

POLK COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, June 20, 2011, 3:00pm  
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice, Womack Building  
Columbus, NC  
MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Gasperson, Vice-Chair McDermott, Commissioner Owens, Commissioner Pack and Commissioner Walker. Also in attendance were County Manager Whitson, County Attorney Egan, Clerk to the Board Fehrmann, staff, media and citizens.

1. Call to Order – Chair Gasperson called the meeting to order.
2. Invocation – Chair Gasperson gave the invocation.
3. Pledge of Allegiance – Vice-Chair McDermott led the pledge.
4. Approval of Minutes – Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to approve the June 6, 2011, budget work session and regular BOC meeting minutes, and the June 13, 2011, budget public hearing minutes, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Approval of Agenda – County Manager Whitson added Agenda Item 14.c – Surplus 2002 Mercury Mountaineer, and Agenda Item 14.d – Minor Amendment to the Mental Health Building Lease. Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
6. FY 2011/12 Polk County Annual Budget – Budget work sessions were held on May 9<sup>th</sup> and June 6<sup>th</sup>. The budget public hearing was advertised in the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* on June 1<sup>st</sup> and June 6<sup>th</sup>, and was held on June 13, 2011. The Budget Ordinance is on file with these minutes. Chair Gasperson made a motion to approve the County Manager's proposed budget, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott. Commissioner Owens made a motion to amend Chair Gasperson's motion to accept the changes to the budget as proposed by Commissioner Pack, seconded by Commissioner Pack.

Commissioner Owens read a statement in support of Commissioner Pack's proposed budget, and the statement is on file with these minutes. Vice-Chair McDermott read a statement in support of the County Manager's proposed budget, and the statement is on file with these minutes.

Commissioner Pack spoke in favor of his proposed budget. He said he deals in facts, and the budget he proposed is very sustainable. His budget cuts County

spending, cuts taxes, and takes care of some of the injustices in employees' salaries. He said that even with the tax cut, the County will still have between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in excess going into the fund balance, thereby increasing it. According to Commissioner Pack, it is time to give money which has been saved by paying off debt service back to the taxpayers. Regarding the Lake Adger dam, he wondered why, if the dam is in seriously bad condition, the County paid off a \$1.9 million dollar school loan instead of setting the money aside for future dam repair. He concluded by saying that, although more cuts could have been made in this Phase I of his overall budget plan, he will propose them in Phase II of his budget next year.

Commissioner Walker said that, while she would like to see a tax cut, she does not believe now is the time, given the current uncertain economic condition. Rather, now is the time to do our best to maintain essential programs, such as the Polk County pre-school program More-at-Four. She recommended adoption of the County Manager's proposed budget, staying the course, and moving toward the point where a tax cut might become more feasible.

Chair Gasperson said the County does not know what further cuts may be coming from the State, and the County growth rate is flat, if not declining slightly. A tax cut might have been more appropriate during prior times of strong growth in the County. The primary role of a Commissioner should be one of not only dealing with the current fiscal and other decision making needs of the County but, even more importantly, having the vision to look forward 2-5 plus years. With this in mind, he recommended the County Manager's proposed budget.

Citizens comments: Debbie Arceneaux expressed concern for the County's debt problems, and urged the Commissioners to be fiscally conservative. Ricky McFalls asked if the County has enough money in the budget for the lawsuit which will result from the EEOC complaint. County Manager Whitson said the County has insurance with a \$5,000 deductible for lawsuits. Keith Holbert expressed concern that not enough open debate regarding the budget occurred between the Commissioners.

Commissioner Owens restated his motion to amend Chair Gasperson's motion to accept the changes to the budget as proposed by Commissioner Pack, seconded by Commissioner Pack and the motion failed 2-3 (Gasperson, McDermott and Walker opposed). Chair Gasperson made a motion to adopt the budget ordinance as presented, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott. Chair Gasperson read a statement in support of the County Manager's proposed budget, and a copy of the statement is on file with these minutes. Commissioner Pack said when he was first elected in 2004, the previous Board had increased debt by \$20 million and the new Board had to raise taxes to pay for that debt. He said the tax rate was subsequently set too high, and that is why he

recommended adjusting the tax rate in his proposed budget. With a motion and a second on the floor, the motion carried 3-2 (Owens and Pack opposed).

