MINUTES – APRIL 20, 2020

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, April 20, 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 and Steve Oestreicher. Absent: Sterling Carter. Also present: Bryan Miller, County Manager, Brian Ferrell, County Attorney, and Debra Ferrell representing The Caswell Messenger. Paula P. Seamster, Clerk to the Board, recorded the minutes.

WELCOME

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board of Commissioners and all the guests in the attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to recess the meeting of the Caswell County Board of Commissioners in order for the Board to sit as the Board of Equalization and Review. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Thomas Bernard, Tax Director, stated that the Board is opening the Board of Equalization and Review by electronic means and added that the Board has to be sworn in again. He stated that appeals need to be in written format between now and May 4th to the Tax Office and it has been recommended by the School of Government to accept the written appeals and then hear the written appeals at a later date when COVID-19 is over with.

Mr. Ferrell stated that this is the annual Board of Equalization and Review session where the Board of Commissioners will sit in as the Board of Equalization and Review. He added that there are several duties as the Board of Equalization and Review and the primary duties is to hear taxpayer appeals for valuation issues for real and personal property. Mr. Ferrell stated that because this is a quasi-judicial hearing where the Board will receive evidence, hear from witnesses and then render a decision it is advised that these types of boards not meet until there can be a hearing in person but as the Tax Director explained the actual appeal hearings if any are filed can be heard after the Board has closed the acceptance of receiving appeals for the year. He asked the clerk to administer the oaths of office.

Ms. Paula Seamster, Clerk to the Board, administered the following Oaths of Office to the Caswell County Board of Equalization and Review.

OATH OF

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW

Ido solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and maintain the Constitution and laws of the United States, and the Constitution and laws of North Carolina not inconsistent therewith, and I will faithfully discharge the duties of my office as a member of the Caswell County Board of Equalization and Review, and that I will not allow my actions as a member of the Board of Equalization and Review to be influenced by personal or political friendships or obligations, so help me God.

S/Rick McVey \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ S/David J. Owen \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Rick McVey, Chairman** **David J. Owen, Vice-Chairman**

 S/William E. Carter **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** S/Jeremiah Jefferies\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**William E. Carter Jeremiah Jefferies**

S/Nathaniel Hall **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** S/Steve Oestreicher **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Nathaniel Hall Steve Oestreicher**

Mr. Bernard informed the Board that he had not received any appeals as of yet.

Mr. Ferrell asked Mr. Bernard to explain to the public how appeals can be filed as well as the adjournment date for appeals. Mr. Bernard responded that appeals can be received in writing until Monday, May 4th and the Board of Equalization and Review will adjourn on Monday, May 4th and then those appeals will be heard at a later date after COVID-19 is over. Mr. Ferrell asked for the address that the written appeals can be sent or delivered. Mr. Bernard responded that the written appeals can be sent to P.O. Box 204, Yanceyville, NC 27379 or delivered to 139 E. Church Street, Yanceyville.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to recess the Board of Equalization and Review until Monday, May 4, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Clerk to the Board read the public comments received via email.

“My name is John Claggett and I reside at 108 Jaye Lane, Providence, NC. Good Morning. I’ve recently been told by the County Manager that all of Caswell County employees are considered essential personnel. If you gentlemen have been reading your email you know I’ve inquired as to which essential employee positions have been working from home. I’ve not received an answer yet again. I would think this information would be readily available by county staff especially during this time of heightened biological concern. The very first paragraph of the Caswell County Personnel Policy states ‘Thank you very much for choosing to become an employee of Caswell County and for choosing to provide and be of service to our citizens. It is for our citizens that your position exists and it is to our citizens that we are held accountable. Almost everything about your employment with the County is public record because of the relationship established between public funding and public service’.

Article 1.6 Responsibility of the Human Resources Director, Paragraph E. Maintaining the official personnel files and other appropriate employee information along with Paragraph J. Performing such other duties as may be assigned by the County Manager not inconsistent with this Policy should, I would think, make the public’s request a relatively simple task to provide.

North Carolina Attorney General contends that North Carolina law declares, “The public records and public information compiled by the agencies of North Carolina government or its subdivisions are the property of the people. Therefore, it is the policy of this State that the people may obtain copies of their public records and public information free or at minimal cost unless otherwise specifically provided by law.” He continues, “It is critical that public agencies understand and follow this law that gives you the right to know what state and local government officials are doing on your behalf. After all, it is your government”. I’ve been repeated stonewalled by the County Manager regarding these types of requests in recent months. He works under your direction. It’s a simple information request. Why can’t the citizens of Caswell County get this public information when the mechanics are in place to provide it? This information could’ve been compiled immediately after the March 16th Emergency Meeting.”

