

**MINUTES**

**LENOIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**February 16, 2015**

The Lenoir County Board of Commissioners met in open session at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 16, 2015, in the Board of Commissioners' Main Meeting Room in the Lenoir County Courthouse at 130 S. Queen St., Kinston, NC.

Members present: Chairman Craig Hill, Vice-Chairman Jackie Brown and Commissioners, Roland Best, Mac Daughety, Reuben Davis, Linda Rouse Sutton, and Eric Rouse.

Members Absent: None

Also present were: Michael W. Jarman, County Manager, Tommy Hollowell, Assistant County Manager, Martha Martin, Finance Officer, Vickie F. King, Clerk to the Board, members of the general public and news media.

Chairman Hill called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 p.m. Ms. Brown offered the Invocation and Mr. Rouse led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION:**

None

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

1. Approval of Minutes: Regular Board Meeting: February 02, 2015.  
Budget Work Session: February 02, 2015.
2. Budget Ordinance Amendment: General Fund: Sheriff/Concealed Weapons: \$100.00. Increase.
3. Budget Ordinance Amendment: General Fund: Non-Departmental: \$1,983.00. Increase.

Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

**BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS/RESOLUTIONS:**

Item No. 4A was a Resolution approving the purchase of 4 vehicles (\$100,000) and 5 Tablets (5,000) from the Work First (TANF) Block Grant: \$105,000. Increase. Susan Moore, DSS Director, stated, Lenoir County DSS currently has nine vehicles in their fleet which are aging.

There are currently 20 Child Protective Service Social Workers, 7 Foster Care Social Workers, and 2 Work First Social Workers who can be in the field at any time. The 9 vehicles are not sufficient for all Social Workers and require workers at times to transport children in their own personal vehicles. Four of the vehicles have over 125,000 miles, three have over 50,000 miles, and the two Dodge Caravans have approximately 40,000. After consulting with our Northwoods partners there is a possibility that rather than spending the funds on tablets we will purchase 5 lap top computers. The approval of this resolution will allow the encumbrance of funds and payments to the vendors. This purchase is 100% Federal TANF funds with no cost to the county. Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, Item No. 4A was unanimously approved.

Item No. 4B was a Budget Ordinance Amendment increase. Susan Moore, DSS Director, stated, this budget amendment is for new purchases from TANF (100% Federal) funding to purchase 4 vehicles and 5 tablets/lap tops. Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, Item No. 4B was unanimously approved.

Item No. 5 was a Budget Ordinance Amendment: School Capital Fund School Building: \$571,874. Increase. Martha Martin, Finance Director, stated, this budget amendment is to cover the purchase of two new activity buses, four Ford F-250 trucks, chiller replacement at North Lenoir High School, chiller replacement at South Lenoir High School, new roof at South Lenoir High School, new roof on the Band Room at Rochelle Middle School, and the installation of window air conditioner units at Moss Hill Elementary School. Dr. Mozingo did not appear before the Commissioners until the July 21, 2014, meeting and the budget was adopted prior to that at the June 2, 2014 meeting. This amendment will allow us to appropriate the funds from fund balance. Upon a motion by Mr. Davis and a second by Ms. Sutton, Item No. 5 was unanimously approved.

Mr. Hill asked where was this information listed?

Mr. Rouse stated, this amount was already included in the budget.

Mr. Hill stated, he was fine with that but he wanted everyone to be aware of how this affects capital. When we start adding chillers and every other item that affects capital we need to make sure that we are clear. However, when we talk about the age of buildings and a 25 year planning process, I want to make sure the public is aware that we added a chiller. Regardless of what funding source it comes out of the reality is it impacts our budget long term one way or another.

Mr. Jarman stated, it does affect the budget greater than it has because we used to have the ADM funds that could be used, and now this is coming from the sales tax. The sales tax is county funds and is designated for the purpose of school capital, but it is still county funds that the Board controls.

This is the money we've been utilizing to help us with the debt service and with other issues. Since fund balance is going down you do need to be watching the capital expenditures closely.

Mr. Rouse stated, again this has already been assigned in the budget it's not an additional expenditure.

Item No. 6 was a Resolution to advertise tax liens for 2014 tax period. Darrell Parrish, Tax Collector, stated, pursuant to G.S. 105-369(a) the Governing Body (Lenoir County Board of Commissioners) shall order the Tax Collector to advertise such tax liens. The outstanding amounts of the 2014 taxes which are a lien on real estate are \$2,619,129.91. This figure includes county taxes, fire taxes, and late listing penalties as of February 9, 2015. We will advertise these liens in the Free Press on March 25, 2015. Upon a motion by Ms. Sutton and a second by Mr. Best, Item No. 6 was unanimously approved.

