

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 17, 2014, at 10:00am in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chairman Larry Cox, Vice-Chair Tom Smith, Commissioner Larry Davis, Commissioner John Goudreau, Commissioner Karen Leys, County Manager Don Adams and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans. County Attorney Donna Shumate was absent.

Chair Cox called the meeting to order, led the Pledge of Allegiance and a silent prayer.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the agenda for this March 17, 2014, meeting. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

AGENDA
Monday, March 17, 2014
10:00 AM

- 10:00 Meeting Called To Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Silent Prayer
Motion on Agenda for March 17, 2014, Meeting
- 10:05 A. Rita Miller - Tax Administrator
1. February Releases and Refunds - Standard release and refund of both automobile and real property taxes due to reasons listed on report. Actions Requested – Vote on releases and refunds.
 2. February Collections Report - Monthly 2014 collection rates through February as compared to 2013 monthly collection rates. No action requested.
 3. Enforced Collections Report – Summarizes enforced collections for the month of February 2014. No action requested.
 4. Payment Agreement Report - List of people with payment agreements who did not make payments. No action requested.
- 10:15 B. Joy Hines – Finance Officer
RE: Audit Contract for 2014/15 with Martin Starnes & Associates. The proposed contract is \$40,975, which is \$1,000 more than last year.
Action Requested – Vote on the proposed audit contract.
- 10:20 C. John Blevins – Social Services Director
1. Request for a replacement vehicle. Action Requested— Vote on the request.
 2. Child Daycare Budget Amendment – General Fund Budget Amendment #13 in the amount of \$63,308 for additional child daycare monies. No county funds involved. Action Requested— Vote on General Fund Budget Amendment #13.
- 10:35 D. Susan Miles – Sparta Revitalization Chair
RE: Sparta Revitalization Committee (SRC) lights & decorations donation request. The SRC is requesting a \$2,700 donation from the County to match the Town of Sparta's \$2,783.28 contribution. Action Requested – Vote on the request.
- 10:45 E. Building Inspections Annual Report
- 10:55 F. Council on Aging Annual Report
- 11:05 G. Alleghany Group Homes Annual Report
- 11:15 H. Sheriff David Edwards (moved to beginning of meeting)
RE: Resources needed to provide security at the Courthouse. Enclosed in packets are three letters. 1. Letter from Judge Gregory requesting security. 2. Letter from the County Manager requesting information from the Sheriff. 3. Letter from Sheriff identifying the resources needed to provide Courthouse security. Action Requested – Decide what financial resources will be budgeted to provide Courthouse security.
- 11:30 I. General Business
1. Southern Belles N-side Out
Southern Belles N-side Out is requesting that the current lease at 136 North Main Street be terminated effective at the end of February 2014. They are also

requesting that the lease payments due March 1, April 1, May 1 and June 1 be waived due to the misunderstanding on what type of lease that was signed.

Action Requested – Vote on the request.

2. Health Insurance Renewal Application with Blue Cross/Blue Shield

The renewal quote proposes an increase of 6.16% for FY 2014/15.

Action Requested – Vote on proposed renewal application.

J. Commissioner Comments

K. Public Comments—30 minutes

L. Adjourn

Sheriff Edwards came before the Board to discuss the letter from Judge Gregory regarding Courthouse security. He talked about the Courthouse security meetings.

Commissioner Davis asked about needing two vehicles for deputies that will stay at the Courthouse. Sheriff Edwards explained that when they aren't working at the Courthouse they will be working throughout the county.

Commissioner Smith talked about some different possibilities if this is going to be their sole job. The Sheriff stated that they will be regular deputies.

The Sheriff stated he tried to get part-time people but the Judge wants full-time security. He discussed these will be full time deputies. Commissioner Smith talked about hiring one person. The Sheriff said that isn't enough because that would take away from the other deputies' duties.

Commissioner Leys said she is taking this very seriously and the request is right before an order, April 1 deadline, and she doesn't understand the need for vehicles. The Sheriff explained that he will be using them elsewhere. Commissioner Leys asked can we not use 3 part-time people that would more than cover the order. Sheriff Edwards asked where you are going to find 3 part-time people. They discussed these people have to have BLET classes and everything. Commissioner Leys stated the need for 1.2 people according to her figures. The Sheriff stated that the remainder time will be used for the Sheriff's Department. They talked about being most cost efficient, requirement to have sworn law enforcement officers who are hard to find, and discussed the hours are 8:00am-5:00pm.

Chair Cox mentioned to the Board that we do have another meeting this meeting this month.

Commissioner Smith asked about the Courthouse security board would allow Commissioner Davis, the Sheriff, the County Manager and Mrs. Gambill to explore these other options. Sheriff Edwards said he is open to anything.

