

MINUTES – MARCH 5, 2007

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at the Historic Courthouse in Yanceyville, North Carolina at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, March 5, 2007. Members present: George W. Ward, Jr., Chairman, Jeremiah Jefferies, Vice-Chairman, William E. Carter, Nathaniel Hall, Larry G. Hamlett, Kenneth D. Travis, and C. Hester Vernon, III. Also present: Robert V. Shaver, Jr., Interim County Manager/County Attorney and Shannon White representing The Caswell Messenger. Wanda P. Smith, Clerk to the Board, recorded the minutes.

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER

Chairman Ward opened the meeting with a Moment of Silent Prayer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

The following items were included on the Consent Agenda:

- 1) Approval of Minutes of February 5, 8, and 19, 2007 Meetings
- 2) Budget Amendment No. 12 - Revised

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Ward opened the floor for public comments.

There were no public comments made.

REQUEST FROM 911 BOARD FOR USE OF FUNDS

Mr. Vernon Massengill, 911 Board Chairman, came before the Board to request the use of 911 Funds. Mr. Massengill reported that the 911 Board met last week to consider a proposal that has been approved by all fire services in the County. Mr. Massengill stated that there has been a problem with the paging system for all fire services in the County due to the fact that it is a low band and does not transmit countywide. Mr. Massengill reported that the fire service met a couple of months ago and decided to go to a UHF frequency, which is an ultra-high frequency. Mr. Massengill informed the Board that the

total cost for this conversion is approximately \$109,745 and this will allow them to page county-wide. Mr. Massengill noted that the Sheriff's Office is also on this frequency.

Mr. Massengill reported that the State has given the fire service permission to utilize their new antenna located at the Dan River Prison Work Farm. Mr. Massengill informed the Board that the fire service is now at 240' and the State has allowed them to go to 460' with the transmitting antenna and 430' with the receiving antenna, which should give them as close to 100% coverage as possible.

Mr. Massengill informed the Board that as of January 1, 2007, the fund balance in the Wired Account, which is controlled by the 911 Board and Board of Commissioners, is \$273,893, and the fund balance in the Wireless Account, which is controlled by the State 911 Board, is \$361,000. Mr. Massengill stated that it is the intention of the 911 Board to talk to the State 911 Board to determine how much money can be appropriated from the Wireless Account, and fund the remainder from the Wired Account.

Mr. Massengill stated that this would allow the fire service in the County to have a frequency that is dependable for many years to come. Mr. Massengill added that the 911 Board plans to apply for five different channels and noted that this will bring them one step closer to interagency operability in Caswell County in that they will be on the same frequency as the Sheriff's Office.

After discussion, Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to approve the request by the 911 Board for the appropriation of \$109,745 from the 911 Wired Account for the conversion to a UHF frequency by 911 and fire services in the County. The motion carried unanimously.

CASWELL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND STRATEGIC HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Ms. Hannah Cockburn, Senior Planner with the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments, came before the Board to present the Caswell County Comprehensive Transportation Plan and Strategic Highway Program. Ms. Cockburn stated that in her role as Senior Planner, she manages the Rural Planning Organization, of which Caswell County is a member. Ms. Cockburn added that they have been working on this Plan for almost two years and today they need input from the Board of Commissioners on the strategic corridors.

Ms. Cockburn reported that thoroughfare plans for Caswell County and the Town of Yanceyville were last prepared for each jurisdiction in 1992, but were never adopted locally or by the State.

Ms. Cockburn stated that in 2003, the North Carolina Department of Transportation began work on a new Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Caswell County, including the municipalities of Milton and Yanceyville. Ms. Cockburn added that planning activities to date include the formation of technical committee, the collection of road

network, land use and socio-economic data, and the deployment and analysis of a community survey.

Ms. Cockburn stated that the purpose of today's presentation is to share information regarding the State's Strategic Corridor's initiative and to receive feedback from the Board of Commissioners on the potential impact on future transportation facilities in Caswell County.

