

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OCTOBER 11, 2016
MINUTES**

Chairman Corbin called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. All Board Members, the County Manager, Finance Director, County Attorney, members of the news media and interested citizens were present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chairman Corbin recognized Lynn Wight, the county's Assistant Information Technology Director, who asked the board to support "Go Blue Friday" for colon cancer awareness on October 21, 2016. She also noted that country artist Wade Hayes, a Stage 4 colon cancer survivor, would be in concert in Franklin on Saturday October 22nd. Chairman Corbin told Ms. Wright that the board members "certainly support what you do."

Also, to "clarify" some matters, Chairman Corbin said that if he is successful in his bid to become the state representative for House District 119, he will be sworn into office in Raleigh on January 11, 2017. He then explained that the board will need to hold a meeting on Monday, December 5th at which time the new or returning board members will be sworn in and a new chairman and vice chairman will be elected. The County Attorney suggested that the board simply recess its November regular meeting until December 5th at 6 p.m.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Corbin asked those in attendance to observe a moment of silence.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT: No one signed up to speak.

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

- To add an item under Old Business as Item #10D regarding the surveillance system at the Parker Meadows Recreational Complex, per the County Manager.
- To remove Item #11B (Agreement with Wolfe Reality Check) under New Business, per the County Manager.
- To add a “very, very brief” closed session per Item 14 in order to preserve the attorney/client privilege, per the County Attorney.
- To add a report from the Macon County Sheriff’s Department as the new Item #11C under New Business, per Commissioner Beale.

NCACC SAFETY AWARD: Charlie Eaton and Bob Carruth with North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Risk Management presented the county with the 2016 Liability & Property Pool Award in recognition of having the lowest number of vehicle claims per 100 vehicles among all large county members. Chairman Corbin accepted the award on behalf of the county.

PUBLIC HEARING ON MACON COUNTY COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM APPLICATION: Following some introductory remarks, Chairman Corbin called the public hearing to order at 6:15 p.m. as advertised. He recognized Macon County Transit Director Kim Angel and also noted that no one from the public had signed up to speak. Mrs. Angel explained that this was part of her department’s annual process to apply for grant funding for the next fiscal year and she reviewed the changes in the application process and went over the anticipated amounts of state and local funding. She pointed out one change in the amounts that were published as part of the notice, noting that the total amount of administrative funding was increased from \$189,531 to \$207,516, which results in an increase in the 10 percent local share from \$28,431 to \$30,137. She went on to explain the capital and operating requests, and pointed out that the new overall total of local share funds would now equal \$119,190. She answered questions from Commissioners Beale and Tate and the County Manager. Chairman Corbin asked one last time if there were any comments from the public, and hearing none, closed the public hearing. The County Attorney suggested that the board members consider each resolution individually. Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to approve the Public Transportation 5310 Program Resolution as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 1) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to approve the Community Transportation Program

Resolution (Section 5311) as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to approve the 5311 Designee Certification Form as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 3) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the Public Transportation Consolidated Capital Call for Projects Program Resolution as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 4) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

COMMUNITY FUNDING POOL RECOMMENDATIONS: Karen Wallace presented the recommendations of the task force for the Community Funding Pool. Ms. Wallace said there were 22 grant requests totaling \$153,719, and that the task force recommended funding 14 projects at a cost of \$75,239, with the hope that the board would consider adding the additional \$239 to its annual \$75,000 allocation. She said the majority of the recommended projects were in the health and human services area and that the task force “had some difficult choices to make.” She responded to questions from board members regarding two of the recommendations, which were for agencies in Jackson County, with Ms. Wallace explaining that the two (Mountain Mediation Services and the Blue Ridge Mountain Health Project) provided specific services in Macon County and that the money would go toward projects offered here. The Finance Director then asked about the total amount, saying that when she added up the recommended amounts for the 14 projects, she came to a total of \$82,137, not \$75,239. She went on to note that if the \$6,898 allocation for Teen Challenge of the Smokies is “backed out,” then the total returns to \$75,239. Chairman Corbin asked Ms. Wallace if the task force wanted to “go back to the drawing board,” and in response she asked the board to consider how it might utilize \$100,000 in non-recurring funds from the state for these types of purposes. Following further discussion, the board asked Ms. Wallace to “relook” at all of the projects and come back with a recommendation at the November regular meeting. No action was taken.

NOVEMBER REGULAR MEETING: Chairman Corbin explained to Ms. Wallace and the audience that the board’s regular meeting in November would fall on Election Day (November 8). Because of that, he said the commission would not have a full agenda that night, and following a brief meeting, would likely recess until the next Tuesday, the 15th.

