

**MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
May 21, 2019**

PUBLIC HEARING – 2019-2020 PROPOSED WILKES COUNTY BUDGET – Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore declared the Public Hearing open concerning the 2019-2020 proposed Wilkes County Budget at 6:38 P.M. on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 with the following members present: Chairman Gideon 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; Chris Huffman, Finance Director; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Public Notice for the Public Hearing was published in the Wilkes-Journal Patriot on May 10, 2019 and May 17, 2019, posted on the County bulletin board outside the meeting location and on the County website. The Public Notice is attached and made a part of these minutes.

Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore recognized the following individuals who addressed the Board:

BERT YOUNG – HOSPITALITY HOUSE – Mr. Young thanked the Board for this time and stated there is a homelessness crisis in Wilkes County, the point in time account for January 2018 revealed 63 adults and 35 children living in Wilkes unsheltered. It increased by 24 people for 2019. He added fortunately the Hospitality House of Boone is addressing the need in Wilkes which serves 7 counties in the northwest region. Mr. Young stated 18% of the residence at the Hospitality House were from Wilkes County, at a cost of \$33 per night, for an annual total of \$242,240. The goal of the hospitality house is not just a shelter, but to help get them back on their feet.

Mr. Young provided handouts and mentioned other services provided by the Hospitality House. He added 95% of the residences come from Wilkes, Watauga, Ashe, and Alleghany county, to this point all of those except Wilkes support Hospitality House in their annual budgets. In closing Mr. Young thanked the Board for their consideration in the upcoming budget. He added many of the Churches and residence of Wilkes support the Hospitality House and they are asking the County to join them in their ongoing efforts to address the issue of homelessness in Wilkes County.

Chairman Elmore thanked Mr. Young for their work and all they do in Wilkes.

AIMEE JAMES – LIBRARY – Ms. James thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak tonight. She said last year the Commissioners agreed to give them enough money over 3-years to implement a new pay scale for the Library Staff and the accompanying benefits. Last year the funding was increased by \$57,450 and they ask for the same increase this year to implement the second step. Ms. James stated the proposed budget gives them an increase of \$28,686 and leaves them almost \$29,000 short. She added with the same increase as last year and personnel changes

they have made they can give the staff the promised increase and provide and improve the services to the public. Mr. James asked them to fully fund the request for the upcoming budget year.

Chairman Elmore thanked Ms. James.

Chairman Elmore asked if anyone would like to speak regarding the proposed 2019-2020 Wilkes County Budget. Hearing no comments on the proposed 2019-2020 Wilkes County Budget, Chairman Elmore declared the Public Hearing closed at 6:44 P. M.

PUBLIC HEARING – REQUEST BY MORAVIAN FALLS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. FOR FIRE TAX RATE INCREASES IN FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 BUDGET – Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore declared the Public Hearing open concerning the request by Moravian Falls Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. for fire tax rate increases in fiscal year 2019-2020 Wilkes County Budget at 6:44 P.M. on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 with the following members present: Chairman Gideon 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; Chris Huffman, Finance Director; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Public Notice for the Public Hearing was published in the Wilkes-Journal Patriot on May 10, 2019 and May 17, 2019, posted on the County bulletin board outside the meeting location and on the County website. The Public Notice is attached and made a part of these minutes.

Chairman Elmore stated this is a formality, the Board does not approve these increases. This is an informative process to let the citizens in that community know this increase is levied by the Fire Department and administered by the County Commissioners and Government.

Chairman Gideon Keith Elmore recognized the following individuals who addressed the Board:

GARY JORDAN, PRESIDENT – MORAVIAN FALLS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. – Mr. Jordan thanked the Board for the opportunity to come and speak. He stated Moravian Falls Fire Department was founded in 1958 and has been operating for 60 years. When the department was founded they had a 5¢ tax rate and they have worked very hard to operate and maintain that 5¢ tax rate. He added up to this point they have been able to do this and have never asked for a rate increase. Mr. Jordan stated they have been good stewards with the finances they received and their goal was to maintain that rate. The problem they have run into is the property valuation increases have not kept up with the growth of expenses in equipment and all their expenses keep rising. Mr. Jordan stated they are to the point now that they have to have some assistance. He next went through a list of building improvements needs and equipment upgrades that are also needed to keep up with the demands in their district. They have to replace some of the older equipment, it is very well maintained and tested, but the cost of the equipment continues to rise. He respectfully asked the Board to consider the rate increase of

4¢ which brings the fire tax rate to 9¢. They will still be one of the lowest rates in the county even with this increase.

