

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
November 2, 2021

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, November 2, 2021 at 6:00 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 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 thanked them for coming tonight. He added they would like to see large crowds at every meeting and they are grateful for the work being done in the County. Chairman Settle called the meeting to order at this time.

INVOCATION – Commissioner David Gambill led the Invocation.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton, seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on October 19, 2021.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS – Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill to approve Budget Amendment No. 9 (Health – Programs – Wilkes Health received \$1,400 from Project Lazarus. These funds will be used to provide substance abuse services for residents of Wilkes County. No County money involved. Wilkes Health received \$1,415,875 in HRSA Federal ARPA COVID funds. This award is one-time funding for a 2-year period to plan, prepare for, promote, distribute, administer, and track COVID-19 vaccines, and carry out other vaccine-related activities such as detect, diagnose, trace and monitor COVID-19 infections and related activities necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, including or related to, equipment or supplies purchase for testing, contact tracing, surveillance, mitigation, salaries, and treatment of COVID-19. Will also purchase equipment and supplies to conduct mobile testing or vaccinations for COVID-19, purchase and maintain mobile vehicles and equipment to conduct such testing or vaccinations, hire and train laboratory personnel and other staff to conduct such testing and carry out other health work and related activities. No County money involved. Wilkes Health received \$23,567.36 from Yadkin County for OBCM. These funds will be utilized to purchase a shed for the new Wilkes Health Sprinter Van and for supplies and materials. No county money involved). The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – UPDATE – Chairman Settle recognized John Blevins, DSS Director. Mr. Blevins said he has a few things to go over before the monthly reports. Greg Minton called earlier this week and said he has resigned from the NC Association of County Boards of Social Services and was he the Region 2 Director. He added this region includes Ashe, Alleghany, Alexander, Davie, Wilkes and Surry. If the Board wants to appoint someone to take his place they can just let Mr. Blevins know. Mr. Blevins said the parent fees for Day Care are still being waived through January, which is another benefit to the parents.

Mr. Blevins stated November is National Adoption Month and he wanted to mention this tonight because they are currently trying to locate adoptive homes for 17 children in Wilkes. The boys they have are one age 4, one age 10, four age 12, one age 13, four boys age 14, and one age 16. Girls are one age 6, one age 11, two girls age 14, and one age 15. All these kids are free for adoption and looking for a permanent home. Mr. Blevins said they have a 12 year old male in the 7th Grade at a local Middle School in Wilkes. DSS has had custody of him since May 2015 at age 5. He has had multiple placements, and had some disruptions where they had to move him including one time on Christmas Eve. This happens with Foster Kids and family can't keep them any longer, it is sad. Mr. Blevins said he is in therapeutic placement currently and looking for a permanent home. He is a good kid, obviously many Foster Kids have some issues and they need a loving family, to care for and love them when things are good and when things are bad. This young man has had many let downs the past several years, but he still wants to be adopted and be part of a family. Mr. Blevins stated anyone that wants to be a Foster Parent or adopt a child please contact Social Services at 336-651-7490. They have several kids waiting that need a forever home.

Mr. Blevins said they continue their recruitment efforts and now they have two Social Workers to license Foster Parents. They have ads running in the Journal Patriot; on 3WC Radio; and on WXII. They are also looking into running ads on WGHP and working on a Website. They plan to take their Foster Parents to Alpha Omega Corn Maze and also the staff will have a booth at light up downtown on the 19th with hot chocolate and handouts. Mr. Blevins stated they want to have a Christmas Party for their Foster Parents as well. They like to do things for them to let them know how much they appreciate what they do.

Next Mr. Blevins briefly went over the DSS Annual Report for 2020-2021. Mr. Elmore added each year over \$110 million goes through DSS to citizens in Wilkes. He stated without this they would not have the hospital they have with the physicians and pharmacies. This money is spent at local grocery stores and is a huge generator to the economy in Wilkes County. Commissioner Elmore said it helps those folks, but also helps the local economy. Mr. Blevins added food and nutrition services money is not county money it is 100% federal and state.

Mr. Blevins provided the Commissioners with handouts for September and 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 September as well. Chairman Settle added there are 240 total active Foster Care cases, they need more adoptive parents. Mr. Blevins stated this is a great need in the county, they want these kids to stay in Wilkes, go to school and grow up here. He added the

more Foster Homes they have the more they can keep here. Commissioner Elmore asked how many homes do they need. Mr. Blevins replied it would be great to have 50 homes. They want to use kinship placement anytime they can, this is best for the kids. Commissioner Gambill said they have had around 30 foster homes for many years, since he has been on this Board. Mr. Blevins agreed this is why they are focusing on outreach efforts and doing all they can to advertise and recruit more. The Board thanked Mr. Blevins for the update.

