MINUTES – NOVEMBER 30, 2020

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in special session at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, November 30, 2020. The meeting was held electronically using Zoom Webinar software. Members present: Rick McVey, Chairman, David J. Owen, Vice Chairman, William E. Carter, Nathaniel Hall, Jeremiah Jefferies, Steve Oestreicher and N. Kent Williamson. Also present: Bryan Miller, County Manager and Brian Ferrell, County Manager. Paula P. Seamster, Clerk to the Board, recorded the minutes.

WELCOME

Chairman McVey welcomed everyone to the second special meeting.

ALTERNATIVE CONFIGURATION OF OPEN SPACES INCLUDING THE SQUARE, HISTORIC COURTHOUSE GROUNDS, AND ALL ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNED BY CASWELL COUNTY AND TO ENGAGE HEALTHY PLACES BY DESIGN TO FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS WITH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Commissioner Owen stated that after the previous Board meeting where there was a consensus on relocating the monuments on the Square and he began to look at what was going to be required from county staff and various committees he realized this would require quite a bit of work. He added that he personally did not feel comfortable asking county staff and the various committees to get started on this with just a consensus so he asked the Chairman if the Board could have a special meeting to have a more official motion so things could get started. Commissioner Owen stated that there needs to be a plan on where the monuments will be relocated. He added that the monuments are public property therefore they must be relocated to public property. Commissioner Owen stated that it will need to be discussed how the monuments will be moved either by staff or by paid movers, the costs, where the funds will come from, as well as a timeline where staff will report back to the Board on the progress that is being made and a projected plan on when all the monuments could be moved.

Mr. Miller stated that county staff will do whatever the Board directs them to do. He added that he could bring information back to the Board on a contract with a facilitator to hold these discussions with stakeholder groups such as the CCTS Class of ’66, Horticulture Club, Historical Association, local Veteran groups, etc.

Commissioner Carter stated that an important aspect is where the monuments are going to be moved to. Commissioner Owen responded that this was the reason why he asked for a formal motion by the Board.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he was a hearing a little divergence in the conversation about relocating the statue versus relocating them. He asked for the scope of what the plan would encompass. Commissioner Owen responded that it would encompass all the monuments on the Square to be relocated. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that it was of the utmost importance to get the cost of the relocation and how it would be paid for. Chairman McVey responded that this was the reason behind Commissioner Owen’s request for the meeting today.

Commissioner Hall asked Commissioner Owen if he meant to include the facilitation of community meetings in his motion. Chairman McVey responded that this was what Mr. Miller had mentioned.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that the Board needed to understand what the scope or the objective of the total plan would look like which would include community meetings, costs, locations, etc. Commissioner Owen asked the county manager to go over the facilitator by design plan to help clarify some of Commissioner Oestreicher’s questions.

Mr. Miller stated that based on the Board’s previous discussions a facilitated discussion plan has been developed and in doing this the assumptions were that the Board had already made the decision to relocate all the monuments on the Square and that the Board would approve engaging with Healthy Places by Design as the facilitator. He added that Healthy Places by Design would identify alternative configurations for open spaces including the Square, Historic Courthouse grounds and all adjacent county owned property. Mr. Miller stated that Healthy Places by Design would present a written and oral presentation to the Board of Commissioners. He stated that staff would determine the cost of relocating each monument and there would be broad based community engagement involved but due to the pandemic these will be conducted by identifying key stakeholders.

Chairman McVey asked Commissioner Oestreicher if this answered his questions.

Commissioner Oestreicher responded that he had a couple of concerns. He asked what the selection process was for Healthy Places by Design, how many facilitators were investigated, what were the references of them, and what was the criteria for selecting them, the cost of relocation of each monument implies that some may go and some may not and wanted this clarified, what would be selected as to what is strategic for community discussions before the discussions are completed so the Board will know what is going on. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he would like for the Board to participate in the planning before it occurs. Commissioner Owen agreed and stated that this was why I wanted a formal motion to direct staff as well as other committees and if the motion carries then the Board would outline the items that Commissioner Oestreicher mentioned. He added that it would be a cost on relocating all the monuments if that is how the Board votes. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he wanted the Board involved in the creation of the plan. He did not want it to get started and then the Board finds out later what the plan will look like.

Commissioner Owen moved to direct staff and necessary boards and committees to presume the redesign of the Square with the first step being developing a plan to relocate all monuments.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked about the cost. Commissioner Owen responded that the cost would be covered in the plan that the Board direct staff and the boards and committees to bring back. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he would like to see this specifically mentioned.

