

Minutes
Richmond County Board of Commissioners
114 E. Franklin Street, Courtroom A, Rockingham, NC
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, April 6, 2020 5:30PM

The Richmond County Board of Commissioners met for a Regular Meeting on Monday, April 6, 2020 at 5:30 P.M. with the following present: Chairman Kenneth R. Robinette; Vice-Chairman John B. Garner; Commissioners Don M. Bryant, Jimmy L. Capps, Ben T. Moss, Jr., Tavares Bostic and Rick Watkins.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robinette at 5:30 P.M.

ITEM NO. 1 Invocation by Commissioner Rick Watkins

Invocation was given by Commissioner Rick Watkins

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of Agenda - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Garner, seconded by Commissioner Bryant and by unanimous vote. Motion carried

ITEM NO. 3 Open Forum for Public Comments - 5:30 - 6:00 PM

No one signed up to speak

ITEM NO. 4 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Resolution to Change Method of Sales Tax - Bryan Land, County Manager-Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Moss, seconded by Commissioner Capps and by unanimous vote. Motion carried

ITEM NO. 5 Monthly Report by County Manager Bryan Land

I sincerely appreciate everyone's willingness to adjust to our new setting tonight. On the County level we are doing everything in our control to stop the spread of Covid 19. We have started alternating schedules for all departments that have adequate workforce to allow for the schedule change. A few departmental exceptions are the Sheriff's Office, Emergency Service, Public Works, including Solid waste and water, the County Managers office and other essential personnel. Last week, we started utilizing nursing students from RCC to take temperatures of our staff before they entered the work place. This also allowed the nursing students to gain some much needed clinical time to graduate and enter the nursing field. We also have shut down all park play areas to the public as of last Monday. Walking trails throughout the County remain open until further notice. Our Libraries are closed to the public; however staff is working remotely via email and telephone. All office areas have been closed to the public for over a week now, the drive thru at the admin building has been a tremendous asset.

As you all are aware, we received our first positive today. We have been extremely fortunate in Richmond County to have only received one positive case. To date we have tested 245 and of those 229 have come back negative.

On a positive note, shell building #5 is finally entering completion. On Wednesday at 2pm, I am inviting the board for a quick walkthrough of Shell Building #5. We are down to the final punch list items and landscaping before the building will be occupied. I am extremely pleased with the final product and I want you guys to see it before the new tenant occupies the building. Please let me know if you feel comfortable doing a quick walkthrough on Wednesday.

Additionally, I am pleased to announce that one of our existing industries Direct Pack is progressing well on their 50,000 square foot expansion. Footers are being installed this week with the pad slated to be poured next week. They are utilizing a \$400,000 building reuse grant that we were able to attain for the company. They are also utilizing a local contractor, Southern Builders to complete the expansion.

As the board is fully aware, budget season is upon us, I have conducted budget meetings with all of our outside agencies including the school system and RCC. I copied you guys on my letter to the agencies and our department heads advising everyone that no increases would be granted this year due to the uncertainty of future revenues and I will read to the board in a few minutes. Many organizations, both private and public are cutting workforce, slashing salaries and fixed cost, eliminating all discretionary spending and other drastic cost cutting measures to keep their doors open.

As always with budget projections, I am conservative and realistic however this year we are in uncharted waters. This will by far the most challenging budget I have been tasked with balancing. The Department of Revenue is advising us to reduce revenue projections in the 20% range. Every month we aren't fully functional at Human Services, we are losing approximately \$350,000. Our cumulative revenue loss including sales tax braches \$550,000 per month. The potential duration of Covid 19 and the lasting effects on our economy really concern me.

I will now highlight the letter I sent out last week
Tuesday, March 31, 2020

Good Afternoon,

As everyone is fully aware, we are experiencing unprecedented times due to the onset of COVID-19. This pandemic has taken a paralyzing economic toll on Richmond County, North Carolina, The United States and the entire world. We have all witnessed small, local businesses forced to close their doors, and in some cases going out of business permanently. Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to all health care workers, Emergency Services staff, our Sheriff's Office and all other essential personnel staff that are required to work during these challenging times.

