

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
August 17, 2021

PUBLIC CONCERNS – None

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, August 17, 2021 at 6:03 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Eddie Settle, Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner David Gambill, and Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson.

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. He asked everyone to remember Sharron Huffman, School Board Member who had surgery today and the children starting back to school and the obstacles they still face after a 1 ½ year of tough times. Please remember all teachers and educators with the challenges they face keeping the kids safe.

INVOCATION – Commissioner 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 Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on August 3, 2021.

WILKES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY – INTRODUCE NEW LIBRARIAN – UPDATE
– Chairman Settle welcomed Gwyn Minton, Chair Wilkes County Library Board and Suzanne Moore, Wilkes County Librarian. Ms. Minton said she is pleased to be invited tonight, and mentioned her love for Libraries that began as a child. She added Wilkes is fortunate to have a beautiful Library inside and out, and their biggest asset is the staff. Ms. Minton said the newest staff member is Suzanne Moore, she comes with an impressive educational resume along with life experiences. She has worked the last 9 years as the Ashe County Librarian during this time she has worked a lot on community outreach. Ms. Moore already knows a lot of the staff and how things work having worked in the Appalachian Regional Library system which is a plus. Ms. Minton stated Ms. Moore has been working in Wilkes one month and hit the ground running and it is her pleasure to introduce the new Wilkes County Librarian, Suzanne Moore.

Ms. Moore thanked the Board and said she is happy to be here to meet everyone, she is excited to be in Wilkes. She moved to the mountains in 2012 to be near her father's home place in Sparta and has been renting since. Now she is ready to locate to a permanent retirement community and has an offer in on a house in Wilkes. Ms. Moore said she is very interested in partnerships and that is the focus of their new 5-year plan. She would like to come back to

present that as soon as it is complete. In closing, she stated she looks forward to having more programming, partnering, and activities in Wilkes.

Chairman Settle stated they look forward to hearing more. Commissioner Johnson added he had the opportunity to serve on the search committee and sat in on the interviews. He added it was a unanimous decision from the search committee and they are thrilled to have Ms. Moore in Wilkes. Commissioner Johnson added she is also a banjo picker. Ms. Moore stated on the 4th Saturday of each month she will be at the Traphill Branch and they will have a music jam there. Commissioner Johnson said she added lots of great programs in Ashe and they look forward to having this in Wilkes. Chairman Settle added they would love to see the Traphill Branch energized. Ms. Moore stated she will be working closely with the Librarian there on marketing, programming, and partnering to include music and maybe a book club.

The Board welcomed and thanked Ms. Moore and Ms. Minton for coming tonight and look forward to working with them.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD APPOINTMENT – Chairman Settle stated they need to appoint Casey Joe Johnson to the Regional Library Board. Commissioner Elmore asked if the Wilkes Library Board selects this member to recommend to the Regional Board or is this under the authority of Commissioners. Mr. Triplett replied this is solely their pick, this Board appoints four to the Appalachian Regional Library Board.

Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton made a motion to appoint Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson to the Appalachian Regional Library Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously approved.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT – REQUEST TO SET PUBLIC HEARING – ROAD NAME REQUEST – TEABERRY LANE – WILKESBORO TOWNSHIP – Chairman Settle recognized W.C. Scroggs, Planner. Mr. Scroggs asked the Board of Commissioners to set a Public Hearing on a Road Name Request received by petition to the Planning Department. He stated the Road Name Request is for Teaberry Lane off Old Moravian Falls Road (SR 1101) in Wilkesboro Township; the request meets the requirements of the Wilkes County Road Naming Ordinance and as required by the Wilkes County Road Naming Ordinance a Public Hearing and a ten day (10) notification period is required.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to set a Public Hearing on Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at 5:55 P.M. with the Meeting to immediately follow regarding the Road Name Request as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO – ETJ MEMBER PLANNING BOARD – Mr. Yates said they have received a letter and request from the North Wilkesboro. It stated “*on July 22, 2021, the North Wilkesboro Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to recommend the appointment of Mr. Jerrell Suddreth as the ETJ Member on the North Wilkesboro Planning Board. Mr. Suddreth’s term will expire in June 2021. As you are aware, all ETJ appointments*

are made by the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners We ask that you place this appointment on your next agenda for consideration and action by the County Board of Commissioners.”

