

**MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
January 16, 2024**

PUBLIC HEARING – WILKES COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN – Chairman Greene declared the Public Hearing open regarding the Wilkes County Growth Management Plan at 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 with the following members present: Chairman Stoney Greene, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Bill Sexton, and Commissioner Greg Minton.

Also present were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; W.C. Scroggs, Planning Director; Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Greene asked if anyone would like to speak regarding the Wilkes County Growth Management Plan. Hearing no comments on the proposed Growth Management Plan, Chairman Greene declared the Public Hearing closed at 5:00 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT TO THE WILKES COUNTY SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE – Chairman Greene declared the Public Hearing open regarding the Amendment to the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance at 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 with the following members present: Chairman Stoney Greene, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Bill Sexton, and Commissioner Greg Minton.

Also present were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; W.C. Scroggs, Planning Director; Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Stoney Greene recognized the following individual who addressed the Board:

BARRY BUSH – Mr. Bush stated *“I work for Finley Properties and live in Wilkesboro and think eliminating the 15 acres requirement is a brilliant idea; especially in Wilkes County where the topography doesn’t lend itself to find a good 15 flat acres. If we are going to get some serious large home sites it’s probably going to be a piece of property, I have worked with Ryan’s Homes and Pilot Homes in Statesville and they go in and take 100 acres or less, 10 or 20 acres and grade it level and build some small houses; eliminating the 15 acres requirement is going to be a big help”*. Mr. Bush thanked the Board.

Chairman Greene asked if anyone would like to speak regarding the Amendment to the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance. Hearing no further comments on the proposed Amendment to the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance, Chairman Greene declared the Public Hearing closed at 5:01P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT TO THE WILKES COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE – Chairman Greene declared the Public Hearing open regarding the Amendment

to the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance at 5:02 P.M. on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 with the following members present: Chairman Stoney Greene, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Bill Sexton, and Commissioner Greg Minton.

Also present were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; W.C. Scroggs, Planning Director; Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Greene asked if anyone would like to speak regarding the Amendment to the Wilkes County Zoning Ordinance. Hearing no comments on the proposed Amendment to the Wilkes County Zoning Ordinance, Chairman Greene declared the Public Hearing closed at 5:02 P.M.

PUBLIC CONCERNS - NONE

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 5:03 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Stoney Greene, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Bill Sexton, and Commissioner Greg Minton.

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

Chairman Stoney Greene welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at this time.

INVOCATION – Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Commissioner Keith Elmore led the Pledge of Allegiance at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion was made by Commissioner Bill Sexton seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on December 19, 2023.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on January 2, 2024.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS – Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton to approve Budget Amendment No. 17 (General – The School System received Repair and Renovation funds (\$225,680) from the North Carolina Education Lottery System to be used on a roofing project at C.B. Eller School). The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

FINANCE – FINAL AUDIT REPORT - Chairman Greene welcomed Cassie Wilson CPA with Martin Starnes & Associates, CPA's, P.A. Ms. Wilson said she was going through the Financial Statement Audit results from June 30th, 2023. Commissioner Elmore asked if there

were copies for the Board. Ms. Wilson replied they just received LGC approval the other day, hard copies are being printed and they would get them later in the week. She added Mr. Huffman has the electronic copy that he can send to them.

Ms. Wilson presented the below presentation at this time:

Wilkes County
 2023 Audited Financial Statements

Audit Highlights

- UNMODIFIED OPINION
- GASB 96 IMPLEMENTATION (SUBSCRIPTIONS)
- PERFORMANCE INDICATORS/FINDINGS
 - NONE

PROPERTY TAXES

2023 Property tax revenues	\$ 41,370,655
2022 Property tax revenues	\$ 40,883,594
2023 Collection Rate	97.35%
2022 Collection Rate	97.50%

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY

Year	Revenues	Expenditures
2022	\$89,763,576	\$88,223,709
2023	\$93,499,238	\$94,739,487

