

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 15, 2004, at 10:00am in the Conference Room of the County Office Building, 90 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chair Eldon Edwards, Commissioner Graylen Blevins, Commissioner Sandy Carter, Commissioner Patrick Woodie, County Manager Don Adams and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans. Vice-Chair Warren Taylor and County Attorney Ed Woltz were absent.

Chair Eldon Edwards called the meeting to order and opened with a prayer.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve the agenda for this March 15, 2004, meeting. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

AGENDA
Monday, March 15, 2004
10:00 AM

- 10:00 Meeting Called To Order
Motion on Agenda for March 15, 2004 meeting
Motion on Minutes for March 1, 2004 meeting
- 10:05 Rita Miller
RE: Tax Releases & Refunds
- 10:10 Gerald Leftwich
RE: LEPC Report & Grant Approval
- 10:20 Sandy Walker
RE: CJPP Grant
- 10:30 Public Hearing
RE: CDBG Grant Close-Out
- 10:40 Melvin Crouse
RE: Annual Forestry Service Report & Firewise Program
- 11:05 Paul Reeves
RE: Proposed Hunting Law Change
- 11:20 Joe Vogel
RE: Proposed Hunting Law Change
County Business
 1. Tobacco Quota Buyout
 2. Wellness Center Budget Amendment
 3. DOT Letter
 4. National Heritage Proclamation
 5. DSS Board Appointment
 6. Other Business
 7. Public Comments—30 minutes
 8. Closed Session—NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (4)—economic development
 9. Adjourn

Commissioner Sandy Carter made a motion to approve the March 1, 2004, minutes. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Rita Miller, Assistant Tax Administrator, presented the vehicle tax requests for February 2004 in the amount of \$492.86 for refunds and \$32,136.99 for releases.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve vehicle tax requests for February 2004 in the amount of \$492.86 for refunds and \$32,136.99 for releases. Commissioner Sandy Carter seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Rita Miller, Assistant Tax Administrator, presented the real property tax requests for February 2004 in the amount of \$1,423.50 for refunds and \$1,362.15 for releases.

Commissioner Sandy Carter made a motion to approve the real property tax requests for February 2004 in the amount of \$1,423.50 for refunds and \$1,362.15 for releases. Commissioner Patrick Woodie seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Rita Miller, Assistant Tax Administrator, presented a resolution authorizing the collection of property taxes at a 2% discount rate for the months of July and August.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve the resolution for the 2% discount for tax payments collected during July and August. Commissioner Sandy Carter seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Rita Miller, Assistant Tax Administrator, presented the Board of Equalization and Review schedule for 2004. She stated that she is proposing April 27th and 29th at 6:00pm for the hearings.

Commissioner Sandy Carter made a motion to accept the proposed Board of E&R hearing schedule. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Gerald Leftwich, Emergency Management Coordinator, presented the annual LEPC report. He reviewed the highlights of the report. He asked that the following members be appointed to the LEPC committee; Hubert Wagoner and Stacy Henderson, because of election changes.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve Hubert Wagoner and Stacy Henderson to serve on the LEPC committee. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Gerald Leftwich, Emergency Management Coordinator, presented a grant request in the amount of \$32,864 from the Department of Justice. He explained how the monies will be spent.

Commissioner Sandy Carter made a motion to approve budget amendment General Fund #17 in the amount of \$32,864. Commissioner Patrick Woodie seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Sandy Walker presented the annual CJPP grant application in the amount of \$36,799 for fiscal year 2004/2005. She reviewed the highlights of the FY2003/04 program and the FY2004/05 grant.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve the CJPP grant application for continuation of the funding. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Rebecca Bloomquist discussed the 2001 Scattered Site Housing Program. She explained the program highlights including how the funding helped 9 homes with 19 people. She stated that the 2004 Scattered Site Housing Program should be starting later this year.