Chairman Settle stated this comes as a recommendation from the North Wilkesboro Town Board. Commissioner Elmore asked if anyone knows this gentleman, or is there anyone in attendance from North Wilkesboro to speak on this. Chairman Settle asked if this is the second request they have received this year. Mr. Yates replied they appointed an Alternate ETJ Member at the last meeting. Commissioner Gambill said he would like more information and will look into this more over the next two weeks.

Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill to table the request to appoint Mr. Jerrell Suddreth as ETJ Member on the North Wilkesboro Planning Board for a 3-year term expiring June 2021, until the next Commissioners’ Meeting to be held on September 7, 2021. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and passed unanimously.

SYNERGY RECOVERY, INC. – RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LEASE AGREEMENT – County Attorney Tony Triplett stated this is a Resolution for the approval of the Lease Agreement for Synergy, this has been discussed and two meetings ago the Board authorized him to advertise this as required by law. He added if the Board wishes to approve this they need a motion to adopt the Resolution which approves the lease agreement. Mr. Triplett said this has five 2-year terms as discussed that can be terminated by either party with adequate notice prior to the end of each 2-year term. He added they will make provisions to come before the Board before renewal each 2 years to make them aware. At that time the Board can review where the lease stands and have the opportunity to terminate at that time if they like as well.

Commissioner Elmore asked about the paving of the parking lot. Mr. Yates replied the bottom parking lot was paved in last year’s budget. Commissioner Elmore asked will they have to also pave the upper lot. Mr. Yates replied they do not use the upper lot very much and the county already completed the lower. Commissioner Elmore stated the lease says they have to pave all of the parking, correct. Mr. Triplett replied he added language that makes it clear that the timing and extent of what they Board does, including paving is up to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Yates stated it is a very large parking lot and they paved the main part they use. Vice Chairman Minton asked if they had discussed cutting the parking lot down. Mr. Yates replied they have discussed taking it down and not paving as much, this is an option.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing Lease Agreement between Wilkes County and Synergy Recovery, Inc. as presented at tonight’s meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

*RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING
LEASE AGREEMENT
BETWEEN WILKES COUNTY
AND SYNERGY RECOVERY, INC.*

WHEREAS, Wilkes County (the "County") is the owner of certain real property situated in North Wilkesboro Township, Wilkes County, North Carolina, the same being located at 118 Peace Street, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659, consisting of 8.36 acres, more or less, together with improvements situated thereon and ingress and egress to and from the same, said property being more fully described in that Deed recorded in Book 558, Page 069, Wilkes County Registry (hereinafter referred to as "the Property"); and

WHEREAS, Synergy Recovery, Inc., a North Carolina non-profit corporation providing mental health, developmental disability, and substance abuse services, with its principal office and place of business being located in Wilkes County, North Carolina (hereinafter "Synergy"), currently occupies and does business on the Property and formerly sublet the same from New River Service Authority, a Joint Agency created pursuant to Chapter 160A of the North Carolina General Statutes (hereinafter "New River"), pursuant to a duly approved lease between the County and New River; and

WHEREAS, New River ceased operations on or about October 31, 2011, and no longer leases the Property from the County or sublets the same to Synergy; and

WHEREAS, Synergy has been conducting its operations at the Property and has leased the same from the County since January 1, 2013; and

WHEREAS, Synergy's most recent lease with the County has expired; and

WHEREAS, the parties desire to continue a lease arrangement as more fully set forth herein; and

WHEREAS, the County has caused a survey to be performed in order to reduce that portion of the Property which will be leased to Synergy, resulting in a parcel of 3.257 acres, more or less, which will comprise the leased premises (hereinafter the "Leased Premises") under the parties' new lease arrangement as set forth herein; and

