

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners reconvened meeting February 26, 2020, Edwin Morgan Center 517 Peden Street, Laurinburg, NC*

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Commissioners in attendance: Chair Bob Davis, Vice-Chair Carol McCall, Commissioners John Alford (arrived at 10:45 am) Whit Gibson (left at 2:05 pm), Betty Gholston, and Tim Ivey. Commissioner McPhatter was absent. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson, Finance Officer Beth Hobbs, Risk Management Director Lori Parks, Human Resources Manager Susan Sanders, Public Buildings Director Mike McGirt, DSS Director Health Director Kristen Patterson, Emergency Services Coordinator Roylin Hammond, Communications Director Mike Edge, Sheriff Ralph Kersey, Chief Deputy Eddie Smith, Tax Administrator Jim Brown, Public Works Director Bryant Higgins, Parks and Recreation Director Bryan Graham, and Deputy Clerk to the Board Jason Robinson, and members of the public.

**Call to Order, Invocation, and Approval of the Agenda**

Chairman Bob Davis called the reconvened meeting to order, and delivered the invocation.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Gibson to approve the agenda. Motion was duly seconded by Vice Chair McCall. Vote to approve the agenda: Unanimous.**

**New County Logo**

The Board first heard from Economic Development Director Mark Ward. Mr. Ward stated that he along with Risk Management Director Lori Parks and Deputy Clerk to the Board Jason Robinson had been working on a new logo for the County. Mr. Ward stated that the old logo isn't bad, it just needed some refreshing. Mr. Ward presented the Board with several alternatives and asked the Board for some direction going forward. Vice Chair McCall stated that since this is something that would be marketed outside of North Carolina then North Carolina or NC should be somewhere on the logo. Commissioner Gibson stated that he liked the idea of a marketable logo. Discussion followed about adding additional department heads and bringing the idea back to the Board. Mr. Ward informed the Board that he hoped to get together with more department heads and have a new design by the April meeting.

**2019 Fiscal Year Audit**

The Board next heard from Mr. Carl Head with Roche, Head, and Associates to report on the yearly audit. Mr. Head stated that his firm was giving an unmodified opinion of the County's finances as of June 30, 2019. Mr. Head commended the Board for having 8 years in a row of positive increases in the fund balance and noted that the fund balance is at 25.65% which is significantly higher than the state requirement of 8%. Mr. Head also reviewed the enterprise funds (Water District 1, Water District 2, and Public Works). Mr. Head stated that the County had a positive cash flow, which is what you want to see. Mr. Head also talked about the issuance of bonds showing as a negative in both water districts and the liabilities being greater than the assets in the public works fund. Mr. Head stated that this would be normal for quite some time. Mr. Head also reviewed the findings that were noted by the auditors. Commissioner Gibson inquired why the liabilities at the landfill were more than assets and Mr. Head stated that it was due to the post-closure costs which would go on for a very long time. Mr. Head also reviewed findings in the audit. There were only two findings and it is not abnormal for a county to have

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findings. The first finding was the lateness of the audit. If the audit is not delivered to the Local Government Commission (LGC) by a certain date, then the auditors have to issue a finding. A finding occurred within the Medicaid program, an individual received benefits that was supposed to. This was a finding caused by another county. Commissioner Ivey asked about the total fund balance and why it was so high. Mr. Head stated that when a loan is secured it goes to the fund balance, so that number is from the loan for the new school.

**Financial Update**

The Board next heard from Finance Officer Beth Hobbs. Mrs. Hobbs updated the Board with the latest revenue and expenditure figures as of January 31, 2020. Mrs. Hobbs reported that revenues were at \$27 million, which is approximately 62%. Mrs. Hobbs also reported expenditures at \$23 or approximately 53%, with revenue over expenditures of about \$3 million. Mrs. Hobbs stated that the County expects to take in 94% of budgeted revenue and to expend about 95% of budgeted expenditures. County Manager Kevin Patterson also added that \$1.9 million in fund balance was budgeted to be spent but expect to only expend \$600,000. Mrs. Hobbs also reported a projected fund balance of 22% with 31% total fund balance but to keep in mind part of the total fund balance is restricted. The Local Government Commission recommends an available fund balance of 30% based on counties of our size. County Manager Kevin Patterson then reviewed all of the school debt service for Wagram Primary, Laurel Hill Elementary, Sycamore Lane Elementary, and South Johnson Elementary. Discussion then followed concerning school funding and low wealth funding. Mr. Patterson also informed the Board that the school system is working with the 2018 budget because the state has not passed a budget this year and he doesn't expect a budget to be passed next year either.

