



The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, April 1st, at 6:30 pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chair Mark Evans, Commissioner Larry Prince, Commissioner Bill Osborne, Commissioner Bobby Irwin, Commissioner John Irwin, County Manager Mike James, and County Attorney Donna Shumate.

Commissioner Larry Prince made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner John Irwin seconded. Vote 5:0.

Commissioner John Irwin made a motion to approve the minutes from 3/18/19. Commissioner Bill Osborne seconded. Vote 5:0.

AGENDA

Monday, April 1, 2019

6:30 pm

- 6:30 Meeting called to order
 - Pledge of Allegiance and invocation
 - Approval of agenda
 - Motion on minutes from 3/18/19 (pages 1-5)
- A. 6:35 **Chamber of Commerce Spotlight Business**
 - i. Save-A-Pet
- B. 6:45 **Public Comments/Agenda Items:** Citizens are encouraged to comment at this time on any item(s) specifically listed on this meeting's agenda. Guidelines for public comment are posted in the meeting room.
- C. 6:55 **Presentations to the Board**
- D. 7:30 **General Business**
 - i. Gould Killian contract for audit services (pages 6-27)
 - ii. Reimbursement Resolution for real property improvements loan (pages 28-29)
 - iii. Amended HVAC contract for services for BDC/Library (pages 30-32)
 - iv. Overview and general discussion of proposed fire tax (pages 33-43)
- E. 8:00 **Consent Agenda** (Board action requested)
 - i. Request for release of resident solid waste fee and refund of solid waste fee paid for 2018 (pages 44-47)
 - ii. General Fund budget amendment #31 in the amount of \$3,051 for insurance proceeds from 2 deer accidents and 2 not at fault accidents (page 48)
 - iii. General Fund budget amendment #32 in the amount of \$5,843 for required OPEB Health Care Plan report (page 49)
 - iv. General Fund budget amendment #33 in the amount of \$705 for Stop the Bleed donations (page 50)

- v. Transportation Fund budget amendment #4 in the amount of \$1,585 for insurance proceeds from vehicle accident (page 51)

F. 8:10 **Public Comments:** Citizens are encouraged to comment at this time on any item(s) requiring the attention of the Commissioners. Guidelines for public comment are posted in the meeting room.

G. 8:15 **County Manager Comments**

- i. Governor Cooper’s 2020-2021 budget proposal overview (pages 52-57)
- ii. Spectrum/Charter name change (page 58)
- iii. EMS Medicaid & debt setoff programs (page 59)
- iv. Alleghany County Detention Center semiannual inspection (pages 60-72)
- v. Update on Economic Development Agreement with Home Town Grocery (Grant’s Supermarket) (pages 73-76)
- vi. Joint meeting with Sparta Town Council 4/29

H. **County Commissioner Comments**

I. **Adjourn**

Chamber of Commerce Spotlight Business

Katee Hettleman highlighted new Chamber members.

Caleb Osborne introduced Jessica Cook with Save-A-Pet.

Jessica Cook gave local and national spay and neuter statistics. She explained that Save-A-Pet offers a free spay and neuter program with the animal shelter. Bark in the Park is June 8th from 2-6.

Public Comments/Agenda Items

No comment

Presentations to the Board

No presentations

General Business

Gould Killian contract for audit services

Commissioner John Irwin made a motion to approve the audit contracts.

Commissioner Larry Prince seconded. Vote 5:0.

Reimbursement Resolution for real property improvement loan

Commissioner John Irwin made a motion to approve the reimbursement resolution. Commissioner Larry Prince seconded. Vote 5:0.

Amended HVAC contract for services for BDC/Library

Commissioner Bobby Irwin made a motion to approve the amended contract.

Commissioner Bill Osborne seconded. Vote 5:0.

Fire tax discussion

County Manager Mike James explained the two different options outlined by General Statute for instituting a fire tax. He said his recommendation should the board decide to move forward with a fire tax is “County Fire Service Districts (G.S. Ch. 153A, Art. 16).”

County Manager Mike James explained the mapping and GIS requirements as well as preliminary estimated fire tax rates for Alleghany county.

County Manager Mike James said the soonest this fire tax could be imposed is July 1, 2020. He said HCCOG or any other mapping partner would take a few months to draw the new maps, have the maps out for display for 30 days then have a public hearing for each district so citizens can comment.

Commissioner Bill Osborne explained how the fire tax benefits fire departments when they are trying to secure a loan because it is guaranteed income.

