

MINUTES
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY
MARCH 6, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN THE JONATHAN FELTON COMMISSIONERS ROOM
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, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Mr. Donald Boswell, Mr. George Thorne, Mrs. Evelyn Powell, Mrs. Viola Harris and Mr. Ralph Webb.

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 safety instructions.

3. PRAYER.

Rev. Hines provided prayer.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2023 meeting as presented. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.

A. Michelle Etheridge, Health Director, presented COVID-19 update.

- As of March 1, 2023 NC DHHS reported 17,584 COVID-19 cases in Edgecombe County. These are the cases that are reported. Home tests are not required to be reported to the Health Department.
- Edgecombe County has been averaging about 8 to 9 cases per day in the last few weeks. Edgecombe County community level is low level.
- 177 deaths.
- DHHS is planning for the Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 to expire on May 11, 2023.
 - ✓ What will be affected.
 - ✓ What will not be affected.
- Coverage for COVID-19 testing for Americans will change.
- Health Department has free home tests available.

6. PUBLIC PETITIONS.

Roosevelt Higgs stated that after the flood of 1999 the then County Manager, Lorenzo Carmon, recommended not to maintain those buyout lots in certain jurisdictions. He felt that the County should allow the lots to grow back to their natural habitation and someday down the road be able to sale the timber. Rev. Higgs stated that out at Staten Estates recently there was land that was foreclosed in the area and purchased by a gentleman by the name of Mr. Sauerborn. He has gone out into Staten Estates to include those lots that the County was given in the buyout program and cut the timber off of those lots as well as the land he purchased through foreclosure that was never developed as a part of Staten Estates. He stated that he was under the opinion that if he went out there and cut that timber off of the land that belongs to the County, he owes the County some money. He may have leased the land, but even if you lease land you cannot go out there and disturb it. He

stated that he did not think that Mr. Sauerborn was aware of it, but it is something that the Board needs to look into.

Mr. Wiggins asked Mr. Evans to look into this.

Rev. Higgs stated that yesterday marked the 58th anniversary of Bloody Sunday during the Civil Rights movement. He provided a document dealing education stating that it shows how in 1901 under the leadership of Governor Charles Aycock who took education seriously for the State of North Carolina and he began to campaign improving the State's public schools and to those who question the ability of the State to finance the schools he would require that we are too poor not to educate the children. This report deals with the Black schools.

Rev. Higgs stated that the County Manager, Eric Evans, is Native American and it shows that Edgecombe County had a very strong population of Native Americans and he understood that November is Native American Heritage Month. Edgecombe County needs to go on record by putting force a resolution in support of their contributions and ask that a marker be placed in Edgecombe County.

Alvin Joyner, 1271 Daughtridge Farm Road, stated that he spoke to the Board last month and he wanted to know if there was any update on the deer hunting.

Mr. Evans called Scott Kiser, Soil and Water Director and Michelle Etheridge, Health Director, to come up to give an update.

Mr. Kiser stated that they responded to a citizen complaint where there was a dug pit and multiple carcasses from harvested wild animals. Since these are wild animals and not domestic many regulatory agencies in the State do not have jurisdiction over this. There are some things we are concerned with, public health being one of those and that is why the Health Director is involved. He stated that from his point of view, water quality and groundwater as well as surface water and if you dig a hole and bury anything overtime it has the opportunity to make its way into ground water. High concentration of anything buried, that has the potential to contaminate groundwater is a concern to his office and all citizens. With that knowledge he made contact with NC-DWQ and they did dispatch an agent out who somewhat evaluated the area and they are not interested, at this time, in pursuing any sort of regulatory action. They are putting this gentleman on their inspection or evaluation list. They are anticipating him not having any more production of these carcasses until hunting season returns. Then they will try to inspect and insure that he is disposing of these animals properly and not in a way that affects groundwater. They are not really concerned about how it smells or how it looks, but they are concerned about contamination to groundwater.