CHARTERS OF FREEDOM MONUMENTS: Perry Snider with Foundation Forward, Inc. presented a PowerPoint presentation and a short video clip on the Charters of Freedom monuments. As an education project, Foundation Forward’s goal is to “design and build a replica of the Charters of Freedom

monument as exhibited in the National Archives Rotunda” in Washington, DC. The display includes copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The foundation seeks to have the display in a location that is central to the community with high visibility, high foot traffic and with easy access for school children. In providing details on the display, Mr. Snider said it is designed to last 300 to 500 years, and he provided examples of other locations, including one in Cherokee County, NC. He said the goal is to have one in every county in the United States in the next nine years. Commissioner Shields said he believed this is “very important” and something the board “should consider for our area.” Responding to Commissioner Shields’ questions, Mr. Snider reviewed items such as “letters of intent,” the need for an advisory board and the location as well as the cost of the display, which he said was free to the county. Mr. Snider said a display is being constructed in Jackson County now. Commissioner Shields made a motion to carry through with the letter of intent, but Mr. Snider said that could not be accomplished without a specific location. The County Attorney advised the board members to “get all the details together” and consider the letter of intent at the November regular meeting. No action was taken.

BROADBAND DISCUSSION WITH PROVIDERS: Chairman Corbin explained that the board wanted to “have a public conversation” with the area’s internet providers regarding the expansion of service within the county. With that in mind, representatives of Morris Broadband, Frontier Communications, Dnet and Balsam West attended the meeting to discuss the issues involved. This was prompted by the work of the county’s planning board, which created maps of the service areas in the county. During the lengthy, open discussion that followed, it became clear that the biggest obstacles to the expansion of service were the county’s mountainous terrain and the cost of extending service to sparsely populated areas versus the return on investment that the service providers would have to make to put the necessary infrastructure in place. Chairman Corbin raised the issue of possible public/private partnerships to extend service, while Commissioner Beale said that the state’s 20 westernmost counties are hit hardest by the lack of high-speed internet, which has become a necessity for businesses and students. The County Manager asked the providers what the county could do in terms of supplying information that could be used in the decision-making process regarding future expansions, outlining the county’s Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities. The board ended up directing the County Manager to continue working with the county’s mapping department and the service providers to make available GIS maps that would aid in taking the next logical steps toward service expansion.

Chairman Corbin declared a five-minute recess.

Chairman Corbin called the meeting back to order.

AWARD OF BID FOR WESLEY’S PARK: The County Manager described the needed improvements at Wesley’s Park, explaining that 15 years of use had produced wear and tear that was very visible and a liability to the county. He said the county has gone through a formal bid procedure seeking to repair the playground equipment and to resurface the playground floor covering. He said that only one response was received, a bid of \$113,355 from TC Strickland Construction, Inc. of Shelby, NC, but that he and Parks and Recreation Director Seth Adams believe it is a representative bid that will bring new life to the playground. This was followed by discussion of repairing the water features at the park, the term of the warranty on the work and the timeline for completing the project. It was noted that there was no funding appropriated in the current fiscal year budget for this work. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to award the bid to TC Strickland Construction, Inc. as presented, to approve the necessary budget amendment to take the \$113,355 from fund balance, and to authorize the County Manager to execute the contract. A copy of the bid tabulation is attached (Attachment 5) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE FOR RADIO COMMUNICATIONS UPGRADE: The Finance Director explained the need for the ordinance. She said that \$400,000 of the estimated \$800,000 cost was already in this year’s budget, but with the project spanning two fiscal years, she was looking to set up a capital projects ordinance to span that timeline. Upon a motion by Commission Tate, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the Capital Project Ordinance/Radio Communications Upgrade as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 6) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR AIRPORT PROJECT: The County Manager presented a draft “letter of support” that would commit the county to a 10 percent local match of a \$4.5-million project to extend the runway and taxiway at the Macon County Airport. The project scored so high at the regional and state level that it was essentially guaranteed funding, and the County Manager noted that the county would not have to appropriate the \$450,000 in local funds until four or five years from now. This led to a lengthy discussion, with Commissioner Higdon questioning the need for the project and if there was a long-range plan for the airport. Commissioner Tate, the board’s liaison to the airport authority, said he sees the benefit of getting the improvements for the cost of the 10 percent match, and that with increased jet traffic at the facility, pilots might be able to use an instrument approach to land instead of a visual one. Commissioner Higdon asked if there was someone who could come and explain the project to the board. After continued discussion, Chairman Corbin

said the board would recess this meeting until Monday, October 17, 2016 at 6 p.m. and have a representative of the airport authority available to answer questions and provide more details. No action was taken.

SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM AT PARKER MEADOWS RECREATION COMPLEX:

The County Manager distributed copies of a letter from Karl Gillespie with National Communications, Inc. (NCI) to provide a surveillance system at the Parker Meadows Recreational Complex. The County Manager outlined the camera locations associated with the system, which he pointed out was priced at \$29,328. He went on to note that there is approximately \$66,000 unspent in the project's fund after all known invoices have been paid. Chairman Corbin said there have been some incidences of vandalism at the complex, and recommended that the board vote to approve the system. Following further discussion, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to approve the bid for the surveillance system as outlined in the letter, with Commissioner Beale adding the condition that an alarm system be integrated into it. The motion also included authorization for the County Manager to execute the contract for the work, and a copy of the letter is attached (Attachment 7) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

PUBLIC HEALTH BILLING GUIDE AND FEE SCHEDULE: Diane Keener with Macon County Public Health presented the agency's proposed billing and collection policies and fee schedules for Fiscal Year 2016-17. Following her comments, and upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to approve the billing guide and fee schedule as presented, copies of which are attached (Attachment 8) and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

ASSIGNMENT OF BID FOR WATAUGA VISTA TRACT: The County Attorney provided an explanation regarding a matter in which the county ended up being the high bidder upon a property that was a parcel in a county-initiated tax foreclosure. The parcel, known as "Tract D" in "Watauga Vista, Inc." was purchased by the county for \$1,508.21. However, Robert Dodd expressed interest in purchasing the property for \$2,258.21. Jeff Goss, an attorney with Ridenour & Goss, prepared an "Assignment of Bid" document that would allow the county to transfer its bid for the property to Mr. Dodd. Otherwise, the parcel would simply be added to the county's list of surplus property. Following some discussion, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted to approve the Assignment of Bid as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 9) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

VESTS FOR SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT: Commissioner Beale initiated the discussion about purchasing new vests for sheriff's department personnel by pointing out that in the last five years, officers had responded to 627 different calls involving guns, with 132 of those coming in the last 10 months, including one on this date that he described as "very serious." He said that the officers will not wear these every day to work, because they are very heavy and designed to stop a large caliber bullet, but will be carried in the patrol vehicle. He said the sheriff is looking to purchase 60 of these, and recognized Sheriff Robert Holland for comments. Sheriff Holland then passed around one of the vests for the board to examine, and said he believes that it is necessary to make the purchase now instead of waiting for a new budget year to arrive. He explained that the vests would be carried in the front passenger seat of the patrol vehicle, and then gave several examples of recent incidents in which his officers were involved where – given the guns and caliber of bullets being used by the lawbreakers – the normal "bullet proof vest" issued to them would not have stopped the bullet from penetrating it. After describing one recent incident in which officers were shot at a total of 32 times, the sheriff said this is "not something we can put off until next July 1." Commissioner Beale then recommended that the board approve an amount not to exceed \$25,000 that would be taken from the sheriff's food services budget and then replaced before the end of the fiscal year with expected savings from that program. However, the Finance Director recommended that the board simply take the money from the contingency fund, with the understanding that it could be reversed prior to the end of the budget year. With that, Commissioner Beale made a motion to take an amount not to exceed \$25,000 from contingency to purchase the vests, and Commissioner Shields seconded the motion. Following additional discussion, the board voted unanimously to approve the purchase of the so-called secondary care vests.

AIRPORT PROJECT: Prior to considering the items on the consent agenda, Commissioner Tate informed the board that he had received a response to his text message to a member of the county's airport authority regarding the proposed letter of intent. He said he had asked Tommy Jenkins about the benefits of extending the runway and taxiway by 1,000 feet to 6,000 feet, and in return, Mr. Jenkins said it would be an investment in the county's economic future, and certainly for the manufacturing firms that are based in the county. He asked that the board look at the long-term benefit of the extension, as it would make the airport more attractive for possible charter flights and with the added length and improved technology, it might make it possible for pilots to execute an instrument approach and landing as opposed to a visual one. With a 6,000-foot runway, the airport would be more readily available to pilots and would give the county a competitive edge over other regional airports. He also said that the 90/10 match for funding would not be available much longer, and added it is likely that no more airports will be built in the foreseeable future.

Commissioner Tate said he recommended approval of the letter of intent, and the discussion turned to money. Chairman Corbin said that with the project four years away, the board could choose to set aside \$100,000 a year to fund it. Commissioner Tate made a motion to authorize the chairman to sign the letter, and it was seconded by Commissioner Beale. Prior to the vote, the Finance Director said that a capital reserve fund could be set up to fund the county's match. Following additional discussion, the board voted unanimously to authorize the letter of intent, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 10) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

CLARIFICATION ON WESLEY'S PARK: The County Manager informed the board that as to the warranty issues with the work on Wesley's Park, the plastic parts carry a 10-year warranty, the metal parts a 15-year warranty and the ground cover a five-year warranty. No further action was necessary.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to approve the items on the consent agenda as follows: the minutes of the September 13, 2016 regular meeting; the following budget amendments: #47 for the Housing Department to move \$101,968 in budgeted funds into various departmental line items; #48 for the Housing Department to allocate \$50,000 in Duke Energy grant funds into a new program; #49 for the Housing Department to move \$84 in a Department of Energy Weatherization grant for a contract increase in program operations; #50 for the Housing Department to allocate an overall decrease of \$8,852 in a weatherization grant due to the grantor's contract changes and #51 for the Housing Department to allocate an overall decrease of \$9,780 in a weatherization grant due to the grantor's contract change. (Copies of the amendments are attached); and tax releases in the amount of \$2,757.44. (A copy of the releases is on file in the Deputy Clerk's office.)

CLOSED SESSION: Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at the request of the County Attorney in order to preserve the attorney/client privilege. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to return to open session. No action was taken.

ADJOURN: With no other business and the need for the continuation meeting no longer necessary, upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Kevin Corbin
Board Chairman