

The Allegheny County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, April 19, 2004, at 10:00am in the Conference Room of the County Office Building, 90 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

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

Chair Eldon Edwards called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie opened the meeting with a prayer.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that closed session for legal needs to be added to the agenda.

Commissioner Warren Taylor made a motion to approve the amended agenda for this April 19, 2004, meeting. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

AGENDA
Monday, April 19, 2004
10:00 AM

- 10:00 Meeting Called To Order
Motion on Agenda for April 19, 2004 meeting
Motion on Minutes for April 5, 2004 meeting
- 10:05 Public Hearing
RE: 911 Road Names
- 10:10 Mary Walker
RE: Tax Releases & Refunds
County Business
1. Budget Amendment—Emergency Management
 2. Budget Amendment—EMS
 3. Commissioners/School Board Meeting
 4. Community Advisory Board Appointment
- 10:30 Public Hearing
RE: Occupancy Tax
- 10:45 Sandy Ashley
RE: Annual DSS Report and DSS Board Appointment
County Business
5. Budget Summary
 6. Other Business
 7. Public Comments—30 minutes
 8. Closed Session—NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3)—legal (added)
 9. Adjourn

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve the April 5, 2004, minutes. Commissioner Warren Taylor seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Chair Eldon Edwards recessed the regular meeting at 10:02am and opened the public hearing regarding E-911 Road Names.

Wendy Williams, E-911 Coordinator/Mapper, presented a new road name, Lyon Ranch Drive, for the Board's approval. She explained where the road is located.

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

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve the road name as presented by the E-911 Coordinator/Mapper. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Chair Eldon Edwards closed the public hearing at 10:05am and reconvened the regular meeting.

Mary Walker, Tax Administrator, presented a motor-vehicle appeal for a 2001 GMC Sonoma with a tax value of \$10,780. She further explained that Trojan Chevrolet currently values the vehicle at \$6,500, and she recommends the value be \$6,500.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to accept the Tax Administrator's recommendation on this motor-vehicle appeal. Commissioner Warren Taylor seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Mary Walker, Tax Administrator, talked to the Board about an error on the February recap sheet stating Mrs. Harrell Edwards was due a refund for \$357.76 and the name should be Chandler Concrete. She asked if the Chairman can sign showing the name change. She reminded the Board that the amount of money doesn't change. The Board agreed.

Mary Walker, Tax Administrator, presented the tax requests for real property for March 2004 in the amount of \$1,127.70 for releases and \$453.16 for refunds.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve the tax requests for real property for March 2004 in the amount of \$1,127.70 for releases and \$453.16 for refunds. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Mary Walker, Tax Administrator, presented the tax requests for vehicles for March 2004 in the amount of \$2,441.40 for releases and \$201.92 for refunds.

Commissioner Warren Taylor made a motion to approve the tax requests for vehicles for March 2004 in the amount of \$2,441.40 for releases and \$201.92 for refunds. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

Mary Walker, Tax Administrator, mentioned that the tax collection rate is 95.46% as of this morning. She stated that she will be advertising delinquent taxes on May 6. She stated that the Tax Office will be starting Present-Use Value audits soon.

County Manager Don Adams presented budget amendment General Fund #19 in the amount of \$4,556 for Emergency Management. He explained that these monies are grant funds to be used for conducting emergency drills for all emergency personnel in the County.

Commissioner Warren Taylor made a motion to approve budget amendment General Fund \$19 in the amount of \$4,556. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

County Manager Don Adams presented budget amendment General Fund #20 in the amount of \$8,423 for EMS. He stated that these monies are from a grant that EMS has received. He reviewed the list of items that will be purchased from the grant funds.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to approve budget amendment General Fund #20 in the amount of \$8,423 for EMS. Commissioner Warren Taylor seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

County Manager Don Adams presented a letter from High Country Council of Governments stating that Debbie White's term has expired on the Alleghany County Community Advisory Committee. He stated that Mrs. White has indicated her desire to be reappointed.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie made a motion to reappoint Debbie White to the Alleghany County

Community Advisory Committee. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 4:0.

County Manager Don Adams discussed dates for a joint meeting with the Board of Education. He mentioned that he would like to have a budget planning meeting on that date as well.

The Board of Commissioners and County Manager Don Adams discussed dates for the meeting. They decided on May 10, 2004 at 8:30am at Sparta Elementary School.

Chair Eldon Edwards asked Leanne Murray to review information about the draft bill for the occupancy tax changes.

Leanne Murray reviewed the changes to the occupancy tax law.

Commissioner Sandy Carter arrived at the meeting at 10:26am.

Leanne Murray continued to review the changes to the occupancy tax law. She discussed the creation of Tourism Development Authority when the annual revenues from occupancy tax reach \$100,000. She further reviewed the other changes; money must be spent on tourism, 3% rate staying the same, all money going to the Chamber and collections from every accommodation provider regardless of the number of units.

Chair Eldon Edwards and Leanne Murray discussed the 3% occupancy tax rate and the General Assembly must change the rate if the County decides to raise the rates.

Leanne Murray mentioned that the draft bill format from the General Assembly staff is trying to streamline occupancy tax laws across the State.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and Leanne Murray discussed the section that deletes repealing the occupancy tax.

Leanne Murray reviewed the next steps to have the draft bill adopted in the General Assembly.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and County Manager Don Adams discussed the bill reading that the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners may levy a room occupancy tax meaning that the Board has the option to pass a local ordinance or not.