“My name is Scott Oakley and I reside at 1425 Baynes Road. Abiding by your public comment rules and procedures, I have been selected as spokesperson for our group, Protect Caswell, which is a newly formed chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (or BREDL for short). We are here today to request an extension to the current moratorium on Polluting Industries. On January 6, 2020 the Caswell County Board of Commissioners adopted a 1 year moratorium on Polluting Industries. In the moratorium it states: “In the event that these steps require more time, Caswell County may extend the moratorium as allowed by G.S. 153A-340. The one (1) year moratorium period is reasonable given the fact the County has only limited regulation over Polluting Industry Development currently and researching potential development regulations, developing zoning maps and implementing zoning districts within Caswell County will require significant and concerted effort of the single County employee in the Caswell County Planning 'Department and other County staff. In addition, the one (l) year moratorium period is reasonable given the statutory requirements for implementing zoning districts, including, but not limited to, public notices, public hearings, and Planning Department reviews.” As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Caswell County issued a Press Release #1 on March 18, 2020 stating significant restrictions on Caswell County Government Operations and a State of Emergency was issued by Caswell County on March 30, 2020. Due to these events all Community zoning meeting have been put on hold and the worked related to researching and developing new regulations are being impacted. We therefore request that the Board of Commissioners begin the process of requesting an extension to the 1 year moratorium for a period which is determined to be no less than the period of time that COVID-19 is impacting Caswell County.”

“Leslie Zimmerman, 732 Solomon Road, Leasburg, NC. The citizens of the southeastern Caswell County thank you for sending our zoning request to the Planning Board. Zoning evokes many opinions. In our community, there is broad support. 738 property owners were notified of this proposal and invited to comment. Nearly all who responded were in favor of zoning as soon as possible. Some of you expressed a desire to wait until the entire count can be zoned. You thought that was only fair. We disagree. What will be unfair is if you deny approval to citizens who are asking for zoning protection. Caswell County has granted zoning protection for decades. Northeastern Caswell has had zoning since the 1960s, Yanceyville and Milton enjoy zoning. Is that fair to other areas of the county? Of course it isn’t. What also isn’t fair is to wait until the entire county accepts zoning. Some communities may tell you they prefer not to be zoned. If they don’t want zoning, that is their prerogative and you can honor their wishes. But the same holds true for communities that ask you to grant zoning protection. You should honor their wishes. It is unfair to make the citizens of southeast Caswell wait, especially since it is unclear whether all the county desires this protection. Southeast Caswell deserves to be treated equally to northeast Caswell. They have zoning. We want it. That’s only fair. There’s another reason why it’s only fair that you act on this proposal. Southeast Caswell has learned the hard way why zoning protection is imperative. While adopting zoning now may not help with the current problem, it will help keep that problem from getting bigger. There is no time to waste. We must contain those who would disrupt the peaceful way of life that we enjoy. You must help us now. As elected officials, we expect you to respond to citizen needs and desires. We ask you to do so when the zoning proposal for southeast Caswell comes back to you for approval. It’s only fair. Thank you.”

RECOGNITIONS

No recognitions were given.

ACTION ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Owen asked to amend the agenda, due to Commissioner S. Carter could not be here today, to remove Item 10.b. Caswell County Cemeteries Board of Trustees and Commissioner Representative and Item 13. Political Robo Calls.

Commissioner Hall requested to reverse Item 18. School Budgets 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 and Item 19. Sales Tax Estimates and Discussions.

Chairman McVey moved, seconded by Commissioner Hall to approve the agenda as amended. After a roll call vote the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to approve the consent agenda. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The following items were included on the Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes of April 6, 2020 Regular Meeting