WHEREAS, a facility-based crisis (FBC) center has been established on the Leased Premises, through renovations to the building located thereon as financed by Vaya Health and a \$1.4 million appropriation from the North Carolina General Assembly secured through the efforts of former State Senator Shirley Randleman; and

WHEREAS, Vaya Health has designated Synergy to operate the FBC center and Synergy has agreed to the same; and

WHEREAS, Synergy will, in addition to operating the FBC center, continue its operations on the Leased Premises as a provider of mental health, developmental disability, and substance abuse services as it has been doing; and

WHEREAS, the County desires that Synergy lease the Leased Premises for the above stated purposes, and Synergy desires to do the same, under terms and conditions as agreed to by and between the parties; and

WHEREAS, the above described lease, together with all of the terms and provisions for the same, have been reduced to writing in the form of a Lease Agreement (hereinafter the "Agreement") which the County and Synergy desire to execute; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners, upon review of the Agreement, desires by this Resolution to authorize approval of the Agreement at its duly held meeting on the date set forth below; and

WHEREAS, a Notice of Intent describing the terms of the Agreement has been duly published at least thirty (30) days prior to said meeting, as required by G.S. §160A-272(a1); and

WHEREAS, the description of the property to be leased as set forth in the Notice of Intent is as follows:

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY TO BE LEASED: The Agreement is for the lease of approximately 3.257 acres, together with improvements situated thereon, located at 118 Peace Street, North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. Synergy currently operates a detoxification and substance abuse treatment center in the building on said property, together with facility-based crisis center services in the Shirley B. Randleman Recovery Center that opened in March of 2021. The County has secured a survey of said property in order to more fully and accurately describe the same, and the description from this survey will be attached as an exhibit to the Agreement.

AND WHEREAS, the amount and terms of the offer by Synergy to lease said property as set forth in the Notice of Intent are as follows:

AMOUNT AND TERMS OF OFFER: Synergy proposes to lease the above described property from the County, and the County proposes to lease the same to Synergy, for an initial term of two (2) years, with a maximum of four (4) automatic renewal terms of two (2) years each, unless either party provides notice to the other at least ninety (90) days prior to the end of the term that the Agreement will not be renewed. Rental to be paid by Synergy to the County would be the sum of \$3,000.00 per month. The County would be responsible for all structural maintenance and repairs with respect to the building located on the property, including the roof, the exterior walls, the HVAC system, and any other structural portions of said building. The County would also be responsible for all

repairs with respect to the paved parking areas located on the property. Synergy would be responsible for all other repairs and maintenance, and for payment of all utilities, taxes, contents insurance, and liability insurance. The Agreement authorizes Synergy to use the property exclusively for the provision of mental health, substance abuse, and/or facility-based crisis center services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to G.S. §§153A-176 and 160A-272, that the Agreement with Synergy as presented at the July 1, 2021 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, and as set forth in the Notice of Intent, is hereby approved, and the Chairman and Clerk of the Board of Commissioners are authorized to execute the same on behalf of the County.

This the 17th day of August, 2021.

WILKES COUNTY

By: _____
*Eddie D. Settle, Chairman
Wilkes County Board of Commissioners*

ATTEST:

Sarah Call, Clerk

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF CONSTRUCTION OF NEW NATIONAL GUARD BASE IN WILKES COUNTY – Chairman Settle asked Larry Pendry to come forward at this time. He added he talked with Mr. Pendry last week and asked him to come tonight. Mr. Pendry handed out information to the Board and said he appreciated the opportunity to speak. It will help Wilkes County now and into the future to get a Readiness Center in Wilkes County. He added the NC citizens passed a bond package in 2015 that included three Regional Readiness Centers; Burke, Guilford, and Wilkes County. Burke County is under construction and Guilford will start soon. Mr. Pendry said former Senator Shirley Randleman was instrumental in getting this Regional Readiness Center committed to Wilkes County. The original bond package was \$70 million for the three centers and in 2018 the Legislature added \$14.4 million more for Burke and Wilkes. The current Wilkes Armory was opened in 1975, with a 76 man infantry unit. The building has changed over the years and they have over 120 in that location now and have outgrown it. Mr. Pendry said the renovation spending numbers in the paper recently indicated \$6 to \$10 million would be spent. He added it does not make sense to spend that amount of funds on renovating that location and is not a good use of taxpayer money.

