

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 14, 2017
MINUTES**

Chairman Tate called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. All Board Members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director, County Attorney, members of the news media and interested citizens were present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The County Manager briefly updated the board members on two items from the February 3, 2017 continued session, explaining his efforts to move forward on (1) situations involving allowing elected officials (sheriff and register of deeds) to accrue annual and sick leave and (2) development of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Tate asked those in attendance to observe a moment of silence.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG: Led by Commissioner Higdon, the pledge to the flag was recited.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: **Karen Wallace** with the Macon County Public Library presented the board with a library usage report. She said the library has more than 33,000 active registered users, which represents an increase of more than 25 percent from July of 2015 to July of 2016. She also pointed out that books are changing as users embrace new technologies such as eBooks, which means circulation is increasing but in a different format. Ms. Wallace also described the programs and events offered by the library, including a portable planetarium. She said the number of visits to the library continues to grow, as all forms of circulation and media usage totaled more than 230,000 in the last fiscal year. **Caroyl Anne Elliott** told the board that she started a local group called Prayers Against Drugs, adding that the response has been amazing. On the first Friday of every month, Ms. Elliott said the group will gather on the courthouse square to pray because “there needs to be something done.” Commissioner Beale commented on the “stigma” associated with drug use and said efforts like this one will help overcome it. **Stephanie Almeida** spoke to the board regarding the “opioid epidemic” in the county, explaining that she had been working to combat this for almost 20 years. She informed

the board about a group called “Learn to Cope,” which is a peer-led support network for families dealing with addiction and recovery that meets each Tuesday. Ms. Almeida said she is putting together a presentation for the board’s next regular meeting. **Sarah Ward** tearfully told the commissioners that her family recently lost a member to drugs and that “none of our children are safe.” She told the board she feels that action on the drug issue lies in the hands of elected officials.

REMARKS REGARDING THE OPIATE EPIDEMIC: The board members agreed to postpone approval of the meeting agenda and moved directly to a presentation by Jan Stanfield regarding the opiate epidemic. Mrs. Stanfield began by saying she was inspired by the Prayers Against Drugs event, prompting her to appear before the board “as a passionate citizen and as a mother, looking for your help in uniting this community in the fight against drug abuse and the fight for the future of our children.” She then gave a detailed story about her son, Stephen, who became a drug addict and died on the rooftop of an auto repair shop in Asheville, NC from an overdose. She told the board, “We cannot have an honest conversation about the drug epidemic, especially the heroin crisis without talking about this county’s obsession with prescription drugs, specifically opioid painkillers – and I know this is a controversial subject.” She provided the board with statistical information regarding opioid use, adding, “There’s something else that I find unacceptable – and that’s the stigma that drug addicts and their families must bear – the misconceptions and shame that keep their struggles secret and in the closet, so to speak.” She later stated, “Remember, even drug addicts belong to somebody – they are loved – and even if they are loved by anybody on this earth, they are indeed loved by God and that alone makes them worthy and deserving of our love and support and our resources.” Saying that Franklin and Macon County are ready for the fight, she asked the board members if they were ready to lead the charge. In closing, she said, “What about if because of your bold leadership coupled with the prayers and commitment of your citizens we really did make a difference? What if we actually held off this epidemic? What if our efforts profoundly changed the course of this storm? What if communities from around the state and around the country came to us and wanted to model strategies for a drug free community? What about that. That ladies and gentlemen would put us on the map. I’m ready, your community is ready. Are you?” Ms. Stanfield received a standing ovation from those in attendance, and a copy of her entire presentation is attached **(Attachment 1)** and is hereby made a part of these minutes. This led to a lengthy discussion involving the board members, Ms. Stanfield, Ms. Elliott and others. Chairman Tate thanked all of those involved in the discussion for their attendance and input.

SPECIAL GUEST: Commissioner Shields recognized William Shields, his great nephew, who is a student at Macon Middle School and is studying parliamentary procedure.