B. Approval of FY 2019-2020 Budget Amendment

APPROPRIATION FOR ENGINEERING PLAN RELATING TO POTENTIAL DEPLOYMENT OF FIBER TO THE HOME

Mr. Miller stated that he is requesting an appropriation of $24,000 to develop a broadband infrastructure plan, an engineering plan specifically. He asked if this could be sent out as an RFQ and to go through the process. Mr. Miller stated that there is approximately $20.4 billion in appropriations with the federal government which would require and engineering plan to be a part of the submission from the applicant. He added that the County cannot apply but individual companies can apply on behalf of Caswell County for census blocks that do not meet federal guidelines for broadband internet but without an engineering plan the County is left out altogether. Mr. Miller stated that he expects the plan to cost much more than $24,000 but most grants require matching funds so he asked the Board to appropriate $24,000 to go towards the matching funds for a grant to develop a broadband infrastructure engineering plan.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked the county manager if this appropriation would require an amendment or an adjustment to the existing budget. Mr. Miller responded that it would require an amendment from the general fund to fund the plan. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if this would require an upward adjustment of the entire budget or if this could be found within the total budget. Mr. Miller responded that throughout the year there have been adjustments made to the budget and each time the county has been able to keep it within the budget but he was not sure that this would be the case this time. He asked the Board to make the appropriation for the $24,000 amount for plan.

Commissioner Hall stated that he wanted to express his general disapproval for what the county has been receiving from the state and federal agencies for assistance with getting internet in the rural areas. He added that he spent 45 minutes talking to a representative from Piedmont Electric and he added that Piedmont Electric has led the customers to believe that they had contracted with River Street and that internet was forth coming and after the conversation with Piedmont Electric he learned that this may be 1 ½ to 3 years out before anything is done. Commissioner Hall stated that it is more critical now more than ever that the county get internet. He stated that he supports the county moving forward to trying to get an answer and if there is a need for an engineering plan it would be in the County’s best interest to get the engineering plan.

Commissioner Owen agreed with Commissioner Hall and asked the county manager if the grant money would be for infrastructure. Mr. Miller responded that the grant money would be for infrastructure. Commissioner Owen stated that he was in favor of moving forward with this plan.

Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to approve the appropriation for engineering plans relating to potential deployment of fiber to the home. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

PIEDMONT ELECTRIC REDLG LOAN REQUEST

Mr. Miller asked the Board to approve a 10 year, 0% interest loan from Piedmont Electric for the completion of the Co-Square economic development project and the repayment schedule would be $10,000 per year for 10 years. He added that this payment would be covered by the revenue generated from the project and he anticipates no tax dollars being used to fund the project or to fund the repayment of this loan.

Commissioner Jefferies asked the county manager how this loan would be repaid if it is not coming from the taxpayers. Mr. Miller responded that the $10,000 is built into the operating expenses for the Co-Square facility. He showed a report on his screen that showed that the loan payment would be covered in the operating expenses. Commissioner Jefferies stated that if the operating expenses are not met the payment would have to come from the taxpayers. Mr. Miller responded that yes this would be one scenario. Commissioner Jefferies stated that he could not support this especially with COVID-19 and individuals living on tight budgets he could not see borrowing money at this time.

Chairman McVey asked what would happen if the Board did not approve the loan. Mr. Miller responded that if the loan is not approved there would not to be serious financial cuts in the project and this would mean a significant reduction in what the project will be able to do.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to approve the Piedmont Electric REDLG loan request. After a roll call vote, the motion carried by a five to one vote with Commissioner Jefferies voting no.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Caswell County Adult Advisory Council

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to appoint Sharon Hicks to the Caswell County Adult Advisory Council. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Recreation Commission

Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to appoint Sharon Hicks to the Recreation Commission. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hall stated that about 2 or 3 meetings ago the Board went through the Rules of Procedure and made changes. He added that he hoped that everyone had the opportunity to go through the changes. Commissioner Hall asked the Board if there were any questions on the redline portion of the Rules of Procedure.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked about Rule 8. Broadcasting and recording meetings, he stated it was changed to ‘any person is entitled to broadcast all or any part of an official meeting’. He asked if there was any concern as far as having a limit on this. Mr. Miller responded that it’s the public’s right to broadcast if they so wish as long as it can be done in a safe manner as long as it is not disruptive. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he fully agreed with the county manager and this was exactly the point he was making but he wanted to know if the Board needed to make a provision for this in the rule. Mr. Ferrell responded that the chair is presumed to have the ability to control the meeting for the purposes of maintaining order. He added that as the county manager mention if the broadcaster disrupts the meeting the chair would have the ability to control that so be believes it is covered but the Board can certainly add to the rule.

