

**MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
January 5, 2021**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, January 5, 2021 at 6:00 P.M. at the Wilkes County Agricultural Center located at 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro, NC 28697 with the following members present: Chairman Eddie Settle, Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner David Gambill, and Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson.

Also present for the meeting were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Eddie Settle welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION – Commissioner David Gambill led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Settle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Motion was made by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton, seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on December 7, 2020.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson, seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on December 15, 2020.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton to approve Budget Amendment No. 21 (General – Sheriff – Request comes from GovDeals sale of previously owned sheriff office Boat. This money in the amount of \$11,100 will be used to purchase other sheriff's office vehicles/equipment). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously approved.

BLUE RIDGE OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (BROC) – COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG):

1. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROJECT – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Dare Stromer, Executive Director and Stacey Howell, Community Services Block Grant Program Assistant. Ms. Howell stated they are required to report how they plan to spend the Community Service Block Grant money. She said they will use the OEM form 210 and 212 to go over the programs. Ms. Howell briefly went over the Emergency Assistance Project form 210 at this time. She said the objective of the Emergency Assistance Program is to adequately respond to 3,701 emergency assistance requests by June 30, 2022 and they plan to do 1,075 per year. She also mentioned how they will do this and how it is reported to their Board monthly as

well as the Office of Economic Opportunity quarterly. Ms. Howell next went over OEM form 212 and said the CSBG funds for the project is \$156,459. She went over the program and said the target number of participant families served per year is 1,075, for a three year total of 3,701, they are in year three of three. Ms. Howell went over the one-year work program outcome measures. She asked for the Boards approval of the program.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to approve the Application for Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission Community Services Block Grant for FY 2021-2022 for Emergency Assistance Project as presented. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

2. FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECT – Ms. Howell went over the Family Self-Sufficiency Program and OEM form 210. She said their objective is to provide support and comprehensive services for program participants to develop skills and increase income so that at least 5 families may rise above poverty income guidelines by June 30, 2022, which will be a total of 15 for the three year period ending this year. She briefly went over the OEM form 212 and said the funds received from this project are \$88,008 and they expect to serve 10 families this year. Ms. Howell went over the outcome measure for the program at this time. She asked for the Boards approval of the program and any questions they may have.

Ms. Stromer thanked the Board and added the numbers they have seen since March has tripled to what they had in their budget. The staff has worked diligently to meet the needs of those they serve and that is what BROOC is about, to be there for the people that are less fortunate. Ms. Stromer said the folks in this area have all seen a tough time this summer, but they have been there for them. Chairman Settle stated this is attributed to COVID, this has been a year unlike any other. Ms. Howell agreed and added they have so many folks that hours have been cut or lost their place of employment due to shutdowns, it is unprecedented number of clients they have seen. Ms. Stromer said they have had many requests for high electric bills and it takes all kinds of resources to meet that need and they coordinate their benefits with other agencies and do all they can.

Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton made a motion to approve the Application for Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission Community Services Block Grant for FY 2021-2022 for the Family Self-Sufficiency Project as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

The Board thanked Ms. Stromer and Ms. Howell. Ms. Stromer thanked they Board for their time and support.

TAX DEPARTMENT:

1. TAX RELEASES – LISTING – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator. Mr. Hamilton asked the Board to approve tax releases for listing in the amount of \$7,417.60. He added these are due to errors that were made and when this happens they have to release the tax bills from the tax base. In many cases they release them

and find them somewhere else, that is not reflected on this list. They deal with over 56,000 properties and mistakes happen, he added.

Commissioner Keith Elmore made a motion to approve the tax releases for listing as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

A detailed listing of tax releases is maintained in the Wilkes County Tax Administrator's office.

2. EXTENSION OF THE LISTING PERIOD – Tax Administrator Alex Hamilton stated North Carolina General Statute Section 105-307 is entitled the "Length of Listing Period; Extension; Preliminary Work". He stated this Statute gives the Board of County Commissioners the authority to extend the listing period by thirty (30) days. He is requesting that the Board extend the listing period until March 2, 2021. Mr. Hamilton stated the statute also allows the County Commissioners to grant "individual extensions of time for the listing of real and personal property upon written request and for good cause shown"; the statute allows the Commissioners to delegate this authority to the Tax Administrator. Mr. Hamilton stated the extensions granted under this paragraph shall not extend beyond April 15, 2021 unless it falls on a weekend. He requested the Board delegate the authority to grant the individual extensions to the Tax Administrator.

Commissioner Keith Elmore made a motion to approve the request to extend the listing period until March 2, 2021 and to delegate the authority under North Carolina General Statute Section 105-307 to the Tax Administrator to grant individual extensions of time for the listing of real and personal property until April 15, 2021 as requested and presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS – Chairman Settle asked Rachel Willard, Health Director to come forward. He added they appreciate what they are doing and would like to let the public know they are doing all they can do. They are giving shots in arms as they get them in. Chairman Settle stated they are all getting phone calls about this and they do not know from week to week how much vaccine they will get, correct. Ms. Willard replied they usually get an email from the state pharmacy division on Thursday or Friday. The Health Department gets this email as well as the hospital. It breaks it down by Pfizer and Moderna and which county is getting what and the allocation for that week. She added this week they received 200 doses and have zero left as of today. Chairman Settle stated that is good. Ms. Willard added as soon as they get it in they have it in people's arms within 24 hours. She said now that they can give to the 75 and older, when they were in phase 1A for the high risk health care workers they were a little slower, but that was also right before Christmas.

Chairman Settle stated the good news is some have gotten it and are safer than they were and a part of society that needs it. Maybe the state will get it out to private hands soon so that more can get it. Ms. Willard said they had to sign up through the CDC, this is all managed by the federal government, they send it to the state and the state allocates out to the enrolled providers in each county. Commissioner Gambill asked if the vaccine protects against the new strand. Ms. Willard replied they do not know, it came out two weeks ago, so far the vaccine has been

effective for those vaccinated and exposed. They have not seen anything different than with the first strand. She added this could change, at this time they are unsure.

Commissioner Elmore stated he is looking forward to joining her Board and asked where is the best source for folks to know about vaccinations, date, time, how many do they have, and information for the 75 and over. Ms. Willard replied it is listed on their website at the Wilkes County Health Department page under vaccine and client information. It is also on the state's website dashboard along with a link for vaccinations. She added the next roll out to group two in phase 1B is scheduled for January 20, but this could change, the state decides this. There is a schedule of anticipated dates and rollouts that can be found on both websites. Commissioner Elmore asked if they have someone that updates the Health Department site. Ms. Willard replied yes. Commissioner Elmore added they don't know how many doses they are getting and when, but when they get the information is it updated immediately on their website or is there a specific time each day they update it. Ms. Willard replied their website states they update it Monday – Friday 8 to 5, and it depends on the day, when they have time, it varies based on when they get the updated information. Commissioner Elmore asked if the county IT can help to get this updated. Mr. Yates added they help them and the county adds the update to their main webpage as soon as they get it as well. It changes very fast, they have worked on this and are trying to put this out as soon as they get it. Ms. Willard added they have just added a call group for testing which has helped tremendously and will add a message at the beginning of phone calls that will tell them Wilkes County Health Department has no vaccine and will not have a vaccine clinic. They hope this will help folks to get more updated information quickly. Mr. Yates added as soon as he heard they were out of vaccine today it was also added to the county website.

Commissioner Elmore said in a perfect world if they had all the vaccine they needed it will take months to get it out and distributed, and then they add the second round and asked how this will work. Ms. Willard replied it depends on the vaccine. She said if they had enough vaccine at the Health Department they can do 100 people per hour with three teams. At River's Edge they are looking at have 6 to 9 teams and could do 900 per hour. She added if they had the resources and vaccine here they could do this in two to three months for the entire population if the phases were removed. Ms. Willard said when she only gets 200 doses a week with 69,000 people it is a hard process to put in people's arms at a speed they all want, this is a nationwide issue. Commissioner Gambill said they second round will start soon and add to the workload and asked when this begins. Ms. Willard said that begins next week, the first folks vaccinated are eligible for their second dose next week. Chairman Settle asked do they just show up or have appointments. Ms. Willard said it will be first come first serve just as it is now. She said next week she will get 400 to cover week one plus her allocation for that week both. Chairman Settle asked do they have enough made and just holding it back. Ms. Willard replied she does not think there was enough made, under operation Warp Speed they only developed so much before approval and now they have that and can begin to mass produce. It will be a slow, tedious, and frustrating process. Chairman Settle added when they get it in the private hands it will go.

Commissioner Johnson asked when the second dose is received how soon can people expect their life to return closer to normal, will they need to continue to wear mask and social distance. Ms. Willard replied at this time regardless of vaccination they do not expect the mask mandate to

go away until they get to herd immunity. She added the studies coming out state folks receiving the Pfizer vaccine within 13 days have antibodies to protect them from the virus, which is very positive. Commissioner Gambill asked if the vaccine still works after 3 months. Ms. Willard replied they are still learning as they go and do not know the answer to this.

Chairman Settle and the Board thanked Ms. Willard for the update and all they are doing.

NEW BUSINESS – SET WORK SESSION – Mr. Yates asked the Board to set a Work Session for January 14, 2021 at 4:00 PM at the Ag Center and stated it will be offered by WebEx for the Bladen County folks and anyone that needs to join remotely. This will be for an Economic Development presentation from Bladen County’s Economic Development Director and Chairman on a program they have been successful with.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to set a Work Session for Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 4:00 P.M., at the Wilkes County Agricultural Center to be noticed and held pursuant to the requirements of Session Law 2020-3 adopted by the N.C. General Assembly on May 4, 2020, and the Policy for Attendance at Wilkes County Commissioners’ Meetings adopted by the Board on April 7, 2020, Amended August 4, 2020 and November 5, 2020. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously approved.

The work session is open to the public in person as well as online through WebEx.

NEW BUSINESS – Commissioner Gambill stated he was at the Landfill yesterday, which was a Monday and it was backed up with many cars out into Hwy 268. He asked if they could get a second scale coming out to help them from getting back in line that would help the traffic pattern. Commissioner Gambill added the use at the landfill is up especially since March, if they could weigh in two at a time and pay on the way out to help, or anything that could make it better. Chairman Settle agreed and added he receives many calls from folks that have to wait in line and they need to look at doing something. Commissioner Gambill said he has been to the Brunswick County Landfill and they have two scales going in and they get a ticket of the weight and then have two scales coming out and you pay at the second one. Chairman Settle stated they do have one person outside for ones that do not need to weigh that helps some but this would work better. Mr. Yates stated they have an old quote from a long time back and he will bring this back to the Board. He added that was between \$250,000 and \$300,000 and would also need renovations and additions to the scale house to make it work, but they will get this together for the Board. Mr. Yates stated there will be additional personal cost, but these upgrades would help a great deal. Chairman Settle said not all need to be weighed maybe they can just add another lane or two for those folks that would help move it along better. Commissioner Elmore asked if there is an automated system where they could pull through and get a ticket like a parking lot that would be a better solution that records the weight. Commissioner Gambill said that is not unusual for a Saturday, but this was a Monday and a much longer line than he expected. Mr. Yates stated many more individuals are bringing themselves and not using commercial haulers which makes for a lot more traffic.

Commissioner Elmore stated this goes back to the Solid Waste Ordinance, if they use a truck to haul trash it has to be enclosed to do this, or have a tarp over the bed correct. Mr. Triplett replied they have discussed this before, but the ordinance does not specify it has to be enclosed, it has to transport solid waste in such a manner that it does not spill or blow out on the highway. He added this is very vague and they have talked about tightening this language up. Commissioner Gambill said he would like to ask that they look into this maybe add a portable digital receipt system for a cash line, weigh line, etc. to help move it along. The Board agreed they would like to look into a second scale and options to see what can be done to help with this. Mr. Yates added these are good suggestions with the automated ticket and weight on the front end and pay at the second set. Chairman Settle stated they will work on this.

ADJOURN – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton, seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 6:43 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Eddie Settle, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: January 19, 2021