Commissioner Leys and Chair Cox talked about the other meeting on March 31.

Chair Cox and the Sheriff talked about needing 1.5 positions, BLET takes about 5 months and do the part-time portion.

Commissioner Leys and Sheriff Edwards talked about how no part time people are used as deputies. They discussed Superior Court is covered in overtime and is currently 4 weeks. The Sheriff provided the example of how this morning he is using 3 different deputies at Superior Court.

Chair Cox and Sheriff Edwards talked about there are 9 deputies currently.

County Manager explained his research confirms the need for a sworn law enforcement officer. He reviewed how he came up with needing 1.4-1.5 positions. The County Manager and the Sheriff talked about these new deputy positions will be 12 hours.

County Manager talked about the equipment and other needed items that will allow the flexibility of using any deputies anywhere. He further talked about how the less expensive option is covering 8:00am-5:00pm and the additional person to cover that person, which will only be covering the Courthouse. He said the discussion is covering the Courthouse only or having fully equipped people to rotate out. He reiterated the options before the board.

Commissioner Goudreau stated for everyone to keep in mind one role of the county government is to protect the citizens. He further stated doing it with part-time staff will take away

from the other deputies' duties. He said he doesn't want to spend the money but can look at other places to get the money.

Chair Cox and the Sheriff talked about when the Clerk of Court holds court and no one else is there. They further talked about how the door entrances will be locked at all times.

Commissioner Davis and the Sheriff talked about moving one person downstairs when there is court downstairs.

Commissioner Leys talked about she is serious about filling the judge's request, and it is only to cover the front door but she is only trying to save money.

Commissioner Goudreau talked about the point is how to cover the front door without jeopardizing the security.

Chair Cox and Sheriff Edwards continued to talk about the other entrances/doors.

Commissioner Smith and the Sheriff talked about there are panic buttons, and some security measures have been taken. Commissioner Smith stated the need to take a look at all of these options to solve our problems.

Chair Cox and the Sheriff talked about Alleghany is the only county in the 23rd court district that doesn't have full-time security.

County Manager talked about a survey conducted with responses from 26 counties that shows 5 counties don't have full-time courthouse security including Surry, which isn't in the 23rd district. He said he plans to sit down with the Sheriff, Commissioner Davis and whoever else and describe the two budgets that he would put together to bring back. He quickly stated that the difference is around \$20,000 between two full-time people and 1 full-time person/1 part-time person then the vehicles. He asked does the ability to integrate justify the additional costs.

Sheriff Edwards thanked everyone.

County Manager Don Adams talked about ways to continue. The Board discussed recessing at the end of this meeting until 6:00pm on March 31 for further discussions.

Rita Miller, Tax Administrator, presented the February auto releases.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the February auto releases. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Rita Miller presented the February auto refunds.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the February auto refunds. Commissioner Leys seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Rita Miller presented the February auto refunds under the vehicle tax system (VTS).

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the VTS February auto refunds. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Rita Miller presented the February real property releases.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the February real property releases. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Rita Miller presented the February real property refunds.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the February real property refunds. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Rita Miller presented the February 2014 collections' report, the enforced collection report

Chair Cox and Rita Miller discussed about the tax collection rate was 76.59% last year and now is 99.51% because of the new tax/tag law.

Rita Miller presented the payment agreement report. She updated the Board that they are changing companies for the ability to accept credit/debit cards and will be starting to collect payments online.

Rita Miller and Commissioner Davis talked about the enforced payment agreement and what happens when people miss payments.

Commissioner Leys and Rita Miller talked about the amount of debt setoff monies and have already received more in March.

Joy Hines, Finance Officer, presented the audit contract for FY 2013/14 audit with Martin Starnes and Associates. She reviewed the costs; \$40,975, which is \$1,000 more than last year.

Commissioner Leys and Joy Hines discussed how long we have been with them and looking to go out to bid before the next one.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the contract. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

John Blevins, Social Services Director, provided additional information to the Board regarding a vehicle request. He explained that their current vehicle with over 297,000 miles has failed; current vehicles at Social Services are a 2003 Chevrolet Cavalier, with almost 140,000 miles, and a 1996 Oldsmobile that is not usable for trips outside of the county. He further explained that Social Services now provides supervised visitation for foster children, transportation by an employee of a minimum of 7 children per week traveling over 650 miles, other vehicles are suitable for car seats, currently using the County Administration Malibu when it is available which has 197,000 miles, and State mandated visits that must be performed each month throughout the state. He talked about the need for two vehicles being the current need and that he is putting in the budget an all-wheel drive vehicle due to mud because of home visits. He explained that he found used vans in the \$14,000 range with approximately 50,000 miles, and a new van purchased through State contract would run \$22,002. He talked about the reimbursement rate with the State, and at the current rate the county cost for a new van would be \$8,779.