Chair Eldon Edwards recessed the regular meeting at 10:30am and opened the public hearing regarding the close-out process for the 2001 Scattered Site grant.

Chair Eldon Edwards asked for public comments. None were received.

Chair Eldon Edwards closed the public hearing at 10:32am and reconvened the regular meeting.

Melvin Crouse with the Forestry Service presented the annual forestry report.

The Board of Commissioners and Melvin Crouse discussed pest control for the forestry industry.

Melvin Crouse introduced the Firewise program. He explained the program highlights. He talked

about the grant program that will help communities in the County to become a Firewise community.

Paul Reeves introduced Clay Nichols stating that he has an appointment and needs to leave.

Clay Nichols stated that he would like to see the hunting laws stay as they are.

Paul Reeves presented petitions to the Board that contains over 1,000 signatures requesting that the County's hunting laws remain the same. He stated that they are only asking for the law to remain the same. He talked about reasons for the law to remain the same.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie stated the change is a minor change and doesn't see a problem with it. He explained the process in the General Assembly of having a local bill passed. He stated that it is his opinion that this is a dead issue because this issue doesn't have the support of the community or the majority of the Board.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins stated that he has spoke to other wildlife officers concerning changes to the law. He stated that he will not support this change. He further stated that the Board told the County Manager to work on the wording and bring it back to the Board for more discussion rather than just sending the letter directing to the General Assembly.

Paul Reeves stated that if the hunters had known this was an issue, they would have come to the previous meetings.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that it is the County's policy to put anyone on the agenda that asks to be placed on the agenda for any type of problems or concerns. He explained how things had gotten out of hand concerning this issue. He reiterated the fact that the Board told the County Manager to write some wording on the proposed changes and bring it back to the Board for discussion. He reviewed the current wording of the law.

Chair Eldon Edwards and Paul Reeves discussed the public road issue and the previous action taken by the Board. Chair Eldon Edwards stated that he doesn't think this issue has the support of the Board.

Joe Vogel stated that he has even signed the petition, and he came before the Board at the request of the game warden; Brian Blankenship. He explained that the game warden thought the law change would help his situation at his property. He stated that he thinks this issue needs to be left alone. He reviewed his reasons for asking the Board to change the law. He further stated that all he is asking is for anyone who wants to hunt on his property gets his permission before hunting. He asked for everyone to give the game warden a fair chance. He stated that he hopes that everyone will stand up together on hunting issues. He stated that all he was asking for is to help keep everyone safe.

Robert Woodie stated that the property owner should charge the illegal hunters of all the charges that could be charged when the illegal hunters are caught.

Jeff Wright stated that the current laws that the County has should be enforced rather than create new laws.

Richard Woodie stated that he has problems both ways on this issue. He gave examples of the issues that he has seen before.

Chris Walker asked Dr. Vogel if Mr. Blankenship came to him to ask for help getting this law changed.

Dr. Vogel stated that he was contacted by Mr. Blankenship.

J.B. Miller stated that it is the State's policy that the officer not get involved in changing any law but

rather just enforce the existing laws.

Chris Walker talked about a judgement call on the game warden's part.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that due to the fact that a decision will not be made to change the law, the law will stand as it does now.

Commissioner Sandy Carter stated that she was impressed by the number of signatures on the petitions. She further stated that she wonders if when a person signed the petition if they really knew what they were voting against. She gave examples of unpopular laws that have been passed to save lives such as seat belts and helmets for bicyclist and motorcyclists. She talked about comments that were made at the last meeting regarding there have been no deaths by road hunting. She mentioned a death in 1970-1971 about a gentleman named Michael Wagoner who was killed by road hunting according to her information. She talked about the number of people in the community that have asked for stronger laws and have sent letters asking for stronger laws. She reminded everyone that at the last meeting, she asked the hunters to help the Board create a law that will help promote the safety of the people. She further stated that it is her hope that before someone is killed a stronger law is passed to protect everyone. She stated that as an elective official she has to support action that is for the good of the people whether it is pleasing to everyone or not.

