

**MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
December 3, 2018**

The newly elected, re-elected and current Wilkes County Commissioners were honored with a reception on December 3, 2018 at 6:00 P.M. at the County Office Building. Approximately sixty people attended.

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Monday, December 3, 2018 at 7:01 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Gary D. Blevins, Vice Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner David Gambill, 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 Gary D. Blevins welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He added they are here tonight to celebrate the career of Commissioner Greg Minton as a commissioner and also the swearing in of the new Commissioners from the recent election.

INVOCATION – Commissioner David Gambill led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Gary D. Blevins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton, seconded by Commissioner Keith Elmore and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on November 8, 2018.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton, seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board meeting held on November 20, 2018.

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING COMMISSIONER – Chairman Gary D. Blevins said it has been difficult to think about what to say about Commissioner Minton. He added it has been a privilege to serve with Greg Minton. He is a gentleman, a family man, a professional, and extremely bright. Chairman Blevins stated Commissioner Minton has brought so much to the Board of Commissioners in the four years he has served. He added they did not know each other when Commissioner Greg Minton started but now he knows him very well after serving together. This job brings them together and they have to stay together as Commissioners. Chairman Blevins stated Commissioner Minton has not done anything that is less than exceptional as a member of this Board. It has been a privilege and honor to serve with him and they cannot express this enough. He added he is an excellent person and has done a great job.

Chairman Blevins thanked Commissioner Minton and presented him with a plaque in appreciation of his service.

Commissioner Greg Minton thanked everyone and said he appreciates each and every one. Commissioner Greg Minton was given a standing ovation by the Board and all attendees. Commissioner Minton stated it was an honor to serve. He thanked the Board and added he wished them all the best and if they ever need him they know where his day job is, and he will be there to help.

SWEARING IN CEREMONY – DAVID D. GAMBILL, JR. – Chairman Blevins welcomed and recognized Judge Robert Crumpton, District Court Judge, 23rd Judicial District. At this time, Commissioner David D. Gambill, Jr. was sworn in by Judge Crumpton.

SWEARING IN CEREMONY – BRIAN S. MINTON – Chairman Blevins welcomed and recognized Senator Shirley B. Randleman, North Carolina Senate, District 30. At this time, Commissioner Brian S. Minton was sworn in by Senator Randleman.

CHAIRMAN BLEVINS' COMMENTS: Chairman Gary D. Blevins stated he will now turn the meeting over to the County Attorney for election of the new Chairman. Mr. Triplett thanked the Chairman and added every year a new Chairman is elected at the first meeting in December and will remain in that role from this meeting until the first meeting in December 2019.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS - CHAIRMAN - County Attorney Tony Triplett stated it is now time to elect a Chairman which is a one-year position and they will serve from tonight until this time next year. He stated the rules for the election of a Chairman or any officer of the Board are basically the same from year-to-year. He stated a nomination of one of the five members of this Board for Chairman will not require a second. He stated anyone can nominate any other Commissioner on the Board, no second is required; however, if any Commissioner desires to make a motion to close nominations or a motion to close nominations and elect someone by acclamation, that motion does require a second. He advised that in any event, there will be a vote called and if there is more than one name placed in nomination, the vote takes place in reverse order of those nominated. He stated every person nominated is entitled to have a vote on his nomination; so, if there is more than one person nominated there will be a vote on each name placed in nomination.

Mr. Triplett opened the floor for nominations for Chairman of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Eddie Settle nominated Commissioner Keith Elmore for Chairman. Commissioner Eddie Settle made a motion to close nominations and elect Commissioner Keith Elmore by acclamation. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously approved.

County Attorney Tony Triplett declared Commissioner Keith Elmore to be Chairman of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners. Mr. Triplett congratulated Chairman Elmore on his appointment for the coming year and relinquished control of the meeting to Chairman Elmore.

Chairman Elmore thanked the Board and stated it has been 5 years since he sat in the seat as Chairman and is happy to serve in this role.

VICE-CHAIRMAN – Chairman Elmore declared the floor open for nominations for Vice Chairman of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner David Gambill nominated Commissioner Eddie Settle for Vice Chairman. Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to elect Commissioner Eddie Settle as Vice Chairman and to close nominations and elect Commissioner Eddie Settle by acclamation. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brain Minton and unanimously approved.

Chairman Elmore declared Commissioner Eddie Settle to be Vice Chairman of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners. Vice Chairman Settle thanked the Board.

RECESS – Chairman Elmore declared the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners recessed at 7:19 P.M. He stated the meeting will reconvene in a few minutes.

RECONVENE – Chairman Elmore reconvened the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 7:27 P.M. on Monday, December 3, 2018.

COMMISSIONER'S STAFF - Chairman Elmore stated the next item on the agenda is the appointment of the Commissioner's staff: the County Attorney Law Firm, County Manager, and County Clerk for next year.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to reappoint the law firm of Vannoy, Colvard, Triplett & Vannoy as the County Attorney Law Firm, John C. Yates as the County Manager, and Sarah D. Call as Clerk to the Board of Commissioners for the coming year. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and unanimously approved.