Ms. Cockburn provided the Board with an excerpt from the strategic highway corridor map highlighting the corridors identified in Caswell County, and a copy of the community survey summary, conducted in the Fall of 2006.

Mr. David Wasserman, with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, addressed the Strategic Highway Corridor concept and how it interacts with the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Commissioner Hall stated that when discussion of this plan started several years ago, a couple of proposals were made for the Board to adopt. Commissioner Hall added that there needs to be resistance to by-passing the Town of Yanceyville altogether, because even if there is a need for an expressway or interstate, doing so will completely destroy the businesses in town. Commissioner Hall stated that an interstate or expressway would be difficult and his first concern would be being able to get something that is workable through Yanceyville. Commissioner Hall noted that he was referring to former discussions of US 158 by-passing Yanceyville.

Upon questioning from Chairman Ward, Ms. Cockburn answered that both proposed projects, US 158 and NC 86, included in the Transportation Improvement Plan, is listed as unfunded projects.

Chairman Ward requested that Board members submit any comments on the presentation to the Interim County Manager and he would forward them to Ms. Cockburn.

WORKERS' COMP RISK CONTROL

Ms. Michelle Love, Member Services Associate, with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners came before the Board to discuss Workers' Comp Risk Control for Caswell County. Ms. Love stated that Risk Control specifically addresses measures to assist in preventing losses from occurring and addresses measures the County can take to reduce the cost of claims once they do occur. Ms. Love added that these measures have had proven results in counties who have followed their Action Plans. Ms. Love stated that NCACC'S goal is to get all of its members scoring 100% on the NCACC Minimum Safety Program survey, saving the County premium dollars for doing so, reducing losses for future savings, and offering a safer environment for Caswell County employees.

Ms. Love presented the County a check from NCACC in the amount of \$4,020 for a Wellness and Safety Grant.

Ms. Jennifer Law of Marsh, Inc., who is the NCACC service partner for the Risk Management Pool for Risk Control, along with Mr. Charlie D'Angelo, Sedgwick Claims, provided a presentation on Workers' Compensation Risk Control and highlighted the causes of workers' comp loss for Caswell County by department, and costs associated with them. Ms. Law noted that the highest claims occur in the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Medical Services, as well as the Social Services and Health Departments.

Ms. Law presented the following:

Current Situation – Workers Comp

- Caswell County from July 2000 to September 2006
 - \$597,000 undeveloped losses
 - 118 claims

Ms. Law presented and discussed the following:

- Annual Claims & Costs, 2000-2006, Workers' Compensation
- Department Experience
- Experience Modifier
- Lag Time by Year
- Lag Time by Department
- Injury Frequency
- Benchmarking
- Minimum Lag Time
- Opportunity Lost
- Hidden Costs (\$4 per \$1 in Claims Costs)
- Claims Costs

Ms. Law informed the Board of the benefits of prompt claims reporting:

- Early reporting can help keep claims costs low by ensuring proper medical care, detecting fraud and returning employees to work more quickly.
- Prompt involvement of claims professionals can help limit the severity of the injury and speed recuperation.
- This equates to lower contributions in the future.

Ms. Law presented the following Proposed Goals and Strategies:

- Short Term Goal & Strategies
 - > Score 100% on Minimum Safety Program
 - Increase management support and direction
 - Develop/Improve safety orientation and training
 - Develop/Improve control of hazards
 - Develop/Improve emergency procedures
 - Develop/Improve claims management

- Long Term Goal & Strategies
 - > Reduce experience modifier to 1.0 or less within the next three years
 - Reduce claim frequency
 - Reduce claim cost
 - Reduce lag time reporting
 - Maintain or improve claim duration

Commissioner Hall stated that it would be advantageous for the Board of Commissioners to attend the training sessions offered by NCACC.

Commissioner Vernon stated that individual departments need to understand that its claims run the County's premium up and they need to be accountable.