Commissioner Hall stated that he thought there was some discussion about this especially about the section on radio and television stations have to let the county know 24 hours in advance. Commissioner Oestreicher responded that this was exactly the point and asked how it would be handled if 10 or 20 people wanted to broadcast in addition to radio and television. He wanted to know why the radio and television were singled out and not the general public requiring an advanced notice. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he was happy with the chairman being responsible for maintaining order. Mr. Ferrell responded that this is mentioned in Rule 8.a. and he recommended changing 8.b. to be consistent with the change in 8.a. and say ‘any person wishing to broadcast any portion of the meeting shall notify the manager’. He added that his is one way to deal with it.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that Mr. Ferrell’s statement is an excellent suggestion and he would be in favor of doing this. Mr. Ferrell responded that the change would be in 8.b. to remove ‘any radio or television station’ and in that place put ‘any person’. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that this would cover his concern.

Commissioner Hall asked if this change was going to be voted on or just vote on the entire document. Chairman McVey responded that he would like to vote on it all at one time.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he did not have any further changes so he was in favor of approving it all at the end.

Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner W. Carter to approve the Rules of Procedure for the Caswell County Board of Commissioners as amended. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

CASWELL COUNTY CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD POLICY

Commissioner Owen stated that everyone has had the opportunity to review this policy and made changes. He added that he wanted to make sure to eliminate the section on Orientation & Training due to the fact that at this time there is no orientation material or training set up. Commissioner Owen hopes that this can be added back once this information can be obtained.

Commissioner W. Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to approve the Caswell County Citizen Advisory Board Policy. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

COVID-19 Update

Ms. Jennifer Eastwood, Health Director, stated that the last four days has brought a lot of change for the county and there is now has 8 confirmed positives in the county. She added that we have one case that the county shares with Alamance because the individual lives in Alamance but works in Caswell. Ms. Eastwood stated that the last 4 days has brought the first case of community spread and two individuals have been hospitalized, one has tested positive and the other is presumed positive. She added that this has also brought the county its first outbreak in a Caswell County Correction Facility. Ms. Eastwood stated that the definition of an outbreak in a congregate setting is two individuals and so at Caswell Correction there are 4 employees and 1 inmate that have tested positive. She stated that the inmate has been transferred to Central Prison where there is a hospital. Ms. Eastwood stated that she is continuing to work with the Warden locally to offer support with testing and mitigation for the facility. She stated that information on the correction facility is coming through the correction’s communications center at the state level. Ms. Eastwood stated that this is a very small outbreak and she hopes to keep it that way. She stated that she is in contact with congregate living facilities, in Caswell, long term facilities and correction facilities. Ms. Eastwood stated that the Governor has stated that the biggest focus is on testing. She stated that at the last Board meeting there was a discussion about communications and there was talk about using Code Red to get information out or if there was a need for another platform. Ms. Eastwood stated that the county used Code Red the Thursday before Easter to send out an informational message and there was only a 46% connection rate so there are some issues there. She added that she included the telephone number of the Health Department so a lot of these thought that the health department was contacting them to notify them that they had been in contact with the virus. Ms. Eastwood stated that she knew that the Health Collaborative was working on written information that would be sent out this week to every mail box in the county.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked Ms. Eastwood when she said that 2 individuals constituted an outbreak did that mean within a certain geography or what. Ms. Eastwood responded that the outbreak definition is for two individual within one congregate living setting and this outbreak is within the prison because there are 5 individuals who either work or live there. Commissioner Oestreicher thanked Ms. Eastwood for the explanation because it did not come through clear about the living setting.

Ms. Eastwood stated that because the county has community spread so she recommended wearing a mask when going out into public and to continue social distancing of at least 6 feet. She also added to continue hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

TAX OFFICE UPDATE

Mr. Thomas Bernard, Tax Director, stated that as of April 15, 2020 the collection rate is 97.06% which is .13% ahead for the same time last year. He added that they are starting to see a slowdown in tax payments at this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Bernard stated that the tax office is in the process of receiving listing forms, applications for the senior citizen and disability exclusions and the Veterans exclusion. He added that his staff is busy entering this data into the computer system, valuing personal property and approving and recalculating land values for the Present Use Value program, appraising real estate for land splits and new construction, along with collections procedures for delinquent tax. Mr. Bernard stated that the tax office continues to work with the E-911 department in correcting addresses that are not correct throughout the county as well as they are working with the State Fire Marshal redrawing and recalculating all fire districts from the original 6 mile fire response districts. He stated that the tax software conversion is in progress. Mr. Bernard stated that staff is presently entering the personal property listings and real estate changes on the AS 400 which will then need to be extracted from the AS 400 to the SQL server. He stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has also slowed this conversion due to employees of Bi-Tek having to work from home but hopefully by June they will have collections running on the new software.

