MINUTES – JANUARY 4, 2021

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, January 4, 2021. The meeting was held electronically using Zoom Webinar software. Members present: David J. Owen, Chairman, Jeremiah Jefferies, Vice Chairman, William E. Carter, John D. Dickerson, Nathaniel Hall, Rick McVey, Steve Oestreicher. 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 Owen welcomed everyone to the January 4, 2021 Board of Commissioners meeting. He wished everyone a Happy New Year and added that he hoped it would be a different year.

Chairman Owen 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.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The clerk read the public comments received:

“Elin Claggett, Ph.D., 108 Jaye Lane, Providence. Economic Development seems to have been a hot topic over the past year with discussion about Co-Square and the Asphalt/Quarry being foremost with Planning Dept. and Board of Commissioners. Several bullet points that have been recurrently omitted from public discussion to include the following examples:

1. Measur.io, an internet based, agricultural data management company, was named the “anchor tenant” for Co-Square 2 years ago. However, their designated office space is empty. Their contract, to include rent payments for 8 desks ($1200/month), has not been made available to the public.  Remember this is the company that had its groundbreaking at Honey Bee Farm on December 7, 2018 and is supposed to create up to 25 jobs and estimated impact of $1.5 million?  This same farm voiced concern in a recent article about the stark lack of consistent internet service in their area.
2. The Arts Council, currently the only CoSquare occupant (other than county employees), is in a suite that is the equivalent space for 6 desks or $900/month. Again, the contract stipulating this rent payment has not been made available.
3. The article in the Caswell Messenger last month stated there were 8 tenants aligned for CoSquare occupancy. How much money will be collected monthly for economic development and repayment of taxpayer $330,000 investment made in August 2019? There is no pay-back until there is income. One Commissioner signed an agreement but again no statement of how much money will be paid to the county for services.  Without paying tenants and more than $1.5 million which has been spent on this project, county employees working at CoSquare now have the highest priced offices in Caswell.
4. The Caswell County Detention Center broke ground in August 2011 for a total price of $8.4 million. This was sold to taxpayers as a source of jobs and economic development. Income minus expenses equals total profit/loss.  How much money did the Detention Center loose over the last fiscal year?  Why is this not publicly discussed during budget sessions?
5. On October 19, 2020, following closed session, Commissioners voted unanimously for a proposed up to $75,000 grant to be paid over three years for the Economic Development Project. Who gets the money and what businesses are supported?
6. How many business loans have been made in the name of economic development over the past decade? Where are those businesses today?
7. Carolina Sunrock proposed a quarry and asphalt plant in southeastern Caswell County. This was promoted as economic development and source of new jobs. Much discussion on anticipated jobs and economic development has been countered by concerns of environmental impact but too little, too late.
8. During the past year, a geo-engineering technical business has bought a large stretch of land in the Pelham district. Reportedly the County Attorney and County Manager are aware of this business. However, this source of economic development has not been mentioned in Board of Commissioner or Planning Dept meetings. Why not?  What is the anticipated economic impact?
9. A furniture manufacturer is supposed to invest $5.4 million for a warehouse & distribution center in Caswell Co. and create 50 new jobs. Where will this be located and when will taxpayers see resultant income?
10. Recently the Commissioners voted to sell county property that is purported to be for a food industry enterprise. What company and what is the projected economic development impact?
11. A casino in Danville, VA could bring a huge opportunity for businesses along Hwy 86 and US-29. Why is this huge opportunity not being explore as tourists travel through Caswell to Danville?

A lot of talk about development but how many new jobs and how many dollars have been collected? Why is there never any update except when money is being spent? Why is there no follow-up when deadlines elapse?  Why is public information on the tenants in CoSquare and their payment to the county not accessible and requiring intervention from our Senator?  Why does no one publicly question when projects, like the Detention center and Measur.io, fail to measure up to their hype?  This is not fiscal accountability nor is it good management. This is a poor county, with approx. 9,145 households, who pay higher tax rates than those of surrounding counties.  The current plan is to further increase taxes in 2021.  Why is information so difficult to obtain vs. being routinely updated every single commissioner meeting? Why don’t you care enough to ask for updates on all these issues?  In 2021, why don’t you start with public updates for this list of economic development spending and opportunities?  Thank you for your time and consideration.”

RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions.

ACTION ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey to approve the agenda. After a roll call vote the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher and Owen voted in favor.)

