

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
August 15, 2023

PUBLIC CONCERNS – None

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, August 15, 2023 at 5:04 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Bill Sexton, and Commissioner Greg Minton.

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

Chairman Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at this time.

INVOCATION – Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Keith Elmore led the Pledge of Allegiance at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Special Called Meeting held on August 1, 2023.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on August 1, 2023.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS – Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson to approve Budget Amendment No. 1 (General – This request is to transfer \$1,618,619 (\$178,825 DSS, \$1,427,170 & \$14,204) from fund balance to be allocated to FY 2023-2024 funds. These were received in FY 2022-2023 and unable to be spent by June 30, 2023 therefore went into Fund Balance). The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

WILKES COUNTY SCHOOLS – REQUEST FOR FUNDING - Chairman Elmore welcomed Rudy Holbrook, Board Chairman and Mark Byrd, Superintendent. Mr. Byrd thanked the Board and stated they are here on behalf of the School System. At the end of April 2023, they learned the school system will lose \$688,720 in low wealth funding from the State. This was after they submitted the budget request to the County. The formula for low wealth funding includes a component based on the efforts of the County funding the school system, thus the 1 cents property tax cut in FY 2021 resulted in this reduction in funding. He added 2023-24 is the first year they have been impacted by this. Mr. Byrd said no one can complain about taxes being cut, but they did not realize how this would impact the school system. They received a 3%

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increase for current expense funding allocation to the schools for 2023-24, which is \$434,234, from the County. They appreciate the increase, but due to the loss of low wealth they are starting the year with \$254,486 less than the previous year. He added that over 80% of their funding is used for salaries and benefits, so this will affect employees. Tonight, they are requesting an additional \$200,000 in current expense to be provided to the school system to help make up the difference.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene stated a tax cut costed them this money. Mr. Byrd replied yes, the 1¢ cut cost the school system over \$600K and he did not realize the impact this would have either. Vice Chairman Greene asked if the amount they are requested goes towards salaries. Mr. Byrd replied yes the vast majority will, it will go towards paying bills and salaries. Commissioner Sexton asked what would the impact be without this money. Mr. Byrd replied they can go into fund balance if they have to, they are already projecting to use as much of their fund balance next year as they have in the last 10 years and this lessens the impact. Chairman Elmore asked how much is their fund balance. Mr. Byrd replied if the numbers are current it is at \$7 million, \$1.5 million is restricted funds they can't use. At the current rate, their funds will operate the school system for over 3 years. Mr. Holbrook added they are at \$1 million almost \$2 million into their fund balance this year. Chairman Elmore stated the County is \$9 million into theirs. Mr. Holbrook said they are trying to get back to where they were last year, this will put them only \$47K out, and they are just asking for \$200K.

Chairman Elmore asked about their enrollment and FTE's. Mr. Byrd replied they ended the 2022-23 school year with 17 fewer students than the previous year. As of today, there are more than 300 more students enrolled in grades PK - 13 than the first day of school last year. All of these students will not show up and some will have moved. He added the first 10 days fluctuate, right now there are 108 fewer students enrolled than they had on the 10th day of school last year. Chairman Elmore asked, so are the numbers up or down, its hard to tell. Mr. Byrd replied they think they will be up, they are not sure, based on the number enrolled today. Commissioner Minton asked about the home and private school vouchers. Mr. Byrd replied they have not been impacted at this point, it scares them to think when they may be. Chairman Elmore asked if they received any cuts from the State. Mr. Byrd replied they don't know; they do not have a budget yet. Mr. Holbrook added they are telling them it will be October.

Chairman Elmore asked if they are fully staffed. Mr. Byrd replied as of today they have 22 vacancies, which is pretty good compared to other districts. This is 7 more than the start of school last year. He added the biggest challenge they have is bus drivers and he would love to talk to anyone with a CDL. Vice Chairman Green asked the enrollment in Traphill and Boomer and the cost to operate them. Mr. Byrd replied he does not know the exact enrollment, but would estimate 80 at Traphill and 125 at Boomer. He added he does not know the cost to operate them.

Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Mr. Holbrook and Mr. Byrd.

