

POLK COUNTY
April 20, 2009
7:00 PM BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice
Womack Building
Columbus, N.C.

PRESENT: Chairperson Cindy Walker, Vice-Chairperson Warren Watson, Commissioners Ray Gasperson, Renee McDermott, Tommy Melton. Also in attendance was County Manager Ryan Whitson, County Attorney Tom Hix, and Clerk to the Board Anne Britton.

1. Call to Order – Chairperson Cindy Walker.
2. Invocation – Commissioner Gasperson delivered the Invocation.
3. Pledge of Allegiance – Commissioner McDermott.
4. Approval of Regular Board of Commissioner minutes for April 6, 2009. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Approval of Agenda – County Manager Whitson added to the agenda the following: Agenda Item #20 Litigation to the Closed Session, Agenda Item 5 (b) Schedule a Public Hearing for the Water Shortage Response Plan and Agenda Item 5 (c) to report good news. Commissioner McDermott made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.
- 5(a). The Public Hearing scheduled for tonight (Transportation Authority - stimulus money for a Van) had to be re-scheduled for May 4, 2009. This allows more time to receive information from the state and advertise the hearing.

Commissioner Melton made a motion to re-schedule the hearing for May 4, 2009 at 7:00; seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

- 5(b). Schedule a (2nd) Public Hearing for May 4, 2009 following the Transportation Public Hearing for the Water Shortage Response Plan. Commissioner McDermott made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gasperson and the motion carried unanimously.
- 5(c). Good News – County Manger Whitson announced that Sandra Hughes had received a letter from Standard & Poors who announced they have changed Polk County’s rating from an “A” to an “A+” for *Polk County, North Carolina, General Obligation Refunding Bonds*.
- 6. St. Luke’s Hospital – Susan McHugh, Chairman of the St. Luke’s Hospital Board of Trustees, introduced the Board of Trustees. She thanked the Board, Commissioner Melton for his work on the St. Luke’s Board, County Manager Ryan Whitson for his expertise with mental health, and the employees and volunteers of the Hospital. She then introduced John E. Young, Vice-President for the Western Division, Carolina Medical Center who presented a PowerPoint of future needs for the hospital and a time line of completion (Phase I) by September, 2009. The cost of Phase I was \$338,000. Woody Woodham, former Chairman of the Board, also followed up with some comments. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is on file in the Clerk’s Office.

The following citizens spoke in support of St. Luke’s Hospital regarding: need for improvements to the facility, the importance of the hospital to the community, the importance of bringing in new technology, the importance and excellence of the Orthopedic Department and Surgeon, the need for growth, and the convenience of the location.

1.) Keith Collins, 2.) Geoff Tennant, 3.) Bill Miller, 4.) Jim Gross, 5.) Dr. Jim Holleman, 6.) Dr. Brian Rosenberg, 7.) Lillie Brown, 8.) Kaye Steele, 9.) W. M. Steele, 10.) H. S. Ezzard, 11.) Norm Powers, 12.) Sam White, 13.) Sandra Page, 14.) Ralph Kuether, 15.) Jim Strausbaugh, and 16.) Andy Haynes.

Commissioner Melton thanked the Board of Commissioners for listening to the fine presentation and thanked all the citizens who spoke on behalf of the hospital.

Commissioner Melton made a motion that this board grant the \$285,000 from the sale of James Tool to St. Luke’s Hospital for improvements to the physical building that is owned by the county in order to facilitate and improve the healthcare of the citizens of Polk County and to strengthen one of the largest employers in Polk County.

Further discussion – Commissioner Gasperson stated that he would like to wait and not vote tonight. This is a lot of new information and a compelling argument we have heard, and it may very well be the right place to put the money right now, but I would like to at least wait until the next meeting.

Commissioner McDermott agreed with Commissioner Gasperson. She reported that a couple of years ago the Board of Commissioners adopted a set of incentive policy guidelines for economic development funds, and I believe by adopting those guidelines; we are bound to follow those in awarding economic development funds. There are principles that are on the website of the Economic Development Commission that need to be followed and spoken to in helping us to determine whether it is appropriate to grant those economic development funds. I am a great supporter of St. Luke's and have spent time there as an inpatient – 11 days in the Intensive Care Unit two years ago – and I have great love and support for that hospital. My husband and I contribute each year. But I don't think we should make an exception for one applicant for these economic development funds, to say that they aren't required to go through the response to the questions that are brought up by these incentive policy guidelines, because each participant will expect the same thing from the County Commissioners. I think we owe the citizens and the tax payers and St. Luke's Hospital, too, the duty of abiding by these and administering them fairly and equally to all those who might come and ask for assistance.

