

POLK COUNTY  
Monday, October 4, 2010, 7:00 PM  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING  
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice, Womack Building  
Columbus, N.C.

PRESENT: Chairperson Walker, Vice-Chairperson Gasperson, Commissioners McDermott, Melton and Watson. The others in attendance were County Manager Whitson, Interim County Attorney Egan and Clerk to the Board Britton, staff, media and citizens.

1. Call to Order/Welcome – Chairperson Walker called the meeting to order.
2. Invocation – Vice - Chairperson Gasperson delivered the invocation.
3. Pledge of Allegiance – Ambrose Mills, Chairperson, Economic Development Commission, introduced Allen Bowen, President of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, who led the Pledge.
4. Approval of Minutes – Approval of September 20, 2010, Regular Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes. Commissioner McDermott made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Gasperson and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Approval of Agenda – Chairperson Walker added 5 (a) Recognition of Employee Service Resolution, and Commissioner Gasperson added 6 (a) Extension of the Main Trunk Waterline North on Highway 9. Commissioner McDermott made the motion to approve the amended agenda with the two additions, seconded by Commissioner Melton and the motion carried unanimously.  
  
5 (a) Resolution of Recognition of Employee Service – Chairperson Walker recognized Jewell Carswell for her 30 years of service to the Polk County Transportation Authority and the citizens of Polk County. Chairperson Walker read the resolution and presented her with the framed resolution from the Board of Commissioners.
6. Polk County Transportation Authority - Approval of two policies: the PCTA Charter Policy and the Title VI Plan. Jewel Carswell, Director, and Cody Frost (Senior Class Project representative) were present to answer questions. Commissioner McDermott made a motion to adopt the Charter Policy, seconded by Commissioner Watson and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Watson made a motion to adopt the Title VI Plan as amended, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.  
  
6 (a) Main Trunk Waterline Extension - An extension which consists of three-tenths of a mile to the proposed restaurant at the Sandy Plains crossroads. Vice-

Chairperson Gasperson requested this item be added to the agenda for review and hopefully for approval at the October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. He announced that a new restaurant is coming to this area. Vice-Chairperson Gasperson introduced Jason Schlabach, who will be building the restaurant. In order to begin this project, the Board needs to address the water situation. He explained that the land has been purchased on the east side of Highway 9. He is proposing a 120 seat minimum restaurant with seating on the left side for about 100 people, and on the right side a café with coffee, a bakery and a separate meeting room. He asked that the County extend the waterline down Highway 9 three tenths of a mile. Mr. Whitson had talked with Dave Odom, County Engineer. Mr. Whitson discussed inquiring about a grant for the waterline. Teresa Spires from Isothermal Planning and Development Commission reported there is a grant from the NC Rural Center that the County can apply for to fund the waterline. That deadline is November 5th and the project will be awarded mid-December. It is a 50% match grant and the rough estimate for the waterline is \$40 - \$50,000. The grant is based on job creation and Mr. Odom feels the restaurant would create a sufficient number of jobs for the funding that is requested for the project. The current year County waterline extension budget has about \$21,000 left. Ambrose Mills, Chairman of the EDC Advisory Board expressed an interest in this project and agreed that the EDC Board would contribute \$1,000 out of their budget. Vice-Chairperson Gasperson made a motion to move forward with the grant application with Isothermal Planning & Development Commission and, if the grant is approved, the County will find the means to fund the 50% match, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Melton would like to see the waterline go all the way to Peniel Road and Highway 9 because that is going to be something we have to face eventually. That would mean another quarter of a mile and just take the 12" line on up to Peniel. Chairperson Walker said we would have to get pricing on that as well. Mr. Whitson will look at the cost estimates first before deciding where the money will come from. Commissioner Watson mentioned the \$700,000 excess revenues over expenditures and the Fund Balance. Commissioner McDermott asked Mr. Slayboch if the developers would be able to contribute funds to the project. He agreed to take this up with the developer.

7. A Model Code of Ethics for North Carolina Local Elected Officials – Chairperson Walker requested this item be placed on the agenda. Continued discussion over a Polk County policy. The consensus of the Board was: a) the tone of the policy would be hybrid (molding aspirational and prohibitive together), which is the most practical to apply and adhere to; b) censure would be part of the document, and; c) to accept the preamble. Chairperson Walker and Commissioner McDermott agreed to make the revisions. Any changes or revisions will be underlined for all the Board to review. Decisions on the document will continue for the next two board meetings with adoption on November 15, 2010.

