



MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
January 10, 2023
MINUTES

Chairman Higdon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All Board Members, County Manager Derek Roland, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, County Attorney Eric Ridenour, Deputy Clerk Mike Decker and members of the news media were present, as were a number of county employees and citizens.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- (A) Mr. Roland informed the board that a North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) caucus meeting for District 17 will be held on Friday, January 13, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom. He requested board members let him know if they wanted to attend.

- (B) Mr. Roland asked board members to consider beginning the budget work sessions on February 9, 2023 at 1:00 p.m., which would mean the board would need to recess this meeting until February 9, 2023.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Higdon requested all in attendance rise and a moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Commissioner Higdon, the pledge to the flag was recited.

PUBLIC HEARING(S): None

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: **Bob Cook** spoke about fentanyl and synthetic opioid use stating that he believed education, aggressive enforcement and rehabilitation was needed to reduce the use in Macon County. He suggested that a rehabilitation facility for men and women of Macon County be built in

the county, using the opioid settlement funds. Mr. Cook also suggested that the old hospital could be utilized for a rehab facility. **Julie Henning** asked that everyone join together and support building a new Franklin High School and spend no more energy finding ways not to build it. **Howard Farley** spoke about the operations of government. **Mary Ann Ingram** congratulated the new and re-elected board members. She addressed some comments about the Franklin High School project made during the joint meeting with the board of education. She stated that a new high school is an emergency and suggested board members keep looking at ways to build a new high school until a solution is found.

ADDITIONS, ADJUSTMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the agenda, as adjusted, as follows:

- To add Item 11C, Discussion about parks under New Business, per Mr. Antoine
- To adjust Item 10B, Consideration of contract for Highlands Middle School renovations under Old Business, to include the budget amendment that has been distributed, per Ms. Carpenter.

Update of NC Dept. of Commerce county tier designations – Economic Development Director Tommy Jenkins, provided an update on the latest tier designations for counties from the North Carolina Department of Commerce. He shared that Macon County has been designated as a Tier 2 county for 2023, with Tier 1 being the most distressed counties and Tier 3 being the least distressed counties. Mr. Jenkins explained that the rankings are scored from 1 to 100, with 1 being the most distressed and 100 being the least distressed. He pointed out that the overall score for Macon County was 79, one position away from Tier 3 (20 least distressed counties), and also provided a handout of the 2023 North Carolina Development Tier Designations memo which explains the designation process [Attachment 1].

Update on 2023 Property Reappraisal – Tax Administrator Abby Braswell presented a PowerPoint presentation updating the board on the status and timeline for the 2023 reappraisal process [Attachment 2]. She stated the estimated taxable value is \$12,600,000,000 as determined by the mass appraisal, however, sales, exemptions, exclusions, deferments, and appeals are all going to affect that reappraisal total. Ms. Braswell indicated that the reappraisal notices will be distributed in February 2023, informal reviews will be held from February to April 2023, dates for the Board of Equalization and Review hearings will be set in March, and hearings will be held in April 2023.

OLD BUSINESS:

Commission liaison appointments – Chairman Higdon presented his proposed liaison appointments to the board and Mr. Roland read them aloud. Upon a motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the appointments as presented.

Consideration of contract for Highlands Middle School renovations – Mr. Roland presented a proposed contract with LS3P for the board's consideration, and stated the board of education has made this project their second priority following the Franklin High School project. He indicated the project had been approved by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) with an estimated cost of \$634,000 with the funding coming from the North Carolina Repair and Renovation Fund. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, to approve the contract and budget amendment in the amount of \$63,430 as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Discussion of Request for Proposals (RFP) for broadband services in the Nantahala Community – Mr. Roland and Jeff Lee of Little T Broadband Services discussed the distribution of a RFP for Fiber Optic Deployment and Network Operator in the Nantahala Township. Mr. Lee stated the RFP would be made available to all qualified providers and reminded the board that \$400,000 of county funding had been included as an incentive to finding a provider in that area. He indicated that once the project is complete, the Nantahala Library and Community Center, Nantahala Volunteer Fire Department, Macon County Emergency Services, and the recreation center will be connected to fiber internet. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Young, to approve distribution of the RFP as presented subject to legal and financial approve. The vote was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF) – Mr. Roland and Mrs. Carpenter briefed board members and provided background information on the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund. Mrs. Carpenter indicated that Macon County is eligible to receive two payments of \$459,842.41 each, for a total of \$919,684.82. She said these funds will go into the general fund for budget purposes to be used for anything except lobbying. Commissioner Young made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields, to apply for the funding. The vote was unanimous.

Discussion of recreation park fee schedule – Chairman Higdon asked Parks and Recreation Director, Seth Adams to explain the fee schedule associated with the county’s recreation parks. Mr. Adams provided a handout and stated that the fee schedule was approved by the board on February 12, 2019 and has not been updated. He shared that a comparison of surrounding counties and the Town of Highlands was completed before finalizing the fee structure. After discussion regarding fees for shows and weekend events, Commissioner Shields made a motion to keep the fees as they are, then withdrew the motion. No action was taken.

Park issue – Commissioner Antoine followed up on a concern mentioned at a previous meeting during public comment and in an email he received about local playgrounds not being handicapped accessible. He recommended partnering with the Town of Franklin to make a larger park that can be used by both handicapped and non-handicapped individuals. Commissioner Antoine requested Mr. Roland schedule a meeting with the Town of Franklin to discuss the possibilities.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Young, the board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented which includes: (A) Minutes of the December 13, 2022 special meeting (joint meeting with Macon County Board of Education), (B) Budget Amendments #118-122, (C) Tax releases for the month of December in the amount of \$6,740.67, and (D) Monthly ad valorem tax collection report for which no action is necessary.

APPOINTMENTS: None

CLOSED SESSION: At 8:04 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session as allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) in order to preserve the attorney client privilege and NCGS 143-381.11(a)(5) to establish, or to instruct the public body’s staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; or (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract. At 8:16 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session and return to open session. Mr. Roland shared that a bid in the amount of \$5,000 was submitted by Anakista Properties for Lot 307 in the

Wildflower development. Commissioner Young made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shearl to accept the bid subject to the upset bid process and enter into a contract.

RECESS: With no other business, at 8:20 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Young, the board voted unanimously to recess until February 9, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. for a budget work session.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Paul Higdon
Board Chair