

**MINUTES  
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
July 7, 2020**

**PUBLIC CONCERNS – None**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, July 7, 2020 at 6:01 P.M. at the Wilkes County Agricultural Center located 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro, NC 28697 with the following members present: Chairman Eddie Settle, Vice Chairman David Gambill, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, and Commissioner Brain S. Minton.

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

Chairman Eddie Settle welcomed everyone and 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 Vice Chairman David Gambill, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on June 16, 2020.**

**CONTRACT FOR FIRE PROTECTION – ADDENDUM FOR SUBSTATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – BUCK SHOALS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. – Chairman Settle recognized County Attorney Tony Triplett. Mr. Triplett said as the Board knows they have developed a Substation Assistance Program that was finalized in March. This is the first application that has come through to be approved for this program, Buck Shoals has submitted their application and supporting documents to the Manager’s office. He added they have worked closely with Buck Shoals Board President, Marty Roberts to get all the necessary information which we do have. Mr. Triplett stated the final step in the process is to approve the addendum that is in the packet for the appropriation. He said Buck Shoals Fire Department has approved the addendum and they have three signed originals awaiting Board action. When the Board approves the addendum, they are approving a check to be written to Buck Shoals in the amount of \$28,258.26.**

Commissioner Elmore asked how the amount was determined. Mr. Triplett replied they required a letter from the lender with loan documents that list the amount of interest cost, this is the total amount of interest for the loan. Commissioner Elmore asked if this is a 30-year Loan and what is the interest rate. Ms. Call replied the interest rate is 3.45% for a 15-year term. Commissioner Elmore stated the amount can vary depending on the rate and term of the loan and amount.

Chairman Settled added there is a limit of \$40,000. Mr. Triplett added that is correct this is the maximum no matter the loan amount or term.

Vice Chairman David Gambill made a motion to approve the Contract for Fire Protection Addendum for Substation Assistance Program between the County of Wilkes and Buck Shoals Volunteer Fire Department, Inc., as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS** – Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore to approve Budget Amendment No. 1 (General & EMS – This request is to transfer unspent CARES ACT funds received in FY 2020 that rolled into fund balance for June 30, 2021 to fiscal year 2021 so these funds can be spent on COVID related services provided by Wilkes County. Also, to transfer funds allocated to the Mt. View EMS Base Project in FY 2020 to FY 2021 so the project can be completed); and Budget Amendment No. 2 (General – This request is to transfer \$28,259 from fund balance to fund the Substation Assistance Program for Rural Volunteer Fire Departments); and Budget Amendment No. 3 (General – This request is to transfer \$28,259 from fund balance to fund the Substation Assistance Program for Rural Volunteer Fire Departments). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE – TRUSTEE BOARD APPOINTMENT** – Chairman Settle stated they would like to recognize the current Board Appointee, Mr. Gerald Lankford. He has served on the Board of Education, Board of Commissioners, and on the WCC Board of Trustees for 16 years. Chairman Settle added he has faithfully served this community, they appreciate all he has done in the past for Wilkes County, he works hard, and they thank him for his service for many, many years. Chairman Settle said they need to appoint a new member to that Board tonight and have two candidates. Commissioner Elmore stated they have two applications, is he asking them to choose between them. Chairman Settle said the consensus from the Board has been for Mr. Evan Handy. Commissioner Elmore stated that consensus was from two years ago, and his concern is he felt that he was asked to go out and recruit and he would not have done that had he know this decision has been made. He added, he found through the community, a very qualified candidate and is very disappointed and hoped everyone had the opportunity to interview and speak with him.

Chairman Settle stated during the interviews for this Board or any Board they make appointments to folks know there is a possibility they may or may not be appointed. Vice Chairman Gambill agreed. Commissioner Elmore added this is a very important appointment that has an impact on 3,000 kids each year and their education, they have a qualified individual that currently serves on the Wake Forest Board of Trustees and an accomplished business man. He feels they are missing an opportunity, but he will go with the Boards decision. Chairman Settle said this could be said with most any appointment that is made by the Governor or the Board of Education to the Board. He added Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Handy are both qualified as was Mr. Lankford for many years. Vice Chairman Gambill agreed and added it was nice to have two, most of the time they do not. Chairman Settle said in many cases there have not been

interviews or multiple folks considered and in lots of cases the same folks go back on, change is good.

Vice Chairman David Gambill made a motion to appoint Mr. Evan Handy to the Wilkes Community College Board of Trustees for a 4-year term, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT – ROAD NAME REQUEST – RIDGEWAY DRIVE – REDDIES RIVER TOWNSHIP** – Chairman Settle recognized Eddie Barnes, Planning Director. Mr. Barnes stated the Wilkes County Planning Department has received a petition to name a Private Road in Reddies River Township of Wilkes County. The name chosen by Petition is Ridgeway Drive. He added this request meets the requirements of the Wilkes County Road Naming Ordinance. Mr. Barnes said pursuant to the Wilkes County Road Naming Ordinance a Public Hearing and a ten-day notification period has been met and it is for the Boards consideration. He added a Public Hearing was held to receive public input on a proposed Road Name Request for Ridgeway Drive, with no opposition.

Vice Chairman David Gambill made a motion to approve the Road Name Request for Ridgeway Drive as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously approved.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:**

**1. ENERGY PROGRAM OUTREACH PLAN – APPROVAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021** – Mr. Blevins said this is a standard plan, it is almost identical to what was approved last year and the state requires approval every year. This is their crisis assistance program for low income energy assistance. He added this plan states how they get the word out to the public and community about the programs. The first page list the committee members that participate to help get the word out, next is the meeting dates and they also use the Journal Patriot and Radio to advertise the program. Mr. Blevins said next is the dates and hours they or open, folks apply at the DSS office. Penny Barlow is the Supervisor of that unit and all questions and concerns go to her. Vice Chairman Gambill asked if this program also helps with cooling. Mr. Blevins replied yes, the crisis intervention program opened July 1<sup>st</sup> and this is assistance for cooling and heating.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve Wilkes County Department of Social Services Energy Program Outreach Plan for FY 2020-20210 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**2. UPDATE** – Mr. Blevins stated he would like to mention first that the Foster Care Social Workers have started back doing home visits, but not the full case load yet. They are following all the guidelines, wearing mask, meeting outside when they can and will continue to do more fact-to-face contact visits. Mr. Blevins said Federal CARES Act funds, COVID money was received to supplement Foster Care Children with an extra \$100 per child that covers the months of April, May and June. He added this will go to the foster home or facility and also

goes to the 18 to 21 year olds, they county will send a check to them and it is 100% reimbursable. The next update is for FNS and this has been increased to the maximum benefit for the past few months for individuals. Mr. Blevins said this benefit will continue for July as it did in May and June and was a sufficient amount of money that came to Wilkes. He added the next update is the crisis invention program that also covers funds for cooling, beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> they no longer have to produce a disconnect notice, only a past due notice for a utility bill, but still have qualify for the program. Mr. Blevins said funds have been received with more to follow, 40 folks have applied for assistance, 24 have been approved, with \$8,913 awarded so far this month.

Mr. Blevins said the last update is Senate Bill 808 which has been ratified and will impact the Medicaid unit. The state also sent out RFP's to see if there was something better than NCFast. He said it will stay because this bill has \$6,154,480 in non-recurring funds just for the child welfare component of NCFast. He thinks that means it is not going away, their workers are still using it for intake and glad they continued to do so. Mr. Blevins said they have not had to redetermination for Medicaid during the pandemic they have been auto extended by the state. He added for any that are due on or after September 1<sup>st</sup> they will start back doing the redetermination, they have continued to do the applications. He added they work on these two months ahead so it will take extra hard work to get back to this point. This Bill says they have to make a good faith effort to go back and look at the ones that the state auto extended during this time. County DSS shall not be financial responsible for any issuance of benefits, which is good, he added. Mr. Blevins said they have not defined good faith efforts, but this will be extra work and hope to know more on this next month.

