

**MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
May 3, 2022**

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED INSTALLMENT FINANCING AGREEMENT – Chairman Keith Elmore declared the Public Hearing open regarding the Proposed Installment Financing Agreement at 6:01 P.M. on Tuesday, May 3, 2022 with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Eddie Settle and Commissioner Brian S. Minton. Commissioner David Gambill was absent.

Also present were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; Chris Huffman, Finance Director, Chris Alexander, FHN Financial Municipal Advisor; Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Elmore asked Mr. Huffman to present this matter. Mr. Huffman thanked the Board and stated Chris Alexander, with FHN Financial is with him tonight and helping them to secure the funds. He added they are here regarding the possibility of the County issuing debt in the amount not to exceed \$10,000,000.00 for the purpose of providing funds along with other available funds to pay for the cost of constructing, equipping, and furnishing a new Emergency Services Facility, and also a vaccine testing site for Wilkes County. A Public Hearing is being held, the notice was published in the Local Wilkes Journal-Patriot as required, to advertise for the Public Hearing.

Chairman Elmore asked if they know the interest rates at this time, they are continuing to rise. Mr. Alexander replied it will depend on the term if 15 years or 20 years. They already have an RFP out requesting both terms and they are seeing them come in at the high 2.75% to 3% for 15 years and 3.50% to 4% for 20 years. He added the expectation is to get a fixed rate quote on Friday, May 6th from several Banks. They sent this to 31 financial institutions on April 21, 2022 and will then do the due diligence on the quote. Mr. Alexander stated the Fed meets tomorrow and they are expecting them to increase the rates 50 basis points, they have also said the rates could rise 50 to 75 more basis points at the June 14th. He added they are up 150 basis points from where they were 90-days ago. Commissioner Settle added it is better than several years ago when rates were 15% to 18%. Mr. Alexander stated they could refinance down the road if the rates drop, they are in an odd point with rates rapidly rising at this time. That could change down the road.

Chairman Elmore asked if anyone would like to speak at this time on the Proposed Installment Financing Agreement for Wilkes County. Hearing no comments Chairman Elmore declared the Public Hearing closed at 6:06 P.M.

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Wilkes, North Carolina, held a regular meeting in the Wilkes County Agriculture Center Meeting Room located at 416 Executive Drive in Wilkesboro, North Carolina at 6:01 p.m. on May 3, 2022.

Present: Chair Gideon Keith Elmore, presiding, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, and Commissioners Eddie Settle and Brian S. Minton

Absent: Commissioners David Gambill

Also Present: John Yates, County Manager; Tony Triplett, County Attorney; Chris Huffman, Finance Director; Sarah D. Call, Clerk; Chris Alexander, FHN Financial Municipal Advisor; and Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney.

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The Chair announced that this was the hour and day of the public hearing on a proposed installment financing agreement (the "Agreement") to be entered into by the County of Wilkes, North Carolina (the "County") pursuant to Section 160A-20 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, as amended (the "Act"), Finance Director Chris Huffman announced in a principal amount not to exceed \$10,000,000 for the purpose of providing funds, together with any other available funds, to pay the cost of constructing, equipping and furnishing a new emergency services facility for the County (the "Project"). To secure its obligations under the Agreement, the County will grant a lien on the site of the Project, together with any improvements or fixtures located or to be located thereon.

Mr. Huffman acknowledged due publication of the notice of public hearing in a newspaper with a general circulation in said County as required by Section 160A-20(g) of the Act and directed the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners to attach the affidavit showing publication in said paper on a date at least ten days prior to the date hereof as Exhibit A hereto.

The Chair then announced that the Board of Commissioners would immediately hear anyone who might wish to be heard on the advisability of the proposed Project or the financing as so described. No one appeared to be heard. Hearing no comments, Chairman Elmore closed the Public Hearing.

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I, Sarah D. Call, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners for the County of Wilkes, North Carolina, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true copy of so much of the proceedings of the Board of Commissioners for said County at a regular meeting held on May 3, 2022, as it relates in any way to the holding of a public hearing on a proposed installment financing agreement to be entered into by said County.

