

MINUTES  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY  
JANUARY 3, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.  
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, Chairman, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman, Mr. Donald Boswell, Mr. George Thorne, Mrs. Viola Harris, Mrs. Evelyn Powell 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.

Safety instructions provided by Mrs. Bess.

3. PRAYER.

Prayer provided by Rev. Hines.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2022 meeting as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing is to order to receive citizen comments and questions relative to the K&H Market LLC rezoning request.

Mr. Peters read the public notice as published.

Mr. Evans stated that the Board has before them a request from K&H Market LLC dba Midway Grocery located at 7995 NC 43 North, Rocky Mount, NC to rezone the property from AR-30 to B-1C. This will allow signage at an existing non-conforming convenience store. It does come from the Planning Board with a unanimous recommendation to approve.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comments. There being none the public hearing was adjourned.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the rezoning request as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

6. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.

A. Jacqueline Lewis of CloudWyze gave an update on the Broadband Project.

Mr. Evans stated that we have been working towards trying to expand broadband in our County for some time now. He announced that CloudWyze has received funding from the GREAT grant from the State. He introduced Ms. Lewis.

Ms. Lewis stated that one of the two projects that they submitted in 2022 was awarded. She presented on the following:

- **Project entails 45 miles of fiber for high-speed internet service.**
- **2,200 households served**
- **\$4 mm state grant funds**
- **\$700k match required**
- **Additional 345 households served in Whitakers as part of Nash County GREAT Grant award.**
- **2-year build timeline: December 2022-December 2024**
- **Mapping exercise explained**
  - ✓ **Prioritized potential new project areas based on (a) operational reasoning: which areas can they easily tie into the GREAT Grant builds or the middle mile fiber, (b) financial reasoning: which areas yield the highest households served per dollar spent; and (c) strategic reasoning: which areas are unlikely to be eligible for future grant funding.**
- **Areas GREAT grant will help serve**
  - ✓ **Cotton Ln.**
  - ✓ **Temperance Hall & Emerald Lake**
  - ✓ **Carver Elementary & South Edgecombe Middle**

**Mrs. Harris asked if there was any of the fiber run in the northern part of the County.**

**Mr. Evans stated not in this funded project, but we will be talking about it in the presentation.**

**Mrs. Lewis stated that they have been in conversation with Mr. Evans and team about while they are in the area it would be easier to build in the area versus leaving the area and coming back. She stated that Mr. Evans and team has discussed some expansion opportunities, specifically areas that they would liked priced out or do high level design. She stated that those areas that were elevated up will be seen in the next slides in her presentation. They are in priority from the least to the most cost-effective ones. She stated that they have also been in communication with the school system to understand where some opportunities for the most hot spot are located.**

**After the presentation and questions and comments from the Board Mr. Evans stated that the recommendation is to come back to the Board in February to present updated recommendations on which projects to be funded, in addition to the current funded project. His recommendation for tonight is to appropriate \$350,000 of our ARPA funds to provide the County portion of the match.**

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

**B. Sarah Stroud, CEO of Eastpointe, presented an update.**

**Ms. Stroud recognized two team members, Kateisha Jones and Victoria Jackson.**

- **Update on Services in Edgecombe County and the tailored plan that will become effective the first of April.**
- **Back in the day it was Edgecombe-Nash and Wilson-Greene and they merged to become the Beacon Center. In 2012 Eastpointe Human Service, the Beacon Center and Southeastern Regional merged to become Eastpointe Human Services.**
- **10 county service area**
- **What Eastpointe does and does not do**
- **Behavioral Health Services update**

- Currently have 424 employees; 10 living in Edgecombe County; \$616M budget; \$174M fund balance; \$47M unassigned fund balance
- Eastpointe County population
- Claims paid fiscal year 2022

Ms. Jackson presented on the following:

- Provider Network update
- Responding to COVID
- Tailored Plan background
- Overview
- Plan Highlights
- Enrollment and Launch
- Healthy Opportunities Pilot
- Next Steps

**C. Beth Edmondson, Interim Finance Director, presented an update on FY-22 Audit.**

Mrs. Edmondson stated that they had expected to achieve their goal of having FY 2022 audit completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>. By late November they had provided to the auditor almost all of the information that they had requested, with a couple of exceptions. They talked with the auditors and based on the timeline of the information ready for them, they anticipate that they will complete their work, and issue their report by the end of January. Mrs. Edmondson thanked her staff for the hard work, stating that this is the third audit completed within about a year's time, in what has really been a rebuilding year for the Finance staff. Of the seven full time members of the staff only one has been in their position more than a year. She stated that the team is continuing to get caught up and put processes in place that they believe will put them in a good position to complete audits on a timely basis going forward and having good responses.