ADDITIONS, ADJUSTMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adjust and approve the agenda, as follows:

- To add an item under New Business as 11B to consider a Proclamation Regarding Blended Family Day, per Commissioner Shields.
- To add an item under Old Business as 10E regarding a discussion of the Robert C. Carpenter building renovation project, per the County Manager.
- To add an item under Old Business as 10F stemming from concerns over the county's grading license program, per Commissioner Beale.
- To adjust the amount of Budget Amendment #118 under Item 12B in the Consent Agenda to reflect a \$12,000 increase, making it \$46,000 instead of \$34,000, per the Finance Director.

CULLASAJA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT: The County Attorney explained that he had prepared an "Agreement to Provide Recreation Opportunities" regarding the board's November 15, 2016 allocation of \$40,950 to the Cullasaja Community Association for renovations to the Old Salem Church. In return, the association will make the church available to the general public for recreation purposes for a 10-year period. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the agreement as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

OTTO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION AGREEMENT: The County Attorney explained that he had prepared a similar "Agreement to Provide Recreation Opportunities" regarding the board's November 15, 2016 allocation of \$44,155 to the Otto Community Development Organization for renovations to the organization's building. In return, the organization will continue to make the building available to the general public for recreation purposes for a 10-year period. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the agreement as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 3) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

FUNDING OF TEACHER SUPPLEMENTS: As a follow up to discussions from two previous meetings, Commissioner Shields requested that the board provide the shortfall of \$23,415 to finish paying the teacher supplements for Macon County Schools this fiscal year. This led to a discussion as to whether the

funds would come from the contingency line item in the current year budget or a transfer from the general fund fund balance. The board members agreed to take the money from contingency, with Commissioner Higdon suggesting that the board consider placing a cap on the amount of money it would provide annually for the supplements. Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to allocate the \$23,415 from contingency. (DOUBLE CHECK WITH LORI ON THIS BEFORE SENDING OUT)...

COWEE SCHOOL ARTS & HERITAGE CENTER: Commissioner Beale outlined his continued support for the Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center, and made a motion to provide an amount not to exceed \$20,000 to assist with the center's operation through June 30, with the funds to come from contingency. Following further discussion, Commissioner Gillespie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, with the Finance Director noting that the funds would be placed into the center's contracted services line item.

CARPENTER BUILDING RENOVATIONS: The County Manager reviewed the process of receiving informal bids for renovations to the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building. He provided the board with a bid summary and supporting documentation. The county is acting as the general contractor on the project, and opened bids for electrical, plumbing, doors and windows, gym floor replacement and general construction work. The County Manager said that the total project cost, based on the bids submitted, ranges from \$618,064 to \$650,269. However, because the total cost exceeds \$500,000, he said the county must reject each of the bids and seek formal bids for each portion. He went on to explain that seeking formal bids should not influence the cost, or would only do so minimally. Also, the anticipated completion date of June 1 will now be delayed by three to four weeks. He said the extra time will allow county officials to discuss the exterior portion of the project and then have one grand opening of the updated facility. At this point, he told the board that the following steps need to be taken:

- The board would need to reject the bids.
- Certain departments would need to be reimbursed for the fixed costs where they have occurred, including \$30,000 for Maintenance and \$5,000 for Parks and Recreation.
- A total of \$55,210 would need to be moved from fund balance into the renovation project fund to cover certain costs.
- The board would need to approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$90,210 as prepared by the Finance Director to cover the items listed above.
- The board would need to authorize staff to seek formal bids.

Following discussion, Commissioner Beale made a motion to reject the bids due to them exceeding the \$500,000 limit, to authorize the formal bid process,

and to approve the budget amendment to appropriate \$90,210 from the general fund to cover a portion of the renovations. A copy of the budget amendment is attached (Attachment 4) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Commissioner Shields seconded the motion, and there was further discussion about formal bids being approved at the March regular meeting and the need for performance bonds and bid bonds. The board then voted unanimously to approve the motion as stated.