Item No. 7 was a Resolution approving appointments of citizens to boards, commissions, etc. Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, Item No. 7, was unanimously approved for Mr. Clifton James Miller's appointment to the Lenoir County Board of Health.

**CURRENT VACANCIES: Lenoir County Health Board – (1) Optometrist, (1) Member, Equalization & Review (1).**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. John Nix, President of the CSS Neuse Foundation, stated, March 7, 2015 will be a big day for downtown Kinston. We will be providing breakfast on the boat from 7:00am-11:00am in conjunction with the opening of the new museum. Everyone is invited to come out and tour the boat. This is the only full scale replica of a civil war iron clad vessel in the world, and it is right here in Kinston and I am proud to be a part of it.

Mr. Nix stated, I came to the Board a couple of weeks ago and asked about the possibility of moving the public comments from the back of the agenda to the front of the agenda. During the meeting we had several discussions regarding public information verses public comments. I have listed some reasons why I feel it would benefit the citizens of Lenoir County if the order of the agenda was changed. Mr. Nix read the reasons included in the agenda package submitted to the Board. He mentioned the majority of the counties structure their agenda allowing public comments at the beginning. Thirteen of sixteen counties not including Lenoir actually have their public comments at the beginning which is a high percentage. The commissioners meetings are a public meeting not just a business meeting and public opinion should be welcomed and considered. Wayne, Wilson and Sampson Counties are the only counties that have public comments at the end of their meeting. Citizen's comments, grievances, questions, and suggestions should be heard and put to use, not discarded and brushed aside.

County commissioners are elected officials paid by the tax payers to oversee the welfare of the county. Commissioners are employed by the citizens of Lenoir County therefore they should have a voice in all matters. This is truly what I believe, and it's a shame we don't have more citizens attending the meetings. I am here as a concerned citizen and I would like to see the opportunity for citizens to speak at the meetings prior to anything else taking place on the agenda.

Mr. Daughety stated, he had a discussion with Scott Bowen regarding this issue earlier today. I will address this to you Mr. Nix, the county manager, the free press and the Board. Once the Board receives the agenda on Thursday or Friday perhaps we can send a copy to the Free Press. I've noticed when I receive several papers like Jacksonville, New Bern, Greenville, and Wilmington several publish their agenda. For instance, if there is a meeting today they will post the agenda in the paper on Friday and the public is aware of the items listed on the agenda. Other than us very few people take the time to go on line even though the information is available to view. It is in my opinion a lot of people would casually see it when they are reading the paper. I get most of my comments from articles that are written about our meetings from the Free Press. Maybe it would be a good idea to consider asking the Free Press to publish our agenda on a Friday so the public is aware. At that point the public would know the time of the meeting and items for discussion. If the public are interested they will have time to call their commissioners and give their comments or they can attend the meeting on Monday.

Mr. Jarman stated, the Free Press has published the agenda in the past. Currently nothing is going to Junious Smith, however; when Joey Bryan sends the information to the commissioners, a copy is sent to Jennifer Schrader, Free Press editor. It would be the decision of the Free Press as to whether or not they want to publish it, but if it's the desire of this Board to pay for it we will make it happen.

Mr. Hill stated, he appreciated Mr. Nix comments. I need to clarify because I don't want to be misinterpreted with my statement regarding "this being a business meeting for the people". I strongly believe we have always invited and given citizens an opportunity to take part in our local meetings. We have even tried different things and I am open to the change. I also would say just because everybody else is doing it that way does not mean what is popular is always what's right, and what is right is not always popular. I don't normally make my decision based on whether 16 counties are doing it or not, we try to do what's right for Lenoir County and I am always open to change. I understand where you are coming from and I have seen it operated both ways, but I'll leave it open to the wishes of this Board. I will leave it to this group and open it for possible discussion or vote.

Upon a motion by Mr. Rouse and a second by Ms. Sutton, public comments were moved to the front of the agenda.

