

MINUTES  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY  
FEBRUARY 7, 2022 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, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Viola Harris, Mrs. Evelyn Powell, Mr. Donald Boswell, Mr. Ralph Webb and Mr. William Wooten.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

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 the safety instructions.

3. PRAYER.

Rev. Hines provided the prayer.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2022 and January 11, 2022 meetings as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.

A. Julius Moody, CSBG Director and Nichelle Cole, Executive Director, NEED, Inc. presentation of CSBG Work Plan.

Mr. Evans stated that Nash Edgecombe Economic Development, Inc. (NEED, Inc) receives federal funding through the Community Service Block Grant program. A requirement of the program is to present their Application for funding, which is their Anti-poverty Plan, to the Board of Commissioners in each county they serve. This plan discusses their strategies for eliminating poverty within their service area. A copy of the plan is included in the agenda packet. No action is needed by the Board. Mr. Evans stated that the Board has the opportunity to submit comments along with the plan.

Ms. Nichelle Cole shared a couple of updates. Number one being changes in Board officers, which she shared. Number two being the name change of the organization to Nash Edgecombe Wilson Community Action, Inc.

Mr. Julius Moody provided an overview on how the funds were used for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and the proposed use of funds for 2022-2023 funds.

B. Twin County Opioid Settlement Committee – Presentation of needs related to the opioid crisis.

Mr. Evans stated that a settlement was reached on the nationwide opioid litigation. The National Association of Counties along with the NC Association of County commissioners crafted a settlement agreement for our State where funds will be provided directly to counties. These funds can be used for a number of opioid remediation activities. The Twin County Opioid Settlement

Committee is a group of partners working to elevate the needs related to opioid crisis and proposed strategies to address this critical issue. Mr. Evans stated that representatives from the Committee will make a presentation on the impact of the crisis in Edgecombe County and recommended strategies. He stated that some of her colleagues were joining

Ms. Becky Copeland presented a power point presentation:

- Opioid Crisis – State Data. (Overdose deaths in NC have increased 27% to date in 2021 compared to 2020)
- Opioid Crisis – Regional data. (Edgecombe County ED visits for drug overdoses have increase at least 15% from 2019 to 2020.
- Existing efforts: Edgecombe
- Lived experiences
- Other important efforts moving forward.
- Opioid Settlement Funds: Edgecombe County anticipates receiving approximately \$2.68 million over a period of 16 years.

Ms. Copeland answered questions from the Board.

**C. Introduction of Connor Pippen, West Edgecombe Ruritan Scout Troop 587 and candidate for a Citizens in the Community Merit Badge.**

Mr. Webb introduced Connor Pippen and his father Craig Pippen.

Mr. Webb stated that Connor Pippen is a member of West Edgecombe Ruritan Scout Troop 587 and is working to receive his Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge. As a part of the requirements for such an accomplishment and honor, it is suggested that he attends a Board of Commissioners meeting. Connor is the son of Craig and Dana Pippen.

**D. Michelle Etheridge, Interim Health Director, presented COVID-19 update.**

Mrs. Etheridge stated that as of February 1, 2022 NC DHHS reported 12,815 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 136. She provided information on COVID-19 testing, vaccines, community events and incentives.

**6. PUBLIC PETITIONS.**

Mr. Derius Swinton, Richmond, Va., presented two objectives and one request. His first objective was to return two checks sent to him from Edgecombe County and Rocky Mount. The second objective was to try to raise the Board's level of awareness and understanding regarding his experience for about five months in trying to get some clarity in two departments that are critical and important to the functioning of the operations of the County Government and City of Rocky Mount. He stated that approximately 13 years ago he purchased some property that is divided between Edgecombe County and Rocky Mount. Consistently and faithfully, when he got the bill, he paid it by way of check. At the end of 13 years, he sold the property and at that time he learned that he was paying more than he should have been paying per year for 13 years. He brought that to the attention of tax assessor's office without even getting any clarity, but he was able to get some factual information from employees saying that a mistake was made but they would never come public and say that. He stated that from his understanding each year an assessment is done on the property and it was not done consistently, which led to him paying more than enough money every year to the City of Rocky Mount and Edgecombe County. He stated that he paid more than \$3000 more than what he should have paid. Mr. Swinton stated that the only reasonable answer he got was there is a Statute that says that you have six years limitation to find the fault and try to get it rectified. Because he was not aware of the statute the person in leadership

took the position and he was told that he could not be reimbursed because of the six-year limitation. As a customer he consistently paid the bill, but now that he has found the error he cannot be reimbursed. That is his concern. He stated that he provided services to cities, state, federal and international levels and has done work for many government agencies throughout but he has so much concern about the lack of accountability and professionalism targeted towards him during the last months just trying to get something resolved. Why is it being held against him when he paid more money than what he should have been paying.

Mr. Peters, as asked by Mr. Wiggins, provided information regarding the statute.

Ms. Candis Owens, Park Avenue, Tarboro, NC, stated that she came tonight because she did not finish last time. She stated that she asked the Board if they gave themselves a raise this past year and they did, but no one could answer how much or what percentage. She found out that the Chairman got a 17% raise (\$880/month). Everyone got a \$150 except for Mr. Wooten, who declined the stipend. The rest of the Board get a 21% raise up to \$729/month. The State employees got a 2 1/2 % raise for the first time in about three years. The Sheriff's department has been begging for a raise. The School system needs so much. She felt a 17 and 21% raise is extraordinary there are better places to put that money, such as the Sheriff's department for our safety and asked that the Board think about that and reconsider. When Sharon Edmondson, LGC, was here she stated that Edgecombe County has reported material weaknesses, key accounts were not reconciled, several requirements of NC General Statutes were violated, several funds reporting deficits, extensive budgetary over expenditures. She stated that there are budget amendments at just about every meeting and she asked the Board to look carefully at the budget and the budget amendments, and stay within the budget. There are no performance evaluations given to the County employees. She asked how can you possibly reduce the payroll if there are no performance evaluation and with the census down 13 1/2% (7,652 people) we are going to have to cut payroll somewhere. There is a County Manager, Assistant County Manager and a Deputy County Manager making \$313,000. She stated that tried to decipher all of this auditing bills and the best I came up with, which included the \$80,000 from last month, was about \$204,000. That is a good starting place to cut. The QVC fire is going to figure in to all of this. This is not fair to our poor people in our poor county. Our tax base is the second highest in the State.

Mr. Curmilus Dancy, 127 Midway Lane, Tarboro, NC, P O 1391, Pinetops stated that he got a call on his way to the meeting and he was asked to find out why all the DSS workers are working in the office at the same time instead of staggering with COVID issues going on. Mr. Dancy thanked the Board for allowing him to serve on the Edgecombe County Animal Welfare Committee. He stated that he did not see anything on the agenda about the report on the Edgecombe County Animal Shelter and he hoped that each month a report would be given because the need of a new animal shelter should be a high priority. He stated that he hoped that you will update the Sheriff vehicles with high mileage. Mr. Dancy stated that he was at the Edgecombe County Christmas Classic Basketball game at Tarboro High and parked across from an old Sheriff SUV and he thought of a question for the Sheriff, however a Deputy drove up and he questioned him about the year of the SUV. He said it was in rotation when he was there as a deputy in early 2000. He stated that it is not in rotation and only SRO drive them to school events and not for patrolling. Mr. Dancy stated that he also understands that some of the vehicles have lots of miles on them as well. He stated that he has been passing by a local business for years and at any given time he sees a Sheriff car there for repair. It is obvious that Edgecombe County Sheriff Office is doing a great job, because he questioned where were the Tarboro Police Officers at the game. Someone told him that only the Sheriff's Officers work the games. He stated that he hopes that the County can

convince QVC to rebuild because these folks are facing salary cuts from with unemployment. QVC has nothing to do with the amount of unemployment wages so that was good when they paid them for several weeks at the salary they were making. He stated that Edgecombe County Commissioners like others have issues and challenges, however he hopes that the Board will tend to his request.

7. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

A. **Approval of budget amendments.**

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

B. **Approval of change of mileage reimbursement rate.**

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 increasing the rate from 56 cents to 58.5 cents per mile. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve a new mileage reimbursement rate at 58.5 cents.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the new rate as presented. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. **Approval of Sheriff Atkinson's request to sell service weapons.**

Mr. Evans stated that Sheriff Atkinson has purchased new rifles for his deputies to replace their issued shotguns. Sheriff Atkinson is requesting the Board's approval to allow deputies to purchase their current weapon. NC General Statutes does allow the governing body to dispose of personal property owned by the County through a negotiated sale. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve the resolution which will allow Sheriff Atkinson to offer these weapons for sale to his deputies.

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

**SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA:**

A. **Approval of an application by Edgecombe County Schools for the State Lottery fund for Capital Improvements.**

Mr. Evans stated that Edgecombe County Schools plans to repaint the interior of their schools using funds from the NC Lottery Building Capital Fund. To use these funds for this project, the Board of Commissioners must jointly request the release of these funds along with ECPS. He presented the application for Public School Building Capital Fund, which has already been approved by the School Board.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the application as presented. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion. The motion carried by a vote of 6 to 1. Mrs. Harris opposed.

8. **APPOINTMENTS:**

A. **ABC Board.**

Rev. Hines moved to re-appoint Mr. Shelly Willingham. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. **Upper Coastal Plains Council of Government.**

Mr. Harris moved to appoint Ms. Delane Bryant as alternate. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

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

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

10. CONTRACTS FOR REVIEW AND/OR APPROVAL.

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

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

A. Water and Sewer update.

B. Monthly Financial Summary presented by Katherine Walters, Finance Director.

C. Vehicle needs for Sheriff's Office.

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

A. Workforce Development indicators.

B. QVC update.

C. Proposed date for Commissioners Retreat – March 21<sup>st</sup>. No objection.

D. Update of FY 20 and 21 audits and fiscal improvements.

E. Sales Tax report.

F. Introduction of new Maintenance Director.

Mr. Evans introduced Mr. Stan Liverman.

Mr. Wiggins stated regarding the public concerns of the additions to executive team. He stated that his position is that the manager needs help with the departments and those positions will continue to have his support.

13. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

14. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.

None.

15. CLOSED SESSION.

Rev. Hines moved to go into closed session to discuss:

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

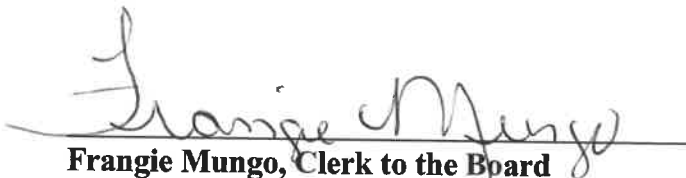
Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

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

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the granting of the extension request from Eastern Petroleum. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

16. REV. HINES MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M. MRS. POWELL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved March 7, 2022.

  
Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board