

**MINUTES  
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
April 2, 2019**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at 7:05 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, Commissioner David Gambill, and Commissioner Brian 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.

**INVOCATION** – Vice Chairman Eddie Settle led the Invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Commissioner Brian Minton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on March 7, 2019.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS** – Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill to approve Budget Amendment No. 22 (Health – Programs – General-OBCM-HP-Diabetes – Wilkes County Health Department received funds from the Health Foundation in the amount of \$3200 to promote Health Promotions-Healthy Communities for Wilkes County. No County money involved. Wilkes County Health Department received funds from the state for the OBCM program to purchase additional supplies and/or equipment. No county money involved. Wilkes County Health Department received \$750 from Project Lazarus as reimbursement for assisting with Project Lazarus Community Member Assistance program for Opioids. No county money involved. Wilkes County Health Department received \$1800 from the Health Foundation to address chronic disease in Children of Wilkes County. No county money involved. Wilkes County Health Department received \$750 from the Health Foundation to continue assessing and treating prediabetes patients in Wilkes County. No County money involved.) The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and unanimously approved.

**BLUE RIDGE OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION – BROCC – NORTH CAROLINA SENIOR TAR HEEL LEGISLATURE – REAPPOINTMENTS** – Chairman Elmore recognized Jennifer Cooper, Director BROCC Senior Nutrition Services. Ms. Cooper thanked the Board and stated they would like to request approval for the reappointments of Kenneth Foster as delegate to the NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature and Ormond Loomis as alternate.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to approve the reappointment of Kenneth Foster as delegate and Ormond Loomis as alternate for the North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature as requested and presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously approved.

**WILKES VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURE DISTRICT:**

**1. WILKES VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURE DISTRICT BOARD REAPPOINTMENTS** – Chairman Keith Elmore recognized Claude Shew, Jr., Chairman, and Rob Baldwin, Director Wilkes Soil & Water Conservation District. Mr. Shew stated the Wilkes Voluntary Ag District appreciates the Board for their time and all they do for them and the County. He said the Voluntary Ag District is recommending approval for reappointments to the Board for 3-year terms of Mr. Gary Blake, Mr. Dan Bumgarner, and Mr. Toby Speaks. He added they have completed the Board No Change Form as required. Chairman Elmore stated they do a good job of covering the county, each of these are from different areas. Mr. Shew replied they broke the county up into four sections and have a representative from each.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the reappointments of Mr. Gary Blake, Mr. Dan Bumgarner, and Mr. Toby Speaks to the Wilkes Voluntary Agriculture District Board for 3-year terms, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and unanimously approved.

**2. ANNUAL REPORT OF ACRES ENROLLED** – Mr. Shew gave the following agriculture update for totals and percentages of acres enrolled:

Totals (all plans): thru March 7, 2019  
Owners – 61 (Groups)  
Parcels – 155  
Acres – 6475 Total

Breakdown of Total:  
Ag Land – 2891  
Forestry Land – 3576  
Horticulture Land – 6.5

**3. REQUEST – ENHANCED VOLUNTARY AG DISTRICT** – Mr. Baldwin thanked the Board and said they would like approval to move forward with having an Enhanced Voluntary Ag District. He added at this point and time they only have a Voluntary Ag District in Wilkes County. This will give farmers that would want to be in an Enhanced District another opportunity. Mr. Baldwin said this would take the re-writing of the Ordinance and working with Mr. Triplett to do this. He added they need the Board's approval to work with Mr. Triplett, then they will bring the new Ordinance to the Board for consideration. Chairman Elmore asked if there will be two programs, Enhanced Voluntary and Voluntary. Mr. Baldwin replied the Enhanced will be part of the Voluntary Ag District, it will be another opportunity. The Enhanced will be within the Voluntary Ag District and will not be two programs. Mr. Baldwin

stated the same Board will oversee it. Vice Chairman Settle asked what the enhancement does for the community. Mr. Baldwin replied any farm land they keep enhances the community. The only difference between the two is the enhanced requires a 10-year irrevocable Conservation Agreement, but the farmer can get 100% cost share with any of their programs.

