurance at Detention Center

Mr. Miller stated that the county had to pay $110,000 medical bill because the Detention Center’s catastrophic inmate insurance company refused to pay. He added that the catastrophic insurance company has paid in the past and did pay some of this claim. Due to this non-payment the Detention Center did not renew the catastrophic insurance policy. The Sheriff has applied for another policy but it will not be in effect until the new fiscal year. Mr. Miller asked the Board in the interim to find some type of insurance to cover the gap in coverage. He added that he is aware of two companies that offer this type of insurance.

Commissioner Hall asked the county manager to define catastrophic in the terms of the deductible. Mr. Miller responded that the deductible was $25,000 per inmate per year. Commissioner Hall then stated that if the Sheriff’s department came to the Board for money to pay this bill then how can they decide to not renew the catastrophic insurance policy. He added that the county needed to have coverage. Commissioner Hall stated that the county also needed to look at the bottom line deductible on this type of coverage. Commissioner Owen responded that the policy that was in effect was a $30,000 deductible. Commissioner Hall asked what the premium was for this policy. Mr. Miller responded $10,000 annually. Commissioner Hall then stated that the policy was costing the county $40,000 a year. Commissioner Owen responded or more because it was $30,000 per inmate per year. Commissioner Hall stated that the county needed to reach out to get better premiums. Mr. Miller responded that the county has reached out to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Risk Pool and they do not handle this kind of coverage. Mr. Ferrell suggested that the county talk to Mark II about this type of coverage. Mr. Miller responded that he was sure they would be willing to help but Mark III does not broker this type of coverage. Commissioner Owen stated that he agreed and that the county needed to move quickly on getting cover for the Detention Center.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the state would do anything to help the county with catastrophic inmate insurance. Mr. Miller responded the state on requires the county to have it. Mr. Ferrell stated that the state requires that the counties to carry insurance on the inmates and there is no cost allocation. He suggested that the NCACC put this as a legislative goal. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if this was the same for federal inmates. Mr. Ferrell responded that the county only houses the federal inmates and that they are not considered county inmates.

Mr. Miller stated that staff would move forward in getting quotes on catastrophic inmates insurance and that he hoped to have that information by the next meeting and if not it will be the following Board meeting.

MOU BETWEEN BOARD OF EDUCATION AND BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Ferrell stated that the Board had a redline copy of the revisions from the last Board meeting. He added that there are a few typos that will need to be corrected but the intent of the agreement was to capture the substance of what the Board wanted at the last meeting.

Chairman McVey asked the Board to take a few minutes to review the changes.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if he could give a copy to the school board. The Board agreed.

Mr. Ferrell stated that one major change to the agreement was to delete the committee concept.

Commissioner Hall stated that there have been several comments made about sales tax rebates and he wanted to know if the county attorney, county manager and finance director are okay with the agreement. Mr. Ferrell stated that he added in language that pertains to the sales tax. He added that the school board owns the property so this can be discussed. Mr. Ferrell stated that another change that he made to the agreement is the Board did not agree to have a project monitor and that the school board would have a representative so he added someone that would represent both parties in the agreement. He added that Commissioner Jefferies had stated the any unspent funds would be reverted and he is sure the USDA will make sure that only the money needed would be spent but he could added a sentence that stated that the county cannot borrow more than what is needed. Mr. Miller stated that he is comfortable with the agreement.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if paragraph I opened the door to this on page 5 of the clean version of the agreement. Mr. Ferrell responded that the intent of i. is just to say if there is an overage everyone has to agree to it. He added that if there is a rising cost in steel for instance this section makes it clear that everyone has to sign off on it. Commissioner Oestreicher stated he did not have a problem with i. but he wanted everyone to understand.

Mr. Miller stated that there needed to be a vote on the revised agreement. Mr. Ferrell added that after the vote the next step would be to clean up the agreement and send it to the school board’s attorney.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner S. Carter to approve the agreement as written and to send it forward to the school board.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that the approved would be with the caveat to clean up the typos. Mr. Ferrell agreed.

Upon a vote of the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Miller stated that before moving to the next item there is one caveat the county is responsible for and that is the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in which the county manager would work with the superintendent of schools to put out the RFQ. He asked the Board for permission to move forward with the process of the RFQ. Mr. Ferrell added that the RFQ is actually an exhibit of the agreement and this would just be an administrative process.

Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to authorize the county manager to move forward with the RFQ process in association with the superintendent of schools. The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECOMMENDED

FY 2019-2020 BUDGET

Mr. Miller stated that he prepared a list of capital projects for the Board to review and once the Board has decided to what want to see in the budget these are things to consider.

Commissioner Owen stated that he wanted to hear about the capital items before moving forward.

The following is the list of Capital Projects:

1. Renovations of Cooperative Extension, FSA & Soil and Water Offices - $2 million

a. Other option – New Building for Cooperative Extension, FSA & Soil and Water - $3.5 million

1. Pelham Industrial Park - $40,000

a. No real investment made in infrastructure since it was built.

1. 2 to 3 Ambulances - $500,000 - $750,000
2. 12 Sheriff’s Office Vehicles - $480,000
3. 5 New County Cars - $175,000

a. DSS

b. Health Department

c. Building Inspections

d. Section 8

e. Parks & Recreation

1. Payroll System - $120,000
2. Finance Software Package - $300,000 (Tax & Finance)

Additional Rate Increases

Health Insurance (Initial Estimates 20% - 50%) $160,000 per month (160,000 x 35% = $216,000 ($672,000 Increase Annually)). Employee Max Contribution ($250,000)

Pelham Industrial Park

Mr. Miller stated that as far as the Pelham Industrial Park maintenance spends a lot of time over there handling issues with air in the lines and alarms. He added that no money has been spent on this park in a very long time.

Commissioner Owen stated that he remembered mention of the maintenance department needing a van but it was not included in the list. Mr. Miller responded that the maintenance director has not come to him with that.

Cooperative Extension Building

Commissioner Jefferies asked if a Cooperative Extension Building could be built for $275,000. Mr. Miller responded that the cost estimates for a new building are $275 per square foot for a metal building.

Commissioner Owen asked what square footage has been requested for this building. Mr. Miller responded that he estimated it at 15,000 square feet but it could be adjusted as needed.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if this was $275 per square foot for a brownfield or a greenfield. Mr. Miller responded greenfield. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the new building would be on a different site. Mr. Miller responded that the county owns land on Fire Tower Road and there is also an option that the county would work with PCC on a different location.

Commissioner S. Carter stated that the current location is currently 8700 square feet. Mr. Miller responded that having enough storage space is a complaint now in that building and the kitchen downstairs is not big enough.

Commissioner Owen asked how much land the county had next to EMS and then asked if it was just the building and the lot. Mr. Miller responded that it was just the building and the lot. Commissioner Owen asked how many offices are rented out by the county. Mr. Miller responded that the only offices the county rent is at Guilford Mills and he asked the clerk how many offices were there. The clerk responded there are about 6 or 7 offices at Guilford Mills.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if a new Cooperative Extension building is built was would go into the old building. Mr. Miller responded that it would be wise to renovate but it needs a new roof and it could turn into additional office space.

Commissioner Owen asked what else was needed in that building besides the roof. Mr. Miller responded new duct work, new paint and he added that there are soft spots in the floor that need to be looked at.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if asbestos was in the building. Commissioner S. Carter responded probably in the old part of the building.

Chairman McVey stated that a HVAC estimated was needed before building a new building.

Commissioner Owen stated that he wanted all options to be explored before building a new building as far as office space.

Commissioner Hall stated that the Board needed to look at the infrastructure of the building because the life of the building is gone. He asked what the county wanted to do with the building. Commissioner Hall stated that the county may want to bulldoze it down and put the new building there.

Commissioner S. Carter stated that he does not agree with bulldozing the building down yet but he is not at the $3.5 million stage either. He added it would be nice to have a complex of offices in town.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated assuming the Ag center is built it would be nice to have more Ag related stuff there. He thought doubling the size of the building was a bit ambitious. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if there was state money to help with the building or could NC State do something to help.

Commissioner Owen stated that the county needed to explore every option. He added to explore renting office space over buying and that all options needed to be explored before making a decision. Mr. Miller responded that this could be talked about more during the budget process.