RECESS

The Board held a brief recess.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTION PLAN

Mr. Randy Reynolds, Director, Business Development Center, Piedmont Community College, came before the Board to present the Entrepreneurship Action Plan. Mr. Reynolds reported that he, along with Chairman Ward and Vice-Chairman Jefferies attended the Energizing Entrepreneurship in Rural North Carolina workshop sponsored by the North Carolina Rural Center on December 6-8, 2006, at Sunset Beach, NC.

Mr. Reynolds stated that in this workshop they:

- Learned about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship
- Examined the importance of entrepreneurship as a rural economic development strategy
- Learned what is needed to encourage entrepreneurship in the County
- Examined the current situation in Caswell County
- Developed an Entrepreneurship Action Plan for the County

Mr. Reynolds reported that:

- 2/3 of new job growth and innovation is from small firms
- 55% of new jobs are from expanding firms
- 44% new businesses
- 1% business relocations

Mr. Reynolds reported that most NC establishments are small with:

- 74% having 1-9 employees
- 21% having 10-49 employees

- 3% having 50-99 employees
- 2% having 100+ employees

Mr. Reynolds presented the Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Caswell County and stated that its purpose is to develop and implement a comprehensive program for the promotion and support of entrepreneurship in Caswell County.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the following is envisioned from the Plan:

- A vibrant economy with a growing tax base
- A place where citizens can find living wage jobs near home
- Shopping available within the county
- A place where youth want to return
- Preservation of the rural and agricultural heritage
- Preservation of the natural resources

Mr. Reynolds presented the following strategies:

- Strategy 1 – Build public support for E2
- Strategy 2 – Create an E2 Implementation Group
- Coordinate with WIRED Program

Strategies to Consider:

- Promote a positive environment for entrepreneurship
- Work for infrastructure improvements
- Entrepreneurship Education
- Promote entrepreneurship as a viable career path for the youth
- Promote opportunities for Agricultural, Nature, and Heritage Tourism
- Business Incubator
- Create linkages between PCC programs and business opportunities
- Improve access to capital

The Board expressed its support for the Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Caswell County as presented by Mr. Reynolds. Chairman Ward stated that it would be good to have someone from the Rural Policy Institute come to Caswell County and meet with the Economic Development Board, Business and Industry Roundtable, and other groups to discuss this further and move this project forward.

UPDATE FROM FINANCE/AUDIT COMMITTEE

Commissioner Hall reported that the Interim County Manager/County Attorney received a proposed contract from the Attorney who is conducting the tax foreclosure proceedings for the County. Commissioner Hall stated that the Finance/Audit Committee has not yet met to discuss this proposed contract and felt it would be appropriate to discuss it further in Closed Session.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Robert V. Shaver, Jr., Interim County Manager/County Attorney provided the Board with a recent article from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners which addresses the Debt Setoff Program and noted that \$7.8 million has been returned to counties in 2006 through the use of the Debt Setoff Program. Mr. Shaver stated that the Debt Setoff Program is working very well for counties and noted the top ten counties for 2006, which included Rockingham County. Mr. Shaver informed the Board that in 2002, the Board adopted a Memorandum to Participate in the program and started off primarily as a method for EMS Billing to collect delinquent fees. Mr. Shaver stated that Caswell County's effectiveness with the Program has not proceeded as is needed. Mr. Shaver added that the Tax Office has had some responsibility with the Debt Setoff Program, but it has not been utilized to its potential. Mr. Shaver informed the Board that in 2006, Rockingham County had 1,402 debts set off, while Caswell County has only had a total of 334 submitted since its inception into the Program in 2002. Mr. Shaver informed the Board that he is bringing the Debt Setoff Program into the Finance Office and they have the software to manage the database. Mr. Shaver stated that he has asked the Tax Director to utilize the Debt Setoff Program as one of the methods available to him for collection of delinquent debts. Mr. Shaver added that he felt that this would be a good tool for the County to put in place and run in a way to collect tax debt, EMS debt, Health Department matters, and any other potential matters. Mr. Shaver stated that the Debt Setoff Program would now begin in the Finance Office, but felt that the initial problem would be staffing and noted that it would help if the Finance Office had additional staff.

