

Greg Edds, Chairman
Jim Greene, Vice- Chairman
Mike Caskey
Judy Klusman
Craig Pierce

Aaron Church, County Manager
Carolyn Barger, Clerk to the Board
John W. Dees, II, County Attorney

Rowan County Board of Commissioners

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

January 19, 2021 – 6:00 PM

J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROOM

J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROWAN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

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Present: Greg Edds, Chairman
Jim Greene, Vice-Chairman
Craig Pierce, Member
Judy Klusman, Member

Absent: Mike Caskey, Member

County Manager Aaron Church, Clerk to the Board Carolyn Barger, County Attorney Jay Dees, Assistant County Manager/CIO Randy Cress and Finance Director James Howden were also present and/or participating remotely.

Chairman Edds convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Chaplain Michael Taylor provided the Invocation.

Chairman Edds led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSIDER ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Chairman Edds added a request from the Economic Development Commission to schedule a public hearing for February 1, 2021 to consider "Project Popcorn." The request was added to the Consent Agenda as Item K.

Chairman Edds added two (2) documents (HDR Master Contract and Task Order #20) from Finance Director James Howden to existing Consent Agenda Item J (Landfill Engineering Services).

CONSIDER DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA

There were no deletions from the agenda.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Klusman moved, Commissioner Pierce seconded and the vote to approve the agenda as amended passed unanimously (4-0).

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Commissioner Klusman moved, Commissioner Greene seconded and the vote to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2021 Commission Meeting passed unanimously (4-0).

1. CONSIDER APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Klusman moved approval of the Consent Agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Greene and passed unanimously (4-0).

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following:

- A. Ratify Z 07-20: Mitch Wilson
- B. Ratify Z 05-20: Steinman Storage
- C. Ratify Z 06-20: Nengtou Vue
- D. FY 2021 Governor's Crime Commission Local Law Enforcement Block Grant
- E. Piedmont Skydiving: Request to Modify Structure Type
- F. Grant Authorization Request
- G. Nature Center FY21 Grant
- H. Revised Catawba College Parking Lot Lease at West End Plaza
- I. Crossnore School & Children's Home – Foster Care Services
- J. Landfill Engineering Services (additional documents were added to this agenda item during Additions to the Agenda and are hereto attached to the minutes for the record)
- K. Schedule a Public Hearing for February 1, 2021 to Consider "Project Popcorn" (addition to the Consent Agenda)

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Chairman Edds opened the Public Comment Period to entertain comments from any citizens wishing to address the Board. With no one coming forward, Chairman Edds closed the Public Comment Period.

3. ANIMAL SERVICES – PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROPOSED CHANGES TO ROWAN COUNTY ORDINANCES CHAPTER 5 SECTION 5-46

Bob Pendergrass, Director of Animal Services, said based on citizen complaints to the Department and also to a Commissioner, staff was tasked with looking into an issue it had never dealt with. Mr. Pendergrass said staff learned people were feeding whole animal carcasses to their domestic animals in the public's view and the County had no ordinance granting authority to address the issue.

Mr. Pendergrass said staff had spoken with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the North Carolina Sporting Dog Association to get a hunting perspective on the matter.

Mr. Pendergrass mentioned it would be up to the Board as to whether it wanted to impose a penalty for the issue.

Mr. Pendergrass submitted the proposed text amendment in the agenda packet to add language to Chapter 5, Animals, Section 5-46, as follows:

(e) It shall be unlawful to intentionally feed whole animal carcasses to domesticated animals in public view.

Mr. Pendergrass explained if the Board wanted to add a penalty for the issue, it typically started with a minimal fine, increasing with each infraction thereafter. Mr. Pendergrass said the first goal was to educate people before imposing fines. Mr. Pendergrass said staff had the option of writing a citation and taking the matter to court; however, he felt it best to establish fines in the beginning.

Commissioner Greene asked County Attorney Jay Dees whether it would circumvent the proposed text if someone were to remove a section of the dead animal to avoid the animal carcass being considered as “whole”. Mr. Dees felt the intent of the provisions was to get the dead carcass out of the front yard and out of visibility of public view. Mr. Dees said the text was not intended to change the custom and practice of how farmers feed their animals but rather he thought it was designed to get the feeding out of the front yard that were viewable to the public.

Mr. Pendergrass confirmed the statement by Mr. Dees was the intention of the language.

Commissioner Pierce said the language was not intended to be intrusive to people who hunt, etc. but to encourage people to be good neighbors and not feed large animal carcasses to dogs in their front yard.

Mr. Pendergrass said the situation was the first for this type of complaint. The issue occurred in a neighborhood with small acreage with other homes. There was no homeowners association in the neighborhood and no recourse to address the matter.

Commissioner Pierce said a meeting was held at the Animal Services office to hear the neighbors' complaints. It was learned the individual causing the situation was not the property owner and Mr. Pendergrass was to speak with the property owner to see if she could intervene in the situation. Mr. Pendergrass said the situation had not happened again but he had not received a response from the owner.

Chairman Edds opened the public hearing to receive citizen input regarding the proposed text amendment. The following individuals addressed the Board and/or submitted written comments on the matter:

- David Childers, 7391 Blackwelder Road, Salisbury, NC submitted written comments in advance of the hearing. Mr. Childers felt the proposed regulation was unnecessary.

With no one else wishing to address the Board, Chairman Edds closed the public hearing.

After a brief discussion, the Board was favorable to table the issue until mid-February.