Mr. Triplett, Mr. Yates, and Mrs. Call thanked the Board for the appointment.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS – Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill to approve Budget Amendment No. 11 (Health – Programs – Child Health. The Wilkes County Health Department received an additional \$5,000 from the state to support the Child Health Program. These additional funds will be used to provide continued interpretation services for Child Health clients. No County money involved); and Budget Amendment No. 12 (General Fund – Social Services. Wilkes DSS received an additional allocation of \$66,853 for Crisis Intervention Funds. No County money involved.) The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and passed unanimously.

WILKES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – UPDATE – Chairman Elmore recognized and welcomed LeeAnn Nixon, EDC President. Ms. Nixon said she plans to come before the Board quarterly to provide an update on the activity at EDC and thanked the Board for their support. She stated since she came on Board in August they have begun to keep several metrics through November which is 4 months of data. Ms. Nixon briefly went over their partner meetings, strong economic growth and the three core areas they are focusing on. Next she briefly went over existing business and said they are growing, even though the unemployment rate in Wilkes went up slightly to 3.2% in October from 2.8% in September. She added NC Works hosted a job fair in November and it went well.

Ms. Nixon stated she made 22 first time visit with existing businesses in Wilkes, had 21 opportunities for recruiting and marketing, with 10 projects currently active. She stated they missed opportunities on 8 occasions, usually due to ceiling height or building space. The good news being they responded to more than half of the requests for information and are dedicated to trying to retain and support business growth. It is interesting to note that over half of their leads come directly through local relationships. Ms. Nixon said they have a strong focus on looking at market trends and how to increase the success rate and have the right product available for existing companies to expand or new industries to come to Wilkes. She added they had 29 occurrences and were able to submit product of a building or site; 19 were in North Wilkesboro, 3 in Wilkesboro, and 5 in the County.

In closing Ms. Nixon said she recently attended the Rural Center's Zero Barriers discussion and the topics were broadband coverage which Wilkes already has and she was very proud of that as many in the room did not. The other points were health issues such as the opioid crisis, and small business developments. She invited the Board to attend EDC's Annual Meeting on Tuesday, December 11th. They will celebrate last year's growth and projects throughout the state with special guest speaker Christopher Chung, CEO Economic Development Partners of NC and looks forward to seeing everyone there.

Vice Chairman Settle stated as a member of the EDC Board he would like to say that LeeAnn Nixon does a great job representing Wilkes. Chairman Elmore asked in addition to tracking unemployment are they also tracking wages and are wages higher due to the shortage of works. Ms. Nixon replied she can get this information and will send to the staff for the Board. She added in the visits to the businesses she has learned they are getting aggressive on how to retain what they have with programs, benefits, and other things. There was another company that was looking to hire 20 new workers and were offering at least \$16.35 which is at or above the county's average wage. Ms. Nixon stated this average wage for the county puts all jobs in the entire county into one category and the state comes up with this average. She added when they track this at EDC they look at job title and many more factors than the state. She thanked the Board for their time.

Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Ms. Nixon for her update.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

1. MODIFICATION OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – Chairman Elmore recognized and welcomed Department of Social Services Director John Blevins. Mr. Blevins congratulated Chairman Elmore, Vice Chairman Settle, and Commissioner Minton. He said this is a modified MOU from DHHS and it came from a lot of negative feedback from counties and the original MOU. Mr. Blevins said they still have difficulty giving them a clean understanding of where to find the data that they will track them on. They will have a webinar on Monday that will help them to locate the data, and would like it in one dashboard so they can see the performance measures all together. Mr. Blevins stated this MOU takes the teeth out of the original MOU they signed for this current fiscal year. There will be no financial penalties, no threat to take over DSS or any of those things during this fiscal year. He added another key change is the metrics have been changed from a specific number they have to meet to a growth measure. In other words they only have to show growth which is easier to meet. Mr. Blevins stated these are the two main difference in this MOU and the last page, the signature page is identical to the first except the first sentence on page 13. This states *“For this MOU covering Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Department will not initiate any actions set forth in Attachment X on the basis of this MOU”*.

Mr. Blevins said if anyone has questions he will be glad to answer them and this does require action by the Board. The MOU is required to be signed by Chairman Elmore with Board approval. Commissioner Blevins asked how many counties could have met all the criteria in the original MOU. Mr. John Blevins replied none because it was so hard to tell where they were, some of the data could not be found and some of the data was in many different locations. He added based on the complaints most of the counties felt like they would not meet the requirements as they were. Commissioner Gary Blevins stated the original MOU had criteria that no one could really meet, that State recognized this, and saw they could not come in and take over all the DSS agencies, so it is being modified. He said at least they have postponed it for a year. Commissioner Blevins added he is opposed to any more MOU's with the state. It makes no sense. Chairman Elmore stated this is through the fiscal year which is June 30, 2019. Mr. Blevins replied yes. Vice Chairman Settle stated they are pushing for regionalization. Mr. Blevins replied yes this is still on the table and there are many groups studying this currently. Vice Chairman Settle added there is one Senator in Raleigh that very much wants to regionalize all DSS Departments. Senator Shirley Randleman stated Senator Beranger did not win her bid for reelection. Vice Chairman Settle said this could change things. Commissioner Gambill asked if the Health Department is being considered in the regionalization process or only DSS. Mr. Blevins stated the regionalization is only DSS at the moment. He added Health Departments already have this ability as is the case in Ashe. Chairman Elmore stated this is an action item, they approved the original and does not think they have a choice. Mr. Blevins stated if they did not sign the state would go back to the original one that had penalties in it, this one is better. Chairman Elmore added it is to their benefit to sign it. Mr. Blevins agreed and added the one next year may need further discussion, it will add all of this back.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the Modification Agreement to the Memorandum of Understanding (Fiscal Year 2018-19) between the North Carolina Department