**Capital (Ongoing and Upcoming)/Budgetary Goals/Strategic Goal Review/Recreation**

The Board next heard from County Manager Kevin Patterson. Mr. Patterson stated that the paving at the Government Complex is funded this year but unsure if it will be completed by the end of the budget year. There is a chance that we will have to do a capital project ordinance. According to Mr. Patterson there has been a growth in revenue for the last three years. Commissioner Gholston inquired about the education lottery since there has been growth in the lottery. Mr. Patterson stated that the amount that the counties get is no longer tied to the growth of the lottery but counties are given a set amount each year. Vice Chair McCall asked if the sales tax had recovered to prerecession levels. Mr. Patterson stated that the county was where it was at 11 years ago. Mr. Patterson reported to the Board that personnel is the biggest expense because County Government is primarily a service industry. Discussion then followed concerning the retirement system and worker's compensation insurance. Mr. Patterson stated that for every dollar spent on salary there is also 50 cents in fringes that has to be accounted for. Mr. Patterson also informed the Board that administration has been working with retirees to control future insurance costs. Mr. Patterson then reviewed personnel cost and informed the Board that he is looking at an \$800,000 increase in personnel for next budget year. Mr. Patterson then went through each department highlighting revenues and expenditures for the last five years, as well as highlighting any major programs or requests. Within the soil and water budget Mr. Patterson highlighted a program to deal with ditch maintenance, within the cooperative extension budget working with hemp farmers was discussed, in DSS the server issue was discussed, in Communications the turnover rate was discussed, and in the library budget the need

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for a new roof was discussed. Parks and recreation created more discussions for the Board. Parks and Recreation Director Bryan Graham reported to the Board that the youth recreation has seen a reduction in participation of youths. According to Mr. Graham, last year football alone saw nearly a 40% drop in participation. Commissioner Alford inquired if there were no kids or if they were doing something else or a combination of the two. Mr. Graham expressed that it was a combination of the two. He also mentioned that the recreation department can't compete with the travel ball organization, the kids like the uniforms or something else and are not signing up for recreation. Mr. Patterson also stated that the County had inquired to the Optimist Club about running baseball and the county providing the facilities. Chairman Davis then moved the conversation to the community center in Laurel Hill. Chairman Davis stated that he felt you had to have a set of plans for the facility and asked the Board if it would be ok to direct the county manager and the parks and recreation director to get together and come up with a set of plans. Commissioner Alford stated that it should probably be planned for a multiuse facility. Chairman Davis recognized Mr. Leon Butler of the Laurel Hill Community. Mr. Butler stated that the folks at Laurel Hill would like to see a facility similar to what is in Wagram. Discussion followed concerning the community center at Laurel Hill. Mr. Patterson next mentioned public buildings and grounds and informed the Board that they may be looking at different options for grounds maintenance. Discussion then followed concerning the John Blue House and roofs at various county buildings. Mr. Patterson then moved to communications and gave the Board an update of the communication tower. According to Mr. Patterson, the hope is to have the tower completely finished by the end of March and explained that the 911 system that we have now is not the same 911 system as we had 18 months ago. Mr. Patterson also explained to the Board that the turnover rate at communication was high (about 48%) due partially to the nature of the job. The Board and Mr. Patterson discussed ways to address and improve the turnover rate. Mr. Patterson then mentioned EMS and stated that the ambulances are in better shape now than in the past. There is still a need to replace the QRVs, which are used as quick response vehicles. These vehicles are older and reaching the end of the useful life. In the Sheriff's budget discussion centered around communication needs to upgrade to 800 megahertz radios and additional personnel for bailiffs and school resource officers. In the jail, Mr. Patterson stated that capital projects are looked at on a rolling basis. Mr. Patterson also discussed with the Board a complete tax reevaluation in 2027. In the elections budget Mr. Patterson informed the Board that new voting equipment would need to be purchased for around roughly \$90,000 to be in place for the November election. In the administration budget Mr. Patterson stated that he would like to do an independent salary study. This would cost a little less than \$30,000. Commissioner Ivey pointed out that since 2015 there have been a 50% increase in salaries and that it jumped off the page. Mr. Patterson stated that is probably due to adding positions. According to Mr. Patterson, lots of counties have 2-3 people to do a job that we only have one for. Mr. Patterson also mentioned that there would be a price tag after a salary study was done. Chairman Davis stated that he had always heard that Scotland County was losing employees to neighboring counties and asked Mr. Patterson if the step increases had helped. Mr. Patterson stated that step increases and COLA have allowed the county to stay firm but not gain but that we were also closer to competitors than five years ago. Commissioner Gibson stated that what he had always known about salary studies was that there was an expectation of a salary adjustment. Mr. Patterson stated that he felt that a lot of positions were competitive. Discussion followed about a salary study and future trends towards retaining employees. Mr. Patterson also reviewed the enterprise funds in the water districts and solid waste. Mr. Patterson also talked about the fire tax and that

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the fire departments have completed purchasing pumper trucks. The fire commission has said that they believe tanker trucks can wait a little while to be replaced. Mr. Patterson also informed the Board about the 911 funding. Mr. Patterson stated that the 911 board gets very picky about what they pay for. Mr. Patterson then stated that he knows that the number one goal for the Board is to lower the tax rate and he always has that in mind at budget time. Mr. Patterson next moved to the new statute 160(d) which deals with land use. Mr. Patterson stated that the Board had identified improving upon the land use plan as one of their strategic goals back in October. Now the North Carolina General Assembly has passed a new statute dealing with land use planning. Mr. Patterson stated that the County is going to have to do a new land use plan and the COG and another agency have been contacted to help with this process. According to the new statute new land use plans must be in place by January of 2021.

**Recreation**

The Board next moved to the topic of community centers. Mr. Patterson stated that he would be getting with parks and recreation to specifically deal with Laurel Hill. Mr. Patterson further stated that he would like to get with parks and recreation about the need for community centers across the county. Chairman Davis stated that he had had discussions with Mr. Graham and that there might be some grants available. Vice Chair McCall stated that she had heard from a number of people in Gibson that they would like a community center as well and she believes that is something that they need. Mr. Patterson said that this was all part of a county-wide process to decide about community centers.

**Policy Committee Recommendations**

The Board next heard from Risk Management Director Lori Parks and Human Resources Manager Susan Sanders. Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Sanders reviewed some policy changes in the administrative leave policy. According to Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Sanders the policy review committee recommended to the policy committee to combine 3 policies into 2 and to eliminate the adverse weather leave policy. The change would also remove the restrictions of using administrative leave and redefine an emergency into a declared emergency, as it relates to administrative leave. Mrs. Sanders pointed out that this leave is not paid out upon separation with the County. Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Sanders also reviewed the changes to the overtime policy which mainly dealt with keeping up with time. Vice Chair McCall stated that it was never the intent of the policy committee for the Board to vote today on the changes and asked if it was pleasing to the Board that it be placed on the consent agenda. *Consent of the Board was to place the changes on the consent agenda for the March 9 meeting.*

The Board then heard from the county manager concerning a monument that is proposed at the sheriff department entrance. Mr. Patterson stated that this discussion started while trying to find an appropriate way to honor a deputy who had been killed in the line of duty. According to Mr. Patterson, right now there are two deputies who have been lost while performing their duties. This memorial would have room for more names if they are needed. In talking with public buildings the installation could be accomplished fairly simply and could pour concrete in the area and put white stone in place. Vice Chair McCall stated that the policy committee had two meetings about this memorial and this is the conclusion that they have come to and if it is agreeable to the Board that this could also be placed on the consent agenda for March 9<sup>th</sup>. *Consent of the Board was to place the memorial/monument on the consent agenda for the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.*

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**North Laurinburg School**

Mr. Patterson then brought to the Board's attention the matter of North Laurinburg Elementary School. According to Mr. Patterson after the school was closed, by statute the Board of Education must offer it to the Board of Commissioners. Discussion followed about the use that that County would have for the school. Upon completion of discussion, **motion was made by Commissioner Ivey to reject the offer to purchase North Laurinburg Elementary School. Motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Alford. Vote to reject: Unanimous.**

**Appointment of Clerk to the Board and Deputy Clerk**

The Board next moved to the matter of the appointment of clerk to the board. Mr. Patterson informed the Board that Jason Robinson had been serving as deputy clerk to the board until his probationary period was over. That probationary period has now ended. Vice Chair McCall stated that she felt that they were very fortunate to have Mr. Robinson and **motion was made by Vice Chair McCall to appoint Mr. Jason Robinson as clerk to the board of commissioners for Scotland County. Motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Ivey. Vote to appoint: Unanimous.** Mr. Patterson then asked the Board to appoint him as deputy clerk to the board just in case. **Motion was made by Commissioner Gholston to appoint Mr. Patterson as deputy clerk to the board. Motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Ivey. Vote to appoint: Unanimous**

**Utility Easement**

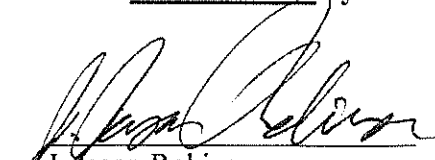
Mr. Patterson brought to the Board's attention the issue that when the County agreed to the lease with Verizon that a utility easement was not granted and that needs to be granted to hook up everything on the tower. Upon hearing from Mr. Patterson, **motion was made by Commissioner Ivey to grant Verizon the needed easement. Motion was duly seconded by Vice Chair McCall.**

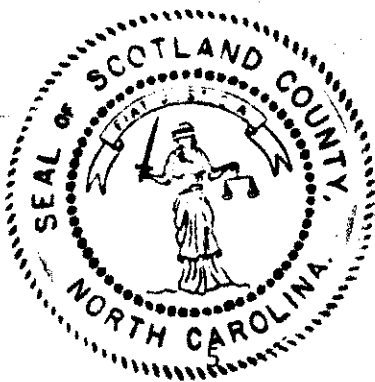
**Commissioner Comments**

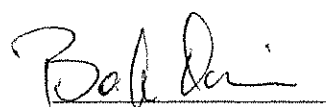
Commissioner Ivey reminded everyone of the NACO Legislative Conference if they wanted to go. Vice Chair McCall thanked Clerk to the Board Jason Robinson on organizing the lunch. Chairman Davis expressed that he appreciated everyone coming out to the meeting and taking an interest.

**Adjournment**

Having no further business, **Motion was made by Vice-Chair McCall to adjourn and it was duly seconded by Commissioner Gholston. Vote: Unanimous**

  
J. Jason Robinson  
Clerk to the Board



  
Bob Davis  
Chair

(County Seal)