

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners and Sparta Town Council met in joint session on Monday, February 29, 2016 at 7:00pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: County—Chair Tom Smith, Vice-Chair Karen Leys, Commissioner Larry Davis, Commissioner Mark Evans, Commissioner Bobby Irwin, County Manager Don Adams, and Administrative Assistant Lauren Linker. Town—Mayor John Miller, Councilman John Brady, Councilman Chris Jones, Councilwoman Milly Richardson, Councilman Terry McGrady, Councilman Mike Parlier and Town Manager Bryan Edwards.

Chair Smith called the Board County Commissioners to order.

Mayor Miller called the Sparta Town Council to order

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the agenda for this February 29, 2016, meeting. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Joint County/Town Meeting  
February 29, 2016  
Agenda

7:00pm	<u>Meeting Called to Order</u> <u>Motion on Agenda</u>
7:05pm	<u>Jeffrey Elmore, NC House Representative –District 94</u>
7:15pm	<u>Mike Pettyjohn, PE- Division 11 Engineer</u>
7:25pm	<u>NC Connect Bond</u>
7:35pm	<u>Sales Tax</u>
7:50pm	<u>Question and Answer Session</u>
8:00pm	<u>Other Business</u> <u>County/Town Adjourn</u>

Chair Smith welcomed North Carolina House Representative Jeffrey Elmore.

Representative Jeffrey Elmore talked about some new legislative information, what was being done new: adding money to the Highway fund to help fix roads, bonuses for teachers, state employees and highway patrol, help in rural economic development, and lowered gas tax. He also went over the Connect NC Bond and where the money would be in our area and how some of it is being used including \$309,000,000 will go towards water and sewer structures, Appalachian State will be receiving \$70,000,000 to build a new health science facility, Wilkes Community College will be receiving \$5,200,000 for renovations and new facilities, Stone Mountain will be making improvement to their visitor center with the \$1,000,000 that they receive. He then turned the floor to the Board asking if they had any questions for him.

Councilman Chris Jones asked if Representative Elmore could put something in the newspaper advertising about the NC Connect bond. Representative Elmore answered that he could not do that, but the Board definitely could if they wanted to.

Commissioner Irwin stated that Alleghany County is the only county without natural gas and asked if there was anything Representative Elmore could do to help us get natural gas. He informed Representative Elmore that it really hurts us when it comes to Economic Development.

Representative Elmore said he was not sure about the situation and that he would have to check.

Commissioner Evans asked about unemployment, what his ideas were about it and what we could do for the situation.

Representative Elmore explained that things are being looked at as far as unemployment it will take a while for things to change, but it is being looked at and evaluated.

Mayor John Miller said that the Medicaid issue is hurting our hospital.

Representative Elmore explained that the reimbursement rates are too low it's hurting many hospitals trying to make payment and we are not sure what or how we can handle it at this point.

Commissioner Leys asked if Representative Elmore might speak about the NC Connect Bond and how it will be funded. She also asked for clarification that it is revenue neutral and if he supported the bond himself.

Representative Elmore stated that he supports the bond because of that very reason, revenue neutral.

Commissioner Irwin explained that for economic development there is no benefit to come to a tier 1 county because there should be something the State could do like incentives to help bring companies into lower tiered counties.

Representative Elmore said he understand and agreed, but at the moment there is nothing like that in place.

Chair Smith thanked Representative Elmore for coming.

Representative Elmore thanked the Board for having him and for their service in local government.

Chair Smith Introduced Mr. Mike Pettyjohn and thanked him for coming.

Mike Pettyjohn, District 11 Division Engineer for North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), began by talking about all the projects going on in the county. He gave a projected finishing date for the Highway 21 project to be done by August of 2016. He also talked about beginning the work on the Sparta Parkway. He informed the Board and Council of the issues concerning the intersection at Highway 221 and Highway 113. He explained that many wrecks have occurred there so they added flashers to help catch the attention of drivers. He went on to discuss the project at the main intersection in town of Highway 21 and Highway 18 where they added new sidewalks and landscape to make Main Street pretty. He explained how pleased he was to be able to finish up the Farmers Fish Camp Bridge this past summer and told of 7 other bridges in the county that will be repaired or replaced. He then asked if anyone had any questions.

Commissioner Davis reiterated that the flashers have been a real help to that intersection at Highway 221 and 113.

