

Minutes
Richmond County Board of Commissioners
1401 Fayetteville Road, Conference Room, Rockingham, NC
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, May 05, 2020 5:30PM

The Richmond County Board of Commissioners met for a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, May 05, 2020 at 5:30 P.M. with the following present: Remotely were the following Commissioners -Chairman Kenneth R. Robinette; Tavares Bostic and Rick Watkins Present in the room were Commissioners -Vice-Chairman John B. Garner; Don M. Bryant, Jimmy L. Capps, and Ben T. Moss, Jr.. Chairman Robinette instructed the board to state their name and vote when a vote is called for so that it can be recorded.

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

ITEM NO. 1 Invocation by Commissioner Ben Moss

Invocation was given by Commissioner Ben Moss

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of Agenda - Decision

Chairman Robinette informed the Board that the agenda needed to be amended to add an item to the Consent Agenda. The agenda item is a budget amendment for LIEAP. We were notified this past Friday afternoon about the additional funding.

By a motion of Commissioner John Garner, seconded by Commissioner Ben Moss.

Commissioner Jimmy Capps voted yes; Commissioner Don Bryant voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

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

Kim McCall
182 Waymon Chapel Road
Hamlet, NC

Chairman Robinette advised Tracy Parris to go check and report back to the Board

ITEM NO. 4 Request for Board Consideration of Approval for Budget Work Session - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Don Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Jimmy Capps.

Commissioner John Garner voted yes; Commissioner Ben Moss voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO. 5 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Audit Contract for Year Ended June 30, 2020 - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Ben Moss, seconded by Commissioner John Garner.

Commissioner Jimmy Capps voted yes; Commissioner Don Bryant voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO. 6 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of a Proclamation for Older American Month - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Tavares Bostic, seconded by Commissioner Jimmy Capps

Commissioner John Garner voted yes; Commissioner Ben Moss voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Don Bryant voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO. 7 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of a Proclamation for Peace Officers Memorial Day and National Police Week - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Jimmy Capps, seconded by Commissioner Don Bryant.

Commissioner Ben Moss voted yes; Commissioner John Garner voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO. 8 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of a Proclamation to Honor Richmond County's Veterans - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Ben Moss, seconded by Commissioner Don Bryant.

Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Commissioner John Garner voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Jimmy Capps voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO. 9 Request for Board Consideration of Approval for the Town of Ellerbe to Update Their Fire Fees - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

Commissioner Ben Moss stated that we need to revisit the flat 10% rate that East Rockingham Fire Department for the other areas

County Manager Bryan Land stated that he would get with Donna Wright and start gathering information.

By a motion of Commissioner John Garner, seconded by Commissioner Jimmy Capps.

Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Commissioner Ben Moss voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Don Bryant voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO.10 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Advertisement of Tax Liens on Real Property for Failure to Pay Taxes - Bryan Land County Manager - Decision

Vagas Jackson was able to attend the meeting so he presented this item to the Board. He stated that the Daily Journal gave the Tax Department a price of \$21,420 for ten pages to list the delinquent tax accounts. This is a much higher rate than we had last year at \$3,572 for nine pages.

Chairman Robinette said that we should try and talk to them and bring back before the Board at the next monthly meeting.

No motion was made.

ITEM NO.11 Monthly Report by County Manager Bryan Land

I sincerely appreciate everyone's willingness to adjust to our new setting tonight. The WebEx platform seems to be the new normal for the foreseeable future. On the County level we are doing everything in our control to stop the spread of Covid 19. We are continuing 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. We are still utilizing nursing students from RCC and our Health Dept. staff to take temperatures of our staff before they enter the work place. All park play areas remain closed to the public. Walking trails throughout the County remain open and are being utilized heavily. 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 six weeks now, the drive thru at the Administrative building has been a tremendous asset. We currently have 50 positive cases for Covid 19. To date we have tested 581 and of those 329 have come back negative.

On a positive note, shell building #5 is finally officially complete. We received our certificate of occupancy on last Tuesday afternoon and on Tuesday night our new tenant started occupying the facility. I am extremely pleased with the final product and I still want you guys to see the finished product once we rid ourselves of the pandemic and get back to a normal lifestyle.

Additionally, I am pleased to announce that one of our existing Industries Direct Pack is progressing well on their 50k sf expansion. Footers are complete and the concrete pad was poured last week as well. They are utilizing a 400k 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.

Staying on the positive topics, I am pleased to announce that we landed a 1 million dollar grant through the Rural infrastructure authority to upgrade infrastructure to our new proposed industrial park . We have also submitted for an additional 1.5 mil from Golden Leaf, I am cautiously optimistic we can land it as well. Thanks again to Mr. Webb for his input on the grant, as he is a board member on the rural infrastructure authority.