Mr. Blevins provided the Commissioners with handouts for May. He briefly went over the monthly caseload report, Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial report. He also went through the CPS Foster Care monthly reports for May. Vice Chairman Gambill asked if the CPS numbers are down on the reports due to the time kids have been out of school. Mr. Blevins replied yes, this is a big concern they have, they are worried there are a lot they are not aware of because folks are not out and seen. They think this will increase as soon as they go back to school. Chairman Settle asked how school and the direction they take may affect them. Mr. Blevins replied they do believe they will get more reports when schools open up, kids will be seen by the teachers and more people at that time. They hope they do not get more reports, they do hope schools open and things can get back to normal.

The Board thanked Mr. Blevins for his update.

**DESIGNATION OF VOTING DELEGATE TO NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE –** Chairman Settle stated a voting delegate needs to be assigned for the 113<sup>TH</sup> NCACC Annual Conference that will be held virtually beginning on Thursday, August 6, 2020. Chairman Settle stated Commissioner Blevins has been to most conferences and has done a great job.

Motion was made by Chairman Eddie Settle to appoint Commissioner Gary D. Blevins as the designated voting delegate for the 2020 NCACC Annual Conference as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Blevins stated this is his 12<sup>th</sup> opportunity to serve and he has served in every capacity at the County Commissioner Association except the Executive Board to include President. He was blessed to be chosen as the Commissioner of the year in 2016 after leading the legislative goals committee for two years. Commissioner Blevins said he would be honored to serve as the voting delegate for this year as he sunsets into retirement and thanked the Board.

## **WILKES COUNTY AIRPORT – APPROVAL OF ADVERTISEMENTS FOR GROUND SPACE LEASE AGREEMENTS :**

### **1. SAMARITAN’S PURSE – FORMAL LOWE’S/CAPITAL BANK HANGAR**

– Chairman Settle recognized County Attorney, Tony Triplett. Mr. Triplett said there is a memo in the packets that gives the background and information. He added the Airport Board has heard these requests and have recommended approval of both ground space leases for Samaritan’s Purse. There is an existing ground space lease on the formal Lowe’s hanger and they are proposing to terminate that and have these run together on the same terms. Mr. Triplett said the rent will be different because the square footage is different. The rental amount of 5¢ per square foot for the ground space will remain the same as it has for the past several years. This is a standard ground space lease that is currently used for all hangars. Mr. Triplett stated the advertising process for leases that run for more than 10-years is the same as the sale of property and must be advertised in the newspaper and is subject to upset bids.

Commissioner Blevins stated a significant amount of hours was spent with Mr. Triplett and Mr. Yates in negotiating with Capital Bank and Samaritan’s Purse and the Airport Board to get to the point where Samaritan’s could secure it at a reasonable price. He added Mr. Franklin Graham acknowledged Mr. Triplett and all the work at the ground opening. Commissioner Blevins said it was a joint effort and look what it has lead to and he sees more great things in the future for the Airport and hopes he can continue to help with these efforts in the future. Chairman Settle added this is one of the best assets the county has. Commissioner Elmore said 12 years or so ago they purchased land on the opposite side and the Board at that time helped to lay the ground work so they could get to where they are today. Mr. Triplett agreed those decisions helped to get to this today, the fire suppression sprinkle system required at the new Samaritan’s Hanger is possible because of the work done years ago.

Chairman Settle said hopefully they can get the extension and the letters are out and maybe Appalachian State will begin to use the Airport for their needs. Commissioner Blevins added they have Wake Forest Baptist AirCare now as well. Chairman Settle stated this is all great for Wilkes Airport and they look forward to the future. Mr. Triplett said a specific motion is needed that he will read at this time.

Commissioner Keith Elmore 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 new Lease Agreement between Wilkes County (as Lessor) and Samaritan’s Purse (as Lessee) for ground

space for the former Lowe's/Capital Bank aircraft hangar owned by Samaritan's Purse at the Wilkes County Airport, together with the right of ingress and egress for both vehicles and aircraft, 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. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

**2. SAMARITAN'S PURSE – NEW HANGAR** – Mr. Triplett read the required motion for this ground space lease at this time.

Commissioner Brian S. Minton 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 Samaritan's Purse (as Lessee) for ground space for the new aircraft hangar currently under construction by Samaritan's Purse at the Wilkes County Airport, together with the right of ingress and egress for both vehicles and aircraft, 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. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman David Gambill and unanimously approved.

Commissioner Blevins stated he would like to acknowledge multiply members of the County Staff that went above and beyond to create the documentation required to received a \$1 million Economic Development Grant that facilitate the infrastructure that made this hangar possible. Chairman Settle asked if they wrote the grant. Mr. Yates replied yes, it was a great team effort. Chairman Settle thanked everyone who helped with the grant.

**RESOLUTION – AUTHORIZING SALE OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY – TRAPHILL TOWNSHIP** – Mr. Triplett stated at the last meeting the Board authorized him to advertise the sale of this track of land that had been foreclosed on for taxes. He added the advertisement ran and there were not upset bids. This is a very small piece of land with a low offer. He said this was land locked and the good part is this will go back on the tax rolls now. Mr. Triplett stated if the Board wishes to approve the offer there is a Resolution in the packets that the Board needs to vote to approve.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman David Gambill to approve and adopt the Resolution Authorizing Sale of County-owned Property in Traphill Township as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian S. Minton and passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION  
AUTHORIZING SALE  
OF REAL PROPERTY

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at its regular meeting of June 16, 2020, authorized advertisement for sale of a tract of land owned by Wilkes County (hereinafter "the County") located in Traphill Township, Wilkes County, North Carolina,

consisting of 0.32 acre(s), more or less, the same having been acquired by the County under Commissioner's Deed dated October 12, 2015, and recorded in Book 1216, Page 056, Wilkes County Registry, pursuant to the tax foreclosure sale in that action captioned "*Wilkes County vs. Denise Hope Anderson Wood, et al.* [Heirs of Brenda K. Anderson]," File No. 14 CVD 969, Wilkes County Clerk of Superior Court's Office., and being identified on the records of the Wilkes County Tax Mapping office as PIN # 4913-85-1794, Parcel ID No. 19-01729;

AND WHEREAS, said sale is by negotiated offer, advertisement, and upset bid pursuant to G.S. §160A-269;

AND WHEREAS, the County received an initial offer from Dale Kennedy of Roaring River, North Carolina, for the purchase of said tract, in the total amount of \$500.00 plus the cost of publication for the required public notice, Deed preparation, and recording costs;

AND WHEREAS, said offer was duly advertised in the *Wilkes Journal-Patriot* on June 24, 2020, as required under G.S. §160A-269;

AND WHEREAS, no further upset bids have been received, and the time has expired in which an additional upset bid may be submitted;

AND WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners desires to accept said high bid of \$500.00 plus the cost of publication for the required public notice, Deed preparation, and recording costs, and desires to authorize sale of the property pursuant to said bid;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to G.S. §160A-269, that the bid of \$500.00 plus the cost of publication for the required public notice, Deed preparation, and recording costs received from Dale Kennedy of Roaring River, North Carolina, is hereby approved, and upon payment of said purchase price, a Special Warranty Deed shall be executed by the County and conveyed to Dale Kennedy or her assignee for the above referenced property.

This the 7th day of July, 2020.

WILKES COUNTY

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Eddie D. Settle, Chairman,

Wilkes County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sarah D. Call, Clerk

**WTA BOARD DISCUSSION** – Chairman Settle said he would like to discuss WTA Board appointments. He added he asked Mr. Yates to send out an email to ask for names and asked Mr. Yates if any had been received. Mr. Yates replied he has not received any names at this time. Chairman Settle said they have all discussed some names, but there would be a procedure

and asked Mr. Triplett what is the procedure they need to name a new WTA Board. Mr. Triplett stated when they are ready to decide they have to first amend the WTA Ordinance to restructure the Board. They will need to direct him first on how they want the new amended ordinance drawn, by Ordinance WTA was created, by Ordinance their Board was restructured, by Ordinance in October 2018 they amended the original Ordinance to establish the Board of Commissioners as the WTA Board. The decision is up to the Board if they have a desire to change this and decide how they want this to be amended. Mr. Triplett said he would need direction on how many members there would be, if they will represent specific fields, if they will serve at the pleasure of this Board, if there will be specific terms, length or terms, can they be removed from the Board, etc. He added there are standard provisions they have to think about when they establish a Board such as this.

Mr. Triplett said this will be a two-step process first to amend the Ordinance to restructure the Board and second to make appointments to fill the seats on the Board. Chairman Settle asked if they can get a consensus tonight to amend the Ordinance to recreate a WTA Board. Mr. Triplett said the previous Ordinance did not have term limits, but they can put that in the Ordinance this time. Chairman Settle stated that is a great idea. Vice Chairman Gambill added he is fine if Mr. Triplett and Mr. Yates come up with the standard Ordinance for a Transportation Board with terms and have that ready so this Board can come up with the people to serve. Chairman Settle asked if they can complete an application on the website. Mr. Yates replied their standard Board Application is on the website and they can add WTA under Board vacancies.

Chairman Settle stated they first need to decide how many members they want on the WTA Board. Mr. Triplett said that is the first thing he needs, he does not recommend they have a 9 member board as before. Chairman Settle said he suggest a 5 member board. Mr. Triplett asked if this Board will name all members or designate positions. Previously they had a member from DSS, from each town, from the planning department, health department, etc. but they don't have to do that. Vice Chairman Gambill stated they need to set it at 5 members. Chairman Settle added they need to appoint the members under the Ordinance. Vice Chairman Gambill said it can be set up as a standard Board with 4-year terms and rotate off at different times to stair step them. Chairman Settle said they can set it up so the entire Board does not turn over at one time. Mr. Yates added they need to stager the terms. Commissioner Elmore stated if they get good members they appoint and reappoint every 2 or 4 years, but do not need to set term limits. This way they can get someone off if they need to, but also keep the good ones. Mr. Triplett said they can do a 2-2-1, 2 members with 2 years terms, 2 with 3 year terms, and 1 with a 4 year term to get them staggered so all 5 will not come up at one time. Chairman Settle stated this sounds good an asked if everyone is good with it.

Commissioner Blevins said from what he has saw in the past 12 years the County Commissioners have had to come in multiple times to rescue WTA from mismanagement and possible criminal activities. He thinks this is premature, they are still having to provide them funding, the COVID money is not going to last, their budget has to be supplemented by the County Commissioners whenever there is an issue. He gives credit to this Board, they have done a good job of management since they took over, they need someone to keep a close watch on them. This is a difficult agency to manage, they see this all across the state not just in Wilkes.

He added, they need to get some really good people with an attendance policy, they do not need folks just going to meet for lunch and be a rubber stamp board. Commissioner Elmore agreed and stated getting good people and the right people on the board is the point. Commissioner Blevins said it is a thankless job and it will be tough to get the right people. He added this will be an uphill battle. Chairman Settle stated it will be tough, they need to get the Ordinance in place and start with that to be ready.

Commissioner Blevins said last time this blew up he was the chairman, he went over there and fought and struggled and did all he could to get action from that Board, it was frustrating because they were powerless, but finally got it straightened out. He added then Commissioner Elmore stepped in as Chairman and did a good job, he stepped in and they got an interim manager. Commissioner Blevins said it is because they manage a lot of things and have a full staff to help them, a finance officer, county manager, county attorney and all that aided them in this process. They will lose all of that and he is afraid of going back to the way it was. Chairman Settle stated they can get some of this worked out to start the process and make it easier to step back in if they have to. Vice Chairman Gambill added they are not there yet, this is just a decision but COVID has brought up a ton of issues and that money will go away. Chairman Settle stated WTA just had a meeting tonight and it was not too bad, but the numbers change quickly. He said they do need to instruct Mr. Triplett to get an Ordinance ready so when they are ready they can come up with some names. Mr. Triplett said he will work on this.

**ADJOURN** - Motion was made by Commissioner Brian S. Minton, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:08 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Eddie Settle, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: August 4, 2020