I DO HEREBY FURTHER CERTIFY that proper notice of such regular meeting was given as required by North Carolina law.

WITNESS my hand and official seal of said County this 3rd day of May, 2022.

_[SEAL]_____ Clerk to the Board of Commissioners

EXHIBIT A [Please see attached publisher's affidavit evidencing publication of Notice of Public Hearing]

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 6:06 P.M. at the Wilkes County Agricultural Center located at 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro, N.C. 28697 with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson, 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. Commissioner David Gambill is out of state and could not attend the meeting tonight.

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 Brian S. Minton, seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on April 19, 2022.

WILKES COUNTY LITTER COMMITTEE POSTER CONTEST WINNER – Chairman Elmore recognized Anderia Byrd, Landfill Director. Ms. Byrd thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Wilkes County Litter Committee. The Committee includes local and state officials along with volunteers from the Clean-Up Wilkes group. Their focus revolves around promoting the importance of litter prevention in the County, resulting in a less polluted environment and increasing the aesthetic value for all. She added recently the committee held a Litter Poster Contest in conjunction with Earth Day for all 4th grade students in Wilkes County. Ms. Byrd said 5 schools participated with 93 fourth grade students submitting a poster. They are pleased to present a certificate to the poster contest winner, Naw Htwe (Twee) from Wilkesboro Elementary School.

Ms. Twee won a pizza party for her class and all poster contest participants will receive an originally designed shirt from the Wilkes County Litter Committee. Ms. Byrd added the sponsors who helped purchase the t-shirts include, Pam Herring with the Herring Foundation, Bart and Jenna Mathis with The Lodge on Briar Creek, Mathis and Sons Quarry, Sherry and Allen Byrd with Life Alliance LLC, and The Woman's Farm Bureau Committee.

The Board of Commissioners and Ms. Byrd congratulated Ms. Twee and her parents on winning the litter contest poster contest and thanked them. Chairman Elmore stated they are all concerned about litter and glad so many took interest and they had a great contest.

WILKES COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES CENTER – CONTRACT – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Kris Little, Vannoy Construction Company, Inc. Mr. Little stated Mr. Triplett will present this and he will answer any questions they may have. Mr. Triplett said he would like to apologize for getting this to the Board so late. It was his delay, but this puts everything into one contract. He added this is for the construction of the Emergency

Services Center. Two meetings ago the Board approved the guaranteed maximum price (GMP) of \$11,869,107 and that is part of this contract. There were many details to work out and the contract covers all of it. Mr. Triplett said this is a construction contract for Vannoy to construct the Emergency Services Center on the Call Property and preliminary work has already begun and formalized what they have already agreed to. The contract calls for substantial completion by October 25, 2023 and final completion by November 30, 2023. Mr. Triplett said if the Board decides to move forward with approval they need to authorize John Yates to sign on behalf of the County.

Chairman Elmore stated they are using some ARPA funds for this. Mr. Yates replied yes, \$3.1 Million ARPA funds and \$362,500 SCIF Grant from the State. Chairman Elmore added this has been in the works for several years and is much needed. Mr. Triplett said it is always a pleasure to work with Vannoy & Sons Construction, Kris Little, Mike Kesterson and Mark Vannoy and all the folks. They appreciate their good work and how easy they are to work with. Mr. Little thanked them. Chairman Elmore stated this will also help the Health Department if they ever need to have a vaccine clinic and give them a dry place to do that.

Commissioner Settle stated he is pleased to see this and would like to see more satellite stations out in the county for quicker responses. Wilkes EMS has made great strides in the last several years and this is another key component. He added they need a couple more satellite stations to get everyone in the 756 square miles covered. Commissioner Settle said this is much needed and they will not pay the lease rent any longer, this is a top notch facility. Commissioner Minton said they are extremely pleased to see this, since coming on the Board he has worked very hard for EMS. They have supported them all they can, as Commissioner Settle stated they need more out in the county. He added they would like to see one in Boomer to take care of the folks there.