FINAL ASSESSMENT RESOLUTION FOR SHADOW RIDGE ROAD

Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to approve the final assessment resolution for Shadow Ridge Road. After a roll call vote the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher and Owen voted in favor.)

FINAL ASSESSMENT RESOLUTION

FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO SHADOW RIDGE ROAD

 WHEREAS, on June 15, 2020 the Caswell County Board of Commissioners received a petition from the owners of land abutting Shadow Ridge Road in Providence Township, Caswell County, North Carolina (the “Road”) requesting the County finance the local share of the cost of improvements to the Road made under the supervision of the Department of Transportation (the “Project”); and

 WHEREAS, the petition was signed by at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the owners of property to be assessed, who represent at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the lineal feet of frontage of the lands abutting the Road; and

 WHEREAS, the Project has been approved by the Department of Transportation; and

 WHEREAS, the Caswell County Board of Commissioners has decided to finance all or part of the local share of the cost of the Project as provided herein; and

WHEREAS, the Caswell County Board of Commissioners adopted a “Preliminary Assessment Resolution For Improvements to Shadow Ridge Road” on August 3, 2020 (the “Initial Preliminary Resolution”); and

 WHEREAS, the Caswell County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on the Initial Preliminary Resolution on September 8, 2020; and

 WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners received public comment during the public hearing indicating that property owners subject to the assessment expected to be assessed at an equal rate per lot rather than based on the amount of street frontage of the lot served or subject to being served by the Project at an equal rate per foot of frontage as provided in the Initial Preliminary Resolution; and

 WHEREAS, based on public comment received during the public hearing on the Initial Preliminary Resolution, the Board found an equal assessment for each lot served by the future public road will most accurately assess each lot according to the benefit conferred upon it by the Project; and

 WHEREAS, the Caswell County Board of Commissioners adopted an Amended and Restated Preliminary Assessment Resolution for the Project on October 19, 2020; and

 WHEREAS, the Caswell County Board of Commissioners hereby adopt a final assessment resolution directing that the Project be undertaken.

 NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

 l. This is a final assessment resolution enacted pursuant to the provisions of North Carolina General Statute153A-192.

 2. The Caswell County Board of Commissioners does hereby undertake actions pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes 153A-205 and 153A-185 et. seq. to finance all or part of the local share of the cost of improvements of the Road as shown on the attached map (Exhibit A).

 3. The nature of the Project is to make improvements, including, but not limited to, surveying and platting of the Road, in order to bring the Road up to the standards of the North Carolina Department of Transportation so that the Road may become a part of the State-maintained system.

 4. The portion of the cost of the improvements to be assessed is not more than Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00) which is the local share required by policies of the Department of Transportation.

 5. The basis for making assessments shall be an equal rate per lot for each lot abutting the Road.

 6. The percentage of the costs of the work to be assessed is One Hundred Percent (100%).

1. Assessments shall not be held in abeyance.
2. The terms of payment shall be payment in five (5) equal annual instalments, with interest accruing on the unpaid balance at the rate of four and one-half percent (4.5%) from the due date of the first installment as provided herein. The first installment with interest is due sixty (60) days after the date that the assessment roll is confirmed, and one installment with interest is due on that same day in each successive year until the assessment is paid in full.

 Adopted this the 4th day of January, 2021.

 CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

 S/David Owen\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
 David Owen, Chairman

ATTEST:

S/Paula Seamster\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
Paula Seamster

Clerk to the Board

MODIFICATION TO RULE 32 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that discussions have been had on the procedure of making appointments to the boards and committees for the county and there have been discussions about the order of receiving nominations and voting. He added that he brought this up 2 years ago, this usually happened when there were more applicants than vacancies and he wanted to make sure that all of the applicants are vetted and considered for the positions. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that he took Rule 32 from the Rules of Procedure and added some input from the county attorney and revised Rule 32. He showed the revision on the screen which included the Current Rule 32, Advice from the county attorney, and then at the bottom he added the revisions in red to the current rule. (See below)

“Current Rule 32. Appointments. The Board shall use the following procedure to make appointments to fill vacancies in other boards and public offices over which the Board has power of appointment.

The Chair shall open the floor to nominations, whereupon the members shall put forward and debate names of possible appointees. When debate ends, the Chair shall call the roll of the members, and each member shall vote. The votes shall not be tallied until each member has voted.

Each vote shall be decided by a majority of the valid ballots cast (a majority is determined by dividing the number of valid ballots cast by two and taking the next highest whole number). It is the duty of each member to vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made, but failure to do so does not invalidate that member’s ballot.

**Advice from County Attorney:**

Chair opens the floor for nominations for the 5 open seats. Commissioners nominate 10 persons for the 5 seats. The names of the 10 persons are debated. Board votes to end debate on nominations. Chair calls the role of each Commissioner. Each Commissioner must vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made (5 in this example). The Clerk tallies the votes once each Commissioner has voted. Each vote is decided by a majority of the valid ballots cast (assuming all 7 Commissioners vote, a majority is determined by dividing by 7 votes by 2 and taking the next highest whole number which is 4). Those nominees with 4 votes or higher are appointed.

Rule 32. Appointments. The Board shall use the following procedure to make appointments to fill vacancies in other boards and public offices over which the Board has power of appointment.

The Chair shall open the floor to nominations, whereupon the members shall put forward the names of possible appointees. After each member has had the opportunity to nominate candidates, those nominated are debated. The Board then votes to end debate on nominations. When debate ends, the Chair shall call the roll of each Commissioner for their vote(s). Each Commissioner must vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made. The votes shall not be tallied until each member has voted. The Clerk tallies the votes once each Commissioner has voted. Those nominees with 4 votes or higher are appointed.

Each vote shall be decided by a majority of the valid ballots cast (a majority is determined by dividing the number of valid ballots cast by two and taking the next highest whole number). It is the duty of each member to vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made, but failure to do so does not invalidate that member’s ballot.”

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that this was a simple change and added that the way the rule was originally written it was not very clear.

Commissioner Oestreicher moved, seconded by Commissioner Hall to adopt Rule 32 as amended.

Commissioner Dickerson thanked the Board for acting quickly on this and correcting this issue. He added that he was very disappointed by the last round of voting for appointments and he did not think it was fair to the citizens. Commissioner Dickerson stated that this was a much-needed change and he appreciated it being taken care of.

Mr. Ferrell stated that the commentary that he provided on the rule was quoted accurately however the last sentence in the second paragraph ‘Those nominees with 4 votes or higher are appointed.’ may or may not be technically correct depending on the actual number of commissioners sitting and voting on a particular day. He stated that he thought this was covered accurately in the final paragraph which states ‘Each vote shall be decided by a majority of the valid ballots cast’ so his suggestion was to delete the final added sentence in the new second paragraph.

Commissioner Hall stated that it may be possible for a commissioner to not vote for a particular candidate at all so it would go back to the majority even if all commissioners are present.

Chairman Owen stated that he noticed that it stated ‘After each member has had the opportunity to nominate candidates, those nominated are debated.’ and then it says ‘The Board then votes to end debate on nominations.’ He asked if the Chair could ask if there were no further debate to close the nominations. Mr. Ferrell responded yes. Chairman Owen asked Commissioner Oestreicher to amend this.

“Rule 32. Appointments. The Board shall use the following procedure to make appointments to fill vacancies in other boards and public offices over which the Board has power of appointment.

The Chair shall open the floor to nominations, whereupon the members shall put forward the names of possible appointees. After each member has had the opportunity to nominate candidates, those nominated are debated. After the debate concludes the Chairman will then end debate on nominations. When debate ends, the Chair shall call the roll of each Commissioner for their vote(s). Each Commissioner must vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made. The votes shall not be tallied until each member has voted. The Clerk tallies the votes once each Commissioner has voted.

Each vote shall be decided by a majority of the valid ballots cast (a majority is determined by dividing the number of valid ballots cast by two and taking the next highest whole number). It is the duty of each member to vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made, but failure to do so does not invalidate that member’s ballot.”

Commissioner Hall moved, seconded by Commissioner Oestreicher to adopt Rule 32 as amended. After a roll call vote the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher and Owen voted in favor.)

APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Chairman Owen opened the nominations to the Board of Adjustment and added that up to 5 individuals may be nominated.

Commissioner Oestreicher nominated Kim Steffan, Phil Barfield, Ray Shaffner, Chris Newnam, and Nikki Turner.

The clerk reminded the Board that there needed to be one appointment from the Hyco Lake zoned area, and she asked Mr. Ferrell if this was correct. Mr. Ferrell responded yes since there was a chance to have a variance from the zoned area and he asked the clerk if those individuals were designated. The clerk stated that there was only one applicant from the zoned area. Mr. Ferrell asked who the applicant was. The clerk stated Stephen Barmann.

Commissioner Carter nominated John Claggett, Kim Steffan, Brian K. Bradner, Stephen Barmann, and James Ray Shaffner.

Commissioner Jefferies nominated John Claggett, Thomas Wright, and Nikki S. Turner.

Commissioner McVey nominated Brian Bradner, Ray Shaffner, Tim Yarbrough, William Vernon, and Nikki Turner.

Commissioner Dickerson nominated John Claggett, Thomas Wright, Steve Harris, Stephen Barmann, and Tim Yarbrough.

Chairman Owen nominated Stephen Barmann, Brian Bradner, James Ray Shaffner, Phil Barfield, and Nikki Turner.

Chairman Owen asked the clerk to name all those that were nominated. The clerk asked Commissioner Hall if he was going to make any nominations. Mr. Hall responded that all his names were nominated.

Commissioner Carter asked if it was true that someone had to be appointed from the Hyco Lake zoned area so the commissioners would only be nominating 4 others. Chairman Owen responded that this was correct, but the commissioners can nominate any five they so choose. Commissioner Carter asked if it was true that one person needed to be appointed from the Hyco Lake zoned area. Mr. Ferrell responded yes and since there was only one applicant from that area the Board would need to appoint that applicant for the Hyco Lake area and then there will be 4 more appointments. Commissioner Carter stated okay.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked Mr. Ferrell if this appointment was statutorily required to appoint someone from the Hyco Lake zoned area or is that Mr. Ferrell’s recommendation. Mr. Ferrell responded that he would have to find the reference in 160D but the general idea is because the Board of Adjustment would be making decisions for the district that is zoned there needs to be a resident of that district included on the Board of Adjustment to make zoning decisions so that was why the clerk brought that up. He stated that he would find the reference for Commissioner Oestreicher.

The clerk stated that if the Board would look at the list of applicants, everyone was nominated on the list except for Randy Whitt and Michael Komondy.

Chairman Owen opened the floor for debate.

Commissioner Carter stated that he nominated Kim Steffan because she was an attorney.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated that Kim Steffan worked admirably on the HIDO committee. He stated that Chris Newnam had been very active with the Caswell Group that studied the statutes and a case law extensively. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that Ray Shaffner served on the Planning Board and was no longer on the Planning Board so there was no conflict there. He stated that Phil Barfield was exceptionally well qualified as far as studying the laws and the data and was retired so he had time to do this. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that Nikki Turner was on the Piedmont Triad Regional Council Workforce Development Board and was quite well qualified to serve on the Board of Adjustment. He stated that the nominees that he selected were all based on a review of their qualifications.

Commissioner McVey stated that Tim Yarbrough is a large landowner and farmer in the Prospect Hill community and has been very successful in his endeavors as well as a leader in the community. He stated that William Vernon is on the opposite side of the county in the Milton area has been an outstanding member of the community and is a successful farmer and landowner.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that John Claggett is retired Army and follows the Board meetings very well and keeps things in order. He added that he thought that Mr. Claggett would be a good person to serve on this board. Commissioner Jefferies stated Thomas Wright has been around for about 71 years, is a farmer, worked for Burlington Industries for over 40 years and would be a good candidate. Commissioner Jefferies stated that Nikki Turner is a contractor and a realtor in the county. He stated that Ms. Turner went to A&T and graduated with a 4.0 and would be a good candidate for the board. Commissioner Jefferies stated that only two black submitted applications for this board so he would like to see one or two to serve on this board.

Commissioner Dickerson echoed the sentiments on John Claggett and thought he would be an excellent choice for the board. He stated that Mr. Claggett has been involved in the community for a long time and follows up well and he thought he would be well suited for this appointment. Commissioner Dickerson echoed Commissioner Jefferies comments on Thomas Wright and added that there needed to be representation from the African American community on this board and Mr. Wright would be ideal for this. Commissioner Dickerson stated that Steve Harris served on the Planning Board and added that Mr. Harris was well rounded and would fit very well in this position. He added that Mr. Harris was already knowledgeable about this and could hit the ground running. Commissioner Dickerson stated that Tim Yarbrough is a very prominent farmer from the southern end of the county and there was a need for representation from all the areas of the county.

Commissioner Carter echoed Commissioner Jefferies and Commissioner Dickerson’s comments on John Claggett and added that Mr. Claggett would be an outstanding candidate. He added that Mr. Claggett had served on the Planning Board for years and keeps up with all the county’s activities. Commissioner Carter stated that Ray Shaffner had served on the Planning Board as well as Steve Harris, so they have good knowledge. Commissioner Carter echoed Commissioner Dickerson and Commissioner McVey’s comments on Tim Yarbrough and thought he would be a good candidate.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked the Chairman for clarification, he asked if when the commissioners vote if they would have four votes due to Mr. Barmann would be appointed by the rule in 160D. Chairman Owen responded that he wanted to defer that to the attorney, but he thought that Mr. Barmann would still have to be nominated. Mr. Ferrell responded that five would need to be nominated and added that in Section 3.4.1.1 of the Land Use Management Ordinance specifies that if the county does not have countywide zoning then each designated area should have at least one resident member of the Board of Adjustment so that is what he clerk was referencing the need to have a member of the Hyco Lake district on the Board of Adjustment. He stated that the Board would still need a nomination and a vote on that nominee so five appointments would be necessary today. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if each commissioner had to vote for Stephen Barmann. Chairman Owen responded that a commissioner does not have to vote for Mr. Barmann but according to what Mr. Ferrell just read Mr. Barmann will have to be appointed. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that there are 9 areas in the county and there are only 5 slots on the board so it would be impossible to have someone from each area. Mr. Ferrell responded that this was correct but there was only one zoned area and the ordinance only speaks to zoned areas.

Chairman Owen declared the debate closed. He then explained how this process will proceed by saying that each commissioner will call out up to 5 appointees but is not required to nominate 5. Mr. Ferrell responded that the rules does stated that each commissioner must vote for the number of vacancies. He stated that the new rule that the Board just adopted has a “shall” vote for the number of vacancies. Chairman Owen stated that he did not see that and stated that each commissioner needed to vote for 5 individuals. He stated that the clerk will record the votes and once everyone had voted the Board will take a recess so the clerk could add up the votes.

Commissioner Carter stated John Claggett, Brian Bradner, Stephen Barmann, Tim Yarbrough, and Ray Shaffner.

Commissioner Dickerson stated John Claggett, Thomas Wright, Steve Harris, William Vernon, and Tim Yarbrough.

Commissioner Hall stated Kim Steffan, Stephen Barmann, John Claggett, Thomas Wright, and Phil Barfield.

Commissioner Jefferies stated John Claggett, Thomas Wright, Steve Harris, Tim Yarbrough, and Nikki Turner.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked the Chairman if Commissioner Hall named 5 individuals. Chairman Owen asked the clerk if Commissioner Hall named 5 individuals. Commissioner Hall responded no he did not name 5 and added that he failed to name Nikki Turner. The clerk stated that she had 6 names for Commissioner Hall and asked him to go over his list again. Commissioner Hall responded Kim Steffan, Nikki Turner, Stephen Barmann, John Claggett, and Phil Barfield.

Commissioner McVey stated Brian Bradner, Ray Shaffner, Tim Yarbrough, William Vernon, and Nikki Turner.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated Kim Steffan, Phil Barfield, Ray Shaffner, Chris Newnam, and Nikki Turner.

Chairman Owen stated Stephen Barmann, Ray Shaffner, Phil Barfield, Nikki Turner, and Tim Yarbrough.

Chairman Owen stated that the Board would take a brief recess so the clerk could tally the votes.

Commissioner Carter stated that he had a question before the Board recessed, he stated that he was confused because he thought the attorney stated that the Board would only nominate four since Stephen Barman would have to be appointed because he lives in the Hyco Lake zoned area. Chairman Owen responded that Stephen Barman was nominated. Commissioner Carter stated that he knew that Mr. Barmann was nominated but he wanted to know if it was true that someone had to be appointed to the board from the Hyco Lake zoned area. Mr. Ferrell read from the Land Use Management Ordinance ‘If the Board of Commissioners does not zone the entire jurisdiction of the county, which is our situation, each designated area shall if practicable have at least one resident as a member of the Board of Adjustment.’ Commissioner Carter asked Mr. Ferrell if Mr. Barmann would have to be appointed. Mr. Ferrell responded, “If practicable is what your ordinance requires but it still would require a formal nomination, which you have, and then a majority vote to appoint.”

Chairman Owen stated that the Board would recess for 5 minutes or until the clerk can tally the votes.

RECESS

The Board took a brief recess so the clerk could tally the votes.

APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT (cont’d)

Chairman Owen asked the clerk to give the results.

The clerk stated that Nikki Turner received 5 votes, Tim Yarbrough received 5 votes, John Claggett received 4 votes, James “Ray” Shaffner received 4 votes, Stephen Barmann received 3 votes, Phil Barfield received 3 votes, Thomas Wright received 2 votes, Kim Steffan received 2 votes, William Vernon received 2 votes, Steve Harris received 2 votes, Brian Bradner received 2 votes, and Christopher Newnam received 1 vote.

Chairman Owen asked the attorney how to handle the two individuals that had 3 votes and asked if the individual in the zoned area needed to be appointed. Mr. Ferrell responded that the ordinance says to the extent practical there needs to be someone that resides in the Hyco Lake area to sit on the Board of Adjustment. Chairman Owen stated that the Board would need to vote again on Stephen Barmann and Phil Barfield to fill the last spot on the Board of Adjustment and he reminded the Board that Stephen Barmann is the individual from the zoned area.

Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, McVey, and Owen voted for Stephen Barmann.

Commissioner Oestreicher voted for Phil Barfield.

The Board could not hear Commissioner Jefferies to receive his vote.

Chairman Owen asked Mr. Ferrell if there needed to be a motion to appoint the 5 to the Board of Adjustment or would the vote be sufficient. Mr. Ferrell responded that the Board had made nominations and voted on the nominees and added that the four names that received the majority and now the Board is voting on the last seat. He asked the clerk if this was consistent with her understanding. The clerk responded yes sir.

Commissioner Jefferies voted for Phil Barfield.

Chairman Owen asked the clerk for the results of the vote. The clerk responded that Stephen Barmann received 5 votes and Phil Barfield received 2 votes.

Chairman Owen stated that the Board of Adjustment had been appointed and congratulated all of those that were appointed and named the individuals: Nikki Turner, Tim Yarbrough, Ray Shaffner, Stephen Barmann and John Claggett.

CASWELL COUNTY ORDINANCE EXTENDING THE MORATORIUM ON POLLUTING INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CASWELL COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey to adopt the Caswell County Ordinance Extending the Moratorium on Polluting Industry Development within Caswell County.

Commissioner Oestreicher stated there was one typo in the ordinance, he said that in the second paragraph it says ‘has’ and should say ‘was’. Chairman Owen stated that this could be handled outside of the vote.

Upon a vote on the motion, after a roll call vote the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher and Owen voted in favor.)

BOARD MINUTES

Chairman Owen asked if there were any corrections to the Board Minutes of December 14, 2020 Special Meeting. He stated with no corrections the Minutes stand approved.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Ms. Jennifer Eastwood, Health Director, updated the Board on COVID-19. She stated that cases have been coming in steadily since Christmas as predicted with the gatherings of families and friend. Ms. Eastwood stated that on December 31st and January 1st there were 50 cases to come in which was a record for Caswell. She stated that Caswell has 1214 cases, 13.3% positivity rate, 15 individuals are in the hospital with 4 of those being critical and 2 of those have been critical for some time, currently have 75 in isolation, and 1 death during the Christmas holiday which brings the death total to 9. Ms. Eastwood stated that the Health Department starting vaccinating last week with the 1a population. She stated that 20 were vaccinated at the Health Department and 16 were vaccinated at other places. Ms. Eastwood stated that at the last meeting she discussed the vaccination framework, and this has since changed and added that North Carolina has aligned itself more with the CDC’s advisory committee on immunization practices. (See below).



Ms. Eastwood stated that the next group to get the vaccine would be the 75 and up age group. She stated that she had been talked with Jeannine Everidge at the Senior Center about holding a vaccination clinic at the Senior Center for this age group. Ms. Eastwood stated with the Maderna vaccination one vile has 10 doses and all 10 doses must be given within 6 hours.