Mrs. Etheridge stated that they all came together and met and in talking about his outfitter they found out that he also lodges people. They are staying there and eating there, so how big does this inspection need to be. Melanie Hudson, Environment Supervisor, sent out a group of people that work for Environmental Health and they found out that people do stay there. They bring their own food. There is no water that is being contaminated from the site. They looked at where the dig was, making sure that it was covered up adequately. What they have done in moving forward is anytime he wants to put a pit out there, they have given him the regulations on how it has to properly be done and for them to come out and look at that location to make sure it does not contaminate the area. The gentleman has been very cooperative and he has agreed to put dirt over the area.

Mr. Wiggins stated that the issue was the odor in the area and how it impacted that community and how do we plan to handle that. Do we have adequate ordinances?

Mr. Kiser stated that he works primarily with farmers and there are lots of odors out there. As we move forward we have to recognize that an offensive odor from a situation such as this could also be confused with an offensive odor from possibly a swine production facility or a poultry production facility in our County. Odors are very difficult to regulate from an ordinance standpoint.

Mrs. Powell asked if air quality meant nothing.

Mr. Evans stated that it was not that there weren't any concerns. It is difficult to regulate smells of their regulatory authority. Mr. Evans felt that if he complies with the guidance that has been given as far as properly covering that on a routine daily basis the by-product of that should drastically remedy that issue.

Mr. Wiggins stated that inspections are now put in place to eliminate some of the issues. He said at any time the neighbors can come to staff if it gets out of hand and we can do what we can enforce compliance.

Curmilus Dancy, 127 Midway Lane Tarboro, P O Box 1391, Pinetops, stated that he lives on the same highway adjacent to 111/122 where the bridge is out. DOT handles that, but he asked if the Board of Commissioners would give out information so people will know it is on the way because people are ready since it has been three years. He stated that he has some information.

Mrs. Powell stated that she serves on that board and they had a meeting last week and she asked that same question concerning Mr. Dancy's area and the Seven Bridges area and 97 area. She stated that she was told that the projected date was around the end of March or April, but they are still on target.

Bruce Edwards, 1014 S. Howard Circle, stated that in response to the situation that Mr. Kiser and Mrs. Etheridge talked about earlier, GFL containers worked out for him. It has a top on it and they put lime on top of it to greatly reduce the smell for \$120 per month during hunting season.

7. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

A. Approval of budget amendments.

Mr. Evans presented budget amendments #1-4.2 that required Board approval. Budget amendments #3, 4.1 and 4.2 were recommended for approval under separate agenda items.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve budget amendments #1,2, and 4 as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. Approval of amendment to Personnel Policy regarding thirty day grace period for health insurance.

Mr. Evans stated that currently our Personnel Policy states that when an employee goes into leave without pay status, he/she becomes responsible for paying both the employer and employee share of the employee's health insurance premium. It has been our practice to allow a 30-day grace period before that payment is due from the employee, however that provision is not currently captured in our Policy. Mr. Evans proposed the addition of the language as he presented to our Personnel Policy to codify our current practice.

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

C. Approval of Franchise Agreement with KRD Transport.

Mr. Evans stated that Mr. Kenneth Draughn, owner of KRD Transit, LLC, has submitted a franchise agreement to provide ambulance transportation in

Edgecombe County. Mr. Draughn would need to have a locally approved franchise agreement to operate ambulance transportation in Edgecombe County before North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services can move to approve his state ambulance license. Mr. Draughn currently has a great working relationship as a when-chair van operator, specifically with Prodigy Transitional Rehabilitation facility as he has provided wheelchair service for the past four years. He receives high accolades in reference to his performance from facility staff. Edgecombe County could benefit from having another ambulance transportation servicer to help meet the demands of transporting our bed confined patients to their doctor's appointment. Currently, Edgecombe County EMS Non-Emergency division is maximizing all opportunities to transport patients. However, the demand is now beyond our capability to manage.