Commissioner Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the Construction Contract between Wilkes County and Vannoy & Sons Construction Company, Inc. for the construction of the Wilkes County Emergency Services Center on the Call property as presented at tonight's meeting; with the County Manager being authorized to sign on behalf of Wilkes County. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

WILKES COMMUNICATIONS – REQUEST NC GREAT GRANT APPLICATION – LETTER OF SUPPORT – Chairman Elmore stated Assistant County Attorney Brooke Felts will present this. Ms. Felts stated Wilkes Communications will not join them tonight. She added Chairman Elmore, Mr. Yates, and herself met with them yesterday for an update. They will now be applying for the Great Grant to serve a total of 1,281 homes and only asking for the \$56,000 match as presented at the last meeting. Chairman Elmore stated the number changed from the last meeting in a good direction. Commissioner Settle stated they were asking for over \$500,000 and this has changed. Mr. Yates replied yes. Ms. Felts added they did away with phase II and all they are asking from the County is \$56,000. She said there is a letter of support in the agenda packets, they have made the updates to reflect the change. An updated letter was provided to the Board at this time for consideration.

Mr. Yates said they have two providers applying for the Great Grant and the County can support both of them if the Board would like to do so. The State will choose who gets the grant and does the project. He added both providers may do some, it will be up to the State to decide and award. Mr. Yates added they can work with both of them. Commissioner Settle asked if the match is required. Ms. Felts replied if the County enters as a partner under the legislation for the grant the match is a minimum of 10%, it has to be at least \$560,000. Vice Chairman Johnson asked what parts of Wilkes will this serve. Ms. Felts replied unfortunately it was a call with Wilkes Communications and they did not provide an updated map. Ms. Sherrie Joines with Wilkes Communications replied it will be in Millers Creek, Ronda, and the Traphill area. Chairman Elmore added this will benefit the County if either one or both gets the grant and that is up to the State to decide.

Commissioner Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the Letter of Support on behalf of Wilkes Communications for the N.C. GREAT Grant Application and for a match of \$56,000 from Wilkes County as presented at tonight’s meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

CENTURY LINK/LUMEN/BRIGHTSPEED – REQUEST NC GREAT GRANT APPLICATION – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Steve Brewer, Director Government Affairs. Mr. Brewer thanked the Board and went over the below PowerPoint presentation at this time: He also explained the transition to Brightspeed and they will be headquartered and making a significant investment in North Carolina:

North Carolina – Wilkes County Considerations

Key Build Considerations

- Builds are currently based on **preliminary** address data from North Carolina – final location checks and adjustments may result in minor edits
- Eligible premises are defined as those with speeds less than 25mbps download | 3mbps upload
 - FCC Form 477 and North Carolina speed survey data was leveraged to determine eligibility
- Ineligible areas include RDOF, Tier 3 County/Non-Rural Tract, Federal Broadband Grant Award Areas, and Previous GREAT Grant Award
- Max funding from the State per application is \$4 Million
- Brightspeed has an agreement to acquire Lumen's assets in North Carolina
 - Brightspeed will take responsibility for these builds after the closure of this deal (est. late summer or early fall 2022)

Wilkes Grant Application



Legend: Grant Planned Fiber Route (blue line), County Application Area (grey box)

Notes: 1) For max score, CPP must be under \$3,500; will continue to reevaluate and bring costs below this threshold if possible. 2) Assumes 70% grant match given our estimated score. Sources: NC GREAT Grant

Project Name Wilkes

Description Target coverage project of majority eligible premises in our footprint within the county