Commissioner Dickerson asked what the over 1200 cases encompassed, if it was from the beginning of the virus or 1200 actual cases in the county. Ms. Eastwood responded that this was a cumulative number of cases since the beginning of the virus. She added that the active cases would be number that is in isolation which is 75 right now. Commissioner Dickerson asked if there were any active flu cases in the county because he was not hearing anything about the flu. Ms. Eastwood responded that there are active cases of flu in the county, flu A and flu B. She added that the same social distancing guidance with the virus is the same for the flu. Ms. Eastwood stated that the flu is serious but he pointed out that there are long term effects with the COVID-19 that are still be learned about so that is the reason it is talked about so much. Commissioner Dickerson asked Ms. Eastwood if she had any numbers on the flu cases in Caswell. He added that he personally did not know of anyone that had the flu and it seemed that it had disappeared. Ms. Eastwood responded that several of the COVID positives have tested positive for both the virus and the flu. She stated that the health department is testing for the flu. Ms. Eastwood stated that she could send Commissioner Dickerson the latest surveillance report for flu like symptoms and that is where the numbers come from. Commissioner Dickerson thanked Ms. Eastwood and stated that he did not know why there were so many COVID cases and so few flu cases. Ms. Eastwood responded that when the flu season is predicted it is predicted based on the southern hemisphere and the southern hemisphere locked down there they had almost no flu season and she added that the county does still have flu cases. Commissioner Dickerson stated that the United States locked down as well as the United States still has a lot of cases of the COVID. Ms. Eastwood responded that the United States did not lock down like the countries in the southern hemisphere did. Commissioner Dickerson responded that he understood that but COVID still made it here to the United States.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked Ms. Eastwood to give the contact number for individuals to call to make an appointment to receive the vaccination. Ms. Eastwood responded that anyone that wanted to be vaccinated can call the Health Department at 336-694-4129 to have their name put on the list. She stated that individuals will be registered in the COVID Vaccine Management System which will generate an email to send to the individuals to let the individuals know what group they qualify for and that is how individuals are vaccinated. Commissioner Oestreicher thanked Ms. Eastwood.

Chairman Owen thanked Ms. Eastwood for the update and for everything she and her staff does.

SCHOOL BOARD – PANDEMIC DISCUSSION

Commissioner Hall stated that again it will be necessary to delay this discussion. He added that he was informed by the county manager that the school board responded last night and this morning. Commissioner Hall stated that the county manager forwarded the school board information to the commissioners, but the commissioners have not had time to review it. Chairman Owen responded that this would be added back to the next meeting.

UPDATED LIST OF APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS & COMMITTEES FOR COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Owen asked the commissioners if they were okay with the appointments that were listed. With no issues with the appointments Chairman Owen asked Mr. Ferrell if it was necessary for the Board to make a motion on these appointments. Mr. Ferrell responded for clarity sake it would be nice to move the list as presented.

Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to approve the list of Appointments to the Boards & Committees for the Commissioners. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher and Owen voted in favor.)

**COMMISSIONER BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

**2021**

Chairman Owen

Social Services Board

Caswell County Hunting & Wildlife Advisory Committee (Alternate)

\*Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization

\*NCACC Government Subcommittee

\*PTRPO Transportation Advisory Council

\*NCACC Health & Human Services Subcommittee

\*NCACC Joint Risk Management Advisory Board of Trustees

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council

Vice Chairman Jefferies

\*Social Services Board

Piedmont Behavioral Health Board

Caswell County Adult Advisory Committee

\*Home Health Advisory Committee

Commissioner Oestreicher

Personnel Committee

EMS Peer Review Committee

Caswell County Area Transportation System

Agriculture Advisory Committee

Planning Board

\*Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization (alternate)

Commissioner W. Carter

E-911 Board

Local Emergency Planning Committee

Cyber Security Committee

Library Advisory Board

Commissioner Dickerson

Cyber Security Committee

Personnel Committee

Caswell County Hunting & Wildlife Advisory Committee

Cemeteries Board of Trustees

Commissioner Hall

\*Piedmont Triad Council of Governments

Caswell County Adult Advisory Committee

\*Caswell County Partnership for Children

Board of Health

\*Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Consortium

Commissioner McVey

Farmer Lake Board

Recreation Commission

Personnel Committee

Regional Economic Development Commission

COUNTY MANAGER’S UPDATES

High Impact Development Ordinance (HIDO)

Mr. Miller informed the Board that due to the passage of the High Impact Development Ordinance (HIDO) and the repeal of the Environmental Impact Ordinance the county is legally obligated to begin processing permits that were put on hold.