TOTAL FUND BALANCE - GENERAL FUND

Year	Total Fund Balance
2021	\$42,809,616
2022	\$45,967,612
2023	\$46,080,127

FUND BALANCE POSITION - GENERAL FUND

Total Fund Balance	\$ 46,080,127
Non-spendable	(231)
Stabilization by State Statute	(5,944,652)
Available Fund Balance 2023	\$ 40,135,244
Available Fund Balance 2022	\$ 40,331,275
Increase in available FB	\$ (196,031)

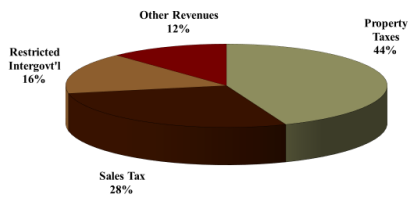
AVAILABLE FUND BALANCE AS A PERCENT OF EXPENDITURES - GENERAL FUND

Year	Percent
2022	44.83%
2023	41.92%

FUND BALANCE DETAIL - GENERAL FUND

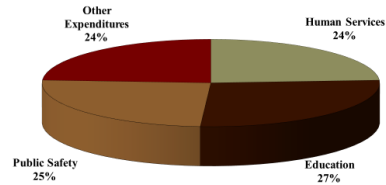
Restricted	\$ 6,473,070
Committed	2,714,701
Assigned	7,532,275
Unassigned	29,539,850
Total Fund Balance	\$ 46,259,896

REVENUES: GENERAL FUND



Property Taxes \$41,370,655
 Sales Tax \$25,718,555
 Restricted \$14,918,240
 Other \$11,491,788
 Total Revenues \$ 93,499,238

EXPENDITURES: GENERAL FUND



Human Services \$22,466,229
 Education \$25,114,487
 Public Safety \$23,982,267
 Other \$23,176,504
 Total Expenditures \$ 94,739,487

Questions?

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MARTIN + STARNES & ASSOCIATES, CPA, P.A.

Commissioner Elmore asked for the sales tax, compared from 2022 to 2023, what was the increase. Ms. Wilson replied the local option did increase \$840,000. The restricted federal and state funding did increase significantly by \$2.4 million. It changes based on what grants Wilkes has received. Commissioner Elmore asked if Medicaid was included in this amount. Ms. Wilson replied Medicaid is included, when they see the revenue increase on the Human Services side they also see the expenditure increase as well.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

1. COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION TEAM (CCPT) ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – Chairman Greene welcomed and recognized Kevin Brown, DSS Director and Hal Wilson, DSS Program Administrator. Mr. Wilson thanked the Board and said the responsibility of the Community Child Protection Team is to meet regularly to promote a community-wide approach to the problem of child abuse, dependency and neglect. The formation that creates the CCPT is mandated by the NC General Statutes, it’s comprised of 9 local agencies that include Mental Health, School system, Law Enforcement, Guardian Ad Litem, Wilkes County Health Department, Local Child Advocacy Center, Our House, Smart Start and many others. The CCPT reviews cases of abuse, neglect and dependency, that they aren’t sure what avenue to take. They pull in other sister agencies and discuss the perplexities of those cases and come up with recommendations that benefit children and families in Wilkes County. Mr. Wilson said the NC General Assembly passed Senate Bill 20, which established a reimbursement fund to assist in supporting unlicensed kinship care providers who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption and are providing care for children in their homes by providing a monthly stipend. Families with children ages 0-5 get \$351.00, children ages 6-12, \$371.00 and children ages 13 and up get \$405.00. The county of Wilkes will make the initial payments. Payments are 50% County and

50% State funded. The agency is reimbursed 50% by the State. Mr. Wilson thanked the Board for the new Child Supervision Facility, it's been a welcome change for children that have to stay overnight. They have had other agencies to chip in and provide other resources as well. He added Wilkesboro United Methodist Church, Millers Creek United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church of North Wilkesboro, Union United Methodist Church, Crossfire United Methodist Church, Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC, and Guardians of Children High Country Chapter have donated generously to the facility. Mr. Wilson thanked the Board for all they do for the agency, the committee and other sister agencies in the community.

