

**MINUTES  
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
June 16, 2020**

**PUBLIC HEARING – ROAD NAME REQUEST – RIDGEWAY DRIVE, REDDIES RIVER TOWNSHIP** – Chairman Eddie Settle declared the Public Hearing open regarding the Road Name Request for Ridgeway Drive at 6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 with the following members present: Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, and Commissioner Brian S. Minton. Vice Chairman David Gambill attended the meeting remotely audio and video through WebEx.

Also present were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; Eddie Barnes, Planning Director, remotely through WebEx; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Mr. Barnes stated the Wilkes County Planning Department received a petition to name a private drive off Ridge Crest Street Subdivision, this has been advertised by General Statue for the 10 day period and no public comments have been received up to this point. He added all residents have agreed to the name of Ridgeway Drive to be added to the 911 system.

Chairman Settle declared the Public Hearing closed at 6:01 P.M.

**PUBLIC CONCERNS** – None

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 6:01 P.M. at the Wilkes County Agricultural Center located at 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro, NC 28697 with the following members present: Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and Commissioner Brain S. Minton. Vice Chairman David Gambill attended the meeting remotely including audio and video through WebEx.

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

Chairman Eddie Settle called the meeting to order.

**INVOCATION** – Vice Chairman David Gambill led the Invocation.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Budget Work Session held on May 26, 2020.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on June 2, 2020.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS** – Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore to approve Budget Amendment No. 38 (General – COVID Recovery Act – Wilkes County received \$1,363,086 in COVID-19 Recovery Act funds to be used for COVID-19 related expenses; and Departmental Line-Item Transfer Request MTR # 3 Central Operations – These expenses are running under budgeted amount. Request to transfer these funds in the amount of \$115,000 to COVID-19 expense). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**2020-2021 BUDGET ADOPTION** – Chairman Settle stated before the Budget Adoption they need to have a consensus on the Millers Creek Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. fire tax rate increase request of 1¢ for FY 2020-2021. He added this was a decrease from their original request of 3¢.

Commissioner Blevins asked if they had the additional meeting and if so what was the response from the public. Chairman Settle stated they had a meeting, but he does not know if they had a public meeting. Commissioner Blevins asked if their regular scheduled meetings had to be public. Mr. Triplett replied no they are a private non-profit corporation. Commissioner Elmore stated they are spending public funds and asked doesn't it have to be an open meeting. Mr. Triplett replied a private non-profit corporation is not subject to the open meetings law, unless they are sufficiently under the county's control. He added Fire Departments are not, the county just collects fire tax and pays it to them. They do not control the fire departments and they can conduct their meetings not subject to the open meetings law. Commissioner Blevins stated typically they have not been in a position where they have said no to an internal matter from a fire department. This is a county tax and makes it a tough and difficult call. Chairman Settle added it is tough, they did drop the request down and they appreciate that, but wished they would have taken it out until next year.

Vice Chairman Gambill stated the Board of Commissioners did have a public meeting on this and that has been his concern. He added they do have community representation on their Fire Department Board. It does need to be more public, but they are providing a specialty service that is not cheap, but the timing hurt. Commissioner Elmore said they have a group of people there that know their needs, they are serving their community, and he has to have confidence they are doing the right thing. Chairman Settle stated he trusts the Board and Fire Department, but after hearing from the community it is bad timing and does not support a tax increase. The County cut up to 14% from its budget and wish they could do the same. Commissioner Elmore added they cut 2¢. Commissioner Blevins stated the tax increase is not as some of the letters eluded to as greed or overspending. He added some of it comes from being highly regulated by agencies and is not volunteer fire fighting as it use to be. This is driven by state regulations and they are under pressure to comply and keep a trained staff. Commissioner Blevins stated 1¢, even under these circumstances is not unreasonable. Chairman Settle added it is better than 3¢.

Consensus in favor of the 1¢ Fire Tax Increase for Miller Creek Volunteer Fire Department Inc. for FY 2020-2021 from 7¢ to 8¢.

Ayes: Vice Chairman David Gambill  
Commissioner Keith Elmore  
Commissioner Gary D. Blevins

Nays: Chairman Eddie Settle  
Commissioner Brian S. Minton

Consensus carries three to two.

