

MINUTES  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY  
FEBRUARY 1, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M.  
IN THE CARMON AUDITORIUM, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING  
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

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1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN LEONARD WIGGINS AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Leonard Wiggins, Chairman, Mrs. Evelyn Powell, Mr. Donald Boswell, Mrs. Viola Harris, Mr. William Wooten and Mr. Ralph Webb.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Eric Evans, County Manager, Mrs. Natalie Bess, Deputy County Manager, Mr. Michael Peters, County Attorney and Ms. Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS.  
Mrs. Bess provided safety instructions.

3. PRAYER.  
Prayer provided by Mrs. Harris.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.  
Mr. Wooten moved to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2021 meeting as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. PUBLIC HEARING.

1. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to receive citizen comments and questions relative to proposed Firearms Ordinance.

Mr. Peters read the public notice as published.

Mr. Evans stated that Sheriff Clee Atkinson is asking that the Board take into consideration a draft ordinance related to firearms. He stated that we have had some complaints from citizens regarding incidents involving the discharge of firearms. This ordinance would put in place protective measures and a means of enforcement. Mr. Evans stated that before an amendment is made to County ordinances, a public hearing must be held. A hearing notice was properly published for this meeting. He recommended that following public comments and Board deliberation of this matter the Board adopt the ordinance as presented. Mr. Evans provided highlights from the proposed ordinance. Mr. Wiggins called for public comments.

Kathy Williams, 2208 Robins Drive, Tarboro, stated that the only issue she has with the ordinance is the "Exceptions #9...Shooting on a person's own property for the purpose of protecting the premises or its occupants from dangerous or destructive animals or reptiles that are a menace to public health and have become a nuisance upon the person's premises." She stated that there are several reptiles that are on the federally protected list in North Carolina and felt that it should be considered. The other issue she has it there is no definition of nuisance, somebody's dog getting into her trash maybe a nuisance to her and she's going to shoot that dog because basically she is being told that she can. Mrs. Williams stated that, in her opinion, number 1 under the "Exceptions...when it is used in defense of persons or property" should cover that. Animal Services are typically called when there is an issue with wildlife, raccoon, skunk or possum. Most people don't handle that themselves anyway.

She stated that the way #9 is worded you are giving people permission to shoot some animals that they probably shouldn't since it is not defined.

After discussion from the Board regarding Mrs. Williams concerns Mrs. Powell moved to approve adding language to the ordinance stating that "Nothing in this Section shall be inconsistent with North Carolina state law". Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Evans read the following public comments submitted via email:

- From: [jrdail@netzero.net](mailto:jrdail@netzero.net)  
*My concerns with amendment to Chapter 18 is this should be a public hearing but according to your rules public isn't allowed due to the pandemic or this reason this matter should be pushed to a later date. The problem with these kind of meetings is Dictatorship tends to come into play there are laws on the books already covering most of this matter. The board needs to realize that they were elected to perform a duty to the peoples needs not their own needs. That's why a decision's and amendments should held off due to pandemic vaccinations are in process so wait until the taxpayers that elected you can be present.*
- From: Kim Whitehurst [kwhithurst@parkwayag.com](mailto:kwhithurst@parkwayag.com)  
*I live in a residential neighborhood where neighbors use firearms just be shooting. It scares by dogs and horse and you can't even stay outside and enjoy your own yard when this is going on so close to you. They also use something that explodes and I have been told by someone it is probably tanzanite. I am not against owning firearms as I have some myself. But I do feel the county should prohibit them from being used in a residential area around pets and children. They also shoot of fireworks any old time and that should also be prohibited. I pay taxes just like they do and there is a time and place for everything.*
- Sue Via [suevia53@gmail.com](mailto:suevia53@gmail.com)  
*I would like to express my concerns about the Fire arm ordinances in Edgecombe County. I live in a neighborhood near Conetoe. My granddaughter and my neighbor son rides there 4 wheeler on the edge of my Uncles field. Several of u ride our golf carts on this same path. This field backs up to several houses. One of the neighbors has recently built a firing range right next to the path. As he was building it I walked over an expressed my concerns with him about the safety of my granddaughter and neighbors son riding their 4 wheelers on this path. He informed me he was NOT concerned about the safety of my granddaughter. Maybe he's not but I am! Last Saturday they were out shooting with friends for about 2 hours. My dogs were scared to death and it took me hours to calm them down. One of the shots was so loud I thought it was coming through my window and I was petrified...I am afraid to come out of my house. I do not think a firing range should be allowed in a residential area. Where do the kids ride now, on the street? Which is safer? I appreciate your consideration in this matter and please help me keep my granddaughter save. Sincerely, Sue Via*
- Tammy Via [kaylyntammy@gmail.com](mailto:kaylyntammy@gmail.com)  
*Thank you for allowing me to share my concerns about the regulation of firearms in Edgecombe County. My neighbor has built a shooting range at the back of his property. There is a path that many of us ride bicycles, four wheelers and golf carts on, that he was well aware of prior to putting the shooting range in that location. Several of us shared our concerns with him. He informed us it was his property and he could do what he wanted. There is a blind spot coming from one direction in which we cannot see them and they cannot see us if they are out there shooting. We brought that to his attention as well. It is built with railroad cross ties and has no dirt/sand behind it. My mother called the sheriffs department to express her concerns about this shooting range. A deputy came out and talked to the property owner and looked at the shooting range. The deputy called my mother and said that there was no ordinance against it but she could call if the shooting became excessive. Last*