Commissioner Greg Minton made a motion to approve an additional \$200,000 appropriation to Wilkes County Schools as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

BLUE RIDGE OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (BROC):

1. HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT FY 2022-2023 FINAL BUDGET – Chairman Elmore recognized Dare Stromer, BROC Executive Director and Katelyn Pruitt, SNS Director. Ms. Pruitt thanked the Board for allowing them to come tonight and said she is the Director for Senior Nutrition Services and Meals on Wheels. They are here to present the FY 2022-2023 final budget for approval for BROC, Wilkes Senior Resources and Ruby Adult Daycare for last year. At this time, she provided background on BROC which began in 1966 and serves Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany County and explained who they serve and the services they provide. Ms. Pruitt said they have 3 meal sites: Maple Spring is congregate only; the Senior Center offers congregate, drive-thru and home delivered meals; Austin Traphill Road offers congregate, drive-thru and home delivered meals. She added if they can't get to them on a route or at a meal site, they do send Moms Meals. These are frozen meals; it is not what they prefer (they would rather see them every day) but in some cases, they have no choice and just need to make sure they have a meal.

Ms. Pruitt went through the final budget in detail at this time: the total for the Block Grant for FY 22-23 for BROC is \$310,017; required local match of \$34,445; 203 clients and 40,084 units. Wilkes Senior Resources: the total Block Grant was \$227,123; required local match \$25,236; 21,415 units. Ruby Pardue Blackburn Adult Day Care: the total Block Grant was \$26,478; required local match \$2,942; 6 clients and 10,080 units. She added the total for the three combined was \$564,820 to Wilkes County, local match of \$62,758, and served 71,579 units. Commissioner Sexton said he sits on the Senior Resources Board and it is amazing how much they do for the seniors and what is available for them. Chairman Elmore stated in addition to the food deliveries it is just as important that someone is going and checking on these folks every day. Ms. Stromer agreed in many cases that is the only person they see. Ms. Pruitt added it is much more than a meal, they have gone to their homes and found folks passed out and they were there to get them help when they needed it.

Commissioner Johnson stated he called yesterday to try to get a family help for care giver relief and the waiting list is very long. Is there anything that can be done to help this, is this due to staffing needs. Ms. Pruitt replied staffing is always an issue for these services, but the number one issue is money. She added every program they have has a waiting list. They apply for grants, but these are very competitive and they don't want to add someone and then have to take them off because the grant goes away. They try to keep a steady workflow based on the funds they have and serve all they can. Ms. Stromer added drivers are always needed for routes as well, in order to take on another route they must have drivers. She added Katelyn does a great job and looks after her clients and goes above and beyond. Chairman Elmore asked if they still have Make a Difference Day. Ms. Stromer replied no the company that donated the money for that does not do this any longer.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to approve the Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission Home and Community Block Grant FY 2022-2023 Final Budget as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

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2. HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT FY 2023-2024 BUDGET – Ms. Pruitt stated this is the Home and Community Care Block Grant FY 2023-24 Budget for next fiscal year. Ms. Pruitt went through the proposed budget for the Block Grant for FY 23-24 for BROC: \$312,895; required local match of \$34,766; 35,750 units. Wilkes Senior Resources: total Block Grant is \$217,909; required local match \$24,212; 21,625 units. Ruby Pardue Blackburn Adult Day Care: total Block Grant is \$27,937; required local match \$3,104; 10,080 units. She added the total for the three is \$558,741 for Wilkes County, with a required local match of \$62,082 to serve the community.

Ms. Pruitt said they have a well issue at the Austin Community Center. Commissioner Sexton asked the status of this. Ms. Pruitt replied they have to get the water tested because they serve food and the test came back with bacteria in the well, then e-coli was detected so they had to shut down. The state offered a free camera to go down the well, this is a very old well with no record so it was probably drilled before 1950. It would be very expensive to repair so they had to drill a new one, but the process has been very slow because the companies that do this had a very long wait. They hope to be back open by the end of September. The new well cost at this time is \$15K, they still need to abandon the old well and get the inspections and then they can open. Ms. Pruitt said the Austin staff comes to the Senior Center to cook a hot meal to serve one day and prepares a cold meal to serve the next day. They are all takeout or home delivery for these clients at this time. Commissioner Johnson asked if BROC covered this entire expense or did the Community Center help. Ms. Pruitt replied the community does not come out to the center very much. They are covering it and making small improvements as they can afford them to keep it open and going for the seniors in that area.