Mr. Pendry said there has been discussions of 119 acres at the North Wilkesboro Industrial Park. The newspaper said it would take \$40 million to do grading and site work, and does not include water, sewer or a road. He is requesting the Board look at this and agree that the Regional

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Readiness Center as passed by the citizens needs to be built in Wilkes County. Mr. Pendry talked with Kenny Cook, Deputy Director of Construction and Facilities, he said no final decision has been made on whether they will do a renovation or build. He added they are currently leaning toward renovation. The news article said they met with the Town and other leaders and they seemed to be in favor of renovation. Mr. Pendry said they need to build a new Readiness Center in Wilkes County for Northwest North Carolina. He talked with the Adjutant General today and he said if there are other site possibilities he will send someone to look at them and will keep an open mind. If they can use something like the Airport there are many possibilities and uses that could go along with that site.

Chairman Settle stated this is correct and he was on the EDC Board in 2015 and everyone was excited about this and they kept asking what is going on with this and no one knew. He added it just went away and now he is bringing it back to their attention. If they all need to go to Raleigh along with Mr. Pendry they can do that and tell them Wilkes wants this facility as the citizens voted for. Chairman Settle asked former Senator Shirley Randleman to come forward and added she represented Wilkes in Raleigh at that time and worked hard to get this for Wilkes. Ms. Randleman has information about this and is still very connected in Raleigh.

Senator Randleman thanked the Board for the invitation to come tonight. She stated in 2009-10 the Guard was looking at closing facilities that were in poor condition, Wilkes County was one of those. Wilkes had deployed Guardsman at the time and she said absolutely not, they would not close it. She Chaired Appropriations for Justice and Public Safety and the committee. When they have Guardsman away they will not let them come back and have their facility closed. Ms. Randleman said they kept it open. In 2015 when they began work on the Bond package she saw counties getting these Readiness Centers and told them Wilkes needs one. She added their facility was in poor condition and they do not want to lose this facility for Northwest N.C. They were able to get Wilkes added to the provision that allowed new Readiness Centers. In 2015 the Bond provision said the National Guard will received \$70 million for Readiness Centers in Guilford, Burke, and Wilkes Counties. There was a provision that said the proceeds from the public improvement bonds for National Guard shall be used by the Adjutant General of the N.C. National Guard for capital improvements for Readiness Centers located in Guilford, Burke, and Wilkes Counties.

Ms. Randleman said this never said a specific location it denoted those three counties would have Readiness Centers. She said when this was being discussed the Guard came to Wilkes and met with local leaders about the possibility of the Readiness Center. It was her understanding then and now that a Readiness Center is a training site. They will rotate Guardsman in and out for training. She said they went to Burke and looked at their site which was to renovate a prison for their center. They learned they could not use that building and had to demolish it and build back new which cost more. The 2018 State Budget appropriated \$14,423,000 to the National Guard for Burke and Wilkes County. Chairman Settle stated this is additional funds. Ms. Randleman replied yes for Readiness Centers not National Guard or Armory. This is intended to be for Northwest N.C. as a training center. She added she did inquire into this and received a response on August 9, 2021. At that time, it was noted the Wilkes National Guard project was authorized to spend \$6 million in Connect NC Bond proceeds as well as an additional \$7.5

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million in general fund supplements which totals \$13.5 million. As of this date from the last report the Wilkes project has spent \$110,000 which may have been for the environmental studies at the North Wilkesboro site. She added North Wilkesboro was willing to give property to the State for the Guard facility and it would have been great to open up the Industrial Park. Ms. Randleman added she does not think the Guard has \$40 million for infrastructure as required on that property. She stated they have \$13.5 million available for this project. If the cost goes over, that would require approval for additional funding from the General Assembly. Ms. Randleman said when she saw the plans for the initial facility it did include a helipad. There were plans to have their helicopters to come in and out of that site.