Councilman Jones said he was glad to hear that our Alleghany DOT facility will be staying here in the county when the Sparta Parkway is completed, since it will run through their current facility.

Mike Pettyjohn said absolutely NCDOT is going to keep it in the county. He explained they did look at some alternative locations in Alleghany, but decided to use what they have and just work around it.

Councilman Jones said he knew that there were some merchants worried about interruptions of business while Main Street is being worked on and asked how that would be prevented.

Mike Pettyjohn said they would definitely try to maintain the business and the accesses to the buildings as much as possible.

Commissioner Leys said the Board would like to thank you for all the work you have done in our county.

Commissioner Evans inquired about a recent fatality at the intersection of Highway 18 and the Sparta Parkway, is there anything that has been talked about to be done for that area.

Mike Pettyjohn said not that he knew of, but there is always an investigation when any fatality occurs across the state so there may, but not yet to my knowledge.

Chair Smith thanked Mike Pettyjohn.

Chair Smith began the discussion of the NC Connect Bond.

County Manager Don Adams explained the paper given to them that explained very specifically what each amount of money was for. He also discussed the information when Wilkes Community College (WCC) came. He stated if this is passes we will also need to look at the roof at WCC for replacement.

Commissioner Leys asked what about the water and sewer money mentioned by Representative Elmore.

Town Manager Bryan Edwards said yes he thought this would help most of all.

Councilman Brady said he thought it would be great to have the paper, which was provided to them all that broke down what the money was for, as well as a good explanation of the Bond.

County Manager Don Adams said the water and sewer would be great for our county and it might be the best part of the Bond.

Councilman Jones said he thought with both governments' support this should be in the paper to help promote.

County Manager Don Adams explained it is important for us to understand the rules of the water and sewer grants, but it could also help the County with economic development.

Town Manager Bryan Edwards stated he was thinking the sewer and water would need to be replaced down Main Street at the same time that the road is being fixed.

Representative Elmore said he agreed it would help cut cost if you can do this at the same time, but also agreed the County couldn't do it on their own.

Chair Smith moved forward to discuss the one-quarter cent (1/4¢) sales tax.

County Manager Don Adams went over what the one-quarter cent (1/4¢) sale tax is and why we need to vote for the sales tax. Then he went over the ads that have been appearing in the Alleghany News in support of the sales tax. He also explains that the sales tax doesn't apply to gas, groceries, or prescription drugs, and it would generate \$175,000 a year. He explained that the County currently only has 2 towers causing lots of "dead zones" so the County will need 2-4 more towers to help the emergency communication in the county.

Commissioner Irwin said that all the Commissioners have talked to numerous groups trying to push it forward.

Commissioner Leys wanted to clarify that part of the improvements are mandated, and we will have to pay for some of it no matter what, beginning later this year.

County Manager Don Adams agreed. He said we will need to get things done no matter what, but hopefully we will be able to use E911 grant money to cover most of the mandated portion.

Commissioner Leys said it was nice to see the Town Council, and encouraged the community to vote.

Commissioner Irwin thanked the Town Council for being here, and stated he was looking forward to the streetscape getting done.

Commissioner Evans thanked Representative Elmore for coming and the Town for being present.

Commissioner Davis thanked the Town and Jeffry Elmore for being here.

Councilman Parlier thanked Representative Elmore for coming.

Councilman McGrady thanked County for having the Council and apologized for being quite, but said he is still learning.

Councilman Jones also thanked Representative Elmore for being here.

Councilwoman Richardson thanked the Board of Commissioners for a good close working relationship and said it is always a pleasure. She also thanked Representative Elmore for coming.

Councilman Brady informed the Board that at an Arts Council meeting they were discussing economic development and the top 3 things to bring and keep people in the area were: 1) schools 2) things to do and 3) hospitals. He explained that there are lots of things for people to do in this area and wanted that to be advertised. He also thanked Representative Elmore and the Board of Commissioners for allowing them to be here. He then exclaimed that this meeting had been great.

Mayor John Miller encouraged people to go vote early.

Being no further business, Commissioner Evans made a motion to adjourn the Board of Commissioners meeting at 8:22pm, Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Councilman Jones moved to adjourn the Town of Sparta meeting at 8:22pm, Councilwoman Richardson seconded Vote 5:0

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Karen Evans  
Clerk to the Board

Tom Smith  
Chair

Minutes Prepared By:

Lauren Linker  
Administrative Assistant