Chairman Settle stated before the Budget Adoption they need to have a consensus on the addition the Board agreed to by consensus during their budget work session and two items that need to be added due to an oversight in the proposed budget as follows:

Lincoln Heights	\$ 1,750
Animal Control Spay & Neuter Program	\$ 7,500
2% COLA Pay Increase	<u>\$471,977</u>
Total	\$481,227

Consensus:

Ayes: Chairman Eddie Settle  
Vice Chairman David Gambill  
Commissioner Keith Elmore  
Commissioner Gary D. Blevins  
Commissioner Brian S. Minton

Proposed Fund Balance Appropriation by County Manager	\$3,308,170
Additional amount needed from Fund Balance to balance the budget after above additions	\$ 481,227
Total used from Fund Balance	<u><u>\$3,789,397</u></u>

### **BUDGET – 2020/2021 FISCAL YEAR**

Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, to approve the three additional items the Board approved to add for Lincoln Heights, Animal Control Spay and Neuter Program, 2% COLA pay increase and 1¢ increased in Fire Tax Rate for the Millers Creek Volunteer Fire Department, Inc., seconded by Brain S. Minton and unanimously approved to adopt the

2020/2021 Budget Ordinance in the amount of \$96,832,591 with the tax rate at sixty-six (66) cents per \$100.00 valuation.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, NORTH CAROLINA, IN REGULAR SESSION ASSEMBLED – JUNE 16, 2020.

**SECTION I.** The following amounts are hereby appropriated for the operation of Wilkes County Government and its activities for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021, according to the following summary and schedules:

SUMMARY	2020/2021 ADOPTED BUDGET	TRANSFER TO/FROM OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
General Fund	\$76,892,595	[945,000]	\$75,947,595
E 911 Telephone System	701,951		701,951
Law Enforcement Restricted	5,000		5,000
Fire Dist. Funds	4,374,290		4,374,290
Airport Enterprise	6,757,553	445,000	7,202,553
Landfill Enterprise	6,076,202	1,500,000	7,576,202
Landfill Capital Reserve	2,025,000	[1,000,000]	1,025,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$96,832,591</b>		<b>\$96,832,591</b>

**SECTION II.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the General Fund the following:

<u>GENERAL FUND EXPENSES</u>	<u>APPROPRIATIONS</u>
Governing Body	\$ 273,063
Administration	451,105
Finance	467,388
Tax Administration	1,291,089
Legal	250,000
Court Facilities	714,785
Elections	349,157
Register of Deeds	407,924
Information Technology	440,288
Central Garage	992,368
Public Buildings	844,942
Purchasing	69,432
Central Operations	2,440,500
<b>TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>\$ <u>8,992,041</u></b>

Sheriff	\$ 6,066,858
Jail	3,962,816
Emergency Communications	1,476,486
Emergency Management	103,227
Fire	231,543
Building Inspections	561,341
Medical Examiner/Coroner	127,000
Emergency Medical Services	5,340,632
Animal Control	686,860

**TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY EXPENSE** \$ 18,556,763

Forestry	\$ 111,123
Other Environmental	160,000

**TOTAL ENVIRONMENTAL** \$ 271,123

Planning	\$ 264,337
Economic Development	448,800
Other Community Development	160,274
Cooperative Extension	221,237
Extension Local	76,000
Soil & Water Conservation	383,850

**TOTAL ECONOMIC PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT** \$ 1,554,498

General Health	\$ 2,122,868
Health Programs – Salaries	1,808,978
Health – Environmental	28,250
Health - Food & Lodging	12,500
Health - Tuberculosis	3,355
HIV & STD Federal	1,305
Health - Communicable Disease	2,293
Comprehensive - B & C Cancer Control	15,300
Adult Health	207,600
Health Promotion	3,000
Women-Infant-Children	40,200
Health-WIC/BPCP	1,500
Maternal Clinic	1,400
Pregnancy Care Management	2,700
Infant Mortality Reduction	22,948
Child Health	47,200
Health - MESH Unit/Schools	90,683
Health – School Nurse Funding	150,000
Health - Family Planning	37,584

Care Coordination for Children	2,900
Health – Immunization Action	500
Wilkes Dental Clinic	1,000,000
Health – Preparedness	1,800
Health – AIM	28,688
Wilkes Community Health Center	505,047
Health – Substance Use Disorder	83,589

**TOTAL HUMAN SERVICE - HEALTH** **\$ 6,222,188**

VAYA Health/Mental Health	\$ 218,612
Daymark Recovery Services – ABC 5¢ Bottle Tax	17,000
Child Abuse Prevention Team	18,066
Adult Developmental Activity Program	27,864
Vocational Workshop	43,963
Wilkes Developmental Day School	131,717
SAFE Program	10,204

**TOTAL MENTAL HEALTH** **\$ 467,426**

Administration	\$ 7,817,895
DSS Occupancy Expense	178,728
Work First Employment	70,000
Income Maintenance/Food Stamps	725,302
IM/Medicaid Assistance XIX	628,500
Legal	40,000
Foster Care	3,826,383
Links	33,755
Other Assistance	51,935
Other Contractuals	73,000
Day Care	34,558

**TOTAL SOCIAL SERVICES** **\$ 13,480,056**

**VETERANS SERVICE** **\$ 114,637**

JCPC/Youth Services	\$ 265,000
Secure Detention/Juvenile Subsidy	54,000

**TOTAL HUMAN SERVICES – YOUTH** **\$ 319,000**

**JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION** **\$ 23,706**

Aging Program Exp/To Agencies	650,000
Volunteer Coalition of Wilkes	7,334

Appalachian Senior Programs		2,786
Ruby Pardue Blackburn Adult Day Care Center	4,816	
American Red Cross	11,145	
Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission	56,815	
Wilkes Senior Resources	189,234	
National Guard Armory	1,857	
Barium Springs/Children's Hope Alliance	27,590	
Volunteers for Wilkes Literacy	12,074	
Crime Stoppers	1,720	
Mountain View Ruritan Club/Fly-In	4,128	
Wilkes Transportation/ROAP Grant	250,000	
Wilkes Transportation Authority Appropriation	43,000	
Catherine Barber Shelter	8,600	
Hospitality House Crisis Shelter	4,085	
Lincoln Heights	1,750	

**TOTAL OTHER HUMAN SERVICES** \$ 1,276,934

Public Schools	\$ 14,948,037
Wilkes Community College	3,582,724

**TOTAL EDUCATION** \$ 18,530,761

Appalachian Regional Library	\$ 569,500
Traphill Library	26,931
Parks & Recreation	879,761
Cultural & Museums	29,746

**TOTAL CULTURAL & RECREATION** \$ 1,505,938

**CONTINGENCY RESERVE FUND** \$ 25,000

**TOTAL COUNTY DEBT** \$ 4,264,339

**TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS** \$ 945,000

**TOTAL GF EXPENSES & OTHER USES** \$ 76,892,595

**SECTION III.** It is estimated the following General Fund Revenues will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021, to meet the foregoing General Fund Appropriations:

Taxes - Ad Valorem	\$ 38,421,558
Sales Taxes	13,269,409

Other Tax and Licenses	480,000
Unrestricted Intergovernmental	472,000
Restricted Intergovernmental	17,587
Health - Restricted State & Federal	3,857,470
DSS – Restricted State & Federal	8,365,897
Other Restricted – State & Federal	2,549,057
Restricted Local - General Fund Other	278,000
Restricted Local - Health	79,940
Restricted Local - DSS	44,805
Permits and Fees	958,000
Health Permits and Fees	115,750
Health Sales & Services	313,500
DSS Sales & Services	33,975
Sales & Services - General Fund Other	3,239,000
Investment Earnings/General Fund	70,700
Miscellaneous/General Fund	544,050
Fund Balance Appropriated	3,781,897
<b>TOTAL ALL TAXES &amp; GENERAL FUND REVENUE</b>	<b><u>\$ 76,892,595</u></b>

**SECTION V.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the E-911 Telephone System Fund the following:

**E-911 Telephone System Expense** \$ **701,951**

**SECTION VI.** It is estimated the following E-911 Telephone System Fund Revenue will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021:

**E-911 Telephone System Revenues** \$ **701,951**

**SECTION VII.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the Law Enforcement Restricted Fund the following:

Law Enforcement Restricted Fund \$ 5,000

**TOTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT RESTRICTED FUND EXPENSE** \$ **5,000**

**SECTION VIII.** It is estimated the following Law Enforcement Restricted Fund revenues will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 to meet the foregoing Law Enforcement Restricted Fund Appropriations:

Law Enforcement Restricted Fund Revenues \$ 5,000

**TOTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT RESTRICTED FUND REVENUE** \$ **5,000**

**SECTION IX.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the Fire District Fund the following:

DEPARTMENT	TAX RATE	APPROPRIATED
No. 1 - Broadway	.09	\$ 286,409
No. 2 - Mountain View	.08	\$ 257,679
No. 3 - Moravian Falls	.09	\$ 355,688
No. 4 - Mulberry-Fairplains	.11	\$ 399,988
No. 5 - Pleasant Hill	.12	\$ 174,283
No. 6 - Traphill	.09	\$ 153,862
No. 7 - Boomer	.11	\$ 159,532
No. 8 - Champion	.11	\$ 397,680
No. 9 - Austin	.12	\$ 171,178
No. 10 - Goshen	.10	\$ 155,724
No. 11 - Millers Creek	.08	\$ 412,351
No. 12 - Arlington (Ronda)	.10	\$ 6,961
No. 13 - State Road	.075	\$ 92,839
No. 14 - Ronda	.13	\$ 210,115
No. 15 - Knottville	.12	\$ 101,022
No. 16 - Shepherds Crossroads	.07	\$ 62,398
No. 17 - Roaring River	.06	\$ 174,144
No. 18 - Ferguson	.10	\$ 175,221
No. 19 - Cricket	.10	\$ 174,652
No. 20 - McGrady	.13	\$ 95,350
No. 21 - Brushy Mountain	.08	\$ 57,475
No. 22 - Buck Shoals	.05	\$ 39,969
No. 23 - Little Brushy Mountain	.12	\$ 55,585
No. 24 - Wilkes-Iredell	.12	\$ 71,550
No. 25 - Wilbar	.12	\$ 132,635
<b>TOTAL FIRE DISTRICTS</b>		<b>\$ 4,374,290</b>

**SECTION X.** It is estimated that the following Fire District Fund Revenues will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 to meet the foregoing Fire District Fund Appropriations:

**TOTAL FIRE DISTRICT REVENUE** **\$ 4,374,290**

**SECTION XI.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the Airport Fund the following:

Airport/Capital Projects	5,050,000
Airport/Operating Expenses	1,707,553

**TOTAL AIRPORT EXPENSES** **\$ 6,757,553**

**SECTION XII.** It is estimated the following Airport Fund Revenue will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 to meet the foregoing Airport Fund Revenue and Appropriations:

Airport – Restricted Intergovernmental	\$ -0-
Airport – Grants/State & Federal	5,050,000
Airport – Sales & Service	1,143,553
Airport – Rents	119,000
Airport – Miscellaneous/Airport	-0-
Airport – Transfers from Other Funds/Airport	445,000
<b>TOTAL AIRPORT REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 6,757,553</b>

**SECTION XIII.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the Landfill Fund the following:

Landfill	\$ 6,076,202
Transfer to Other Funds/Landfill	-0-
<b>TOTAL LANDFILL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 6,076,202</b>

**SECTION XIV.** It is estimated that following Landfill Fund Revenue will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 to meet the foregoing Landfill Fund Revenue and Appropriations:

Landfill – Restricted State & Federal	\$ 155,000
Landfill – Sales & Service	2,667,539
Landfill – Investment Earnings	5,000
Miscellaneous/Landfill	20,000
Fund Balance Appropriation/Landfill	1,728,663
Landfill – Transfer from Other Funds/Landfill	1,500,000
<b>TOTAL LANDFILL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 6,076,202</b>

**SECTION XV.** That for said fiscal year there is hereby appropriated out of the Landfill Capital Reserve Fund the following:

<b>TOTAL LANDFILL CAPITAL RESERVE EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$ 2,025,000</b>
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**SECTION XVI.** It is estimated the following Landfill Capital Reserve Revenue will be available during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 to meet the foregoing Landfill Capital Reserve Fund Revenue Appropriations:

Interest on Investments	\$ 25,000
Fund Balance Appropriation	1,500,000
Transfer from Landfill Enterprise Fund	500,000
<b>TOTAL LANDFILL CAPITAL RESERVE REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 2,025,000</b>

There is hereby levied for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 a tax rate of sixty-six (\$0.66) cents on each one hundred dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation of taxable property as listed as of January 1, 2020, for the purpose of raising the revenue from current year's property tax as set forth in the foregoing estimate of revenue, and in order to finance foregoing appropriations.

The tax rate of sixty-six (66) cents per hundred dollars valuation is based on an estimated total appraised value of property for the purpose of taxation of \$5,911,532,393, with estimated collection of 95.42% on real and personal property and 100% on vehicles.

**BUDGET 2020/2021 – ADOPTED – JUNE 16, 2020.**

**BLUE RIDGE OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (BROC) – SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM – UPDATE** – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Jennifer Cooper, Director BROC Senior Nutrition Services. Ms. Cooper said there has been no change in their home delivery meal program since this began. They did have to shut down the dining rooms, and they do not have a re-open date. She added their volunteers that make telephone reassurance calls say they are looking forward to coming back but don't rush and wait until it is safe.

Chairman Settle asked if they have received additional money for delivery service from state of federal programs. Ms. Cooper replied yes, they received an allocation from Family First Funding specifically for nutrition and also received an allocation for the CARES Act funding for nutrition services. She stated the guidance is vague, other than it is to extend existing nutrition services. They are looking for the best way to utilize that money for meals on wheels. Ms. Cooper said the priority is to move some of the high priority folks to existing routes, she added there will not be a lot they can add as most of those routes are full. She said they are looking into a company that delivers refrigerator meals to the door, 14 meals every other week, they are ready to heat up and can be frozen for later use. Ms. Cooper said they will reach out to the waiting list folks to see how many will utilize those meals and they will serve those as long as they can.

Ms. Cooper stated they received an award of 150 meal boxes from AARP through Meals on Wheels America donor program at no cost. They have an event set for June 30<sup>th</sup>, Sheriff Shew and his Officers are assisting them at Boomer Ball Park. They will advertise this and call waiting list folks in Boomer, Moravian Falls, and Ferguson that are on the waiting list that is outside their service area in hopes they can come and pick up these boxes. Ms. Cooper said they also hope to get as many of those folks registered at that time to use some of the emergency money to serve them in the future. Chairman Settle asked if their applications for home delivery

are up. Ms. Cooper replied no, and they are surprised by that. She added they have partnered with the Health Foundation and delivered meals to 7 of the income based housing complexes. This has shown them they are a lot of folks that should be receiving services that for whatever reason are not. Ms. Cooper said they are looking at this to see what other apartment complexes may have seniors that need their services they can add with the emergency funding.

The Board thanked Ms. Copper for the update.

**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – UPDATE** – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Trent Beaver, PE Division Construction Engineer Division 11, N. C. Department of Transportation. Mr. Beaver said they appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on the Hwy 268 project, he would like to say it is complete and it should be, but it is not. He added the project is about 90% complete and will take several more months to complete. Mr. Beaver said they have not been pleased with the project and have discussed this on multiple occasions with the contractor over the past few years. He added there have been some litigant delays in the beginning, first with the clearing of utilities and they are starting on their third wet year. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the contractor in the last few months, a few crews are not working due to positive tests. Mr. Beaver stated one was the curb and gutter crew, which is critical at this point.

They met with the contractor recently and discussed that they have to complete something, they are working in several areas, but not making a lot of progress. Mr. Beaver said they cannot direct their operations, but they strongly encourage them to break the project up in segments and begin with the 5-lane segment and work east. He stated they agreed to this and have given them a concept of what their plan will be to finish the project. They plan to start at the beginning of the project at NC 18 to Legion Drive and complete this section up to the final layer of asphalt surface by the end of July. Mr. Beaver said this is very aggressive, they ask them to concentrate on the commercial section and complete it as soon as they can. Next they will move from Legion Drive down to the bridge at Mulberry Creek, and plan to complete up to the final layer of asphalt by the end of September. He said they will complete from the bridge to the end of the project at Airport Road up to the final layer by the end of October. Mr. Beaver said next will be the final layer of asphalt, signage, striping will be completed in November, hopefully the entire project will be completed by mid-December.

Charmian Settle stated that is good news for the businesses in that area will be very appreciative. Commissioner Elmore asked when this project started. Mr. Beaver replied it begin in November 2015, which was early so they could clear for the utilities, have been going on about 5 years. Commissioner Elmore said much larger projects on Hwy 40 and 77 have been completed during this time frame maybe resources need to be shifted. He asked if they agree this has taken an extraordinarily long time to complete. Mr. Beaver replied this is a 3 mile section and yes it has taken longer than it should. He added the contractor also agrees this hasn't progressed like it should have. Commissioner Elmore said it sounds like they have a plan to hopefully improve that. Mr. Beaver replied damages should be starting soon if not already, but time could be granted to the completion date for the pandemic. He added they would like to see it completed

too, it is additional cost to them on inspections and engineering. Chairman Settle added they appreciate him providing an update and information on completion.

Chairman Settle asked when will they complete it from Airport Road to Elkin. Mr. Beaver replied they do not think this is on the board at this time. As the Board knows with their budget situation they have to get above the cash floor before they plan on any new work. They cannot enter into any new contracts or agreements until they do. Chairman Settle stated he saw that and this is also affecting the repairs at Taco Bell on Hwy 421. Mr. Beaver said on March 2<sup>nd</sup> they tried to get a contract, but it came in 46% over the estimate and ask the contractor questions and the reasons for this. He added they went back and made changes and was ready to move forward, then COVID-19 pandemic hit and their revenues nearly dried up. They fell below the cash floor and can't place the revised contract out for bid. Mr. Beaver said they intend to do this as soon as they can get approval. He added the Town of Wilkesboro have done additional work on their side and developed a plan to tie in for a permanent solution. They will install a portion of the drainage that would be needed for the upcoming Super Street Project to help at that site.

The Board thanked Mr. Beaver for the update.

**CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND (CRF)** – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Phil Trew, High Country Council of Governments Director of Planning and Development and Chris Huffman Finance Director. Mr. Trew said they will be working with FEMA and CRF both to help recover some of the cost and expenses associated with the pandemic. He said FEMA money is available for expense accrued from January 20<sup>th</sup> with no end date at this time. Local Governments can apply for 75% reimbursement for items such as controlling the public health threat, delivery meals, law enforcement, etc. Mr. Trew said next they have the Coronavirus Relief Fund through the CARES Act, Wilkes County received \$1,363,086 this can be used for expenses beginning March 20<sup>th</sup> through December 30, 2020. He added the cost are broader than what FEMA allows, but it does address a lot of the same things related to public health, medical expenses, and includes economic recovery as an eligible expense. Mr. Trew stated he, John Yates, Chris Huffman, and Tim Pennington met to discuss his role and help the county take advantage of both funds. He added he has worked on the paperwork to get the County registered with FEMA, he has submitted documents to draw down and has also submitted paperwork for CRF and this money has been received. They have submitted a plan on how this money will be spent and this is a best guess based on the past few month expenditures and what they think they will need over the next 7 months. He added the plan can be amended at any time as needed.

Mr. Trew said nothing has been submitted for FEMA reimbursement at this time, he is working on cataloging the expenses which is \$95,000 to date. They are working to find out what is eligible for FEMA and what is eligible for CRF to make sure the funds are maximized. He added the key is to document all expenses, and for Emergency Management and the Pandemic Recovery Office to confirm what is eligible expenses for each. Mr. Trew said the goal is to make sure CFR money is spent correctly so there is no payback in the future and to get as much FEMA reimbursement as they can. He added they are also trying to make sure that they are not asking for reimbursement from FEMA for expenses that are covered with other CARES money as mentioned by Jennifer Cooper earlier and what other agencies in the county are getting.

Commissioner Elmore asked if they applied for this grant or was it automatically distributed. Mr. Yates replied they were told how much was available and they had to submit the paperwork to received it. Chairman Settle stated they have to be careful and make sure it is all documented and spent correctly for PPE and approved items or it has to be paid back. Mr. Yates added yes there are claw backs. Mr. Huffman stated they are trying to spend it in the correct way to be reimbursed and when it is not eligible for that they plan to use the CRF funds. They want to spend the money wisely and get as much reimbursement as they can as well.

Commissioner Elmore asked if they are handling this for all 7 counties they serve. Mr. Trew replied no just Wilkes. Commissioner Elmore asked what are the other counties doing. Mr. Yates replied they do not know, he reached out to Mr. Trew because of his expertise in grants and when claw backs are involved they wanted to make sure it is used 100% correctly. Chairman Settle agreed and thanked Mr. Trew for agreeing to handle this for Wilkes. Commissioner Blevins added Wilkes is the largest of the 7 counties and most likely received the largest amount. He asked if the CRF is federal money that is coming through the state. Mr. Yates replied yes. Commissioner Blevins asked if this is what the County Commissioner's Association helped to negotiate. Mr. Yates replied yes. Commissioner Blevins said they had many discussions about that at their meetings and they came up with a good equitable plan. Mr. Yates added the Health Department received money that Rachel Willard will go over with her update, the Airport will receive \$69,000 once they submit that paperwork. He added they will keep watching for more of these funds. Mr. Huffman stated they will need to make sure they meet each department needs without double dipping, this can be tricky and where the pay back would come in.

The Board thanked Mr. Trew for the update and the great job they do for Wilkes County.

Commissioner Blevins stated they had a High Country Board meeting earlier this week and Mr. Trew did a presentation and he thanked him and everyone on the great job with the Mulberry Sewer Project they have helped with as well. It was very well done and profession. Chairman Settle agreed, they do a great job. Mr. Yates stated the HCCOG received COVID money and they are not charging the county to do this with FEMA and CRF, they are using their funds to cover this.

**WILKES COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – UPDATE** – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Rachel Willard, Health Director. Ms. Willard stated as of 5:00 PM Wilkes has 548 cases of Coronavirus, 6 deaths, 32 total hospitalization with no one current hospitalized that they are aware of, 492 people have recovered, and 35 active cases. She added an active case is someone that is still under isolation, self-isolation at home. Ms. Willard said they are monitoring one outbreak at the prison, they had 25 cases as of yesterday. They are still working with Tyson on their cluster outbreak and hope to close them out early next week. Walmart has tested 391, they have received 266 results with no positives at this time. Ms. Willard added they are testing on Monday-Wednesday- Friday from 7 to 9 and will be for an undetermined amount of time until the need is no longer there. She said their goal is to test 90% of the population within a 10 mile radius.

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Ms. Willard stated they have received questions about testing and this has changed over the past few weeks. There are two buckets, the Commercial test which is from Lab Core for Health Departments and Private Offices use which means anyone can be tested. The guidance for them it to test anyone that has symptoms, been in close contact with a positive case, at high risk of being exposed by working at a prison, long term care facility, those at the highest risk for severe illness due to underlying medical conditions, historically marginalized populations, health care workers, first responders, and now includes CPS and APS workers at DSS, front line and essential workers and anyone that has attended a mass gathering it is recommended they are tested. Next is the State Lab bucket which is more specific and these are the kits that are free of charge for the Health Department and could be used at the jail, they must be symptomatic, if someone is hospitalized, or must be a health care worker or first responder, live in a congregate living facility, uninsured patient, or someone at a higher risk for illness, or if they took a post-mortem assessment on someone that they suspected had COVID-19. Ms. Willard added they are still testing anyone that needs it through Lab Corp or the State Lab. They have seen a decline in the number of folks coming to be tested, this could be they are going to a private practice to be tested or somewhere else.