Commissioner Blevins asked the breakdown of the 425 calls they had last year. Fire Chief Kimi Hamby replied they had 270 first responder calls and 140 fire calls. Mr. Jordan added they do have a large number of structure calls but also vehicle fires. Vice Chairman Settle asked if their district goes all the way to 421. Mr. Jordan replied no they go to Food Lion on 16 and all the way to the top of the mountain; down 18 to Boomer; and then to Broadway; which is a large area to cover. Chairman Elmore asked if they cover all of Lithia Springs to the top of the mountain. Mr. Jordan replied yes. Vice Chairman Settle asked if they had room for EMS if in the future someone wanted to place one there. Mr. Hamby replied not at the present time. Vice Chairman Settle asked how they feel about doing that in the future. Mr. Jordan replied if it would assist and they had the room it would be good. Mr. Sam Ingraham with the Fire Department added they house a rescue squad crash truck at their station.

Commissioner Blevins stated for the process on increasing their tax rate, they have a duly elected Board in their fire District. Mr. Jordan replied yes. Commissioner Blevins said they choose officers and meet yearly. Mr. Jordan replied yes, they have an annual meeting. Commissioner Blevins asked if there was a vote by the Board and everyone had an opportunity to weigh in on the decision to raise the tax rate. Mr. Jordan stated they publish a notice of the Board meeting and they get a fairly large turnout. He added the Board of Directors considered this and discussed it at length, they approved the request so it could be brought to the County for consideration. Mr. Jordan stated they did not advertise it in the community. Chairman Elmore stated the Board began having these hearings a few years ago, they are not required to, but it is good to inform the public. He added they have done a good job with why the increase is needed and they appreciate all they do. The Board supports them and all the Fire Departments. Commissioner Gambill stated the equipment costs are going up a tremendous amount and also the additional equipment they have to have to respond to the medical calls as well. He added they appreciate what they do. Commissioner Gambill said he is glad they do this so they can see what the fire department needs and how things are going.

Mr. Jordan stated with him tonight are Kimi Hamby, Fire Chief and Assistant Chief, Sam Ingram. The Board thanked Mr. Hamby, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Ingram and said they appreciate all they do for their community, it is a very important service. Commissioner Blevins added they also appreciate the relationship they have with the Fire Departments, they have duly elected Boards and have atonement within their fire district and they respect that and the good job they do.

Chairman Elmore asked if anyone else would like to speak on behalf of the request from Moravian Falls. Hearing no comments Chairman Elmore declared the Public Hearing closed at 6:55 P.M. on the proposed fire tax rate increase for Moravian Falls Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

PUBLIC CONCERNS – RICHARD RENTON – FREE ACCESS TO REGISTER OF DEEDS – Richard Renton was joined by Jim Logan. Mr. Renton stated he is the CEO of Triad Multiple Listing Service (MLS), they provide MLS systems and support to 5,000 realtors in a 10-12 county region that covers Wilkes and the surrounding counties. He said he and Jim Logan are here on behalf of the Wilkes Realtor group and speaking on the importance of having easy access to public recording information online. Mr. Renton stated specifically deeds that are used consistently and often in transacting real estate. He added the vast majority of the 100 counties in NC offer this service at no charge to the public, it is a business generator. Mr. Renton stated Realtors must complete legally binding information on their forms for every property they list which helps them to make the real estate market work. If the Realtors cannot not easily access this information at no cost they go to third party sites that may not have accurate information. Mr. Renton stated back before online access these folks drove to the Courthouse and paid a copy fee to get what they needed.

In closing Mr. Renton stated they feel it is important for all communities in the State to provide access to this data at no cost. The Realtors bring back a lot to the community to make the market work and bring business, finding homes and helping folks achieve the American dream of being home owners. In Wilkes County last year there were 879 properties sold with a medium price of \$158,000. Mr. Renton said they are requesting Wilkes does what the majority of all the other counties in NC do which is offer the deeds at no cost to the community.

