

**MINUTES**  
**WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**October 3, 2023**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 5:02 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** – Vice Chairman Stoney Greene led the Invocation.

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

**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 September 19, 2023.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS** – Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton to approve Budget Amendment No. 7 (Em. Comm – This budget request in the amount of \$11,668 is being made in order to replace one transmitter at the single VHF Tower Site in Wilkes County on Old Orchard Road. The old transmitter has been in place for 14 years and is showing failure at this time, replacement is needed immediately to communicate and page out emergency services such as Fire and EMS. This is one of six transmitters that will need to be replaced in the near future to prevent total failure of all public safety communication). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

Chairman Elmore asked if the funds for this are coming from 911 funds. Mr. Logan Kerr replied no, they contacted the 911 Board, but they said a transmitter is not 911 eligible. Commissioner Minton added the phone company wants to make sure they are paid. Mr. Kerr said he will provide a list of what is eligible for 911 funds to the Board. Mr. Yates added when he questioned this it was explained to him that anything inside the walls is covered by 911 and anything outside is not. Mr. Kerr agreed. Commissioner Minton said they will pay for maybe one-half of the emergency communications at best. They even drill down to the computers on the work stations in front of the telecommunicators. They tried to upgrade telecommunicators' chairs and they would not even pay for those. Mr. Kerr replied they do pay for chairs now up to \$1,200 and more if an exception is needed. Chairman Elmore asked if 911 covers the radios in their vehicles. Mr. Kerr replied no, this is all locally funded. Vice Chairman Greene asked if they have a time frame to replace the other five transmitters. Mr. Kerr replied they would like to do this over 3-years, and by doing all six, one will be used as a spare. Vice Chairman Greene said he wanted to make sure they have a plan for this, which they do. Commissioner Minton asked if 911 allows service contracts. Mr.

Kerr replied it depends on what it includes and they pick it apart, most of the time it is all percentage based.

**DESIGN-BUILD – WILKES COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEX PROJECT – DESIGN PLAN PRESENTATION FOR THE WILKES COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING** – Chairman Elmore welcomed Kris Little and Mike Kesterson from Vannoy & Sons Construction Company, Inc. Mr. Little thanked the Board and handed out an updated floor plan and samples for the Board to pass around for outside finish. He also handed out a Halloween Treat bag and said in coordination with EMS they wanted to do something special at Halloween. They plan to have the building complete with the Certificate of Occupancy by 10/31/23, and thought it may be neat to have a treat for the citizens of Wilkes with an open invite. Folks will not tour the inside of the facility, but they will have a Halloween trick-or-treat at the new EMS bay the night of Halloween from either 5-8PM or 6-9PM. Vannoy is sponsoring the bags the Board has in front of them and they will give them to the first 400 kids and families that come through. Mr. Little said this is a good way for the citizens to see where the new base is and understand the logistics and where the new EMS operations will be. They will run an ad in the newspaper and they invited the Board to attend as well.

Mr. Little said tonight they would like to review the updated floor plans so they have the foundation for the GMP for the documentation moving forward. He added the samples and booklet in front of them is the fiber cement panels they have discussed on the face of the building. This is the main facade for the facility and will be in addition to the brick and glass they saw, and he wanted them to see samples of this product. It is very low maintenance and cost effective with a nice look. Mr. Little stated they will select size and colors later, they just wanted them to see the product and a few options. He added at the next meeting they will present the formal elevations to tie back with these for the GMP and this gives them a head-start. Mr. Little said tonight is not an action item, they just wanted a head nod on this product so they can keep fast tracking this and move forward on the outside of the facility. They will have brick and glass along with the cement panels and a little metal all on the outside. He stated unless someone has objections, they will continue to move forward to get cost allowances for this and the Board will pick colors within the allowance later.

