

**GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
- JULY 20, 2015**

The Gates County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session at 7:00 p.m. Monday, July 20, 2015 in the Main Court Room, 202 Court Street, Gatesville. Commissioners Hofler, Owens, Jordan, Felton and Freeman were present. Also present was County Manager, Natalie Rountree.

Commissioner Freeman led in prayer and the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Hofler called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes are approved during the first meeting of the month.

**Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Hofler stated the agenda needs to be adjusted move new business item Personnel Board Recommendations to the last item under old business.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

**Delegations – Announced**

None

**Delegations – Unannounced**

Helen Eure, Cooperative Extension Director, introduced herself to the Board as the new County Extension Director. Board members welcomed Mrs. Eure.

**Administrative Reports**

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

**Public Hearings**

Commissioner Felton made a motion to enter into public hearing on the After Hours Fee Amendment to the Fees and Fines Ordinance. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

There were no public comments.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to exit the public hearing on the After Hours Fee Amendment to the Fees and Fines Ordinance. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hofler stated inspections completed after 5pm, on weekends and on holidays will have a \$100 an hour charge. Inspections conducted due to emergencies caused by Mother Nature will not be charged.

Commissioner Felton would like to make sure the after-hours inspection is requested by the contractor or owner.

Ms. Rountree stated when the fee is put into the ordinance there will be a one sentence explanation of the fee given.

Commissioner Jordan agreed with Commissioner Felton that the inspection needs to be requested by the contractor after the Inspections Office has made every effort to conduct the inspection during the work day.

Commissioner Owens stated he submitted an email with suggested wording and typically a contractor that would request something of this nature is requesting it because it would benefit their project. There needs to be a separate application for an after-hours inspection

to make sure the contractor is specifically requesting an inspection after working hours and is in agreement with the fee.

Commissioner Jordan reiterated we have to work to protect the small projects as well as the big projects and need to have something in place to make sure the Inspections Office isn't putting the inspection off to where the owner or contractor feels they must request an after-hours inspection. Commissioner Hofler stated she believes our office works as efficiently as possible to ensure that inspections are conducted in timely manner.

Commissioner Jordan said if current staff cannot support the inspections that are requested during working hours the county may need to cover the costs of after-hours inspections or hire additional staff.

Edgar Mitchell, Building Inspector, explained the situations where a contractor would request the service is typically because it is for a business and they do not want to interrupt business hours. Solar farm construction often run 24 hours shifts so they can speed up their schedule and they request inspections that are convenient to them. The fee is not intended to handle backlog. If an emergency occurs and a citizen needs an inspection that is out of their control they will not be charged.

Commissioner Jordan said it needs to be noted that a fee will be charged an inspection is requested to benefit the owner/contractor.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to approve the amendment to the Fees & Fines Ordinance for an Inspections Afterhours Fee at \$100 per hour when requested by the permit holder and notified by the office of an additional fee. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

### **Old Business**

Chair Hofler stated there have been three applications received from citizens for the CAMA Land Use Plan Steering Committee.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to appoint Ashton Todd Lewis to the CAMA Land Use Plan Steering Committee. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to appoint Earl Rountree to the CAMA Land Use Plan Steering Committee. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to appoint Tom Morgan to the CAMA Land Use Plan Steering Committee. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Jennifer Baptiste, Planning Director, asked the Board to go ahead and appoint the remaining committee members. Chair Hofler stated we need the other members to complete a committee application.

Commissioner Owens asked the Board their thoughts on letting the County Manager select the remaining members from the previous presented list once the applications are submitted in order to speed up the process.

The Board reviewed the 6 previously recommended committee members.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to set the CAMA Land Use Plan Steering Committee Board to 9 members. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Felton said he doesn't have an issue with the individuals on the list but feels the Board needs to stick with protocol and have an application submitted before an appointment is given.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to table the remaining 6 appointments to the CAMA Land Use Steering Committee until applications can be obtained and additional

advertisements are run. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Natalie Rountree, County Manager, informed the Board they have a letter before them regarding the rescue squad applying to the NCACC Medicaid Reimbursement Program. EMS submitted an application and we have received notification that the application was denied. Edgecombe County allows the rescue squad to use the county NPI number and the Board of Commissioners appoints a board, they do not run the program.

Stormy Butts, EMS Chief, explained to the Board the NPI number only identifies the entity that is conducting business. It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners appoint the five EMS Board Members and a 6<sup>th</sup> member to be the emergency services director. The last request is to allow the County to be a pass through for funds; the EMS Board will continue to manage and facilitate funds.

Chair Hofler verified the finance director is in agreement with the recommendations.

Commissioner Owens asked if the recommendations will meet all of the requirements needed to be granted approval. Chief Butts stated to the best of his knowledge these changes would make EMS eligible to obtain the funds in 2017.

Commissioner Jordan stated the County is in favor of recouping money but Medicaid isn't a program to play around with, it is serious business. The letter states the funds cannot be recouped if the program is not a governmental entity. The general statute requires the county to have emergency medical services but the county is not required to own it. The description of the organizational structure needs to be explained and the articles of corporation need to be clear and drafted by the County Attorney so there is no question of qualifications.

Ms. Rountree read the recommendations that were sent by the NCACC.

Commissioner Jordan stated the County is going to submit an application for a NPI number on behalf of the rescue squad and should address the letter we received in order to reduce any perception of fraud.

Commissioner Owens asked if there is a possibility to reach back and recoup any cost. Chief Butts stated that is not possible due to how the program is set up.

Commissioner Jordan stated the general statute requires us to have emergency services and our county ordinance requires an EMS Advisory Board be established. Chief Butts stated there is an advisory committee and it meets to approve franchise services while the EMS Board deals with the daily business of emergency medical services. Commissioner Jordan feels the Advisory Board needs to be active and meet regularly.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to submit the application for the County NPI number and to respond to the DHHS letter. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion.

County Manager Rountree asked how to respond to the letter. Commissioner Jordan stated we should respond and state we do not have an issue with the initial rejection and explain how we are going to be in compliance. Commissioner Owens recommended responding with a thank you for your help through the process and the county is in the process of following recommendations.

Chair Hofler restated Commissioner Jordan made a motion to submit the application for the County NPI number and to respond to the DHHS letter. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Chief Butts final request is for the Board of Commissioners to agree to appoint the five EMS Board members, one from each voting district, then Chief Butts can go to his Board and request the by-laws be changed and have the current Board apply to stay on the Board.

Commissioner Jordan requested the Board submit an annual report to the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Owens recommended having Board members serve a

three year term with the option to be reappointed for unlimited terms. Commissioner Jordan recommended appointing the initial members as one, two, and three year terms so Board member terms are staggered.

Commissioner Owens suggested appointing all initial members to a three year term to ensure we are accommodating the needs of current Board members.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to have the Gates County Board of Commissioners appoint five members to the Rescue Squad Board. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Jordan asked County Manager to investigate the Emergency Medical Advisory Committee membership and report back at the August meeting.

Natalie Rountree, County Manager, stated there was a phone conference held last week in regards to the construction at the Historic Courthouse. Prior to the phone conference Soil and Water conducted some additional soil testing and found their report matched the initial soil testing. The group has determined the issue is not with the soil it is with the deteriorating bricks. Ms. Rountree shared the recommendations from Sass Conservation. The recommendation also includes testing of the east wing as it is starting to show some of the same issues as the west wing. The recommendation would be \$4,750.

Commissioner Jordan stated the Board needs the information a little more in advance to have time to review in detail.

Chair Hofler stated part of the issue is the reaction between old bricks and new bricks.

Commissioner Jordan stated Reid Thomas has to be contacted. Ms. Rountree said Mr. Thomas has been contacted and replacement of west wing bricks would not compromise the historical significance of the building. We would need to contact him again if we needed to replace three of the walls.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to move forward with the services of Shelly Sass. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Chair Hofler stated after the Personnel Board meeting last week it was recommended the Tax Office collect tax payments and Customer Service collect water and other county payments.

Commissioner Jordan stated he has read the proposal and during the last seven years we have changed departments and reorganized a lot, we need some stability and need to make efforts to make things work however there are strong desires to split the departments again and they can't be ignored. One concern is the Tax Office needs to have a safe. Kathy Lane stated there are funds in the current budget to secure a good safe for the office and Ms. Lane is currently bonded by the County.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to accept the Personnel Board recommendation to approve the Tax Office to collect tax payments and Customer Service collect water and other county payments. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Chair Hofler explained there has been a lot of change and sometimes changes are made and they don't work and need to be corrected. It is vital that we make changes to increase the operations of collecting delinquent tax payments.

Commissioner Jordan stated we have to make sure we are making decisions that are best for citizens. Ms. Rountree stated there have been numerous citizen requests for these changes.

Chair Hofler stated the second recommendation is for Customer Service to become its own department separate from Financial Services. This will allow the Financial Services Department Head to spend more time handling the County's finances. The Customer

Service Department would be comprised of the Customer Service Department Head, two Customer Service Representatives, and three Water Meter Readers.

Ms. Rountree stated this is a recommendation that was tabled from the last meeting.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the separation of Customer Service and Finance as recommended and Development Services would become the inspections Department. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

### **New Business**

Natalie Rountree presented DSS, Emergency Management, Financial Services, Planning & Inspections and GITS surplus request. Ms. Rountree noted the truck from Emergency Services is being recommended to be given to the Community Center.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the surplus requests as presented for DSS, Finance, GITS, and Planning and Inspections. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

The Board discussed the pickup truck to be given to the Community Center. Commissioner Jordan would like to see the County Manager site the general statute that allows the County to dispose of a vehicle other than a sale.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to surplus the Emergency Management Truck to the Community Center with a notation of the General Statue in the transfer. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Kathy Lane, Tax Administrator, presented Revaluation bids from Gary Piner Appraisal Service, Inc. in conjunction with Renee McGinnis and Shackelford & Associates. Gary Piner would conduct all of the field work and do a basic walk around of every dwelling and commercial service as well as get new digital images. His proposal is a very conservative number and is one of the lowest Ms. Lane has seen through 9 revaluations. Mr. Piner will also be available for any formal appeals, if needed. Commissioner Owens asked if an informal appeal was submitted would we need his services. Ms. Lane stated typically the tax accessor does not insert themselves in the process but it is possible the process could be done in house. Ms. Lane stated Renee McGinnis has submitted the technical side of the bid which include the market study, updating the schedule of values and data entry. A part time data clerk could be used in conjunction with the tax office staff to handle remaining data entry. Ms. Lane stated the new system is more user friendly and data can be entered more quickly. Commissioner Owens asked what the total number would be for the Piner/McGinnis quote. Ms. Lane stated the range would be \$118,000 to \$130,000, the higher range would be if the party conducted all appeals and if we had 5% appeals which is very unlikely.

Commissioner Owens asked if the Shackelford bid includes a walk around of each property. Ms. Lane stated they do a review that's a little more than a windshield appraisal but is not as detailed as a full walk around of every dwelling. Ms. Lane stated she is not in favor of this method. The Shackelford & Associates bid is for \$162,000 which is about \$20 per parcel. Ms. Lane stated she would recommend doing it in house and utilizing Piner/McGinnis but is open to going in whatever direction the Board would like.

Commissioner Jordan would like to see a detailed bio on Mr. Piner and asked Ms. Lane if there are certain requirements that an appraisal firm must meet to be considered. Ms. Lane said the statutes do not state specifically and gives the Board and/or the administrator some flexibility on who they choose. Ms. Lane will provide a full bio for Mr. Piner at the next meeting.

Ms. Rountree stated several of the surrounding counties have had appraisals submitted by Piner.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to table the awarding of the revaluation bid until the August meeting. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Chair Hofler announced Mr. Jonathan Jones and Mrs. Sandra Nickens were appointed by the State to serve on the Gates County Department of Social Services Board.

Chair Hofler stated Joy Greenwood with Merchants Millpond has requested the County support the Bond Referendum for Infrastructure in NC State Parks.

Commissioner Jordan asked if a resolution is needed. Ms. Rountree stated the Board can submit a resolution or a letter. Commissioner Freeman stated he would like to see a resolution signed by each Commissioner sent to our legislative delegation.

Commissioner Jordan asked what the repercussions of bond issuance to the County are. Commissioner Owens explained this would be a State Bond and the state would solicit major firms to secure bonds. The County would receive the bond but would not be a part of the process.

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to approve a resolution in support of the Bond for Infrastructure in NC State Parks. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hofler stated we have received a request for funding for the Albemarle Senior Games. Ms. Pittman stated we receive the request every year after the budget process has taken place and we have requested the request come early in the spring.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to award \$200 to the Albemarle Senior Games. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Chair Hofler said it has been requested that the Board send celebratory birthday greetings to Imogene Savage-Freeman who is about to celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to send a letter to Imogene Savage-Freeman for her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

#### **Citizen Comments**

Roger Van Smith, Gates County NC Church Ambassadors Inc., presented letters to Commissioner Jordan, Hofler and Attorney Godwin

#### **Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Owens thanked citizens for attending and participating. We have had spirited debate on issues

Commissioner Jordan thanked citizens for attending and being interested in the decisions that are being made. The Board is concerned about all of our county, citizens and employees and decisions are made to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Commissioner Felton thanked everyone for attending and Board is looking for the ways to provide the best things for citizens. It is nice to have a great number in attendance including staff and the Register of Deeds at a night meeting.

Commissioner Freeman thanked citizens for attending voicing opinions. We hear you through your letters and phone calls and we address the issues that are brought up.

Commissioner Freeman thanked the Chair and the County Manager for keeping the Board thoroughly informed and for citizens expressing their concerns through phone calls and visits. The Board tries to be kind and just to all citizens.

Chairman Hofler thanked citizens for attending. We all have opinions and sometimes we disagree which is great. Chair Hofler reminded everyone that the Board wants to hear from citizens, don't hesitate to call and to stop us around the County. We are here to serve and appreciate your comments.

**Closed Session**

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to enter into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 a (3) Legal, (4) Economic Development, (5) Real Estate, (6) Personnel. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

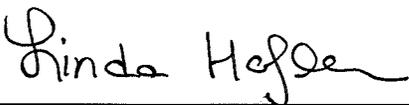
Commissioner Owens made a motion to exit closed session. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion carried without opposition.

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to move forward with the preliminary soil testing on the site discussed in closed session. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to direct the County Manager to respond to the property owner as discussed in closed session in regards to the County property line. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

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

  
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Linda Hofler, Chairman

  
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Melissa C. Lawrence, Clerk

GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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