Ms. Stromer and Mr. Pruitt thanked the Board for all their support. The Board thanked Ms. Stromer and Ms. Pruitt for all they do for the Seniors in Wilkes County.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to approve the Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission Home and Community Block Grant FY 2023-2024 Budget as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

WILKES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – APPOINTMENT OF FIRE MARSHAL – Chairman Elmore welcomed Sheriff Chris Shew. Sherriff Shew introduced Christopher Ryan Hicks, the new Fire Marshal. He added they had a committee to find a Fire Marshal, Mr. Hicks' resume is very impressive in which the Board has a copy. He has been in fire service for over 30 years and has his Class II inspector certification and working on Class III and is eligible for probationary. Sheriff Shew said in the interview process he did well, is very personable and met all the requirements and expectations of the Committee which included Commissioner Sexton, John Yates, Logan Kerr, Chris Wagoner, James Summers and himself. They were impressed with him and what he brings to the table and attending with Mr. Hicks tonight is his girlfriend and family. Chairman Elmore and the Board welcomed Mr. Hicks to Wilkes County. Commissioner Sexton added he had the pleasure to meet with him and he will do a good job.

Commissioner Bill Sexton made a motion to approve the Appointment of Christopher Ryan Hicks as the Wilkes County Fire Marshal effective September 1, 2023, as requested and presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

The Board thanked Sheriff Shew and Mr. Hicks and added they look forward to working with him.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – WILKES OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY – Chairman Elmore recognized W.C. Scroggs, Planning Director. Mr. Scroggs said this is a MOU for the Outdoor Recreation Economy work group and he will provide a brief overview. He added the MOU is between and among the County of Wilkes; The Health Foundation; Town of North Wilkesboro; Town of Wilkesboro; Wilkes County Health Department; Wilkes County Economic Development Corp.; Wilkesboro Tourism Development Authority; Yadkin River Greenway Council; and Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor. The purpose of the MOU is to clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities and is not a legally binding agreement. Mr. Scroggs stated each partner has agreed to invest in the group which will establish priorities and expend the invested funds. He added this MOU will hold the members accountable to the common goal of harnesses the outdoor recreation assets to realize community and economic goals which define Wilkes County as a premier outdoor destination. The intent is to benefit the health and quality of life of residents while enhancing visitor experiences and encourage relocation of individuals, families and business to the area. Voting rights are reserved to parties that contributed funding on an annual basis for 5-years. Mr. Scroggs stated Wilkes County's annual contribution will be \$30K.

Chairman Elmore stated Yadkin River Greenway and Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor does not vote, only the funding members, correct. Mr. Scroggs replied yes. Chairman Elmore asked if Yadkin Valley Heritage is still in existence and who funds them. Mr. Scroggs replied yes they may receive grant funds. Mr. Chris Huffman added the County makes an appropriation to them. Chairman Elmore asked if the County has a Member on their Board and do they have meetings. Mr. Scroggs replied yes he is on their Board and they do meet.

Commissioner Greg Minton made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding for the Wilkes Outdoor Recreation Economy, as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE – NC OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND – Ms. Felts stated before the Board for consideration is another document related to the Opioid Settlement Funds. She added the Grant Project Ordinance is for audit purposes and sets out the funds that the Board approved in the Budget for this year's allocations to the specified groups listed. Chairman Elmore stated this will be approved yearly. Ms. Felts replied yes and will change yearly depending on the Board's approved allocations from the Settlement. Chairman Elmore stated the Health Foundation will be monitoring these funds and handling this. Ms. Felts replied yes they will handle the reporting, send it to the County, and then she will forward it to the Department of Justice as required after she reviews them.

Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson made a motion to approve the Wilkes County Grant Project Ordinance NC Opioid Settlement Fund as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

*Wilkes County
Grant Project Ordinance
NC Opioid Settlement Fund*

BE IT ORDAINED by the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners, pursuant to Section 13.2 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the following grant project ordinance is hereby adopted:

Section 1. The project authorized is the NC Opioid Settlement described in the Memorandum of Agreement Between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation (hereinafter "Agreement") between this unit and the State of North Carolina for the purpose of abating and alleviating the impacts of the misconduct committed by certain pharmaceutical companies.

Section 2. The officers of this unit are hereby directed to proceed with the grant project within the terms of the grant documents, the rules and regulations of Agreement with the State of North Carolina, and the budget contained herein.

Section 3. The following revenues are available to complete this project:

<i>NC Opioid Settlement Fund</i>	<i>\$12,862,149</i>
<i>Fiscal Year 2023-2024 funds used</i>	<i>\$ 1,178,989</i>

Section 4. The following amounts are appropriated for the project:

Collaborative and strategic planning activities outlined in Option B of the MOA to used in FY 2023-2024 as follows:

<i>Wilkes Recovery Revolution</i>	<i>\$379,372</i>
<i>Wilkes County EMS</i>	<i>\$288,205</i>
<i>NW Comprehensive Treatment Center Mountain Health Solutions</i>	<i>\$250,600</i>
<i>Hospitality House</i>	<i>\$116,800</i>
<i>Project Lazarus</i>	<i>\$ 54,000</i>
<i>NC Tech Paths</i>	<i>\$ 45,000</i>
<i>Wilkes County Health Department</i>	<i>\$ 22,087</i>
<i>Wilkes County Public Library</i>	<i>\$ 11,925</i>
<i>Wilkes Youth Life Development</i>	<i>\$ 11,000</i>

<i>Total funds to be used FY 2023-2024</i>	<i>\$1,178,989</i>
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Section 5. The Finance Officer is hereby directed to maintain within the Grant Project Fund sufficient, specific, and detailed accounting records to provide the accounting to the grant agency required by the state regulations.

Section 6. The Finance Officer is directed to report annual on the financial status of each project element in Section 4 and on the grant, revenues received or claimed.

Section 7. Copies of this Grant Project Ordinance shall be made available to the Finance Officer for direction in carrying out this project.

ADOPTED this 15th day of August, 2023.

Keith Elmore , Chairman

ATTEST:

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

SET PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO ISSUE LIMITED OBLIGATION BONDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING FUNDS, TOGETHER WITH ANY OTHER AVAILABLE FUNDS, TO PAY THE COSTS OF CONSTRUCTING AND EQUIPPING A NEW COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING – Mr. Huffman stated he is here to request the Board set a Public Hearing. This is one of the LGC requirements before any local government can apply for a new debt, they must hold a public hearing. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to receive comments on the County issuing Limited Liability Bonds or to go with Public Financing to pay for the cost of construction and equipping a new County Administration Building. Chairman Elmore asked if this is obligating them to anything. Mr. Huffman replied no, this is an LGC requirement. Chairman Elmore asked if they have any idea what interest rates are at this time. Mr. Huffman replied he is unsure. Mr. Yates added the last he heard was around 4.2% to 4.4%. Chairman Elmore said prime is much higher than that. Mr. Huffman stated as a local government they will qualify for a rate less than prime.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bill Sexton to set a Public Hearing to consider whether to issue Limited Obligation Bonds for the purpose of providing funds, together with any other available funds, to pay the costs of constructing and equipping a new County Administration Building on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 5:00 PM in the Commissioners Meeting Room located at 110 North Street, Wilkesboro, NC 28697 with the meeting to immediately follow. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

JURY COMMISSION APPOINTMENT – County Attorney Tony Triplett said there is a memo in the packet that explains this appointment, which rolls around every 2-years. He added the General Statute provides there are three members of the Jury Commission, which they have in every county. The Jury Commission provides the master list of prospective jurors. They do this with the assistance of the Clerk of Court. All three members are appointed, one by the Clerk of Court; one by the resident Superior Court Judge and one by the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Triplett stated Regina Billings, the Clerk of Superior Court has required they appoint or re-appoint a member to that Board. He added currently Mr. Rocky Lyons is serving as the Commissioner member and is willing to serve again if the Board wished to reappoint him. The term for this appointment is 2-years from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025 and is before the Board for your consideration.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to re-appoint Mr. Rocky Charles Lyons to the Jury Commission for a 2-term from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Greg Minton and unanimously approved.

VAYA HEALTH REGION 3 BOARD APPOINTMENT – Mr. Yates said there is a vacancy on the Vaya Health Region 3 Board created by the retirement of John Blevins, former DSS Director. He added Kevin Brown, current DSS Director, has agreed to fill the vacancy on this Board if the Commissioners would like. Chairman Elmore stated he thinks that would be very appropriate.

Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson made a motion to appoint Mr. Kevin Brown to the Vaya Health Region 3 Board as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

CLOSED SESSION – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene to go into closed session to discuss qualifications, competence, or conditions of employment of a Public Officer or employee or prospective Public Officer or employee pursuant to the personnel exception under G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6); and under Section 143-318.11 (a)(5) of the North Carolina General Statutes to establish or instruct the staff concerning the price or other material terms of a possible contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property. The motion was seconded by Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn back into regular session. No action was taken in the closed session.

CLOSED SESSION – Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson to go into closed session under Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statutes to consult with the Board’s Attorney to preserve the attorney-client privilege. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn back into regular session. No action was taken in the closed session.

ADJOURN - Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 6:46 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: September 5, 2023