Chairman Elmore asked if a vote was needed, it is not listed as an action item. Commissioner Gambill added they need direction from the Board to proceed. Mr. Triplett said it is not listed as action, the Board can vote on it if they like. He added Mr. Shew and Mr. Baldwin are asking for the opportunity to work with him to either amend the current Ordinance or write a new Ordinance. Chairman Elmore asked if any Board members are opposed. Commissioner Blevins added it does not sound like there is much difference in going to an Enhanced VAD from the current.

Mr. Shew and Mr. Baldwin thanked the Board. The Chairman and Board thanked Mr. Shew and Mr. Baldwin for the update and all they do for agricultural in Wilkes County.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE** – Chairman Elmore welcomed John Blevins, DSS Director. Mr. Blevins stated first he would like to provide a few updates from the State. He said Senate Bill 212 is in the Rules and Operations Committee of the Senate, this will postpone the development of Project 4 (P4) NC Fast. The amendment asks to not roll P4 out before October 1, 2019, currently Wilkes is set to go fully into P4 in May. He added that is the part that does not work very well and they are very concerned about. Mr. Blevins said the second part of this amendment will allow counties that have gone into the first part of P4 as Wilkes has for intake and assessment the option to stay in or discontinue using it. He added they do not want to opt out of that part, it works. Commissioner Blevins stated he met with Representative Stevens and told her Wilkes likes the intake part of the system, Hal Wilson likes the way it works and would like to stay in. She told him they would amend the bill so it would be optional. Mr. Blevins replied that is what they have done, it has not passed yet, but it was amended to include this option. He received a letter from the State that gives them the option to do this now and they see no reason to opt out, but they do not want the second part.

Mr. Blevins stated they received additional information about P4 from the time the State began work on this until now, they have spent \$92 million so far just on the Child welfare portion. He added \$85 million of it has been for contractors and temporary workers, only \$900K has been spent on the software, which appears to be part of the problem. They were told if the State stops the roll out to give time to fix the issues it will cost them \$1.5 million per month to suspend it. He added if they do away with it entirely, the Feds said it will cost \$52 million in Federal penalties to the State. This puts them in a tough situation.

Mr. Blevins said managed care for Medicaid is coming up and getting closer. They are in region 2 which goes in effect November 1, 2019. They will have a soft launch June 28, 2019. This means the enrollment brokers will start sending welcome packets to their recipients. This will go to the folks that are moving into managed care. Mr. Blevins said those folks will have a call center and website for clients to call and ask questions. The brokers will be reaching out to them to let them know of the different plans available. He added DSS will continue to determine

eligibility, not much is changing for them at that time. The open enrollment will start July 15, through September 13, 2019. If someone has not chosen a plan by this date one will be chosen for them. It will be effective November 1, 2019. Mr. Blevins said there will be a fee for service which is what they do now, and managed care will be new. This means those insurance companies will get a set amount of money and they will have to manage all the folks with the money allowed and no more. Mr. Blevins said the mandatory clients that will go into managed care is all of the family and children's Medicaid; pregnant women; non-Medicare age blind and disabled. There will be some excluded which are the duly eligible (get Medicaid and Medicare); foster care and adoption cases; and CAPT C cases. He added the behavior health and intellectual developmental disability clients will be carved out from going in until 2021. This will affect Medicaid transportation.

Mr. Blevins said they will still process Medicaid applications, recertification's, and changes of circumstances. They will do replacement cards and Medicaid transportation for the fee for service folks, and update their primary care providers in the system. He added they will not help them choose or counsel them on the plans. They will not do Medicaid transportation for anyone in those plans. Mr. Blevins said they will begin referring them to the enrollment brokers. The eligibility rules are staying the same, health services and supplies are the same, and co-pays are the same. Mr. Blevins said they have asked how many will go into managed care, and they do not know the answer. His estimate is the majority will go into a managed care plan, but they have no percentages to share at this time. It will be a big change and they expect many questions as soon as the packets are sent out. This is basically the same as choosing a health insurance plan, which is not what their clients are used to and will be confusing at the beginning.

