

Minutes
Richmond County Board of Commissioners
105 W. Franklin Street, Courtroom C, Rockingham, NC
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, February 1, 2022 5:30PM

The Richmond County Board of Commissioners met for a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, February 1, 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 and Chairman Jeff Smart - Remotely: Vice Chairman Justin Dawkins

ITEM NO. 1 Invocation by Pastor Mike Childers

Invocation was given by Pastor Mike Childers of Mt. Carmel Free Will Baptist Church, Rockingham, NC

ITEM NO. 2 Approval of Agenda - Decision

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

ITEM NO. 3 Consent Agenda - Decision

**A) Approval of Draft Minutes of Regular Meeting on January 4, 2022
as Submitted by the Clerk for Review**

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

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

D) Approval of Budget Amendment for Share the Warmth

E) Approval of Budget Amendment for Southern Regional AHEC HRSA

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

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

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

No one signed up to speak

ITEM NO. 5 Update from Richmond County Partnership for Children - Katrina Chance, Executive Director - Discussion

Ms. Chance updated the board on the programs and the needs of the organization. She presented the annual report 2020-2021 to the board. ITEM #1

ITEM NO. 6 Presentation of FirstHealth EMS Annual Report - Buddy Williams, EMS Director - Discussion

Richmond EMS Director Buddy Williams thank the Board for the opportunity to report the past year of FirstHealthRichmond EMS operations.

Calls and Response

During FY 2021 FirstHealth Richmond EMS responded to 8930 calls. This is a 9.5% increase from the previous year. There was also a 4.7% increase in billable transports. In FY2020 we had a 22.2% refusal rate. In FY2021 it was 26%.

Ambulances, Fleet and Mileage

FirstHealth Richmond EMS drove 185,669 miles to ensure that our patients received the finest medical care available.

Out of the seven ambulances we currently operate, two of them are at or above 250,000 miles. One of the two ambulances is over 300,000 miles. Our Fleet department has done an outstanding job in keeping these units serviced and repaired. But in the past year we were forced to replace three units. One unit is a new ambulance (New Chassis and new patient care box) and the other two are remounts. (New chassis and remodeled patient care box). This cost is reflected in the Capital Line Item on the Financial Report.

Facilities

In our facility in Rockingham, we typically have 5 staff members occupying the space. Due to social distancing concerns, we continue to have an arrangement with the Hospital to accommodate three of the five staff on the hospital campus when needed. This can result in added time in our response to calls. When treating a COVID 19 patient the crew must don extra protective equipment prior to responding to the call. We have also set a modular unit on Physicians Park Circle in Rockingham, to house one crew while following the protocols for social distancing.

Breakdown of calls

Over the past fiscal year, the categories that made up many of our calls for medical assistance were cardiac related issues, traumatic injuries – to include falls and motor vehicle accidents, abdominal pain/problems, respiratory issues, drug and behavioral issues and strokes. Throughout FY 2021, 13.5% of our calls were for patient experiencing some type of trauma, 11.9 % experiencing some type of non-traumatic pain, 7.5% of our call volume was comprised of patients suffering from a heart attack or experiencing symptoms of cardiac distress, respiratory issues made up 7.3%, drug related, and behavior issues made up 8.2%, flu-like symptoms, to include COVID patients, were at 3.1% with stroke-like symptoms making up 1% of our call volume. These categories make up 52.5% of our entire call volume for FY2021.

The average time of the ambulance being dispatched to the ambulance arriving at the scene of the call, was 9 minutes and 31 seconds this past year.

Education and Medical Direction

FirstHealth Richmond EMS provides continuing education to our staff and the county's volunteer rescue squads and fire departments. We also monitor clinical training records for all EMS providers in the county, as required by the North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services (NCOEMS). Dr. Matthew Harmody, with Sandhill Emergency Physicians, continues to be the Medical Director for our EMS service, the volunteer services, and Richmond County's 911 Center for medical oversight. We have also added an Assistant Medical Director, Dr Katie Newell, also with Sandhill Emergency Physicians, to help Dr. Harmody as our FirstHealth EMS System continues to grow.

Community

FirstHealth Richmond EMS continues to provide standbys for various activities held within the county. Our working relationship with the rescue squads, fire departments, the county's Emergency Management team, tele-communicators at the county's 911 center and all law enforcement agencies remains strong.

Through a TEAM approach, our EMS providers and the other agencies providing public service to the citizens of Richmond County, we ensure that every person living in, visiting, or traveling through the county, receives the highest quality of pre-hospital care in their time of need. That dedication to service through caring for people is the core purpose to which FirstHealth has committed itself.

Acknowledgement

At this time, I would like to state how proud I am of our EMS staff and First Responders, to include law enforcement and Fire Departments, in this County. I believe that you will not find any better people who work with a high sense of professionalism and dedication to perform the difficult task they have been burdened with these past 2 years. It is proof that real heroes don't wear capes.

As we look forward to another year, I would like to thank the Richmond County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of FirstHealth and FirstHealth Richmond EMS, for allowing us to be a part of Richmond County and for the privilege of serving the citizens of our community. To be able to serve alongside of you is nothing short of an honor.

ITEM NO. 7 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Date and Time for E & R Board meeting - Vagas Jackson, Tax Administrator - Decision

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

ITEM NO. 8 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Public Comment Policy - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

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

ITEM NO. 9 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Board Appointments Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

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

ITEM NO.10 Request for Board Consideration of Approval of Resolution for

2020 Local Water Supply Plan - Bryan Land, County Manager - Decision

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

ITEM NO.11 Monthly Report by County Manager Bryan Land

The holiday season has come to a close and January rolled in like a lion! We have had 3 straight weeks of winter weather events. Our building maintenance, public works, sheriff's office, water maintenance and others have carried on the day to day operations, with a business as usual approach. Hats off to everyone who helped play a vital role in keeping Richmond County Government rolling.

Our team in collections continues to steam roll! December and January were both record breaking months for us. As of January 6th the 2% late penalty was attached to 2021 tax bills. On January 11th late notices were mailed to all delinquent taxpayers as well as bank attachment & forced collections will begin later this week. Our tax administrator Mr. Vegas Jackson and our collector Ms. Michelle Holden from the tax department and myself are still targeting our goal of a 97.50% collection rate (*97.36% last year*) through the hard work and dedication of our collections staff. Every month we feel more and more confident that the goal is becoming attainable. As of today, we stand at 93.27%, at the end of January last year we were at 92.20%. In years past properties would sit delinquent and dormant for over 10 years. I want to assure you that isn't the case anymore. Our tax office begins the foreclosure process after 2 years if an attempt to pay hasn't been made. Our tax office is more than willing to work with individuals, but we do ask that they make a conscious effort to pay monthly.

Our solid waste report is as follows: we picked up 525 bags for a total of approx. 7.4 tons. Additionally, 34 tires were removed; we cleaned up 23 different roadways with Richmond County Staff and DOT forces. Some roadways were picked up multiple times. Our Solid Waste Enforcement Officer investigated 2 illegal dump sites and issued 4 citations and warnings. I continue to urge citizens to join in against the fight of the litter epidemic.

HHW Collection day is scheduled to be held on the 2nd Saturday in April which will be April 9th. Location will be our Richmond County Health and Human Services building parking lot at 127 Caroline Street. From 9:00AM until 1:00PM.

NCDOT will be conducting their Spring litter sweep the last 2 weeks of April. Richmond County will partner with local businesses and individual citizens, similar to last fall's litter sweep and we plan on the 1st of these 2 weeks which would be April 18-22. For additional information or to sign up for the event **please call 910-997-8215**.

A few updates from our partners at DOT and Law enforcement pertaining to questions posed at last month's meeting and throughout the month. Enforcement along McDonald Church road will be ramped up due to speeding concerns in the 35 mph zone. Our Sheriff's office will be placing our portable radar gun along McDonald Church Road. DOT is conducting a traffic /safety study at the 4 way stop intersection on Airport and Battley Dairy Road, additionally DOT is reviewing the drainage/safety concerns on US 1 N off Fox Rd and on 74 business nears Don's Locksmith. Lastly, patching to repair the potholes on Ledbetter bridge is scheduled to take place tomorrow.

Transitioning to Area Richmond Transit.

Tommy Jarrell has done an excellent job seg-waying into the Directors role after the unexpected death of our Director Neel Peacock.

The ART staff are working with our state partners to assist us in this time of transition.

The annual audit is current being conducted and is progressing well.

We are currently recruiting for part-time drivers. We thank our neighboring county transportation systems for assisting us during this difficult time for the staff of ART.

Additionally I would like to thank our County garage for assisting with routine maintenance on the ART fleet.

On the Economic Development front, the last few weeks have been very demanding for us. We have 7 active projects Martie and I are working. Additionally, last week was more icing on the cake as Wade Manufacturing announced their deal to be acquired by Mt. Vernon Mills. They are retaining the majority of the current employees as well as hiring an additional 40 new employees. Investment figures have not been released yet however we feel confident they will be significant. Additionally, over the last month we have met with a few of our existing industries discussing potential expansions! As we always say, our existing industries are our "bread and butter" in Richmond County, and we always do our part to make sure they are successful.

Budget season is just around the corner,

In the next 3 weeks our finance office will be sending out budget workbooks to our department heads, additionally at this time outside agencies will be asked to submit their request with justification & up to date financials. This will begin the budgeting process for our next fiscal year. Over the next 45 days, I will begin meeting with individual department heads one on one to discuss their budgets.

Transitioning to the Health side, Cheryl Speight and the entire Health Department staff continue to work tirelessly daily.

Currently covid Vaccines are offered Monday-Thursday 8:00AM until 5:00PM and Friday 8:00AM until 11:00AM at the Health Department. No appointments are needed. Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson and Johnson are available. We are currently averaging around 30 vaccines per day.

Testing numbers remain high but have decreased over the last week. Last week we tested over 700 individuals. . This is a decrease from the 1700/ week we were seeing for the several weeks after Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Covid testing is still offered behind the Health Department on Monday-Friday 8:00AM until 6:00PM and at Cole Auditorium 10:00AM until 6:00PM.

As of yesterday, our County Covid numbers are as follows: we currently have **11,668** positive cases of Covid-19. We have had 178 deaths, up from 160 last month . After extremely high daily case counts, averaging over 150-200 per day, the state as well as Richmond County is seeing a leveling off of these high spikes. Richmond County has a positivity rate of 26% which is a drop from 35% last week

Percent of Richmond County residents from age 5 and up. Fully vaccinated: currently stands at 50%

Number of residents with a booster dose from age 5 and up: 8416

The Moderna vaccine has obtained full FDA approval and will be marketed as Spikevax. Until yesterday, Moderna was still under Emergency Use Authorization .

Transitioning to a few of our building maintenance projects,

The sewer project at the jail has been finalized with the exception of final asphalt paving. Hudson Paving is scheduled to repave the parking lot as soon as weather permits.

Our roofing project for the jail and sheriffs office at the old courthouse is complete. 130k

Our HVAC changeout project at the jail, sheriffs office and old courthouse is progressing. Prep work has been completed and the new units have arrived. Crews are scheduled to start installing the new units later next week. 251k (replacing 1976 models)

The fencing project at the Judicial Center is almost complete. The gate controllers arrived last week and crews are scheduled to install next Tuesday. This will finish up the project. 24k

And lastly, I did receive an update from DOT yesterday requesting final quantities and signed contracts for the resurfacing project at East Rockingham Fire Department. As a reminder, I was able to negotiate a contract with NCDOT to include the paving of the parking lot at the Fire department into their annual County resurfacing contract saving the department approximately \$40,000. This was a huge win for the department as they will be able to utilize the funds they had set aside for the paving for other needed upgrades and projects at the fire department.

ITEM NO.12 Adjournment - Decision

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 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**