

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CONTINUED SESSION
MAY 18, 2015
MINUTES**

Chairman Corbin reconvened the recessed meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners at 6:06 p.m. at the Macon County Heritage Center at the historic Cowee School. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a joint meeting with the Town of Franklin Board of Aldermen and the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners. All of the county commissioners, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk and Finance Director were present. All of the Franklin aldermen (with the exception of Verlin Curtis, Farrell Jamison and Billy Mashburn), Mayor Bob Scott, Town Manager Summer Woodard, Town Clerk/Human Resource Officer Chad Simons and Financial Officer Kyra Doster were present. All of the Highlands commissioners (with the exception of Donnie Calloway, Eric Pierson and Brian Stiehler), Mayor Patrick Taylor and Town Manager Bob Frye were present. Also present were members of the news media and interested citizens.

Following a welcome by Chairman Corbin and announcements by Commissioner Beale and Bobby Koppers, Commissioner Higdon gave the invocation. The board members then shared a meal together, with Chairman Corbin noting that the meeting would resume at approximately 6:50 p.m.

Chairman Corbin reconvened the meeting at 6:56 p.m. and thanked the members of the Southeastern Bluegrass Association for providing music during the meal. He recognized the County Manager and Finance Director, pointing out that the board had challenged the manager to produce a revenue neutral budget. The County Manager responded that the budget would be revenue neutral following an 18 percent decline in the county's tax base that will bring the new rate to 34.9 cents per \$100 valuation. While the county is seeing positive growth in sales tax revenue, he said the budget will contain a conservative increase in extra projected revenue from that source. He explained

that he was only budgeting a three percent increase due to uncertainty surrounding the outcome of two bills in the state Senate that would redistribute sales tax revenue on a per capita basis. He also reviewed efforts at the county level to overhaul the county employees' health insurance plan, the need for technology updates to the county's telephone and data storage systems, and the move toward completion of the Parker Meadows Recreational Complex. He concluded by noting that the proposed budget would be presented to the board on Thursday, May 21st.

Following a legislative update from Commissioner Beale, Franklin Mayor Bob Scott introduced the aldermen and town staff, and stated that "the biggest problem the town has is the North Carolina General Assembly." Mayor Scott noted that the town board is elected on a non-partisan basis and the legislature wants to change that. He also spoke briefly about the upgrade of the town's water plant, the opening of the Lazy Hiker Brewery at the former town hall location, and the upcoming bridge replacement project. He then recognized Ms. Woodard, who presented her proposed budget to the aldermen on May 4th. She said the town's new revenue neutral tax rate would be 27.27 cents, which was rounded up to a proposed 28-cent rate in order to grow the town's fund balance. She also said the town would utilize a \$3.5-million loan to upgrade the water treatment plan, with work set to begin on October 1, 2015. Ms. Woodard also discussed plans to reroute traffic on East Main Street during the bridge replacement project.

Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor praised the Cowee heritage center as a "wonderful venue," and explained that the town had been involved in a very active capital project expansion. He talked about efforts to lower Lake Sequoyah in order to install a new water intake and make repairs to the dam, and said that the water level will begin to rise within the next few days and should be at "full pool" by late May. He also addressed the installation of a six-inch water line along NC 28, renovations to the school's ball field, and improvements to the town's recreation facility, which includes a covered swimming pool. The town is still in process of formulating its new budget, and the mayor said he and the board would have a final budget work session this week. He also expressed concern over the proposed sales tax legislation. In closing, he said the new fire department substation will help lower insurance rates for residents, and expressed his thanks to Commissioner Tate for his work with Jackson County on that and other issues.

From there, the discussion turned to funding for education, and then returned to the bridge replacement project in Franklin, with Commissioner Shields asking questions about traffic flow during the project and the potential impact on the Friends of the Greenway headquarters, which Ms. Woodard addressed.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to recess the meeting until Thursday, May 21, 2015 at 6 p.m. in the commission boardroom on the third floor of the Macon County Courthouse, 5 West Main Street, Franklin, NC.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Kevin Corbin
Board Chairman