Gary Murphy stated that Michael Wagoner was his best friend when he died, and he would like to comment on that. He reviewed how Mr. Wagoner died during a hunting accident rather than road hunting.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins stated that he appreciates the respect for Dr. Vogel and everyone else. He asked that the death not be discussed out of respect for that person.

County Manager Don Adams informed the public that the Commissioners and himself received letters asking for help regarding the changing the law. He stated that he called Brian Blankenship, and the first thing that Mr. Blankenship did was state that he couldn't get involved in the law changes. He reviewed the timelines of the events from that phone call until today regarding the law change issue.

Richard Joines stated that Mr. Blankenship has already confessed that he could lose his job over this issue. He read a statement that Mr. Blankenship made regarding changing the hunting law.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that this issue has totally gotten out of hand. He reminded everyone of the fact that the Board asked the County Manager to write a proposed change and bring it back to the Board for more discussion rather than telling the County Manager to send the wording change directly to our legislators. He stated that the issue doesn't have the support of everyone on the Board.

Chris Walker talked about there are lobbyists trying to take away the right to bear arms everyday in Washington. He talked about the group that was present today was attending this meeting because of the fear of rights being taken away instead of anger or hard feelings towards anyone.

County Manager Don Adams presented a letter from Britt Cobb asking that a letter be written to support the tobacco buyout program in 2004.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie stated that he supports this concept and appreciates the work our delegation has done in Washington on this matter.

The Board of Commissioners discussed the tobacco buyout process and decided to have the County Manager write a letter to the Department of Agriculture and our delegation on this issue.

County Manager Don Adams presented budget amendment General Fund #18 in the amount of \$300,000 for the Wellness Center. He explained these monies are a straight pass through for a grant that the Wellness Center received.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve budget amendment General Fund #18 in the amount of \$300,000. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Chair Eldon Edwards discussed the Department of Transportation's efforts during the winter storms. He stated that he would like a letter to be written to the DOT thanking them for their efforts in keeping the road clean.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that he received a letter from Iredell county asking for support in recognition of God as the foundation of our national heritage.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins stated that he agreed.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie stated that he feels like that this resolution is getting dangerously close to the Board going on record to support one denomination over another, and he isn't comfortable with that idea.

Commissioner Sandy Carter stated that she agrees with Commissioner Patrick Woodie that this resolution will give the appearance that the Board is supporting one over another. She reminded everyone that the Board starts every meeting with a prayer.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins asked the County Manager to read the resolution.

Commissioner Sandy Carter stated that the Board may want to wait until Commissioner Warren Taylor is present to further discuss this matter.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that he wasn't going to ask for vote just discussion on this issue.

County Manager Don Adams read the proposed proclamation.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie stated his concerns over the resolution including the section regarding the Alabama state supreme justice.

County Manager Don Adams presented a letter from Sandy Ashley concerning the DSS Board needs a replacement for Ken Richardson whose term expires June 30, 2004.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie gave the Board an update regarding New River Behavioral Healthcare concerning the mental health reform act. He talked about how private providers are to be used for mental health services and the burden that concept places on our region.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins stated that he really encourages everyone to visit the Wellness Center.

Chair Eldon Edwards mentioned a resolution from the NCACC regarding Clay Cox.

Chair Eldon Edwards mentioned the NCACC district meetings in Hudson. He stated that if anyone is interested in attending this meeting, let Karen Evans know.

Chair Eldon Edwards asked for public comments. None were received.

Commissioner Sandy Carter made a motion to enter into closed session at 12:06pm under NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (4)—economic development. Commissioner Patrick Woodie seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to adjourn the closed session at 12:28pm and reconvene the regular meeting. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated no action was taken during closed session.

Being no further business, Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:30pm. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Eldon Edwards
Chairman