

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JULY 10, 2018  
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:** Chairman Tate recognized State Representative and former board chairman Kevin Corbin. Rep. Corbin updated the board on the recently completed “short session” of the North Carolina General Assembly. He noted the approval of \$1.5-million in funding for small schools (Highlands and Nantahala) in the county, a large allocation for nearby Western Carolina University, pay raises for teachers and increased funding for public schools. No action was necessary.

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

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** **Howell Jacobs** told the board he wanted to speak about tax dollars coming to Nantahala. He asked for a new community building/library, and told the commissioners that at the recycling center there are “two little ropes to keep someone from falling in a hole” and questioned, “Why can’t this get fixed?” He asked the board to spend some money before someone gets hurt and to “just be fair” to Nantahala. **Narelle Kirkland** requested to have the cellular telephone numbers for each of the commissioners and also asked for a county-sponsored trip to Raleigh to visit a World War I exhibit at a museum there. She again asked that the county pave the remaining gravel portions of the Little Tennessee River Greenway.

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

- To remove Item 11D under New Business (discussion regarding proposed NCDOT abandonment of a section of Holt Road), per Chairman Tate.
- To add a brief update on Wi-Fi for the libraries at Highlands and Nantahala as Item 10B under Old Business, per Commissioner Gillespie.
- To add Budget Amendments #11 and #12 to the Consent Agenda as part of Item 12B, per the Finance Director.

**REQUEST FOR NEW FACILITY FOR SENIORS:** Chairman Tate welcomed clients of Macon County Senior Services to the meeting. He told them he had the pleasure of visiting the senior center in May “when bingo was going on” and pointed out he had to circle the parking lot twice looking for a place to park. He noted that while he saw “smiling faces and good activities,” the current facility on Wayah Street does not have enough space. **Sandy Lajeunesse** said she was here to voice support for a new senior center. She explained that she suffered a stroke in 2011 and that “the senior center got me through recovery.” She said the clients check on each other and develop lifelong friendships. **Jean Wright** told the board that after her husband died unexpectedly, she became a semi-recluse and, except for going to church, sat in her home. She said that friends got her to go to the senior center, and soon “these people had become very important to me,” particularly after she fell in her backyard and was injured. She added that she got signed up for “meals on wheels,” and once she was well enough to drive, started going back to the center. She started facilitating a writer’s group and book club, and currently has a part-time job at the center planning trips and now says she looks forward to “a paycheck and taxes.” She concluded by telling the board that July 1 is now the anniversary of her new life, not her husband’s death. **Lucille Green**, who is 96 years old, simply told the board members, “Please find us another place. That’s all I got to say.” **Don Capaforte**, the administrative officer for Senior Services, handed out copies of the center’s newsletter to the board members and told them he had wanted some of the seniors to share their stories with the commissioners. According to Capaforte, 28 percent of the county’s residents are 60 years or older and more are moving here to retire. He said the center has had approximately 1,500 participants, and averages about 200 per day. He noted that these folks are socializing, and “we are feeding them,” adding that studies show that 27 percent of seniors are isolated. From a health perspective, that is just as bad as smoking, he told the board. “We have outgrown where we are,” he said, pointing out that 75 of the state’s 100 counties have more adults age 60 and over than they do 0-18. “We just want our county to be ready,” he concluded. Commissioner Beale asked the senior center volunteers to stand and be recognized, noting that they contributed a monetary value of \$1,628,000 worth of time in the past year. He noted that there would be a benefit for Mr. Capaforte, who is dealing with cancer, on September 8<sup>th</sup> and he thanked Mr. Capaforte “for your steadfastness and showing up when most wouldn’t.” Chairman Tate responded that “you can’t get anywhere without a

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plan,” noting that the county was in the process of implementing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and that a new senior center “is at the forefront” of it. “We hear you loud and clear,” he told the seniors in the audience. No action was taken.

**HEART FOR FAMILIES LEADERSHIP SEMINAR:** Cindy Cavender with the Franklin Chamber of Commerce requested the board’s sponsorship of a Heart for Families leadership seminar to be held in Franklin in November. She asked the commissioners for \$1,000 for a partnership in the event. The County Attorney raised some questions as to how the money would be spent and asked to see any promotional literature about the seminar. Following additional discussion, no action was taken.

**STATE OF FRANKLIN:** Former Macon County Manager Jack Horton gave the board an update on the State of Franklin, a non-profit organization headquartered in Bryson City, NC. Mr. Horton explained that he is now the chairman of the board of the non-profit, which will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. He said the State of Franklin provides a number of services in Swain County, and is better known in the surrounding counties for its Senior Aides program. Subsidized by the U.S. Department of Labor, the State of Franklin provides workers for organizations such as Macon County’s Department of Social Services. As Mr. Horton noted, “These people want to work and they show up.” He told the commissioners that “Macon County has always been a big supporter of senior citizen programs,” and noted that Shelia Jenkins, the former administrative officer for the county’s senior services program, is the State of Franklin’s newest board member. He extended his appreciation to the board for including the State of Franklin in the county budget again this year. Macon provides \$14,000 to the non-profit. No action was taken.

**ADOPTION OF THE 2019 SCHEDULE OF VALUES:** Following brief comments from Tax Administrator Richard Lightner, and upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to approve the “2019 Schedules of Values, Standards and Rules for Market Value” as presented, a copy of which is attached **(Attachment 1)** and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

**WI-FI FOR LIBRARIES:** Commissioner Gillespie shared some information regarding a proposal to upgrade wi-fi services at the libraries in Highlands and Nantahala, and told the board he anticipated possible action on this matter at the August regular meeting. No action was taken.

