



**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OCTOBER 10, 2023
MINUTES**

Chairman Higdon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All Board Members, County Manager Derek Roland, Deputy Clerk Tammy Keezer, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, and County Attorney Eric Ridenour were present, as were a number of county employees, media, and citizens. Commissioner Shields arrived at 6:10 p.m. after the meeting had been called to order due to his representation of the Board at the 100th Anniversary Celebration of Angel Medical Center.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(A) Mr. Roland announced that Commissioner Shields is running about ten minutes late due to attendance at the 100th-year celebration of Angel Medical Center.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Higdon requested all in attendance rise and a moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Commissioner Shearl, the pledge to the flag was recited.

PUBLIC HEARING(S): None

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: None

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

- To add Item 11E under New Business, Discussion Regarding Support for a Grant for Career and Technical Education program at Franklin High School, per Commissioner Mr. Roland
- To correct Item 11D under New Business, to Discussion and Consideration of the Addition of a Planner Position instead of a Code Enforcement Officer II Position in the Planning, Permitting, and Development Department, per Mr. Roland
- To add a Closed Session before Item 11D, To Discuss Personnel in Accordance with N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (5), per Mr. Roland
- To Table Item 11A under New Business, Discussion Regarding Town of Franklin Social District and Use of the Gazebo and Clock Tower Squares, per Chairman Higdon

REPORTS AND PRESENTATION:

Quarterly Award Presentations For First Responders – Commissioner Antoine stated he is participating in this presentation as a Community Chaplain and not as a Commissioner. He indicated that he is one of three volunteer Chaplains for

Macon County and would be presenting the second round of quarterly awards. Mr. Antoine present awards to Dalton Drinnon, Page Southard, and Chandler Ellenburg with Macon County Emergency Management; Michael Gerra with the North Carolina State Highway Patrol; and Anissa Steel and Daniel Crane with Macon County Sheriff's Office.

OLD BUSINESS:

Discussion Regarding Franklin High School Public Review of Schematic Drawings

– Mr. Roland introduced Paul Boney with LS3P and announced that a Community Input Session will be held on October 19, 2023, at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building. Mr. Boney said they are looking forward to having as many people as possible present and his team will be available to answer questions. He said the drawings will be on display, as well as floor plans, site plans, interior renderings, etc. Mr. Boney welcomed feedback and input from the community. Commissioner Young asked about a virtual tour. Mr. Boney said they would try to have that available.

Highlands School Renovation/Pre-K Project Update – Mr. Boney said the bids previously received were significantly over budget and they have been trying to figure out how to order some of the long lead time materials (HVAC, windows, etc.), and figure out how to make this project move forward in a way that gives us the most options. He suggested to award the project to Construction Manager at Risk firm which would be selected on qualification instead of price. Mr. Boney said they in this scenario, the firm is given the budget and would be in charge of the bid process. He stated the firm would continue to work with LS3P but the Construction Manager at Risk would be responsible for the money. Mr. Boney explained this method gives us an opportunity to move forward with purchasing some items with a long lead time and to get ahead of inflation. He indicated that the only other option is to put the project back out to bid as we did before and see if we get any better bids. Mr. Boney requested that an Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Construction Manager (CM) at Risk be posted to see what kind of interest we get. He indicated that the scope of the project should be broken down in to phases with Phase I consisting of mechanical, windows, roof, doors; Phase II consisting of the Highlands Pre-K project; and Phase III renovations with the FP coming from Macon County using the Repair and Renovation Fund. Ms. Carpenter said \$63,430 of the requested \$697,730 has been encumbered for Planning and Design with the remainder intended for the Highlands Middle School HVAC, windows, and flooring. Ms. Carpenter deposits are posted quarterly and the current balance is \$754,993.02 which includes what has previously been encumbered. She said she thinks we may have to amend the application as we applied a year ago and may be modifying that application. Ms. Carpenter indicated that \$165,377 was budgeted for design development and construction documents for the Highlands Pre-K project as well. After some additional discussion, Commissioner Young made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields to solicit an RFQ for CM at Risk for Highlands School Renovation project which will be broken into three phases. Vote was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion Regarding Town of Franklin Social District and Use of the Gazebo And Clock Tower Squares – Tabled until November 2023 Regular Meeting.

Discussion and Consideration of Bond Amendment with Tiny Mountain Estates Subdivision – Planning Director Joe Allen presented the agreement and explained the purpose and project needs. Motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Shields to enter into a bond agreement in the amount of \$22,714.76 by cash, in lieu of paving the roads as described in the agreement. Vote was unanimous.