Mr. Wiggins, on behalf of the Board, thanked Mrs. Edmondson for the job well done. He stated that Mrs. Edmondson and Mrs. Johnna Sharp have done an excellent job on

**7. PUBLIC PETITIONS.**

None.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**A. Approval of budget amendments.**

Mrs. Harris moved to approve budget amendments 1 – 7.5, with the exception of budget amendment #4, which is recommended for approval in item D of other business. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**B. Approval of authorizing the County Manager to approve lease agreements for County-owned property.**

Mr. Evans stated that we received a request from Mr. Billy Wooten to lease 302 acres of County-owned property for hunting. The property is located just north of the Corning facility, just off of Highway 64 Alt. and Dunbar 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. Powell moved to approve the lease and authorize the County Manager to execute a lease agreement. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**C. Approval of Resolution to Support the Naming of “Handy Corner.”**

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

**D. Approval of engagement with Mercer to overhaul the County's Compensation Plan.**

**Mr. Evans stated that in the last couple of years, all employers have experienced higher than normal employee turnover, and Edgecombe County has certainly not been the exception. Though there are multiple factors contributing to that, he believed one key factor for us, that existed prior to the pandemic, is the lack of competitiveness of our salaries and minimal opportunities within our current compensation structure for career growth. It has been since 2009 that our pay plan was updated. Since then, not only have we lost competitive ground with other units of local governments and private businesses, but also many of our job titles and descriptions have become outdated and inconsistent with what the position requires. Mr. Evans stated that working with our consultant, we have received and reviewed a proposal from Mercer, one of the top Human Resource firms in the world. We believe they can provide us exactly what we need, which is researching the current job market to recommend competitive salaries, proposing implementation options so that we can choose what our budget can sustain, and building in career growth opportunities that will help with retaining the best talent.**

**Mrs. Johnna Sharpe, Consultant, stated that in her thirty years working in and with local governments she has never see a staffing crisis such as we have now. Anything that an entity can do to help improve that is a good investment, because in local government we are a service provider. We do not make things. We are people helping people. If you do not have the staff to deliver the services, then your constituents are the ones who are negatively impacted. We are seeing turnover everywhere. We are seeing a very difficult time recruiting. In evaluating the pay plan, she saw that it was out of date and that is not something that helps attract talent. She stated that Mr. Evans has implemented some strategies, from the extraordinary pay to looking at remote working. You can try a lot of strategies, but if your foundation is not solid it does not make those strategies as affective. The pay plan is the foundation for how you compensate, reward and attract new talent to come and be with the County. If there is a tremendous opportunity to modernize the pay plan a big component of this is setting up career architecture, career levels, building an organizational structure that helps you understand how various positions relate to other positions. The market component will look at where Edgecombe County is trying to attract talent from. It will also look at comparable jobs in other areas, but it will always be normalized for what the cost of living is wherever those jobs are compared. It will a very important of the work they do in making sure we have apples to apples comparisons to put Edgecombe County in the best light to be competitive for talents in the areas in which you are employing from. Mrs. Sharpe stated that she has worked with Mercer. They are world class, but they also want to have an impact in the community where they help serve. They are very interested in bringing a new model to local government in that they can get it done faster, much less expensively than a typical engagement, but you will still have a high-quality output. In North Carolina many counties have the same type positions, because so much of what we do is mandated by the State. It is being as looking at a lot of data that already exist to streamline the process, but to give you a new tool. One of the most important tools in retaining the staff you have.**

**Mrs. Harris stated that there is no need to get it and put it on the shelf. We have to act on it.**

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the selection of Mercer to overhaul the Compensation Plan, approve budget amendment #4 and authorize Mr. Evans to execute the contract. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5 for and 1 against. Mr. Boswell opposed.