Pelham Industrial Park

Chairman McVey asked about more information on the Pelham Industrial Park. Mr. Miller responded that the maintenance director has evaluated the lines and that Holland Industrial and C & J Electrical have made some suggestions on adjustments to the pumps. He added that the line is about a mile long and no maintenance has been done. Mr. Miller stated that an air relief value would cost between $30,000 and $40,000. Chairman McVey asked how long the lines had been there. Mr. Miller responded about 20 years.

Commissioner Hall asked if there was any money in reserve for the Industrial Park. Mr. Miller responded no. Commissioner Hall asked what else needed to be done at the Industrial Park. Mr. Miller responded that maintenance was trying to get a generator from the state for the Welcome Center. He added that he has become very frustrated over the last 6 months because of the amount of time maintenance has spent at the industrial park and Colon has spent a lot of time over there after hours.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the $40,000 would comprehensively fix the problem or patch it. Mr. Miller responded comprehensively fix.

Ambulances

Mr. Miller stated that the ambulances are aging and the county has ambulances that were received 3 years ago as part of the Piedmont Electric Red Leg program that was set up on a 10 year payment plan but the finance director had been very aggressive with the payment and the final payment of $72,000 will be paid off in the FY 2019-2020.

Commissioner Hall stated that the ambulances are being worn out before they are paid for.

Chairman McVey stated that he has asked the EMS director to look into leasing ambulances under a maintenance contract. He stated the ambulances can be leased for 2 years and then turned in for newer ones. Mr. Miller responded that the lease option has not made sense in the past but it may be a feasible option now.

Commissioner Jefferies asked if the $72,000 payment could be paid now. Mr. Miller responded that it could be done. Commissioner Jefferies stated that the county could save on the interest. Ms. Vaughn responded that there is no interest on this loan.

Mr. Miller stated that the Board needed to look at the true cost of running a government agency by department.

Sheriff’s Office Cars

Chairman McVey asked if the Sheriff’s cars could be leased. Mr. Miller responded that this could be looked at or he could ask the Sheriff’s office about it.

RECESS

The Board took a brief recess.

(The county attorney left the meeting.)

New County Cars

Chairman McVey asked if the same thing could be done with the county cars, lease program.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if DSS could get funding from the state since they are mandated by the state. Mr. Miller responded that this is an option.

Payroll System

Mr. Miller stated the he did not honestly think this list would be discussed today. He added that there is a need for a payroll system and that the current system is not the best practice.

Commissioner Hall asked if this could be done for $120,000. Mr. Miller responded yes.

Finance Software Package

Mr. Miller stated that the current finance package is old. He added that the tax office has experienced issues and the program is not user friendly.

Ms. Gwen Vaughn stated that the company that the County bought the finance and tax package through has been bought out 3 times in the last 2 or 3 years. She added that the modules are separate and the county can pick and choose what it wants in the package.

Commissioner Hall asked how long the county has had the current finance/tax package. Ms. Vaughn responded since 2000. Commissioner S. Carter stated it is long overdue. Commissioner Hall stated that staff spends a lot of time shuffling paper and could spend their time doing other things.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked what the advantages would be to changing. Mr. Miller responded ease of use. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if this new program could help in generating the proposed budget. Ms. Vaughn responded that it would depend. She added that if the Board approves the finance and tax program they may also find a system for payroll.

Health Insurance

Mr. Miller stated that he thought the county could do better than the $672,000 figure.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if this could be put out for bids. Mr. Miller responded that the County has a broker that handled that. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the increase could be cut to $300,000. Mr. Miller responded that this is a possibility but it is market driven and claims driven.

DSS Technology

Commissioner Owen stated that DSS technology needed to be added to the capital projects list. He added that the new IT director is working with DSS on a new state program.

Salary Study

Commissioner Owen stated that the Board had invested in a salary study and it needed to look at something salarywise. He added that it has been 3 years since EMS received a raise. Commissioner Owen stated that the county manager has talked about Phase 3 of the salary study as far as increasing salaries based on years of service. He added that the county pays the minimum on salaries now.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that the county manager also needed to list addition or new positions to the list. Mr. Miller responded that he could create a list for this. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that a fleet manager has been mentioned but there have been others. Mr. Miller responded that the Board had funded some of those positions already. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that there were 2 positions that were only allocated for 2 years. Mr. Miller responded that he would have to look into that.

