

Minutes
Richmond County Board of Commissioners
105 W. Franklin Street, Courtroom C, Rockingham, NC
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, January 4, 2022 5:30PM

The Richmond County Board of Commissioners met for a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, January 4, 2022, at 5:30 P.M. with the following present: Commissioner Don M. Bryant, Commissioner Rick Watkins, Commissioner Toni R. Maples, Commissioner Andy Grooms, Commissioner Tavares Bostic, Vice Chairman Justin Dawkins, and Chairman Jeff Smart

Chairman Smart asked if everyone would stand for a moment of silence in memory of Richmond County employee Neel Peacock who passed away on Thursday, December 16, 2021.

ITEM NO. 1 Invocation by Pastor John Gould

Invocation was given by Pastor John Gould of Marston 1st Baptist Church

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of Agenda - Decision

Chairman Smart asked board for approval of the agenda being amended to add an item to the consent agenda for JCPC.

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve the agenda as amended , seconded by Commissioner Grooms and by unanimous vote. Motion carried

ITEM NO. 3 Consent Agenda - Decision

**Approval of Draft Minutes of Regular Meeting on December 7, 2021 as
A)Submitted by the Clerk for Review**

**B)Approval of Tax Releases And Tax Refunds for Month of
November, 2021**

**C)Approval of North Carolina Vehicle Tax System Refund Report
for the Month of November 2021**

D)Approval of Budget Amendment for AFDO EH Food & Lodging

**E)Approval of Budget Amendment for LIEAP Funds for Energy
Assistance**

**F)Approval of Budget Amendment for LIEAP Pandemic Automated
Funds**

G)Approval of Budget Amendments for LINKS Program

H)Approval of Draft Minutes of the Richmond County Board of Health Meeting on December 7, 2021 as submitted by the Clerk for Review

Amended I)Approval of the JCPC Program Agreement Revisions

Consent agenda was amended and approved along with the agenda for the meeting

ITEM NO. 4 Open Forum for Public Comments - 5:30 - 6:00 PM

No one signed up to speak

ITEM NO. 5 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Presented Audit for FY 2021 - Alan Thompson, Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Company, PA - Decision

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

ITEM NO. 6 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Proclamation to Designate January 17, 2022 as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Maples, seconded by Commissioner Dawkins and by unanimous vote. Motion carried

ITEM NO. 7 Monthly Report by County Manager Bryan Land

We have made it through the holiday season. I hope everyone enjoyed their time with friends and family. Our staff has come back to work with their sleeves rolled up and their batteries fully charged. We have tried to get back to some sense of normalcy over the last few months however Covid continues to make that challenging for everyone. As you are aware, we weren't able to host our large scale annual employee appreciation dinner this year due to Covid, it's always a highly attended event with over 500 of our employees and their spouses getting an opportunity to gather for a nice dinner. However, we were able to host multiple smaller departmental holiday dinners this year that were very personable and everyone seemed to really enjoy the outings.

December and January are always extremely busy months for us in the collections department. The tax and collections departments have been very busy for the last 45 days. I am thankful for the drive thru window that we have to serve our customers, remember back a few years ago when a drive through for collections was only a vision. I would like to remind everyone that tomorrow January 5th is the last day to pay your 2021 property taxes without incurring a 2% penalty. Our tax administrator Mr. Vegas Jackson and our collector Mrs. Michelle Holden from the tax department and myself feel highly confident that we will be able to achieve our goal of a 97.50% (97.36%) last yr. collection rate through the hard work and dedication of our collections staff. Even with the strains of Covid, we are still currently @ 62.76%, tracking 1.91% higher than last year at the end of December. (60.85%)

Our solid waste report is as follows: Even though we were in the middle of the holiday season, the litter in our County didn't slow. It is typical for roadside waste to increase during the holidays -we picked up 587 bags for a total of approximately 8.1 tons. Additionally, 28 tires were removed; we cleaned up 25 different roadways with Richmond County Staff and DOT forces. Our Solid Waste Enforcement Officer investigated 3 illegal dump sites and issued 2 citations. Also, I have some year-end tallies on litter pickup I would like to highlight. , we picked up 278 roads , which equates to 59.2 total tons of litter, 5657 total bags, 173 tires, 23 illegal dumpsites investigated, 31 warnings with citations issued and 27 burning investigations. I continue to urge citizens to join in against the fight of the litter epidemic.

To piggy back off of Alan Thompson from Thompson, Price Scott & Adams formal audit presentation I felt compelled to touch on a few of the financial highlights from 2021 that I am extremely proud of...As you know the audit is considered my annual report card. Additionally I am equally proud of how our team in finance has handled the transition phase that we have gone through the last year. As you know Mac Steagall retired in July, Mac was our finance director for over 15 years. Additionally, Sheila Trotter was our deputy finance director since 2008, Sheila has seg-wayed into the role of HR Director earlier this year and is doing an excellent job. However, this left a tremendous void in our finance department. We hired Cary Garner in March of last year, Cary and his team consisting of Susan Tibbs, Missy Kelly and Belinda Soto have also done an outstanding job carrying the torch and getting us through the transition phase. I did want to give those ladies and gentleman a huge thank you for their contributions in making these transitions & the audit process almost seamless.

As Alan mentioned earlier, We were able to increase our fund balance by 26% from 19.46% to 24.64% after a solid 21% increase in 2020 from 16.07 to 19.46 % , we are definitely trending in the upward trajectory as we would like to see. I still have a goal of reaching 35% , as that is the State average and Treasures office recommendation for Counties in our peer group of similar size. Our finance director Cary Garner, keeps reminding me Anson County is north of 48%.....

We achieved our highest tax collection rate ever @ 97.36% excluding vehicles.

