MINUTES – FEBRUARY 11, 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 Monday, February 11, 2019. Members present: Rick McVey, Chairman, Jeremiah Jefferies, Vice-Chairman, William E. Carter, Steve Oestreicher and David Owen. Absent: Sterling Carter and Nathaniel Hall. Also present: Bryan Miller, County Manager and Gwen Vaughn, Finance Director. Paula P. Seamster, Clerk to the Board recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McVey called the meeting to order.

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER

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

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Chairman McVey stated that he was going to go around the table so that every Commissioner could state their priorities and then the Board could do through each of those priorities. He asked the county manager for his list.

Mr. Miller stated that he would like to hear from the Board on its priorities.

Commissioner Owen stated that his priorities are: Employee raises – Phase 2 of the Salary Study, Ambulances, Sheriff’s Vehicles, Building Inspections position, and Waterlines at Pelham Industrial Park. He added that he would like to see the budget before making any decisions.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that his priorities are: High Street Church, Pelham Ag Center, Trip to Mount Olive, Raises for Employees making less than $25,000 a year, and Building Inspections position.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that his priorities are: High Speed Broadband, Bartlett Yancey High School Project, Structured Budget Development Process, County Zoning, Tourism, Waste Management/Recycling, Fleet Management, Drivers Safety Training/Certification to use County Vehicles, County Maintenance, and Historic Courthouse Offices Redesign.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that his priorities are: Resources for Additional Revenue, Employee Raises, Cut Wasteful Spending, Study on a County Airport – he has talked with Economic Developer on this, and How to Obtain More Businesses in the County.

Chairman McVey stated that his priorities are: Budget, Public Safety – EMS and Sheriff, Building Inspections position, and Employee Raises.

Employee Raises

Commissioner Owen stated that the County did a Salary Study and it has been 3 years since Public Safety has received a raise. He also added that he would like to see Phase 2 of the Salary Study implemented along with the employees making less than $25,000 to be brought up to $25,000 a year.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that the County needed to look at the employees that are making less than $25,000 a year. He added that the county raised taxes for the fire departments 3 cents and will raise taxes 4 cents for the high school. Commissioner Jefferies asked where the money would come from to pay the employees more money.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked for more information on the salary study. He wanted to know where the data came from and if the county employees were compared to other Tier 1 counties. Mr. Miller responded that the salary study brought the county employees up to the minimum wage of the job. Commissioner Oestreicher asked who defined the minimum. Mr. Miller responded that the minimum was defined by the people who did the salary study based off the information they collected from other like counties. Mr. Miller added that slight adjustments will keep the salary study intact and on track. He added that giving individual raises messes up the salary study. Mr. Miller stated that grades were formulated by tasks performed. He added that the Board may want to exempt certain positions out of the salary study. Mr. Miller stated that the DSS Board should make recommendations for Social Services employees and the Health Board should make recommendations for Health Department employees. Mr. Miller stated that first of all it needed to be determined if the county could afford these raises especially to bring up the employees making less than $25,000 a year and then taking into account the 20+ years of service employees. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the salary study has been updated annually. Mr. Miller responded that the salary study was a one-time thing but it is a good idea to update it every 3, 4 or 5 years. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if there is a gap between the recommendation and where the salaries are. Mr. Miller responded that the salary study recommended 3 levels: minimum, median and maximum. He added that the Board authorized the minimum level. Mr. Miller added that there is a stepping grade plan that accounts for years of service and the study breaks the service down over a 30 years span.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that he agreed that the employees needed a raise especially the employees making less than $25,000 a year as well as EMS and the Sheriff’s Department. He added that Caswell is a training center for EMS and deputies. Commissioner W. Carter added that he thinks there needs to be a 2 year contract signed for those that the county pays for their training. Commissioner Owen responded that this is included in the new Personnel Policy. Commissioner W. Carter stated that investigators are needed for DSS because he gets calls all the time about things going on with people who receive assistance from DSS. Commissioner Owen responded that this was discussed several years ago during a Tri-County meeting with Rockingham and Stokes County. He added that Rockingham County has captured a large amount of money due to this and this position may be able to pay for itself. Commissioner W. Carter stated that a position needed to be added for this. Mr. Miller responded that this would be a good item for the DSS Board to request from the Board. Commissioner W. Carter stated that this is a large portion of the County’s budget.

Chairman McVey stated that the county manager would look into the salary study and bring several scenarios back to the Board.

Commissioner Owen stated that this should not include positions that report to the Board, Health Department, DSS, Soil and Water, and Elections.

Mr. Miller stated that the current system does not take into account years of service. He added that he would start with employees that make less than $25,000 a year and years of service.

Building Inspections Position

Chairman McVey stated that Building Inspections is making enough money to bring in another position.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that Building Inspections has had two good years: 2015 and 2018.

Mr. Miller responded that 2015 was due to solar farms and 2018 had some larger permits. He added that this year there will be several projects going on such as the high school and possibly the Ag center.

Commissioner Owen stated bring a new inspector in will not increase revenues but it will decrease the work load on the current building inspector. He added that he has heard from several people that the current inspector is the best inspector the county has had but he has way too many inspections. Mr. Miller responded that the building inspector completed 90 inspections last week.

Chairman McVey asked if the Board wanted to consider a part time inspector or a full time inspector. Mr. Miller responded that the County could try to find a part time inspector but he did not think this would be possible. He added that there may be a possibility of code enforcement and building inspections if there was a full time position.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked what it took to become a building inspector. Mr. Miller responded that he was not sure but the person would have to serve under a licensed building inspector for so long and then take state exams.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that he knows someone who would be interested in working part time as the building inspector that would come back to the county and that is the retired building inspector, Woodrow Bigelow. Commissioner Owen responded to check into this.

Commissioner W. Carter asked if this position would be added before July. Commissioner Jefferies responded that Woodrow Bigelow would be interested in talking. Mr. Miller stated that building inspections has changed since Woodrow was with the county. He added that the county does not pay mileage and that the pay would be at a lesser rate than what Woodrow was making when it was here before. Chairman McVey asked the county manager to get in touch with Woodrow. Mr. Miller responded that the position would have to be posted just like any other position. Mr. Miller stated that the position would be part time permanent.

Commissioner W. Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to look into hiring a part time permanent building inspector with salary amount from county manager. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Owen asked what the salary would be. Chairman McVey responded that the county manager would bring back the salary.

Mr. Miller stated that he would put together a salary and present at the next Board meeting on February 18, 2019.

Public Safety Vehicles

EMS

Chairman McVey stated that he had asked EMS and the Sheriff for rates to lease vehicles versus buying.

Mr. Miller stated that he will be meeting with the Sheriff on February 14th on leasing vehicles. He added that he has some estimates on a lease program for EMS. Mr. Miller stated that the lease program is for a 3 year or 5 year lease but he was not sure that this would be a recommendation that he would make. He added that the lease interest rates are between 5.24% and 5.39%. Mr. Miller stated that there would be 6 payments for the 3 year lease and 10 payments for the 5 year lease. He recommended following the regular installment program.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that the International ambulance needed to go. Mr. Miller agreed and added that exhaust is going into the back of the ambulance. Commissioner W. Carter asked if the Sprinter was being used. Mr. Miller responded that it is still being used.

Chairman McVey asked what the maintenance cost has been on the ambulances. Mr. Miller responded that through January 2019 it is $33,630. Chairman McVey asked if this included tires. Mr. Miller responded yes.

Commissioner W. Carter asked it the maintenance was higher than what it was with Caswell Tire. Mr. Miller responded that the maintenance cost is actually less. Commissioner W. Carter asked how many ambulances EMS had. Mr. Miller responded 5 and that 208 has 180,000 miles, 209 has 172,000 miles, 204 has 158,000 miles, 207 has 283,000 and 211 has 88,000 miles.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that it may be better to replace the engine versus replacing the whole unit. Commissioner W. Carter responded that 2 units have already had the engines replaced. Commissioner Owen stated that he thought there was only 1 unit that the box could be switched.

Chairman McVey stated that the County may need to look into at least 2 ambulances.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if these could be financed through Piedmont Electric. Mr. Miller responded that the County would have to apply to the red leg loan program but the County still owes $72,000 on the previous loan.

Patrol Cars

Chairman McVey stated that the Sheriff is requesting 12 patrol cars.

Commissioner W. Carter asked if the Sheriff’s office could get by with 10 cars. He added that several years ago the county set the Sheriff’s office up on a rotation but did not stick do it so that is why they need so many cars now.

Commissioner Owen asked why the Sheriff’s office was requesting $40,000 each when it the past it has been $30 - $31,000 each. Mr. Miller responded that this was due to the up-fitting.

Commissioner Jefferies suggested 6 cars for the Sheriff’s office. Chairman McVey added that the County pay for these outright and not borrow any money.

RECESS

The Board took a brief recess.

BUDGET PROCESS

Commissioner Owen stated that he had one concern and that is with Solid Waste. He added that fund had been going down and the Board may need to consider raising this fee back up. Ms. Gwen Vaughn responded that the fund balance was $700,000 but $300,000 will be needed to offset the balance. Commissioner Owen stated that the fund balance will be $233,000 after the next budget and the Board needed to be aware of that. The old fee was $84 and it was lowered to $44. Mr. Miller responded that will needed to be addressed in the budget work sessions and that he would be happy to bring back a recommendation.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that he would like to start looking at the budget in March and asked if this was possible. Mr. Miller responded that this would only give staff one month to put the budget together and to have department head budget meetings. He asked if the budget could be given the Board at the 2nd meeting in March or the 1st meeting in April. Commissioner Jefferies stated that the 1st meeting in April would be good.

Commissioner W. Carter brought up the waterline expense at the Pelham Industrial Park. Mr. Miller added that there is urgency with this repair and he would like to have it approved in this budget year because it is tying up the maintenance staff a lot.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he noticed that there were repairs on elevators and other things last year and he wanted to know if the county could look at an escrow account to start accruing for these types of things. Mr. Miller responded that the county can do that because the county is dealing with aging buildings.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that the Board put money in a capital fund to address these issues before. Mr. Miller responded that this can be done but this money is strictly designated for capital items and cannot be used for anything else.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked the county manager to put together a schedule plan for these items.

Cooperative Extension Building

Commissioner Jefferies stated that a new cooperative extension building needed to be built. Commissioner Owen stated that he did not think there needed to be a new building built and that the structure and foundation seemed good and that a roof may be needed. Commissioner Jefferies recommended putting up a tin building. Mr. Miller stated that the HVAC and floors needed to be addressed in the building. Commissioner Oestreicher asked that a list of items that needed to be addressed be put together. Chairman McVey stated that there are several buildings that need to be addressed like the EMS building.

Chairman McVey stated that he has not had not heard anyone say not to raise taxes. Commissioner W. Carter stated that there are only 2 ways to get money and that is from raising taxes or fund balance. He added that the county needed to look at wasteful spending. Mr. Miller responded that the budget had been cut over the last 2 years significantly. Chairman McVey reminded the Board that there will be a tax increase on the high school renovation. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that the citizens voted to use up to $36 million for this project and he added that it would be interesting to see how many will scream when the taxes are raised after this project because he did not think the citizens realized what they were voting for.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he wanted to see a very transparent budget. Chairman McVey stated that the Board had talked about showing how many cents it takes to run each department in the budget.

Commissioner W. Carter asked the county manager how many vehicles were being requested for fleet management. Mr. Miller responded five but they are not necessary. Commissioner W. Carter stated that a truck would be needed for building inspections.

WATERLINES AT PELHAM INDUSTRIAL PARK

Commissioner Owen stated that the Board needed to address the waterline issue at the Pelham Industrial Park. Commissioner W. Carter responded that it becomes a priority when the state sends a letter and this has been done. Mr. Miller stated that he would like to move on this issue now and a budget amendment can be put on the next agenda.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner W. Carter for a budget amendment to be prepared on the waterline issue at the Pelham Industrial Park for the next Board meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Miller stated that he would get the exact dollar amount for the budget amendment.

HIGH STREET CHURCH

Commissioner Jefferies stated that he was emailed about installing a crosswalk in front of High Street Church but he did not think that would fix the problem because the church is in a curse and a lot of people go there and have to cross the street to park. He added that he has asked that a light be put there and this light would be turned on during church services.

Mr. Miller stated that he started working on this about 1 ½ years ago and turned it over to the Mayor of Milton which at the time was Michael Bryant and since then he got sick and resigned. He added that the state does not want to do a crosswalk because it is not at an intersection but this will not fix the issue either. Mr. Miller stated that Mayor Foster had indicated that he is willing to check on special funding to have something done but he is happy to work with DOT to get this resolved. He added that the whole area needs to be looked at.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that a lot of churches have a sheriff’s car there for this purpose. Commissioner Owen responded that the church would have to request and pay for this service. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if a letter could be sent to the church recommending this.

PELHAM AGRICULTURE EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Mr. Miller stated that during the February 18th Board meeting there will be a public hearing on the Agriculture Educational Center. He added that the Board will receive 2 to 3 options for locations of the center. Mr. Miller stated that this is all tied to the $1.4 million grant funding that Piedmont Community College will be receiving. He added that the County’s investment would be $700,000 which would be a donation of land at the Pelham Industrial Park.

Commissioner W. Carter asked where the center would be located if it were put in Yanceyville. Mr. Miller responded that land would have to be purchased.

Chairman McVey stated that the county already owns land in Pelham with water and sewer so nothing would have to be purchased there.

Mr. Miller stated that there are pros and cons for both of these locations.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that the county owns land on the County Home Road and there should be water and sewer there as well and if the center were put there it would be centrally located. He added that he could not see putting any money into this if put in Pelham and that if this is where it would be located he would suggest putting the center in Roxboro.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked what the value of the land was at the Pelham Industrial Park. Mr. Miller responded that the selling price that the Board of Commissioners agreed to was $7500 per acre but an appraisal would be needed. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the price per acre could be revisited. Mr. Miller responded that it could be revisited.

Mr. Miller stated that one of the economic development multipliers for putting the center in Pelham is the million plus people that come through the Welcome Center. Commissioner W. Carter added that Highway 29 is also a good factor for this. Mr. Miller added that there is also an opportunity for farm to table restaurants to be located there as well but there are benefits to both sites and there are bad issues as well.

TRIP TO MOUNT OLIVE

Commissioner Jefferies stated that Mount Olive had an Agriculture Educational Center and he suggested that the commissioners take a trip to visit this center. Several commissioners stated that they would like to visit the center in Mount Olive.

Mr. Miller asked if the economic developer and someone from Piedmont Community College could also go on this trip.

Mr. Miller stated that he would call Mount Olive to see if a trip could be scheduled for this Thursday.

HIGH SPEED BROADBAND

Commissioner Oestreicher asked the county manager where the high speed broadband surveys stood because this is high on everybody’s list. Mr. Miller responded that the planning director collected over 2700 surveys and this information has been submitted to the state so now it just a waiting game to see if the county will be chosen for a $2 million grant and the county would have to match the grant 2 to 1. He added that the county planner’s involvement would count as in kind towards the match as well as tower access in the county but the county is pretty much in a holding pattern until 2020. Mr. Miller added that there have been discussions about this that involve economic development so he cannot discuss any specifics during open session.

COUNTY ZONING

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that over the last 2 weeks he knows of 3 instances that could have been prevented if the county had zoning. He added that the county is pushing for new businesses and he thinks it would be good for the county to discuss the pros and cons of zoning in the county.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that zoning would not pass in the county; it has been talked about before.

Mr. Miller stated that people do not want zoning until it affects them but zoning is a way for the county to protect its land. He added that there has been a renewed interest in zoning.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the county could look at countywide zoning versus certain area zoning. Commissioner Owen suggested holding public meetings on zoning. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if a public hearing or surveys would be helpful in finding out this information. Mr. Miller responded that there are statutory guidelines that have to be followed. He added that he would get the county planner to schedule a public meeting on zoning.

Commissioner Oestreicher moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen for the County Manager and County Planner to schedule a public meeting for zoning in the county. The motion carried by a vote of 3 to 2 with Commissioners W. Carter and Jefferies voting no.

TOURISM

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he knows that this is a part of Economic Development and the priority of the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to encourage more tourism. He added that he had heard that a new Chamber of Commerce Director would be starting in April so she asked if the economic developer could work with the Chamber and the Historical Association to promote tourism. Commissioner Oestreicher added that he would like to see how the tourism money is being spent. Mr. Miller responded that the Board appoints the Tourism Development Authority so that authority is responsible for assigning those funds. He added that the Board may need to make another appointment to this authority since one of the members has not attended a meeting on two separate occasions but the TDA will need to make this request.

Commissioner Owen asked if a person who rents a cottage could be part of this authority. Mr. Miller responded yes if this person remits the occupancy tax. Commissioner Owen stated that if this authority could get moving it would be great. He added that there is $14,000 that has been collected through the occupancy tax.

DRIVERS SAFETY CLASS

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he knew of one vehicle that died on the side of the road and he wanted to know if the Board was interested in have a safety driving class for employees that drive county cars. Commissioner W. Carter responded that law enforcement already goes through a defensive driving course. Mr. Miller responded that EMS does this as well. Commissioner Owen stated that CATS goes through a similar course as well.

BUDGET UPDATE

Ms. Gwen Vaughn gave the Board a FY 2018-2019 Revenue & Expenditure report for period July 2018 through January 2019. She stated that the revenues outweigh the expenditures in the report but there are some fixed costs that will be coming out within the next few months that will balance the revenues and expenditures. Ms. Vaughn stated that the next report will have the 3rd quarter revenues and expenditures.

ADJOURNMENT

At 12:07 p.m. Commissioner W. Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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Paula P. Seamster Rick McVey

Clerk to the Board Chairman

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