

MINUTES
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY
DECEMBER 4, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.
JONATHAN FELTON COMMISSIONERS ROOM
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

1. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY MR. MICHAEL PETERS, COUNTY ATTORNEY AT 7:00 P.M.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

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

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.
Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the November 6, 2023 and November 15, 2023 meetings as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS – 2024.
Mr. Peters called for nominations for Board of Commissioners Chairman for 2024.

Rev. Hines nominated Mr. Wiggins. There were no other nominations.

Mr. Boswell moved to elect Mr. Wiggins as Chairman. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Peters called for nominations for Board of Commissioners Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Wiggins nominated Rev. Hines.

Mr. Thorne nominated Mrs. Harris.

Mr. Boswell moved to elect Mrs. Harris as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 4 for (Thorne, Boswell, Webb and Harris) and 3 opposing (Wiggins, Hines and Powell).

4. REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN LEONARD WIGGINS.

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

6. PRAYER.
Rev. Hines provided prayer.

7. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.
A. Dalton Barrett, Community Paramedic Supervisor, presented an update on the Community Paramedic Program.

- Mission statement.

- Local CP Programs.
- Substance -Use Focus.
- Opioid Settlement FY 23-24.
- Naloxone distribution.
- Where is the need.
- Overdose death rates/100K (2021)
- Traditional response to the Opioid cases.
- Edgecombe's CP response to the crisis.
- Community Paramedic stats (12/1/2023)
- Success stories.
- Partnership opportunities.

B. Jova Bullock, Regional Director for Congressman Don Davis, provided an update.

- Working for the East: Casework, Outreach, Educational Opportunities for Youth, Commendations & Greetings, Flag Requests, Federal Grant Assistance; Representation in Congress.
- Legislative updates.
- Appropriations and Community Project Funding update.
- Full Circle (Special moments).
- Social Media. (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.)

8. PUBLIC PETITIONS.

Dr. Stacy Phillips stated the following: *Title: Addressing Poverty in Edgecombe County: A Call to Action. In examining the state of Edgecombe County, the prevalent poverty rates stand out as a significant social determinant affecting the well-being of its residents. According to the 2020 US Census, the county's poverty rate is alarmingly high at 22.4%. This issue is compounded by the fact that 21.2% of the population is over 65 years old, and a distressing 33% of children live in poverty. The recent revelation from the County Social Services Director that 51% of residents, approximately 5,400 people, are eligible for Medicaid expansion adds another layer to this complex problem. Disturbingly, Edgecombe County ranks 99 out of 100 NC Counties for health outcomes, reflecting both the length and quality of life. These troubling statistics underscore the impact of historical and current policies. Adding to the distress, despite these challenges, Edgecombe County residents bear the second-highest property tax burden in the state. This disproportionately affects the economically disadvantaged, exacerbating the struggles of those already facing financial hardships. Over the past two decades, the county has witnessed a decline in population, health, and overall welfare. The apparent lack of responsiveness, willingness, or concern from county leadership has contributed to this decline. Even recent initiatives like the Get off the Lists campaign seem more symbolic than substantive, lacking meaningful action or communication with the community. Community engagement is a potent force for positive change. It involves partnerships and coalitions that can mobilize resources, influence systems, and bring about environmental and behavioral changes. Unfortunately, the county's recent efforts have fallen short in this regard, raising questions about transparency, resource allocation, and whose concerns are genuinely considered. Amidst the holiday season, it's crucial to remember those in need. This Christmas, as we revel in festivities, let's not forget the impoverished in Edgecombe County. Beyond the consumerism, there are families without food or medicine, individuals starting anew, and hardworking citizens struggling to make ends meet. Addressing persistent poverty requires a catalyst for change. It demands a shift in priorities and a commitment to transparency and effective communication. With this vision, I am excited to announce my candidacy for Edgecombe County Commissioner, District 1. I believe in the power of citizens to bring about significant change, and I invite you, Edgecombe County, to join me in this transformative journey. As we reflect on this*

season of giving, let's not only remember the less fortunate but also pledge to be the agents of change our county needs.

Crystal Anderson, Rocky Mount, stated that we are undergoing a demerger. She stated that typically when she comes and advocate at the school level and talk directly to those that are involved. However, her children are no longer in the public school system due to incidents that have occurred within the school system so now they pay out of pocket for them to be in private school. She stated that as we are going through this demerger that it is kept in mind of the things that have been occurring within the Nash County Rocky Mount system to the children on the Edgecombe County side of town. There are a lot of schools that are dealing with issues when it comes to violence and drugs in the school systems. When it comes to just everyday things that should not happen in our school systems. She asked that the Board be mindful as we are demerging that there are going to be some additional services that are going to be required for out students on the Edgecombe Rocky Mount side of town when it comes down to mental health services. Mrs. Anderson stated that she would like for us to be proactive because we have lost a lot of advocates in the system. The schools will need additional officers in there that can actually communicate with them. She stated that she came before the Board as an advocate for the children.