**E. Approval of Pay Tel Communications Account Signing Authority for staff at the Sheriff's Office.**

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the request from Sheriff Atkinson to authorize the following staff to sign checks on the Pay Tel communications PNC Inmate Bank Account: Captain Oliver Washington, Lieutenant Tocorya Cohen, Lieutenant Deloris Pittman, Sergeant Barbara Knight, Sergeant Takia Daniels, Sergeant Steven Stalls, Sergeant Shronda Hinton, Sergeant Gail Norwood-Davis, Sergeant Brenda Sherrod, Corporal timothy Braddy, Corporal William Lucas, Corporal David Spencer and Corporal Marcie McCray. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**F. Approval of amendment to the Pay Plan.**

Mr. Evans stated that at the August meeting the Board approved the addition of a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) position to our pay scale at grade 30. Our goal in adding the position is to recruit a person with the requisite skills and experience needed to run the finance department and manage the County's financial operations. We are working with a recruitment firm to assist us in finding the ideal candidate. We already knew that this would be a hard position to fill, as it is all over the State. Unfortunately, during our first round of recruitment, we did not identify that candidate. Mr. Evans stated that in order to improve our chances in such a competitive market, he recommended that the Board amend the pay scale to move this position to a grade 31. Mr. Evans asked the Board to authorize him to negotiate and go above the scale only if necessary. He stated that this position also has a residency requirement. The policy states that they have to obtain residency in the County within twelve months. He asked the Board to authorize him, if necessary, to extend that up to eighteen months.

Mr. Wiggins stated that he is not in agreement with extending the residency requirement. That is something that it should be brought back to the Board if it is needed.

Mrs. Harris agreed with Mr. Wiggins.

Mr. Boswell stated that he did not see a difference in giving them a year or eighteen months.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the moving of the grade from 30 to 31. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to authorize Mr. Evans to have the authority to exceed the salary range for grade 31 if necessary. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to authorize Mr. Evans to extend the residency requirement from 12 months to 18 months. Mr. Webb seconded the motion. The motion failed with 2 for (Boswell and Webb) and 5 against (Wiggins, Hines, Harris, Powell and Thorne.)

Mr. Evans asked for consideration on two positions in Solid Waste, Heavy Equipment Operator, grade 8, and Truck Driver, grade 9. He asked the Board to authorize him, if necessary, to be able to negotiate a salary above the pay ranges.

Mr. Boswell moved to authorize Mr. Evans to negotiate a salary above the pay ranges for the Heavy Equipment Operator and Truck Driver positions. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**G. Approval of Tax Foreclosure Agreement with the City of Rocky Mount.**

Mr. Evans stated that Mr. Peter Varney, Interim City Manager for Rocky Mount, reached out to Mr. Peters and Mr. Evans to request that we consider increasing the number of tax foreclosures with the City limits. To do so, they are offering compensation for that additional work and related costs. Mr. Evans stated that we have determined that we can increase the number of foreclosures for Rocky Mount, and recommended that the Board approve the agreement as presented.

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

**H. Approval of the IRS recommended mileage reimbursement rate.**

Mr. Evans stated that it is the County's practice to follow the standard mileage reimbursement rate set by the Internal Revenue Service. Recently, the IRS issued a notice that it is increasing the rate from 62.5 cents to 65.5 cents per mile.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the new mileage reimbursement rate at 65.5 cents. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**I. Approval of calling for a public hearing regarding a request for a Special Use Permit at the February 6, 2023 meeting.**

Mr. Evans stated that Mr. Roger Sauerborn has submitted an application for a Special Use Permit to expand his permitted sand mine on NC Highway 42 East. A public hearing is required.

Rev. Hines moved to call for a public hearing to be held at the February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**J. Approval of farm land lease.**

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.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the lowest responsive bidder as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**9. APPOINTMENTS:**

**A. Planning Board.**

Mrs. Harris moved to appoint Mr. Roy Gray. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

**B. Board of Adjustment.**

Mr. Wiggins moved to appoint Mr. William Gaines. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

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

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

**11. APPROVAL AND/OR REVIEW OF CONTRACTS.**

Mr. Evans stated that the contract being presented is for HVAC replacement in a number of County buildings. This is with funding by ARPA funds we received.

Mr. Evans also asked the Board to approve the contract for Lawn Care Maintenance for County facilities. (Thompson Nursery)

Mr. Thorne stated that he has heard from a lot of people for many years that the HVAC systems are full of mold and mildew, especially in the courthouse. He asked does part of this contract have in there some stipulation on cleaning up the existing infrastructure not just replacing the HVAC units that are there. His understanding is that if you put a new HVAC unit in it is still going to blow mold and mildew. He would like to see some kind of process of cleaning the ducts that are there with some kind of consideration for the contractor to do that.