Commissioner Blevins asked if the 8275 cases on the February caseload report is separate individuals or families. Mr. Blevins replied it is cases and could be some individuals, but it is families. He added it is about 13,000 individuals. Mr. Blevins briefly went over the monthly caseload report for February. He also went over the Foster Care financial report. He next went through the Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial reports for February.

The Board thanked Mr. Blevins for his update.

**WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS – RECOMMENDATION ON PURCHASE OF VOTING EQUIPMENT** – Chairman Elmore recognized and welcomed Larry Taylor Chairman and Kim Caudill Director. Mr. Taylor thanked the Board and added other Board of Elections Members Larry Pendry, Tim Joines, and Lynn Day are also in attendance. He added they are here seeking final approval for Tabulation equipment. The State requires them to get final approval. Mrs. Caudill said when purchasing equipment the State Board of Elections requires them to do a preliminary recommendation which they did last September. It was tested during early voting at their office in November and now they are ready to purchase. She added the final step it to request approval from the State and from the Board of Commissioners. The State is currently reviewing their request. They are before this Board to request approval at this time. Vice Chairman Eddie Settle asked if this is included in the current budget. Mr. Yates replied yes. Chairman Elmore asked if this will require paper ballots and do they have a backup.

Mrs. Caudill replied this is a newer version of what they have currently, the citizens will still color in the ovals.

Commissioner Blevins asked what they are purchasing. Mrs. Caudill replied they are buying thirty-eight DS2000 tabulator machines. Commissioner Blevins asked how many precincts they have. Mrs. Caudill replied they have 28 and then must also include one-stop sites, absentee by mail, and a few backups. Commissioner Blevins said this does not sound like an excessive number considering the number of precincts they have. He added the County taxpayers are 100% responsible for the funding of elections, there are no grants or anything for buying voting equipment. Commissioner Blevins stated there was federal money available, but the state would not let go of it for equipment. Mrs. Caudill agreed and added the state did receive some funds, but they kept it for cyber security. Vice Chairman Settle asked the total cost. Mrs. Caudill replied it is approximately \$205,000. Commissioner Blevins asked how much was budgeted. Mr. Yates replied \$225,000.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle to approve the purchase of Thirty-Eight DS2000 Voting Tabulators not to exceed \$225,000.00 as included in the Budget, as recommended at tonight's meeting. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and unanimously approved.

#### **TAX DEPARTMENT:**

**1. TAX RELEASES – LISTINGS – UNCOLLECTABLE** – Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator asked the Board to approve tax releases for listing that are uncollectable in the amount of \$13,579.98.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases for listings that are uncollectable as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and unanimously approved.

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

**2. TAX RELEASES – LISTING** – Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator asked the Board to approve tax releases for listing in the amount of \$8,472.42.

Vice Chairman Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the tax releases for listing as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously approved.

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

**3. TAX RELEASES – COLLECTIONS** – Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator asked the Board to approve tax releases for collections in the amount of \$402.39.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases for collections as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and unanimously approved.

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

**4. 2019 APPOINTMENTS – WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW** – Tax Administrator Alex Hamilton stated the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution in 2001 that established a special Board of Equalization and Review as allowed in North Carolina General Statute §105-322. It is time to appoint members to the Board for the 2019 tax year. He said Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, Mr. Steve Crystal, Ms. Carmen James, Mr. Andrew Casey, and Ms. Janie Cheek have agreed to serve this year if that is the Board's desire. Mr. Hamilton stated all have completed the No Change Forms as required. Commissioner Blevins said this Board has been together for a few years and it is working well, which is very important with the revaluation. Their experience is helpful when going through this process.

Commissioner Gambill asked how many times this Board meets. Mr. Hamilton replied it depends on the number of appeals they receive, but at least twice to open and adjourn. He added there is no statutory requirement they will keep it open as long as they need to. He added they normally have three weeks to a month in-between to make sure they include anyone that wants to appeal. Mr. Hamilton stated at this time things are very smooth so they may not have a large amount of appeals. Commissioner Blevins stated that is due to Mr. Hamilton and the good job he does, many get resolved before they get to the E & R Board. Mr. Hamilton added it is due to the staff and the good job they do. Commissioner Gambill stated he has been asked in the past and folks said they can only do this one time per year. This makes sense because the bills only go out one time per year. Mr. Hamilton said the reason is they need to finish up as soon as possible is so they can do the billing. They have to be sent out in July and do not want a lot of changes once they establish the tax base. This is needed for budgeting and billing and it takes about one month to print bills. He added they have the early payment discount in August so they have to finish one month earlier to offer the discounts.

Vice Chairman Eddie Settle made a motion to appoint Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, Mr. Steve Crystal, Ms. Carmen James, Mr. Andrew Casey, and Ms. Janie Cheek to the 2019 Wilkes County Board of Equalization and Review as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

**PURCHASE OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY – MULBERRY TOWNSHIP** – County Attorney Tony Triplett stated he wanted to provide the Board an update. At the last meeting they agreed to advertise it for \$7,000 and this is the Wyatt property on Elledge Mill Road that they foreclosed on. Mr. Triplett said they have two upset bids filed thus far, with the most recent being today by Mr. Wagoner. He made the original offer and that bid was upset and he upset it again for \$7,925. Based on the calls received they feel there is a good chance it will be upset again. This process will continue until it runs out or is upset again and it will be brought back to

the Board at that point. Mr. Triplett said this will be advertised Friday and start a new 10-day upset that will run out April 15<sup>th</sup>.

**SET WORK SESSION – WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE – PRESENTATION –**

Chairman Elmore said Dr. Jeffrey Cox has invited the Board to lunch provided by the Culinary Students and a short presentation from the Finance Committee for their budget request for the upcoming year on April 11, 2019 from 12:30 until 2:00 PM. He added he hopes everyone can make it. Commissioner Blevins stated he will be out of town for a Health and Human Services Workshop and Committee meeting in Raleigh and will not be able to attend. He said he hates to miss it and apologizes to the College for not being in attendance. Vice Chairman Settle stated he has a Hospital Auxiliary Board meeting that has been scheduled for a long time, if he can get out of that he will come. Commissioner Gambill said it would be nice if they could move this to the evening and he cannot be there at this time. Chairman Elmore stated anyone that is available please attend, it will be a great meal with a very impressive new building to tour.

Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins to set a Work Session at Wilkes Community College on Thursday, April 11, 2019 with Lunch at 12:30 PM followed by a short presentation from Dr. Jeffrey Cox and the Finance Committee in Randolph Hall, Tory Oak Dining Area located at 1328 S Collegiate Drive, Wilkesboro. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Brain Minton and unanimous approved.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. LEASE AGREEMENT WITH STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA – CARTER FALLS – MEMORANDUM OF LEASE AGREEMENT –**

County Attorney Tony Triplett said they have in front of them documents for Carter Falls, which they have been talking about and working toward for a long time. He stated Dr. Bill Blackley is in attendance tonight and he had been leading the movement to develop Carter Falls as part of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. Chairman Elmore asked Dr. Blackley to come forward at this time.

Dr. Blakely stated he is the Chairman of the Elkin Valley Trails Association, Inc. (EVTA) and has been for the past 8 years. He said this has a lot to do with connectivity for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail that comes through Wilkes County. Mr. Blackley said 85% of the trail they are working on will be in Wilkes. He added last year they had over 4,600 volunteer hours and were in Our State Magazine which highlighted Carter Falls. They had 20 pages dedicated to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail to include Carter Falls. Mr. Blackley stated they are also part of the Piedmont Legacy Trails and working together to bring more trails to Wilkes, and are endorsing and promoting each other. He stated Derek Goddard has applied for and been awarded a \$150K grant for the bridge, EVTA has raised \$50K and hope to apply for a Park F Grant that has an April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. They are working on final cost estimates and designs at this time.