Curmilus Dancy congratulated the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Dancy thanked the opioid team, because he hears a lot about the opioid situation in Edgecombe County and he appreciates that team forming and doing good things and maybe he can get into some of the training. He stated that he could relate the spokesperson from Congressman Don Davis' Office regarding IRS. He thanked the Board for all the hard work they have done, along with the School Board, on the merger.

Roger Savain commended the Opioid presenter.

9. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Approval of budget amendments.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the budget amendment 2a as presented. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Budget amendment 1 to be approved under agenda item E.

Budget amendment 2 to be approved under agenda item B.

B. Approval of accepting ownership of the Edgecombe County Industrial Incubator facility.

Mr. Evans stated that Rocky Mount-Edgecombe Community Development Corporation (RMECDC) owns a facility at Fountain Business Park called the Edgecombe County Industrial Incubator. It is a 40,000 SF facility that used to have both large, anchor tenants, including a call center for the NC Department of Revenue, as well as small businesses. The facility is now vacant, and RMECDC wants to sell the building and reinvest the proceeds in Crossings at 64, their mixed-use development in Rocky Mount. The availability of this facility comes at an opportune time for us. It is well-positioned for the County and our partners, including Edgecombe County Public Schools, Edgecombe Community College, Turning Point Workforce Development, and Carolinas Gateway Partnership, to jointly repurpose the facility into a workforce readiness center focused on manufacturing, engineering, and technology. In addition, to the work all our partners are currently doing, this additional effort is needed to meet existing and future workforce demands, especially with our prospects at Kingsboro Industrial Park. Mr. Evans stated that we are fortunate that there are state funds that will allow us to acquire the building without any County

appropriation. Edgecombe Community College received a state grant appropriation that was to be used to equip the training facility we were going to build at Kingsboro Industrial Park. That facility was put on hold indefinitely once Triangle backed out of their plans for a manufacturing facility. Therefore, ECC stands to lose those funds. However, with the help of Representative Shelly Willingham, those funds have been repurposed and now can be used for the purchase of this facility. Considering what a tremendous asset the facility would be for us and our partners, and that no County funds are needed to purchase it, he recommended that we take ownership of the building and if the Board agrees, he asked that they approve the accompanying budget amendment to appropriate \$25,000 to cover utilities and maintenance for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve taking ownership of the building and to approve budget amendment 2 as presented. Mr. Wiggins seconded the motion.

Mrs. Harris asked about the covering of the utility and maintenance for the remainder of the fiscal year and if it went through June 30th.

Mr. Evans replied that it will go through June 30th.

Mr. Thorne asked if this is going to be maintained by Edgecombe County or Edgecombe County Public Schools.

Mr. Evans stated that for the time being he is asking that we take ownership and maintain the building. Once we have the opportunity to work out the details of partnership in the building, we may decide it be owned by either of the two, or we maintain ownership of the building.

Mr. Thorne asked if there is an unprofit cost in this.

Mr. Evans stated that there likely would be. Currently of the state funds that is available, there is \$2.5 million. \$2.3 million is offered for the building so the remainder \$200,000 will be available to do some profit.

Mr. Wiggins stated that more than likely it is going to require some profit depending upon what the use is going to be.

Mr. Boswell stated that he talked to Mr. Evans about this and he is not against this at all, but every time we take on another building we take on a lot more expense and it is more than what is here. When you figure additional insurance and other things we need to be realistic about what we have to spend.

The motion carried by a vote of 6 for and 1 opposing. (Mr. Thorne opposed)

C. Approval of Edgecombe County Board of Commissioners 2024 Regular Meeting Schedule.

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

Mr. Boswell moved to call for a public hearing on January 2, 2024 regarding the proposed amendment to Chapter 2, Article II "Board of Commissioners" of the County Ordinance: Section 2-56 "Meetings". The amendment would change the time of the regularly scheduled meetings and change the scheduling of regular meetings on months when the first Monday falls on a holiday. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of the reappointment of Tarasa Lewis as the Tax Administrator. Mr. Evans stated that North Carolina General Statutes require that the Board of Commissioners appoints both a Tax Collector and Tax Assessor for a term of at least two years and no more than four years. Mrs. Tarasa Lewis, who serves both roles, meets the statutory requirements for serving in that role.