Mr. Logan added he is here representing the Association as the President and they have access but there is a charge for it and sometimes is it hard to get accurate data from one MLS to another. This data provided for free needs to be done, not just for the realtors, but also for appraisers and all parts of the real estate business. Mr. Logan stated they currently only have access to deeds and need access to other public records that are associated with real estate. He added deed restrictions are not online and need to be. They deal with realtors outside of Wilkes that are listing and selling properties in this area and they have to drive to the Wilkes County Court House to get what they need. Mr. Logan said not only do they have to drive and get what is not online, the have to pay for what is online.

Vice Chairman Settle asked where do they have to go to get a copy. Mr. Logan replied Register of Deeds. Vice Chairman Settle asked if this is the case in Watauga County. Mr. Logan replied no, they can get online in Wilkes but there is a fee and is limited to certain information. Vice Chairman Settle asked if the surrounding counties operate this way. Mr. Logan replied no, they have free access.

Chairman Elmore stated they have a duly elected Register of Deeds that he suggested they meet with to see what can be worked out. He added they are all elected officials as Ms. Misty Smithey is. Chairman Elmore recognized Ms. Smithey at this time. Mr. Logan stated previous Boards have met with her, but he has not. Chairman Elmore added this would be a good start. He thanked Mr. Renton and Mr. Logan for their comments.

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 at 7:04 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Gideon 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 Gideon Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION – Commissioner David Gambill led the Invocation.

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

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

WILKES COUNTY PROCUREMENT POLICY – CDBG-I PROGRAM – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Kelly Coffee, Senior Planner High Country Council of Governments. Mr. Kelly said this is a CDBG Infrastructure project. He added this is simple, last fall the Board adopted a Procurement Policy provided by CDBG program for the Mulberry Sewer Extension. In January 2019 they came out with a new procurement policy to adopt and the difference is the prior one was very general. It lists the federal regulations and general statutes and that Wilkes County will adhere to the North Carolina Federal and State procurement policies. Mr. Kelly stated the new policy list all the requirements and is more of an addendum to what was passed prior. He added it is nothing new and the county probably already follows most of these guidelines anyway.

Commissioner Blevins asked if everything is getting to the point to begin construction. Mr. Coffee replied they are several months ahead of schedule. The environmental review has been approved, engineering is approved, the advertisement for bids has gone out, and bids are due in June. He added they have not had any issues up to this point.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve and adopt the Wilkes County Procurement Policy for the CDBG-I Program as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (JCPC):

1. FUNDING PLAN FOR 2019-2020 – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Christyn Grant, Chairperson JCPC. Ms. Grant thanked the Board and stated she is here for approval of the JCPC funding plan that the JCPC Committee has voted on. Commissioner Blevins asked who is the Commissioner representative on their Board. Commissioner Brian Minton stated he is. Chairman Elmore stated there is a 20% match required. Ms. Grant replied yes.

Motion was made by Commissioner Brian Minton to approve the Wilkes County 2019-2020 Funding Plan for the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and passed unanimously.

2. RESOLUTION SUPPORTING JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL ALLOCATION EXPANSION – Chairman Elmore stated he could not help but notice it is been 9-years since they had an increase in funding. Ms. Grant replied that is what she has been told, she has not been there that long, but there has been no increase in that time.

Commissioner Gambill asked if the increase is considering the change in law coming up with raise the age. He added he is not aware of all the changes and assume they will get more information soon, but it will be a big deal. Ms. Grant said the Resolution is to support JCPC expansion. They JCPC provides intermediate sanctions for early intervention programs to help make possible the 86% reductions in youth served by the Youth Development Center since 1998. She added there has been a decrease in juveniles at intake, but an increase in the youth population. Ms. Grant said the decrease is good however, with the raise the age there will be an increase of juveniles being served. The JCPC needs adequate funding to be fully prepared. She added if NC is to continue its success in diverting juveniles away from the justice system after raise the age takes affect on December 1, 2019, community based programs need support. Ms. Grant said they will need expansion to accommodate an older population, expansion to assist local districts with school justice partnership which is an element of raise the age legislation, training, and age appropriate services. She added without addition JCPC funding this will be impossible. Commissioner Gambill said their workload will double if not triple by adding 16 and 17 year old's.

Commissioner Brian Minton made a motion to adopt the Resolution Supporting Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Allocation Expansion as requested and presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously approved.