TAX FORECLOSURES

Mr. Bernard stated that all tax foreclosures have been put on hold due to COVID-19 and the tax office is working with people to make payments arrangements. He added that the tax office is encouraging these individuals to make payments so they will not have multiple bills when the 2020 taxes go out in August. Mr. Bernard stated that letters were sent out to the individuals that did not respond to the original bills, the reminder notices, the delinquent notices, and then published in the newspaper. He stated that he knew that even after the pandemic the Board will still want to see a good collection rate to work with the 2020-2021budget. Mr. Bernard stated that the tax office is proceeding carefully because they know that people have been laid off as well as lost jobs. He added that COVID-19 did not exist until the end of February or the first of March which was after the bills became delinquent but the tax office is still working with the individuals.

Commissioner Owen asked the tax director to continue to work with the citizens and he added that right now he is not worried about the tax rates. He added that he is more concerned about the citizens due to the hardship and he really appreciated what the tax office is doing to help the citizens out. Mr. Bernard responded and said that the tax office will continue to do so.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that he wanted to echo Commissioner Owen’s comments. He added that it is trying times and the tax department needs to work with the citizens as much as possible.

Commissioner Oestreicher thanked Mr. Bernard for working with the taxpayers and for looking out for the taxpayer’s best interest.

Mr. Bernard thanked everyone for their comments.

DISCREPANCY IN FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Chairman McVey informed the Board that the auditing firm is in the meeting today.

Mr. Bernard stated that he looked at the county’s values and the values increased $28,502,710 from 2018 to 2019. He turned the rest of this discussion over to the county manager and finance director. Mr. Bernard stated that Ms. Gwen Vaughn works very close with the auditors and he thinks there is some revised numbers for 2018.

Mr. Miller stated that he and Ms. Vaughn had been in contact with Mr. Thompson. He added that Ms. Vaughn has put a lot of work and effort into trying to come up with the calculations that were used and figuring out exactly what happened. Mr. Miller asked Ms. Vaughn to go through the information.

Ms. Gwen Vaughn, Finance Director, thanked the auditor, Alan Thompson for being on the call today. She stated that first of all, they determined that the tax rate had to be the calculation issue because as Mr. Bernard mentioned the valuations increased. Ms. Vaughn stated that after looking back at the numbers from the fiscal year 2017-2018 the tax levy was adopted at 74.59 and this included the 3.69 for the special fire district so when the property valuation was calculated the 3.69 was removed from the total and the valuation was calculated as 70.90. She stated that when Commissioner Hall asked about this discrepancy the valuation was looked at first and then the tax rate which showed that the tax rate caused the discrepancy. Ms. Vaughn stated that she has asked the auditors to revise page 4 to show the true value and this is the only thing that needs to be changed. She stated that the financial statement does not need to be revised because the numbers are correct.

Commissioner Hall asked if a reconciliation had been prepared so he could look at the numbers to explain what had just been said. Ms. Vaughn responded that she did have a report that she would get that to Commissioner Hall and the rest of the Board. Commissioner Hall thanked Ms. Vaughn. The report that Ms. Vaughn prepared was put on the screen for everyone to see. This report showed the reported amount for fiscal year 2019 at $1,673,424,683 and the reported amount for fiscal year 2018 at $1,644,921,973. Commissioner Hall stated that he would have to absorb this information.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked for the sake of clarity if Ms. Vaughn could show the fire tax levy in the table. Ms. Vaughn responded that this may make it more confusing because the fire tax levy is reported in different funds and she wanted to show just the general fund.

Commissioner Hall stated that he understands what Commissioner Oestreicher is asking but he is not concerned with the financial statement. He added that if the fire tax levy had been shown it would have been the reconciliation that he wanted to see. Commissioner Hall stated that to understand this he would need to see it and he asked Ms. Vaughn to get the information to him later. Ms. Vaughn responded that she would share that information with the full Board.

