

Surry County Board of Commissioners
Meeting of May 18, 2020

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m., May 18, 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 in-person for the meeting, at various times, were:
Chris Knopf, County Manager
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
Rhonda Nixon, Finance Officer
Jessica Montgomery, Public Works Director
Kristy Preston, DSS Director
Ed Woltz, County Attorney
Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager

Others present via Zoom, at various times, were:
Jessica Roberts, Mount Airy Tourism Development Authority

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

Chairman Johnson requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve the May 18, 2020 agenda.

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

Chairman Johnson requested the Board consider the minutes of the April 29, 2020 special meeting as presented. Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

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

Request from the County Manager:

- Approve the following from the Tax Department:
 1. Total releases for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$1,433.88.
 2. Total refunds for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$1,926.98.
 3. Total NCVTS tag and tax refunds for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$1,006.59.
 4. Total real and personal property discoveries for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$4,969.92.
 5. Total motor vehicle discoveries for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$0.
 6. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC additions for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$81,505.85.

7. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC refunds for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$426.89.
8. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC releases for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$3,434.34.
9. Total EMS, EMD and EMS-MC collections for the month ending 4/30/2020 in the amount of \$22,694.68.

Requests from the Assistant County Manager:

- Approve the Workers' Comp settlement activity for quarter ending March 31, 2020, totaling \$36,206.10.
- Approve the Workers' Compensation payment of \$151,769 to the NC Association of County Commissioners.
- Approve the Parks and Recreation Director's request for "Running the Vines" to be held on August 1, 2020, conditions permitting, and seek a one-time road closure permit from NC DOT.
- Approve for John Shelton to purchase a combo extrication device and accessories funded by the Emergency Management Supplemental grant.
- Appoint employee #3249 as Interim Facilities Director, effective May 1, 2020, with a one month overlap for training purposes.

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.

Caroline Hamlin told the Board about her daughter overdosing five years ago on May 13. She discussed recent overdose deaths. She said this topic should be more publicized and asked the County and local newspapers to advertise more data to prevent overdoses.

Mark Jones presented a three-pronged approach for Surry County to sue Gov. Roy Cooper over the shutdown of the economy due to COVID-19. He said that the Governor was trampling citizens' constitutional rights.

Mark Bender reiterated what Mr. Jones said. He said that the Stay at Home Order has kept some businesses closed for too long.

Delores Taylor of Alton Lane in Mount Airy spoke about a neighbor's house, which is located next to her house at the corner of Alton Lane and Galax Trail. She said that the house has: A tennis court that houses 14 dogs, 50 chickens in the basement, 20 ducks, and multiple goats and roosters. She described how the neighbor's living conditions have ruined her property value and quality of life.

Pam Bledsoe, a neighbor of Ms. Taylor, asked the Board to help with the situation. She said the noise level of the animals at the house is ridiculous. She said she spoke with the homeowner about the problem and her response was that it wasn't her fault.

Jennifer Adams, another neighbor of Ms. Taylor, said the number of animals causes problems for all the neighbors. She said the homeowner's lot is too small for that many animals. She also said she has called Waste Management for a year over the homeowner's trash.

Rhonda Baylor, a former neighbor of Ms. Taylor, said that the neighborhood was nice in 2008, but since the problematic homeowner moved in, the neighborhood now looks very bad.

Gayle Norman reiterated what Mr. Jones said and asked the Board to take legal action against Gov. Cooper.

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

Kristy Preston, DSS Director, presented a DSS Director's Report, which included performance measure data, a child support recognition from the State for DSS employee Leslie Carroll and information about supplemental payments to families.

Ms. Preston covered benefits to families who DSS serves. She said that food stamp applications are up 35 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commissioner Marion asked if there has been an uptick in child abuse cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Preston said child abuse cases are down, but foster child entry is up.

Jessica Roberts, Director of The Tourism Partnership of Surry County, presented a report about losses in the hotel and restaurant industries. Ms. Roberts also covered the potential for tourism in Surry County as the State reopens.

Ms. Roberts said that the tourism benefits for Surry County include being close to many tourists in the Mid-Atlantic states, that Surry County is rural, that Surry County is an attractive place to visit and that people are more likely to travel in cars right now versus flying. She said occupancy tax collections should rebound soon.

Ms. Roberts also discussed an e-newsletter and other efforts to lure tourists to Surry County.

Jessica Montgomery, Public Works Director, presented requests for scale house, landfill expansion and leachate pond change orders.

Ms. Montgomery reviewed the project details and costs.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to approve the scale house change order bid for \$26,206.85 from Simcon Company, the landfill expansion change order bid for \$79,265.42 from Jimmy R. Lynch & Sons and the pond change order bid for \$89,990 from Jimmy R. Lynch & Sons.

Ms. Montgomery also provided an update on the landfill and convenience centers, recycling, the methane project in the landfill (powers 900 homes) and the importance of commercial carriers needing to secure their truck loads to reduce litter.

Chris Knopf, County Manager, presented specifics on the \$1.4 million Surry County is receiving from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Mr. Knopf said the funds will only cover expenses and operations related to Coronavirus response.

Mr. Knopf said that separate funds will be coming to the local school systems through the Department of Public Instruction.

Mr. Knopf said the County is responsible for how the funds are spent, including how subgrant recipients spend it, such as the municipalities.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, the Board unanimously approved receiving the \$1.4 million

Coronavirus Relief Fund and the County Manager's plan for allocating the funds.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board unanimously approved entering into interlocal agreements for the Coronavirus Relief Fund with the City of Mount Airy, Town of Elkin, Town of Dobson and Town of Pilot Mountain.

Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager, presented Board and Commission appointments and reappointments to the Board.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Chairman Johnson, the Board unanimously approved the appointments of Christina Chilton and Joe Rick and the re-appointments of Rusty Slate, Spencer Key, Daniel White, Jeff Eads, Dr. Terri Mosley and John Deir to the Surry County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Dr. Richard Merlo to the Partners Behavioral Health Board.

The Board discussed a recent meeting item about deferring rent for businesses leasing County-owned commercial buildings. The Board decided to take no action.

Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager, announced that 578 people were tested on May 18 at the County's three COVID-19 mass testing sites.

The Board discussed Mr. Jones' request to sue Gov. Cooper. Board members expressed their viewpoints about the request.

Mr. Woltz said that suing the State has not yielded much success for the County in the past. He recommended that the Board take no action on the topic during the meeting and see what Gov. Cooper announces for May 22, the date which the State is scheduled to move into Phase 2 of the reopening process.

Chairman Johnson said the Board will meet again the first Monday in June.

The Board discussed any actions the County could take against the problematic homeowner on Galax Trail.

Mr. Woltz read a letter he had written to Capt. Larry Lowe of the Sheriff's Office about the property. Mr. Woltz's recommendation was that the neighbors need to file a civil nuisance lawsuit against the homeowner.

Upon motion of Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board unanimously approved to adjourn at 8:39 p.m.

Nathan Walls
Clerk to the Board