

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 12, 2018
MINUTES

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chairman Tate recognized Emergency Services Director Warren Cabe, who announced the updated protection class ratings, effective October 1, 2018, for the following Macon County Volunteer Fire Departments:

- Scaly Mountain – 6
- Burningtown/Iotla – 5
- Cowee – 5
- Mountain Valley – 5
- West Macon – 4
- Nantahala – 5

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 HEARING: At 6:02 p.m., Chairman Tate called to order the public hearing concerning the approval of the execution, delivery and performance of the contract and the deed of trust and the financing of the improvements to South Macon Elementary School. He stated that no one had signed up to speak at the hearing. The County Attorney pointed out the need to provide some details as to the terms of the arrangement. Per the notice of the public hearing, the board, at its April 10, 2018 meeting, had adopted a resolution which authorized the county to (1) enter into negotiations with respect to an installment purchase contract in an aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$2,923,674 in order to pay the capital costs of additions to the school and other costs related to the execution and delivery of the contract and (2) to enter into a deed of trust under which the county would grant a lien on such portion of its fee simple interest in the site on which the school is located as may be required. The school is located at 855 Addington Bridge Road in Franklin.

Macon County Board of Education Chairman Jim Breedlove told the commissioners that the school board members would review bids on the 19th and recommend the best one. The Finance Director shared that the county had received five proposals for financing for the project, with Entegra Bank having the lowest interest rate at 3.35 percent. She said the county anticipated closing the loan on July 23rd. Commissioner Gillespie voiced his opinion that he was very much in favor of paying for the addition out of fund balance instead of securing a loan. Due to the current interest rate environment in which rates are going up as much as 1.5 percent a year, the Finance Director recommended moving forward with the loan and perhaps consider using fund balance money for other projects such as the Southwestern Community College (SCC) "burn building" or a new senior center. Chairman Tate said that when the budget was completed, the board would "dive in" to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). With no other comments, Chairman Tate closed the public hearing at 6:11 p.m. No action was necessary. The Finance Director did point out that the loan application had been submitted to the Local Government Commission and was scheduled to be considered on July 10th.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: **Jennifer Love** spoke to the school funding issue, and encouraged the commissioners to "fully fund" Macon County Schools for the upcoming year. **Stephanie Laseter** also spoke to the school funding issue as a parent of students at South Macon Elementary. She thanked Commissioner Beale and Commissioner Shields for their proposed funding recommendations and told them, "I fully support you in the work you are trying to do." **John deVille** provided the board with a handout and said he wanted to "echo what Stephanie just said." He said it was a difficult budget year for school systems across the state, noting that on May 16th some 20,000 people marched in Raleigh to bring attention to the shortfall in education funding. He went on to discuss some of the priority goals set by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) and suggested that the commissioners serve as champions of the people. He said he was concerned about a "game of chicken" where the General Assembly is in one car, boards of commissioners are in another and school kids are in the middle. He then addressed recent comments made by some board members at the June 5th continued session. In conclusion, he told the commissioners he was "deeply grateful" to all of them for the job they did. **Narelle Kirkland** asked the board to consider helping organize a trip to the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh by allowing Macon County Transit to transport a group down there, and she again asked the county to make improvements to a gravel section of the Little Tennessee River Greenway. **Sarah Caldwell** spoke as a mom of students in the school system, noted that she was really happy with the teachers and the system but added that the teachers need some assistance. She thanked the board for considering additional funding for the school

system. **Tamara Lynn Zwinak** addressed the board on three different subjects; school funding, healthcare costs and the Scott Knibbs shooting. She began by speaking to balancing the needs of students and seniors, and questioned the need for building a new senior services facility and how the county would pay for it. She also told the board that paying 100 percent of employee health insurance premiums was not sustainable. In closing, she asked the board to listen to the 911 call that was made prior to the officer-involved shooting of Scott Knibbs, and raised the issue of 911 "swatting," which is false reporting of an emergency to public safety by a person for the intent of getting a SWAT team response to the location. **Molly Phillips** also addressed school funding, telling the board she was thankful for the school system's facilities, adding that communities do well when they attract young families. As parents of a third-grader and a sixth-grader, she told the board members she would appreciate their consideration of the liaisons' recommendation. **Barbara Putman**, who said she has a fourth-grader at Iotla Valley Elementary, told the board she appreciated the "transparency in budget matters." and that she agreed with Jennifer Love in asking the board to pursue grant funding for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program. **Michael Vargas**, a graduate of Macon Early College, said he loves living in Macon County and wants to be a teacher, but this is not the best area to be a teacher and that he and others "would love to teach here but no one plans to."