Dr. Blakely went over several trail sections and locations that they are working on for connectivity in both Surry and Wilkes County. The Carter Falls project will be a 200 foot arched suspension Bridge with the design being safety first followed by maintenance. It will include a lot of wood to keep it natural looking, rather than cables. Dr. Blackley said everything they do

will be presented to the County for approval. He added the Trail from Carter Falls to Stone Mountain is going to be a horse and hike trail and from Carter Falls to Elkin will be a hike and bike trail. They are working with both groups so there will be trails for everyone to enjoy and will bring in lots of people. He said they also hope to make the corner of Surry and Wilkes a hub for mountain biking with the addition of Carter Falls. They are also working with the Alleghany Sparta Trail Association, who are building a trail from Sparta to the Parkway. Once all the trails are completed it will go from Wilkes/Surry to Sparta, he added.

Dr. Blakely stated Bridges School has adopted Carter Falls for their Environmental project and have done all the clean ups on it and have another one set later this month. They are doing a great job. He added EVTA is working with the Water Shed Now group on a cleanup of trails and streams in Wilkes and Surry. He mentioned NC Trail Days coming up May 31, June 1-2, 2019 in Elkin which will include, fishing, biking, guided hikes, music, and a low country boil. Some of the activities will take place at Stone Mountain in Wilkes, he stated.

Dr. Blakely said for flood plain and beauty the bridge will be between 23 to 36 feet off the water. He added they will capture views of the lower and upper falls. They are working with landowners Brandon and Julie Osteen who are the ones that discovered the grave site of William Harris near Carter Falls. He was one of the body guard's for George Washington. He added there are two Scouts that have taken this as a project, they will clean it up and put up a flag pole. Dr. Blakely said this is very exciting and until recently no one knew it was there, it is about 30 feet from the trail. In closing he thanked the Board for being a core supporter of EVTA.

Mr. Triplett stated before the Board tonight is the County's approval to carry forward the Carter Falls project that has been in the works for a long time. He added it is a 30-year lease for \$1.00 for the entire 43 acre site to be used for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail at Carter Falls. He said either party can get out at any time with one year's notice. Mr. Triplett stated he received this late last week and was just advised by Derek Goddard of the April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline for the Part F Grant. The grant includes a provision that he has to certify that the county controls the property, meaning the lease has to be signed. Mr. Triplett stated that is why the lease was added tonight. This is before the Board along with a Memorandum of Lease and they go together. The memorandum is what is recorded at the Register of Deeds.

Chairman Elmore asked Mr. Triplett if he is satisfied with these documents. Mr. Triplett replied yes he is satisfied that the county's interest is protected. Vice Chairman Settle stated either party can get out of the lease with one year's notice. Mr. Triplett replied yes either party can get out, it runs on one-year terms with a one year notice by either party. Chairman Elmore stated the lease with the State can be canceled and the agreement with EVTA. Mr. Triplett replied yes. Commissioner Blevins asked what would happen with the bridge if they did get out, do they have to take it back to its natural state. Mr. Triplett replied no the wording in this lease states in general the property would be returned to its natural state except for any improvements with the consent of the State of North Carolina. The bridge and all the improvements to include trails, benches, and parking have been with the state's approval. Dr. Blackley added the state actually owns it, they build it and the state owns it.

Vice Chairman Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the Lease Agreement and the Memorandum of Lease between the State of North Carolina and Wilkes County for the 43 acre Carter Falls Property as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brain Minton and unanimously approved.

**2. MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT FOR CARTER FALLS – ELKIN VALLEY TRAILS ASSOCIATION, INC.** – Mr. Triplett stated the Management Agreement is between the county and EVTA, where they agree to be responsible for all of the County's obligations under the lease. They have to carry liability insurance and indemnify the county against any liability they have as the tenant of the property. He added they have worked on the agreement with EVTA and it is very comprehensive and covers everything including EVTA will pay matches for any grants or expenses. Mr. Triplett said it requires EVTA to work with the county and obtain approval for any changes made to the property and in turn the county will work with the state to make sure it satisfies the Division of Parks and Recreation. He added it is a three party undertaking with the State, County, and EVTA. Chairman Elmore stated the management agreement with EVTA has been in place for some time and this has not changed. Mr. Triplett replied that is correct they were just waiting on the Lease.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the Management Agreement between Wilkes County and Elkin Valley Trails Association, Inc. for Carter Falls as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

**ADJOURN** – Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill, seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 8:33 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Giddeon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: