

MINUTES
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY
JANUARY 3, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN THE CARMON AUDITORIUM
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Leonard Wiggins, Chairman, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Viola Harris, Mr. Ralph Webb, Mrs. Evelyn Powell and Mr. Donald Boswell.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. William Wooten.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Eric Evans, County Manager and Mr. Michael Peters, County Attorney.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS.
Provided by Mr. Evans.

3. PRAYER.
Provided by Rev. Hines.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.
Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2021 as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. CONFIRMING VOTE ON CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2022.
Mr. Leonard Wiggins was nominated by Rev. Hines at the December 6, 2021 meeting for Board of Commissioners Chairman.

Rev. E. Wayne Hines was nominated by Mr. Leonard Wiggins at the December 6, 2021 meeting for Board of Commissioners Vice-Chairman.

Both nominations were confirmed and carried by unanimous vote.

6. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.

A. Recognition of Trooper Daniel Harrell.

Mr. Boswell read the Resolution to Recognize Trooper Daniel Harrell, which will become a part of the official minutes. Mr. Boswell made the presentation to Trooper Harrell.

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

Trooper Harrell thanked the Board.

B. Recognition of First Responders at QVC Facility fire.

Mr. Evans stated that the QVC Facility fire was certainly a tragic event, with a lot of property loss, and a life that was loss as well. He stated that this is a very fitting recognition because everybody would be very proud of the many agents that cooperated together to respond. Mr. Evans asked Mark Walters, EMS Director to come forward on behalf of all of the agencies.

Mr. Webb read the Resolution to Recognize First Responders Assisting with the QVC Fire, which will become a part of the official minutes.

Rev. Hines moved to adopt the resolution as presented. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

- C. Michelle Etheridge, Interim Health Director, to presented COVID-19 update. Mrs. Etheridge stated that as of December 29, 2021 NC DHHS reported 8,150 cases of COVID-19 in Edgecombe County. Group most affected is white females in the age group of 25-49. There has been a significant increase in the daily case averages. She provided information on demographics on cases, deaths and vaccines. Death count due to COVID-19 is 127. Total vaccines given in Edgecombe County equals 48,293. She provided information on COVID-19 testing, vaccines, community events and incentives.

7. PUBLIC PETITIONS.

Mr. William Ellis, 1959 Wells Lake Road, Macclesfield, thanked the Board for letting him speak on a request that is very dear to his heart. He stated that crossroads community that he grew up in is known as Handy Corner and is located about two miles outside of Macclesfield. The old Handy Corner store was a gathering place and a vital source of commodities during its hay day in this farming community. It had a milling operation that mixed feed for animals and ground meal and also served as a general store and eating establishment. Mr. Ellis stated that he has so many fond memories of going to that store with his granddaddy and buying an .08 cent drink and cookies. The kids would play as the farmers sat on the benches or drink crate to discuss their crops or their hunting activities. There are so many more memories too numerous to mention, but he found out from letters that people wrote and people within the community they came to the Handy Corner Store to ride out the storm because they felt safer in that store. He stated that it is not only about the store. It is also about a community in a time when neighbors would step up and help each other. Helping to bring in a crop, visiting the sick, lending a neighbor whatever he needed to get by. Livestock, equipment, food, credit or money so no one went without. That same spirit is still alive today in the Handy Corner community. He stated that his great granddaddy Thad Ellis lent the money to his cousin for the first store to be built in 1933. Out of his great granddaddy's eleven children, five descendants still live in the Handy Corner community, including him. Mr. Ellis stated that this endeavor is very important to him and respectfully ask and request that a sign be erected that designates the intersection of Webbs Lake Road and Webbs Chapel Road as Handy Corner. He stated to the Board that he appreciated their time and consideration.

Mr. Wiggins stated that he did not think that the Board would have any objection to this if it is within their powers to do.

Mr. Evans stated that we can present a request to the Department of Transportation. They do signs like this for intersections.

With no objections from the Board, Mr. Evans was asked to proceed and make it happen and to keep the Board posted.

Mrs. Candace Owens stated that this was not a happy time for her and she did not want to be here. She stated that she was here as a result of paper articles that Rocky Mount Telegram and Tar River Times wrote, which distressed her to no end and her spirit was crushed. She stated that she cannot believe that Edgecombe County is in the shape that Ms. Edmondson from the State Treasurer's Office presented last month. She stated that she is embarrassed and ashamed of our County and the County has no business being where they are. The County has no business being two years late on the last audit. She did not understand why we have two audit firms working on this, paying one \$75,000 and she did not know what we are paying the other. She said that she did not know where the money is coming from and how it was found. Mrs. Owens stated that the County has to get this done

by February 22nd or will risk losing \$3.7 million. She stated that she knows there has already been an extension until June and we should not have an extension. We should not be in this situation. We can rely on the School of Government and the LGC for classes on how to keep us out of this situation. She stated that she was very interested to know how many of the Board members has taken the required classes, fiscal training, offered by the LGC. She stated that she would really like to know, for six years, back to 2015 and would like that written down and requested a report on that.

