

**MINUTES**  
**WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**February 1, 2022**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 6:05 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner David Gambill, Commissioner Eddie Settle and Commissioner Brian S. Minton.

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

Chairman Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at this time.

**INVOCATION** – Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson led the Invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Chairman Keith Elmore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Motion was made by Commissioner Eddie Settle, seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on January 18, 2022.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS** – Motion was made by Commissioner Brian S. Minton to approve Budget Amendment No. 21 (General – Health Programs – Wilkes Health received \$700 from Project Lazarus. These finds will be used to provide substance abuse service for residents of Wilkes County. No County money involved. Wilkes Health received \$15,000 from Appalachian Health District to purchase LARC devices (IUD's/Nexplanons) for underinsured/uninsured Family Planning patients. No County money involved. Wilkes Health received \$6,502.56 from Yadkin county for OB Management Services provided to Yadkin County. These funds will be used to purchase additional supplies and material needed to provide OB Care Management Services to underinsured/uninsured women. No County money involved). The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – UPDATE** – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized John Blevins, DSS Director. Mr. Blevins said he has a few updates before they go over the reports. He stated first is an update on their open positions: 4 Social Workers; 1 Food and Nutrition; 1 Child Support Agent; and 1 CSST. This is the second time they are advertising the 4 social workers jobs and hope they get some applicants. He mentioned there are many factors such as Covid, stress of life and job, folks want flexibility in jobs which these do not allow, burnout, pay, small pool to pull from, and they compete with surrounding counties. Other counties are facing the same issues, it is a concern and they need to keep an eye on this. He added they can manage, but a team is 6 so they are down almost one full team. Chairman Elmore asked if they have had absences due to Covid. Mr. Blevins replies yes they have staff out due to exposure or have Covid. It is more beneficial now that they reduced the time and this has helped. Vice Chairman Johnson asked if they have received many applications. Mr. Blevins replied not a lot. Some jobs have not received any. Vice Chairman Johnson asked if folks can get a license if they do not have a social

work degree to fill these jobs. Mr. Blevins replied they can have a related 4 year degree, but they would have to be considered a work against and may qualify at a lower level with less pay to begin with. He added over half of their social workers do not have this degree. Vice Chairman Johnson asked if there are college pools to pull from. Mr. Blevins replied yes. They pester Appalachian almost daily. They also have interns at their office from Appalachian. They accept all interns that will come because sometimes they will stay. They just filled one position with an interim from Appalachian State. Chairman Elmore asked if Wilkes Community College offers any degrees or certification that helps them. Mr. Blevins replied yes in the Income Maintenance position, but not for Social Workers. They can get a 2 year Human Services degree there, then have to get the 4 year at App or somewhere for the Social Worker degree.

Mr. Blevins stated parent fees will be covered for child care assistance for February through June. He added the State sent out an APS survey for 2020-2021, Wilkes County had 397 APS reports. He went over some of the numbers from surrounding counties in which Wilkes was high. If you look at the counties similar in population some are closer aligned. Mr. Blevins said 294 reports were screened in (accepted) and 103 were screened out, for a 74% rate, the State rate is 59%. He asked the supervisor and she said they err on the side of caution, which is good, and some counties define disabilities different. If they meet the criteria they have to accept them. Mr. Blevins added this report shows they work very hard and why they added one in this area last year. He said one of the openings is in their department and they hope to fill it soon.

Mr. Blevins went over the monthly caseload reports for December. Next, Mr. Blevins went through the Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial reports for December. He added they had 9 completed adoptions and are working on more. Commissioner Gambill asked of the 9 how many foster homes did they lose. Mr. Blevins replied he is not sure but it was a few. Several families do foster to adopt.

Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Mr. Blevins for the update.

**TAX DEPARTMENT – PERMISSION TO ADVERTISE TAX LIENS** – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Tax Administrator Will Lankford. Mr. Lankford stated pursuant to North Carolina General Statute §105-369, the Tax Collector shall report to the Board of Commissioners the total amount of unpaid taxes for the current fiscal year that are liens on real property. He stated the governing body shall then order the Tax Collector to advertise such liens. Anyone who has not paid their taxes will receive a notice at least 30 days prior to the date of advertising, that taxes are owed and that they will be advertised if the taxes are not paid within that 30 day period. Mr. Lankford stated he is requesting permission to advertise these tax liens. They will send out letters in the next week or so and folks will have at least 30 days from that date to pay.

Mr. Lankford stated currently they billed \$36,294,388.10 for Real Estate, as of today there is \$3,546,264.20 owed that are liens on Real Property. The collection rate at this time is 90.2%. In 2019 there were 89.66% and in 2020 it was 90.5% at this time. He added they have until June 30<sup>th</sup> and the collections process ramps up from this point forward. They historically end up at 96% to 97% for the year.

Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson made a motion to grant permission to the Tax Administration to Advertise Tax Liens as requested and presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

**WILKES COUNTY – CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY FOR THE DISBURSEMENT OF FEDERAL OR STATE FUNDS** – Chairman Elmore recognized Assistant County Attorney Brooke Felts. Ms. Felts thanked the Board and stated before the Board is a Conflict of Interest Policy. The State is requiring this as a condition to accept funds they allocated to the County in their budget this year. This was awarded under a State Capital Infrastructure Fund (SCIF) Grant. She added these funds can be used for capital improvements in the amount of \$362,500. Ms. Felts stated to accept and use the funds this policy has to be in place. Chairman Elmore said they need to do this to accept grant funds. Ms. Felts replied yes and it will also be useful going forward for the ARPA administration as well. Commissioner Settle stated Wilkes is ahead of other counties, he was in Raleigh last week and most others are way behind on doing this. Commissioner Gambill added this has been the law ever since he has been a Commissioner and not sure why they are requiring this. Commissioner Settle replied they are going to require a lot of things for getting these funds and spending them. Mr. Yates stated this will be uploaded to the State tomorrow morning with some other requested documents, and hopefully Mr. Huffman will receive a check in a few weeks.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to adopt the Wilkes County Conflict of Interest Policy for the Disbursement of Federal or State Funds as requested and presented at tonight’s meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**JCPC BOARD MEMBER APPOINTMENT** – County Manager Mr. Yates said the Wilkes County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council is recommending Amanda Bullard be appointed to the JCPC for a 2-year term. The term is for 2022-2024. Mr. Yates added her application has been received and she is a Court Counselor.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to appoint Amanda Bullard to the JCPC Board for a 2-year term as requested and presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL PROPERTY – DEED OF RECONVEYANCE TO BOARD OF EDUCATION AND TERMINATION OF LEASE AGREEMENT** – County Attorney Tony Triplett stated there is a memo in the packet and earlier today he sent out the documents by email that he received from Fred Johnson the School Board Attorney. He added this is a formality the county financed the Middle Schools in 2000, refinanced in 2010 and paid it off in 2021. As part of the finance three Middle Schools were used on the Deed of Trust and these were acquired from the Board of Education. Mr. Triplett said now that the debt is paid off they need to reconvey it back to the Board of Education. He added while the county owed it, they leased it to the school system and will need to terminate the Lease Agreement as well. These are the two documents before the Board tonight, termination of the Lease Agreement and Deed. Vice Chairman Johnson said when the Board of Commissioners voted to do this he was just going into Middle School, and got to enjoy 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at North Middle. Commissioner Gambill asked why was all four not used for the loan. Commissioner Settle stated East Middle was not included. Mr. Triplett added BB&T at the time of the financing only required 3 or the 4 for collateral. Chairman Elmore stated it was a great thing that they built the 4 new middle schools and the Board agreed.

Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson made a motion to approve the Termination of Lease Agreement with the Board of Education and Deed of Reconveyance to the Wilkes County Board of Education for West, North, and Central Middle Schools as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**CLOSED SESSION** – Commissioner David Gambill a motion to go into Closed Session 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 Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Brian S. Minton, seconded by Commissioner Eddie Settle 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 Brian S. Minton, seconded by Commissioner Eddie Settle and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:27 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Giddeon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: February 22, 2022