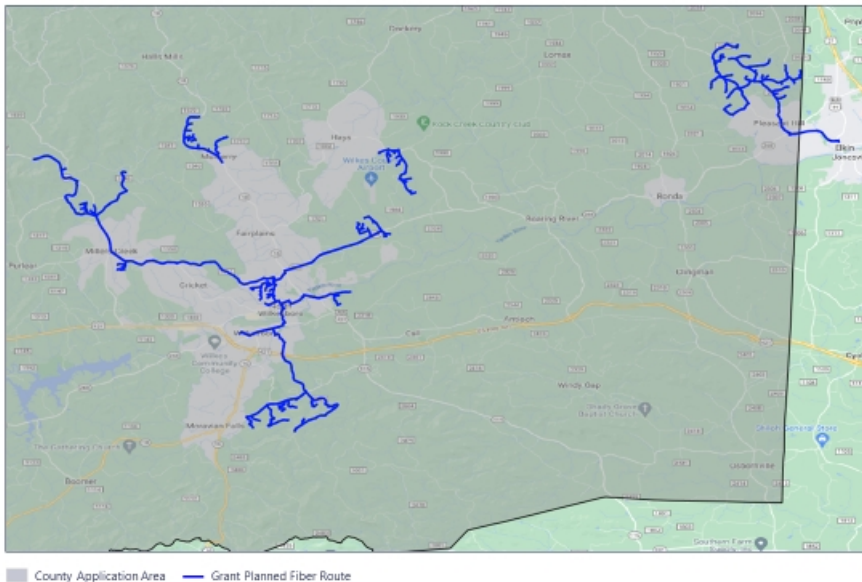
Key Build Figures

Total Capex	\$5.45M
Cost Per Premise (CPP)¹	\$4,937
Premises	1,103
Fiber (miles)	71.8
Est. State Grant²	\$3.86M
Requested from County	\$50K
Provider Capex	\$1.53M

Confidential & Proprietary | Trade Secret March 2022 1

Confidential & Proprietary | Trade Secret March 2022 2

Wilkes Grant Application Map



Mr. Brewer stated each application is capped at \$4 million, the county could have multiple winning applications, counties are capped at a total of \$8 million. This could include Wilkes Communications and he is optimistic a number of counties will receive multiple awards. Mr. Brewer explained how the grant works, the speed qualifications, who qualifies, and also the potential for future grant programs later this year and next. He added they plan to target an additional 7,000 to 8,000 units in Wilkes that does not qualify for the grant program. This will be for fiber installation with much higher speeds. The executives at Brightspeed are the former executives from Verizon that built their wireless network and they provide great leadership and knowledge in the newest fiber technology. Mr. Brewer said Brightspeed has committed to participate in the Federal Government's Affordable Connectivity Plan (ACP). This is a subsidy that provides a \$30 discount to low income households.

Commissioner Settle asked about the 7,000 to 8,000 additional folks they plan to serve. Mr. Brewer replied this is a planned build outside of the grant that Brightspeed is willing to do to bring fiber to as many locations as possible. This is the target number for Wilkes. Chairman Elmore stated they could possibly get both grants, which would be very good. Mr. Brewer replied yes, that is possible. The state will fund the first place application in every county before it funds the second. They will roll back around and award second place. Due to the \$4 million cap it is feasible there will be second place application awards. Chairman Elmore stated what happens with the fiber in ground after 15-20 years, and asked if this all below ground. Mr. Brewer replied he is told the fiber technology they are using is something that Corning came up with. It is much easier to install with much higher speed potential and long term upgrades. He added it will be both below ground and above depending on the area. There are many grant programs coming with hundreds of millions that both Brightspeed and Wilkes Communications can leverage. Mr. Brewer said they would like to work with the county on broadband grants in the future to help increase speeds and serve more folks. He added they hope to get close to

universal broadband and look forward to working with the County. Commissioner Settle added this is the number one connected county in NC and the rest will catch up with all the money. It was pitiful when they were in DC and all the kids were in online classes and so many did not have internet especially in the rural areas. He added they all need it. Mr. Brewer agreed, they are at a crossroads in history and hope all can have broadband soon.

1. LETTER OF SUPPORT – Chairman Elmore asked the pleasure of the Board.

Commissioner Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the Letter of Support on behalf of Century Link/Lumen/Brightspeed for the N.C. GREAT Grant Application and for a match of \$50,000 from Wilkes County as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

2. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – Mr. Brewer stated they have requested the MOU, it tells the State, that Wilkes County is willing to partner with them. There are points available through the partnership that will help with the scoring on the grant application. It also says the \$50,000 contribution will be given toward the overall cost of the fiber. He added it will be submitted with their application.