Mr. Shaver provided the Board with Medicaid projections as calculated by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Mr. Shaver noted that it is predicted that Caswell County's cost of Medicaid for next year will increase by \$213,000 over the current year. Mr. Shaver reminded the Board that the Medicaid cap imposed by the State is for one year only and unless the State comes up with something new, the County will have to budget an additional \$213,000 for Medicaid costs in the upcoming year.

Mr. Shaver provided the Board with a legislative update and added that statewide Medicaid costs would increase by \$91,000,000 for next year. Mr. Shaver informed the Board that there is a possibility of a Statewide bond for school construction in the amount of two billion dollars. Mr. Shaver stated that property tax exemptions are also being discussed, and noted that this affects a lot of coastal counties. Mr. Shaver noted that a lot of industries, such as furniture and textile manufacturers also request property tax exemption. Mr. Shaver added that the NCACC is opposed to most of these measures because it will erode the local tax base.

Commissioner Hall reported that there is a move within the legislature to approve a local option land transfer tax.

Commissioner Vernon reported that Representative Faison introduced a bill to try to get an appropriation of two million dollars to build a value-added center in Prospect Hill.

Commissioner Vernon stated that the Cooperative Extension Service and other groups have been working on a multi-county value-added center and this would help the County in a lot of ways.

Mr. Shaver announced that the Board of Directors of the Caswell County Senior Center has designated Thursday, March 15, 2007 as “*Mrs. Inez Blackwell Day*” and they are planning a party in her honor on that day, beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the Senior Center in Yanceyville, NC. Mr. Shaver added that the Board of Commissioners has been extended an invitation to attend this event and to present a letter of appreciation to Mrs. Blackwell. After discussion, Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis that the Board prepare a letter of appreciation to be presented to Mrs. Inez Blackwell on “*Mrs. Inez Blackwell Day*”. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Ward reported that he has a conflict on that day and requested that Vice-Chairman Jefferies present the letter to Mrs. Blackwell.

Mr. Shaver reported that last June the County assumed control of the Meals on Wheels Program. Mr. Shaver stated that the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments feels that the program is now running well, the volunteer numbers have increased, and the waiting list for service has decreased. Mr. Shaver added that in February, 2007, the Caswell County Planning Committee for Services to the Elderly voted unanimously to support County retention of the Program. Mr. Shaver reported that currently the County is leasing office space at The Caswell Messenger building for the Meals on Wheels Program. Mr. Shaver added that it is his plans that the County continue to operate the Meals on Wheels Program in the coming fiscal year and that the Meals on Wheels Program relocate to the Senior Center since there is office space available there.

Mr. Shaver reported that the e-NC Authority is pushing for funding at the State level to try to obtain ten million dollars from the North Carolina General Assembly and one of their primary areas of concern is to increase broadband access in rural counties.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Hall referred to a suggestion by a County citizen concerning the sound system in the Historic Courthouse and that they cannot hear what is being said during Board meetings. Commissioner Hall stated that the Board needs to try again to address the sound problem. Chairman Ward referred this issue to the Building and Grounds Committee for further consideration. Commissioner Hamlett stated that he knew someone that could take a look at the sound system.

Commissioner Hall referred to the Monthly Overtime Report in the agenda and requested that it be compiled in a more concise manner.

Chairman Ward requested that the Monthly Gasoline Report be prepared in a more concise manner also, by departments only.

Commissioner Travis announced that the annual Caswell County Chamber Banquet will be held on Tuesday, March 13, 2007, at 6:15 p.m. at the Caswell Pines Golf Club.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Hamlett moved, seconded by Commissioner Vernon that the Board enter into closed session to hear a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6)); to consider the competence, terms of appointment, and performance of an individual public officer (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6)); and to preserve the Attorney/Client privilege (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3)). The motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR SESSION

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Hamlett to resume regular session. The motion carried unanimously.

THE ADJOURNMENT

At 1:30 p.m. Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Wanda P. Smith
Clerk to the Board

George W. Ward, Jr.
Chairman