Commissioner Pierce moved, Commissioner Greene seconded and the vote to table the issue to mid-February passed unanimously (4-0). Commissioner Klusman had left the room and was therefore recorded in the affirmative.

4. REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR MATRIX PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT STUDY

Using a power point, Assistant County Manager/CIO Randy Cress presented a timeline for implementation of the tasks from the Matrix Study that was received following their findings in April 2020 and the follow-up presentation in September 2020.

Mr. Cress provided a recap of the Matrix Study Project Scope Review as follows:

- Evaluate the development review and permitting functions in Building, Environmental Health, Environmental Management, Fire and Planning
- Analyze current processes and staffing needs
- Assess technology needs related to development review
- Feasibility assessment of a consolidated permitting department

Mr. Cress highlighted the task list in the agenda packet. Mr. Cress said he would be working with the departments for implementation alignment and engage the department stakeholders for collaboration. Mr. Cress briefly mentioned the fiscal year budget alignment for the tasks.

Continuing with the power point, Mr. Cress reviewed the following:

Technology Task Highlights

Online Portal for all things Development and Permitting

- 1st Phase: Review of status of existing building permits – Beginning mid-February – CHANGE
- 2nd Phase: Place initial popular building inspection permits online – Next 3 months – NEW
- Reviewing online payment processes – New
- Evaluating Fire Inspections needs for FY 21 recommendation (Software Transition) – CHANGE

Electronic Plan Review

- Evaluating software and hardware needs for FY 21 recommendation – NEW

Centralized development review (hub) that acts as a digital one stop shop (Short term)

Staffing Related Task Highlights

- Immediate position modifications completed:
 - Erosion Control Specialist – Planning
 - Environmental Health Position Changes

- Budget related Position tasks:
 - Fire Inspections/Building Inspections Staffing levels
 - Environmental Health Career Progression
 - Planning Department Recommendations

Process Improvement Task Highlights

- Reduce or eliminate unnecessary processes in citizen workflow
- Recommend fee schedule across all departments providing services
 - Adopt a technology fee to add to development review and permitting fees to account for software and technology upgrades
- Create and implement a special event application and permit
- Maintain current departments and Director positions

What to expect next...

- Collaborative effort across departments involved
 - Expansion of capabilities of our software platform
 - Onboarding and migration from other department-specific platforms
 - Movement from paper-based to electronic processes (internal/public)
- Budgetary items for FY21 will include:
 - Staffing recommendations based on current needs and Matrix findings
 - Hardware/Software costs to continue move to a unified platform
 - Fee review and staff recommendations

The information was presented with a request to accept the timeline as proposed and to allow work to continue through the proposed tasks. No budgetary items were requested. All budgetary considerations would fall within standard fiscal year cycles unless a situation warranted immediate action during the implementation process.

Chairman Edds asked if the implementation involved working with any municipalities and their processes. Mr. Cress responded there were internal processes Rowan County needed to work through first; however, the County could work with any municipalities as other issues were identified.

In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Greene, Mr. Cress discussed how the platform allowed for expansions and tracking. Mr. Cress also confirmed how permits could be viewed in the system once they were entered.

Chairman Edds emphasized that having a consistent, predictable and efficient process was so important to developers, whether residential or commercial. Chairman Edds said the County had great staff; however, the connections between the departments

was not currently as fluid as it could be. Chairman Edds said he looked forward to Rowan County utilizing technology that would take the guess work out of the process.

In closing, Chairman Edds praised Mr. Cress and thanked him for seeing the County through the burden that had been placed on him with the technology. Chairman Edds reassured Mr. Cress of the Board's confidence in him to move the County forward "into the next century."

4. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Finance Director James Howden presented several financial graphs depicting the following information:

- Annual Cumulative Expenditure Comparisons as of December in FY '21 - \$74,529,148
- Annual Cumulative Revenue Comparisons as of December in FY '21 - \$84,277,884
- Annual Cumulative Current Year Property Tax Comparisons as of November in FY '21 – \$59,761,902
- Annual Cumulative Sales Tax Comparisons as of September in FY '21 - \$7,570,930

6. CONSIDER APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Finance Director James Howden presented the following budget amendments for the Board's consideration:

- Finance – Budget the FY20 Homeland Security Grant awarded to Rowan County for the purchase of a prime mover. This award was approved by the Board on October 19, 2020. \$60,000
- Sheriff – Recognize excess revenue from State Asset Forfeiture and transfer funds to Technology-Service and Maintenance Account to allow payment of Invoices. \$4,326
- Finance – Budget the FY21 Natural and Cultural Resources Grant awarded to Rowan County Nature Center. \$60,000

Commissioner Pierce moved approval of the budget amendments as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Greene and passed unanimously (4-0). Commissioner Klusman had left the room and was therefore counted in the affirmative.

7. CLOSED SESSION

Chairman Edds moved at 6:45 p.m. for the Board to enter into Closed Session in accordance with North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1) to consider approval of the minutes of the Closed Sessions held on September 8, 2020, September 21, 2020, October 19, 2020 and November 16, 2020; and North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(5) to consider real estate negotiations. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pierce and passed unanimously (4-0).

Commissioner Pierce moved, Commissioner Klusman seconded and the vote to return to Open Session at 7:20 p.m. passed unanimously (4-0). No action was taken.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Pierce moved to adjourn at 7:20 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Klusman and passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn Barger".

Carolyn Barger, MMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board