



MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
April 8, 2025
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All Board Members, County Manager Warren Cabe, Deputy Clerk Tammy Keezer, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, and County Attorney Eric Ridenour were present, as were several county employees, media, and citizens.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(A) Mr. Cabe announced that the Army Corps of Engineers has contracted with some agencies to conduct storm debris clean-up on the local streams, and they will be working from the south side toward the north side of the county over the next couple of months.

(B) Mr. Cabe said he received notice from Manager Aimee Owens from the Town of Franklin that during the month of April, you will notice some blue lights at the gazebo on the square in observance of child abuse awareness.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Young requested all in attendance rise, and a moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Commissioner Shields, the pledge to the flag was recited.

PUBLIC HEARING(S): None

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: **Janet Walker** introduced herself as the President of Franklin Amateur Swim Team (FAST) and treasurer of the Mountain Swim League which includes Franklin, Highlands, Sylva, Murphy, and Waynesville and said Macon County is the only place that does not have a covered pool that the swim teams can use and believes a covered pool is beneficial. She stated that the swim team pays Franklin Health and Fitness Center over 7,600 dollars per year to be able to practice at their facility. Ms. Walker reported that they are having some health-related issues from using the pool at the Franklin Health and Fitness Center due to chemical levels in the pool. Commissioner Young encouraged her to attend a Recreation Commission meeting to further discuss this. **Maryann Ingram** expressed thanks for the improvements that the county made to Pine Grove School. **Kim Leister** spoke about the Library Board, saying the email that was sent to board members a couple of months ago has still not been addressed, and yet this person is still on the library board. **Betsy Baste** commented on the difference between listening and hearing and then spoke about the library board, reminding the board that at last month's meeting, she had asked board members to avoid taking a cookie-cutter approach to appointment library board members, but

here we are with a cookie-cutter approach. Ms. Baste said she feels like whatever she speaks about this board does the opposite. She announced that on May 1st from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., there will be a Unity and Community Group meeting held at the Carpenter Building, where community members meet to talk about things that are uncomfortable. She said the group meets every month and invited board members to come and hear what other citizens have to say.

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

- To add Item H under Consent Agenda, Firework Permit for April 26th and 27th at the Old Edwards Inn in Highlands, per Ms. Keezer
- To remove Item H under Old Business, Discussion regarding Panther Drive and Porter Street intersection redesign, per Mr. Cabe

REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS: None

OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) UPDATE ON HIGHLANDS SCHOOL PROJECT** - Caitlin Jones from Vannoy Construction reported the project is on schedule, footings are in, and steel is being erected on the addition, and renovations for the existing middle school have started as well. She said the project is tracking on budget or under budget and announced they would be having a BBQ lunch on May 23rd for board members to come and see the progress made. No action.
- (B) UPDATE ON MACON COUNTY RECREATION PARK PICKLEBALL COURTS AND APPROVAL OF BID PACKAGE FOR PHASE 1A OF THE RECREATION MASTER PLAN** - Kurtiss Durrant recapped that the last time they presented, they had a design that was shovel-ready, but they redesigned the concept based on feedback from the board. He presented and explained the new schematic design, and after some questions and discussion, Mr. Cabe indicated that if the design was approved tonight, there would be some additional design costs associated with this second design. He said that the proposal would need to be approved at the next meeting, and then the project could go out for bid. Commissioner Shearl said he did not feel that we were completely at fault for having to have a second design. Mr. Cabe said he and Attorney Ridenour can look at the contract and determine that. Commissioner Shearl said that the original design was not what we asked for, which is what led to the need for the second design. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to approve the design as presented. The vote was unanimous.
- (C) DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF BID PACKAGE FOR MACON COUNTY RECREATION PARK TENNIS COURTS** - Parks and Recreation Director Seth Adams thanked the board for making improvements to the park. He said that in pursuing the plan for the racquetball courts, the decision was made to keep the tennis courts where they are currently and make some improvements to them. Mr. Adams said that since the courts are used by Franklin High School, the timing of the refurbishment of the courts was important. He indicated that the project went out to bid, shared details of the project, and reported the results of the bids. Mr. Adams said he would like to start construction in May so it can be completed in time for the teams to start practice in August, since the refurbishment will involve the removal of the existing courts and the replacement of courts in the existing area from ground level up. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine to approve Signature Tennis Courts, Incorporated in the amount of

373,200 dollars with a ten percent contingency in the amount of 37,320 dollars at 10% for a total of 410,520 dollars and budget amendment from General Fund Contingency with Project Manager Jack Morgan and Planning Permitting and Development Director Joe Allen reviewing the permitting and serving as the general contractors. The vote was unanimous.

- (D) UPDATE ON MACON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY PROJECT** – Project Coordinator Joe Allen said the porte-cochere is eighty percent complete. He explained the details and completion timeline of the project. Mr. Allen said there are some additional costs that will be incurred due to unforeseen issues with the exterior wall of the library, including the replacement of the siding. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, for a change order in the amount of 43,610 dollars for Wind River Construction and 1,500 dollars for Looper Architecture, for a total of 45,110 dollars, as well as a budget amendment from general fund contingency for this project. The vote was unanimous.
- (E) DISCUSSION REGARDING MACON COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES SYSTEM SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS** - Mr. Cabe reviewed the three recommended options that were included in the report that was presented at the March 11, 2025, meeting. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, for Mr. Cabe to pursue option three, which was to advertise and see if an outside agency could manage the shelter as part of the upcoming budget process. The vote was unanimous.
- (F) UPDATE ON COWEE SCHOOL** – Mr. Cabe stated that the current lease expires on April 19th, and we need to sign a new one-year lease and explained the terms of the lease. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to approve the lease as presented for one year. The vote was unanimous.
- (G) UPDATE AND DISCUSSION REGARDING UPSET BID PROCESS FOR OFFER TO PURCHASE SURPLUS PROPERTY LOCATED AT 651 EAST MAIN STREET** – Attorney Ridenour reported that no bids were received during the upset bid period and that the board would need to either accept or decline the bid that has been made in the amount of 175,000 dollars. Following a brief discussion, Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to accept the offer. The vote was unanimous.
- (H) Discussion Regarding Panther Drive and Porter Street Intersection Redesign** – Removed.

NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) APPROVAL OF PROCLAMATION DECLARING APRIL 2025 AS NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH** – Mr. Cabe read the proclamation into the record, a copy of which can be obtained in the office of the Clerk to the Board. Commissioner Antoine made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields, to approve the proclamation as requested. The vote was unanimous.
- (B) DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF PART F GRANT APPLICATION** - Mr. Adams explained the plans approved by the Recreation Commission to include a walking bridge to connect the parking lot to the new pickleball facility, a new amphitheater, a covered multi-court, and a bathroom facility totaling 1.4 million dollars. He said the grant will require a one-to-one match up to 500,000 dollars and the county would cover the remaining cost of 400,000 dollars for a total county contribution of 900,000, and requested approval to move forward with submission of the grant application. Mr. Adams said Southwestern Commission is assisting with writing the grant and the grant is

due May 1st with the award at the end of August. Commissioner Antoine made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, to approve the application with the match as requested. The vote was unanimous.

(C)DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMUNITY FUNDING POOL – Mr. Cabe reviewed the funding allocation of 75,000 dollars that is in the budget, the committee review and recommendation process, and the distribution of funds. He said the committee members have a three-year term and all of the terms have currently ended. Mr. Cabe requested approval to advertise vacancies and follow the regular process for appointing members. He shared the designated committee member requirements as stated in previous minutes and resolutions and said some of the agency no longer exist and it is unclear how the board is to proceed. Mr. Cabe said if the board was to reestablish this committee he requests the applicants declare what organization they represent on the application form and then the board make a decision of who they want to appoint. He said the board does not have to have this committee to distribute these funds and could decide not to distribute the funds, or could decide to distribute the funds as individual organizations come before the board with their request. After some discussion, Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to reestablish the committee under Mr. Cabe's guidance. The vote was 4-1 with Commissioner Shields, Commissioner Antoine, Commissioner Young, and Commissioner Breeden voting in favor of the motion, and Commissioner Shearl opposed.

(D)DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF REAPPOINTMENT OF COUNTY

ATTORNEY ERIC RIDENOUR – Mr. Cabe stated that Attorney Ridenour was originally appointed in 2021 for a 4-year term and the contract was amended some time ago, but Attorney Ridenour felt that since it has been four years since the board had an opportunity to review or amend the contract and since the board had recently conduct his evaluation, that a renewal was warranted. Mr. Cabe said the terms of contract are the same as the previous contract. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields, to approve the contract and reappoint Attorney Eric Ridenour for a 4-year term. The vote was unanimous.

(E)CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION EXEMPTING ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES FOR THE SOLID WASTE RECOVERY BUILDING FROM THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 3D OF CHAPTER 143 OF THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL STATUTES - Mr. Cabe reminded the board that there was a fire a couple of years ago that impacted the recovery building and that Macon County had received an insurance settlement on the building, and those funds are budgeted. He said architectural services are needed to determine how to approach the repair or rebuild of the facility and recommended Looper Architectural Services who is currently working on other projects for us. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to approve the resolution as requested. The vote was unanimous.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented which includes: (A) Minutes of the March 11, 2025 regular meeting, (B) Budget Amendments #235-241, (C) FY 2024-2025 Distribution Request – Public School Building Capital Fund – North Carolina Education Lottery, (D) Capital Project Ordinance Amendment – Airport State Grant (E) Capital Project Ordinance – Airport Infrastructure Grants, (F) Tax releases for the month of March 2025 in the amount of \$1,190.09, (G) Monthly ad valorem tax collection report for which no action is necessary.

APPOINTMENTS:

(A) Board of Health (1 seat) – Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Young, to approve the appointment of Courtney Patrick as requested. The vote was unanimous.

CLOSED SESSION: At 7:36 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session as allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney about possible legal action. At 8:13 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session and return to open session.

ADJOURN: With no other business, at 8:14 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.



Warren Cabe
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board



Josh Young
Board Chair