Chair Eldon Edwards recessed the regular meeting at 10:30am and opened a public hearing regarding changing the current occupancy tax law. He asked for public comments.

Vonnie Cook asked about this change applying to all vacation rentals including bed and breakfast and the amount of occupancy tax to be collected.

Leanne Murray mentioned that the occupancy tax will be charged for all units and the amount of the tax will remain the same.

Bob Alexander asked what advantages there are to increase the collections. He talked about people not coming to the County due to taxes. He further talked about refocusing the efforts of the occupancy tax to get more "bang for the buck".

Leanne Murray talked about how the occupancy tax money has been spent. She gave examples of ads that been purchased with the occupancy tax money.

Bob Alexander asked about all units charging occupancy tax money then more money will be generated for the Chamber to properly promote the County.

Leanne Murray talked about the ad campaign that the Chamber has put together to keep Alleghany County on the forefront and needing the additional occupancy tax money to make that ad campaign work. She talked about the smaller vacation rentals getting the benefits of the current occupancy tax without collecting the occupancy tax.

Bob Alexander mentioned that three or four years ago, he received benefits, since then he hasn't.

Leanne Murray discussed the County keeping the 50% resulting in reduction in ads for Alleghany County.

Bob Alexander discussed the referral system that used to work in Alleghany County. He stated that he is against the new tax.

Leanne Murray and Bob Alexander discussed how the occupancy tax changing the vacation rental collections procedures. Leanne Murray mentioned the accommodation providers' meeting with 20 people supporting this action.

Vonnie Cook mentioned that the weather affected travel and tourism last year.

Bob Bamberg talked about how promoting the County will benefit everyone.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about events coming into the County that require an overnight stay creating more occupancy tax revenues.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins and Leanne Murray talked about the benefits from the occupancy tax should be benefiting everyone not just benefiting Chamber members.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about the advertising and promotion is for the County as a whole. She stated that the benefit that non-Chamber members would miss is the normal advertising for Chamber members on the web and in brochures.

Leanne Murray and Bob Alexander discussed making this tax fairer across the Board.

County Manager Don Adams, Vonnie Cook and Leanne Murray discussed sales tax collection for the vacation rental providers.

Vonnie Cook asked about solid waste fees.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that the fees are used for transporting the waste to Concord.

Vonnie Cook asked about recycling reducing the fees.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that any time anyone recycles reduces the amount of waste therefore saves money.

Bob Bamberg stated that this occupancy tax isn't an absolutely fair tax but is about as fair as you can make. He gave examples of how this tax is fair and benefits Alleghany County.

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

Chair Eldon Edwards adjourned the public hearing and reconvened the regular meeting at 11:07am.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon made a motion to approve the Chamber's request and give the County Manager the authority to forward this action to the General Assembly. Commissioner Patrick Woodie seconded the motion.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins talked about the numerous comments that he gets in relation to the operations of the Chamber.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie talked about travel impacts since he left the Chamber and occupancy tax revenues have decreased with the amount of money to promote the County, cost of ads increased although revenues decreased. He stated that he thinks this change is fair and doesn't know a better way.

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

Commissioner Graylen Blevins and Leanne Murray discussed comments that the Commissioners are receiving about the operations of the Chamber, and people should be talking to the Chamber about Chamber problems rather than to the Commissioners.

Sandy Ashley, Social Services Director, presented the annual Department of Social Services report. She reviewed the accomplishments for 2003 and goals for 2004.

Sandy Ashley, Social Services Director, presented a letter to the Board requesting that someone be appointed to the DSS Board since Ken Richardson's term is expiring.

Sandy Ashley, Social Services Director, discussed a letter from the State Personnel Office reclassifying a Social Worker III to Social Worker of Investigations/Assessment and Treatment with a recommended pay grade at Grade 70. She discussed the pay grade for this position that affects two people. She stated that the DSS Board recommended this position be paid at a Grade 70.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and Sandy Ashley discussed the salary pay plan and the classification for this position.

County Manager Don Adams talked about this request will be considered during the budget process.

County Manager Don Adams presented the preliminary fiscal year 2004-2005 budget to the Board. He explained that these figures represent monies that each department has asked for, and he will bring his recommended budget to the Board in June.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon offered her apologies for being late this morning.

Commissioner Warren Taylor gave the Board an update about a meeting he attended concerning Caldwell County's prescription drug plan.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon stated that her concern is that this action is in violation of the Federal and State law.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that he shared Commissioner Herndon's concerns as well as the program doesn't have FDA standards and inspections.

Commissioner Patrick Woodie discussed the skyrocketing health-care costs.

Chair Eldon Edwards mentioned the district meeting about Mental Health next Tuesday in Winston-Salem.

Chair Eldon Edwards mentioned the Legislative Briefing on May 19 in Raleigh.

Chair Eldon Edwards and County Manager Don Adams stated that they would attend this meeting in Raleigh.

Chair Eldon Edwards mentioned a letter from Cliff Phillips requesting that May be proclaimed as Older American's Month and the need for an alternate for the Senior Tarheel Legislators.

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

Commissioner Warren Taylor made a motion to enter into closed session at 12:05pm under NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3)—legal. Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Commissioner Warren Taylor made a motion to adjourn closed session and reconvene the regular meeting at 12:22pm. Commissioner Patrick Woodie seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

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

Being no further business, Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:23pm. Commissioner Warren Taylor seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Eldon Edwards
Chairman