

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, May 7, 2012, at 6:30pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chair Ken Richardson, Vice-Chair Tom Smith, Commissioner Larry Cox, Commissioner John Goudreau, Commissioner Steve Roten, County Attorney Donna Shumate, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans.

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

Commissioner Cox made a motion to approve the agenda for this May 7, 2012, meeting. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

AGENDA
Monday, May 7, 2012
6:30 PM

- 6:30 Meeting Called To Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Silent Prayer
Motion on Agenda for May 7, 2012, meeting
Motion on Minutes for April 16 and April 23, 2012, meetings
- 6:35 A. Public Comments—30 minutes
B. Glade Creek Volunteer Fire Department Annual Report
C. General Business
1. Budget Amendment—Tax Office
2. Community Transportation Plan Maps Adoption
3. Farmers Market Manager/Update
4. Agriculture Fair
5. Sheriff Department Request
6. 2012/13 Budget Meetings Schedule
D. Commissioner Business
1. Alleghany Memorial Hospital—Commissioner Cox
E. Closed Session—NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3)—legal
NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (4)—economic development
F. Adjourn

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the minutes for the April 16 and April 23, 2012, meetings. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Chair Richardson opened the public comments' portion of the meeting and asked for public comments.

Dennis Smith talked about at the last meeting, three Commissioners voted against House Concurrent Resolution 107. He read House Concurrent Resolution 107. He talked about why Commissioner Smith, Commissioner Cox and Chair Richardson didn't individually support the House Concurrent Resolution 107 and explained each individual response. He talked about the Hospital's first ad and read a portion of the ad. He explained that he thought people could submit questions prior to the meeting in order to allow time for Hospital staff time to research the answers. He talked about his understanding of how the meeting could work and that didn't happen. He explained how the meeting happened including multiple individuals gave testimonials about why we need the Hospital, which went on for most of the night. He further explained that it seemed like the list of names was front loaded with people in support of the Hospital and who were not going to ask questions but rather do whatever it takes to keep the Hospital. He said as a result he left the meeting with more questions than before. He talked about the ad said the meeting would be a question/answer session but what we got was an effort to intimidate people who had questions about how we got to this point. He said that he would guess that most people want the Hospital to do well. He further said that the question is how to best achieve that goal. He explained that he doesn't understand why it was advertised to submit questions by email then the questions didn't get answered. He further explained that the ad didn't say people had to be in attendance to get the questions answered. He said that the fact that these questions were ignored and the Hospital is being less than transparent makes one wonder why. He talked about before the Alleghany Board of Commissioners turn over money, wouldn't it be prudent to have a complete understanding of the Hospital's financial and contractual positions. He read a prayer offered in the United States Senate.

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

David Higgins, Chief of Glade Creek Volunteer Fire Department, came before the Board to present their annual report. He reviewed their current roster, trucks, fundraisers, special events, community services, training and their 2011 capital grant. He explained the equipment that they purchased and requested that the capital portion be kept at \$15,000 rather than \$13,500. He talked about their new tanker fire truck, reasons for the new tanker because trying to get to a 7 rating for insurance purposes, 2012 capital grant and their 2012/13 budget. He talked about how the county has the best fire departments anywhere. He further talked about what it takes to be a firefighter. He asked the Commissioners to not raise taxes because it hurts them on their fundraisers. He talked about not having prayer in the County Commissioners meetings and if someone doesn't like it, they can get up and walk out. He explained that there comes a time when you can't let one or two rule. He said that he is asking the Commissioners tonight to hold their money where it is. He thanked Karen Evans for her work with the fire departments. He also thanked the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Goudreau stated his appreciation for the firefighters.

County Manager Don Adams presented budget amendment General Fund #25 in the amount of \$1,410. He explained that this is for supplies and auto expenses that the Board previously approved for the Tax Office.

Commissioner Roten made a motion to approve budget amendment General Fund #25 in the amount of \$1,410. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

County Manager Don Adams presented a resolution adopting the Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Alleghany County, NC. He read the last paragraph of the resolution. He reminded the Board that they are voting on the maps in the packets. He stated that the required public hearing was held at the joint meeting with the Town.

Commissioner Roten made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

County Manager Don Adams informed the Board about the Farmers Market manager/update. He explained the Farmers Market just hired a new manager, Cynthia Grant, who will be coordinating the day-to-day management activities, creating a broader customer base and implementing an educational component that will encourage eating local and eating healthy. He further explained that she will be working with several organizations about promoting fresh and healthy foods. He reminded everyone that the Health Department gave a \$20,000 grant to study the Farmers Market and about the selection process of Crouse Park. He talked about the money for a manager is included in the \$20,000. He further talked about the job description included in the packets as written by the Extension Service. He explained the proposed contract and why the County cannot hire contract people. He talked about the need to find another not-for profit or this person will be a temporary, part-time employee. He reviewed the budget including \$6,000 has been budgeted for the Farmers Market manager; he is requesting to move \$6,000 to part-time salaries and this will be no additional financial costs to the county. He reiterated that the request is to temporarily put Cynthia Grant on as a part-time employee as the Farmers Market manager.

Chair Richardson asked is this because they don't have a 501 (c) 3. County Manager Don Adams said yes because if they did he would recommend providing the funding to them. The County Manager explained that the Extension Service would have to turn in a timesheet for Cynthia Grant and keep up with her hours because she cannot work more than 40 hours per week and once the money is spent, the position is terminated.

Commissioner Smith asked are the auditors fine with this. County Manager Don Adams stated that the auditors are fine; it's the IRS that is dictating these reasons.

The County Manager talked about there is some potential liability in workers comp but the \$6,000 covers all other expenses. He explained the difference between a contract person and an employee.

Commissioner Goudreau asked about federal unemployment tax. County Manager Don Adams talked about making it clear that this is a temporary position. They talked about the amounts of unemployment insurance paid are based on actual claims.

Commissioner Roten and County Manager Don Adams talked about the number of hours per week to qualify for benefits including retirement and health insurance being 1,000 hours per year for retirement and a set time of 30 hours per week for health insurance. The County Manager explained that the hours will be set by and she is working at the direction of the Extension Service and for the Farmers Market.

Commissioner Cox asked is there 40 hours a week worth of work. County Manager Don Adams answered they didn't think she will come anywhere near 40 hours per week but explained the purpose of talking about overtime and how they would burn through the monies if overtime comes into the picture.

Commissioner Cox asked if this is for one season. County Manager Don Adams said yes because if the Health Department comes back with another grant then we can tell them that we will pass it along to the 501 (c) 3.

Commissioner Cox said it was his understanding that they had a 501 (c) 3. County Attorney Donna Shumate stated that application has been made and doesn't know how long it will take.

Chair Richardson made a motion to approve the request of a temporary employee. Commissioner Roten seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

County Manager Don Adams updated the Board and the general public about the agriculture fair. He explained the history of the fair with Extension Service and people volunteering to help. He further explained that several things have come up and not sure if there is going to be a fair this year. He talked about the volunteer base is gone, county staff would be who is working the fair, Extension Service tried to get the volunteer interest back but the interest was on the agriculture side and lacking the volunteer base to put on the major activities/events. He further talked about paying premiums for 1st, 2nd, 3rd places and having to raise \$5,000 for that on the agriculture side. He talked about the second major issue is the carnival gave them a good deal, they have chosen not to come back, when looking at other carnivals you have to guarantee more, there is nobody that can sign on the line for the carnival. He explained that there is a very minimal amount of money in bank for the fair of less than \$1,000. He reviewed that there is no money there for a carnival, have a volunteer base for the agriculture part, still struggling to come up with the premiums, may be able to fundraise \$2,500. He talked about the fair committee had a meeting last Monday and at that meeting it came down to who was there which was Extension staff with a couple others. He said that he is just trying to inform the public that it is very slim to have a carnival, major event, and the committee is still trying to have the agriculture fair.

Chair Richardson said that even though it was an Alleghany County Fair, 98% was volunteers. County Manager Don Adams agreed and said that it isn't an Alleghany County employee driven fair.

County Manager Don Adams submitted a letter from Sheriff Edwards about a vehicle request. He talked about the Sheriff requested a new vehicle to replace a 2004 Ford Explorer. He reminded everyone about the 911 funding; phone bills have a 70¢ charge that goes to operate the 911 system. He explained the rules about using these funds including a couple of years ago the State Legislators changed what the money could be spent on and counties who had fund balances could use up to 50% of the fund balance on any public safety purpose with two years to spend the money. He said that the two years are up on June 30, 2012. He explained that a good portion of those funds went to the Safety Training Facility. He provided examples of other items the funds were used for; roof at the Law Enforcement Center, capital grant match for the fire departments/rescue squad up to \$15,000 each annually. He talked about this year's budget had \$90,000 for the fire departments/rescue squad capital requests, funding for reprogramming of radios and at Dispatch, and around \$17,000 to buy the equipment for a morgue at the Hospital. He further talked about all of these monies must be spent by the end of the fiscal year. He stated that approximately \$17,366 is left that can be spent for any safety need. He explained that Sheriff Edwards is requesting that the \$17,366 remaining be applied towards the new vehicle and he will use monies from the drug fund as a match to fund this vehicle request. He talked about more conversations will need to occur about the morgue with one possibility of the Commissioners could attach it as a stipulation, if funding is provided, to build out the morgue in the basement.

Chair Richardson asked what is needed from the Commissioners. County Manager Don Adams answered to reallocate the money from the morgue to the vehicle.

Commissioner Roten asked is that all of the money. County Manager Don Adams said there is about \$5,000 left. Commissioner Roten said so there is enough for Glade Creek fire department's request of \$1,500. County Manager Don Adams explained that he would look at all 5 fire departments if the Board is going in that direction.

Commissioner Goudreau made a motion to proceed with reallocating the funds for the vehicle. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

County Manager Don Adams talked to the Board about the FY 2012/13 budget meeting schedule. He further talked about the original budget schedule had June 1 for the County Manager submitting the budget. He talked about getting a meeting time set up on June 1. He further talked about several organizations will come before the Board and the need to set up those meeting dates.

The Board talked about times on June 1. They decided on 10:00am.

County Manager Don Adams talked about how many other meetings could be needed and explained the purposes.

The Board talked about dates/times for additional budget meetings. They decided on June 7 at 6:30pm and June 8 at 10:00am.

County Manager Don Adams talked about he wanted to let the Board know that the Solid Waste Management Plan must be updated every 3 years and a public hearing must be held. He explained what the plan is and summarized the operations at the Transfer Facility. He further explained that he would like to schedule a public hearing for at the June 4 meeting.

Chair Richardson asked if anyone has any problems with that. No one spoke.

Commissioner Cox talked about he requested this time to generate discussions among the Board. He further talked about the Commissioners have heard what has been said at the Commissioners' meetings and the public forum. He said that people are coming talking to him about the Hospital. He summarized comments that he is hearing; a lot of concern about taxes, don't want to see the Hospital close. He listed out his thoughts including there are more questions than answers at this point, many people make assumptions about what the County Commissioners are going to do, and he doesn't know if the Commissioners are going to do anything. He explained that this takes time and serious deliberations. He further explained that there are other needs in our county including the situation with New River, schools, health care with the Health Department, insurance for employees. He said that he feels the need for more information and more transparency. He further said that he needs to know what measures and actions the Hospital has taken to reduce the flow of red ink including things that have been implemented to balance the budget, how many positions have been eliminated and how much savings did this bring about. He talked about the issue of salaries has gotten out there, and it is fair to ask about reduction of salaries to help balance the budget. He said that it is true that the Hospital isn't a regular business but provided examples of groups that aren't regular businesses including the schools and county government where the budget must still be balanced. He talked about the transfer of the CAP program, going to a Critical Access Hospital, elimination of OB services. He stated that Allegheny Memorial Hospital applied for funds from Golden Leaf and if they get it will they still need taxpayers' money. He provided an example of New River Service Authority's problems including the need for accountability and transparency. He said that if there is an appropriation of funds there must be serious strings attached. He provided some examples; transparency, would a Commissioner be on the board, periodic detailed reports of financial health. He talked about members of the Hospital's board said they would lose control if a merger occurred. He stated that local control will change if taxpayers' funds are allocated. He said that he cares about our friends and neighbors who work at the Hospital; no one he knows wants the Hospital to fail. He stated that the question becomes how do we pull together to make this work.

Chair Richardson talked about he was pleased that all 5 Commissioners were at the forum. He said that people asked what he got out of the forum. He further said that he was impressed with the support that was offered but he came away with changes had to be made and confidence had been lost. He talked about the necessity of keeping the Hospital. He said we use the medical community to attract people to Allegheny County. He talked about there must be more discussions. He said that the forum was a big step forward. He stated that they have hired a new CEO, and he looks forward to hearing what he has to say. He further stated that Commissioner Cox started the ball rolling and now it is up to the Commissioners to talk about this. He said that he doesn't see us playing a major role but playing a role in being able to keep the Hospital. He reminded everyone that this Board cannot obligate a future board and can only look at one year at a time.

Commissioner Smith said that he knows that there were a lot of questions about the Hospital and no one wants the Hospital to close. He talked about having lots of questions. He said it wouldn't be a bad idea to submit questions in writing to get answers back in writing. He talked about getting the questions answered before the Board moves forward.

Commissioner Cox agreed.

Chair Richardson talked about submitting a list to the County Manager or having a meeting with the Hospital.

Commissioner Smith said he agrees with either suggestion to get our answers.

Commissioner Goudreau stated that the public has a lot of questions that haven't been addressed by the Hospital. He said that maybe with the new CEO that those questions will be answered. He further said that no one wants to see the Hospital close. He talked about trying to do everything the Board can to

see the Hospital succeed but just because pouring money into the Hospital doesn't mean it will succeed. He said that it will take a new business plan and even though they say they aren't a business; they still have to balance the books. He stated that he supports submitting questions in a workshop.

Chair Richardson talked about if each one of the Commissioners submits questions then have a workshop with the Hospital to answer the questions. County Manager Don Adams reiterated each Commissioner to submit questions to Karen Evans then he will contact the Hospital to set up the meeting. He asked how the Board would want to have the meeting and submitting the questions. Chair Richardson and County Manager Don Adams talked about ways to continue with the questions being submitted. Chair Richardson asked each Commissioner would they meet with the County Manager. County Manager Don Adams talked about submitting the questions then meeting with the Commissioners. The Board talked about setting up a timeline for this including having the questions in by Friday of this week then meeting with the County Manager.

Commissioner Cox said the meeting will be open to the public with minutes kept. County Manager Don Adams agreed and reviewed the workshop rules of this will be a special meeting with no public comments because public comments are at the two regular meetings each month. The County Manager asked about this being an interaction with the Hospital people and the Board of Commissioners or open forum. Commissioner Cox answered conversation with the Board. County Manager Don Adams reiterated that he wants to make the public understand that this is between the Hospital and the Commissioners.

Commissioner Smith said he would like for these questions to be public documents, too. County Manager Don Adams stated that if the public will give him time, we will have a list by Monday/Tuesday.

Commissioner Cox said that a forum was a good start but it needs to continue.

Chair Richardson talked about having questions to Don Adams by Friday then each Commissioner spending time with the County Manager going over the questions. He further talked about after that talking to the Hospital about scheduling a workshop as soon as possible.

County Manager Don Adams asked about scheduling the meeting. The Board talked about dates/times for the Alleghany Memorial Hospital meeting. They talked about May 14, May 16 and May 17 at 6:30pm.

Commissioner Cox made a motion to enter into closed session at 8:07pm under NCGS 143.318.11 (a) (3)—legal and (a) (4)—economic development. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Commissioner Cox made a motion to adjourn closed session at 9:02pm and reconvene the regular meeting. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Chair Richardson stated that no decisions were made during closed session.

Commissioner Cox made a motion to enter into a legal agreement between Alleghany County, Ashe County, Avery County, Watauga County, and Wilkes County dealing with a Whitaker Medical legal dispute. Commissioner Goudreau seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Being no further business, Commissioner Goudreau made a motion to adjourn at 9:05pm. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Ken Richardson
Chairman