

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CONTINUED SESSION
JUNE 2, 2020
MINUTES**

Chairman Tate reconvened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. as recessed from the May 26, 2020 continued session, and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed tax rate increase for Otto Volunteer Fire Department, to continue discussion regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget, and to consider a lease agreement with the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center. Due to Gov. Roy Cooper's Executive Order limiting the number of people at a mass gathering to 10 due to COVID-19, physical participation at the meeting in the boardroom was limited to that number. All five commissioners were physically present and practiced social distancing. County Manager Derek Roland was also present, as was Finance Director Lori Carpenter. Deputy Clerk Mike Decker watched the meeting via live stream, and County Attorney Chester Jones participated via telephone. A reduced number of members of the media were allowed to attend.

OTTO VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT TAX INCREASE REQUEST:

Chairman Tate recognized Terry Rohletter, the chief of the Otto Volunteer Fire Department, who said the department is seeking a tax increase for the purpose of building a new fire station. Mr. Rohletter explained that a new facility was needed in order for the department to meet ISO insurance standards in the future. He said the cost of the new 12,000-square-foot building is estimated at \$3.7-million. He also noted that a possible deal is in the works with Macon County Emergency Services to use the current facility as an ambulance base for the southern part of the county. The proposed tax increase would be 0.0384-cent, and would bring the new rate to 0.1068-cents per \$100 of property valuation. Mr. Rohletter stated it was "a bad year" to be asking for a rate increase, "but we have to provide a service to the community." He told the board the increase does have community support, saying that approximately 15 people showed up at an "open house" to learn about the plan for the new station and all were in support. He also said some 3,200 letters were mailed to property owners, and out of 30 responses, only one was negative. He asked the board to consider the increase, as the last change in the department's tax rate was in 2016. Following further discussion, Mr. Rohletter introduced the architect on the project, who presented the plans for the new structure, and told the board it would be a year and a half before the building was in operation, if the

groundbreaking was today. Mr. Rohletter and several of the board members then engaged in a lengthy discussion, but with Chairman Tate pointing out that there is “just not support on the board for a tax increase this year.” Following further discussion, no action was taken.

DISCUSSION REGARDING PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2020-21 BUDGET:

With regard to the county manager’s recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget, there were no questions or concerns voiced by the board members, and Commissioner Higdon expressed his thanks to Mr. Roland and Mrs. Carpenter for their work. No action was taken.

CONSIDERATION OF LEASE AGREEMENT WITH COWEE SCHOOL ARTS AND HERITAGE CENTER:

Mr. Roland explained that there was a typographical error in the previous version of the five-year lease agreement the board had approved with the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center, where a date of April 30, 2020 should have read April 30, 2025. At the request of Mr. Jones, Mr. Roland asked the board to approve a “Resolution of the Macon County Board of County Commissioners to Revise a Five Year Lease in Order to Correct a Typographical Error in the Same.” Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner, the board voted unanimously to approve the resolution as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 1) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Then, upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve a “Revised Lease to Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center from Macon County, a copy of which is also attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

UPDATE ON MACON MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT: Mr. Roland gave the board a brief update on the Macon Middle School renovation project, noting that the architectural firm is at a point with the plans where they can be “ready to hit the street” for bids. He advised the board that it makes sense to allow them to finish the bid package for the project and then the county can put it out for bids when it is ready. No action was needed.

ADJOURN: With no other business, and at 6:44 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chairman