Richmond County is also experiencing unprecedented economic losses due to COVID-19, many economist are projecting these revenue losses to be far worse than the housing crisis in 2008-2009. Many of those professionals are also projecting unemployment to breach 25%! This is a statistic that hasn't been breached since the Great Depression. Mac Steagall, our Finance Director and I are tracking revenues and reviewing 3-6 month trends daily and how they are going to affect our budget. Local sales tax revenues are projected to be lower by approximately 20-25% for the next 90 days and potentially lower by 10% in the subsequent 90 days. Revenues at DSS and our Health Department could potentially be reduced by over \$300,000-\$350,000 per month for the next 90 days. The cumulative shortfall for sales tax revenues and Human Services revenues could easily break \$550,000 per month. I don't want to sound like complete doom and gloom but I want all of our Department Heads to understand that these are going to be monumental challenges to get over.

I fully believe that within the next 90 days our economy will recover to the economic powerhouse that it was prior to the pandemic. However, it is extremely prudent that we make immediate changes to offset our declining revenue. The finance department and I have discussed the best ways to begin addressing expenses and we all agree that cuts in employees pay and furloughs should not be an option at this time. My goal is continue working through these tough times as long as we can do so safely. However, starting today I am asking all of you to strive to reduce operating cost, reduce departmental spending, and stop all discretionary spending for the next 90 days or until notice is received from our finance office to cease the order. Additionally, I am advising all of you that no increased budget request will be granted in the upcoming budget. Furthermore, no outside agencies will be granted increases either.

I truly hate to balance our budget on the backs of our Department Heads due to a pandemic that was completely out of our hands. However, I firmly believe that we will recover from these losses soon and our economy will be stronger than ever after we rid ourselves of the pandemic. These are extremely trying times for our Country and Richmond County, we are certainly in uncharted territory but with everyone working together we will emerge on the other side of this all winners!

As I have always promised to our team, I will keep open lines of communication and will continue to provide honest updates to everyone regarding our daily operations and provide a full financial picture as we travel through this journey over the next few months. Please remember that we are all committed to weathering this storm and continuing to provide services to the citizens of Richmond County. We have the best team in the State of North Carolina, and I truly appreciate everyone's dedication through these times. I hope each of you and your family members continue to stay well and healthy.

Sincerely,
Bryan R. Land

One final reminder, our annual hazardous household waste day that was scheduled for this past Saturday, April 4th from 9 am to 1pm in the Richmond County Health Department Parking lot has been cancelled until further notice. We will be rescheduling the event once Covid 19 is no longer affecting us.

ITEM NO. 6 Consent Agenda - Decision

**A) Approval of Draft Minutes of Regular Meeting on March 9, 2020
as Submitted by the Clerk for Review**

**B) Approval of Tax Releases And Tax Refunds for Month of
February, 2020**

**C) Approval of North Carolina Vehicle Tax System Refund Report
For The Month of February 2020**

**D) Approval of Budget Amendment for 2018 JAG Grant to Purchase
SRT Equipment**

**E) Approval of Budget Amendment for 2019 JAG Grant to Purchase
Portable Radios**

**F) Approval of Budget Amendment to Appropriate Designated State
Drug Funds**

**G) Approval of Budget Amendment for Environmental Health Food
and Lodging**

**H) Approval of Appointment to the Hoffman Fire & Rescue Relief
Board**

By a motion of Commissioner Moss, seconded by Commissioner Garner and by
unanimous vote. Motion carried

ITEM NO. 7 Adjournment - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Garner, seconded by Commissioner Watkins and by
unanimous vote. Motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 5:51 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted by the Clerk

Dena R. Cook, NCCCC

Clerk to the Board

Richmond County Board of Commissioners