Commissioner John Irwin explained the “fire tax” is also a Rescue Squad tax. He explained that since the hospital has changed hands, the Rescue Squad estimates a \$30,000 increase in materials because they aren’t being replenished by the hospital anymore.

Commissioner John Irwin said approximately \$.03 of property tax now goes to the fire departments for retirement, life insurance, grants and workers comp.

County Manager Mike James said in addition, we also appropriate funds for regular operating costs.

Commissioner John Irwin said if we stop funding our fire departments, we would lose 2-3 of them because they cannot sustain themselves.

Commissioner John Irwin went over the cost to outfit each volunteer fireman, the number of certified firemen required for each department and the number of training hours required each year.

County Manager Mike James said it would take about three months for the fire districts to be redrawn.

Commissioner John Irwin confirmed that the fire departments are going to have an opportunity to make comments and valid objections when the districts are drawn.

Commissioner Bobby Irwin said the general public needs to know this is going to be a new tax on their tax bill and could be raised to a maximum of \$.15 by future boards.

Commissioner Bobby Irwin said he would like the citizens of Alleghany county to be able to vote on whether to implement the fire tax or not.

Commissioner Larry Prince said the fire tax would, actually, be a reallocation of where the tax dollars are currently. He said taxpayers are not going to be paying any more than they already are.

Chair Mark Evans asked to bring this discussion back in 30 days.

Commissioner John Irwin asked to put a comment section on the county’s website to gather feedback from the citizens. He also said if the fire tax passes, the fire departments would be responsible for the things the county currently reimburses them for such as retirement, grants and workers comp.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Larry Prince made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Commissioner John Irwin seconded. Vote 5:0.

Public comments

Larry Adams explained his thoughts on why different rates for different fire districts would work best. He said each fire district is very different with regards to homes and terrain. He said Piney Creek fire district has talked about \$.05 as their possible fire tax.

Larry Adams talked about the grant constraints the fire departments are dealing with.

Larry Adams said it costs \$8,900 to equip a fireman from head to toe and the gear has to be replaced every ten years.

Larry Adams said Alleghany county districts are 6-mile which saves citizens 30% on homeowners insurance.

County Manager comments

County Manager Mike James said first responders had a busy day today and thanked them for their work.

County Manager Mike James went over Governor Cooper's 2020-2021 budget proposal and how it pertains to Alleghany county.

County Manager Mike James proposed having a joint meeting with the school board in the fall to talk about our school capital needs and hopefully have more information on the \$10M allotted to Alleghany county.

County Manager Mike James said Charter Communications is changing their operating name to Spectrum Southeast, LLC.

County Manager Mike James went over the most recent jail inspection and explained that the fire inspection and dietician approval of the menu have been completed but weren't properly displayed on the day of the inspection.

County Manager Mike James explained since Hometown Grocery, LLC (Grant's) is in breach of their Economic Development Agreement, the county will be seeking reimbursement of the \$20,000 given to them.

County Manager Mike James said we have a joint meeting with the Sparta Town Council on Monday, April 29th since it is the fifth Monday this month. He said we will have all joint meetings in our meeting room since we have more room.

County Manager Mike James encouraged everyone to attend the meeting on April 15th at 10:00 am because there are a lot of interesting topics to be discussed including Streetscape and the public pool.

County Manager Mike James said the first fairgrounds event is April 27th, a mud sling. He said Sarah Dalton is working on a promo video for the mud sling.

County Manager Mike James said the restrooms will be done by then and said the new campsites are going in.

County Manager Mike James said Maintenance just finished a new pedestrian bridge at the fairgrounds.

County Manager Mike James said at the April 15th meeting, the Sheriff will present his yearly report and his team is going to demonstrate some of their new tactical equipment paid for with drug and grant funds.

County Commissioner comments

Commissioner Bill Osborne said he was glad to hear of the much-needed improvements at the fairgrounds.

Commissioner Bill Osborne thanked the Chamber for their hard work in keeping enrollment up.

Commissioner Bobby Irwin said he thinks it is time for the court house committee to sit down with the judges and give them a general overview of what is possibly coming. He said he thinks this meeting needs to happen before we borrow this money.

Commissioner Larry Prince said Katee Hettleman has done an outstanding job with the Chamber. He said she is helping members be successful and thanked her.

Commissioner John Irwin noted the increase in membership at the Chamber.

Adjourn

Commissioner Larry Prince made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner John Irwin seconded. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Drew Temple,
Clerk to the Board

Mark Evans,
Chairman