Commissioner Brain S. Minton made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding for the \$50,000 Grant Match for Century Link/Lumen/Brightspeed GREAT Grant Application as presented at tonight's meeting. 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 first he would like to provide an update on a few things. May is national Foster Care month and Older American month. He added first he wanted to mention the Children and Family Specialty Plan. DHHS wants to promote this plan which is a single plan to allow kids to maintain their provider and care manager no matter where they are, which may be out of Vaya's catchment area. Mr. Blevins said the County Commissioners Association (NCACC) has asked them to pause this plan, to give time for the LME/MCO's to work together. Vaya and the other 5 LME/MCO's are opposed to it. They feel like the existing system is good and this will fragment it. He added the Social Services Director Association wants the new plan. It will help children placed outside the service area and cut down on the delays they have now. They feel like if there was one state plan it would speed up the process. Mr. Blevins stated there are issues in other areas, some of the LME/MCO's are not as good as Vaya, they help them and do a good job for Wilkes DSS. He just wanted the Board to know about this. Chairman Elmore asked if they need to support what the NCACC is asking for with a pause. Mr. Blevins replied that is up to the Board, what they have now in Wilkes works with Vaya. Commissioner Minton agreed Vaya does a good job and they would like to keep it the way it is. Commissioner Settle added NCACC will advocate for what they think is best for all 100 counties.

Mr. Blevins stated there is another change that they are all in favor of, to extend Medicaid to the parents of the children. This will be wonderful as long as they are making reasonable efforts in

the court ordered reunification. Many times, when they have to take the children the parents lose their Medicaid and can't do what is needed to get them back. Helpfully this will go through and help them with reunifying the family.

The next update is Work First ARPA funding they received \$500 per child for the month of March. Also, ARPA is providing funds for staffing based on the County's Food and Nutrition (FNS) case load. Mr. Blevins said Wilkes will get \$77,159.71, usually this is 50% county and 50% state and will give them 100% up to this amount, beginning in July. They are asking counties to use this to enhance the FNS programs, but it is not mandated. The last updated is the REDA Medicaid audit has started. They pulled the first month's cases and there are no paybacks so far. This is because of the great staff they have. They hope this continues and he will keep them updated as this continues. Mr. Huffman added DSS is in an audit almost year round.

Mr. Blevins went over the monthly caseload reports for March at this time. Next, he went through the Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial reports for March. Mr. Blevins went over the CPS Foster Care monthly report for March at this time. Mr. Blevins thanked the Board for their support of DSS and all they do for the kids.

Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Mr. Blevins for the good report, update, and all they do. They are very happy with the work they do. Mr. Blevins replied it is the staff.

TO: Wilkes County Board of Commissioners
FROM: John C. Yates, County Manager
SUBJECT: Recommended Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget
DATE: May 3, 2022

The recommended budget for fiscal year 2022-2023 is respectfully submitted with a proposed tax rate of 66 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. The total recommended budget including all funds: General, 911, Grants, Airport, Landfill, and Volunteer Fire Districts is \$106,779,434.

GENERAL FUND

The recommended General Fund budget for fiscal year 2022-2023 is \$92,856,090. This is a 1.43% decrease from the 2021-2022 amended budget of \$94,188,773.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

This year's recommended appropriation for Wilkes County School System is \$19,463,119. This appropriation includes \$14,474,484 for current expense/operations and \$675,000 for capital outlay/improvements. This appropriation reflects a 4% increase in operation funding of

\$1,176,934. The total appropriation also includes lottery and sales tax funds forwarded to the school system by statute. We are estimating growth of sales tax funds we forward to the Wilkes County School System to be an additional \$195,223 for their portion of articles 40 and 42.

WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE

This year's recommended appropriation for Wilkes Community College is \$4,303,877. The recommended budget for current expense is \$3,585,877; \$150,000 for capital outlay, \$366,000 for salary supplements, and a one-time building improvement appropriation of \$202,000 for the Welding Facility. This year's appropriation reflects a 4% increase in operation funding of \$137,919.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY

This year's recommended appropriation for Wilkes County Appalachian Regional Library is \$688,697. Plus, an additional \$32,568 for the Traphill Branch. This year's appropriation reflects a 4% increase for a total of \$27,740.

PERSONNEL

In the proposed budget for 2022-2023, we have the following new full-time positions:

1 – Sheriff – Deputy Sheriff Sergeant. This new position will patrol assigned areas; respond to calls for service; investigate crimes; and perform many other duties. Due to growing staff there is a need for a mid-level experienced deputy.

1 – Sheriff – SRO. This new position will work as a second School Resource Officer at Wilkes Central High School due to the size of student population and to better serve this community.

1 – Finance – Assistant Finance Officer. This new position is needed to help oversee 30 million in ARPA funds and to navigate changes in the GASB laws and reporting for ARPA and State funds. This position will help finance maintain the level of service needed for the 30 departments within the county and outside agencies.

PAY

A 6% salary increase has been recommended for all full-time employees; currently we have 22 unfilled open positions in Wilkes County.

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

Our self-insured Blue Cross Blue Shield Employee Health Insurance premiums will increase by 2% which is \$121,000 for 2022-2023.

HUMAN SERVICES

The Social Services General Administrative budget is recommended at \$8,714,707, or a \$517,952 increase from the prior year. The total Department of Social Services budget is \$15,913,337. The County portion of the total Department of Social Services budget is \$7,616,123 or 47.86%.

The General Health budget is recommended at \$2,509,914. The total Health budget is \$8,235,684. The County's portion of the total Health Department budget is \$2,443,109 or 29.67%.

The VAYA Health budget is recommended an appropriation of \$218,612 which is the same as last year's budget.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Sheriff's Department recommended budget is \$7,535,827. The Jail recommended budget is \$4,602,407.

The Emergency Communications recommended budget is \$1,725,341.

The Emergency Medical Services budget is recommended \$6,102,180.

SPECIAL PROJECTS/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This year \$250,952 has been appropriated for the Wilkes Economic Development Corporation, which reflects a 4% increase. This will enable them to continue to work on job growth and existing business retention in Wilkes County. We are very excited to be working with Wilkes EDC on the Wilkes Commercial Business Center.

REVENUES

Ad valorem taxes for the recommended budget are estimated at \$40,455,630. This includes a 2.52% growth in real property tax values. We also project a 7.5% growth in motor vehicle tax for 2022-2023.

Sales Tax represents 24.81% of the County's revenue and is budgeted at \$23,033,918 which reflects a 12.8% increase over last year's amended budget.

General Fund Balance appropriation of \$5,696,113 is required to balance this year's recommended budget. In the County's most recent audit, the unassigned fund balance as of June 30, 2021 was \$29,055,519 or 46%. If we use the total of \$5,696,113 our unassigned fund balance would be estimated at \$23,359,406.

AIRPORT FUND

The Airport operating budget is recommended at \$4,108,212.

LANDFILL FUND

The Landfill operating budget is recommended at \$4,412,782.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

In the proposed budget last year, we cut several public safety capital requests, in doing so we anticipated spending American Recovery Act Funds of \$1,000,000 on Sheriff's Department and EMS vehicles. In addition, we are also using \$600,000 for the construction of the burn building at the Fire Training Ground; \$3,100,000 for the construction of Emergency Services Center to be located on the Call Street property; \$288,933 was used for the vaccine Incentive Program; \$7,988,299 for the Rural Community Wastewater Infrastructure Extension Project; and \$191,194 for the Part F Grant Match. Wilkes County has received \$6,644,114.50 funds to date and expect to receive the remaining ½ by the end of this fiscal year.

We are very excited to be working with N.C. Commerce for the \$18 million appropriated for the North Wilkesboro Speedway and look forward to this project.

CONCLUSION

This budget year has been very difficult due to navigating the end of the pandemic, inflation, and economic uncertainties. The economy and rising inflation has increased the cost of goods, services, and fuel, which impacts the cost of county services and places an additional burden on citizens and employees. Other factors that may impact our budget are State and Federal spending. We cannot predict what response they may take in regards to unfunded mandates, decreases in revenues, and rising inflation. Due to the resilience of our citizens, businesses, and employees, we do anticipate an increase in sales tax and property tax collections. We strive to provide an efficient and productive work environment for our employees and the citizens who depend on our services by always remaining open. Delivering our services is, and will remain, our priority.