Zoom Room

Mr. Miller informed the Board that the installation of the Zoom Room in the upstairs room in the Historic Courthouse will resume on Wednesday and there will be staff training on Friday. He stated after the staff training there will be discussions about whether the Board will begin meeting there again. Mr. Miller stated that there are still internet issues at the Historic Courthouse that needed to be worked out and the IT director is working on those.

Payment Assistance Program

Mr. Miller informed the Board and the public that the county allocated $20,000 to support The Caswell Fund with the Payment Assistance Program. He added that this is $20,000 in addition to the initial $6,000 from CARES Act money to help residents with payment assistance and he urged residents that needed this assistance to contact the Senior Center.

Mr. Miller informed the Board that the county had contract with Healthy Places by Design to formalize a plan for the redesign for the Square and expects this process to move forward over the next two months and soon achieve the goals that the Board has set.

Mr. Miller stated that he would be happy to answer any questions about these topics or any other topics.

Commissioner Oestreicher asked if the $6,000 from the CARES Act was related to the Duke Energy contribution. Mr. Miller responded yes and added that Duke Energy contributed $4,000 for payment assistance to The Caswell Fund and the County contributed $6,000 originally. He stated that what was realized was there was such a need in the county, and he spoke with Jeannine Everidge, Senior Service Director, and Ms. Everidge stated that she was inundated with applications so after these conversations and conversations with the Health Director Jennifer Eastwood the county decided to allocate an additional $20,000 to the Payment Assistance Program. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that this was a total of $26,000. Mr. Miller responded that it would be $30,000 if the Duke Energy contribution is added in. Commissioner Oestreicher asked for the extension date on the CARES Act funding. Mr. Miller responded that with the passing of the omnibus bill and being signed into law by President Trump along with the COVID Relief Bill the extension for CARES Act spending was extended to December 21, 2021. Commissioner Oestreicher stated that any funds received in 2020 could be spent throughout 2021. Mr. Miller responded that this was correct and any additional funds that are received.

 COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Hall stated that this past weekend his computer sent him a message that said that the ESINC had outdated security protocols and suggested that he not read his emails so he thought he needed to bring that to somebody’s attention and suggested talking to ESINC. Chairman Owen responded that this would be forwarded to IT.

Commissioner Dickerson stated that he had received several comments and several people have reached out to him about the poor and substandard internet service in the county and added that these people are struggling with their children to try to keep up with the schooling requirements and these people want to know when the children will be allowed to go back to school. He stated that these people are pointing out that surrounding counties are going back to school with broken schedules. Commissioner Dickerson stated that Person County is back in the classroom with half the students going two days, the other half goes two days and then off on Fridays. He stated that the children not being able to socialize with others is hurting the children as well. Commissioner Dickerson asked if there were any plans to open the schools. Chairman Owen responded that this would be up to the school board and its next meeting is January 11th. He stated that he did not know where the school board stood on this issue, but he thought it would be on the agenda for that meeting. Chairman Owen stated that he agreed with Commissioner Dickerson’s sentiments and added that he thought there was more harm being done by the children not being able to go back to school and have a teacher as well as the socialization part and stated that this would be a good question for forward to the school board. Commissioner Dickerson asked what portion of the COVID money went to the school system. Mr. Miller responded that the County appropriated $1500 to Caswell County Schools to help with the feeding site that fed children and adults. Chairman Owen responded that Caswell County Schools was appropriated money through the CARES Act. Mr. Miller stated that this was correct and that he could investigate how much money Caswell County Schools received from the CARES Act. Commissioner Dickerson stated that he would like to get that figure and thanked Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller responded yes sir.

Commissioner Hall followed up on Commissioner Dickerson’s comment and stated that one of the reasons he requested information from the school board was to get ahead of this problem. He stated that he was quite disappointed that it took the Board almost a month for the school board to answer some general questions and added that Commissioner Dickerson’s question could have been asked if there had been some discussions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Chairman Owen asked if there were announcements that the Board needed to be made aware of.

Commissioner Carter stated that the Board would have a work session that was coming up on January 10th. Chairman Owen responded that it would be on January 20th.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:23 a.m. Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to adjourn. After a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners Carter, Dickerson, Hall, Jefferies, McVey, Oestreicher, and Owen voted in favor.)

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Paula P. Seamster David J. Owen

Clerk to the Board Chairman

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