*Saturday there was four people that were shooting for over an hour. A neighbor called the sheriffs department to report (piece disturbance) and a deputy came out but they had stopped shooting by the time the deputy arrived. I am a gun owner but I pay to go to an indoor shooting range because I have more respect and concern for the safety of my neighbors. Please help keep us safe. Thank you, Tammy Via.*

- [kipperann@suddenlink.net](mailto:kipperann@suddenlink.net)

*I live in a residential area in the county. I am very concerned about the frequency of gun shots. A stray bullet entered my home just after midnight on November 1, 2020. The deputy retrieved a 45 caliber bullet 10 feet from where I was sleeping. I no longer feel safe in my home. When I hear gunshots I am terrified that the bullet is going to hit me or my home. It is a "normal" occurrence out here to hear gunshots all hours of the night, especially on holidays (New Year's Eve, July 4<sup>th</sup>, etc.) Now, one of the neighbors has built a firing range in hi back yard within 500 feet of other homes. When they have friends over for shooting practice, it sounds like a war zone. There are 4 other properties that adjoins his property. Suppose all the neighbors decide to build a firing range in their backyards! With the increase in gun sales and the desire to "target shoot", without some rules & regulations in place, this can get out of hand. Not only is it dangerous but it is a noise nuisance. The majority of us are dog owners and the dogs are terrified as well. Where does it end? Thank you for your consideration.*

- Josph Dail [jdail1953@yahoo.com](mailto:jdail1953@yahoo.com)

*I am a county resident and live on Hwy 64 Alternate, 7 miles east of Tarboro-near Conetoe. I have raised rabbit beagles for over 40 years. I currently have 9 beagles. My dog pen is at the back of my property. My neighbor has recently built a makeshift shooting range at the back of his property, sixty feet from my dog pen. I, along with other neighbors expressed to him our concern for safety and noise. He informed us it is his property and there was nothing we could do about it. I also told him that the repeated shooting would make my beagles gun shy. He told me that wasn't his problem, it was my problem. He has been using the shooting range for approximately one month. In that one month, I have 2 beagles that are now gun shy. Since he has built the shooting range, deputies have been called to his home on numerous occasions for "disturbing the peace". There is also another subdivision across the field from where his is shooting. Should he miss the backstop, the bullet could potentially hit one of the houses in that area. There have already been 2 houses in this area that have been hit from stray bullets. Not only are he and his wife shooting, but they invite friends over to shoot as well. They shot non-stop last Saturday for 1 ½ hours. I just don't think a shooting range in a residential area is safe. Many of the neighbors are very concerned for their safety. There are too many legal shooting ranges in the area that are available without citizens having to put ranges in their yards, risking injury/deaths to others. Thank you for your consideration in this very important matter. Joe Dail.*

Phone call message from Robert & Betty Abrams, 234 Everette Road, Tarboro, NC. Expressed concerns about shooting in neighborhoods (shooting ranges).

Mrs. Harris asked who can answer the question about the legal right of an owner in a residential area setting up firing range.

Mr. Evans stated that since they are not being opened to the public there is no business regulations or zoning regulations for that. That being the case we currently do not have anything on the books to regulate that. He stated that at last months meeting the Sheriff talked about the difficulty he and his staff have in trying to address these issues.