Last week, we partnered with the school system to provide wireless internet to the Magnum Community building. This will allow students in the north western end of the county to link into an internet source to complete their assignments. As many of you know this is a dead area for wireless signals

I wanted to update the board on the budget; I am nearing completion of the budget and plan to have it available for your review in the next week. I copied the board on my letter to the outside agencies, schools and our department heads advising everyone that no budget increases would be granted this year due to the uncertainty of future revenues from the carryover of Covid 19. 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. On the County level, we have been blessed to keep everyone working through the pandemic.

As always with budget projections, I am conservative and realistic however this year we are in uncharted waters. This will by far be 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. Robbie Hall and his staff have done an excellent job trying to fill the voids on the revenue side while working remotely. Our cumulative revenue loss including property tax, sales tax & enterprise payments may breach \$550,000 per month. The potential duration of Covid 19 and the lasting effects on our economy really concern me.

There hasn't been a considerable amount of discussion pertaining to the animal shelter lately, however staff is still working diligently at the facility and our final construction related project which is the last phase of the floor resurfacing will take place next week May 11-15th. Our average daily census has been down slightly over the last month. Outside adoption agencies and our staff are still networking to get animals adopted out.

Our solid waste report is as follows: we picked up 212 bags for a total of approx. 3.1 tons. Additionally, 29 tires were removed; we cleaned up 19 different roadways with Richmond County Staff and DOT forces. Our Solid Waste Enforcement Officer investigated 1 illegal dump site and issued 4 citations or notices. I continue to urge citizens to join in against the fight of the litter epidemic. I did have a few questions concerning fuel prices in Richmond County from Commissioner Capps and Commissioner Moss. I have tried to research and find out some additional information as to why our neighboring counties are considerably cheaper, I will send out an email to the board if I receive a definitive answer from any of our local fuel suppliers.

ITEM NO.12 Request for Board Consideration of Approval to Accept 2020 Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant - Bryan Leggett, Director of Solid Waste - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Jimmy Capps, seconded by Commissioner Ben Moss.

Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Commissioner John Garner voted yes; Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Don Bryant voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

ITEM NO.13 Consent Agenda - Decision

A) Approval of Draft Minutes of Regular Meeting on April 6, 2020 As Submitted by the Clerk For Review

B) Approval of Tax Releases And Tax Refunds for the Month of March, 2020

C) Approval of North Carolina Vehicle Tax System Refund Report for the Month of March 2020

D) Approval of Budget Amendment for General Fund Year End Adjustments for Departments

E) Approval of Budget Amendment for General Fund Year End Adjustments for Other Funds

F) Approval of Budget Amendment for 2019 Justice Assistance Grant

G) Approval of Budget Amendment for Smart Start and Child Care Health Consultant

H) Approval of Budget Amendment for COVID-19 Crisis Response

I) Approval of Budget Amendment for Sandhills Behavioral Health COVID Hotline Grant

J) Approval of Budget Amendment for LIEAP **amended**

By a motion of Commissioner John Garner, seconded by Commissioner Ben Moss.

Commissioner Jimmy Capps voted yes; Commissioner Don Bryant voted yes;

Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watkins asked Chairman Robinette if he could make a motion to the board.

I move that the Richmond County Board of Commissioners retain the services of an independent tax and accounting firm to study the issue of taxation in Richmond County. This study will not be limited to county government but will include all municipalities and townships. Each governmental entity shall sign a Memorandum of Understanding and Commitment to cooperate fully in an open and transparent process. The findings of the study and sharing of related financial data with all parties shall occur no later than February 1, 2021. The study shall include but will not be limited to the following:

- a. Historical context
- b. Methods and research regarding taxation in North Carolina and Richmond County
- c. Ability to Pay of both individuals and government entities
- d. Fairness to all taxpayers
- e. Equity of tax burden among governmental entities
- f. Short and Long-term tax revenue projections

g. Recommendations for the future to include, taxation strategies to enhance business, farming, and industrial development

Commissioner Bostic seconded the motion

Commissioner Moss asked if national information be included

Commissioner Garner said that we need to get figures for cost and who the players are going to be

Commissioner Moss asked if they would be sharing in the cost

Chairman Robinette asked Commissioner Watkins to respond to the questions

Commissioner Watkins stated that the county pay 50% and the municipalities split the balance

Chairman Robinette asked County Manager Land to have a list of firms and pricing if possible.

ITEM NO.14 Adjournment - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Ben Moss, seconded by Commissioner Don Bryant.

Commissioner Jimmy Capps voted yes; Commissioner John Garner voted yes;

Commissioner Rick Watkins voted yes; Commissioner Tavares Bostic voted yes; Chairman Kenneth Robinette voted yes and by unanimous vote. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:13 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted by the Clerk

Dena R. Cook, NCCCC

Clerk to the Board

Richmond County Board of Commissioners