

POLK COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, March 21, 2011, 3:00pm  
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice, Womack Building  
Columbus, NC  
MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Gasperson, Vice-Chair McDermott, Commissioner Owens, and Commissioner Walker. Commissioner Pack was not in attendance due to a family illness. 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 – Commissioner Walker gave the invocation.
3. Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Gasperson led the pledge.
4. Approval of Minutes – Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to approve the March 7, 2011, regular BOC meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Owens and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Approval of Agenda – Commissioner Owens asked that Agenda Item #15 be removed. Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
6. Tax Interest & Penalty Refund Request - John Bridgers, Tax Assessor, and Melissa Bowlin, Tax Collector, presented the refund request for Bruce Metcalf. Mr. Metcalf's brother, Johnny Metcalf, was present to answer questions on his behalf. Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the refund request. Discussion ensued, and Commissioners agreed the issue was somewhat confusing. Commissioner Owens subsequently withdrew his motion. The Board agreed to review the situation and make a decision at the April 4, 2011, BOC meeting. Vice-Chair McDermott reminded the Board that tax matters are quasi-judicial proceedings and should not be discussed outside of the hearing.
7. Tax Refund Request – Melissa Bowlin, Tax Collector, requested the February tax refund. Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the February tax refund request, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
8. House of Flags Update – Bob Lair, House of Flags Vice-Chair, said construction on the front lobby is about 60% complete. Volunteers have been generous with their

- time, and the three volunteer workdays held so far have saved the House of Flags hundreds of dollars. The Flag Institute of London is going to run a story on the House of Flags this month in its quarterly magazine *The Flagmaster*.
9. NC Tomorrow Initiative – Jim Edwards, Executive Director of Isothermal Planning & Development Commission (IPDC), gave a presentation on this potential Community Development Block Grant funded project that would create comprehensive economic development strategies in each of the seventeen State regions using a common template. The information is on file with these minutes. Commissioner Owens made a motion for Polk County to serve as the applicant, and for IPDC to act as the sub-grantee to carry out the work and manage the grant, and to schedule the first of two public hearings for April 4, 2011, at 7:00pm, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
  10. Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Proclamation – Lou Parton, Polk County DSS Program Manager, read the proclamation. Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the proclamation, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
  11. Community Child Protection Team Report – Lou Parton, Polk County DSS Program Manager, gave the report and the information is on file with these minutes. Commissioners expressed concern regarding the lack of coordination with the local district attorney and court system to effectively advocate for child victims, the lack of prosecution for perpetrators of crimes against children, and the lack of a full-time Polk County Juvenile Counselor. County Manager Whitson said that, as requested by the Chief Court Counselor three years ago, office space has been made available for a Juvenile Counselor, but a full-time counselor has not yet been provided. Regarding the prosecution of perpetrators, County Manager Whitson recommended that social workers take out misdemeanor charges against individuals for contributing to the abuse or neglect of a child. It was the consensus of the Board that a resolution be created to address these issues; the resolution will be considered at the April 4, 2011, meeting.
  12. Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) – Helen White, Polk County CFPT Coordinator, gave the report and the information is on file with these minutes.
  13. Education Lottery Application & School Budget Amendment #4 – Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the lottery application for FY 2011-2012, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve school budget amendment #4 for FY 2010-2011, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

14. Travel & Tourism Department – Representatives from the following entities presented options regarding the future of the Travel & Tourism Department. The information on each presentation is on file with these minutes.
- a) Accommodations Members of the Travel & Tourism Board – Peggy Turner
  - b) Chamber of Commerce – Andy Millard
  - c) EDC – Ambrose Mills
  - d) Carl Caudle – General input
  - e) Polk County Government Travel & Tourism - Melinda Young
  - f) Town of Tryon/Tryon Tourism Development Authority (TTDA) – County Manager Whitson read the letter submitted by the Mayor and the TTDA Chair.

Citizen comments: Bill Crowell and Andy Millard spoke in favor of the Chamber of Commerce taking over the Travel & Tourism Department. Catherine Ross, Marti Wells, Walter Hoover, Ellen Cantrell and Bimm Patel spoke in favor of the Travel & Tourism Department remaining as it is with Polk County Government. Peggy Turner and Dale Petruski spoke in favor of the Travel & Tourism Board taking over the Travel & Tourism Department. Carl Caudle, Lucy Roberts and Sarah Huff spoke in favor of website optimization. Frank Lilly and Bob Morgan spoke in favor of Economic Development Department taking over the Travel & Tourism Department.

Commissioner Walker mentioned that the County could stop collecting occupancy tax altogether. Commissioners agreed that travel and tourism is an important part of the Polk County economy and the Board has a tough decision to make.

15. Funding For Schools vs. Water Line Extension – This item was removed from the agenda.
16. County Manager's Report – a) Updated Road Abandonment Resolutions – Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the SR 1307 Blanton Road Abandonment resolution, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Owens asked that the length of road to be abandoned be added to the Martin Arledge Road Abandonment resolution. Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the SR 1141 Martin Arledge Road Abandonment as amended, seconded by Commissioner Owens and the motion carried unanimously. b) Position Reclassification Request – Sheriff Hill requested grade changes for nine detention center employees and one Sheriff's secretary. The Sheriff said the County needs to start compensating its Sheriff's Department employees better or they will seek employment elsewhere. He also said it is expensive to keep training new employees. Commissioner Owens said that, in fairness, all employees' salaries should be reviewed. He said Commissioners need to review the 2008 salary survey. Discussion ensued, and it was determined that the grade changes would be considered at budget time. Vice-Chair McDermott reminded Commissioners that classification changes require a separate Board vote. c) Position Reclassification Request – County Manager

- Whitson withdrew the request and asked that it be considered as part of the budget process.
17. Volunteer Boards for Vote – Brevard Henry was appointed as an Animal Cruelty Investigator by a 3-1 vote (Owens voted for Jessica Emery). Betty Fenner was appointed to the Council on Aging by unanimous vote. Kathleen McMillian was reappointed to the IPDC Executive Committee by unanimous vote.
  18. Volunteer Boards for Review – The following board applications were reviewed: Appearance Commission – 1 application, 1 vacancy; Council on Aging – 2 applications, 3 regular vacancies; Recreation Advisory Board - 5 applications, 2 vacancies; Recycling Advisory Board – 2 applications, 3 vacancies. The applications are in the packet.
  19. Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items – Ernie Kan asked the Board to contribute financially to the fireworks display for Columbus' Fabulous Fourth celebration. Mary Hardvall thanked the Commissioners for all their hard work.
  20. Commissioner Comments – Commissioners thanked everyone for coming.
  21. Adjournment – Commissioner Owens made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Walker 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