

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
March 16, 2020 - 7:00 PM
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice Womack Building Columbus, NC
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Yoder, Vice-Chairman Melton, Commissioner Beiler, Commissioner Gasperson, and Commissioner Moore. Also in attendance were County Manager Pittman, Attorney Berg, Clerk to the Board High, and citizens.

1. Public Hearing

A. Call to Order the Public Hearing - Chairman Yoder. The purpose of the public hearing was to take public comment on amendments to the Polk County Wireless Telecommunication Ordinance. The public hearing was properly advertised in the Tryon Daily Bulletin. Hannah Lynch, Planning Administrator, was available for questions.

B. Citizen Comments.

There were none.

C. Commissioner Comments.

Commissioner Moore asked Mrs. Lynch if she had any concerns, and she replied no.

D. Vice-Chairman Melton moved to adjourn the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Call to Order the Regular Meeting - Chairman Yoder.

3. Invocation - Commissioner Moore.

4. Pledge of Allegiance - Chairman Yoder.

5. Approval of Agenda

A. Chairman Yoder read suggested changes to the agenda. Commissioner Moore moved to approve the agenda with the following changes as read by the Chairman: Remove items 9 - Proclamation Declaring April 2020 Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month, 11 - Farmer's Market Vendors Fees, 13 - Kudzu Information, and 16 - Closed Session, and move item 12 to the consent agenda changing the date of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan Survey work session to April 20th, and add to the consent agenda Scheduling a Public Hearing to discuss applying for a PARTF grant on Monday April 20, 2020 at 7:00pm, seconded by Vice-Chairman Melton and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Consent Agenda

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

- A. March 2, 2020 regular meeting minutes.
- B. Tax refund requests through March 10, 2020 in the amount of \$300.22.
- C. Budget Amendment to appropriate \$60,000 from general fund balance to Contracted Services for the Broadband Engineering Study and Design Report.
- D. Budget Amendment to transfer funds from Contracted Services 911 Fund to Capital 911 fund in the amount of \$49,630.00.
- E. Budget Amendment to appropriate \$30,172 from the general fund to 911 Communications for salaries.
- F. Schedule Work Session for the NCDOT Comprehensive Transportation Plan Survey Monday, April 20, 2020 at 6:00pm in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) first floor Womack Building.
- G. Schedule a Public Hearing to discuss applying for a PARTF grant on Monday, April 20, 2020 at 7:00 pm.
- H. Secondary Road Right of Way Agreement - increasing the right of way on Wolverine Trail to 60 feet from the current 50 feet.

7. Citizen Comment(s)

There were no citizen comments.

8. Coronavirus/COVID 19 Update.

A. Public Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) - Joshua Kennedy, HHSA Director, gave a presentation, a copy of which is hereby incorporated by reference into these minutes. He briefed the Board on the Global, State and Local impacts, gave a history of the coronavirus with statistics, and discussed response plans and public prevention.

The Commissioners discussed the impact this could have on the community, and Manager Pittman said the County's relationship with St. Luke's Hospital and the Polk County School System is vital since all parties have a significant stake in everything going on in the county. Attorney Berg spoke on the legal ramifications if someone refused to follow the guidelines to self isolate or quarantine. She said it is a criminal offense to not abide by the advice of the Health Director.

B. Emergency Management (EM) Department - Bobby Arledge, EM Director said Polk County declared a State of Emergency for the Coronavirus on Monday, March 16, 2020 beginning at 8:00 am. He said the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) would be open from March 17, 2020, Monday through Friday during regular working hours until the pandemic is over. He said there are some new guidelines for 911 calls regarding potential COVID-19 patients, nursing homes and assisted living. Mr. Arledge said first responders from fire departments will not be going on calls with potential COVID-19 patients. He told the Board about the community message system called Nixle where citizens may sign up to receive text messages and updates about COVID-19. He encouraged everyone to only listen to credible sources, and not to spread misinformation.

Chairman Yoder confirmed that an ambulance will still be sent to potential COVID-19 patients, just not first responders. Commissioner Gasperson asked if the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) workers have enough Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Michael Crater, EMS Director said they do at this time. He also said to prevent a hole in patient care, extra paramedics will be working to fill the void of first responders.

C. County Administration - Marche Pittman, County Manager said this situation is very fluid, and everyday the County is being faced with something new. He said he is requesting \$25,000 to fund a temporary Community Paramedic to be dispatched to potential COVID-19 patients to conduct initial consultations. He said this will help to avoid potential contamination to ambulances and other personnel. He also requested \$50,000 be put into Manager's Discretion to be used as a special COVID-19 fund for whatever unexpected things come up as a result of this pandemic. He said he would notify the Board when the money is spent.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve the Budget Amendment - \$25,000 for temporary additional EMS staffing, and \$50,000 to Manager's Discretion for Coronavirus Pandemic, seconded by Commissioner Beiler.

Commissioner Gasperson asked how long they planned to use the temporary EMS staffing, and if they had a vehicle for them to drive. Manager Pittman said the \$25,000 will cover a twelve hour shift everyday until the end of June, and they do already have a vehicle for them to use. With a motion and a second on the floor, the motion carried unanimously.

Manager Pittman presented the following resolution for the Board's consideration.

Covid19 Virus ~ Emergency Response Authority

WHEREAS, the Polk County Board of Commissioners desires to protect the health, well-being, comfort and working environment of its employees and the general public; and

WHEREAS, in order to comply with and follow recommendations of federal, state and local authorities and experts in responding to the Covid19 crisis, the Board of Commissioners recognizes the critical need for the County's ability to be agile in its response; and

WHEREAS, the consensus of the Board of Commissioners is to authorize

Polk County Manager to make necessary determinations regarding emergency action planning, county operations, staff support, resource allocation, and the ongoing monitoring of recommendations made by state and local officials in order to act accordingly; and

WHEREAS, the Polk County Manager will, with his leadership team, receive the full support of the Polk County Board of Commissioners in assisting and supporting the County and community members while dealing with this public health crisis.