Mr. Wiggins stated that he could not promise a report on what we have done. That is an individual thing.

Mrs. Owens stated that it should be reported somewhere. It should be in the records. She stated that Mr. Evans said that "we had the root of the problem as being three things, change of personnel, change in audit firms and change in reporting procedures." She stated that this has been going on since 2015. Ms. Edmondson, Treasurer's Office, reported in the paper that "Edgecombe County's inability to meet it's finance and reporting obligations could result in the LGC taking control of County government as it did with Princeville several years ago." Mrs. Owens stated that when she first read that, she was crushed, embarrassed and ashamed, but after thinking about that, it probably would not be a bad idea to come in, let them take us over and get us straight again. She asked if the Board received financial accounting every month?

Mr. Wiggins stated yes.

Mrs. Owens so you did not know that you were in this shape?

Mr. Wiggins stated they knew they were behind on the audits.

Mrs. Owens stated that the County has a decrease in population. If there is a decrease in population that means there is a payroll that needs to be decreased. The County has one Social Services in two locations, one Edgecombe Community Colleges in two locations, one court system in two locations. The County has the second highest tax rate in the State of North Carolina. The County has a County Manager, a Deputy County Manager and an Assistant County Manager and a decrease in population. Mrs. Owens talked about the County's website that she went on and could not find contact for some of the Commissioners. She quoted that again, from the newspapers, 2018 and 2019 audits, from Ms. Edmondson, "Material weaknesses reported in those two years there were key accounts not reconciled. There were several requirements of the NCGS that were violated. Several funds reported deficits. Extensive budgetary over expenditures."

Mr. Wiggins stated the Mrs. Owens that everything she stated is the financial responsibility of the Board. We have gotten the message from LGC in terms of what we need to do and it will be done. How we do it is a matter of how the Board decides to do it. He stated to Mrs. Owens that what she is reading to the Board, he did not know if it is actual, because she is reading from a newspaper statement and not necessarily reading from the documents from LGC, but what he did know is that we have problems.

Mrs. Owens stated that Sheriff Atkinson has asked for pay raises for the Sheriff's Department and he needs to get pay raises and the Sheriff wants an animal shelter and we need an animal shelter. She stated that when she thought things were at the worst, QVC burned and she did not think there were any of the Board members out there except Mr. Evans and Mr. Wooten.

Several Board members corrected her, stating they were out there.

Mr. Wiggins and Mr. Boswell both agreed that competent staff and responders were there and reported back and the Board should not get in the way of those who knew what they were doing.

Mrs. Harris stated that what was written about Princeville was the newspaper's writing, not what Ms. Edmondson said. She stated that she did not want anything to contributed to Ms. Edmondson that she did not say.

Mr. Curmilus Dancy, 127 Midway Lane, Tarboro, NC, P O 1391, Pinetops, NC, I look at Edgecombe County politics. I have been out here for a long time. He stated that it amazes him when people come out when it looks like it's all about black majority. He stated that he knows of issues in Tarboro Town Council and he was there and he did not see it. Rocky Mount, when it was majority white, he did not see it. He stated that he has been out here since the late 80s and has been at these meetings and Rocky Mount meetings longer than some of the Board members have been on the Commission. He stated secondly, he goes by QVC every morning going to work. However, he was going to go to work 3 a.m., but it was during the holiday season, so he waited to go at 4 a.m. He stated that he got phone calls telling him QVC was on fire. He then saw on Facebook about the fire and when he went through there he videoed on his way to work. He stated that he is concerned about QVC and has been following QVC and he has been attending the press conferences. He stated that his concern was the fundraisers he has seen (the donations being asked), but his main concern is where is the drive to make sure QVC come back. He stated that that is the piece he is missing. He wants to hear about a campaign, especially with Edgecombe County Commissioners. What are you doing to make sure they come back, because he has not heard that part. Mr. Dancy stated that he saw where on February 1st they will be terminating everybody's employment. He stated that he felt like they are going to come back, but he would like to see a public campaign.

Mr. Wiggins stated that there is a conversation ongoing by our partnership and staff to assist them. It is an economic development conversation and a lot of things you do not necessarily see in public. He stated that it is there decision whether they come back or not. He stated that we want them to come back as bad as anybody and the Board will do anything within the power of the Board and other partnering agencies are on that same mind set.