Ms. Willard said they are working with the Community College on their plan, they started screening visitors and staff before they enter. She added they are working with Mark Byrd for schools and athletics. Angie Rhodes is continuing to hold weekly calls with the long term care facilities to discuss challenges and any new guidance that comes out. Wilkes County was the first county to go live with the state contact tracers in Northwest NC to help utilize the state partners, it is going pretty smoothly. Ms. Willard stated outbreaks at long term facility, prisons, or farms are already on the state website, beginning next Monday the state will add schools and child care centers if there is an outbreak at one of those. It will be updated twice a week. She said they also include recoveries across the state which is updated once per week.

Ms. Willard stated as Mr. Yates mentioned on funding the State had a press release today that local Health Departments across the state will get \$35 million, Wilkes County will receive \$383,669 from that, it will be over a span of 2 ½ years. She said they are excited about this, they had a \$90,000 baseline for all and then the additional was based on population. She said the last \$15 million was distributed based on the case per county as of June 5<sup>th</sup>. They are also receiving COVID funds because they are a Federally Qualified Health Center. In April they received CARES money from the federal government that will total around \$800,000, the state added \$90,000 to use from January through December. She said they will be getting a little over \$1 million total to help fight the pandemic. Chairman Settle asked if they are under the same restrictions as the county on the CARES money. Ms. Willard replied yes, they do have to track it just like the county. Commissioner Blevins thanked her for the report and asked about antibody testing in Wilkes. Ms. Willard stated currently no one in Wilkes is conducting antibody testing. She added there are many issues with the validity and accuracy. They have talked with one lab to look into bringing antibody testing to the Health Department in the near future and checking to see if there is anyone close by that can process the results for them. They would like to move forward on this when they can. Ms. Willard said one issue is in NC the case definition of COVID-19 does not align with antibody testing yet, they are working on how to integrate this,

but not there yet. Commissioner Blevins stated he has heard from many about a flu like epidemic in Wilkes back in January with a large number sick and symptoms similar to COVID that tested negative for the flu and Strep. Have they heard any evidence of the possibility of an early outbreak before mid-March. Ms. Willard replied this has been a nationwide discussion that started as early as November. It will be hard to say until they get the antibody testing worked out. Chairman Settle said there are 35 active cases with 25 of them at the prison. Ms. Willard said there are 35 active cases, but not all are at the prison because not all of those are Wilkes County residents. There are 25 in the prison, but some are out of isolation and some of the guards do not live in Wilkes and are not included in the case count. Commissioner Blevins asked if they knew where the first case may have been in Wilkes. Ms. Willard replied it was a community transmission case, they had not traveled, so they could not identify where it came from, the first death was the first case. Chairman Settle said this discussion will go on for a long time, this was a great update and very informative.

The Board thanked Ms. Willard for the update.

**FIRE MARSHAL – 2020 FIREWORKS PERMIT APPLICATION – APPROVAL –**

Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Niki Hamby, Fire Marshal. Mr. Handy stated he is asking for approval of a Firework Displays for Oakwoods Country Club on July 3, 2019. He added the application meets all the requirements of the 2010 Pyrotechnics Act and the county requirements. Mr. Hamby said they have the appropriate Certificate of Insurance and he visited the site and everything is in order. By statute the local Board of County Commissioners must approve this event. Commissioner Blevins said he has spoken with the planning folks and they have assured them they will following the social distancing rules and this will be in a safe and proper manner.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the 2020 Fireworks Display Permit Application for Oakwoods Country Club as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and passed unanimously.

**TAX DEPARTMENT:**

**1. TAX RELEASES – LISTING – UNCOLLECTABLE** – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator. Mr. Hamilton asked the Board to approve tax releases that are uncollectable in the amount of \$3,746.52. Commissioner Elmore stated some of these go back 10 years. Mr. Hamilton replied they are cleaning up the delinquent accounts and they can keep them on the system 10 years. He added they are going through account by account and it takes a lot of time, they have to not be able to find them before they are released. These are all personal property and typically small amounts.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases that are uncollectable as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore 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 \$7,717.03. He added these are due to changes in property, mistakes, or folks going out of business.

Vice Chairman David Gambill made a motion to approve the tax releases for listing as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore 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 \$2,681.67. These are people that have passed away and are for personal property that they cannot collect.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases for collections as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