Chairman Settle said the State is flush with cash at this time with all the American Rescue Plan and Covid money. Ms. Randleman added this is for Public Safety and would fall in line with those funds. Chairman Settle said they voted on a bond for this and the citizens supported this. Ms. Randleman stated 65% of the N.C. citizens voted in favor of the Bond issue in April of 2016. Chairman Settle said they were told this would happen and they understand North Wilkesboro gave them land, but it has issues. He added there are other places in the county, Commissioner Minton has called him about the Airport as has Mr. Pendry. Chairman Settle said that would be a perfect location if they can find a spot.

Mr. Yates provided an enlarged map and pointed out there are two sites they can look out. The first is on Airport Road. The County owns approximately 50 acres total that was an old farm they bought years ago for the approach area. They most likely cannot sale the property to anyone, but they think the County can offer a long term lease. He added he spoke with Dale Shumate from North Wilkesboro today about extending a gravity fed sewer line out Airport Road to Royal Road. Mr. Yates added they would like to get a sewer line to all of the Airport eventually, there are a lot of possibilities there. He asked Mr. Pendry how much land do they need for the Readiness Center. Mr. Pendry replied for an Armory the minimum is 15 acres. For a Regional Readiness Center, they need more, maybe 25 acres to 40 acres, he does not know what they need. Mr. Yates added there is a 20 acres site on the other side of the Airport, but he is concerned that is not large enough. Commissioner Gambill asked if the land surrounding the 20 acres is privately owned. Mr. Yates replied yes, there is probably a selling price but is it not county property and is accessible through Johnson Road. Mr. Pendry said the Guard normally requires the land be deeded to them as the North Wilkesboro property, but there may be other options.

Vice Chairman Minton asked of the land Mr. Yates is referring to is in the flight zone. Mr. Yates replied he talked with Jimmy Luther earlier and he felt like FAA would have to approve anything on this. He thinks they can obtain this as long as they are not selling it and would be leasing it, which they can do for \$1.00 per year. Mr. Yates said the 20 Acres has more flexibility because it was not purchased with FAA funds, but the other tract is a much larger site. Mr. Pendry asked if the Guard chose the 20 acres site is that a possibility. Chairman Settle replied it would get the conversation started if they can get someone to come in and say they are interested. The State could possibly purchase some of the surrounding farmland. Vice Chairman Minton stated in the original plan there was a helipad. Mr. Randleman replied yes. Chairman Settle added they defiantly want that at the Airport.

Chairman Settle stated they have a Resolution before the Board for consideration in Support of Construction of New N.C. National Guard Armory Readiness Center. If passed they can send copies to Governor Cooper, Senate Pro Temp Phil Berger, and the Adjutant General. Commissioner Elmore asked should they send the Senator and House of Representatives a copy of the Resolution as well. Mr. Yates replied they will include all of them. Commissioner Gambill asked why are they doing a Resolution, why don't they just go to Raleigh and talk to them. Chairman Settle said it sounds like they need to talk with the Adjutant General. Commissioner Gambill said that should be their starting point. He added they don't know if any of that land is for sale, or how much they need, he is good with this and has been since 2015. Chairman Settle stated they need to start the conversation.

Mr. Pendry said he talked with the General Hunt today and was advised that he could send someone out to look at possible sites if the Commissioners had some in 2-3 weeks. Mr. Yates stated if they could send them specs of what they need and are looking for it would help the County to know what type of sites to look for. Commissioner Johnson asked what is the difference between an Armory and a Readiness Center. Mr. Pendry replied the Readiness Center concept is where they are trying to close down some of the older Armories. The Watauga troops would go to Burke for training and Watauga would be shut down. They may place two or three units in a Regional Center. He would like for the Wilkes site to include a staging area and others options. Commissioner Gambill said they need specs on this to see what size site they need.

Chairman Settle thanked Senator Randleman and Mr. Pendry for attending tonight, and for their time and work on this.