Commissioner Hall stated that there were some discussions about a Deputy Finance Director. Mr. Miller responded that the Board approved that position. Commissioner Hall asked if it was a permanent position. Mr. Miller responded that the Board increased the salary of the accounting tech position by $13,000 to make the deputy finance director position.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that it was the SRO position that was only funded for 2 years. Mr. Miller responded that the Sheriff would come before the Board if he wants to continue that position.

STRATEGIC PLANNING – SUCCESSION/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Commissioner Hall stated that the county is having a difficult time recruiting people and the county may have to look at a Plan B for recruiting. He added that the county needed to find a way to entice people to come to Caswell. Commissioner Hall stated that the county may have to look at workforce development training.

Chairman McVey directed the county manager to come up with a plan. Mr. Miller responded that he would be happy to come up with a plan.

Commissioner Hall stated that the county needed to look at a couple of things. He added the people who live here are happy here but outsiders don’t know why we are happy here. Commissioner Hall stated that the county needs to look at another person’s perspective. He added that Caswell is competing with metropolitan areas and Caswell cannot play what other areas are paying.

Commissioner Owen stated that it is the same with economic development, the county needs to look at its strengths. He added that he agrees with Commissioner Hall the county has to have something in place to bring people here and that will take money but there are pieces of the puzzle that the county can start with.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that in Washington last year it was discussed that a rural county like Caswell had an economic developer that worked with the county manager to write grants and he felt the county needed a full time economic developer. He added that the taxpayers carry the burden of the county solely and the county needs someone who will sell the county. Commissioner Hall responded that it is hard to sell someone a horse and buggy when people want cars. He added that technology has changed and Caswell does not have the infrastructure, water or sewer. Commissioner Hall stated that the Center downtown is a step in the right direction. He added that if the county could get good internet here that would help to bring businesses into the county. Commissioner Hall stated that the county needed to beef up its infrastructure. He added that have a CATS bus to transport students from PCC in Yanceyville to PCC in Roxboro is a step in the right direction.

Ms. Vaughn stated that with strategic planning the Board needs to discuss retention. Commissioner Hall responded that the Board needs to think across the board but staff needs to update their skills. Mr. Miller stated that there is no need if staff is working on antiquated equipment.

Commissioner Oestreicher suggested starting a Blue Ribbon Committee that would include people like Mesur.io and why they came to Caswell County. Commissioner Hall responded that the Board already knows why they came here, the rent was cheap and internet was a requirement. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that having a Blue Ribbon Committee to help guide the Board would be helpful.

Mr. Miller stated that the county just completed a strategic economic development plan and that is what the county is trying to follow with the Center on the Square, the possibility of an Ag Center and the broadband internet study that is being headed up by the county planner. He added the county planner is gather data that hopefully will be beneficial to the county. Mr. Miller stated that the county id doing what the citizens and the elected officials asked the county to do with the strategic development plan.

(At 11:00 Commissioner Owen left the meeting.)

Commissioner Oestreicher asked what is being done. Mr. Miller stated that things are being done but things will not change dramatically. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he would like to see the county marching forward. Mr. Miller responded that this is what the county is doing with building a new high school, the co-working space on the Square, working with PCC for the Ag Center in Pelham or Yanceyville and all of this is being done without adding positions. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that maybe volunteers needed to be brought in to help with this process. Commissioner Hall responded that some of the weight needed to come from this Board. He added that the Board needed to ask itself where is the world going, where does Caswell fit in and how does Caswell catch up. Commissioner Hall stated that the county has access to a workforce development team through the PTRC and he could speak to them about coming to speak to the Board.

Commissioner Hall stated that the Board needed to look at expanding the IT department because if the county is going to be getting more technical more staff is needed. He added that the time for file cabinets is over and the IT department will be crucial in this.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that in the preparation of the budget he is struggling with the fact of the tax collector having to wait on figures from the utility companies. Mr. Miller responded that the tax collector bases his estimates off the number of utilities and the value located in the county. Commissioner Hall stated that the tax director does not have a way to project this; the state does this and sends it to the county. Mr. Miller responded that the county will use last year’s numbers to start the budget process and if there is a change staff will let the Board know.

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:13 a.m. Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner S. Carter to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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Paula P. Seamster Rick McVey

Clerk to the Board Chairman

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