GRADING LICENSE: Commissioner Beale recommended to the board that the county planning board be tasked with reviewing the county's grading license process, and he made a motion to suspend the program immediately and discuss the review process with the members of the planning board at the joint meeting scheduled for Thursday (February 16th). Commissioner Beale said some graders like to have the license on their resume and some do not, adding that the license requirement was much needed at the time that it went into place. Commissioner Higdon seconded the motion. During discussion, Chairman Tate said it was a good idea to send this to the planning board, and that he had spoken to graders who liked obtaining the license. Commissioner Higdon, however, said the program never worked, that not one fine had ever been levied and that it was "a feel good thing." Following more discussion, the board voted unanimously to approve the motion as stated.

2016-17 AUDIT CONTRACT: The Finance Director explained that she had negotiated with Martin Starnes & Associates to keep the cost for the audit contract for Fiscal Year 2016-17 at a total cost of \$65,150 – representing no increase from the previous year. Noting the county's "good working relationship" with Martin Starnes, she recommended award of the contract in that amount. Commissioner Beale made a motion to approve the "Contract to Audit Accounts" as presented, and it was seconded by Commissioner Shields. During discussion, Commissioner Gillespie said that as long as there is only one proposal for consideration, he will continue to be concerned, and stated his belief that all projects should go out for bid in order to keep everyone honest. He added that this was no reflection on the county Finance Department. The board then voted 4-1 to approve the contract as presented, with Commissioner Gillespie opposing. A copy of the document is attached (Attachment 5) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

PROCLAMATION REGARDING BLENDED FAMILY DAY: Bruce Ferguson asked that the board proclaim April 29, 2017 as "Blended Family Day," noting that one third of marriages now are between those who have been married before. Following discussion, and upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Higdon, the board voted unanimously to approve the "Proclamation Regarding Blended Family Day" as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 6) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the items on the consent agenda as follows: the minutes of the January 10, 2017 regular meeting and the February 3, 2017 continued session; the following budget amendments: #113 for the Sheriff's Department to appropriate federal and state drug forfeiture money totaling \$16,236; #114 for the Health Department to approve a new agreement addendum for Maternal Health with \$1,600 in additional funds; #115 for the Health Department to account for a \$3,900 decrease in the Ebola allocation; #116 for the Health Department to allocate the NC Wildlife Division's prepayment for 12 doses of Rabies vaccines; #117 for the Department of Social Services to allocate \$500 for Home Care Assistance; and #118 for Housing to appropriate \$46,000 (instead of \$34,000) from a Duke Energy HHP Grant for HVAC repair and replacement (Copies of the amendments are attached); approved tax releases for January 2017 in the amount of \$307.06. Copies of the releases are on file in the Deputy Clerk's office.

RECESS: With no other business, and at 7:56 p.m. upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, Chairman Tate asked William Shields to announce that the board would recess until Thursday, February 16, 2017 at 5 p.m. at the Environmental Resource Center at 1624 Lakeside Drive, Franklin, NC for the purpose of holding a joint meeting with the Macon County Planning Board.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chairman

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CONTINUED SESSION
FEBRUARY 16, 2017
MINUTES**

The members of the Macon County Board of Commissioners held a joint meeting with the members of the Macon County Planning Board on Thursday, February 16, 2017 at the Environmental Resource Center, 1624 Lakeside Drive, in Franklin, NC. At 5 p.m., Chairman Tate announced that the two boards would share a meal together prior to starting the meeting and asked the County Manager to give the invocation.

Chairman Tate reconvened the meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners at 5:27 p.m. as recessed from the February 14, 2017 regular meeting. All of the board members with the exception of Commissioner Gillespie, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk and the County Attorney were present.

Joe Deal, the chairman of the Macon County Planning Board, called the planning board meeting to order.

Chairman Tate welcomed those in attendance, and read a dictionary definition of planning before adding his own definition of the word as follows: "Where do we want to go and how do we get there." Mr. Deal followed by noting that "where there is no vision, the people perish."

Chairman Tate explained that Commissioner Gillespie was ill with flu-like symptoms and would not be attending, but read aloud a portion of a text he had received from Commissioner Gillespie, who serves as the commission's liaison to the planning board.

The members of the planning board then unanimously approved the minutes of their previous meeting.

Chairman Tate asked that the commissioners approve the agenda as presented, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, voted 4-0 to do so.