Commissioner Davis and John Blevins talked about there is warranty on a new one and the used one would not have a warranty.

Commissioner Smith and John Blevins talked about the majority of maintenance is done by County personnel.

Commissioner Leys explained this issue was discussed at the Department of Social Services (DSS) meeting. She read some of the comments the DSS Board made at that meeting regarding this vehicle need. She stated it will cost more to use Alleghany in Motion, which wouldn't be cost effective.

County Manager explained that currently there is a particular issue that requires out of state travel and he has only found two other vehicles that could make that kind of trip. He further explained that there will be more conversations during budget time about other vehicles.

Chair Cox and County Manager talked about the 297,000 miles van will be sold as surplus.

Commissioner Leys and John Blevins talked about the purchase price does not include the tax. Clerk to the Board Karen Evans stated the tax is 3% of the purchase price.

Chair Cox and John Blevins talked about how their van broke down on the side of the road.

Commissioner Leys provided the total amount counting the tax.

Commissioner Davis talked about the condition of Social Services' vehicles.

Commissioner Goudreau talked about bending over backwards to meet this request but wouldn't for the Sheriff.

Commissioner Leys said she takes personal offense at that.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the purchase of a new van at a cost of \$22,662.06. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

John Blevins talked about the DSS budget amendment for additional daycare monies, which has no county monies involved. He explained this provides daycare monies for the children and is pass-through monies.

Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve General Fund Budget Amendment #13 in the amount of \$63,308. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Susan Miles, President of the Sparta Revitalization Committee, came before the Board to requesting funding for some banners and decorations on Main Street. She explained some of the things that they are involved with; construction of the Welcome to Sparta signs, planting of flowers/shrubs, façade grants, County seal on the Courthouse, hosting of parades, assistance with activities and promotions of Main Street for the Christmas season decorations. She said they are requesting \$2,700 to order some decorations and maybe be a recurring donation for over 3-5 years. She further said that the Town has provided \$2,783.

Commissioner Smith, Susan Miles and Barbara Lucier talked about the current decorations are 11-12 years old. Susan Miles explained they have gone through the existing decorations to replace the bulbs trying to make them last and there are 37 locations for decorations and they don't want to add any more.

Chair Cox asked could this be part of the budget process. Susan Miles said they are asking for \$2,700 now and the remaining could be part of the budget process. She talked about trying to get these decorations to make a statement and look better.

Commissioner Davis asked if the \$2,783 from the Town was a one time expense. Susan Miles said she thinks they will provide more at a later time.

Commissioner Smith and Susan Miles talked about today's request is \$2,700.

Chair Cox reiterated that the request is for \$2,700 for the Sparta Revitalization Committee to be spent on Christmas decorations. Susan Miles explained the snowflake is a lot more noticeable because of the lights.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve \$2,700 for Sparta Revitalization Committee to be spent on Christmas decorations. Commissioner Leys seconded the motion.

Commissioner Goudreau talked about previous conversations in this meeting about being good stewards of County dollars but now we are buying decorations for the Town of Sparta.

Chair Cox said he thinks it should be part of the budget process.

The Board voted on motion on floor. Vote 3:2 (John Goudreau, Larry Cox).

Chair Cox declared a brief recess at 11:10am.

Randy Blankenship, Chief Building Inspector, presented the annual report for the Building Inspections. He talked about the construction trend and the secondary housing market is still slow.

Commissioner Leys said thank you for your work.

The County Manager asked Randy Blankenship to talk about Travis Dalton's certifications.

Randy Blankenship explained that Travis Dalton has all of his level 2 certifications and is working on his level 3.

Commissioner Smith and Randy Blankenship talked about that is the last level, and the schools require inspections annually that must be completed by a level 3 person.

Randy Blankenship talked about smaller areas have multiple trades' inspectors and larger areas are 2 trades or single trades.

Chair Cox and Randy Blankenship talked about industry takes a level 2 or 3 depending upon the building.

Karon Edwards, Council on Aging Director, presented their annual report. She reviewed their annual statistics including the home delivered meals, congregate meals, in-home aide programs activities and number of clients, consumer directed service, the NC PILOT program and Alleghany is

the only county in our area. She continued reviewing their other programs and activities. She asked the Board to look over the annual report.

Commissioner Leys and Karon Edwards discussed the number of people they served last year. Commissioner Leys thanked Karon Edwards.

Chair Cox talked about Commissioner Smith is a volunteer and is on the board. He further talked about his mother started receiving meals on wheels and looks forward to the people who deliver her meals.

Commissioner Leys and Karon Edwards talked about the addition of porches and decks. Karon Edwards talked about how they also received some patio tables and chairs, and they are looking at covering the rear deck as well. Karon Edwards explained that they obtained a grant used for fundraising for this project.

Becky Miller, Alleghany Group Homes Director, presented their annual report. She reviewed their activities and functions. She further reviewed the number of staff, number of clients, overrun, client payroll, and they utilize Alleghany in Motion for their transportation.

Chair Cox and Becky Miller talked about they are still working with the fiber and named other companies they work with.

Commissioner Leys talked about when you go in this building, these people are happy to be there, and how fortunate we are to have this type of facility.

County Manager Don Adams presented information from Southern Belle's N-Side Out. He talked about this is regarding a lease with them at the old PO building next to the library. He explained they moved out of the facility at the end of February and are now operating on Main Street. He said apparently there is some confusion about the type of lease they signed; month-to-month or a year. He read a letter from Janet Crouse asking that the lease be terminated at the end of February and the lease payments for March, April, May, June be waived due to the misunderstanding of what type of lease that they signed. He explained that at this point there is a current lease in place with payments due monthly.

Commissioner Smith asked what has been paid up to this point. County Manager stated that they have paid through the end of February. They talked about the library board and the County has put money into the building. Commissioner Smith said he remembers the initial conversation was month-to-month but it was changed.

Chair Cox and County Manager talked about the money received versus the amount spent is about the same.

Commissioner Leys asked why there was a misunderstanding, and is the lease is clear.

County Manager Don Adams explained that the Crouse's were pushing to get into the building by July 1 and the only way that could occur was to approve a month-to-month until the Board could meet and then it was a year lease. He talked about how that didn't occur because and they requested the first payment be forgiven due to the amount of work they did. He said he sent home a copy of the lease with them. He stated that they are saying they misunderstood.

Commissioner Leys talked about the County Attorney isn't here. She asked does the County Manager know her opinion on this.

County Manager explained he did have conversation and referenced it in his letter. He read a portion of his letter that was written. He reviewed his last conversation. He talked about the choices today are either go with the request and terminate the payments or don't terminate and go forward with the County Attorney.

Commissioner Davis talked about \$2,100 is what is owed if the lease continues.

Chair Cox said he thinks we need to be as supportive as possible of a local business.

Commissioner Leys and County Manager talked about language in the lease modification and the lease. She said it is confusing to her.

County Manager said this lease was previously brought before this Board and approved by the County Attorney.

Commissioner Leys said the County isn't out any cash for renting the building; the building is fixed up and cleaned up.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to release the rent for March, April, May, June and terminating the lease. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

County Manager Don Adams presented the health insurance renewal at 6.16%. He said he isn't proposing making any changes at this time. He reminded everyone of the \$68,000 credit received. He reviewed the items in the packets. He explained the actual costs to the General Fund today. He stated that his request is to approve this and lock in the rates at this time. He reviewed the numbers about the actual costs to the General Fund.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the recommendation to renew the health insurance application with Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Leys thanked the county employees for their work on the wellness program.

The Board voted on the motion on the floor. Vote 5:0.

County Manager Don Adams talked about how Legal Aid of North Carolina will be back on March 20 at the County Administration Building and March 22 at the Alleghany Memorial Hospital to assist people signing up for the Affordable Care Act. He talked about the need to call 1-855-733-3711 to sign up for the Affordable Care Act.

County Manager Don Adams said he wants to be clear about his directions for the next meeting; get with the Sheriff, Commissioner Davis and Commissioner Leys to meet and review having Courthouse security alone or the Sheriff's view of looking at a broader scope of working 12-hour shifts and rotating in with the other deputies with the same equipment as other deputies. He quickly reviewed several different scenarios. He talked about getting this information and bringing it back to the board on the 31st then bringing the actual budget amendment to the April 7 meeting.

Commissioner Leys mentioned that the local Girl Scouts, being lead by Dr. Flowers and her staff, are going to do a project collecting money for the animal shelter to purchase dog food and cat food. She stated to please support the Girl Scouts.

Chair Cox opened the floor for public comments.

Harry Jones asked has there been any communications about combining the Sparta Police Department and Alleghany County Sheriff's Department. He listed out reasons why it is more beneficial. He said he is looking at the long term future of our county.

Chair Cox asked for additional public comments. None were received. He closed that portion of the meeting.

Being no further business, Commissioner Leys made a motion to recess this meeting at 12:10pm until 6pm on March 31. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Larry Cox
Chairman