Mr. Dancy stated that he is recording so it is documented now. Mr. Dancy stated that, lastly, he was in Greenville when he got the email stating the meeting was being zoomed and he was excited. He stated that he started not to come, but a lot of people do not know it and a lot of them follow him and he told them that the County was zooming and that is great, because he has been asking for that because you could hardly understand what was aid with the phone calls. He stated that he has confidence that the Board is going to get the money thing right and he is going to stand by the Board. Mr. Dancy stated that a woman could have been nominated as Vice-Chair.

8. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Approval of budget amendments.

Mr. Evans provided additional information on some of the budget amendments.

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

B. Approval of Health Department Fee Schedule change.

Mr. Evans stated that staff at the Health Department regularly reviews the fee schedule to add fees as needed and to ensure existing fees cover the costs

associated with providing the services. Mr. Evans presented for Board's consideration the addition of COVID vaccine fees per the billing codes, as well as the addition of an Engineered Option Permit fee and a Pump Calculation Fee for Environmental Health. The Human Services Board voted to recommend the approval of these changes to the Health Department's fee schedule.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the changes as recommended by the Human Services Board. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. Approval of selection of a location for the proposed Animal Shelter.

Mr. Evans stated that we are considering plans for the construction of a new animal shelter. A new shelter will allow us to replace our current shelter, which is aged and undersized. A new shelter will also provide the opportunity to consolidate animal services operations with the Town of Tarboro, which they have expressed interest. He stated that he, along with Sheriff Atkinson both recommend that the animal services operations be moved from the current location on North Main Street here in Tarboro, to property the County owns on Anaconda Road, next to the Sheriff's Office/Detention Center. This will not only allow for the County to make use of land already owned, but will also enable Sheriff Atkinson to have more direct access over those operations.

Mr. Evans answered questions from the Board.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve of the location for the new animal shelter. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of addition of Juneteenth to the County Holiday Schedule.

Mr. Evans stated that last year on June 17th Juneteenth became a federal recognized paid holiday for federal employees. The State of North Carolina has taken action to acknowledge and recognize Juneteenth but the State has not adopted it necessarily as a paid holiday. The General Assembly's position has been to leave that up to counties and towns. A number of counties and towns have already approved Juneteenth as a paid holiday for their employees. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board consider adding this holiday.

Mrs. Powell read the resolution.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the addition of June 19th as Juneteenth to the County Holiday Schedule to be observed on a Friday when it falls on a Saturday or Sunday. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

E. Approval of farm leases.

Mr. Evans stated that on behalf of the County, Tanya Heath, Cooperative Extension Director, facilitated the bid of a number of county-owned parcels for farm leases. They were bid in two groups; group #1 at Kingsboro Industrial Park included a total of 196.5 acres, and group #2 at the landfill included a total of 46.9 acres. Based on the bids received, he recommended the approval of farm leases to:

Group #1 – JL Whitehurst Farms - \$185 per acre

Group #2 – JL Whitehurst Farms - \$185 per acre

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the lease of these parcels and to authorize the Manager to execute agreements for the same. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

F. Approval of franchise agreements for Non-Emergency Medical Transport.

Mr. Evans stated that we have received applications for franchise agreements to

operate ambulances in Edgecombe County from Metz Medical Transport, Inc. and Vidant East Care. This is to provide non-emergency medical transportation as a back-up for Edgecombe County Rescue Squad. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve the franchise agreements as presented.

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

9. **APPOINTMENTS:**
 - A. **Human Services Board.**

Rev. Hines moved to reappoint Mr. Ernest Taylor and Dr. Jennifer Taylor. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.
10. **AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.**

Rev. Hines 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 and Sewer update.
 - B. Monthly Financial Summary.
 - C. Health Department Community Health Assessment.
12. **MANAGER'S REPORT.*****Received***
 - A. Workforce Development indicators.
 - B. QVC update.
 - C. Update on Financial Management Improvements.
 - D. Community Voice update.
13. **COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.**

None.
14. **ATTORNEY'S REPORT.**

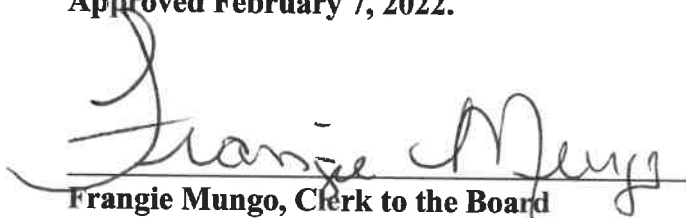
None.
15. **CLOSED SESSION.**

Rev. Hines moved to go into closed session to discuss personnel per [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)]. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to go out of closed session and resume the regular meeting. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the extension of the Contract of the County Attorney for five years. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.
16. **MEETING WAS ADJOURNED UNTIL MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Approved February 7, 2022.


Franje Mungo, Clerk to the Board