The members of the planning board then approved their agenda.

Chairman Tate introduced his fellow board members and county staff, followed by introductions of the planning board members and county staff working with them. Those present from the planning board included Mr. Deal, Aaron Garrett, Evan Harrell, Chris Hanners, Bill Futral, Tommy Potts, Kathy Tinsley (the planning board's vice-chair), Betty Waldroop and Justin Setser. Unable to attend were Ben Laseter and Rick Trevathan. Also present were County Planner Jack Morgan and Tina Wiggins with the Planning, Permitting and Development Department.

UPDATE ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Mr. Deal said the planning board has been working for about one year on an update of the county's comprehensive plan. He said the board's subcommittees are finalizing their reports, which are scheduled to go to the full planning board in June. He said the board is anticipating presenting the update to the commissioners in August of this year. Mr. Morgan spoke briefly about the work of the subcommittees, which are focused on the following topics: economic development, land use/environmental, transportation/housing, education, recreation and healthcare/childcare.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS: Chairman Tate opened up the floor for a "brainstorming session" regarding future projects for the planning board to address. Each member of the planning board voiced their thoughts, followed by each of the commissioners. The following list of items (in no particular order) were concerns of the planning board members: broadband, drug use, success of the Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center, development of a farmland protection plan, solid waste options once the new landfill cell under construction fills up, control of growth, work on the comprehensive plan after it is updated, creating areas for business growth, planning for highway corridors, restrictions on the age of mobile homes that can be moved into the county, and a long-range plan for education from a building and maintenance viewpoint. From the county commissioners, Commissioner Higdon told the group he was "here to listen." Commissioner Shields focused on education "from a bricks and mortar perspective" and also broadband and internet service and the homeless situation in the county. Commissioner Beale addressed a list of issues including transportation from a regional standpoint, water and sewer infrastructure, broadband, the county's workforce and having the planning board involved with Southwestern Community College to bring back the "trade" programs, farmland protection and agriculture and the drug problem. He also told the planning board about the commission's vote on the previous Tuesday to have the board review the county's grading license program and provide a recommendation. His final comments addressed education and the county landfill. Chairman Tate had three items: the suspended grading license and the need to either eliminate it or improve it, a

study of county facilities and a review of how the county provides dollars for capital outlay spending. Mr. Hanners asked the commissioners to elaborate on the grading license program issue, and Commissioners Higdon and Beale expressed their differing viewpoints. Mr. Potts asked about the status of the DARE Program, which in turn led to a lengthy discussion about the drug problem in the county.

DEPARTMENTAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS: Mr. Morgan told the boards that there are 10 different ordinances that fall under the Planning, Permitting and Development Department’s jurisdiction – building inspections, floodplain, sign control, soil erosion and sedimentation control, telecommunication facilities, watershed protection, high impact land use, subdivision ordinance, building heights and sexually oriented businesses. He said that for the citizens looking to comply, these are sometimes confusing and cumbersome and can leave someone unsure if they have covered “all the bases.” With that in mind, he suggested that the county evaluate whether all of these could be combined into one ordinance and streamline the process. Also, he explained that the subdivision ordinance has a technical review committee process that works very well. Meanwhile, there are other ordinances that require a process for appeal or relief, but finding volunteer members to serve on the watershed review board or the board of adjustment are hard to find, and can make getting a quorum at a meeting difficult. He asked the commission to consider the planning board, which meets monthly, to be designated to act in these areas.

Mr. Deal expressed his thanks to the commissioners and to the planning board members for their work, and specifically thanked Mr. Futral, whose term on the planning board will expire soon.

Chairman Tate thanked all of the planning board members for their volunteer service, and challenged everyone to think of “what can we do to make Macon County a better place to live.” He said he had a list of 22 ideas that he had collected from the meeting, and while the commissioners would need to tell the planning board “where we want to go, it’s up to you as to how we get there.”

ADJOURN: With no other business, and at 6:41 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Higdon, the commissioners voted 4-0 to adjourn, followed immediately by the members of the planning board voting to adjourn.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chairman