Commissioner Elmore asked if they have a budget for the subsidiary payment. Kevin Brown replied they moved money in their budget to cover that. He stated they are covered for this fiscal year. Chairman Greene asked if the County is getting a reimbursement for that. Mr. Brown replied yes. Vice Chairman Johnson asked if the payment was per child. Mr. Wilson replied yes, based on their age.

2. UPDATE – Chairman Greene welcomed Kevin Brown, DSS Director. Mr. Brown provided the Commissioners with handouts for November. Next, Mr. Brown went over the monthly caseload report, Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial report. He also went through the CPS Foster Care monthly reports for November.

Chairman Greene stated 10 hospitalizations. Mr. Brown said those were mostly for mental health issues which are very hard to treat, unfortunately, they try to dismiss those kids directly to DSS.

The Board thanked Mr. Brown and Mr. Wilson for the update.

TAX DEPARTMENT:

1. TAX RELEASES – LISTINGS – Mr. Lankford asked the Board to approve 53 tax releases for listings in the amount of \$20,074.88 which covers November, December and a small portion of January. These will be added to the prior total for the fiscal year of \$30,026.96, for a total to date of \$50,101.84.

Commissioner Keith Elmore made a motion to approve the tax releases for listings in the amount of \$20,074.88 as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and was unanimously approved.

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

2. EXTENSION OF THE LISTING PERIOD – Mr. Lankford stated the North Carolina General Statute 105-307 is entitled, "Length of listing period; extension; preliminary work." This statute gives the Board of County Commissioners the authority to extend the listing period by 30 days. He is requesting that the Board extend the listing period until March 1st, 2024. This 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. The extensions granted under this paragraph shall not extend beyond April 15th, 2024 unless it falls on a weekend. Mr. Lankford is requesting that the Board delegate authority to grant the individual extensions as described above to the Tax Administrator.

Commissioner Greg Minton made a motion to approve the request to extend the listing period until March 1, 2024 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, 2024 as requested and presented at tonight’s meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and unanimously approved.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT:

1. GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVAL – Chairman Greene welcomed W.C. Scroggs, Planning Director. Mr. Scroggs said at its regular meeting of November 27, 2023, the Wilkes Joint Planning Board voted to approve and recommend to the Board of Commissioners the Wilkes County Growth Management Plan with a recommendation that it be approved. The Growth Management Plan is designed to guide decisions related to land use in Wilkes County over the next 10-15 years. It serves to fulfill the requirement set by North Carolina General Statute Chapter 160D that local governments adopt a comprehensive plan as a prerequisite to exercising certain development regulations. The contents of this plan meet the standards for a comprehensive plan as set forth in N.C.G.S. 160D-501(a-c). Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute, the notification standards have been met, and a public hearing has been held at this time.

Commissioner Elmore asked if this was required by the state, is that the purpose of the document. Attorney Triplett replied yes. They are required by Chapter 160D to have a comprehensive plan. All counties are and this will qualify as that requirement. It’s a prerequisite to exercising zoning and other planning jurisdiction. This is an introductory step they had to take to get in place, so it meets that requirement. A lot of work went into it, it’s open to questions by any of the Board members. Chairman Greene asked the date of the last one they had. Mr. Scroggs replied 2014. Commissioner Elmore said the document doesn’t paint a rosy picture of the future. The prediction of the population going down, how were these predictions made. He asked where the information came from. Phil Trew, Planning and Development Director from High Country Council of Governments said they looked at information from the Office of State Management Budget and the U.S. Census. The projection is made on previous growth. Wilkes County is seeing a loss in population, because more people are dying than being born here. The County also has more people moving here. If second homeowners claim residency in other states where their income taxes are low, there may be new homes being built that don’t accurately reflect the population. They try to put building permit data in the plan to supplement the data from the Office of State Management Budget and Census. Commissioner Elmore said anything can impact the plan. If they could recruit a business or expansion of an existing business, that could all change the 25-year plan. Commissioner Elmore asked how many people did they look at to get the information about what Wilkes County needs. Mr.