of Health and Human Services and Wilkes County as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and unanimously approved.

2. UPDATE – Mr. Blevins briefly went over the monthly caseload report for October, and said the elderly and disabled energy assistance program started today. They had 198 folks to apply today and expended \$39K for low income energy assistance. Commissioner Gambill stated this program runs through the DSS office and will it open up in Janaury to more if they still have funds. Mr. Blevins replied yes, it runs through December for the elderly and disabled. In Janaury it opens up to everyone and continues until the money runs out. He also went over the Foster Care financial report and added the foster care is down from 243 to 220 children, which is very good news. Mr. Blevins said this cost for the State Boarding Home and Special Needs has dropped from last month and will continued to go down. Commissioner Blevins asked if they moved some of the children out of the expensive placement. Mr. Blevins replied yes. Next he went through the Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial reports, and CPS Foster Care monthly reports for October.

Chairman Elmore stated they are very fortunate to have him watching over the Department of Social Services. Commissioner Blevins asked if they could add the placements from the past month to the report. He asked if they have 243 in DSS Custody why is there only 199 placements, are some in one facility. Mr. Blevins replied yes there may be multiple children, but it is one placement location. He added he can get them more information on this.

Commissioner Blevins asked about the 12 hour period that Hal Wilson mentioned to him. Mr. Blevins replied this is allowed in the guidelines, they do not have to but they can. He stated when they get a report for a child that might come into care, they can do a 12 hour hold. They can then search for a relative, family member, or someone that can step up to take the child so they do not have to go into foster care. Mr. Blevins stated if they can find this person it is great. Commissioner Blevins added this also helps with the court process and the time and many delays that process has. Vice Chairman Settle added there is a movie out that he just saw. It is about this very thing, children in foster care and it is great, maybe this will help as well. It is based on a true story. Commissioner Gambill added he ran into John Yates at the movies over the weekend and saw the DSS ad on the previews before the movie. It was great and lots of people see it.

The Board thanked Mr. Blevins for the update.

COMMISSIONERS' SCHEDULED MEETING – CHANGE OF DATE – JANAURY 1, 2019 – Chairman Elmore stated due the first meeting in January falling on New Year's Day the Board needs to change the date of their January 1, 2019 regular meeting. He asked the pleasure of the Board on the new date of Thursday, Janaury 3, 2019.

Commissioner David Gambill made a motion to move the date of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting scheduled on Tuesday, January 1, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. to Thursday, Janaury 3, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. in the Commissioners Meeting Room located at 110

North Street, Wilkesboro, NC. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS – Commissioner Blevins said he has received a lot of negative feedback about the friendly reminders to pay taxes. He added he talked with Mr. Yates about this as well. He added he wanted to find out about why the county did this, it looked expensive. Commissioner Blevins stated after talking with Mr. Yates and the Tax Office he has found that the company that handles all the mailings, which is much more efficient and less expensive than the county doing it made an error and left the bar code off the original tax bills. They offered free of charge to send the reminder that has the bar code to attempt to correct the mistake they made. No tax money was involved and nothing meant by the reminder, it was to correct a mistaken from the vendor.

NEW BUSINESS – Chairman Elmore stated as Mr. Blevins mentioned in his update the line of folks waiting this morning for heating assistance and he went up 421 earlier and saw a line of folks at Samaritans Kitchen waiting to pick up food as well. He said it really bothered him, earlier they heard a really good job report and wages are increasing. Chairman Elmore stated as they go through this season they cannot forget there are folks in the county that are truly struggling, some are older people that can't work. They just wanted to mention this as folks seem to give and want to do more during the Christmas Holidays and there is still a need.

NEW BUSINESS – Chairman Elmore said they lost a great man in the passing of Past President George Herbert Walker Bush. He was watching this and Speaker McConnell read President Bush's 7 core principles that he had written down for his mother. There were:

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| 1. Tell the Truth | 3. Be strong | 5. Try hard | 7. Stay the course |
| 2. Don't blame people | 4. Do your best | 6. Forgive | |

He just wanted to share this and ask everyone to take this to heart. Chairman Elmore thanked the Board for their support and electing him Chairman. He added he will try to be fair across the Board, they will move forward and have a good year and asked for their help.

ADJOURN - Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 8:12 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: