

January 28, 2021 (Recessed)

**MINUTES
BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RECESSED MEETING**

Both Burke County and the State of North Carolina had previously declared a state of emergency which was ongoing as of January 28, 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Following the N.C. Governor's Executive Order limiting mass gatherings and to protect the health of all meeting participants, attendance in the County Board Room, Burke Services Building, 110 N. Green Street in Morganton, was on a first come first served basis, social distancing measures were imposed inside the meeting room and face coverings were required. The meeting, a budget / strategic planning session, was scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. and the agenda, in its entirety, was posted to the County's website, www.burkenc.org, several days prior to the meeting.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
Scott Mulwee, Vice Chairman (Left at 3:36 p.m.)
Wayne F. Abele, Sr. (Left at 12:07 p.m.)
Johnnie W. Carswell
Maynard M. Taylor (Left at 4:06 p.m.)

STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Steen, County Manager
Margaret Pierce, Deputy Co. Manager/Finance Director
Scott Carpenter, Deputy Co. Manager/Planning Director
J.R. Simpson, II, Co. Atty. (Excused after the action item.)
Kay Honeycutt Draughn, Clerk to the Board

CALL TO ORDER

After breakfast, Chairman Brittain called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: To approve the agenda.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Wayne F. Abele, Sr., Commissioner
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Wayne F. Abele, Sr., Johnnie W. Carswell and Maynard M. Taylor

ITEMS FOR DECISION

BOC - SWORN LIEUTENANT POSITION AT JAIL (RECONSIDERATION OF MOTION)

Chairman Brittain presented the following request:

At its January 19th meeting, the Board approved the following motion in response to the Sheriff's request to add a sworn lieutenant position at the jail. "That this becomes the Sheriff's decision, and he understands that we're not adding a position, or anything to this year's budget. Whatever he and the Board of County Commissioners decides for the budget for next year will be the budget for next

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year.”

However, after reviewing the motion, the staff and attorney do not believe it is in a form that can be administered. It appears it will be necessary to create the requested position in order to administer the wage and salary at that level. Therefore, the County Attorney was asked to draft a motion that is workable from the stated motion for reconsideration at this meeting.

County Manager's Recommendation: Approval is not recommended.

Motion: The Sheriff may create a temporary sworn officer lieutenant position for the Burke County Jail, with such position to extend from the present until June 30, 2021; the Sheriff is allowed to use lapsed Jail salary funds from his Department's 2020-2021 budget to pay for such salary; the future of this position beyond June 30, 2021, along with automobile and other necessary expenses associated with the position, shall be determined by the Board of Commissioners in consultation with the Sheriff for the upcoming budget year, and if approved by the Board, shall become a part of the County 2021-2022 budget.

RESULT:	APPROVED [3 TO 2]
MOVER:	Wayne F. Abele, Sr., Commissioner
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Wayne F. Abele, Sr. and Maynard M. Taylor
NAYS:	Scott Mulwee and Johnnie W. Carswell

Note: The County Attorney was excused and was not present for the remainder of the meeting.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

BOC - BUDGET & PLANNING RETREAT - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Chairman Brittain made introductory comments and then turned the floor over to County Manager Steen.

UPDATE ON LAST YEAR'S RETREAT – NEW POSITIONS FOR GENERAL SERVICES

Margaret Pierce, Deputy County Manager/Finance Director, said new positions for the General Services Department were discussed at last year's retreat in connection with necessary repairs to county facilities. The County Manager recommended four (4) positions in the FY 20-21 budget. The positions and their status are:

- Senior Accounting Technician - Filled
- Water/Sewer Supervisor - Filled
- Facilities Technician III for HVAC - Filled
- Facilities Technician III for electrical - Currently vacant

She said they are still evaluating and looking for ways to assist General Services with their mail service responsibilities but were sidetracked because of the global pandemic. Regarding the electrical position, Scott Carpenter, Deputy County Manager/Planning Director, said they are not getting applications from certified applicants and stated the need for a plumber. Mr. Carpenter

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identified both pay and the current demand for certified electricians being attributing factors. Ms. Pierce then reviewed the repair status of County buildings as follows:

Building / Area	Repair / Action	Status
Agriculture Center	Replacement of 1 rooftop HVAC unit	Completed
Avery Building	Security access control	Completed w/ COVID funding
	Front access non—ADA compliant	Completed w/ COVID funding
	Sidewalk – ADA accessibility	Spring 2021
Courthouse	Drain & plumbing issues in old jail area	Completed by contractor
	Minor leak in sallyport addition	Repaired
Foothills Higher Ed. Center	Door hardware replacement needed on both ends (County & WPCC)	Some fixed by door access project
HRC	Hire consultant to analyze capacity/needs	Finance working on RFQ now
	Repair/replace emergency lights	Completed by contractor
	Clean out halls and attic	Completed
Morganton Library	Exterior fascia repairs & painting 50% funding from Morganton	FY 21-22
	Replace light fixtures	Summer 2021
Morganton Senior Center	Drainage in front of building	Completed by contractor
	Interior water damage due to drainage	In-process by contractor
Sheriff's Office	Roof leaks	Completed by contractor
Parker Road Park	Removal of unusable restrooms	Recreation staff will remove
Landfill Garage	Exterior concrete slab repair area	Completed by contractor
East Burke Convenience Site	County Mgr. searching for new location	In process
Jonas Ridge Convenience Site	Land acquisition	Completed In process
	Site design	
	Project handled by Dep. County Manager / Planning Dir.	
EMS Bases	Multiple repairs at multiple bases	Some repairs completed by EMS personnel