Commissioner Keith Elmore made a motion to approve the Resolution in Support of Construction of New N.C. National Guard Armory Readiness Center in Wilkes County, North Carolina as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

*RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF CONSTRUCTION OF
NEW N.C. NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY READINESS CENTER
IN WILKES COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA*

WHEREAS, the current N.C. National Guard Armory located on Armory Road in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, was initially constructed in 1955 and has been an outstanding asset to this community, having provided countless services to the citizens of Wilkes County, the State of North Carolina, and the American people for over sixty-five years; and

WHEREAS, due to the age of this facility and the continuing importance to Wilkes County and to our state and nation of a local N.C. National Guard facility, local and state leaders have recognized the need to construct a new N.C. National Guard readiness center in Wilkes County to replace the one built in 1955; and

WHEREAS, under date of October 21, 2015, the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015 was enacted into law, authorizing a statewide vote on the issuance of \$2 billion in state bonds for numerous capital improvements across North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the voters of the State of North Carolina approved the issuance of these bonds in an election held on March 15, 2016, with over 65% voting in favor of the bonds authorized under the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015 included \$70,000,000.00 in funding for the construction of three new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness centers in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Wilkes County was named as one of three counties for construction of a new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center, the other counties being Guilford and Burke; and

WHEREAS, planning and/or construction is already proceeding on the new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness centers in Guilford and Burke Counties; and

WHEREAS, construction has not yet begun on the new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center for Wilkes County, nor have official plans for the same yet been announced, nor have N.C. National Guard or other state officials even committed publicly to the construction of such a facility; and

WHEREAS, it is the belief of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners that the clear intent of the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015, as approved by the voters of North Carolina, was to authorize construction of a new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center for Wilkes County; and

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners wishes to express its support for carrying out the intent of the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015 through construction of a new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center in Wilkes County, North Carolina, and desires by this Resolution to urge the N.C. National Guard and state officials to proceed with the same as soon as possible; and

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners further wishes to confirm its commitment to cooperate with the N.C. National Guard and state officials in said effort and to work with the same in securing construction of a new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center in Wilkes County pursuant to the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners does hereby express its support for carrying out the intent of the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015 through construction of a new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center in Wilkes County, North Carolina, and does hereby urge the N.C. National Guard and state officials to proceed with the same as soon as possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners hereby confirms its commitment to cooperate with the N.C. National Guard and state officials in said effort and to work with the same in securing construction of a new N.C. National Guard Armory readiness center in Wilkes County pursuant to the Connect NC Bond Act of 2015.

This the 17th day of August, 2021.

WILKES COUNTY

By: _____

Eddie D. Settle, Chairman

Wilkes County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

TOWN OF RONDA EMERGENCY ENTRANCE – YADKIN RIVER – Chairman Settle stated the Town of Ronda is not ready to move forward on this. Cole Wyatt, Chief Wilkes Rescue Squad is here tonight and they will discuss this matter, but no action will be taken. Chairman Settle asked if they had an issue in Ronda where they could not get in. Chief Wyatt replied they have had several experiences where they can't get in. There is 56 miles of shore line from the lake to Elkin and they have access points at Lowes Motel in Wilkesboro, and Smoot Park in North Wilkesboro, the next is in Ronda. Chairman Settle asked what about Roaring River. Chief Wyatt replied, there is one in Roaring River, but it is unusable. It was graded and then it washed away and now there is a 4-5 foot drop to the river. They can get a boat off if they have to but it is not quick or safe. He added they can go to Ronda Park and put a boat in and get there quicker, it takes 4 minutes to get from Ronda to Roaring River. Mr. Yates added Wildlife is going to put in a new concrete pad at the access point near the landfill. He talked with Ken Hodges, they got behind with Covid, but are working on this. Chairman Settle asked if they have 24 hour access to this. Chief Wyatt replied yes, Ronda and Roaring River access points also have 24 hour access. He added Ronda is concrete and has a parking area where they can park and stage, it is the better access point and the most used. They do 10 to 25 water calls a year, 90% are from Roaring River to Ronda.