*Wilkes COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
110 North Street
Wilkesboro, NC 28697*

*Wilkes County Board of Commissioners Resolution
Supporting
Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Allocation Expansion*

WHEREAS, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) funding is a partnership between the State of North Carolina and the County to ensure a local continuum of services for court involved and at-risk juveniles; and,

WHEREAS, the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, under the authority of NCGS§143B-851, and within the scope of its powers and duties, "Each County Council shall annually review the needs of juveniles in the county who are at risk of delinquency or who have been adjudicated

undisciplined or delinquent and the resources available to address those needs. In particular, each County Council shall assess the needs of juveniles in the county who are at risk or who have been associated with gangs or gang activity, and the local resources that are established to address those needs,” and,

WHEREAS, the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act passed in 2017, also referenced as North Carolina’s Raise the Age legislation, expands the age of juvenile jurisdiction, increasing it to include juveniles ages 16 and 17 years of age effective December 1, 2019; and,

WHEREAS, Raise the Age legislation will increase the need for immediate and age-appropriate sanctions and diversion services for juvenile offenders and those at-risk of delinquency; and, WHEREAS, JCPC funding has seen no increase in more than nine years; and,

WHEREAS, the effort to immediately and effectively address juvenile offending behavior is an evidence-based investment in North Carolina’s future; and,

WHEREAS, effective intervention and programming reduces detention and youth development commitments as a cost savings to the state and county;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Wilkes County fully supports an adequate and timely increase of local Juvenile Crime Prevention funding to ensure program expansion and successful implementation of the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act Raise the Age Legislation, set for December 1, 2019.

Adopted this 21st day of May, 2019.

Chairman

Clerk to the Board

RESOLUTION – NORTH WILKESBORO SPEEDWAY – Chairman Elmore stated the Town of Wilkesboro is asking the County to adopt a Resolution to seek opportunities for North Wilkesboro Speedway. Commissioner Blevins asked if this request came from North Wilkesboro and added it would have been nice if someone would have come over to present it. Mr. Yates replied yes, they sent it for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. Chairman Elmore stated he spoke with Mayor Robert Johnson and they passed a similar Resolution and would like the County and Town of Wilkesboro to also pass a Resolution of Support. He added this is to request Charlotte Motor Speedway to meet and look for opportunities to open the race track back up for racing. Chairman Elmore stated this is non-binding and simply a Resolution of Support. He added it would be great if they would come back and do something here.

Vice Chairman Settle asked who will set up this meeting, he would love to meet and discuss this. Commissioner Gambill stated this Board has always been willing to meet. Commissioner Blevins added he would support a plan. Chairman Elmore asked if Wilkesboro has passed it. Mr. Yates stated he does not think they have, but it may be on their next meeting agenda. Chairman Elmore stated it would behoove the county to pass this in his opinion. Vice Chairman

Settle asked if anyone has met with Charlotte Motor Speedway, he is ready to do this. Commissioner Minton added it would have been nice to have someone here to tell them about this and answer questions. Vice Chairman Settle added it would be great to have a plan. Commissioner Gambill stated this is something they have always supported. Commissioner Minton asked if anyone from North Wilkesboro could come and answer their questions. He asked LeeAnn Nixon, EDC President if she was aware of this or a meeting. Vice Chairman Settle asked if they came to the EDC Board about this. Ms. Nixon replied no, she would be glad to help. Vice Chairman Settle added they all would be happy to help. Commissioner Blevins said there has been many videos made and ongoing efforts to revive the track. He added they should be as informed as North Wilkesboro since this track is in the County and not North Wilkesboro.

Chairman Elmore asked what are their concerns. Commissioner Gambill replied he does not have a problem with the resolution. Commissioner Blevins stated if they were aware of something new that was going on that required this they would be very quick and happy to support it, this is just saying they resolve to support whatever. Chairman Elmore said he would like the Board to pass the Resolution of Support. Vice Chairman Settle added he would like to see something gets done and a meeting is set up.

Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins to adopt the Resolution to Seek Opportunities for North Wilkesboro Speedway, as requested. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and passed unanimously.

*RESOLUTION TO SEEK OPPORUNITIES FOR
NORTH WILKESBORO SPEEDWAY*

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners desire to begin cooperation and work with North Wilkesboro Speedway owners, Speedway Motorsports Inc. of Charlotte, North Carolina, to seek out opportunities for the property; and

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners desire to help identify all possible state and regional funding streams for infrastructure and property improvements; and

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners desire to provide local support to Speedway Motorsports Inc. of Charlotte, North Carolina in seeking opportunities for property reuse.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners resolve to meet with Speedway Motorsports Inc. to identify any possible ideas and opportunities.