Mr. Webb moved to reappoint Mrs. Lewis, in her capacity as the Tax Administrator as the Tax Administrator, to serve as Tax Collector and Tax Assessor for a four-year term. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Lewis was sworn in by Mr. Peters.

E. Approval of modification of Urgent Repair Program Funding Agreement. Mr. Evans stated that Edgecombe County was awarded \$67,000 by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) under the 2023 cycle of the Urgent Repair Program (URP). The goal of the project is to assist at least five very-low and low-income families with special needs in addressing housing conditions that pose imminent threats to their life and/or safety or to provide accessibility modifications and other repairs necessary to prevent displacement. Since the acceptance of the award, we have been offered the opportunity to receive an additional \$65,000 in URP'23 funds.

Mrs. Harris moved to accept the additional award by approving the funding agreement and amended project ordinance. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

F. Approval of Edgecombe County Public School request for School Building Lottery Funds.

Mr. Evans stated that Edgecombe County Schools plans to use state lottery funds to perform roof repairs at Bulluck Elementary, Carver Elementary, North Edgecombe High School, and Phillips Middle School. To use these funds for these projects, the Board of Commissioners must jointly request the release of these funds along with ECPS.

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

G. Approval of Memorandum of Agreement with Cooperative Extension. Mr. Evans presented for Board consideration an updated Memorandum of Agreement with NC State University for Cooperative Extension. The MOA describes the nature of the relationship and our respective responsibilities for hosting and supporting Cooperative Extension here in the County. A summary of the previous agreement is provided. These changes are improvements in clarifying the provisions of the agreement, but there are no substantive changes to our relationship, roles and responsibilities.

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

H. Approval of the use of State grant funds for staff retention in the Health Department. Mr. Evans stated that our Health Department is receiving \$264,835 in funding from the NC Department of Health and Human Services through the Public Health Infrastructure: Local Workforce program. The intent of this program is to hire, support, and retain staff in local Health Departments. Michelle Etheridge, Health Director, is recommending we use these funds to help retain staff by providing a one-time bonus, which is an eligible use of the funds.

Considering the increased turnover we have experienced in the Health Department in the last three years, Mr. Evans agrees with Mrs. Etheridge's recommendation and believe this will help with retaining staff.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the using of these funds to provide a one-time bonus of \$1,000 for full-time staff and \$500 for part-time staff for staff members employed on or before June 20, 2023. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

10. AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

Mr. Thorne moved to approve the afterlists and releases as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

11. REVIEW AND/OR APPROVAL OF CONTRACTS.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve contract with RL Architecture, PLLC and contract with Production Painting and Decorating as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Webb moved to approve contract with ES&S Express Votes as a sole source procurement vendor. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve budget amendment 2b as presented for the Cott Systems contract. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve contract with Siemens Industry as a sole source procurement vendor. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

12. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW.***Received***

A. Water and Sewer update.

B. Monthly Financial Summary provided by Mrs. Barfield and provided an update on the audit.

13. MANAGER'S REPORT.***Received***

A. Update on Getting Off the Lists initiative.

Mr. Evans introduced Mrs. Tracy Puddy, Career Navigator.

B. Major events and updates.

C. Workforce Development indicators.

D. TDA Financial Report.

E. Farm City Breakfast: January 4, 2024 at 7:30 a.m. at the East Carolina Education and Agriculture Center.

F. Notice of Grant Award from Eastpointe.

G. Update on Countyline Merger.

14. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

Mrs. Harris invited the Board and audience to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical Contest that the Ebonette Club of Tarboro will be hosting on Thursday at 6 p.m. in the Carmon Auditorium.

15. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.

None.

16. CLOSED SESSION.

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

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

B. Attorney-Client Privilege [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)]

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

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

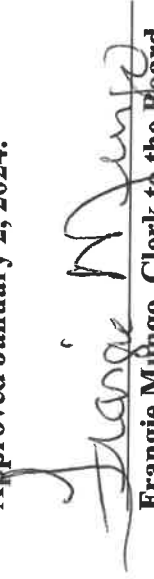
17. Approval of Agreement with NC Department of Information Technology and Brightspeed.

Mr. Thorne moved to rescind the agreement with Cloudewyze. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the agreement with NC Department of Information and Technology and Brightspeed as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

18. MR. BOSWELL MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING UNTIL TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M. MR. WEBB SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved January 2, 2024.


Frankie Mungo, Clerk to the Board