

POLK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING
April 18, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice
Womack Building
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Gage, Vice-Chair Holbert, Commissioner Bradley, Commissioner Gasperson and Commissioner Owens. Also in attendance were County Manager Pittman, County Attorney Berg, Clerk to the Board Fehrmann, media and citizens.

1. Call to Order – Chair Gage called the meeting to order
2. Invocation – Pastor Thomas Olson, Trinity Lutheran Church, gave the invocation.
3. Pledge of Allegiance – Vice-Chair Holbert led the pledge.
4. Approval of Agenda – Vice-Chair Holbert moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Owens and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Consent Agenda
 - A) Approval of the April 4, 2016, regular meeting minutes.
 - B) Approval of the March 2016 Tax Department Refund Request - \$3,190.28.
 - C) Approval of Polk County Board of Education expenditures for a technology project (Chromebooks purchase, \$83,020.60), and a capital improvement project (Saluda Elementary & Tryon Elementary roof repair, \$150,000.00).

Vice-Chair Holbert moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Owens and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Citizen Comments – Pat Salomon said the proposed jail/sheriff's department facility needs to be comprised of 74 jail cells as recommended by Moseley Architects, not 100 jail cells, expressed concern that neither the facility's location nor its method of financing has been determined, and asked that the issue be decided by referendum.
7. Proclamation in Honor of Frank Smith – Commissioner Owens moved to adopt a proclamation designating April 28, 2016, as Frank Smith Appreciation Day in Polk County, seconded by Commissioner Bradley. Mr. Garland Goodwin read a tribute to Mr. Smith, a copy of which is hereby incorporated by reference into these minutes. With a motion and a second on the floor, the motion carried unanimously.
8. Property Revaluation Update – Wampler Eanes Appraisal Group (WEAG) representative Robert Haskins said four WEAG representatives have completed 52% of the field reviews/listings, and he hopes to conclude this phase of the revaluation by the end of September 2016. Mr. Haskins said 10% of the data gathered to date has been entered into the tax system, and reported general pricing reviews have been conducted on 15-20% of the properties.

Mr. Haskins said Polk County's 2009 revaluation came at the end of a housing bubble, which is a time that causes a run-up in housing prices fueled by demand, speculation, and the belief that recent history is an infallible forecast of the future. Given the timing, the 2009 revaluation resulted in the assignment of property values skewed to the high end. Mr. Haskins said the current revaluation will likely result in a decrease in property values.

Regarding a small community located in Pea Ridge near the Tryon International Equestrian Center, Mr. Haskins said property in well defined, close knit neighborhoods can be valued differently than the surrounding property.

9. Proposed Replacement of the Historic Courthouse Retaining Wall – Dave Odom of Odom Engineering said the scope of the project includes replacing all of the retaining walls around the entire courthouse grounds, and recommended the walls be made of concrete with a rough finish. Three bids for the project were submitted: 1) AA Pavers - \$65,716. 2) Carolina Hardscape - \$113,100. 3) Jay's Lawn Service - \$94,160. It was the majority consensus of the Board to reconsider this initiative at the May 2, 2016, regular BOC meeting, and to instruct County Manager Pittman to discuss the project with the Columbus Town Manager in order to get feedback and support. Commissioner Gasperson said the retaining walls need to be repaired but the need is not imminent, and recommended the project be well planned and budgeted for in the next one to three years.
10. Resolution Adopting the Official Polk County Flag – Commissioner Owens, who placed this item on the agenda, noted the recommended flag includes the county's 1855 founding date. A color photograph of the flag will be kept on file in the original agenda packet. Commissioner Owens moved to adopt the recommended official Polk County Flag, seconded by Vice-Chair Holbert and the motion carried unanimously.
11. Proposed New Jail/Sheriff's Department Facility – County Manager Pittman gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding options for the financing, funding, and location of the proposed facility, a copy of which is hereby incorporated by reference into these minutes. Financing options for the facility include a USDA loan, consumer lending, limited obligation bonds, and general obligation bonds. Commissioner Gasperson said since the taxpayers will be paying for the proposed new jail/sheriff's department facility, the issue should be decided by bond referendum. County Attorney Berg confirmed the Polk County is not statutorily required to house inmates within the county.

Sheriff Donald Hill said the jail was in deplorable condition six years ago when he first approached the BOC about building a new jail facility, and it has continued to deteriorate in the ensuing years. He said the jail is a disgrace to the employees and the county at large, and a new jail/sheriff's department facility must be built sooner rather than later. Sheriff Hill said he does not believe the proposed 100 cell jail facility is oversized for the county.

Commissioner Gasperson said the required six month time limit to close on a consumer loan would mean fast-tracking the proposed new jail/sheriff's department

facility project, which is imprudent and inadvisable. Commissioner Gasperson said he is not opposed to a new detention center, but would like the issue to be decided by bond referendum and, if approved by the voters, to take time to plan and budget for the project. Chair Gage said for the safety of the community he wants the facility under contract before he leaves office in December 2016. Vice-Chair Holbert said the need for a new jail/sheriff's department facility has reached crisis level due to lack of planning.

County Manager Pittman said the annual debt service on a 15-year loan for the proposed facility will be approximately \$1 million. The new facility will require nine new employees, which translates to an additional annual cost to the county of approximately \$500,000. As the tax base stands currently, an increase of 1¢ equals approximately \$277,522; this number will change if the tax base changes as a result of the revaluation.

County Manager Pittman said Town of Columbus zoning regulations require locating the jail/sheriff's department facility in a Public Service zoning district. Areas currently zoned as Public Service are Stearns, St. Luke's Hospital, and various parcels around Locust Street. County Manager Pittman recommended the county purchase enough property to provide for a new courthouse to be built in close proximity to the jail/sheriff's department facility in the future. The courthouse must be located in the county seat, so the jail/sheriff's department facility needs to be located in Columbus as well.

The Polk County 4-H Club owns a 6.5 acre parcel on Locust St., and the parcel is zoned Public Service. County Manager Pittman has been in discussions with the 4-H Board regarding the possibility of trading the county's former adult day care facility on Carmel Lane (next to The Meeting Place) for the 4-H property on Locust St. The appraised value of the 4-H Center is \$365,000, and the appraised value of the county's Carmel Lane property is \$290,000 (\$75,000 difference). As part of the trade, the 4-H Board has requested the Carmel Lane property be improved with the addition of a \$97,000 shell building, a \$23,000 BBQ pit, and \$10,000 in parking area improvements. The 4-H Board has also requested the Cooperative Extension Office be relocated to the Carmel Lane building along with the 4-H Club. Commissioner Gasperson said the county needs to take its time and look at other sites for the new jail/sheriff's department facility, even it means seeking property outside the municipal limits of the Town of Columbus which could be annexed into the town. Commissioner Gasperson said opting for a larger parcel for the new jail/sheriff's department facility would allow for a new courthouse to be built on the site in the future. County Manager Pittman said in order to secure financing for the project the county must first acquire property for the project.

It was the majority consensus of the Board for County Manager Pittman to pursue having the new jail/sheriff's department facility under contract by November 2016 (Gasperson opposed). It was the majority consensus of the Board for County Manager Pittman to pursue consumer lending for the new jail/sheriff's department facility (Gasperson opposed). It was the majority consensus of the Board to build a tax increase into the 2016/17 budget to fund the facility (Gasperson opposed). It was the majority consensus of the Board to instruct County Manager Pittman to

pursue negotiations with the 4-H Board regarding the proposed property trade between the county's Carmel Lane property and the 4-H Club property on Locust Street (Gasperson opposed).

12. Manager's Report – County Manager Pittman reported that Cleveland, not Rutherford, County Government employs a grant writer, and they are currently in the process of reevaluating the position.
13. Volunteer Board for Vote – Rickie McFalls and Ronnie Smith were appointed to the Columbus Fire District Tax Commission by unanimous vote. Barie Baker and Laura Smith were appointed to the Library Board of Trustees. Mark Oxtoby, Anthony Hamilton and Gerald Pruitt were appointed to the Saluda Fire District Tax Commission by unanimous vote.
14. Volunteer Boards for Review – Applications for the following boards were reviewed: Economic & Tourism Development Commission – 1 health care/medical/social services provider application, 1 health care/medical/social services provider vacancy; Mill Spring Fire District Tax Commission - 3 applications, 3 vacancies.
15. Commissioner Comments – The Commissioners thanked everyone for coming out. Sgt. Ronnie Smith reaffirmed Sheriff Hill's concerns regarding the current condition of the jail.

Prior to the Board going into closed session, Commissioner Gasperson asked to be excused from the meeting in order to prepare for his scheduled surgery the next day.

16. Closed Session – Commissioner Owens moved to go into closed session for the purpose of attorney-client privilege, G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3), and acquisition of property, G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5), seconded by Vice-Chair Holbert and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Owens moved to approve a settlement offer made by Dr. Edward Lily for his property located at 565 Chestertown Rd. in the Bright's Creek Subdivision to adjust the value of his parcel from \$1,349,846 to \$1,016,300, seconded by Vice-Chair Holbert and the motion carried unanimously.
17. Return to Open Session – Commissioner Owens moved to return to open session, seconded by Vice-Chair Holbert and the motion carried unanimously.
18. Adjournment – Commissioner Owens moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Chair Gage and the motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

POLK COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS

Beth Fehrmann
Clerk to the Board

Michael V. Gage
Chair