Scroggs replied the survey ran for over 5 months and they had 312 responses. Commissioner Minton asked if they were still seeing a pattern shifting to the metro area. Mr. Trew replied they were seeing an increase in the elderly population in Wilkes. People are having smaller families, younger people are graduating high school and leaving town. Commissioner Elmore said they spend a lot of time, energy and money, going out and soliciting new businesses. If they are showing their population is aging and our workforce is shrinking, how can they promote themselves. Mr. Trew replied it's a dilemma, if they can recruit a big company hopefully they can recruit a younger workforce to work here and would rather live here than in metropolitan areas. Commissioner Elmore asked who receives this document. Mr. Trew replied it is intended for the Board and internal staff. Besides being a requirement from the General Assembly, they look at it as a tool for them to use as a good legal foundation if they want to change ordinances and it gives the department heads and the Board a list of items to work on.

Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton to Approve the Growth Management Plan as presented in tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and unanimously approved.

2. AMENDMENT TO WILKES COUNTY SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE – Chairman Greene recognized Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney. Ms. Felts said at the regular meeting of November 27, 2023, the Wilkes Joint Planning Board voted to approve and recommend to the Board of Commissioners an amendment to the Wilkes County Zoning Ordinance. This amendment pertains to the regulations governing Planned Unit Development (“PUDs”) in Wilkes County. The purpose of the proposed changes is to create consistency in the regulations governing PUDs between the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance and the Wilkes County Zoning Ordinance in addition to increasing flexibility for PUDs by removing the minimum acreage requirement. Hopefully, these changes will help address the housing shortage in Wilkes County. She included a clean copy of the proposed amendment as well as a redlined copy indicating the specific changes made to the language of the original ordinance.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore to Approve the Amendment to the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance as presented in tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

3. AMENDMENT TO WILKES COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE – Ms. Felts said at its regular meeting of November 27, 2023, the Wilkes Joint Planning Board voted to approve and recommend to the Board of Commissioners an amendment to the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance. This amendment pertains to the regulations governing Planned Unit Development (“PUDs”) in Wilkes County. The purpose of the proposed changes is to create consistency in the regulations governing PUDs between the Wilkes County Zoning Ordinance and the Wilkes County Subdivision Ordinance in addition to increasing flexibility for PUDs by removing the minimum acreage requirement. Hopefully, these changes will help address the housing shortage in Wilkes County. She has included a clean copy of the proposed amendment as well as a redlined copy indicating the specific changes made to the language of the original ordinance.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore to Approve the Amendment to the Wilkes County Zoning Ordinance as presented in tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

DISTRICT W TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS – Ms. Felts stated at this time Wilkesboro and the County have appointed their members, North Wilkesboro has tentatively appointed a member and Ronda has not yet made their appointment. The names for consideration at this time if the Board would like to move forward: Chairman: Trevor Whitson, County appointment; Vice Chairman: Daniel Isom, Wilkesboro appointment; Secretary: Linda Cheek.

Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton to approved the Appointment of Trevor Whitson as Chairman, to serve until December 31, 2024; Daniel Isom as Vice Chairman, to serve until December 31, 2024; Linda Cheek as Secretary, to serve until December 31, 2024; and Chris Huffman or his designee as Treasurer as required by General Statute for the District W Tourism Development Board as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

CLOSED SESSION – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson to go into closed session under Section 143-318.11 (a)(5) of the North Carolina General Statutes to establish or instruct the staff concerning the price or other material terms of a possible contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property; and under Section 143-318.11 (a)(4) of the North Carolina General Statutes to discuss the location or expansion of business in Wilkes County; and; and to discuss qualifications, competence, performance, or conditions of employment for a county employee or prospective county employee pursuant to the personnel exception under G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6); and under Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statutes to consult with the Board's Attorney to preserve the attorney-client privilege. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and was unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn back into regular session. No action was taken in the closed session.

ADJOURN – Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 6:29 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Stoney S. Greene, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: February 6, 2024