NOW THEREFORE, the Board of Commissioners hereby amends the policy language in the "Policy Disclaimer" section of the policies to read, "...the County Manager shall have the authority in situations involving federal, state or local emergency, health crisis, or other urgent situations which could potentially affect the health and wellbeing of employees and citizens of Polk County, to change, revoke, interpret or add to any of these policies at any time at his/her sole discretion without prior notice."

He said the personnel policy doesn't address every situation, and this resolution will give the Manager authority to make necessary decisions to help protect the citizens and staff during emergency situations. Commissioner Gasperson asked if Attorney Berg approved the resolution. She said she had reviewed and edited the resolution to her satisfaction.

commissioner Beiler moved to approve the resolution, seconded by Vice-Chairman Melton and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Gasperson asked for a daily update on COVID-19. Emergency Management Director Arledge said he will be sending a daily situation update to the County Manager each day. Manager Pittman said he will forward that information and any other information he has to the Board each day.

D. County Government - Chairman Yoder said in response to the crisis, he asked Attorney Berg to present a Remote Participation Policy. Attorney Berg said the Commissioners may participate remotely with a quorum being physically present. This policy will allow the Commissioners to continue conducting the County's business during a declared state of emergency. She read the policy, and said she would contact the State Legislature to see if the quorum requirement could be adjusted. Attorney Berg said in light of technological advantages, there should be a way to allow everyone, including the public, to participate remotely. She said she could draft a resolution to request allowing remote meetings during a declared state of emergency. Manager Pittman said he had spoken with the Governor's office, and asked for remote meetings to be included in the next executive order.

Commissioner Gasperson moved to approve the remote participation policy, and asked Attorney Berg to draft a resolution for a permanent fix for remote meetings and send to all jurisdictions, seconded by Commissioner Beiler, and the motion carried unanimously.

A revised meeting schedule was presented, canceling the regular meetings for April 6th, May 4th, and June 1st due to the pandemic. A special meeting was added for Monday, May 4th at 9:00 am for the presentation of the balanced budget.

Commissioner Gasperson said he wants to get back to two meetings a month after this is all over, and Vice-Chairman Melton said the calendar can be flexible and re-adjusted if needed.

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the revised regular meeting schedule, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

Manager Pittman explained the changes to the regular meeting schedule affect the budget calendar. He presented a revised budget calendar changing the presentation of the balance budget to the Special Meeting at 9:00 am on May 4th. Commissioner Gasperson stated the Board is mandated by the State to only have one meeting a month, with public comments. He said in fact, many jurisdiction always have only one meeting a month.

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the revised budget calendar, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

E. Board of Education - Aaron Greene, Superintendent said the school systems approach is prioritizing the student and staff well being, supporting the community, and keeping open communication. He said he will participate in the EOC, and for at least the next two weeks the schools will be closed, and they will be following the directives of the Governor. He said starting next week they will begin distributing meals to ensure all students are being fed, and teachers will be calling students making sure they are being cared for, and have whatever they might need during this time. He said they will also be opening an emergency daycare for children ages 3 - 12 for nurses, doctors, and emergency personnel who may need child care. Mr. Greene said the next directive would be to continue education remotely, providing instruction. He said this is extremely difficult with an estimated 60% of the students not having internet access, but they will be creative, and will work with the parents and students.

9. Polk County Wireless Telecommunication Ordinance.

Hannah Lynch, Planning Administrator presented the changes to the Wireless Telecommunication Ordinance. Attorney Berg said she had added a few modifications that were not substantial, and therefore it did not need to go back to the Planning Board.

Commissioner Gasperson said he is looking forward to the increase in height and collocation on towers to improve cell service throughout the County. He said he is striving for fiber to every residence, but is pleased with the tower changes.

Commissioner Gasperson moved that the written recommendation of the Planning Board regarding Plan Consistency be made a part of the record of this proceeding, enacting all recommended changes to the Polk County Wireless Telecommunication Ordinance from the Planning Board, and Attorney Berg. The Board of Commissioners further finds that the Wireless Telecommunication Ordinance is consistent with the 20/20 Vision Comprehensive Plan, adopted March 15, 2010, amended September 18, 2017, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Volunteer Board Application(s)

Commissioner Gasperson suggested suspending the rule of reviewing volunteer board applications at one meeting, then appointing them at the next meeting.

Commissioner Gasperson moved to suspend the review meeting for volunteer board applications through June 2020, seconded by Commissioner Beiler, and the motion carried unanimously.

A. Commissioner Gasperson moved to approve the Volunteer Board Applications for Ted Owens, Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC); Carolyn Baughman, Marci Cannon, Richard Miller, and Elna Owens, Library Board of Trustees, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Commissioner Gasperson moved to waive the review period, and approve these Volunteer Board Applications for Marshall Lipscomb, Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee (FRAC); Laura Lynch, Recreation Advisory Board, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

11. Commissioner Comment(s)

The Commissioners thanked everyone who attended the meeting, or watched it remotely, and agreed Polk County is the best place to live and together we will get through this.

Commissioner Beiler showed a picture of three citizens picking up trash along Highway 14 on Saturday morning. He said people like this is what makes this the best community.

12. Adjournment

Attest:

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS

Ange High
Clerk to the Board

Myron Yoder
Chairman