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

**4. AGREEMENT WITH FORTE PAYMENT SYSTEMS** – Mr. Hamilton said currently they are using two separate companies to process credit cards, one for online and another for in the tax office. They are wanting to consolidate and use one company, he is asking for permission to enter into an agreement with Forte Payment Systems to consolidate online and inhouse for credit card payments. He added Forte takes all credit cards and will also do e-checks which will save folks money and their credit card fee is less than the ones they use now. Mr. Hamilton said they will charge 2.5%, with a minimum fee of \$1.95. He is requesting permission to use them, they are going to waive all reader fees, there is no cost to the county, the fee is passed on the tax payer for this service. They are a test and if it goes well finance would like for all departments in the county to switch to Forte. He added he needs permission to sign the agreement. Mr. Triplett reviewed the agreement and the changes he requested were made. Commissioner Elmore asked the length of the contract. Mr. Hamilton replied 5 years, however one of Mr. Triplett's changes was that it could be terminated with 30 days written notice and they agreed to this. Mr. Triplett added since they are trying this out they wanted to make sure they had a 30 day out clause at any time for any reason. Commissioner Elmore asked if the effective date is the date he signs it. Mr. Hamilton said they need to sign it as soon as possible so the phone number and information can be included on the bills and online that go out in July. Commissioner Elmore asked if the only fee is 2.5% paid by the tax payor. Mr. Hamilton replied it is 2.5% of the payment amount with a minimum fee of \$1.95. Mr. Triplett added there are no other fees, it is per transaction. Mr. Hamilton stated if they use e-check the cost is \$1.75 up to \$50,000 and will make sure the tax payors are aware of this, it is a cheaper alternative for them. Commissioner Blevins asked how much is the early pay discount. Mr. Hamilton replied that is in August and it is 1.5%. Chairman Settle said this is a good service, at a good price, and folks will be using this. Mr. Hamilton said they still have a lot of folks coming in, but also have a drop box for folks to use as well.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to authorize Tax Administrator Alex Hamilton to enter into an Agreement with Forte Payment Systems and execute the contract as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**PURCHASE OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY – TRAPHILL TOWNSHIP** – Attorney Tony Triplett stated there is a memo in the packet with the information. This is the same process they go through when selling a piece of county-owned property that was a tax foreclosure property. He added this one is not going to be like the last that had many upset bids. This is 3/10 of an acre and does not have any access to a public right-of way and has a dilapidated mobile home. It joins the property of the person that made the offer which is Ms. Dale Kennedy who is offering \$500 for this property and is less than what they have in it. Mr. Triplett said this happens from time to time. He added this is part of the process they have to go through; the offer is low and all the Board would be approving tonight is authorizing it to be advertised. Chairman Settle stated it is land locked. Mr. Triplett replied that is correct, Ms. Kennedy is the only one that would have access because she owns the adjoining property. This will get it back on the tax roll.

Commissioner Blevins said in the interest of tax payers is there not some mechanism to be used in situations like this for an expiated foreclosure process to not spend so much money to get an offer of so little. Mr. Triplett replied there is only one system he is aware of. Commissioner Blevins said they are losing money and if there is a way to do with less legal fees it would be helpful to the tax payors. Mr. Triplett stated it would be great if there was a process for properties such as these with little value that the county has had to foreclose on. Commissioner Blevins asked if the legislature would have to enact a law to allow this. Mr. Triplett said it would be an invalid sale unless the legislature changed the law and the method by which they can dispose of publicly owned property. Commissioner Elmore asked if there is a quick claim process that a person can do after 7 years. Mr. Triplett replied the county does not own it until they foreclose on it, someone could try to quick claim from the current owner. The quick claim process is not a good way to obtain title, because ultimately a court order would be needed in order to recognize the quick claim process worked. This is never recommended because they cannot obtain title insurance through this process.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to publish notice in the *Wilkes Journal-Patriot*, pursuant to G.S. §160A-269, of the offer received from Dale Kennedy dated May 27, 2020, for the purchase of property formerly owned by Brenda K. Anderson, consisting of 0.29 acres located off Byrd Road in Traphill Township, Wilkes County, North Carolina, the same having been acquired by Wilkes County through tax foreclosure in Deed Book 1216, Page 056, Wilkes County Registry, for \$500.00 plus advertising costs, deed preparation, and recording costs; provided, that the County first receives a 5% deposit from Ms. Kennedy; provided further, that the matter continue to be advertised by the County Attorney as required by law in the event of receipt of any upset bids, and that upon the expiration of the upset bid period the matter be brought back to the Board by the County Attorney for action as permitted under G.S. §160A-269. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously approved.

**NEW BUSINESS** – Vice Chairman Gambill asked to open the floor for discussion on the two applications for the Wilkes Community College Board of Trustee appointment. Commissioner Elmore said he would like to suggest that each Commissioner have the opportunity to interview the candidate. He has interviewed both and would like for everyone to have time to do this. Commissioner Blevins agreed and added he has not had the opportunity to talk to either of them, this has not been put on the agenda, and they have not heard anything from the College. Chairman Settle said there have been suggestions from two Commissioners to hold up until everyone can interview the candidates. Commissioner Blevins requested one meeting to have an opportunity to meet with the candidates since they represent this Board and then place it on the agenda and make a final decision. Commissioner Minton state he is good with the suggestions to interview the candidates as well. Vice Chairman Gambill thanked the Board for their time and discussion on this matter.

**ADJOURN** - Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins 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

Eddie Settle, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: July 7, 2020