

**GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 21, 2016**

The Gates County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session at 7:00 p.m. Monday, November 21, 2016 in the Gates County Courthouse, 202 Court Street, Gatesville. Commissioners Hofler, Owens, Jordan, Felton and Freeman were present. Also present was County Manager, Natalie Rountree.

Commissioner Felton led in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Hofler called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes are approved during the first meeting of the month.

**Approval of Agenda**

Chair Hofler stated under New Business a date to meet with the Board of Education needs to be added.

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to accept the agenda as adjusted. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

**Delegations:**

Earl Rountree, Sunbury, addressed the Board with concerns about the middle school. He told a short story about farmer's maintaining equipment and related it to building maintenance at the school. Maintenance of equipment and buildings is important and Mr. Rountree asked why school maintenance has lacked and how have buildings been allowed to get in poor condition. He feels there is a lack of trust between the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners. Trust must be built if the school situation is going to be settled. There are people in the school system promoting how terrible the school is and making people in the county believe the school is not safe for their children and we cannot have this happening. We need to fix what needs to be fixed and a plan needs to be in place for the next joint meeting. These joint meetings never really accomplish anything. Each Board needs to have a plan and a goal to achieve in the meeting. The County owns the buildings and it should be up to the County to maintain the buildings, the Board needs to spend money and know exactly where it is going for problems to be resolved. Money is power, the Board of Commissioners is the only one with the power to tax the citizens and determine where the money goes. Mr. Rountree is shocked that the Gates County Index ran an editorial from the Superintendent on the front page. The Superintendent stated in the article that six million dollars must be returned from a grant.

Chuck Brothers, Drum Hill Road, stated after going to meetings, talking to citizens and to the editor of the newspaper he has determined the other side of the issue has not been broadcast. Mr. Brothers and four other individuals sponsored the vote no to the bond referendum campaign because they have never known of anything that couldn't be fixed. Mr. Brothers toured Central Middle School and feels the maintenance issues can be fixed and if continuous maintenance was being conducted the school should not be in the shape it is in. Mr. Brothers shared an article where Portsmouth got a 6.1 million dollar bond to renovate schools. It falls back on the Board of Commissioners to fix the schools and information should come from the County Finance Officer. There is money that can be received to fix schools.

Marsha Parker, Sunbury, feels the Board of Commissioners cannot act without the backing of the people. There should be more people attending the meetings. When we had a hurricane and people sat around looking for their free water instead of helping. You can't blame everything on the Commissioners when the citizens are not supporting and backing the Board. This meeting should be filled with people looking for solutions. Ms. Parker feels Gates County could really be something good if the people supported and helped the Board to find solutions.

**Old Business**

Chair Hofler stated Joe Felton made a presentation at the last meeting about House Bill 770 and has asked the Board for support. Commissioner Felton stated he supports the issues that have been brought up by Mr. Felton because the bill is watering down the enforcement of building codes. Commissioner Freeman also supports Mr. Felton's concerns with House Bill 770.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to write a letter in support of repealing Bill 770. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion;

Commissioner Jordan feels the Board doesn't know what prudent information was considered when creating Bill 770 and would like the letter to recognize the information presented by Mr. Felton and ask the State to reconsider the bill and do what is best for the citizens.

Commissioner Owens asked if a copy of the letter should be sent to anyone other than legislators. Mrs. Rountree stated a letter can be sent to others showing concern but it is ultimately the legislators who make the decision.

Commissioner Felton modified his motion to write a letter that expresses concern and acknowledges the issues addressed in Mr. Felton's letter. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed.

#### **Administrative Reports**

Administrative reports are given at the first meeting of the month.

#### **Public Hearing**

None

#### **New Business**

Chair Hofler, stated an interim finance officer appointment is being requested to cover the transition time between Ms. Pittman and the hiring of a new Finance Officer.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to appoint Natalie Rountree as Interim Finance Officer to be effective December 9, 2016. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed.

Commissioner Jordan stated he hopes we are not overloading the county manager by having her conduct her duties, be an acting planner and now adding financial responsibilities. Unfortunately we are not in a position to act differently but the Board needs to be aware that all of the additional responsibilities will dramatically increase the workload.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to approve the Resolution to Support the Upgrading of US Highway 17 in Northeast NC to Interstate Standards (Appendix 1). Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed.

Mrs. Rountree presented the Personnel Board Recommendation to reclassify the facilities technician position.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the Personnel Board recommendation to reclassify the facilities technician position to a grade 12 step 1 to be effective January 1, 2017. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed.

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to appoint John Taylor Kittrell and Daniel Bright to the Sunbury Firefighter Relief Fund Board, Webster Harrell and Colin Ryan to the Gatesville Firefighter Relief Fund Board, Ronald Taylor and Al Hobbs to the Hobbsville Firefighter Relief Fund Board, Maryland Harrell and Ronnie Parker to the Gates Firefighter Relief Fund Board and Billy Felton and T.C. Vaughan to the Eure Firefighter Relief Fund Board. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed.

Sandy Pittman, Finance Director, presented information on the special separation allowance for the retirement of Ed Webb. The county really does not have a choice in paying the separation but the Board needs to be aware of the information and approve it

for formality purposes. There will be an amendment at the December meeting to reallocate funds to cover the separation payment.

The Board unanimously approved the authorization of the special separation allowance for Ed Webb.

Mrs. Rountree stated the December Board meeting will be on December 5<sup>th</sup> due to the general statute requirement to hold the meeting the first Monday in December and will likely be held at the Cooperative Extension Building or the EIC Building due to court being scheduled.

The Board decided to ask the Board of Education to meet on either December 1<sup>st</sup>, December 7<sup>th</sup> or December 8<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 p.m. or later.

Earl Rountree, Sunbury, the supreme court has a mandatory retirement age of 65 and we lose a lot of good judges because of this. There is not a mandatory retirement for school teachers and we have some teachers teaching well beyond their years. Mr. Rountree will call each of the Board members and ask their opinion on the situation before he goes to Raleigh with the issue.

Marsha Parker asked where the money for the firefighter relief fund board comes from. Mrs. Pittman stated there is no county money allocated the money comes from the Office of the State Fire Marshall.

#### **Commissioner Comments**

Chair Hofler stated this week is Thanksgiving and we have many blessings to be thankful for. We recently saw some of the good in the county when the community came together to resolve issues during the hurricane. We are thankful that we live in a nation where we all have the right to vote and hope elected leaders will do the best they can for the nation, the state, and the county. We hope everyone has a blessed thanksgiving. Chair Hofler announced two churches in the county celebrating 150 years.

Commissioner Owens thanked everyone for being present and participating. Comments from the podium were documented and notes were taken. The Board appreciates when folks come to the podium with research. Commissioner Owens wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Jordan thanked everyone for attending and providing input at the meeting and thanked those that provide input outside of meetings. Citizens need to be aware of the business and decisions of the County. Happy Thanksgiving to everyone and please be mindful of the weather change in temperatures.

Commissioner Felton thanked everyone for attending and participating. Commissioner Felton thanked Sheriff Hathaway for his attendance at the meeting and to Mr. Rountree and Mr. Brothers for their research. Commissioner Felton thanked Mrs. Pittman for her service to the county and wished her the best.

Commissioner Freeman thanked citizens for attending and recognized the audience is full of residents from Gates. Citizen participation is important and appreciated and the Board enjoys hearing from those that do not approach the podium outside of meetings. Happy Thanksgiving and God Bless to everyone.

#### **Closed Session**

Commissioner Owens made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 a (3) Legal and (6) Personnel. Commissioner Jordan seconded; motion passed.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to come out of closed session. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Owens made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Linda Hofler  
Linda Hofler, Chairman

Melissa Lawrence  
Melissa C. Lawrence, Clerk

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