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

D. Approval of Cooperative Agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation.

Mr. Evans stated that annually we enter into an agreement with the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to assist eligible individuals in gaining employment. These services include counseling, training, education, transportation, job placement, assistive technology, and other support services. The County provides matching funds, which for FY-24 will be \$20,759. We also provide office space for their staff.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the agreement as presented and to authorize the Chairman to execute the same. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

E. Approval of Health Department fees.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Health Department fees as recommended by the Health and Human Services Board. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion.

Mr. Thorne asked why were significantly higher than other counties.

Mr. Evans stated that those counties realize that they are behind in updating their fees as well.

The motion carried by unanimous vote.

F. Approval of revised plan and budget for Opioid Settlement funds.

Mr. Evans stated that we have received our first two of the 18-year opioid settlement distributions totaling \$330,166. The Board previously approved the recommended plan of action which came from the list of eligible activities. Our CORE Committee (Coordinated Opiate Recovery Effort) recommended:

- Evidence-Based Addition Treatment
- Recovery Support Services
- Syringe Service Program
- Naloxone Distribution

The Recovery Support Services category included a plan to hire two Peer Support Specialists. The Committee has since revised its recommendation to instead hire and deploy a Community Paramedic who will provide community-based healthcare with a focus on opioid overdoses. Staff will provide more details at the meeting on this approach. Mr. Evans stated that he agrees with their plan and recommended that the Board take separate actions to first approve the budget amendment which realigns with this revised plan, and then

to approve the Community Paramedic job description and revised pay plan to include it at grade 18.

Mr. Boswell asked for an explanation on the Syringe Service Program.

Mrs. Etheridge stated that the Health Department has had a Safe Syringe Exchange Program since 2019. COVID-19 put a big damper on that. It is where someone in the Community that uses needles for drug use can come in and bring in used needles in a safety container and they can exchange them for clean and safe needles. When they come in they meet with a nurse who talks to them about how to safely use them and tries to get them into one of the doctors in case they need further treatment. They also try to link them to treatment, provide them with resources and while they are with them they try to get them an appointment to be seen that day if they have some other needs. They are not required to do that, but it is a way to keep dirty needles off the streets. The Health Department did a lot of evidence-based research and that is how they came to have the program. Mrs. Etheridge stated that from that you are looking for ways to expand that into the community and the areas where you can meet the needs of that population. The Health Department is working with Carolina Family Medical Center and Freedom Hill to be an extension of their Syringe Exchange Program.

Mrs. Harris wanted to know how are we going to sustain the hiring of this employee.

Mrs. Etheridge stated that it will be a full-time employee under EMS. The Health Department is also looking at incorporating that into the EMS budget, but also looking for funding resources to help to grow that program. The start with this will be a Community Paramedic Program with a focus on opioid overdose with one employee, but then to grow that to have several paramedics that are addressing the health needs of Edgecombe County.

Mr. Evans asked Chad Eason with EMS to come forth and summarize the description of what a Community Paramedic does. Mr. Evans stated that we are hesitant about adding positions with a grant. This is an eighteen-year funding that we are going to get.

Mr. Eason, EMS Coordinator, stated that he has been a paramedic for over twelve years and been with the system for over twenty years. He stated that Community Paramedicine is something that in the last ten years has been created through agencies to try to get out in the community. A lot of their calls are not an emergency. Some of the things to cut down on that call volume with Community Paramedicine, primary focus would be opioid addiction and trying to keep them off of drugs, get them involved in the MAT (Medication Assistance Therapy) Programs, eventually they create programs in the Community Paramedicine and be a MAT provider so they can provide that to them also. There are a lot of things they are working out like trying to get referrals from clinics, hospitals, and EMS. In two months there were 33 overdoses in the County, 23 patients. They went to the same patient multiple times so creating a system like this in Community Paramedicine will hopefully be able to show numbers in the future that they are not responding back to the same individuals.

Mr. Webb moved to approve budget amendment #3 as presented. Mr. Thorne seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the job description and revised pay plan as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

G. Approval of Resolution for the Supplemental Agreement for Additional Opioid Settlement funds.

Mr. Evans stated that the NC Department of Justice recently announced new opioid settlements with five pharmacies. These settlements will result in an additional \$600 million to NC state and local governments, and almost doubling our settlement fund allocation. The distribution will mirror the original settlement agreement with counties. However, to participate, the Board must approve the resolution.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Resolution by the County of Edgecombe Authorizing Execution of Opioid Settlements and Approving the supplemental Agreement for Additional Funds Between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

H. Approval the adoption of ARPA required policies.

Mr. Evans stated that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) requires certain policies to comply with federal funding provisions. These policies include:

- Eligible Use Policy for the Expenditure of ARPA funds
- Allowable Cost and Cost Principles Policy
- Records and Retention Policy
- Non-Discrimination Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the ARPA related policies as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

I. Approval of request for a Hunting Lease for County-owned property.

Mr. Evans stated that we have received a request from New Hope Hunting Club to lease 283 acres of County-owned property for hunting. It includes property behind QVC and next to our landfill on Colonial Road. The offer is a one-year lease at \$20 per acre. Staff has researched hunting leases in the County and found this to be in the range of leases for similar properties.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the lease and authorize the County Manager to execute a lease agreement. Rev. Hines seconded the motion.

Mr. Boswell asked if we announced each year that there is land for lease and what was the process.

Mr. Evans stated that hunting leases is new for us. We have been leasing farm land for a few years now and we do a more formal process. At the Board's January meeting you approve leasing property that the County owns just behind Corning. That was our first time doing that and that was because the request came unsolicited. This request came to the County unsolicited. Mr. Evans recommended that in the future we handle this similar to the way that we handle our farm land lease.

Mr. Boswell stated that is what he was getting at. We give equal opportunity to anybody that wants to lease it. Mr. Boswell stated that he noticed that they have \$1 million coverage. Are we requiring that for anybody who leases the property?

Mr. Peters stated that in our first lease. We received that certificate of insurance.

Mr. Boswell asked if was mandated to lease it now.

Mr. Evans stated that we do not have a written policy, but we have established the practice.

Mr. Boswell asked if he thought we needed a written policy.

Mr. Peters stated that it is a term of the first lease and anticipated that it will be a term of this lease also.

Mr. Wiggins stated that he and Mr. Evans had a conversation as to how we need to go forward with it. He stated that we do need to go forward with a formal process.

The motion carried by unanimous vote.

J. Approval of responses to FY-22 Audit Findings.

Mr. Evans stated that the Local Government Commission requires that the auditor identifies Financial Performance Indicators of Concern (FPIC). We are required to then respond to those within sixty days of the audit being presented to the Board. Mr. Evans presented our response to the two areas of concern and recommended approval.

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

K. Approval of revised job description for Public Health Nurse III.

Mr. Evans stated that to better suit the needs of the Health Department, Michelle Etheridge, Health Director, has recommended the revision of the Public Health Nurse III position. The revision adds Communicable Disease, Tuberculosis, and HIV/STD's responsibilities to the position. The position will remain at grade 20.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the revised job description as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

L. Calling for a public hearing to consider Expansion of Princeville's ETJ.
TABLED

M. Calling for the convening of the Board of Equalization and Review.

Rev. Hines moved to call for the convening of the Board of Equalization and Review at the April 2, 2023 meeting. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

N. Approval of Grant Projects from the NC Office of State Budget Management.

Mrs. Bess stated that we have been approved for funding from the State budget through the NC Office of State Budget Management. Mr. Evans presented a brief description of each of the four projects. He stated that he will provide additional commentary on each project at the next meeting. Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve acceptance of these grant awards as presented.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the acceptance of these grant awards with their accompanying project ordinance and budget amendments (4.1 and 4.2). Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

8. APPOINTMENTS:

A. Planning Board.

B. HCCBG Committee.

Mrs. Harris moved to appoint Deborah Coley, Alberta Pettaway, Sarah Peveler and Jean Wooten-Jiles. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

9. **PLANNING BOARD REPORT.** ***Received***

Katina Braswell, Planning Director, provided the Planning Board report.

