

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
AUGUST 11, 2015  
MINUTES**

Vice-Chairman Tate called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. All Board Members (with the exception of Chairman Corbin), the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director, County Attorney, members of the news media and interested citizens were present. Vice-Chairman Tate explained that Chairman Corbin was away on vacation.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Those in attendance watched a video from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) that provided an update on recent NCACC activities. Commissioner Beale noted two events scheduled for Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup> – the open house at the Macon County Airport and the Third Annual Cowee School Celebration and Macon County Heritage Day. He also provided a brief update on the ongoing sales tax debate in the state legislature.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Vice-Chairman Tate asked those in attendance to observe a moment of silence.

**PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:** Led by Commissioner Higdon, the pledge to the flag was recited.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** **Dr. Gordon Mercer** addressed the board regarding The Father’s House, a facility located off Jim Mann Road in Franklin which is recognized as a homeless shelter. Dr. Mercer said The Father’s House is “my church,” adding that he goes there every week and that regular worship services are held. He said that it was “unique” in that “we do have the homeless come there.” He told the board that the county’s efforts to close the church down would breach the United States Constitution and make the board of commissioners the first governmental body in North Carolina to close down a church. He gave the board copies of an article showing where Brunswick County officials allow churches to shelter the homeless under certain

conditions. He said that The Father's House is looking for a more permanent location and is seeking grant opportunities, but meanwhile, he said there is a fire watch at night and the facility has proper exits and adequate fire extinguishers. He concluded by saying that representatives of The Father's House are willing to work with county officials and "will respect safety." **Karen Wallace** noted that she had appeared before the board a couple of months ago requesting an increase in funding for the Macon County Public Library and wanted to provide the commissioners with an update. She reported that the library has not had to cut hours or services and has focused its efforts on securing technology grants and provided the board with a handout regarding technology used at all Macon County libraries. She said computer use is going down but wireless use is going way up as more people bring their own devices. She also said that more than half of the library computers use the Microsoft XP operating system which is no longer supported by Microsoft. The library has received two grants totaling \$25,000, she said, but has been turned down on others due to a lack of matching funds. She added that the library has renegotiated its insurance premium increases, cutting them from a 17 percent rise to 8 percent, and is looking to engage in more fund-raising efforts. **Lowell Monteith**, speaking on behalf of The Father's House, told the board members that they see the "nicer, cleaner side of issues" while he deals with the "dirtier side." He also questioned that the county would not bend the rules for anyone, asking why the county allowed 300-plus minors to stay at Macon Middle School for a World Changers event when there is no sprinkler system in that facility. Stating he was not here to argue, he said it appears there is "a little bit of bias happening." Commissioner Beale addressed the issue with World Changers, stating that the organization has its own rules and does have a "fire watch" at night. Mr. Monteith stated that if it is a life safety issue in his situation, it should be one across the board, and ended his comments by stating that the county should support his efforts regarding the homeless.

**ADJUSTMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Higdon, the board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as adjusted, as follows:

- To add the appointment of new Department of Social Services Director Patrick Betancourt to the Macon Program for Progress (MPP) board under Appointments as Item 12B, per Commissioner Beale.
- To add a brief presentation from County Planner Matt Mason regarding the Macon County Planning Board under New Business as Item 10C, per the County Manager.

**ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT:** Vice-Chairman Tate agreed to allow **Narelle Kirkland** to address the board regarding her plans to establish a viewing platform at an area near the Macon Bank Headquarters after former

plans to build such a platform near the First United Methodist Church did not materialize. She asked the board to consider appointing a liaison from among its members to help with the project, stating that the viewstand would be for the benefit of the citizens that live here.

**RESOLUTION HONORING MERRITT FOUTS:** Following comments and background information from Commissioner Beale, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adopt a “Resolution Designating Merritt Fouts as an Honorary Historian of Macon County.” A copy of the resolution is attached (Attachment 1) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

**CANCELLATION OF NOTE AND DEED OF TRUST ON REHABILITATION LOAN:** The County Attorney explained that a Victoria E. Gelford had borrowed some money back in 2000 under a housing rehabilitation program and that the loan was excused after a number of years. Accordingly, he said, the deed of trust should have been cancelled. While it would be appropriate for the board to do so, the County Attorney said that he had prepared the proper document and requested that the board approve it. Upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to approve the “Satisfaction of Security Instrument” as recommended by the County Attorney, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:** County Planner Matt Mason informed the board that the county’s comprehensive plan is nearing the five-year mark and told the commissioners it is time for the planning board to begin reviewing and updating it. He asked for the commission’s blessing for the planning board to take this on as its next task, and the board agreed to this by consensus. No formal vote was taken.

**CONSENT AGENDA:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the following items on the consent agenda were approved unanimously: **Minutes** – Approved the minutes from the June 25, 2015 continued session, the July 14, 2015 regular meeting, and the July 23, 2015 continued session. **Budget amendments** – Approved the following budget amendments: #15 for Public Health to allocate \$76,737 in new Tobacco Settlement monies received from the state; #16 for Social Services to allocate \$43,696 for the transfer of federal adoption funds; #17 for Public Health to roll \$5,283 in unexpended grant money to the current fiscal year; and #18 for Public Health to roll \$54 in unexpended grant money to the current fiscal year. (Revisions with corresponding numbers attached). **2014 Tax Settlement Report:** Accepted the report for the settlement for current taxes for Fiscal Year 2014-15 totaling \$25,666,380.87, which reflects a collection rate of 97.61

percent. **Public Health Fee Changes:** Approved a list of proposed fee changes at Macon County Public Health, a copy of which is attached.

**APPOINTMENTS: (1) Economic Development Commission:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to reappoint Steve Chenoweth, Roger Plemens and Mark West to the Economic Development Commission, each for terms of three years, which will expire August 11, 2018. **(2) Macon Program for Progress (MPP) Board:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Higdon, the board voted unanimously to appoint Director of Social Services Patrick Betancourt to the MPP Board, replacing former DSS Director Jane Kimsey.

**PARKER MEADOWS RECREATIONAL COMPLEX:** The County Manager announced that the dedication of the Parker Meadows Recreational Complex would take place on Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and would feature free food, live music and tours of the park.

**ADJOURN:** With no further business, and at 6:51 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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Derek Roland  
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

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Kevin Corbin  
Board Chairman