However, Wilkes County cannot do what we do for our citizens without attracting and retaining high quality, loyal, dedicated, and hardworking employees. This is the single most important asset and resource we have, and the employees are our top priority for this year's budget. Unemployment in Wilkes was 3.6% for the first quarter of this year. We have 506 full time positions, 22 unfilled open positions at this time, and 42 employees that have left the County since 12/30/2021.

We understand the budget is the single most important document approved by the Board of Commissioners each year. It is the County's basic plan of action for FY 2022-2023. As always, Wilkes County is very dependent on sales tax and we will continue to monitor the

effects of an uncertain economy and rising inflation. Looking forward, thanks to the leadership and support of the Commissioners, we see opportunities for many positive impacts for Wilkes. Such opportunities include: WCC Education Promise for all students, continued growth at the Airport to include the 7,000 sq. ft. runway extension, and several economic development projects throughout Wilkes County to include: the North Wilkesboro Speedway, the Wilkes Commercial Business Center, and construction has just begun on the new Wilkes Emergency Service Center. We are also looking forward to the upcoming opportunity to work with NC Tech Pathways. This is the Manager's recommendation and is now presented to the Board for your consideration. The staff and I stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Chairman Elmore thanked Mr. Yates and the staff and said the best part is there is no tax increase and this has been true for at least the last 8 years. Mr. Huffman added there were no fire tax rate increase requested for this year as well. Chairman Elmore said they are doing a good job and they are not hearing many complaints. Vice Chairman Johnson said he appreciates all the hard work, this is a large task they do. Mr. Yates replied they have a good group that works on this. Chairman Elmore asked about the letter to the outside agencies and non-profits that finance was to send of what will be required next year. Mr. Huffman replied that will go out in about 6 months since it will be effective next fiscal year. Chairman Elmore said they need to send it sooner, with this upcoming year's appropriation would be a good start. They will have a full year to plan. Commissioner Settle added they may need to send them more than one, they all have budgets and need to plan for this.

2. SET BUDGET WORK SESSION – Chairman Elmore stated they need to set a budget work session.

Commissioner Eddie Settle made a motion to set a Budget Work Session for Tuesday, May 10, 2022 at 4:30 P.M. with the meeting to immediately follow at the Wilkes County Agricultural Center located at 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro, N.C. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

The work session is open to the public.

3. SET PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED BUDGET – Chairman Elmore stated next, they need to set the Public Hearing on the proposed budget.

Commissioner Eddie Settle made a Motion to set a Public Hearing on the proposed FY 2022-2023 Wilkes County Budget for Tuesday, June 7, 2021 at 6:00 P.M., to be noticed and held pursuant to the requirements of the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, with the Commissioners' regularly scheduled meeting to immediately follow the Public Hearing in the Commissioners' Meeting Room located at the Wilkes County Office Building, 110 North Street Wilkesboro, N.C. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS – BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS – Motion was made by Commissioner Brian S. Minton to approve Budget Amendment No. 32 (General – Social Services – Received an allocation of \$459,036.04 for Pandemic LIEAP – Low Income Energy Assistance for a one time supplement due to COVID-19. No County funds required). The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved

NEW BUSINESS – Commissioner Minton stated he is wearing a lime green ribbon at tonight's meeting. This is National Mental Health Awareness month and with all that he is involved in felt it was appropriate to wear this in support of Mental Health Awareness. Chairman Elmore added they appreciate this. It is becoming more and more important, it adds to drug issues, suicides and is very important to remember. Commissioner Minton stated they need to slow down and listen and they can help.

CLOSED SESSION – Commissioner Brian S. Minton 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; under Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statute and to consult with and give instructions to the Board's attorneys regarding pending litigation titled Wilkes County vs. Wilkesboro Holdings, LLC and the Opioid Litigation currently pending in which the County is a Plaintiff. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Brian S. Minton, seconded by Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson 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 Vice Chairman Casey Joe Johnson and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:54 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: June 7, 2022