Ms. Pierce said, regarding the HRC building, that staff were not able to work on a request for qualifications (RFQ) for a consultant, but she has the names of four (4) companies that have completed similar studies. She asked the Board how encompassing would they like the study to be and would they like to include other buildings besides the HRC building. Chairman Brittain commented on the lack of office space for County staff at the HRC building. Discussion ensued regarding HVAC at the HRC building, and other buildings to be included in a potential study. Chairman Brittain asked if the Courthouse would need to be included in a study, discussion ensued regarding the building and the need to conduct preventive maintenance on all County buildings, which, for the most part, are very old. County Manager Steen identified several major improvements made within the past few years at the Courthouse but advised that it may be time to replace the roof. Commissioner Taylor asked if there is a priority list of areas at the Courthouse that need repair(s). Ms. Pierce said there is not a list, but there known areas that need attention, such as the General Services area, discussion ensued regarding the Courthouse. Commissioner Taylor suggested that someone, perhaps the Clerk of Court, should keep a list of complaints/issues received at the Courthouse so a priority list can be made. Discussion ensued and Ms. Pierce said buildings that should be included in the study are the HRC building, Avery building, and the Burke Services building. Ms. Pierce said they would issue an RFQ, evaluate

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and negotiate with the best firm, and come to the Board with a figure during budget season, unless they can figure out a way to proceed with the study quicker.

In reference to General Services, Chairman Brittain said he believes the County needs to be diligent with getting the vacant positions filled and with the number of aging buildings, the County needs to stay on top of General Services projects and maintenance. Discussion ensued on General Services' work order tracking software and how it can be used to track work orders by buildings for reporting purposes. Mr. Carpenter said General Services had management issues last year regarding delegation of lower priority problems which slowed the department down in responding to work orders. However, Mr. Carpenter said, that process has been fixed and noted that General Services is a complex department. Commissioner Abele asked now that the new door locks are installed in the Avery building, how do citizens contact the County Manager when they have a problem. County Manager Steen said typically by telephone or email as well as meeting people in the lobby. A discussion ensued about citizen foot traffic in the Avery building. Commissioner Taylor made additional comments concerning parking at the Courthouse and previously discussed locations for a new courthouse. Chairman Brittain said based on the Board's conversation, staff/buildings that needs to be included in a study are the HRC (Human Resource Center), General Services offices, the Avery building, and the Burke Services building. Vice Chairman Mulwee advocated for obtaining a price to study all county facilities. Discussion continued about the need for a long-range capital improvement plan going forward. Ms. Pierce then continued reviewing the status of County buildings. Regarding the Jonas Ridge Convenience Site property, Mr. Carpenter said they do not have a safe ingress and egress and that should be installed this year as well as drying-in the house on the property. Chairman Brittain expressed his desire to make the Jonas Ridge Convenience Site a priority project and noted the residents have waited a long time. Mr. Carpenter said the project is progressing but out of the two (2) options, A and B, the community wants option B which will take longer due to the land acquisition process but noted it will be very nice and something the community can be proud of. Vice Chairman Mulwee said everyone he spoke with in the Jonas Ridge area said they do not mind waiting for option B and noted they are a very tight-knit community. Discussion continued and Chairman Brittain advocated for not waiting too long.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

EMS BASE NO. 1 – 107 FOOTHILLS DRIVE, MORGANTON

Jason Black, Interim EMS Director, said EMS Base 1 is in the worst condition of all the current



bases and noted it was built in the 1970s by EMS employees, so it was never constructed well to begin with, and is too far gone to repair. In addition to the building's poor condition, he said the land is owned by the local hospital. In addition, he said staff has begun looking for land for a new EMS Base 1 and said the

Enola Road or the Drexel areas are advantageous. He advised that the new base would need

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to be expandable, have at least three (3) to four (4) bays, and at least be the size of EMS Base 7. Since Burke County EMS is a certified teaching institution, he wanted a dedicated classroom. Discussion continued and Director Black expressed pride on recent improvements made to EMS facilities that were completed by EMS personnel working together. Commissioner Taylor asked if Director Black knows which area(s) receive the most calls. Mr. Black said currently, Emergency Communications does not have a way to automatically compile that information but noted that Bases 1 and 7 respond to the most calls. Commissioner Taylor noted the possibility of investigating adding an EMS base and/or relocating some County offices to property at Broughton Hospital. After additional discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the Enola Road area, Chairman Brittain asked as the Board considers a facility study, is there enough property to have a long-range County complex and should the County think about a centralized campus. Additional discussion ensued regarding the placement of a new EMS Base 1 and it was noted that the new software Communications purchased will provide call location data. Commissioner Taylor asked how much it would cost to build a new EMS base. County Manager Steen said he is not sure and noted if they do something similar to EMS Base 7, there would be space to build a large classroom with plumbing fixtures, so that when new crews are needed, that room can be converted into crew space with restrooms. Discussion continued with Ms. Pierce advising that EMS Base 7 cost approximately \$1.2 million. Chairman Brittain cautioned that since he has been on the Board, there has not been enough long-range vision regarding County buildings and property acquisition and noted that many County buildings have no room to expand.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

RECESS OF MEETING

The Board took a short break at 10:09 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:26 a.m. Vice Chairman Mulwee left when the break started and returned at 10:42 p.m.

COVID-19 FUNDING UPDATE

Ms. Pierce presented the following list of projects completed or items purchased with CARES Act Funding as of December 2020:

Category No.	Item or Project	Amount
1	DLX Tent-Enhanced Tent for COVID-10 Testing Sites	\$33,310
1	Plum Case – Extended 5G Ready	\$9,542
1	Reusable Gowns for EMS	\$6,860
1	Climate Control System – Emerge. Mgmt. Warehouse	\$19,324
1	Pro-lift Cots for EMS	\$436,035
2	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	\$119,940
2	Storage Containers & Shelving for PPE Push Packages at Warehouse	\$12,894
2	Miscellaneous Purchase of Cleaning & Sanitation Supplies & Expanded Cleaning Requirements	\$86,902
2	Hand Sanitizing Stations	\$18,378
2	Touchless Faucets within Burke County Buildings	*\$84,838
2	Installation of Touchless Soap and Towel Dispensers in Burke County Maintained Bathrooms	\$26,750
2	Glass Shields and Partitions (Courtroom #1, Courtroom #2,	\$125,587

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	Clerk of Court Offices, Estates, Senior Center, Board of Elections, DSS, Health, Tax Listing, Environmental Health, Permitting, Agriculture Building, Animal Services, All Libraries)	
2	Building Renovations Avery Building Lobby Control Access Tax Area – Door Added GIS Area – Window Added Animal Services Center – Door Renovated	\$33,335
2	Proximity Card and Public Access Control Project	\$319,820
2	Jury Pool Selection – Daily Lease of CoMMA (City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium)	\$150
2	Setup for Temporary Court Facility at Foothills Higher Education Conference Center	\$5,620
2	Updated Graphics for Western Piedmont Regional Transportation Authority Busses	\$854
2	TV/Radio Ads with WBTV Broadcaster to Enhance Outreach and Information Dissemination to the Public	\$18,190
2	Educational Materials/Bill Inserts (3 W's & Social Distancing)	\$3,067
3	Payroll Expenses for Multiple Positions in Public Health, Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Law Enforcement and Finance	\$922,088
4	Computers and Software to Allow Teleworking/Training/Distance Meetings	\$133,191
4	Increased Cost of Landfill Disposal Operations	\$31,666
4	Broad Band Support for Burke County Schools through CARES Act Funding to Purchase Mi-Fi's for Student Use	\$201,560
7	Municipality Funding* CARES Act Funding to Burke County is currently \$3,478,349 with 25% legislative mandated passthrough to municipalities of \$869,610. Funding to municipalities at current legislative allocation (Note that numbers preceding are each municipality are specific to NCPRO reporting requirements): 02-12-01, Morganton \$469,616, reverted \$109 02-12-02, Connelly Springs, \$25,108, reverted \$21,267 02-12-03, Drexel, \$50,550 02-12-04, Glen Alpine, \$43,340 02-12-05, Hildebran, \$55,355 02-12-06, Long View, \$20,550 02-12-07, Rhodhiss, \$20,635 02-12-08, Rutherford College, \$9,075, reverted \$29,625 02-12-09, Town of Valdese, \$124,380 <i>*This report is not inclusive of all funding but merely a summary overview.</i>	
Health Department Funding		

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Category	Item or Project	Amount
1	Automatic Door, Concrete Work and Awning Cover for Outdoor Testing and Vaccination Area at the Public Health side of the Human Resources Building (Awning Construction to be Completed in early February)	\$119,000
FEMA Funding		
	Courthouse Tent Lease	\$7,903
	Message Boards	\$26,065
	Distribution of 4,500 Cloth Masks to Government Personnel and Non-Profit Organizations	No Cost

Ms. Pierce responded to questions regarding the batteries in the touchless soap/towel dispensers, utilizing local radio stations to advertise COVID-19 safety information and efforts to ensure the municipalities spent their funds. Ms. Pierce reported as of January 8, the final report has been submitted, the funds have been expended and that there is a three (3) year period in which the expended COVID-19 funds can be rendered ineligible for improper expenses. However, she noted, they have been conscious of the regulations, which changed throughout the process and there were approximately 10-12 different sources of COVID-19 funding with their own guidelines and requirements. Discussion ensued regarding the outdoor testing and vaccination site at the Health Department. Regarding Senior Services, Nutrition Services, Ms. Pierce said they are no longer doing congregate meals and had to switch to frozen meals, and they received funding for freezers and were able to add additional clients and routes. She mentioned other sources of COVID-19 funding and projects County departments were able to accomplish. In response to questions regarding cloth and disposable mask distribution, Commissioner Taylor suggested that the Board should send a letter of thanks to the organization(s) that supplied free masks to Burke County. She further reported Burke County has been able to utilize all the COVID-19 funds, except the Board of Elections (BOE) which may have to revert some funding, but they are discussing that with the State. On a somewhat related note, Ms. Pierce reported they have a second FEMA grant application in process for other projects related to storm damage.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

FORMER BURKE-CATAWBA DISTRICT CONFINEMENT FACILITY - UPDATE

County Manager Steen reported the County and Partners Behavioral Health Management (PBHM) have continued working on options to utilize the building (BCDCF) for a regional mental health and substance abuse treatment facility. During discussion, Chairman Brittain noted that the renovations that PBHM wants would cost approximately \$2.5 million and that they are working with Burke County's local State representatives to try and secure State assistance.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

COMPREHENSIVE FACILITIES PLAN

Regarding a comprehensive facility study mentioned earlier in the meeting, Ms. Pierce reported that two (2) years ago Craven County's comprehensive 5-to-50-year facilities plan cost approximately \$150,000.

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RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

REVENUE PROJECTIONS

Ms. Pierce reported the County has three (3) main sources of revenue, property tax, intergovernmental, and sales tax. She said thus far, sales tax revenues are up, but they will have better numbers when the budget is presented. She noted that the State is encouraging local governments to budget conservatively and Burke County is going to look at the local numbers carefully rather than the States broader picture. Ms. Pierce said occupancy tax is down slightly, but that will impact the Tourism Development Authority's (TDA) budget more than Burke County's budget. The other revenue fund that is down is interest income, Ms. Pierce said. Ms. Pierce said they were told to budget 10 percent down on property tax revenues, but collections are on target according to the Tax Administrator. In response to a question from Commissioner Abele, Ms. Pierce said sales tax figures were up approximately seven (7) percent. Ms. Pierce said regarding revenue projections that the County is cautiously optimistic of where the trends are going for planning purposes.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

RECESS OF MEETING

A boxed lunch was served from 11:45 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. when the meeting resumed. Commissioner Abele left at 12:07 p.m. and was not present for the remainder of the meeting.

DEBT SERVICE

Ms. Pierce reported for FY 21-22 the County will budget approximately \$7.8 million for debt service, a significant portion of that is from the set aside funds for the school system, and approximately \$2.6 million will come from the General Fund. She said there is debt for Western Piedmont Community College's (WPCC) mechatronics building which will be paid out in FY 23-24. The jail debt service in FY 21-22 is \$1.7 million and the County's portion of the Foothills Higher Education Center debt will be paid out in FY 25-26. She further reported the County's debt rating is AA and none of the County's debt is eligible for refinance, but the interest rates on these loans are good. She also reviewed the outstanding loan amounts and debt retirement schedule. Discussion continued. Topics discussed were COVID-19 funds the school system may be holding and the impact of a \$15 per hour minimum wage would have on the budget.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

TAX REAPPRAISAL

Danny Isenhour, Tax Administrator, presented the following information and responded to questions from the Board:

Reappraisals in Burke County

The following is a list of Burke County Reappraisal Projects:

- 1987 – Full measure and list. Conducted by AVS (Automated Valuation Services)
- 1994 – Windshield or Street Review. Conducted by Tax Office Staff. Only did on-site reviews, if issues were seen from the street.
- 2001 – Desktop Review. Conducted by Tax Office Staff
- 2001 – First project where appeals were handled by on-site review. From this point forward on-site reviews were made for all appeals.

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- 2007 - Desktop Review. Conducted by Tax Office Staff
- 2013 - Desktop Review. Conducted by Tax Office Staff
- 2019 - Desktop Review. Conducted by Tax Office Staff

As one can see, a measure and list has not been conducted since 1987. Burke County is in dire need of a full measure and list. The 2023 project is going to be another Desktop Review unless additional funding is provided. In the past, the tax office has asked for additional funding for staff and other resources like (Pictometry), but these items have not made it through the budget process.

What Staff is Doing

Each year our Appraisal staff's time is filled with what we call regular maintenance. They conduct field reviews on all building permits, exemption applications, appeals, Present Use Value (PUV) applications, owner inquiries, and ownership changes. Better that 90% of the time when an appraiser conducts an on-site review, he/she finds errors or changes that need to be made to the tax data on the property record card (PRC). Not counting drive time these reviews may take as little as 10 minutes to several hours depending on the complexity of the property. Then additional time is required in the office preparing for the review and additional time in the office completing the paperwork.

Reappraisal Standards NCDOR Required

The Reappraisal Standards Document is very important part of the 2023 Reappraisal Project. This document incorporates IAAO Procedure and best practice. It set the guidelines and NCDOR requirements for all Counties conducting a revaluation project beginning January 1, 2020.

Burke's first reappraisal project using these new rules will be the 2023 project. The first step in this process began in January 2020 with the random sample. To begin these reappraisal project requirements staff was required to develop a random sample procedure and submit a random sample file to the NCDOR for approval. This random sample (1% of improved parcels) consisted of 106 commercial properties and 442 residential properties. None of which were vacant parcels.

These parcels were reviewed, and certain data fields were collected and used for comparison to determine the data accuracy. The main element of this data accuracy is square footage (SF). Standards dictate SF should be at least 95% correct. Findings resulted in residential being 87.78% correct and commercial being 90.57% correct. Below the minimum acceptable range of 95% for both. This random sampling was additional work appraisal staff conducted delaying their 2020 maintenance work. There are two additional accuracy types looked at by NCDOR. Objective – factual data and Subjective – opinion date like effective year- used in depreciation and quality grade.

NCDOR also does an annual Sale Ratio Report (SR). This report for 2018 sales compared to our 2019 reappraisal project showed the SR to be 99.27% with a COD of 9.2. These were excellent values. For 2019 sales, the SR dropped to 88.68% and a COD to 15.68 (lower is better).

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With the accuracy results being lower than expectable and the SR dropping below 90%. The NCDOR has sent us a letter requiring the next reappraisal to be 2023. Since the next reappraisal was already scheduled for 2023 that is not an issue. The issue is based on the data accuracy of the SF being less than 95%, the NCDOR recommends a full measure and list.

2023 Reappraisal

Work began on the 2023 reappraisal once the 2019 became effective. As staff ran into issues or found the need for additional data resources, and the sales began to escalate in different areas, notes were made. These notes will be reviewed once the reappraisal file is created, and the notes used to make needed updates.

With no additional appraiser time, other staff have begun making updates or changes as time allows. Currently we are balancing several projects that need to be addressed prior to rolling the information and creating the 2023 reappraisal file.

- Reviewing the design and style of residential properties. 30% complete.
- Adding flags. 100% complete.
- Removing commercial and industrial properties from market areas (MA). For the sales comparison reports in the system to work, the MA can only be residential. 75% complete with commercial, 10% industrial.
- Create sales comparison factors. Not started.
- The biggest project is the resketch of residential properties from a horizontal view to vertical view. This project needs a full-time person for 6 or so months. This builds equity and consistency in residential values.

Until these projects completed, staff must put off creating the reappraisal file. This reduces the time staff has available to complete the 2023 project.

How do we handle this?

This depends on the approach the BOC want to take. Currently there are no funds appropriated for a full measure and list or additional staff. A full measure and list will cost between \$25-\$30 per parcel, times around 59,000 parcels. (Rutherford County did this for their 2019 project) This could be accomplished in stages or less than a full measure and list (not recommended).

It can be accomplished by hiring additional staff who's only responsibility is the measure and list. By hiring 2 to 3 dedicated staff a full measure and list could be completed over a 4-5-year period if they were not pulled off to other projects. This I believe to be the most cost effective.

Regarding the square footage data accuracy (Burke County's is 87.78% per the NCDOR) Vice Chairman Mulwee asked how Burke County compares to the other surrounding counties. Mr. Isenhour said he is unsure but could check with the NC Department of Revenue and discussion continued. Commissioner Taylor asked if Rutherford County hired additional personnel to conduct their measure and list. Mr. Isenhour said Rutherford hired a vendor to perform the work at \$25 - \$30 per parcel. Discussion continued regarding outsourcing the work (ex. 59,000

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parcels X \$30 = \$1,770,000) compared to hiring additional employees. Mr. Isenhour believed it would be more cost effective to hire two (2) – three (3) additional employees. Discussion continued on training requirements for the additional employees, proposed duties and estimated time to complete the project as well as the potential amount of unrealized revenue. Ms. Pierce said she wanted Mr. Isenhour to present this information because it may become a significant piece of the upcoming budget in either requested employees or a sizable contract. Ms. Pierce also addressed using a hybrid process to get accurate data more quickly and less expensively. Commissioner Taylor asked if there are any grants that would be available to assist with this process. County Manager Steen said he is unaware of any available grants. Chairman Brittain said that based on the information and discussion regarding the revaluation/measure and list, that the Board would like to see some comparisons and different options on how to proceed.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

DSS UPDATE ON VERITAS, STAFFING, TELECOMMUTING, COVID-19 CHANGES

Korey Fisher-Wellman, DSS Director, introduced Matt Hillman, Program Administrator for Children and Adult Services and Amanda Grady, Program Administrator for Economic Services. They gave an update on DSS. Mr. Hillman thanked the Board for adding a Program Manager for Child Protection Services (CPS) and said it has allowed them to focus and reduce their caseload numbers and hopefully it will help with staff retention. Mr. Hillman noted that salaries in surrounding counties, Buncombe and Catawba counties, makes hiring/retaining staff challenging and they are exploring alternatives to increase staff retention. He said during the COVID-19 pandemic, some DSS staff were able work from home and Adult Protective Services staff were able to take cloth masks into the community and distribute as needed. Mr. Hillman noted other safety measures and community outreach initiatives Burke County DSS staff were able to accomplish during the pandemic. Commissioner Carswell asked what the County could do aside from pay increases to help with employee retention, especially regarding improving the HRC building/atmosphere. Mr. Hillman reviewed some of the positive changes that have occurred in the HRC building, such as improvements to the family visitation room completed by local Girl Scouts Willow and Scout Conrad. Chairman Brittain requested a presentation be made at an upcoming meeting on the improvements made to the family visitation room. Mr. Hillman then noted that most of the walls at the HRC building have not been painted in a long time and the HVAC has serious issues which impacts morale. Discussion continued regarding the HRC building, staffing, telecommuting and service numbers, with Mr. Hillman noting that foster care numbers have increased. In response to an inquiry, Mr. Hillman reported there are seven (7) vacancies in the Child and Adult Protective Services unit and commented on the importance of training good leaders within the organization. After additional discussion on the agency's vision, Ms. Grady said having a Medicaid Program Manager would be very helpful in the future. Regarding Child Support, which was outsourced, Ms. Grady said, it is going very well even with the COVID-19 pandemic, she noted that Burke County has moved from 100th in the State to 97th. She then reviewed ways staff has been able to conduct their jobs effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic, including working from home. She said Food and Nutrition Services has increased by 1,000 from this time last year, Medicaid, and energy assistance requests, which has seen the largest increase, have all increased as well. Discussion continued and Ms. Grady noted that retraining temporary workers every year is inefficient and perhaps a different approach could be utilized by hiring permanent workers. In response to an inquiry on the number of vacancies in the Economic Services division, Ms. Grady said there are two (2) and discussion ensued regarding the COVID-19 funding that the division received and how they

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(Economic Services) used it. Moving forward, Ms. Grady said, they would like a Program Manager for Medicaid and a QA (quality assurance)/training team. Commissioner Taylor asked how many employees does DSS have. Ms. Grady said when the Department is fully staffed, there are 187. Discussion continued and Commissioner Taylor recommended that DSS staff conduct motivational training and practices to ensure morale is maintained. Mr. Fisher-Wellman commended Mr. Hillman and Ms. Grady for their work and said he is excited with the direction DSS is going even with the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Fisher-Wellman discussed efforts taken to keep staff safe, being able to hire quality staff, being able to train staff to become leaders, utilizing interns, strengthening community partnerships, etc. Commissioner Carswell asked how Burke County's benefits program compares to other counties. Mr. Fisher-Wellman and Mr. Hillman said the benefits are competitive to other counties. Next, Mr. Fisher-Wellman reviewed issues with the HRC Building, including the HVAC (extreme heat and/or extreme cold) and a lack of office space, noting that allowing some employees to work from home has helped to alleviate some of the space issues. Mr. Carpenter asked, aside from a new building, what can be done to improve their workspace. Mr. Fisher-Wellman said climate control. He also commented on a recent fire inspection which required the removal of items in the attic and hallways. Mr. Carpenter said General Services would do their best to get the HVAC repaired this year. Commissioner Taylor asked what are the top three (3) budget challenges that DSS will face in the upcoming year. Mr. Fisher-Wellman said due to the increase in needed services, they will need a few new positions. Chairman Brittain suggested utilizing a "roving" employee to handle the seasonal peaks. On behalf of the Board, Chairman Brittain thanked DSS for the work they do for Burke County.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

MAJOR EXPENSE DRIVERS

Ms. Pierce said DSS comprises approximately 17 percent of the County budget, but they also bring in significant revenues as well. She said out of the \$17.6 million DSS budget, approximately \$5.5 million - \$6 million are local County funds. Discussion continued on DSS funding and the corresponding reimbursement amounts. Regarding the HRC Building, Chairman Brittain said he wanted, in the upcoming budget year, the building's climate control system fixed and that it will require a dedicated service provider to do it. Further, he expressed disappointment that although the situation was discussed last year and directives were given, nothing changed. Commissioner Carswell requested that painting and cleaning be completed as well. A general discussion on the overall condition of the building, the number of employees in the building and its climate control system ensued. Ms. Pierce advised there are funds available in the current year budget to hire a contractor to conduct the repair work.

Ms. Pierce then discussed the following list of major expense drivers:

- Pay plan annual review – second year of three-year cycle.
- COLA/Retirement 1.25% increase.
- Schools – No increases anticipated at this time.
- WPCC capital match - \$1 million requested for Trades building.
- Sheriff's Office

Regarding the WPCC capital match for the Trades building, Vice Chairman Mulwee and Chairman of the WPCC Board of Trustees, said the requested match can be split over multiple budget years. A short discussion ensued on other funding sources used for the Trades building.

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RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

CAPITAL REPAIRS

Ms. Pierce reviewed the list of significant capital repairs:

- Morganton Library expansion – not on the horizon.
- Animal Services facility
- Paving
- Roofs and leaks

Ms. Pierce said \$300,000 - \$400,000 should be in the maintenance budget annually for repairs and noted there are multiple paving and roof projects coming up soon and there needs to be a priority list/schedule. She noted that the most expense maintenance projects are HVAC, roofs, and paving.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

RECESS OF MEETING

The Board took a short break at 2:52 p.m. The meeting resumed at 3:05 p.m.

CAPITAL REPAIRS CONTINUED

County Manager Steen, regarding the Animal Services facility, said it is still too soon to determine if a new facility is needed based on the number of animals coming in and out of the facility. He said in another year they may be able to determine if a new facility is needed. Chairman Brittain suggested some funds be set aside in next year's budget for a new facility. Ms. Pierce then reviewed recent improvements made to the shelter with COVID-19 funds.

Chairman Brittain said he would like to see the convenience sites look more maintained / aesthetically pleasing because they are utilized frequently by Burke County taxpayers. Commissioner Carswell inquired on the progress of installing restrooms at the convenience sites. Mr. Carpenter said they have some estimates, but it depends on the type of restrooms the Board wants to install, and he noted the best restrooms are prefabricated. Commissioner Taylor commented on shower requirements for safety and upgrading the entrances for curb appeal and community acceptance. A general discussion ensued on owned sites v. leased sites. Mr. Carpenter stated funding for the restrooms would be included in the upcoming budget and advised that professional signage will be installed at all the convenience centers. Further discussion ensued regarding the litter situation on Huffman Bridge Road, hiring personnel to clean the road and installing signage were discussed as ideas to help mitigate the issue. In reference to an earlier question from Commissioner Carswell, Ms. Pierce said BCPS (Burke Co. Public Schools) responded and that their COVID-19 allocation has been set aside to preserve jobs where allowable. Discussion ensued regarding the eligibility of COVID-19 funds for preserving jobs, school funding and teacher supplements. With regard to priority items in next year's budget, Commissioner Carswell requested restrooms at the convenience centers, Vice Chairman Mulwee requested that Ms. Pierce discuss the funding plan for the WPCC Trades Building with the college president, and Chairman Brittain requested ball field lighting at Burke County parks in addition to the HVAC repair at the HRC building. Discussion continued on the Article 43 sales tax.

January 28, 2021 (Recessed)

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN.

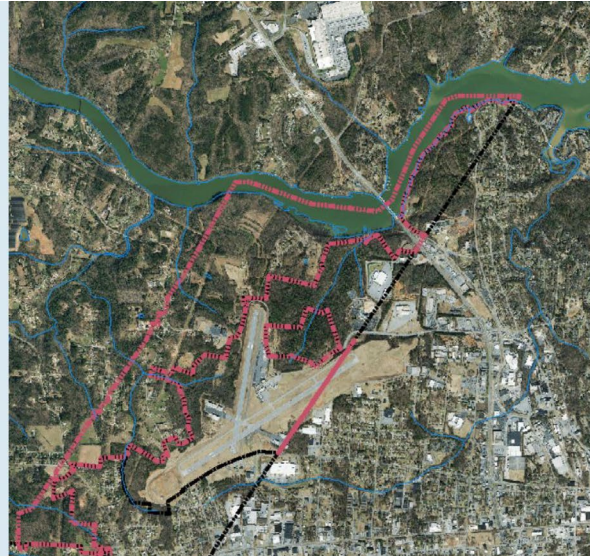
CITY OF HICKORY AIRPORT HANGER PROJECT

Hickory City Manager Warren Wood and Rodney Miller, Deputy City Manager presented the following PowerPoint slideshow and responded to questions from the Board. Rick Beasley, Assistant City Manager, were also in attendance.