Mr. Wiggins stated that it appears that the ordinance will give law enforcement the authority to deal with some of the issues that are being raised, specifically the 500 feet part.

Mr. Wooten stated that his concern was with the 500 feet. If you do the math and you do 500 feet in a square, that is 5.7 acres of land. Someone could go out in our county and buy 5 ½ acres of land and will not be able to discharge a firearm without having to get permission from somebody next door. He felt it was excessive in a rural county and suggested reducing it to 200 feet.

After further discussion Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Firearms Ordinance as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5 for and 1 against. Mr. Wooten opposed.

6. **SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.**

A. **Karen Lachapelle, Health Director, provided COVID-19 update.**

Mrs. Lachapelle stated that they started giving vaccines at the Health Department on January 6<sup>th</sup>. They are providing vaccines daily in the Tarboro office and the Rocky Mount office from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. As of this afternoon they have given 3166 doses and they have 280 doses as of five today. They are expecting a delivery of 400 more doses tomorrow morning. They have 400 second round doses on hand. Her stated that for the rest of this week they have 741 appointments and they did not get the vaccine that they had anticipated getting. Mrs. Lachapelle stated that they do not charge for the vaccine however, they are allowed to charge a \$25.00 fee for administering the vaccine and they do that to all private companies, Medicare and Medicaid. No one is turned away for inability to pay or lack of health insurance, nor will they ever receive a bill for it. They are only limited now to the amount of vaccine that they receive each week, which is 400 doses. Currently they need about 1200 doses a week to meet their current appointments. She stated that she sat down with Mr. Evans to come up with a plan to work with the black churches in the County. They would like to is target maybe five larger churches in the County and get them to work with the smaller churches. She stated that they do have some volunteer staffing, contract staff and using staff from the National Guard, faculty from ECU and soon will have faculty from ECC and looking forward to using some of the EMTs and Paramedics from Edgecombe County Rescue. She stated that they have a back log of hundreds of phone calls that need returning and only have three people pulling the phone calls off of the answering machine and three to four returning the calls to set-up appointments.

Mrs. Lachapelle answered questions from the Board.

B. **Chad Eason, EMS Coordinator, introduction of EMS Supervisors and transition update.**

Mr. Eason stated that they have been in service since January 21<sup>st</sup> as a County agency. He introduced his command staff.

Approval of Resolution Recognizing Edgecombe Rescue Squad was read by Mr. Boswell.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

7. **PUBLIC PETITIONS.**

In light of the State of Emergency and in consideration of the recommendations of government and public health officials to limit public gatherings, Edgecombe County's Board of Commissioners meeting was closed to the public and the public was encouraged to submit any public petitions via email to



[publiccomments@edgecombeco.com](mailto:publiccomments@edgecombeco.com) or by mail addressed to Eric Evans, County Manager. The public was notified that all public comments submitted would be read at the meeting. The public was also encouraged to listen to the meeting by calling the published number.

The public was previously notified by the Board of Commissioners that they will allow ten people to make public comments in person and to do so, the public must sign up in advance by calling the Clerk to the Board.

Curmilus Dancy, on behalf of NAACP Rocky Mount Branch, read the following: *The Rocky Mount Branch of the NAACP requests that the Edgecombe and Nash Board of Commissioners actively ensures that their Departments of Health do more to guarantee the prioritization of black and brown communities and constituents in the strategy and administration of COVID vaccines in their respective counties. Members of our Branch are receiving scores of calls from residents in both counties that are complaining of rude treatment, deflection and denial of requests for registration for people who are included in Governor Cooper' priority designations (1a, 1b and 1c) and unnecessary onerous registration policies that disparately impact black people. Black people in both counties are not receiving callbacks on a timely basis, referred to other counties, asked to wait for another day, week or month to register, told that supplies are out and otherwise discouraged from continuing in their rights to access the vaccine. Nash County black populations are receiving the vaccine at lower rates than whites and Edgecombe County does not track, or refuses to release all COVID data, by race or ethnicity. These discriminatory trends add to the distrust and skepticism in public health policy and remedies by black people for illnesses that they die from often unnecessarily, and in this case, because of fear and intentional misinformation. While we all recognize that the previous federal government administration did not perform their public health responsibilities regarding the Coronavirus for the entire United States adequately, much opportunity lies in the hands of local public health entities. You have been given priority status over other healthcare entities and the results of your strategies have left black and brown communities unnecessarily unprotected from COVID. While we empathize with the overwhelming response that public health agencies are experiencing, we have received too many complaints to think that vaccine administration efforts are being treated equitably. Several of our members themselves have received callous and flippant customer service from both agencies regarding the vaccine. If you want our assistance in developing better outreach and administrative strategies, we will help you. If you do not, that is fine. But we do want all of you to know that we are watching, taking account of your actions and will continue to advocate loudly in every circle and sector until black and brown people in our counties receive the vaccine. We suffer health disparities and mortalities at much higher rates in almost every health indicator than our white neighbors, friends, and peers. We appeal to every elected and appointed official to change this narrative and protect our seniors, our first responders, our essential workers, our healthcare workers and all our public and provide us all with equitable opportunities to receive the vaccine and to protect our nation's future.*