Commissioner Watson stated he was also a supporter of St. Luke's Hospital and is aware of their needs. He went on to say this community has to address these needs, and this board needs to be a part of that. I think it would be inappropriate tonight to vote to spend these funds for economic development. However, I think we are going to have to look long and hard at the plan the hospital has put together and how we might partner with the Hospital Board to make these plans come to fruition. That is what this board's mission should be with regard to a community hospital - to keep it here and help it grow and help partner financially with them, as possible. Tonight, I would suggest we table this particular motion and study it first.

Commissioner Melton reminded the Board that the County owns the building that St. Luke's Hospital is located in, and the County gave the hospital a lease through 2028. I think with the response you heard tonight, and the need of maintaining quality healthcare and the situation, this really is an emergency situation. I appreciate that you want to wait and study it, but all the Board members are acutely aware that this has been discussed and has been on the table for some time. When the management contract was signed with Maps, it became apparent, at that time with Carolina Healthcare, that we would want to come to this board and establish a dialogue that will allow us to partner with St. Luke's Hospital to maintain the quality healthcare that we need for the

citizens of Polk County. As one man stated, it is us, the leaders, of this community that is responsible for doing that. And that is what I am trying to do. I don't have a problem waiting; I don't have a problem having a Public Hearing but let's not table it so that it goes away because it is not going away. It has to be put in the front and it is something this Board of Commissioners' needs to address, and I recommend that we put it on the agenda for May 4th to discuss and let's vote on it. Let's move forward and be progressive and not wait until the hospital does close.

Chairperson Walker responded that she, too, would like to study this further. This is the first time I have seen this packet and these facts, and I need to digest this. I think as a Board, one of the things we have been doing this year as a new Board, is to thoroughly look at all parts of an issue and try to make the best decisions as quickly as possible, but also with thorough investigation I support the Hospital, I thank you all for your hard work as volunteers and Employees and Doctors, Nurses and all the people that are here tonight that works so hard. We, too, want to do a good job at what we are doing, and so I agree that we need more time. I have questions and I need to digest this. Give us a chance to get our questions together that we may have and perhaps we can get our questions to Commissioner Melton, as our contact, and then put on the May 4th agenda.

Commissioner Melton asked again about having a Public Hearing on May 4th. Commissioner McDermott felt it was like a Public Hearing tonight and we do know how the citizens feel about it. She did not feel that was the part we were not clear on. She felt the incentive guidelines need to be followed and read some of them. She does not feel they should be hurried or brushed off. These guidelines are still on Polk County's website under the Economic Development Commission and should be answered by St. Luke's Hospital. Commissioner McDermott agreed to hand the questions over to the hospital.

Chairperson Walker instructed the Clerk to put this on the May 4th agenda, and called for a short recess.

7. Polk County Comprehensive Plan – Dale Holland presented the monthly status report which is filed in the Planning Department. Mr. Holland reported they are on schedule with the Plan.
8. Administrative Funding for Food & Nutrition Services – a request by the County Manager and the DSS Director to transfer a position from Community Development to DSS. County Manager Whitson recommended a lateral transfer from the Grade 16 position in the Planning Department to the Department of Social Services' Maintenance Income Department at a savings of \$33,255 to the county. Commissioner Watson wanted more information on the possible ramifications of this transfer, and how it would impact the

Planning Department. It was the consensus of the Board to table any action until the May 4, 2009 meeting.

9. Community Child Protection Team Annual Report – DSS Director, Sue Rhodes, made her annual report and thanked the Board for their continued support and focus on children and mental health.

Child Fatality Prevention Team Annual Report – Health Department, Helen White, was unable to be present. You have her written report.

10. Human Services Facility – Cecil Cannon, Architect, had distributed in the board packets the Architect/Engineer Selection Process for this facility and also a proposed draft of all space descriptions and design guidelines. (Under blue cover).