Mr. Little stated they changed a couple of things in the floorplan and it gives them growth potential, which they will go through next. They will start on the lower level; the biggest change came after they got into the HVAC. They have worked on the electrical, fire protection, and completed the fire flow test on the high-pressure hydrants. This is very positive, it is a newer 12 inch main line. They have met with the Fire Marshal and Building Inspector Jake Patrick. They don't think they will have to have a fire pump on this building, and have had a sprinkle contractor run tests and things look good. The State does have additional requirements for fire protection for a building over 30 feet from entry to the highest level to have a standpipe, which are in all multi-story buildings. There is an exception they are looking at that allows the standpipe to be an uncharged dry standpipe. Mr. Little said the sprinkler system will protect the building, the stand pipe is the back up to add more water flow with its own set of pipes. The exception allows for a high-pressure hydrant to be placed within a certain length of the fire department connection so that hydrant will charge the standpipe, or the fire pumper truck can stand in line with the fire truck connection to

the hydrant and the pump on the truck could boost the standpipe, either works. He added they want to be very safe and have a well-designed building, but at the same time they want something that is easy to maintain for the long term as well.

Mr. Little said on the left side of the lower floor they have the columns in the new plan, the structural engineering is working hard on the deck and beam system. He added until they get everything finalized with bids and the final design in place they plan to leave the 4500 sq. ft. on the left unfinished. This is a change, they will move IT up to the extra space on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor so they don't have 700 sq. ft. of empty space on this floor. This gives them the same growth potential on the lower level. Mr. Little said all the chases needed will be in place so IT could move back to the lower floor. The glass, exits, and entrances will all still be there, but on day one the basement level will be mechanical space with everything located there. They have worked on the HVAC system closely with the design team as Chairman Elmore asked about efficiencies for the beginning. He added the plan was to have nothing on the roof, but they are looking at a hybrid option that is VRF with a piped refrigerate heat pump type system. It does not have a lot of ductwork; they are cartridge units that go in the ceiling. The fresh air makeup unit will be on the center of the roof near the stairwell on the right. The stairs will peek through the roof, the system only requires maintenance quarterly and no ladder is needed. All of the other equipment will be on a pad by the dumpster that needs monthly maintenance or more often. This option hits within the budget; it is top notch efficiency. It is the best choice for mechanical and electrical and they feel very good about this system. As the Board can see, they have made lots of progress on the design.

Mr. Little said the major change with the bottom floor is the unfinished future build out will be only mechanical from the beginning. Moving to the first floor, there are not a lot of changes, just the small phone room in the tax office because they need somewhere for equipment. They removed the low wall in collections which did not affect the drive-through. He added, they made a change to the mail receiving room and made it a little bigger. There is also a chase between the janitor and break room for the fresh air duct system all the way through the building. This is the main change from the first plans they will see. Mr. Little said on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, the chase was added which changed the breakroom slightly. They added the public work counter to fill out paperwork to the one stop permitting and inspections lobby area, removed a door from a work room, and added a small supply closet due to the column. He added all columns will be within the walls and spaced out. The other big change on this floor is that IT is now in the 521 sq. ft. area with a back door to their space and they have a 171 sq. ft. server room which is larger than it was on the first plan. This is located at the back of the stairwell and lets them have a permanent chase access that will go throughout the building. This allows IT to add anything needed in any direction. The cooling unit for this will be on the wall and this room will be about 60 degrees all the time.

Mr. Little said he has met with Jake Patrick a lot lately and by moving IT they do not have to build the restrooms out in the basement, it will be mechanical and storage from day one. They will plumb and rough in the restrooms with water and sewer, but will not finish it. He added all the plumbing, mechanical, electrical and infrastructure will be in place so this can be built out by only adding walls and a ceiling at any point. He stated Jake Patrick felt better with this plan and IT on

the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor from day one and they have not lost any growth area. The County still can add another department or service in the lower level at any time it will be needed.

Chairman Elmore asked if Environmental Health still has cubicles, as he does not see them. Mr. Little replied yes it is just really light on the print out. It still has all the landing zones for the inspectors and environmental health open office on both sides. He added Jake Patrick got to see the plans for the first time last week and he was very pleased with this layout.

Mr. Little said there are no major changes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, they corrected the payroll and conference/open office space. The IT chase and the airflow were added, but it is still the same minus 6-8 inches for a column. He added this is a non-action item, but they wanted to present this as the final version of what they will be basing the GMP on. Chairman Elmore asked the total square footage. Mr. Little replied it is just under 50,000 sq. ft. Chairman Elmore said they have a breakroom on each level, would it make sense to combine this to one area with one set of vending machines in an open area. Mr. Little replied that is up to the Board. Mr. Yates added they do not have vending machines just a refrigerator, microwave, small storage and counter space. Chairman Elmore said rather than 3 small breakrooms, one large consolidated common area would be nice with everything in one space. This is late in the design, but it just occurred to him. Mr. Little replied they can look into this, it is not going to add or take away much in cost, it will only change the layout. Chairman Elmore asked if it was centralized, that would be better.