SALES TAX ESTIMATES AND DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Vaughn stated that Commissioner Hall had asked about the sales tax and she stated that COVID-19 is impacting Caswell County in ways that will be difficult to determine with a long term affect. She added that the county is witnessing the financial impact locally with declining revenue sources in permits and fees, services, and sales tax. Ms. Vaughn stated that as a result it will be necessary to monitor this closely and to revise the year end revenues and expenditures for the later part of this year and the rest of the fiscal year. She added that the county has received sales tax revenues from December through February which exceeded the adopted budget by 3.3% which totals just over $142,000. Ms. Vaughn stated that in reviewing the sales tax projections and doing a calculation on a decline she is looking at an 8.5% shortfall which is in the neighborhood of $300,000. She added that she did a projection that was higher than what has been seen from NaCO and the School of Government because Caswell is a small county and she hopes this will not come to fruition. Ms. Vaughn stated that she would report to the Board at the next meeting on a more updated prediction.

Commissioner Hall stated that this was the information that he wanted to hear from Ms. Vaughn before moving into the School Budget. He added that there a couple of things that the Board must consider. Commissioner Hall stated that first the sales tax revenues is how the county makes the school bond payments. Ms. Vaughn responded that it is correct that the county uses sales tax revenues to pay for the school bond payments but the final payment was done through the school using funds so this is already in place. Commissioner Hall stated that the county will not have any more bond payments. Ms. Vaughn responded that this was correct and there would not be any more bond payments until the completion of the new high school. She added that the restricted sales tax has been set aside for the new Bartlett Yancey High School project. Commissioner Hall asked how much money was in restricted sales tax. Ms. Vaughn responded that it is over $800,000. Commissioner Hall stated that he brought this up because he knew statewide there is going to be a big reduction in sales tax and part of the county’s allocation comes from the state. He continued by saying that a more scarier thing than the reduction is the Speaker of the House was quoted last week that all sales tax revenues may be withheld from all counties and if this is done it will crippled the county. Commissioner Hall stated that neither Ms. Vaughn nor the manager can estimate how much this will be. He added that if this happens the county will have to survive on the county’s reserves.

SCHOOL BUDGETS 2019-2020 AND 2020-2021

Commissioner Hall stated that the next issue is how the county will fund the school board. He stated that right now school is out and the county is still transferring money to the schools so the county is still spending money. Commissioner Hall asked what the Board is going to do for the next 2 years when the sales tax revenues fall and the State takes some of the sales tax revenues and the county has to survive off the reserves. He stated that the Board has to find out from the school system how it is going to make up for this lost time. Commissioner Hall stated that the children have been out of school for at least half a semester and they can’t be shortchanged on their education so the county will probably be looking at year round schools for the next year or so. He added that he did not know what the School Board is planning but they will have to do something because the children cannot succeed in college. Commissioner Hall stated that he wanted to bring this up so the Board can talk about how to finance the schools once we find out what the School Board plans to do or what they need to do and he added that the Board may need to get involved in the School Board’s planning. He stated that this needs to start with this year’s funding because the children are not in school and he asked what the Board is going to do next year. Commissioner Hall stated that he understands that the Board cannot cut the schools funding but it is not the schools money if children are not being taught. He asked for the thoughts of the other commissioners.

Commissioner Owen stated agreed that there needed to be a discussion with the School Board on this issue to see what plans they have if any and the Board will have to take a hard look at the funding moving forward into the next year. He stated as Commissioner Hall stated the county does not know how money it will received and the School Board needs to be prepared for that as well because there will be less funding available. Commissioner Owen stated that he agreed with Commissioner Hall that a discussion needs to be started with the School Board.

Commissioner W. Carter stated that he agreed with Commissioner Owen that the Board needed to have a meeting with the School Board to see what their plans are.

Commissioner Jefferies agreed with Commissioner W. Carter to have a meeting with the School Board to see what their plans are. He added that Commissioner Hall has some good ideas about this.

Chairman McVey directed the county manager to get this meeting with the School Board set up.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he fully agreed with the statements that have been made.

Commissioner Hall stated that if the Board will move forward and open the lines of communications with the School Board the Board can figure out where the county may end up and what may need to be done over the next couple of years.

COUNTY MANAGER’S UPDATES

Telecommuting

Mr. Miller stated that department leaders are asking their staff to work from home and at the same time keeping their department adequately staffed. He added that some departments are able to do this but others are not able to allow the employees to work from home due to public safety. Mr. Miller stated that the county is till following this course in following the guidance of the CDC, DHHS, Governor, and Health Department.

S.R. Farmer Lake

Mr. Miller informed the Board that after speaking with the Lake Warden Charlie King the Farmer Lake has been reopened as of last Wednesday. He added that the fishing pier has been roped off because it was attracting more than 10 people but the boat launch is open.

Commissioner Hall stated to the county manager that he thinks that it would be helpful to some of the seniors if they could use the fishing pier. He asked the county manager to look into this possibility. Commissioner Hall stated that he thinks Commissioner S. Carter mentioned earlier to allow individuals to fish from their private property and he did not think the Board received any recommendations from the Farmer Lake Board but this needs to be considered as well. Mr. Miller stated that he would take a look into both of these options.

Information Notification System

Commissioner Oestreicher asked the county manager for an update on the second informational notification system. Mr. Miller responded that that he is trying to put something in place to handle and to serve as an informational notification system. He stated that initially he thought this could be handled through the Code Red System while keeping the integrity of the Code Red System for emergencies but Code Red’s ability is not what was originally thought so he is going to continue with possibly One Call which is another platform that Code Red has but it is more expensive to go with One Call. Commissioner Oestreicher asked the county manager if he had an estimate on the additional cost for One Call. Mr. Miller responded that the additional cost would be between $5,000 and $8,000. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if it would make sense to not spend money on how the informational notices are being sent out via other social media and divert this money to the One Call system. Mr. Miller responded that he did not think so and he quoted the local health director when she stated that it takes 8 different ways to get a message across so more avenues are needed to send these informational messages out. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that this was the answer he was looking for.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner W. Carter stated that he had been in the meeting since 9:00 but he had to reboot the system several times to get the video up.

Commissioner Owen stated that the Board received an email from Kevin Leonard, Executive Director of the NCACC, in regard to a possible bill that is being moved forward on the federal level for direct assistance to counties. He added that he thinks this needs to be discussed at the local level and then sent up the chain because the only thing they are going to base this on is population but he thinks other factors need to be considered rather than just population. Commissioner Owen stated this because the county next Caswell could lose 5 to 10 businesses and still sustain without those business but Caswell would not be able to sustain if it lost 5 to 10 businesses. He added that citizens in Caswell County will not have jobs as well due to these loses.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he fully concurred with Commissioner Owen’s comments and added that there are certain basic services and certain basic issues that every county has to deal with other than just population. He added that he did not have a concept to make a proposal at this time but if the Board wants to organize a smaller group to look into that and he would volunteer his services to this group. Commissioner Owen responded that this would be a good thing to get started on and added that he was willing to help as well. Chairman McVey responded that he did not mind helping.

Commissioner Owen stated that he did not want to put Commissioner Hall on the spot but he knew that Commissioner Hall is very involved in a district level and would be able to give a lot of wisdom in this process. He added that if Commissioner Hall did not want to serve directly that is fine but I hope he would consider being a source to get information and to give some guidance. Chairman McVey stated that he would be glad to step down and to allow Commissioner Hall to step in. Commissioner Hall responded that he appreciated the thoughts and the comments by Commissioner Owen and he agreed to do whatever he could. Chairman McVey stated that Commissioner Hall would serve on this committee. Commissioner Hall responded okay.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he would also suggest that the Mr. Miller would be involved in this group as well.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

 A. 113th NCACC Annual Conference – August 13 – 15, 2020 – Cabarrus County

 Concord Convention Center

Commissioner W. Carter stated that the Board received an email that the Joint Meeting with the Towns of Yanceyville and Milton has been cancelled for May.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Hall to go into closed session to preserve attorney/client privilege (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3)).

Mr. Ferrell stated that before the Board takes this motion, the Board can expect to received advice for him on a litigation filed in Wake County Superior Court in the matter of Thomas Edward Peckham, Plaintiff v. Cynthia Williamson, Caswell County Sheriff’s Office, Tony Durden, Caswell County Sheriff, and Bryan Miller, County Manager.

After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked how this would be done on Zoom. Chairman McVey responded that the IT Director would explain how closed session would be handled.

Mr. Ferrell stated that for the closed session the individuals participating will need to stop their audio and video. He added that the broadcast will continue and once the closed session is over the participants will return to the meeting to conclude the regular session. Mr. Ferrell stated that the county manager can help the individuals to connect to closed session separately.

REGULAR SESSION

Commissioner Oestreicher moved, seconded by Commissioner W. Carter to go back into regular session. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:30 a.m. Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner W. Carter to adjourn. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

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Paula P. Seamster Rick McVey

Clerk to the Board Chairman

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