Discussion and Consideration of Renewal of the Master Service Agreement with LittleT Broadband – Mr. Roland reminded the board of the details of the Master Agreement with LittleT Broadband as a consultant to work with the broadband

committee. He said this agreement has no funding involved and once a project is identified then sub-agreements are entered in to and funding designated. Mr. Roland said we need to renew this agreement to have this level of expertise on staff as well as oversight of the fiber project in Nantahala with funds allocated to that project subagreement in the FY 24 budget. Mr. Roland said this is a renewal of the current agreement. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Young to approve the agreement as presented. Vote was unanimous.

CLOSED SESSION: At 7:02 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session as allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(5). At 7:32 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.

Discussion and Consideration of the Addition of a Planner Position in the Planning, Permitting, and Development Department – Mr. Roland gave an overview of the structure of the Planning Permitting and Development Department and the volume of inspections. He explained the positions currently in the department consisting of eight total positions and stated he is asking for nine total. Mr. Roland requested approval of the addition of a Planner position and the accompanying budget amendment. He said the department is one of the most efficient departments that the county operates and shared that Jackson County has twenty-one employees performing the same duties as this department. Mr. Roland said currently the Planning Director oversees all planning, the planning board, code enforcement related to land use ordinances, erosion control, watershed, floodplain, and building inspections, and conducts fire inspections as well. He explained that with the addition of the Planner position, the Planner will conduct all planning, oversee the planning board, and code enforcement related to land use ordinances, erosion control, watershed, and floodplain duties. He said the Planning Director position will be reclassified to a Plan Reviewer/CEO III with the new duties of plan review, permit entry, code enforcement, and building inspections. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Higdon to approve the addition of the position as requested as well as the accompanying budget amendment in the amount of \$69,718 and to increase revenue from interest on investments by the same amount. Vote was unanimous.

Discussion Regarding Support for a Grant for the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program at Franklin High School – Ms. Colleen Strickland and Mr. Josh Brooks reminded the board of the CTE program plan that was previously presented to the board and provided statistics about upcoming planned graduations for telecommunicators and basic EMT's. Ms. Strickland stated that the Dogwood Health Trust has just awarded \$495,280 in funding to Franklin High School to increase the CTE staffing. She said Dogwood Health Trust has offered to hire a grant writer and leverage the funding for the application for the Perkins Innovation Modernization Grant. Ms. Strickland said Franklin High School is eligible to apply for this grant because the Higdon property has been purchased, the county pays for one-and-a-half CTE positions, the county pays for a two percent supplement to the salaries of all CTE teachers, plus the Dogwood Health Trust funding to use for the required funding match. She shared that the Dogwood Health Trust has offered an additional \$100,000 match and that SCC has also been paying for several teacher positions which will count toward the match. Ms. Strickland said that all combined this is more than fifty percent local match. She said we are eligible to apply for a five-year grant in the amount of \$4.8 million which will enhance everything they receive from the Dogwood Health Trust, help put in infrastructure and programs to support the farm-to-table land lab, and increase dual enrollment for students. Ms. Strickland said the grant will not allow for any renovations but will allow for contracting with an architect who can develop a master plan and design for the Higdon property, set aside tuition for students in the aviation program, stipends for student internships, equipment, and virtual reality opportunities for Nantahala and Highlands for some programs such as welding, automotive and health sciences. She said this is a competitive grant and she is asking for Mr. Roland to send a letter of support on behalf of the board to this grant and consider a resolution at the next meeting in

support of CTE and the grant. Mr. Brooks gave some statistical information about the number of students, credentials achieved, etc., and how the Franklin High School program compares to others in the region and state. Motion by Commissioner Antoine, seconded by Commissioner Shields for the County Manager to work on a letter of support. Vote was unanimous.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented which includes: (A) Minutes of the September 12, 2023 regular meeting, (B) Budget Amendments #50-55, (C) Revised Vehicle Policy, (D) Tax releases for the month of September 2023 in the amount of \$1,774.32, (E) Monthly ad valorem tax collection report for which no action is necessary.

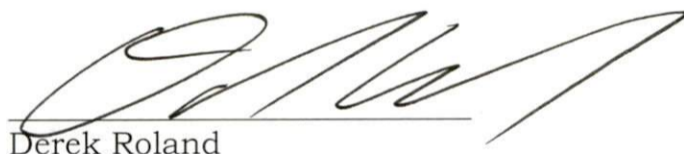
APPOINTMENTS:

(A) Board of Health (3 seats)

Chairman Higdon said as the liaison of the Macon County Board of Health he would like to recommend Ruth Stillwell, Matt Corbin, and Garrett Higdon as approved by the Board of Health. Chairman Higdon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields to appoint all three representatives as presented. Vote was unanimous.

CLOSED SESSION: At 8:07 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session as allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(5) to discuss the acquisition of property and NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel matter. At 8:48 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session and return to open session.

ADJOURN: With no other business, at 8:49 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Young, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.



Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board



Paul Higdon
Board Chair