Mr. Evans read the following public petition submitted by email:

From: Freda Ruffin [flr1967@yahoo.com](mailto:flr1967@yahoo.com)

*Good afternoon, I just wanted to address the issue in our county of trash that is overflowing on the side of the roadways. I have reach out to DOT and I was informed that they clean the sides of the roads for only 2 weeks out of the year. This was disturbing news especially now that our county is subject to flooding just with major rainfall and hurricanes. To me Edgecombe County is living up to its reputation of not only being an economically poor county but one that does not keep their "house" cleaned as well. My parents told me that you can tell a lot about a person by how they keep their yards. I believe that to be true. The pictures below are off the exit ramps on Kingsboro Road. Please take the time to ride through the county that you serve and*

*implement a plan to get our county up to standard. I will be sending more pictures as I drive through Edgecombe. Sincerely, Freda Ruffin.*

8. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

A. **Approval of budget amendments.**

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the budget amendments as presented. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. **Approval of Emergency Sick Leave related to COVID-19.**

Mr. Evans stated that the Family First Coronavirus Response Act required employers to provide up to 80 hours of paid sick leave to employees who were unable to work due to testing positive or being required to quarantine because of contact with a person having tested positive. For employees who were unable to work because they had to provide care for their children due to schools being closed, it required up to 80 hours of paid sick leave, and up to an additional 10 weeks of paid extended family and medial leave. This law expired on December 31, 2020. Being that the COVID-19 pandemic is still a major public health concern and Edgecombe County is still designated by the State as one of 86 counties with critical community spread, he believe we should continue to offer the 80 hours of sick leave to those who have tested positive or otherwise ordered to quarantine by a medical professional. It is important for our staff who are in this situation not to come to work risking exposure to other employees. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board authorize him to offer up to 80 hours of emergency sick leave retroactive to January 1, 2021.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve as presented. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. **Approval of creating a Housing Redevelopment Incentive Grant.**

Mr. Evans stated that he received a request from Berkshire Acres Community Association requesting the County consider a rebate of taxes on a property it is redeveloping. Their plan is to purchase homes that have substantial arrears for past due taxes for renovation and resale. Mr. Evans presented a letter with more details about their plan. In order for the County to consider such a request, there would have to be a clear, public purpose. Mr. Evans suggested that we first consider creating a program and identify the purpose and requirements, for which Berkshire Acres Community Association and any other qualifying entity may apply. Such a program would encourage investment and redevelopment in properties that may otherwise contribute to community blight. He recommended that the Board approve the Housing Redevelopment Incentive Grant as described in documents presented and to authorize him to publicly solicit applications.

Mr. Wooten moved to approve the Housing Redevelopment Incentive Grant as described. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. **Approval of amendment of grant agreement for Princeville's 53-acre development.**

Mr. Evans stated that we received funds in two separate grants from NC Department of Commerce totaling \$3,171,000 for the development of the 53-acre tract the Town of Princeville purchased and annexed. The purpose of the grants is to complete an environmental review and development plan for the entire 53 acres, and construct a public works building and a new fire station. The environmental review and development plan have been completed. The next step is to move forward with the construction of the two buildings and the infrastructure for both. The Town of Princeville is pursuing funds to construct infrastructure on the entire 53-acre development, and has requested that the County delay our construction so that all of the infrastructure can be done at one time. Mr. Evans stated he agree, as well as the funding agency, with this

approach and recommended that the Board approve the two grant amendments.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the grant amendments as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**E. Approval of short-term agreement for EMS Billing Services.**