Commissioner Sexton asked about the loading doors on the north side of the basement level. Mr. Little replied they are not truck loading doors. Mr. Kesterson added they are coiling doors that are for access to the equipment for breakdowns and maintenance on the inside of the building. Commissioner Sexton said that is his concern, where will trucks make deliveries. Mr. Little replied they have checked and cannot add a bump dock there is not enough room, but they are stripping an area on the side for UPS, Mail, etc. All deliveries will come in on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor through a side entrance next to the mail room. They can make this a double door if needed, they have several glass placeholders between the columns that can be a door or wider double doors if needed. Chairman Elmore said on the morning news he heard about a company called Resolute Elevators based in Burlington. They build modular elevators in Burlington that come in one piece and are set with a crane. This may be something they can look into, it could be a cost savings and only takes about a week. Mr. Little stated elevators that come in separate crates can be an issue. They are happy to look into this company, they would prefer to use local as long as it is a good name brand that can be serviced and worked on as needed. They will not use a conventional non-proprietary elevator, this has not worked out in the past.

Mr. Little thanked the Board and added they will present the elevations, final design, and GMP at the next meeting. The Board thanked Mr. Little and Mr. Kesterson.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – UPDATE** – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized DSS Director Kevin Brown. Mr. Brown thanked the Board and provided the Commissioners with handouts for August. He stated as they are aware Medicaid expansion is set to start December 1<sup>st</sup>. They have all but two of the new positions filled and will be ready to go. They have some great new employees and are excited to get them going. Mr. Brown said their

Child Support Staff received a Certificate of Excellence from the state for outstanding achievement in all collections and incentive performance measures for FY 2023. This is an awesome achievement, they have good staff that works very hard. Chairman Elmore added this is a State award. Mr. Brown replied yes and not all counties received it, they do a great job.

Mr. Brown went over the monthly caseload report, Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial report. He added this is the lowest number of foster kids they have had in a while which is great. Next he went through the CPS Foster Care monthly reports for August. They only had kids for 7 nights in September which is much improved from last month. The staff works very hard to get placement and Vaya does an excellent job to help them with this. Commissioner Minton asked if they have any projections for Medicaid. Mr. Brown said in April 2022 they estimated 5,000 to 6,000 new cases in Wilkes, they have not provided an update since. The policy looks fairly simple as far as Medicaid goes, the supervisors are pleased with the draft they have received. The extra time to train from October to December will help and they will be ready to go. As long as the NC Fast system works, they are good. Chairman Elmore asked if it is working now. Mr. Brown replied yes it is, but statewide there will be about 600,000 additional new cases. Chairman Elmore said there will be an impact in the community for WTA, Doctors, Hospitals with many more folks being eligible for care and procedures. Commissioner Minton asked the last time the State provided an economic impact report or study from this. Mr. Brown replied he does not know. Chairman Elmore said it will be a large impact. Commissioner Minton added it is sad, but good.

Chairman Elmore stated with the new employees at DSS, their facility is completely full, correct. Mr. Brown replied they have space at Curtis Bridge Road, but renovations would be needed. Mr. Yates added the issue is parking at Curtis Bridge Road, they have space they can upfit in the top to add more office space, but they can't add parking. Mr. Brown said they are maxed out at the main office. Chairman Elmore said what will they do when they have to hire more. Mr. Yates said they have room for the 8 new ones and hopefully they won't have to hire any more. He added they could easily add 3-5 more at Curtis Bridge without parking issues. Chairman Elmore said the State is the one that tells them how many they have to have, DSS does not set that. Mr. Yates added yes they require a certain number of employees based on caseload. Mr. Brown said they could actually add 1 to 2 more at Curtis Bridge with no more changes but that is about it, the main office is full. Mr. Yates said they have office space in the basement at the County Office if needed as well.

The Board thanked Mr. Brown for his update.

**CLOSED SESSION** – Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson to go into closed session 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; and 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 Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton 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 6:22 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Giddeon Keith Elmore, Chairman

**WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Approved:     October 17, 2023