Commissioner Gasperson stated that he is not comfortable with the Park Street site because of the size and would like to consider the property where the Carolina Classical is located. He knows there are zoning issues that will have to be dealt with. Commissioner Watson also likes this property but feels this decision needs to be made soon. He does not want it to end up on the back burner. Commissioner Melton supports the facility at the Carolina Classical. Planner Cathy Ruth said in order to change the permitted table from RE-1; it would have to go to the Planning Board for review, schedule and hold a public hearing, and notify all property owners. DOT and flood area issues have to be dealt with also. Chairperson Walker recommended that all Board of Commissioner members tour the area again; and a decision on the property will be made at the May 4, 2009 meeting.

11. Board of Commissioner Schedule Changes – Budget Calendar 2009/10 budget work session has been consolidated into one meeting on May 11th starting at 5:00 pm.

Board of Commissioner Regular Meeting Change – Chairperson Cindy Walker requested the June meetings be changed to the 2nd and 4th weeks. The meeting dates will be June 8th and 22nd.

Commissioner Gasperson made a motion to approve the schedule changes, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

12. 2009 Audit Contract Proposal – Sandra Hughes, Finance Officer, made her recommendation to award the 2009 audit contract to Gould Killian Group for \$55,000. Vice-Chairperson Watson made a motion to approve the recommendation, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

13. Financial Update – Sandra Hughes, Finance Officer, reported her March update. These updates are on file in the Clerk’s office.
14. County Manager’s Report – Mr. Whitson recommended purchasing the
(1) Toyota Fork Lift for the Transfer Station for \$39,879.40 and declare surplus the 78 Model; Vice-Chairperson Watson made a motion to purchase the Fork Lift, seconded by Commissioner Gasperson and the motion carried unanimously.

(2) Two 2009 Ford Explorers for Sheriff’s Department; Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve the two Ford Explorers @\$21,100 from Ken Wilson Ford and surplus the three cars, seconded by Commissioner Gasperson and the motion carried unanimously.

(3) One 2009 Ford Focus for Transportation Authority; Commissioner McDermott made a motion to purchase the Ford Focus at \$11,490 from Ken Wilson Ford, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

(4) Swimming Pool repairs. Vice-Chairperson Watson made a motion to bring the pool repairs into compliance (Virginia Graeme Baker Act) for \$15,200 from the fuel contingency fund, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

(5) All Employee Meeting – County Manager Whitson requested approval to close Polk County offices one hour early April 30 @4:00 for the annual all employee meeting. Commissioner McDermott made a motion to approve the employee meeting, seconded by Vice-Chairperson McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
15. Budget Amendments – BA# 84 Sheriff, \$43,478 to transfer available funds from salaries to capital for the purchase of 2 Ford Explorers. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

BA# 85 EMS, \$20,000 to transfer available funds from salaries to capital for purchase of 2 capnography machines, 3 drug refrigerators and 3 locking systems to place on the ambulances. Vice-Chairperson Watson made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

BA# 9, Transportation, \$11,841 the request from fuel contingency is to purchase a Ford Focus, if approved, the balance of fuel contingency will be \$24,645. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

BA# 17 Social Services, \$3,377 to increase revenue and expenditures for State funding – 100%. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

BA# 10 Gibson Park, \$15,200 from fuel contingency to replace the drains in the main and kiddy pool, if approved the balance in fuel contingency will be \$9,445. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

16. Planning Board Review – Commissioner McDermott made a motion to request the Planning Board review the Flood Plain area below Lake Adger Dam and report back to the Board of Commissioners, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

17. Board Vacancies: (Vote) Juvenile Crime and Prevention Commission, 2 applications, 2 vacancies - Gerald Siddons and William (Blake) Arledge. Vice-Chairperson Watson made a motion to approve the two applicants, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

Board Vacancies: (Review) Recreation Department, 5 applications, 4 vacancies; Home and Community Care Block Grant, 5 reappointments, 5 vacancies. These applications were reviewed.

18. Citizens Comments on Non-Agenda items – Lisa Krolak, David Maxwell and David Weiss, all from Columbus, spoke of their opposition to the proposed ETJ area in Columbus.
19. Commissioner Comments – The Commissioners thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and appreciated the well done presentation from St. Luke's Hospital.
20. Closed Session – Attorney Client Privilege (G.S. 143-318.11). (1) Woodland Mills. (2) Possible Litigation. Commissioner Gasperson made a motion to go into Closed Session, seconded by Commissioner Melton and the motion carried unanimously.
21. Return To Open Session. There was no action taken.
22. Adjourn.