AMBULANCE FRANCHISE ORDINANCE:

1. FRANCHISE AGREEMENT – WILKES COUNTY EMS – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized Tim Pennington, EMS Director. Mr. Pennington said he is here for the second and final vote for approval on the Ambulance Franchise Ordinance renewal for Wilkes County EMS and Wilkes Rescue Squad. Applications have been submitted and are in order, both agencies are in great standing with the State, Health & Human Services, and North Carolina EMS.

Chairman Settle added this is the second vote and will finalize the Franchise Agreements.

Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson made a motion to approve the Wilkes County EMS Franchise Agreement for the second and final approval, as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

2. FRANCHISE AGREEMENT – WILKES COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD –

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to approve the Wilkes County Rescue Squad Franchise Agreement for the second and final approval, as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and unanimously approved.

Chairman Settle asked for a CONSENSUS from the Board to move the Tax Department (Item I.) up on the agenda. The Board of Commissioner gave their consensus at this time.

TAX DEPARTMENT – TAX RELEASES – LISTINGS – Chairman Settle recognized Will Lankford, Tax Administrator. Mr. Lankford asked the Board to approve tax releases for listings for the months of September and October, in the amount of \$18,216.91.

Commissioner Keith Elmore made a motion to approve the tax releases for listings in the amount of \$18,216.91 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

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

RESOLUTION FOR LIFE – Chairman Settle welcomed and recognized David Dyer Pastor Fairplains Baptist Church and Susan Sturgill Director Wilkes Pregnancy Care Center. Chairman Settle stated this resolution is not passing judgement on anybody, it's a voice for the unborn, a stand for the right for life. The Declaration of Independence affirms that all men are created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights – chief among

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them the right to life – and that the protection of these rights is an affirmative duty of federal, state, and local boards. He added they can't pass a law in here, but they can pass a resolution. Chairman Settle said scripture says I knew you in the womb, this is all he needs. He is prayerful they have not aborted the person that had the cure for cancer. He was told he needs to know the science, but he knows the State of North Carolina defines unborn at the stage of development. If a pregnant lady is killed, she and her unborn, are two deaths. Chairman Settle stated it should be that way from start to finish in this Country. He added he is grateful and thankful to Mr. Dyer and Ms. Sturgill for bringing this forward and to their attention.

Mr. Dyer thanked the Board and everyone in attendance tonight for their show of support for the unborn. It's their duty as followers of Christ to stand in the gap on behalf of the unborn. Mr. Dyer read Jerimiah 1:5 and Isaiah 49:1 at this time, and said the words of the Bible speak clearly concerning the issue of life, its value, and when it begins. He added he is thankful for the opportunity tonight; this resolution represents the deeply held convictions of thousands of citizens in Wilkes County. Mr. Dyer stated men and women from across this county have signed their names in support of this effort to declare a child in the womb has equal value to everyone. At this time, he presented 1,835 signatures of Wilkes County Citizens supporting this Resolution. Mr. Byer added people have prayed and cried out for protection of these babies for decades. They are grieved that they are overlooked by this cultural and saddened to hear the statics telling them that these lives have been extinguished. Mr. Dyer said they are commanded to speak and to act on their behalf, and read Proverbs 24:11-12 at this time. He stated they cannot claim ignorance concerning this issue, an ultrasound has shown them the miracle of life in the womb. They can watch and hear the heart beat of an 8 week old baby, see a child stretch out, kick their feet, and suck their thumb. They can witness the pain and suffering by those that claim to have the right to end their life.

Mr. Dyer said they will not remain silent and cannot allow this to continue. God knows that they know the truth and they will be held accountable for what they do with the truth. This is the moment they have been given to declare as a County, that they believe in the value of every person including those who have yet to be born. He added tonight is a meaningful step that they take as a Community that they stand boldly for life.

Ms. Sturgill thanked the Board for the opportunity to come before them tonight. She added the resolution that has been presented represents what the Pregnancy Care Center has been doing for 25 years in Wilkes County. It is heartening to see the Community which has supported them come out with such great support and the County Commissioners paying attending to this issue. Ms. Sturgill stated 60 + million children have been aborted since 1973 and this does not include all, as records are not kept accurately as they should be. She added where would they be today if they weren't doing this. They do not know of another species in the world that devalues their unborn as they have. She thanked them for bringing this forward, for the Churches that have come out and for a Community that agrees and will honor the unborn.

Vice Chairman Minton stated they would be remiss if they did not recognize former Senator Shirley Randleman for her tireless efforts in the legislation, passing laws to protect the unborn. Commissioner Gambill asked how many churches and denominations are represented here

tonight. Mr. Dyer replied they have well over 30 churches represented and 7 different denominations. Commissioner Elmore stated as he entered he was asked if they will stand up for the unborn, and he replied certainly it was not a question. He added they just heard from DSS and he would like to also stand up for the born and the many foster kids. If they have the opportunity and are able it would be great to do this. Commissioner Elmore stated he has done this, it is tough, but very much needed and they have many kids that need love, help, and guidance. Commissioner Johnson said he appreciates everyone being here and showing their support for this resolution. He added it is an exciting night for Wilkes County and North Carolina, they are the third county to pass this resolution and what a difference they are making by being here tonight. Commissioner Johnson said he has the privilege to serve on the Board at the Wilkes Pregnancy Care Center and appreciates all they do to support women, men, and families. He added recently they had a fund raiser, Pastor David Jones from Baptist Home that is here tonight shared a story. He asked his permission to share that tonight. Commissioner Johnson said Pastor Jones said there was a 14 year old girl that found herself pregnant and in a predicament. She had choices of things she could do, and because she chose life he got to be a father. He added he has two children one is 9 weeks old and it is an honor to be apart of this Board and vote on this resolution tonight. Chairman Settle thanked everyone for being here tonight, especially his wife, and read the Resolution at this time.

Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton made a motion to approve and adopt the Resolution for Life as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION FOR LIFE

A RESOLUTION OF THE WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS DECLARING WILKES COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE A STRONG ADVOCATE FOR LIFE AND URGING THE CITIZENS OF THE COUNTY TO PROMOTE AND DEFEND THE UNALIENABLE RIGHT TO LIFE AND THE INHERENT DIGNITY OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS, INCLUDING THE UNBORN, FROM CONCEPTION OR FERTILIZATION THROUGH ALL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence affirms that all men are created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights – chief among them the right to life – and that the protection of these rights is an affirmative duty of federal, state, and local governments; and

WHEREAS, the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution provide for the protection of human life and liberty; and

WHEREAS, Article I of the Constitution of North Carolina states that “all persons are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, the enjoyment of the fruits of their own labor, and the pursuit of happiness;” and

WHEREAS, James Madison, who is considered to be the father of the United States Constitution, wrote that “the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands...may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny;” and

WHEREAS, the federal judiciary has, in the opinion of the Board of Commissioners, accumulated and exercised powers far in excess of its proper role under the United States Constitution in its rulings concerning the rights of the unborn and has violated the above stated precepts of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the North Carolina Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Poelker v. Doe, 432 U.S. 519 (1977), concluded that “the Constitution does not forbid a State or city, pursuant to democratic processes, from expressing a preference for normal childbirth” instead of abortion; and

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners desires to express its strong feeling and deep concern that all human beings in the County of Wilkes, at every stage of development, including before birth, should be afforded protection from acts of cruelty, and be treated humanely and with dignity; and

WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners further desires to declare Wilkes County to be a strong advocate for life and to urge the County’s citizens to promote and defend the unalienable right to life and the inherent dignity of all human beings, including the unborn, from conception or fertilization through all stages of development;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners hereby expresses its strong feeling and deep concern that all human beings in the County of Wilkes, at every stage of development, including before birth, should be afforded protection from acts of cruelty, and be treated humanely and with dignity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners hereby declares Wilkes County to be a strong advocate for life and urges the County’s citizens to promote and defend the unalienable right to life and the inherent dignity of all human beings, including the unborn, from conception or fertilization through all stages of development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners hereby resolves to use all means within its power to support the sanctity of human life in accordance with its God-given responsibilities as the people’s elected governing body; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a plaque be erected by the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at such time and place and in such manner as the Board shall deem appropriate, memorializing this Resolution.

Adopted, this the 2nd day of November, 2021.

Sarah D. Call

Eddie D. Settle, Chairman

Clerk to the Board

Wilkes County Board of Commissioners

RECESS – Chairman Settle declared the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners recessed at 6:41 P.M. He stated the meeting will reconvene in a few minutes.

RECONVENE – Chairman Settle reconvened the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, November 2, 2021.

NEW BUSINESS – VAYA – Vice Chairman Minton stated he attended a phone conference with Vaya last week and since they have merged with Cardinal, they now have 31 counties. The Board of Commissioners will need to appoint 2 people to the new Regional Board, one of these must be a County Commissioner. The second must be either the DSS Director, Health Director, Law Enforcement, County Manager or a second Commissioner. Vice Chairman Minton stated there will be 4 Regions and Wilkes is in Regional 3 along with Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, McDowell, Rowan, and Watauga counties. He added these two people need to be appointed at the December 7th Board Meeting. Vice Chairman Minton added he has not talked with Rachel Willard or the Sheriff, but he did speak with John Blevins DSS Director. He is willing to serve on the Vaya Regional Board if this is what the Board of Commissioners would like. Mr. Yates stated Zack Shepherd will be providing an update from Vaya at the next Commissioner's meeting as well. Vice Chairman Minton added Brian Shuping will still be their contact, but they will not have to travel to Asheville for meetings it will be in the new region.

CLOSED SESSION – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton to go into closed session under Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statute and to consult with and give instructions to the Board's attorney and to protect the attorney-client privilege regarding the Opioid Litigation currently pending in which the County is a Plaintiff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore seconded by Chairman Eddie Settle 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 David Gambill, seconded by Vice Chairman Brian S. Minton and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:16 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Eddie Settle, Chairman

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Approved: November 16, 2021