

POLK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING
Monday, July 11, 2011, 7:00pm
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 – Commissioner Pack led the pledge.
4. Approval of Minutes – Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion to approve the June 20, 2011, regular BOC meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Approval of Agenda – Commissioner Pack made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Owens, and the motion carried unanimously.
6. Economic & Tourism Development Commission Ordinance – Ambrose Mills, EDC Chair, presented the ordinance. Commissioner Owens made a motion to schedule the ordinance public hearing for August 1, 2011, at 6:30pm, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
7. Economic & Tourism Development Commission Policies & Procedures – Ambrose Mills presented the policies and procedures for review.
8. Polk County Recreation Master Plan Efforts – Jim Patterson, Chair of the Recreation Advisory Board, gave a presentation on current efforts to update the County's master plan. The Board is planning five public input meetings as well as a citizen survey in order to tailor the plan to the wants and needs of the citizens.
9. North Carolina Community College System Resolution – Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the North Carolina Community College System Resolution, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
10. Sheriff's Department Employee Grade Changes – Vice-Chair McDermott made a motion that upon completion of BLET, and receipt and maintenance of certification, the Jail or other Sheriff's Department personnel be moved to Pay Grade 20, and the detention sergeants be moved to Pay Grade 21, seconded by Commissioner

Walker, thereby opening the floor to discussion. The County will allow those interested in pursuing BLET to take the requisite time off without pay, if needed, and will cover their work schedules as necessary. Commissioner Walker and Vice-Chair McDermott emphasized that BLET would not only be of benefit financially, but physically and mentally as well for the individuals, and it would make those officers more flexible in their work for the Sheriff's Department and Polk County.

Commissioner Owens said he could not vote for the motion, and presented three PowerPoint slides with his reasons. The slides are on file with these minutes. Vice-Chair McDermott stated that certain assumptions on Commissioner Owens' slides were erroneous and clarified that Sheriff's Department employees do not need BLET training in order to get a raise; if other County employees are given raises, then Sheriff's Department employees will also receive raises. Those who have completed BLET will simply be moved to a higher pay grade. Commissioners Owens and Pack asserted that it will take three years for Sheriff's Department employees to recover lost pay during the eight months required for BLET. Those statements were refuted by Commissioner Walker.

Commissioner Pack asked the County Manager how he could justify having detention officers with two levels of training being paid the same amount as patrol deputies with one level of training. County Manager Whitson said a patrol deputy has a much more difficult job because a patrol deputy goes into other people's controlled environments, and detention officers are in the Sheriff's controlled environment. Commissioner Pack said it makes no sense to him, as a manager himself, to require detention officers - who already have detention officer training - to complete BLET, since detention and patrol are two different fields.

Commissioner Pack made a motion to amend the previous motion to include increasing detention officers to Grade 18 and detention sergeants to Grade 20, with no additional training, seconded by Commissioner Owens, thereby opening the floor to discussion.

Sheriff Donald Hill emphasized that he never meant for this to become a political issue. He said all he did was include a salary increase in his FY 2011/2012 budget for his jailers and his secretary, employees who were passed over for an increase in the past. Commissioner Owens said he could understand the BLET requirement for detention officers if patrol deputies were also required to have detention officer training, which would result in employees being cross-trained. Commissioner Pack said he believes the detention officers are underpaid, and he apologized to those upset with his salary comparison to the maintenance person who cleans the Womack Building. He said he does not think the maintenance person makes too much, but rather the detention officers are not paid enough given that their job is much more dangerous and demanding. Commissioner Pack said County employees' salaries which are determined to be substandard need to be increased in phases.

Vice-Chair McDermott agreed that the Sheriff's Department and other County employees are underpaid, but no one wants to increase taxes or take the money out of fund balance to remedy that. Both Vice-Chair McDermott and Commissioner Walker suggested that the Sheriff's Department be given its own budget to handle as the Sheriff sees fit. Chair Gasperson spoke in favor of BLET, and encouraged those eligible to pursue it.

With Commissioner Pack's amended motion and a second on the floor, the motion failed 2-3 (Gasperson, McDermott & Walker opposed). County Manager Whitson restated Vice-Chair McDermott's original motion that upon completion and certification from BLET, current detention officers will go from a Grade 16 to a Grade 20, current detention sergeants from a Grade 18 to a Grade 21, and the current Sheriff's secretary from a Grade 16 to a Grade 20; it is the Sheriff's option to hire someone who is not certified as a Grade 16 or a Grade 18, or to hire someone who is certified as a Grade 20 or Grade 21, seconded by Commissioner Walker, and the motion carried 3-2 (Owens and Pack opposed).

11. Manager's Report – a) Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club contract modification, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously. b) Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the advertisement for RFPs for mental health MOE funds, seconded by Commissioner Walker and the motion carried unanimously.
12. Volunteer Boards for Vote – The following individuals were appointed by unanimous vote: Carl Caudle, Economic Development Commission; Angela Garner, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council; Barbara Batchelor-Graham, Western Carolina Community Action.
13. Volunteer Boards for Review – The following applications were reviewed: Animal Cruelty Investigators – 3 applications, 4 vacancies; Economic Development Commission – 2 applications, 2 vacancies; Juvenile Crime Prevention Council - 2 applications, 2 vacancies; Tryon Fire District Tax Commission – 3 applications, 3 vacancies.
14. Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items – Keith Holbert asked if the Transfer Station was losing money, and was informed by County Manager Whitson that it is about breaking even. Rickie McFalls thanked the Board for contributing to the 4th of July fireworks and making the celebration special.
15. Commissioner Comments – Commissioner Owens assured people that the Sheriff's Department issue was not political. Commissioner Walker thanked Ernie Kan and members of the Foothills Grace Church for making the 4th of July celebration special. Commissioner Pack thanked everyone for coming out. Vice-Chair McDermott encouraged those who served in the armed forces to look into V.A. benefits available to themselves and their families. Chair Gasperson thanked everyone for coming out, and said he was pleased with the 4th of July celebration.

16. Adjournment – Commissioner Walker made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice-Chair McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

POLK COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS

Beth Fehrmann
Clerk to the Board

Ray Gasperson
Chair