Commissioner Hall stated that he did not have a problem with Commissioner Owen’s motion, but he thought a motion should be made first to remove all monuments from the Square and the second motion would be Commissioner Owen’s motion. Commissioner Owen responded that he did not have a problem with this. Commissioner Owen withdrew his motion.

Chairman McVey asked Commissioner Oestreicher if he agreed with this. Commissioner Oestreicher responded that he did not agree. He added that this would be a very impactful motion to make the motion without the understanding of what the statutes are, what the costs are, he did not see how the Board could commit to relocating all the monuments without understanding what the costs, the objectives, and where they are going. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he could not see the Board making that broad of a statement without knowing more details. He stated that this could be a huge amount of money involved in this process.

Commissioner Owen stated that he understood what Commissioner Oestreicher is saying and that was the reason for his motion to develop a plan to relocate all the monuments and this plan would have to come back before the Board with the cost and suggested new locations if relocated. He agreed that the Board needed to know the cost before a decision is made to relocate all the monuments. Commissioner Oestreicher responded that this was exactly the point he was trying to make. He added that the Board may need to consider putting this on a referendum to allow the public to vote on this and how it will get paid for.

Commissioner Williamson stated that the county did not prepare the public for the referendum for zoning so therefore an incomplete message from the citizens. He added that some people were mislead that zoning was controlling their property. Commissioner Williamson stated that the Board needed to make a motion to move the monuments from the Square and then the Board can find ways to get the necessary funds to have them removed.

Commissioner Hall stated that he wanted to clarify that the Board’s intention was to remove all the monuments from the Square but if this motion created a problem, he wanted to go back to Commissioner Owen’s motion. He added that the Board did not put it on a referendum that the county was going to pay $14,000 for comp time, etc. and he added that as elected officials the Board needs to make these decisions and the Board has been dealing with this issue since June. Commissioner Hall asked Commissioner Owen to restate his motion so the Board could move forward.

Commissioner Oestreicher reiterated that there is no question that this project will cost a lot of money and it is as impactful as zoning in that the Board needs to know the details before committing to do anything. He stated that he thought Commissioner Hall was stating that part of the plan needs to specify that this includes all the monuments on the Square, and he did not have an issue with that. Commissioner Oestreicher stated to move forward with Commissioner Owen’s plan to develop the details in a plan by staff with the Board of Commissioners input.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Hall to direct staff and necessary boards and committees to pursue the redesign of the Square, with the first step being developing a plan to relocate all the monuments and for that plan to be brought back to the Board for approval.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that there needed to be a cost included in this plan specifically. Commissioner Owen responded that if the motion is approved one of his first things to have in the plan is to determine where the monuments will go before a cost can be received and then where the funds will come from. He stated that all these things will be included in the plan that will come back before the Board before another step is taken. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that this was fine. Commissioner Owen responded that the Board may at that time decide not to move the monuments due to the cost being too high to move all of them and then the Board may have to come up with a Plan B. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that if Commissioner Owen’s motion states to have a plan that includes such things as location, cost, etc. Commissioner Owen responded okay.

Commissioner Owen moved to direct staff and necessary boards and committees to pursue the redesign of the Square, with the first step being developing a plan to relocate all the monuments which will include location, cost…

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that it should also include community input. He stated, “If we don’t know what we are creating we’re not going to know if we have created what we want.”

Commissioner Owen withdrew his motion again. He asked Commissioner Oestreicher to work on a motion. Commissioner Owen stated the motion now is “to direct staff and necessary boards and committees to pursue the redesign of the Square, with the first step being developing a plan to relocate all the monuments which will include.” Commissioner Oestreicher responded “which will include location, cost, associated aspects of the relocation and include community input.” Commissioner Owen stated that there is a problem with community input unless dealing with specific groups due to COVID and the inability to have community meetings. Commissioner Oestreicher responded that he did not say every person in the community and added that it should be strategic input. Commissioner Owen stated okay.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Hall to direct staff to direct staff and necessary boards and committees to pursue the redesign of the Square, with the first step being developing a plan to relocate all monuments and that plan would include location, cost, associated aspects of the relocation and include strategic community input. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners W. Carter, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher, Owen, and Williamson voted in favor.)

Commissioner Carter thanked Commissioner Williamson for filling in for the vacancy on the Board and thanked him for his expertise.

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:15 a.m. Commissioner Williamson moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to adjourn the special meeting. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners W. Carter, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher, Owen, and Williamson voted in favor.)

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Paula P. Seamster Rick McVey

Clerk to the Board Chairman

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