**WHO GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT AGEISM:** Tamara Zwinak began her comments by stating that she was “not here to offend” but might “ruffle a few

feathers.” Saying that she is a licensed clinical social worker and a psychiatrist, she told the board that she wants to make Franklin “an age friendly city.” She said she was motivated to speak to the board after hearing comments by Commissioner Beale at a presentation on elder abuse during which time she said that he commented that “our seniors need to be protected.” This was “a red flag” to her, she said, adding that ageism is a civil rights violation and federal law prohibits it. Ageism includes “addressing older people in elder speak and speaking loud or in a simplified manner, she said, and went on to speak against the county building a new senior services center. She gave the board the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of ageism, and said the county was providing segregated programs for seniors instead of integrated programs. She asked the commissioners to “get on board” with the WHO campaign to combat ageism. Near this time in her presentation, Commissioner Beale attempted to ask Ms. Zwinak a question and was essentially scolded for interrupting her, and she asked the board to hold any questions until she was done. She told the board that if the senior center is the only option for the county’s elderly, “that should give you pause,” and later suggested the county provide programs for the whole family, not just seniors. She added that seniors have invaluable knowledge, and the waste of that “is the biggest mistake of your positions here” as commissioners. She encouraged the board to think out of the box, and after citing a number of statistics, stated that ageism is a social problem and that it is “morally reprehensible and illegal to segregate elders.” Following some additional comments, she asked Commissioner Beale to accept her apologies for her earlier remarks to him. No action was taken.

**AIRPORT AUTHORITY REQUEST:** Gary Schmidt and Richard Rhodes, members of the Macon County Airport Authority, appeared before the board to request matching funds to complete an archeology study on the runway extension project at the airport. Commissioner Gillespie, the board’s liaison to the authority, provided some background information on the project and explained that the authority needs \$19,300 to provide the 10 percent match for the work, noting that there have been “significant findings” by the contractor. This led to discussion among the board members regarding the original quote for these services. The Finance Director explained that the authority receives “non-primary entitlement” (NPE) funds of \$150,000 a year on an annual basis and those funds can be used for this, but more money is needed due to the amount of artifacts discovered. She added that the county would need to match two NPE grants of \$16,667 each for a total of \$33,334 in order to cover the request. The archeology study must be completed in order for other projects to move forward, and Commissioner Gillespie said that the authority members voted unanimously to make the request. He then made a motion to approve the matching funds, which, according to the Finance Director, is a total of \$33,334, not \$19,300 as mentioned earlier. This was followed by

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discussion of taking the money from the county's contingency line item, which has \$125,000 in it. Commissioner Shields seconded the motion, and the board voted unanimously to approve the request.

**DUKE ENERGY LEASE/NANTAHALA RECREATION PARK:** Commissioner Higdon said certain needs have been identified in the Nantahala community, and with the community building and the recreation park housed on land leased by the county from Duke Energy, he had asked the County Attorney to review the lease agreement prior to the county engaging further in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process. The County Attorney said he had shared some information with the board members in an e-mail, adding that the "bottom line" is that Duke Energy is very supportive of the community and the County Attorney believes Duke would give the county a fair deal. Discussion turned to the CIP process and a possible work session on that topic. The County Manager explained that he was in the process of putting together a request for proposals (RFP) for a space needs study that would "dovetail" with the CIP and the upcoming Fiscal Year 2019-20 budget. Discussion of the CIP and space needs study continued and eventually turned toward safety issues at recycling convenience centers like the one in Nantahala. No action was taken.

**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 May 8, 2018 regular meeting and the May 15, 2018 continued session; the following budget amendments: #1 an agreement addendum for the Health Department to decrease the total budget for the Regular Chronic Disease 1422 Grant from \$117,332 to \$96,323 in revenue and expenditures to cover expenses for June 2018; #2 an agreement addendum for the Health Department to decrease the total budget for the Tobacco Grant from \$125,272 to \$117,899 in revenue and expenditures to cover expenses for June 2018 ; #3 an agreement addendum for the Health Department to decrease the total budget for the Minority Diabetes Prevention Grant from \$165,808 to \$155,528 in revenue and expenditures to cover expenses for June 2018 ; #4 for Education to carry forward a balance of \$18,209 for the Franklin High School vocation building heating project and the Highlands School cafeteria floor covering; #5 for Emergency Management to appropriate \$6,020 received from the Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness Grant Program; #11 for the Health Department to allocate an additional \$15,187 in WIC funds from the state; #12 for the Health Department to allocate \$43,110 from an Evergreen Foundation Grant. (Copies of the amendments are attached); tax releases for the month of June in the amount of \$35.06; monthly ad valorem tax collections report (no action necessary).

**APPOINTMENTS: (1) Library Board:** Karen Wallace with Macon County Library informed the board that John Gaston had submitted his letter of resignation from the Macon County Library Board of Trustees, effective June 30, 2018, and in turn submitted an application from Wood Lovell, a member of the Hudson Library Board in Highlands, to fill Mr. Gaston's unexpired term in the Macon County board. She requested that Mr. Lovell be appointed, and upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Lovell as requested.

**CLOSED SESSION:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 7:54 p.m. for the purpose of preserving the attorney-client privilege under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3). At 8:47 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session and return to open session. No action was taken.

**ADJOURN:** With no other business, at 8:48 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

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Derek Roland  
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

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Jim Tate  
Board Chairman