7. Tax Release Request – Melissa Bowlin, Tax Collector, presented the request for tax release for deceased persons. Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Commissioner Owens and the motion carried unanimously.
8. Relief of Interest Request – Melissa Bowlin and John Bridgers, Tax Assessor, presented Karon Edwards' request for relief of property tax interest due to a clerical error. Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Commissioner Pack and the motion carried unanimously.
9. Tax Collector's Office Software Conversion – Melissa Bowlin gave an overview of the conversion, which is to be completed by July 5, 2011.
10. BOC Meeting Schedule – Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the BOC regular meeting schedule for July through December 2011, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
11. Agenda Items Procedure – Commissioner Walker made a motion to amend the Agenda Items Procedure to reflect that any item placed on the agenda for open session must be accompanied by a description of the topic sufficient to put staff, Commissioners and the public on notice regarding what will be discussed; if that description is not provided, the item shall not be included in the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Owens. Commissioner Owens made a motion to amend Commissioner Walker's motion to include that agenda items which require a vote must have a motion and a second before being allowed on the floor for discussion, seconded by Commissioner Walker. Commissioner Pack cautioned against adding more rules when the ones already in place are not being adhered to. It was the consensus of the Commissioners to abide by the existing rules in the future. With Commissioner Owens' motion and Commissioner Walker's second on the floor, the motion carried unanimously.
12. Mill Spring Post Office Resolution – Vice-Chair McDermott read the resolution. The clerk was instructed to send a cover letter with the resolution to the County's representatives and the Postmaster General.

Citizen comments: Judy Arledge and Virginia Walker spoke in support of the Mill Spring post office and the resolution.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to pass the resolution, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

13. Sheriff's Department Employee Grade Changes – Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to adopt the policy that if Jail and Administrative Personnel complete their BLET training, and receive and maintain their certification, then they will be placed at Pay Grade 20, seconded by Commissioner Walker and discussion ensued. Sheriff's Officer Ronnie Smith said the hours required for BLET training would be difficult, if not impossible, for many of the employees to complete. His reasons included scheduling conflicts, potential reduction in work hours possibly resulting in decreased pay, and stress. It was the consensus of the Board to seek further information and table the issue until the July 11, 2011, regular BOC meeting.
14. Manager's Report – a) Alexander's Ford – The County recently closed on the 162 acre tract of land, and has approximately one year to make improvements on the property to satisfy PARTF grant requirements. b) Little Mountain Landfill – DENR has taken over this now defunct landfill and has reimbursed the County \$241,589.65 for most of the costs incurred in closing the landfill. The money will go into the solid waste enterprise fund. c) Commissioner Owens made a motion to surplus the 2002 Mercury Mountaineer, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously. d) Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to approve the minor amendment to the Mental Health Building Lease, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
15. Budget Amendments – Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to approve BA #9 to appropriate \$60,000 fund balance for a possible shortfall of revenue compared to expenditures; DSS fund balance is currently \$641,341 and is combined with the General Fund to report one General Fund Balance at year end, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried 3-2 (Owens and Pack opposed). Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve BA #93 to transfer \$54,000 excess budget from various Sheriff's Department line items to Capital Reserve for the future purchase of Sheriff patrol cars, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
16. Volunteer Boards for Vote – Norman Morgan was appointed to the Recreation Board Advisory Board by unanimous vote. Michael Axelrod and Betty Hill were appointed to regular positions on the Zoning Board of Adjustment by unanimous vote.
17. Volunteer Boards for Review – Applications for the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council and Western Carolina Community Action were reviewed.
18. Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items – Keith Holbert asked for and received confirmation that the Board would follow the procedure wherein an agenda item should not be added later than the deadline unless it is considered an emergency or time sensitive by the Chairman or the County Manager.

19. Commissioner Comments – Vice-Chair McDermott thanked everyone for coming out. Commissioner Pack said it appears that, with the passage of the budget, the citizens of Polk County have lost again. Commissioner Owens reiterated that he does not advocate borrowing money for small items, but urged caution when paying as you go. Commissioner Walker announced that the library has received a grant to replace all of the lab computers, add three additional stations, and convert at least three of the old computers into quick-check email stations. She also announced that a facilitator will work with the Recreation Department and Little League in August to help them work out their issues. Commissioner Gasperson encouraged those interested to read the minutes of previous County budget processes.
20. Adjournment – Commissioner Owens made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

POLK COUNTY BOARD  
OF COMMISSIONERS

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Beth Fehrmann  
Clerk to the Board

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Ray Gasperson  
Chair