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

- To add six items to the Consent Agenda (two capital project ordinance amendments, two grant project ordinance amendments and two new grant project ordinances), per the Finance Director.
- To add a request from the Macon County Public Library as Item 11G under New Business, per Chairman Tate.

ANGEL MEDICAL CENTER LETTER OF INTENT WITH HCA: Karen Gorby, the president and chief nursing officer for Angel Medical Center (AMC), updated the board on the status of the letter of intent between Mission Health and HCA Healthcare. She explained that Mission Health, of which AMC is a part, announced in March of this year that it would become part of HCA. She explained that the letter of intent means that both parties have mutually agreed to further evaluate a potential relationship between them using a defined process, and she outlined the five steps in that process. Currently, both sides are nearing completion of the due diligence portion of that process. She described why HCA Healthcare is "a perfect match" for Mission, and provided an overview of HCA's areas of service. As HCA is a for-profit organization, she said a key component of the agreement, if it moves forward, will be the creation

of a “very substantial foundation” that would help fund improvements to the health of residents of western North Carolina. She also noted that HCA will pay state and local property taxes. In closing, she pointed out that plans for a new hospital in Franklin are included in the letter of intent and call for a move into the new facility in the winter of 2022. No action was necessary.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT: Sarah Thompson, the Executive Director of the Southwestern Commission, presented each member of the board with a copy of the agency’s annual report for 2017. She explained that the agency, also known as Region A, serves the state’s seven westernmost counties and the 17 municipalities within those counties. It is supported by dues from each entity that are calculated on a per capita rate of 75 cents, with Macon’s number at 30,749, which excludes the populations of the towns of Franklin and Highlands. Local dollars are used as a match to draw down state funding, she said, and the agency operates on a \$6-million annual budget, most of which is pass-through funds. In looking at the “snapshot” of the report, she reviewed the organization’s three major areas of focus; the Area Agency on Aging, Workforce Development and Community and Economic Development. She briefly touched on the regional broadband assessment being conducted. No action was necessary.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES: Department of Social Services (DSS) Director Patrick Betancourt had two items of business before the board, the first being a contract to participate in the statewide enhanced primary care case management program. He explained that this allowed DSS workers to go into Medicaid billing information that is related to foster children in DSS custody. This particular document has been updated, and after discussing it with the County Attorney, Mr. Betancourt said he felt it was best to get board permission to sign the agreement, noting that without it, the agency’s access to the data will be revoked. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to grant specific authority for Mr. Betancourt to sign the agreement. The second item involved an annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Mr. Betancourt said the MOU establishes certain performance measures for DSS, including any action steps taken by DHHS and the county’s opportunity to rebut any corrective action cited. His question to the board centered on whether he or the County Manager should sign the MOU? The County Attorney recommended that Mr. Betancourt sign the document and that any notices be sent to both Mr. Betancourt and the County Manager. Following additional discussion, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to authorize Mr. Betancourt to sign the MOU as presented, a draft copy of which is attached [Attachment 1] and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

2019 SCHEDULE OF VALUES: Tax Administrator Richard Lightner presented the board with the 2019 Schedules of Values, Standards and Rules for Market Value, a 115-page document. He pointed out that the upcoming property revaluation would be his sixth with the county and quite possibly his last one. The county performed a revaluation back in 2015 and is now back on a four-year schedule. In presenting the schedules, he also asked the board to hold a public hearing on them at the June 19th continued session. Following discussion on the process of advertising that the schedules are out for review, Mr. Lightner said that the board could adopt the document at its July regular meeting. No action was necessary.

WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICATION: The Finance Director explained that Housing Director John Fay was seeking approval to apply for \$113,572 from a state Weatherization Assistance Program, but that the application was due tomorrow (June 13th) by 5 p.m. Upon a motion by Commissioner Gillespie, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to authorize Mr. Fay to submit the application, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

MACON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH LEASE RENEWALS: Following brief comments from Public Health Director Jim Bruckner, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve in one motion three resolutions and the accompanying lease agreements as follows: Community Care of Western North Carolina (Attachments 3 and 4), Community Care Clinic of Franklin (Attachments 5 and 6), Community Care Clinic of Highlands (Attachments 7 and 8) and the dental clinic lease with C.J. Ramey (Attachment 9).

RESCISSION OF INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT: Emergency Services Director Warren Cabe told the board that the Town of Franklin desired to terminate an interlocal agreement established in 2013 regarding the housing and use of a hazardous materials trailer, which is owned by the county but is currently being stored at the Franklin Fire Department. The County Attorney explained that the town is exercising its option in the agreement and that he had prepared a "Rescission of Interlocal Agreement" to accommodate that. After further discussion, and upon a motion by Commissioner Gillespie, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the rescission of the agreement, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 10) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OCCUPANCY TAX SERVICE CONTRACT: Following a brief discussion, the County Attorney shared with the board members that he would have an updated contract with the

Highlands Chamber of Commerce regarding the occupancy tax ready for the board's consideration at its June 19th continued session. He noted that the current contract expires June 30, 2018. No action was taken.

NANTAHALA FIREWORKS PERMIT: Upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve a permit for a fireworks display to be held in Nantahala on June 30, 2018.

FRANKLIN FIREWORKS PERMIT: Upon a motion by Commissioner Gillespie, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve a permit for a fireworks display to be held in Franklin on July 4, 2018.

LIBRARY FUNDING REQUEST: Chairman Tate explained that he had received an e-mail on this date from Karen Wallace with Macon County Public Library asking for a one-time \$5,000 request for higher-speed internet at the libraries in Highlands and Nantahala. Commissioner Gillespie said that he would like to have more details on this item, and following discussion, the board agreed by consensus to hold off on taking any action.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Gillespie, the board voted unanimously to approve the items on the consent agenda as follows: the following budget amendments: #233 to allocate \$3,500 in additional revenue for the Department of Social Services; #234 for the Health Department to allocate \$21,009 in the Chronic Disease 1422 Grant to cover June 2018 expenses; #235 for the Health Department to allocate \$7,373 in the Tobacco Grant to cover June 2018 expenses; #236 for the Health Department to allocate \$10,280 in the Minority Diabetes Prevention Grant to cover June 2018 expenses. (Copies of the amendments are attached); the Ordinance Amending the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 budget (copy of the ordinance is attached); monthly ad valorem tax collections report (no action necessary); a Capital Project Ordinance Amendment for the Carpenter Building Renovations in the amount of \$899,965 (copy attached); a Capital Project Ordinance Amendment for the Radio Communications Upgrade in the amount of \$945,360 (copy attached); a Grant Project Ordinance Amendment for the Duke Energy Income Qualified Weatherization Program in the amount of \$98,200 (copy attached); a Grant Project Ordinance Amendment for the Duke Energy Income Qualified Weatherization Program Direct Reimbursement in the amount of \$100,000 (copy attached); a Grant Project Ordinance for the 2018 Urgent Repair Program in the amount of \$100,000 (copy attached) and a Grant Project Ordinance for the Weatherization Assistance Program FY 2019 in the amount of \$113,572.

CLOSED SESSION: Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 7:55 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the acquisition of real property under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(5). Upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session at 8:32 p.m. and return to open session. No action was taken.

RECESS: Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to recess the meeting until Tuesday, June 19, 2018 at 6 p.m. in the commission boardroom on the third floor of the Macon County Courthouse, 5 West Main Street, Franklin, NC for the primary purpose of holding a public hearing at 6 p.m. on the proposed Fiscal Year 2018-19 budget and for any other business that may come before the board.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chairman