Mr. Evans stated that bringing Emergency Medical Services in-house under our Emergency Services Department includes contracting with a company to handle medical billing. We will soon publish a request for proposals and vet companies to select for a long-term contract. In the meantime, he recommended that we enter into an agreement with Tarheel Medical Billing, which was previously contracted by Edgecombe County Rescue Squad, through June of this year. Doing so will provide for a smooth transition of billing service.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the Agreement for Emergency Medical Billing Services as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**F. Approval of recommendation for construction award for waterline relocation.**

Mr. Evans stated that construction of the new bridge over the Tar River on Highway 42 at Old Sparta required that our waterline be relocated. During the construction, our lines were cut and water was rerouted to those affected customers. Now that the bridge is complete, new lines need to be installed. The NC Department of Transportation has committed to the funds for the relocation of the lines, but asked that we handle the relocation project. Bids were solicited and a recommendation of award to Ralph Hodge Construction by our engineers is included in the Board packets.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve Ralph Hodge Construction for the award of this contract and the approval of the accompanying budget amendment to appropriate the funds from NC-DOT. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**G. Receipt of Edgecombe County Public Schools Facility Needs survey.**

Mr. Evans stated that Edgecombe County Public Schools is required to submit a Facility Needs Survey which describes the improvements and additional facilities needed to accommodate projected enrollment. Prior to its submission to the State Board of Education, a copy must be presented to the Board for review. He stated that the Board will have the opportunity to hear more about their facility needs in the joint meeting later this year. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board acknowledge by vote receipt of this document. Certification does not constitute endorsement of or commitment to fund the needs list.

Mr. Wooten moved to acknowledge receipt of the documents. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**H. Approval of revised mileage rates for 2021.**

Mr. Evans stated that it is the County's practice to follow the standard mileage reimbursement rates set by the Internal Revenue Service. Recently, the IRS issued a notice that it is decreasing the rate from 57.6 cents to 56 cents per mile.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve a new mileage reimbursement rate at 56 cents. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**I. Approval of Resolution to Amend Contract Authority.**

Mr. Evans stated that the job description for the Deputy County Manager position includes serving in the role of the County Manager during extended absences. Though he did not anticipate a need to implement that provision, he

thought it wise for the sake of continuity to codify the authority of the Deputy County Manager to approve contracts if needed. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve a resolution to amend Section C of the County's Financial Accounting Procedures Manual. This will give the Deputy County Manager the authority to approve a contract up to \$50,000.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Resolution to Amend Contract Authority as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**J. Approval of a Resolution to Honor Mr. James Edward Bridgers.**

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the resolution as presented. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Harris read the resolution.

**9. APPOINTMENTS.**

**A. Rocky Mount Board of Adjustment.**

None.

**B. Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments Board of Directors.**

None.

**10. AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.**

Mr. Webb moved to approve the afterlists and releases as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**11. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW.\*\*\*Received\*\*\***

**A. Water Services.**

**B. Financial Summary report.**

**C. Report on building permits.**

**12. MANAGER'S REPORT.\*\*\*Received\*\*\***

**A. Response to citizen's concerns from the January meeting.**

**B. Workforce Development Indicators.**

**C. Work session for UDO draft presentation.**

UDO Special meeting February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10 a.m.

Retreat date March 15<sup>th</sup>.

**13. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.**

Mrs. Harris shared with the Board the NCACC goals.

**14. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.**

None.

**15. CLOSED SESSION.**

Mr. Webb moved to go into closed session to discuss:

**A. Economic Development. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(4)]**

**B. Legal matter. [Per N.C.G.S 143-318.11(a)(3)]**

Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

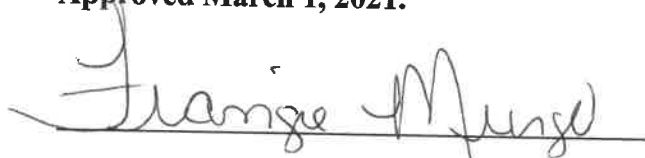
Mr. Wooten moved to go out of closed and resume the regular meeting. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Wiggins talked about the meetings he, Rev. Hines and Mr. Evans have been attending regarding school county line issue.



16. MRS. POWELL MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING UNTIL MARCH 1, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M. MR. WOOTEN SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved March 1, 2021.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Frankie Mungo", written over a horizontal line.

Frankie Mungo, Clerk to the Board