Over the last 4 years, we have netted over 800 thousand dollars and placed 170 dormant properties back on our tax books through surplus property auctions through Ironhorse Auction, gov deals and through court ordered auctions hosted by Zachieus Tax Service.

This was the 3rd consecutive year and only the third time since 2005 that Fund balance wasn't utilized to balance our budget.

All of our departments heads, outside agencies, and our finance department deserve a huge pat on the back for this audit. They are the ones that have made considerable sacrifices over the last 4 years to turn our financial state from a low of 5.03% to a current level almost breaching 25%!! During the same timeframe we have been able to slash our debt burden from 44 million to less than 28 million. Cary Garner and his staff in our finance department won't have much of a breather though as budgeting for next year will begin in less than 45 days.

These few items I mentioned are just the tip of the iceberg, our employees and department heads are working daily on cost cutting measures, operating more efficiently, effectively and discovering innovative ways to strive to be good stewards of our taxpayer's dollar. Our employees and department heads are an amazing asset that we all should be extremely proud of.

Transitioning to the Health side, Cheryl Speight and the entire Health Department staff deserve the largest pat on the back this year as they have done a tremendous job with handling the day-to-day duties with Covid for almost two years. Everyone is worn down from the event but they always seem to stay positive and do a great job. We all are hopeful 2022 will bring a glimmer of hope for everyone!. & leave covid in the rearview mirror.

Staying on the health topic,

Currently covid vaccines are offered Monday thru Thursday 8:00AM until 5:00PM and Friday 8AM thru 11:00AM at the Health Department. No appointments are needed. Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson and Johnson are available. We are currently averaging 75-100 vaccines per day.

Covid testing is still offered behind the Health Department Monday thru Friday 8:00AM thru 6:00PM and at Cole Auditorium 10:00AM thru 6:00PM. We opened up the testing Drive thru Friday, December 31st and Saturday, January 1st due to high demand and to decrease patients going to the FirstHealth Emergency Department for Covid testing. The week of December 27th thru January 1st, 1,774 tests were performed at the Health Department. Of those 310 were positive. Before this December surge, we were averaging 100-400 tests per week. We are continuing to work with the state on expanding these testing hours.

As of today, our County Covid numbers are as follows: we currently have **8,291** positive cases of Covid-19. As of noon today we had 97 new cases for the day. We currently have 543 active cases. We have had 160 deaths.

As far as percentages and vaccination updates. The following are our latest stats:

Richmond County residents who have received at least one dose of vaccine:

Richmond County residents fully vaccinated	20,633
Percent fully vaccinated	46%
Percent of eligible population fully vaccinated (5and up)	49%
Percent Richmond County age 75 & older fully vaccinated	85%
Percent Richmond County age 65-74 fully vaccinated	80%
Percent Richmond County age 50-64 fully vaccinated	66%
Percent Richmond County age 25-49	42%
Percent Richmond County age 18-24 fully vaccinated	29%
Percent Richmond County age 12-17 fully vaccinated	24%
Percent Richmond County age 5-11 fully vaccinated	5%

Transitioning to a few of our public works projects

Paving improvements at the Public Works Facility are complete. The Degraded pavement has been replaced and a new area was paved to benefit the public when dropping off tires. Hudson Paving did a great job with this project.

NCDEQ performed their annual inspection of our Transfer Station and Solid Waste Operations in December. All went well with the inspection. Hats off to our Public Works Director Jerry Austin and his Assistant. Public Works Director Brian Leggett.

Our roofing project & the jail and Sheriffs office at the old courthouse is complete. Final project walkthrough is scheduled for tomorrow, weather permitting. Cost \$130,000

Our HVAC changeout project at the jail, Sheriffs office and old courthouse is progressing. Prep work has been completed and units are scheduled to be delivered in mid January. \$251,000 - (replacing 1976 models)

The fencing project at the Judicial Center is almost complete. We are waiting on gate controllers to be delivered to finish up the project. \$24,000

**ITEM NO. 8 Bi-Monthly Report - Martie T. Butler, Management Analyst/
Economic Developer - Discussion**

A year in Review:

Existing Industries expansions- Global Packing and Latham Pools

Existing Industries are our greatest chances to grow our tax base and employment

Grants- Golden Leak \$1.5 million; IDF \$1 million; Building Demo \$250,000; Direct Pack \$475,000; Global Packing and Novipax

Shell Building Acquisition - Shell building was acquired this year - part of a \$13 million project by Impact Plastics

The availability and option of build to suit helped win this project.

32 Leads-75% came from Economic Development Partnership, direct calls or real estate development

12 unable to submit due to lack of buildings or site

4 remain active -meaning that we are continuing conversation

Remainder-no decision or alternate site was chosen

Why? Labor supply, rural and surrounding; asked for target marketing

Much of this remains confidential

Moving Forward - We must have product to compete

With the Toyota Announcement and Economy is it crucial we continue to invest in our infrastructure, buildings and sites. Shell Building Program - we need to continue to give options to new clients and existing industries. Invest in our infrastructure

Interest in Shell building

Infrastructure & certified sites

**ITEM NO. 9 Discussion of Proposed Public Comment Policy - Bryan Land,
County Manager - Discussion**

Commissioner Dawkins requested that item # 3 be changed back to the current policy time frame.

Board agreed to allow time for County Attorney Webb to review the new policy and it will be put on the February 1st board meeting for a vote.

ITEM NO.10 Adjournment - Decision

By a motion of Commissioner Grooms, seconded by Commissioner Maples and by unanimous vote. Motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted by the Clerk

Dena R. Cook, NCCCC

Clerk to the Board

Richmond County Board of Commissioners

**Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Memorandum of
Opioid Litigation - Bryan Land, Co**