Mr. Hill stated, since we've made this change I do think we do need to put some limits on the time frame since it's at the front of the meeting. Let's allow Mr. Jarman and his staff to develop the structure such as 3 minutes per speaker, or 5 minutes per group. If we have a whole group present to speak about the same topic I will have the ability as the chairman to intervene so the meeting won't go on and on. We can possibly place a sign-up sheet out front or something along those lines so everyone will be aware of the process. While it might be up front it could be more restricting than we've been doing in some degree because we have left it open. Mr. Hill stated, Mr. Jarman's staff will make the agenda changes for the meetings.

Mr. Jarman asked was this schedule for one or both meetings? Mr. Hill replied for both.

Mr. Jarman stated, I would like clarification on the order of the agenda. Public information should be scheduled prior to public comments. For example if we have someone traveling from out of town to make a presentation like the School of Government or Red Cross, allow them to go first prior to public comments. Everyone agreed that would be fine.

Item No. 9 was items from the County Manager, Mike Jarman. Mr. Jarman shared a short video from the NCACC. Mr. Jarman stated, Rebecca Troutman who was speaking in one part of the video is a huge asset to the counties. She is very intelligent and her knowledge on every subject is vast. Whether you are talking about county transit or DSS it's just amazing that she can keep up with all of that information. She mentioned the tremendous growth in the sales tax, however; she was talking about areas that have a much larger retail base than Lenoir County. Our numbers are at a slow increase so we don't have a huge wind fall in our sales tax. The NCACC is staying on top of a lot of items like the historic tax credit. The association sent notice of Secretary Klutz being in our area and the invitation was open for all who could attend. The associations are doing a lot of grass root efforts so lets' pay attention to their emails. We have several upcoming scheduled meetings and important dates, Thursday, February 19, 2015 from 6:30pm-8:00pm, Lenoir County Public School Legislative Dinner, this will be your chance to meet with the elected delegates and talk and listen to the schools. March 9, 2015 at 6:00pm our joint meeting with LCPS will take place at the Woodmen Community Center, I will send you specifics at a later date. Pink Hill Mayor, Carol Sykes phoned me earlier regarding some misinformation out pertaining to the Pink Hill Gym, and was wondering what actions were taken. I clarified that the Board was moving into their budget season and as you generally do you take a strong look at trying to be accountable for the use of funds, as well as being accountable to the correct funding source being used. We talked about the issues and she would like for the Board to join them at their regular Pink Hill Town Council meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 7:00pm in Pink Hill. I think it will be some open discussion about working with several different items. Hopefully all will be able to attend this meeting.

Mr. Hill stated, we are still trying to schedule the joint meetings with the City of Kinston and the Town of LaGrange. Mr. Hill mentioned he is looking forward to these meetings. We don't have to meet every year but it is needed at this time.

We should sit down and have conversations with the municipalities that are a part of the county. Having good dialog will allow us to be in a better place when we are finished. It will not hurt to communicate with the different groups that we are working with. I understand if everybody can't make every single one of these meetings but please do your best. I think these are very important meetings that we are trying to broker with other groups, so I hope everybody will be there.

Mr. Davis stated, in the News and Observer Mr. Kendall Hill was named Tar Heel of the week. Mr. Hill is co-owner of Tull Hill Farms and they have very quietly been a big part of Lenoir County and have done a lot of great things for us. I would like for the Board to give a Resolution in honor of their contribution.

Mr. Hill stated, he had done a lot for our community and he is glad to see our citizens being recognized.

Mr. Rouse stated, he posted on Face Book information regarding the transportation meeting. Mr. Blount from DOT discussed long range plans and a lot of good ideas. The meeting was very informative. DOT is currently salting the roads in preparation of the expected inclement weather.

Ms. Brown stated, she has been asked if any of the commissioners will be available on the morning of on March 9<sup>th</sup> to read to children at the schools. Mr. Rouse, and Ms. Sutton volunteered, and Mr. Hill said he was already on the list to read.

Mr. Jarman stated, Lenoir County Government has an adverse weather policy in place that we have always followed. Once I receive a call from Roger Dail, EMS Director, I will contact Department Heads, and if it's appropriate to close or delay we will do so. We normally give employees enough notice and ask them to use their judgment based on the condition of their area. We will follow that policy regarding the expected weather condition for tomorrow.

Mr. Hill acknowledged the growth of TACC 9 which has expanded to 3 stations, and 9 counties, which gives more exposure to Lenoir County.

Ms. Sutton asked the Board to join her in congratulating Mr. Hill on his new grandchild, a healthy happy bouncing baby girl.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie F. King  
Clerk to the Board