8. County Manager's Report - a) Update on Human Services Facility site. 5" of rain brought everything to a halt last week and Mr. Whitson thinks we will have a pressure test Friday or Monday. ADW is reviewing the qualifications and the contracts of the 2 lowest bids.
  - b) Tribute to North Carolina Veterans, President of NCACC has sent a letter. A Wall of Oath will be created in the NC Veterans Park in Fayetteville and promoters of the project have asked for a bronze cast of a Polk County veteran's hand which will symbolize taking the Oath. Mr. Whitson recommended Darrel Moore, Veterans Service Officer, be the contact person and also let him choose the veteran.
  - c) Western Highlands, LME, Medicaid waiver update. In March, by a vote of 9-4, Western Highlands, LME, voted to send a letter of support requesting that the Western Highlands, LME, be awarded a waiver on Medicaid. There are some good points and some bad points to this waiver. All the Boards of County Commissioners have to vote in support of the waiver as well. This does take some funding away from hospitals, especially Mission, Pardee and Carolina Healthcare. You will be hearing more about it in months to come. Mr. Whitson has also requested that more forums be held in Polk County and to do so before the Board of Commissioners have to vote on it.
9. Board Vacancies (Review) - The applications are in the packet for the Transportation Authority, Economic Development Commission, and Planning Board. These applications will be voted on October 18<sup>th</sup>.
10. Financial Report – Sandra Hughes, Finance Director, gave the August Financial Report. This report is on file in the Clerk's office.
11. Citizen Comments on Non- Agenda Items
  - 1) Ernie Smith – Questioned if the Thermal Belt Building was a good fit and location for Family Preservation. What is the asking price of the building? Is this money being spent wisely? He also questioned applause at the meetings.
  - 2) Betsy Freeman – Thanked Commissioner Watson and all the Board of Commissioners and County Manager for their work on the Don and Betsy Freeman Adult Day Health Care Center. She announced the grand opening is October 17<sup>th</sup> and invited everyone to come.
  - 3) Rickie McFalls – Discussed his concerns about the taxes on his property. He questioned why the taxes on his own real property went up. If prices all across the nation are down, why is land in the Peniel Community higher? Commissioner McDermott explained that the prior Board of Commissioners approved the Schedule of Values that was used by the Assessor to assess all

properties and that is the method by which all property values were set in the recent revaluation.

- 4) Tom Pack – Stated that the following numbers came directly from the Finance Office. The budget year that just ended in June of this year, combining both property and vehicle taxes, totaled \$13,687,830.32, which were record revenues for Polk County.
  - 5) Debbie Arceneaux – Brought pocket-size books of The Constitution of the United States for the Board members and the Chairman. Ms. Arceneaux discussed the public's right to speak during citizen comments.
  - 6) Betty Garniss – Spoke emotionally about the Revolutionary War, and “the shot heard around the world.” She emphasized throughout her comments that we all should come together.
12. Commissioner Comments – Vice-Chairperson Gasperson commented on the tax issue. He stated that every comment he makes he does not make without confirmation from the County Manager's office and the Finance Office. In 2009, the NCACC reported that Polk County had the greatest tax decrease of all 100 counties. He also seeks information from the NC School of Government. He said he is very careful about statements he makes, especially when it comes to taxes. In the last 2 years, when citizens asked him questions about their property tax issues, he advised them to check with the Tax Assessor's office first, and if there is still an issue, request a hearing with the E&R Board. Through the last revaluation of the County, there were about 17,000 parcels that were reassessed. The Schedule of Values, which they were operating with, was approved by the prior Board, not this Board. If you have an issue that was the last Board that approved that. Finally, Commissioner Gasperson pointed out that he is looking forward rather than looking over his shoulder about these issues. His focus is to keep the tax rate as low as possible.

Chairperson Walker, Commissioners Melton, Watson and McDermott thanked the crowd for coming to the meeting and participating in the meeting with their comments.

13. Adjourn – Commissioner Melton made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Anne Britton  
Clerk to the Board

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Cindy Walker  
Chairperson