ADOPTED by the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners in regular session assembled, this the 21st day of May, 2019.

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

By: _____
Giddeon Keith Elmore, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sarah D. Call, Clerk to the Board

WILKES COUNTY AIRPORT - APPROVAL OF ADVERTISEMENT FOR LEASE AGREEMENT – BILLY MCELWEE – County Attorney Tony Triplett stated this is a lease for Mr. and Mrs. Billy McElwee. The Airport Board at its last meeting recommended that the Board of Commissioners adopt a new lease agreement for Mr. McElwee. He has leased a hangar at the Airport since 2008. Mr. Triplett stated this lease expired in 2018, and this will renew it for another 10 years in 2 year increments retroactive to last year. The Airport Board recommends this and he has continued to pay rent. Mr. Triplett stated this is the same terms as before with no change, he has been paying \$1,000 per month which the Airport Board feels is a good rent. This hangar is about 5,000 square feet and located across from the Samaritan's Purse or the former Lowe's hangars. Mr. Triplett stated Mr. McElwee uses it and also subleases space and is very active in aviation and wishes to renew the lease. He added this is a twostep process which is to authorize it to be advertised at tonight's meeting, after 30 days advertisement it will come back for approval.

Commissioner Blevins added Mr. McElwee is an Airport Board member and a loyal lessor and pays on time every month. Chairman Elmore asked how was this missed, it is retroactive to July 2018. Mr. Triplett replied the Airport Board is not meeting as often as it has in the past. They have only met two times since last fall and he did not think to place it on one of those meetings so it could come before this Board earlier. Commissioner Blevins asked what is the legal status during that time period, does it continue as long as the payments are made. He added the Airport has been around a long time and this is not the first time this has happen. Chairman Elmore asked do they need a procedure in place to catch these. Mr. Triplett replied the lease continues under the same terms except it is month to month during that interim time. He added it would be good to have something in place, but with the irregularity of the Airport Board Meetings it just happens sometimes and takes one meeting with them and two from this Board to renew a lease.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to publish notice, pursuant to G.S. 153A-176, 160A-272, and 63-53(3), of the intent of the Board of Commissioners to enter into a Lease Agreement between Wilkes County (as Lessor) and William H. McElwee, III, and Karen I. McElwee, jointly and severally (as Lessees), for a hangar building, ground space, parking, and taxi-lane access, the same being the former John Bond/Suncrest Associates, LLC hangar purchased by Wilkes County in February 2008, consisting of approximately 21,450 square feet of ground space and approximately 5,250 square feet of hangar space, under terms and conditions as set forth in the proposed Lease Agreement presented at tonight's meeting, with the County Attorney to present a Resolution for final approval of the Lease Agreement at the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners following the expiration of thirty (30) days after the date of publication of the required notice. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and unanimously approved.

PURCHASE OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY – MULBERRY TOWNSHIP – County Attorney Tony Triplett stated he wanted to provide the Board an update. This is the Wyatt tax foreclosure property on Elledge Mill Road. Mr. Triplett said they have received another upset bid for \$10,500 and it will expire on May 24th at 5 PM. If there is another bid it would need to be for \$11,075. Mr. Triplett stated if it is not upset it will be on the next agenda for consideration of final approval by the Board. Commissioner Minton asked do they think there will be an upset. Mr. Triplett replied they are not sure it will be upset again this may be the last from what they have been hearing.

OLD BUSINESS – Commissioner Blevins stated today he was going down Hwy 421 and there was a truck in front of him that had trash blowing off of it and cars were weaving to miss it. He thought about Chairman Elmore because of his passion for this issue. It was a fairly new truck and had the roll up tarp material partially covering it but it was not covering the back. Commissioner Blevins said this is exactly what they have been talking about, this vehicle was tarped but was not secure. He added they need to go back and revisit it; the manufactures have to know this is not a secure load and debris was all over the road. Commissioner Blevins said many folks have been trying to help and support cleaning up trash, they are paying to have it picked up. They need to address this now even back to the manufactures' that this is not secured. Commissioner Blevins said had it been covered correctly trash would not have been lost all over 421. Chairman Elmore stated they require tarping so, at this time he would probably have been legal. Commissioner Blevins agreed this is why they have to go back and define what is a secure load. Chairman Elmore stated he appreciated the comments.

ADJOURN – Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:38 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: