

Surry County Board of Commissioners
Meeting of August 17, 2020

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m., August 17, 2020. 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 Larry Johnson, Vice-Chairman Mark Marion, Commissioner Eddie Harris, Commissioner Van Tucker and Commissioner Bill Goins.

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

Chris Knopf, County Manager
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
Rhonda Nixon, Finance Officer
John Shelton, Emergency Services Director
Penny Harrison, Tax Administrator
Mark Willis, Opioid Response Director
Daniel White, Parks & Recreation Director
Martha Brintle, MIS Director
George Crater, Airport Manager
Ed Woltz, County Attorney
Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager
Mike Hoots, LifeStar Emergency Services
News Media

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

Chairman Johnson requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Marion, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the August 17, 2020 meeting agenda.

Chairman Johnson requested the Board consider the minutes of the July 20, 2020 meeting as presented. Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

Chairman Johnson requested the Board consider the consent agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, 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 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$40,395.80.
 2. Total refunds for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$4,460.15.
 3. Total NCVTS tag and tax refunds for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$1,550.19.
 4. Total real and personal property discoveries for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$36,668.10.
 5. Total motor vehicle discoveries for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$0.
 6. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC additions for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$81,869.10.
 7. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC refunds for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$118.06.

- 8. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC releases for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$835.60.
- 9. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC collections for the month ending 7/31/2020 in the amount of \$30,379.82.

- Approve the tax write-off for the year 2010 in the amount of \$79,062.12. The amount includes delinquent real property taxes of \$33,814.54, personal property taxes of \$19,243.12 and motor vehicle property taxes of \$26,004.46.
- Appoint Johnny Easter, Deana Snow and Deanna Henderson as Subdivision Administrators.
- Appoint Johnny Easter and Deana Snow as Review Officers.
- Amend the 2020 Board of Commissioners' Meeting Calendar by canceling the September 8, October 5 and November 2 Board meetings.

Requests from the Assistant County Manager:

- Approve to renew the County's liability and property insurance with Travelers Insurance.

Requests from the Finance Officer:

- Approve to surplus the following vehicles:

<u>Asset#</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>VIN#</u>	<u>Department</u>
51085	2002	Jeep	Grand Cherokee	1J4GW48S72C263026	C-Comm
50262	2003	Dodge	Durango	1D4H538N03F583205	C-Comm
51161	2007	Dodge	Durango	1D8HB48267F544683	C-Comm
51187	2007	Ford	Ranger	1FTYR15E07PA72398	Env Health

- Approve the donation of a vehicle from Surry County Government to the Bannertown Volunteer Fire Department.
- Approve the donation of a vehicle from Surry County Government to the Jot-Um-Down Volunteer Fire Department.
- Approve the surplus of a 2018 Ford F-150, VIN# 1FTEW1E52JFA87879, and even trade of it for a 2020 Ford Explorer, VIN# 1FMSK8DH5LGA33956. The 2018 Ford F-150 is owned by the Sheriff's Office and will be traded for the 2020 Ford Explorer from Scenic Ford in Mount Airy because transmission parts for the Ford F-150 cannot be located and the vehicle has not been repaired after many attempts.

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

Samona Creasy addressed the NAACP joint statement that was signed by the presiding members of each of Surry County's elected bodies, including Chairman Larry Johnson. She discussed Pilot Mountain Mayor Evan Cockerham's responses to her previous statements and elected officials who she said did not consult their elected bodies before signing the document. She asked Chairman Larry Johnson for an apology and asked if he really believes what was in the joint statement. Chairman Johnson said that he would respond to her during the Board's time for General County Business.

Linda Black discussed the potential vehicular road closure of the Bean Shoals Access at the Yadkin River Section of Pilot Mountain State Park. She said the Pilot Mountain State Park Superintendent had requested the closure from the State. She discussed areas in the Bean Shoals Access area that need to be improved and said Pilot Mountain State Park has enough resources to make that happen. She presented a

petition of people who want to keep the road open and asked for the Board's support in asking the State to keep the road open.

Frank Hamby, who lives near the Bean Shoals Access, discussed the benefits of the park and why he wanted the road to stay open. He also discussed other possible park improvements.

Emily Grogan, of Friends of the Sauratown Mountains, said that she and her group members can help with any needed improvements at Bean Shoals Access. She discussed the history of the park, Joe Matthews' efforts and introduced Andy Matthews, Joe Matthews' son.

Colby Brown said that Bean Shoals Access means a lot to Surry County citizens and asked the Board for their help in keeping the road open.

Brian Fannon, the Yadkin Riverkeeper, who said he grew up here and moved back, voiced his support of keeping the road open. He stated the road should stay open, especially with more people becoming interested in the outdoors.

S. Douglas and Helen Beets and Scott Needham, a Pilot Mountain Town Commissioner, emailed public comments that are saved as hard copies and electronic files with the meeting's agenda packet.

There being no further comments, Chairman Johnson closed the open forum.

Penny Harrison, Tax Administrator, presented a settlement for 2019-2020 property taxes, a required resolution to approve and accept the annual settlement, the order of tax collection for the 2020-2021 fiscal year and the affidavit of due diligence.

The required resolution approving the annual settlement follows:

**RESOLUTION APPROVING
THE TAX COLLECTOR'S ANNUAL SETTLEMENT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019 – 2020 AND PRIOR YEARS**

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. 105-373, the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector has made his report of settlement to the Surry County Board of Commissioners for fiscal year 2019 – 2020 and prior years after July 1 and before he is charged with taxes for the current fiscal year, 2020 - 2021; and

WHEREAS, based upon the written and oral report of settlement of the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector, Surry County Board of Commissioners has made sufficient inquiry in order to reach a determination that the collection work of the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector has been performed satisfactorily and that the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector has done everything that he could have done to reach whatever property may have been available; and

WHEREAS, as required by N.C.G.S. 105-373, before being charged with taxes for the current fiscal year, the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector has presented the Surry County Board of Commissioners a list of the persons owning real property taxes whose taxes for the preceding fiscal year remain unpaid and the principal amount owed by each person and a list of the persons not owning real property taxes whose personal property taxes for the preceding fiscal year remain unpaid and the principal amount owed by each person, along with a statement under oath that he has made diligent efforts to collect the taxes due from the persons listed in a manner that is reasonably necessary by all means available to him for collection; and

WHEREAS, the settlement of the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector, including the settlement for the taxes for prior years, which are attached hereto, together with this action of the Surry County Board of Commissioners, shall be entered into the minutes of said Board;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Surry County Board of Commissioners that the list of persons owning real property whose 2019 real property taxes remain unpaid and the list of persons not owning real property whose 2019 personal property taxes remain unpaid and the principal amount owed by each person are hereby acknowledged as received.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Surry County Board of Commissioners that the annual settlement of the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector for the fiscal year 2019 – 2020 and prior years is hereby accepted as presented by the Tax Administrator in his capacity as Tax Collector.

ADOPTED this the 17th day of August 2020.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the resolution to approve and accept the annual settlement.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the order of tax collection for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

Mark Willis, Opioid Response Director, presented project updates from his department.

Mr. Willis discussed how COVID-19 is causing an increase in drug overdoses in Surry County. Mr. Willis reported that Surry County has had 129 overdose deaths this year. He showed the Board the trailer to a video series titled "Surry, The Road to Recovery," which will educate citizens about how to prevent opioid abuse.

Mr. Willis provided projections for the future state of substance use in Surry County. He detailed new methods that Surry County is using that many counties are not. He discussed the number of treatment centers and their outpatient capabilities.

Mr. Willis reviewed information about the Drug Overdose Fatality Review Team. He discussed the team's charter, purpose and objectives.

County Attorney Ed Woltz asked Mr. Willis how many people are being investigated by the District Attorney's Office for the new Death by Distribution law. Mr. Willis responded that the District Attorney's Office had declined to investigate five Death by Distribution cases that had been brought to their attention. Commissioner Harris said he hopes the District Attorney's Office prosecutes the cases going forward.

The Board praised the work of Mr. Willis and his staff.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Drug Overdose Fatality Review Team Charter.

Chris Knopf, County Manager, requested that the Board amend the agenda to add an item to discuss a Bean Shoals Access Resolution.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to add an item to discuss a Bean Shoals Access Resolution.

Mr. Knopf read a draft Bean Shoals Access Resolution, which follows, requesting that the State keep the Bean Shoals Access road open to vehicular traffic:

SURRY COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Pilot Mountain State Park is one of Surry County's most significant natural resources and tourist destinations, and how the Park is managed and accessed has a significant impact on the local economy; and

WHEREAS, the Bean Shoals Access of Pilot Mountain State Park has been a place of enjoyment for approximately 50 years, opening around 1970, because it provides close vehicular access to the Yadkin River for outdoor enthusiasts, families, groups, scouts, and many others; and

WHEREAS, the Bean Shoals portion of Pilot Mountain State Park is the most significant public access for vehicular traffic to the Yadkin River for both residents and tourists alike, outside of a couple of paddling accesses; and

WHEREAS, over the years the Bean Shoals Access has been a significant source of outdoor recreation and has alleviated overflow crowds from the Mountain Section of Pilot Mountain State Park; and

WHEREAS, the Surry County Tourism Development Authority spent significant funds providing way finding signage directing vehicular traffic from NC 268 to Pilot Mountain State Park accesses along the Corridor and at Bean Shoals, which were supported and encouraged by State Park staff to relieve traffic pressure at the Mountain Section; and

WHEREAS, it has come to the attention of the Surry County Board of Commissioners that the Pilot Mountain State Park Superintendent has requested that the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources permanently close the Bean Shoals Access of Pilot Mountain State Park to vehicular traffic; and

WHEREAS, the fact that a permanent vehicular access closure request with significance well beyond the State Park has been submitted to the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources without any prior discussion by State Park staff to local park users, municipal and county officials, tourism officials, etc. is deeply concerning; and

WHEREAS, the alleged issue that has led to this request deals with certain vehicles having difficulty fording streams along the access road and the impact this has on these natural resources; and

WHEREAS, if closed to vehicular traffic, visitors would be expected to hike up to 1.5 to 3.4 miles to access the Yadkin River, camp sites, picnic areas, and the historic Bean Shoals Canal over rough, hilly terrain. This change would then especially create a hardship for any typical and healthy hiker, especially for children, elderly and disabled visitors, all but ensuring far fewer users at the Bean Shoals Access in the future; and

WHEREAS, local residents are reporting less satisfaction with Pilot Mountain State Park due to increasing efforts to limit access that has been in place since the park's inception, especially since public funds support the existence of Pilot Mountain State Park; and

WHEREAS, in the opinion of Surry County, this request is shortsighted considering the information described in this resolution and would create an incredibly negative impact for our residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Surry County opposes the request of the Pilot Mountain State Park Superintendent to permanently close the Bean Shoals Access of Pilot Mountain State Park to vehicular traffic and requests that the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources employ a transparent process for making the necessary improvements to the Bean Shoals Access road that protects the streams and keeps it open to vehicular access.

Adopted this, the 17th day of August 2020.

Commissioners Tucker and Harris thanked the citizens who spoke in support of keeping the road open. They also discussed the importance of the road to tourism in Surry County and the amount of money that has been spent to promote Bean Shoals Access and repair streams in the park.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the Bean Shoals Access Resolution, requesting that the State keep the Bean Shoals Access road open to vehicular traffic.

An ambulance franchise hearing was held to consider an ambulance franchise application from LifeStar Emergency Services.

John Shelton, Emergency Services Director, and Mike Hoots, of LifeStar Emergency Services, discussed the benefits of LifeStar providing convalescent services for Surry County.

Mr. Hoots said that LifeStar is working with Forsyth, Davidson and Stokes counties to provide convalescent services. Mr. Shelton

said that LifeStar will be a good fit for Surry County, given that they have an excellent background and reputation.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Chairman Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to approve LifeStar's ambulance franchise application.

Daniel White, Parks & Recreation Director, presented an item proposing that camping be permitted at Fisher River Park. He said that the department has been approached by the Boy Scouts of America (Dogwood District) and the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA), who would hold a bicycle race at the park, followed by camping.

Mr. White also presented a request from the Boy Scouts of America to waive amphitheater fees at the park while they camp.

Upon motion of Commissioner Marion, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve a camping trial run for the Boy Scouts of America or NICA, whichever camping trip is scheduled first. Any future camping opportunities at Fisher River Park would be based on the results of the first camping trip.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Chairman Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to waive amphitheater fees for the Boy Scouts of America.

Mr. Knopf pulled an item from the agenda considering collaboration with Surry Communications for a CARES Act/EDA Grant Application.

Mr. Woltz provided the Board an update on the Rawley Avenue properties that are up for sale. He said that he and Jessica Montgomery, Interim Facilities Management Director, have shown the properties to prospective buyers twice, both of which showed interest. The building and the parking lot are being marketed together, Mr. Woltz said.

Mr. Knopf presented, as an informational item, Legislative Goals for 2021-2022. He requested that the Board provide him any items they would like added to the goals before the September Board meeting.

Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager, presented a request from the Board of Health to reappoint Wade White.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Chairman Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to reappoint Wade White to the Board of Health.

In General County Business, Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Knopf about possible broadband improvements for Surry County. After discussion, Mr. Knopf recommended partnering with private sector companies and municipalities to improve the service in Surry County.

Chairman Johnson discussed the NAACP joint statement he signed. He said he was contacted several months ago by the NAACP President on the phone and they agreed what happened to Mr. George Floyd in Minnesota was terrible. But it was also agreed upon that Surry County does not have that problem. He said he was OK with meeting with the NAACP later to discuss preventative maintenance to ensure an event

like what took place in Minnesota never happens in Surry County. He later signed the document without realizing some of the wording in it. Mr. Johnson said it was a mistake to sign it without discussing it with other Board members and he apologized to each of them.

Chairman Johnson recognized the late Jimmy Miller's service to Surry County as a former Board member and acknowledged that he had passed away. Commissioners Harris and Tucker said their hearts go out to the Miller family and they recognized his service to citizens.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, the Board voted unanimously to go into closed session for legal pursuant to 143-318.11 (a) (3), economic development pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a) (4) and personnel matters pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6).

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

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to reclassify employee #431042 to Human Resources Manager I and move employee #1798 to Grade 67-3, effective August 1, 2020.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board unanimously voted to approve, but not release, the July 20, 2020 Board closed session minutes.

The Board adjourned by unanimous consensus at 9:28 p.m.

Nathan Walls
Clerk to the Board