Mr. Stan Liverman, Maintenance Director, stated that this contract is replacement of existing equipment. It does not include any cleaning of duct. It is something we need to consider in the future.

Mr. Wiggins stated that before the Board approves this we should take a look to see if there is a need for us to clean that duct work.

Mr. Thorne stated that he has seen comments from people about visible mold in the units, particularly in the courthouse.

After more discussion Mr. Wiggins stated that this needs to be addressed.

Mr. Evans suggested that the Board approve the contract as presented and if we determine that there is some additional work that needs to be done we will decide one of two things, either it is significant enough that we need to bid it separately or it is not and we can do it as a change order that will have to come back before the Board.

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

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

- A. Water and Sewer update.
- B. Monthly Financial Summary.

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

- A. Workforce Development indicators.
- B. TDA Financial Report.
- C. Expansion of Princeville's extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- D. Princeville's 138<sup>th</sup> Founders Celebration.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve Princeville's Founders day Resolution. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Tarboro Edgecombe Public Arts Commission letter regarding Juneteenth celebration was presented to the Board.

14. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

Mrs. Boswell expressed his concern regarding the CloudWyze and Mercer projects being decided on in one meeting. The whole Board should meet for these discussions.

Mr. Wiggins agreed and suggested to Mr. Evans that anytime we have projects such as these, we should call for a work session.

**Mrs. Harris shared from the Edgecombe Entrepreneur Organization regarding the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, which will be a virtual program on Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.**

**Mr. Boswell asked what became of the Register of Deeds' system being attacked.**

**Mr. Evans stated that are able to do marriage license now and they are doing a lot of manual recording now. It has not been resolved by the vendor, Cotts. It has affected other counties too. It is still an ongoing thing.**

**Mrs. Harris stated that she has been asked about what is going on with the Animal Shelter. The Sheriff's Office is supposed to run it, but who is supposed to actually plan if we are going to build a new one. A couple of people in her district has asked who is going to build it, what is taking so long, what is the plan.**

**Mr. Evans stated that in our existing Animal Shelter we have, through our Maintenance Department, done a lot of work over the last year or so. We have been trying to balance doing what we need to do, but we don't want to put a whole lot of money in it, when we know we are going to build another one. We have taken care of those most critical things at the existing shelter. As far as the new shelter, the Board approved in the budget this year \$50,000 for design work for a new shelter. That is underway. A committee is planning that. Preliminary information has been provided by the architect. The committee is working towards a final plan on what we will build and we will bid that out. The next phase we ask what we expect that to cost and how we are going to pay for that and he will come back to the Board with recommendations.**

**Mrs. Harris asked if we have asked our representatives on the State and Federal levels about helping us get that money to build the Animal Shelter or have we had anybody to look for grant funding that might be available.**

**Mr. Evans stated yes to both. We have searched for years for grant funding. There is money out there for supplies. Regarding our representatives, the State budget includes some appropriations to the County (\$1 million for Edgecombe). Some of that is to place lost revenues, fire protection and equipment, for the Kingsboro area. Some of that includes planning money for shelter, space needs at the courthouse as well as looking at need of a fire station (Leggett). We have already gotten the architectural study covered in our current budget for the animal shelter. What we have requested is can the balance of that can be used to put into the direct cost of the construction of the animal shelter. They seem to be open to that, but we have not gotten a final yes.**

**Mr. Thorne stated that we do have a looming de-merger happening and suggested making sure that we are in communication with the school systems and how that process is going to look and how funding is going to look. He stated that he would like to have some kind of meeting at some point, besides the annual retreat, where they come and talk to us, because that is going to be major. We are going to have to look at a lot of staffing, buildings, kids and budgeting.**

**Mr. Evans stated that we have had conversation with staff and even with Nash County staff starting that conversation and looking to plan having some work sessions between the boards as well as a series of community meetings as well to inform the those who will be affected by this where we are, what we know.**

**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)]**



**Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.**

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

- 17. REV. HINES MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING UNTIL FEBRUARY 6, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M. MRS. POWELL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.**

**Approved February 6, 2023.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Frankie Mungo", is written over a horizontal line.

**Frankie Mungo, Clerk to the Board**