Vice Chairman Mulwee left at 3:36 p.m. and was not present for the remainder of the meeting.

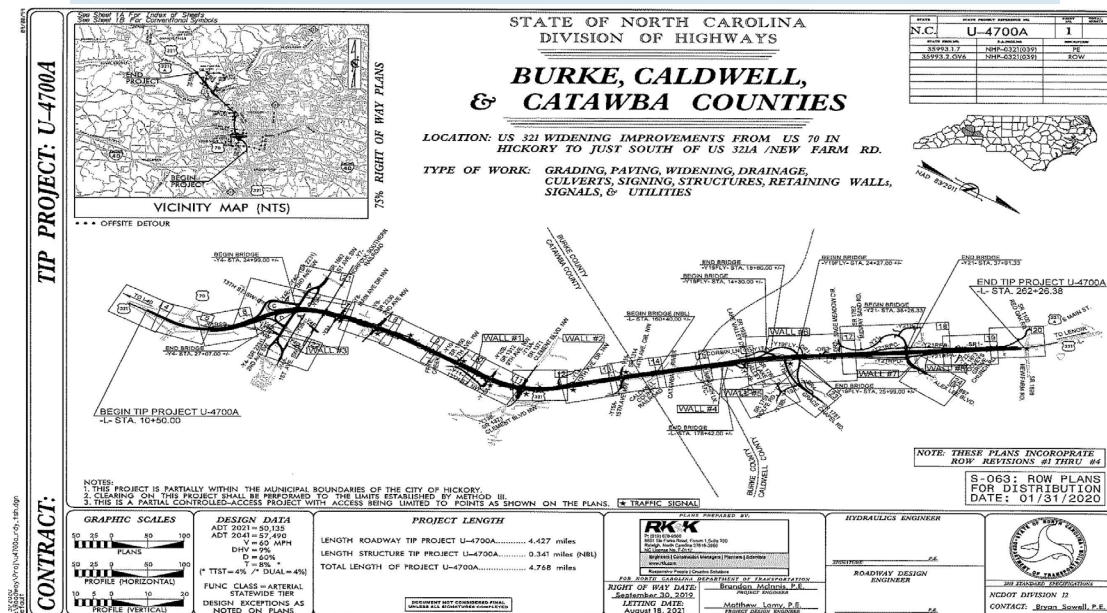


- 1400 acres of Hickory's City Limits or Extraterritorial Jurisdiction are in Burke County
- City currently owns 750 acres between Drowning Creek and Bud Geitner Park (future Deidra Lackey Park)
- City purchased about 100 acres around the Airport over the past year
- Hickory Regional Airport 460 acres "inside the fence"
- Looking at purchasing an additional 250 acres

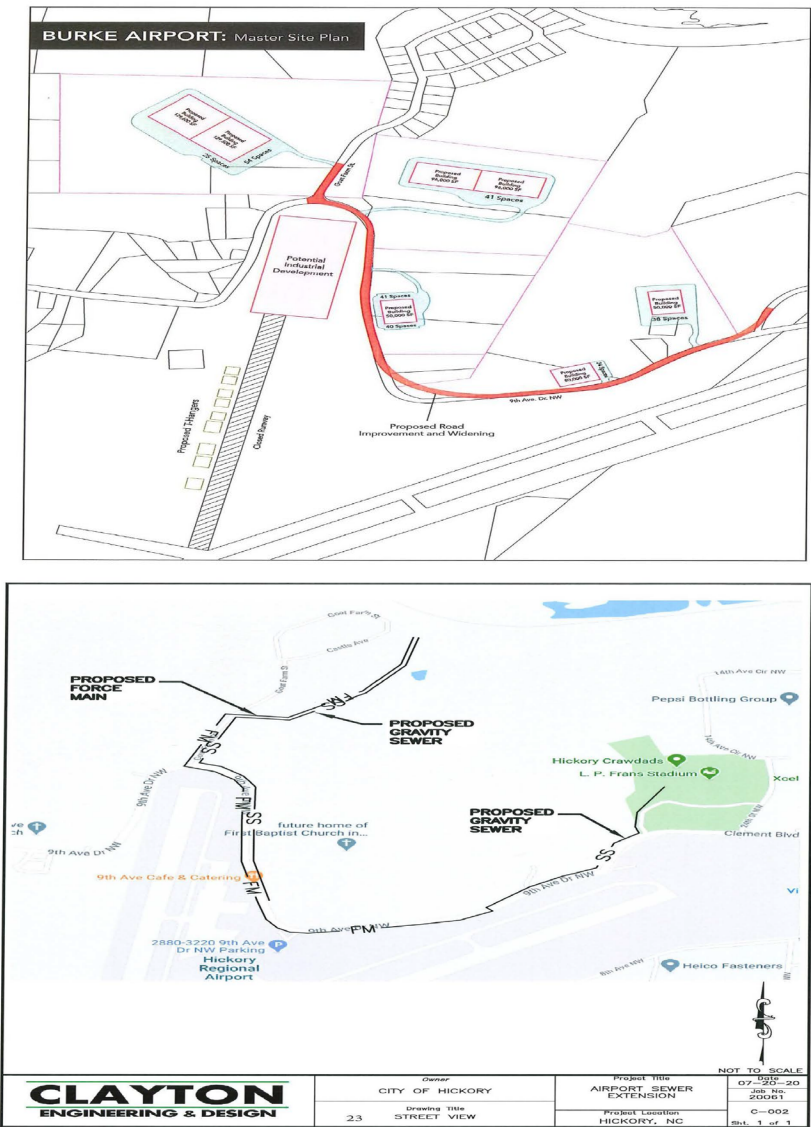


Preparation for Development - Infrastructure

- Land Design “Hickory Riverwalk Plan”
 - US321 Widening Project – Six Lane Super Street from 1st Ave SW to Walmart, construction in 2025 (\$150 million)
 - Riverwalk Project – On land and on water 10ft wide multi-modal path (\$12.5 million)
 - Deidra Lackey Park and Entertainment Venue – At terminus of the Riverwalk (\$10 million private sector project)
 - Aviation Walk & Pedestrian Bridge Over US321 – USDOT BUILD Grant (\$17 million)
 - Appalachian Regional Commission Grant – 9th Ave Dr. Widening/Improvement Project (\$2.2 million)
 - Appalachian Regional Commission Grant – Sewer Extension from LP Frans to Goat Farm Rd. (\$1.2 million)
 - Waterline Extension 16” – Completed (\$400,000)
 - Burke County Tier 1
 - This Census track is in an Opportunity Zone
- 



January 28, 2021 (Recessed)



January 28, 2021 (Recessed)



Project Announcements (Spec Buildings)

Lake Park-321 LLC Spec Building: 40,000 Square Feet on Aviation Walk, \$2.6M Private Investment



January 28, 2021 (Recessed)



January 28, 2021 (Recessed)



There are 62 general aviation airports in North Carolina. Here is how the Hickory Regional Airport compares in a number of categories:

- **26th best in economic output**
- **24th best in jobs**
- **22nd best in state and local taxes**
- **26th best in personal income**

Additionally, there is about \$37.5 million in aircraft property tax value at the Hickory Regional Airport.



There are a few other Airport projects in the works which include:

- Main runway expansion to over 7,000 feet
- Closing secondary runway 1-19 to open for hanger and industrial development
- Pursuing commercial air service
- Just finished new 32,000 sq. ft. hanger

January 28, 2021 (Recessed)



January 28, 2021 (Recessed)



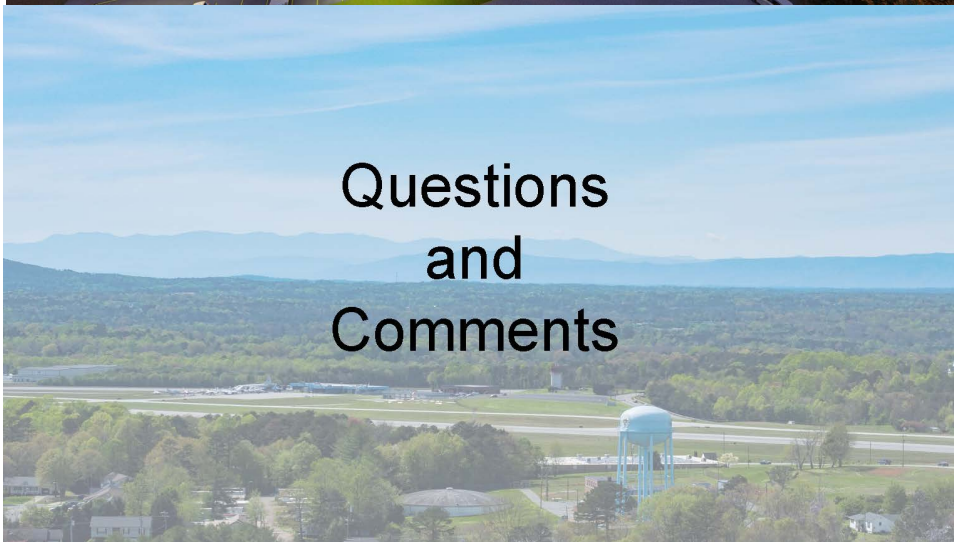
 **mcmillan | pazdan | smith**
ARCHITECTURE

HICKORY AVIATION COMPLEX
HICKORY, NC

ENTRY TO MUSEUM



Questions
and
Comments



January 28, 2021 (Recessed)

Proposed Burke County & City of Hickory Partnership Regarding Hanger Construction at the Hickory Regional Airport

- City would pay to design and construct a new hanger
- County and City would agree on a baseline of property tax base
- Burke County would agree to contribute 50% of any additional property tax revenue generated at the Airport as a result of additional property tax base to go towards paying off the hanger
- If tax base is lost for any reason and falls below the baseline, Burke County would owe nothing
- Once hanger is paid off, Burke County would retain 100% of their property tax revenue

Mr. Miller also commented on the completion of a study conducted on the airport and the real likelihood of restoring commercial flights at the HRA. Commissioner Taylor left at 4:06 p.m., during Mr. Wood's presentation, and was not present for the remainder of the meeting. County Manager Steen said if the Board is interested, staff would draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and establish a publicized joint meeting with the Hickory City Council and the Board. It would be the start of a beneficial relationship, he said. Discussion continued.

Note: March 9, 2021 was selected as the date for the special joint meeting.

RESULT: NO ACTION TAKEN

LOSS OF QUORUM

With Commissioner Taylor's departure at 4:06 p.m., a quorum of the Commissioners was no longer present.

ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn at 4:31 p.m.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain and Johnnie W. Carswell
ABSENT:	Wayne F. Abele, Sr., Scott Mulwee and Maynard M. Taylor

Approved this 16th day of March 2021.


 Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
 Burke Co. Board of Commissioners

January 28, 2021 (Recessed)

ATTEST:



Kay Honeycutt Draughn, CMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board