Chairman Settle asked when Wildlife gets that fixed will it help. Chief Wyatt replied it will be a great asset, they can come from two directions. Chairman Settle asked will the need another access in Ronda. Chief Wyatt replied yes and no, the problem with Ronda is the parking lot is full of cars from daylight to dark. It takes time to move enough cars to get a boat down the ramp and in the water. They need a lot of space for the fire truck and trailer, this is their issue. This is their only usable access point. He added he has talked with the folks at the Town of Ronda and the Ronda Fire Department. They would like to have a second access point at the park or somewhere else in Ronda just for emergency use with a concrete ramp and room to park.

Chairman Settle stated he was told Ronda is going to pay for this and wants the County to help with grading, but have an issue with the property owner. He added Roaring River sounds like

good option for them. Chief Wyatt agreed at this time it is not used much, but if they concrete and make it nice, lots more people will use it. He added maybe having both is a better option. Commissioner Elmore agreed and added he is very family with this and there are just as many tubers as kayaks and canoes. There are lots of folks that float the river, it is very popular. He added it looks like parking should be moved to the other side of the park. They have lots of land past the playground they just need to grade, pave and fix a parking lot away from the water. Chief Wyatt replied that would solve the issue if they had parking and could leave the ramp open. Commissioner Gambill asked if the site in Roaring River is still across from the Landfill. Chief Wyatt replied yes.

Commissioner Gambill said at the last Fire Association meeting this topic came up, they could not get up the river from Roaring River. Chief Wyatt said that is not an access issue it is the type of Boat they had, that is why they got the Air Boat for the Rescue Squad it will go everywhere. Commissioner Gambill asked are they working on any other access points. Chief Wyatt replied they are contacting land owners between Smoot Park and Knoxville and down to Roaring River because there is no access there. It takes 25 minutes to get to those areas from the current access points. Commissioner Gambill agreed, the Fire Department had a homeowner try to run them off and deny access while they were trying to get to the water to save people. Chief Wyatt said they are working with homeowners and business owners to have more access points along the river. Chairman Settle asked how do they help them with Ronda. Chief Wyatt said he is unsure when he talked with Commissioner Kevin Reece he thought they had secured land for an emergency use access. Chairman Settle said he was told the Town of Ronda had a right-of-way, but has an issue with the owner.

Vice Chairman Minton asked if they reached out to anyone on Rock Quarry Road and Old Quarry Road, both go to the river. Chief Wyatt said they have talked with the Mathis that farm a lot of the river area and have been great to give them access as any point. They need access near Ronda, they get calls from behind Lowes in Wilkesboro and all the rest are between Roaring River and Ronda. Vice Chairman Minton said when it rains the river gets up and is much more dangerous and folks just don't realize it. Commissioner Gambill agreed and asked Chief Wyatt to let the Board know what they can do to help on this when Ronda is ready to move forward.

Then Board thanked Chief Wyatt for all they do. They would like to commend the Rescue Squad for the Swift Water Rescue training and other specialized training they do to help the citizens in Wilkes.

NEW BUSINESS – Commissioner Gambill said they have received a couple emails with pictures from a concerned citizen about the Ferguson Fire Department. They need guidance on how to help with this and need to respond. Chairman Settle said this has come up before. Commissioner Gambill asked do they need to contact Niki Hamby and have him reach out to the Ferguson Fire Chief. Mr. Triplett replied yes, and asked if this is in regards to the Ferguson Substation. Commissioner Gambill replied yes. Mr. Yates said this is not the first time they have received a complaint. He will contact Mr. Hamby to talk with Ferguson about this issue.

CLOSED SESSION – Commissioner David Gambill a motion to go into Closed Session under Section 143-318.11 (a)(4) of the North Carolina General Statutes to discuss the location or expansion of business in Wilkes County. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill seconded by Vice Chairman Bran S. Minton and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn back into regular session. No action was taken in the closed session.

ADJOURN – Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 8:02 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Eddie Settle, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: September 7, 2021