1. **UDO Text Amendment request for approval.**

The Planning Board forwarded the request to the Board of Commissioners with a favorable recommendation.

Mr. Boswell moved to call for a public hearing at the April 3, 2023 meeting. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

2. **Minutes of February 20, 2023 meeting.**

3. **Draft minutes of February 28, 2023 meeting.**

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

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

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

A. **Water and Sewer update.**

Mr. Boswell asked about the water leak.

Mr. Paul Moseley, Water Director provided an explanation.

B. **Monthly Financial Summary.**

C. **Social Services – NCDHHS letter regarding Medicaid expansion.**

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

A. **Follow-up on complaint about hunting outfitter from last month's meeting.**

Provided during Public Petitions.

B. **Updated dates on upcoming meetings.**

C. **TDA financial report.**

D. **NCDOT approval of the naming of Handy Corner.**

E. **Update on search for State Lobbyist.**

Mr. Evans stated that five responses were received and were reviewed by his Executive Team. He stated that now they are looking for from the Board is some direction as to how the Board would like for them to proceed. Mr. Evans suggested that they interview at least the top two or three and the Executive Team would be happy to do that, or the Board appoint a committee to do the interviews.

Mr. Boswell stated that a Board member should be represented on the committee.

Mr. Thorne volunteered to serve on the committee to interview the firms. He also suggested that all of the RFPs be sent to the full Board.

13. **COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.**

Mrs. Harris stated that she attended the NCACC and attended the Health and Human Services Board meeting as well as the Public Education Board, in which She serves on both. She shared information regarding the loss of education for children during the pandemic 2021 and provided information that was presented at the Public Education meeting.

Mr. Thorne stated that the Town of Tarboro received a grant for riverbank stabilization and riverbank work along the Tar River and as a part of that process they also received a Rural Economic Transportation grant. They put both of the grants together, almost \$1 million worth of site plans and work that is there. They have been going through this process since he has been in those meetings. He has seen the draft proposal and thought it was important for the Board to know it because we own a significant amount of property in downtown Tarboro that we use

for our staff. Part of that plan is about developing the property that we own and how we would develop it and help the Town achieve those goals and grow.

Mrs. Harris asked if the County has any ordinances on drones.

Mr. Evans stated that not that he was aware of.

Mrs. Harris stated that someone felt that their privacy had been invaded because a drone over her house and community.

Mr. Evans stated that staff will do some research on that.

Mr. Webb stated that the Wildlife Landing in Old Sparta is horrible and dilapidated and in need of updating. He has received several calls in the last couple of weeks from sportsmen that have communicated with NC Wildlife Commission since early 2021 and were told that they may get to it until the winter of this year. Mr. Webb stated that is unacceptable. If they are not going to fix it, it needs to be closed. He stated that he has made calls and sent emails. Mr. Evans has made calls and sent emails. Many of our citizens use the landing and it is not safe. He stated that he did not know what we need to do, request again, put pressure on, but we really need to see if we can make that a better place.

Mr. Wiggins suggested that maybe we can have our inspectors, or somebody, determine that it is unsafe, we can send a letter and have the Manager to communicate to Wildlife. We can express our concerns.

14. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.

None.

15. CLOSED SESSION.

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

A. Personnel. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)]

B. Legal Matter. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(2)]

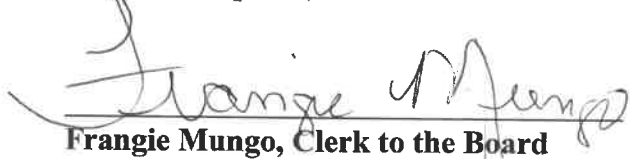
Mr. Peters provided the following case citation: Eastpointe Human Services v. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Mandy K. Cohen, in her official capacity as Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Richard O. Brajer, in his individual and former official capacity as Secretary of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Nash County, and Edgecombe County, Nash County, 20-CVS-1555

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

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

16. REV. HINES MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2023 AT 9:00 A.M. (COMMISSIONERS RETREAT). MRS. HARRIS SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved April 3, 2023.


Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board