

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners Special Meeting June 10, 2020, Scotland Place
1210 Turnpike Road and GoToMeeting Room #376-128-365, Laurinburg, NC*

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Commissioners in attendance: Chair Bob Davis, Vice-Chair Carol McCall, Commissioners John Alford, Whit Gibson (electronic), Betty Gholston, and Tim Ivey. Commissioner McPhatter was absent. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson, County Attorney Ed Johnston, and Clerk to the Board Jason Robinson.

Call to Order, Invocation, and Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Bob Davis called the special meeting to order, and delivered the invocation and led the pledge of allegiance. **Motion was made by Commissioner Alford to approve the agenda. Motion was duly seconded by Vice Chair McCall. Vote to approve the agenda: Unanimous.**

Report from Law Enforcement

The Board first heard from Sheriff Ralph Kersey. Sheriff Kersey stated that he had been asked to come and speak briefly concerning crime. According to Sheriff Kersey, the first five months of 2020 (January through May) have seen less reports of crime to the sheriff's department than 2019. Through the first five months of 2019 there had been 522 incidents reported, and through the first five months of 2020 there had only been 218 incidents reported, which is a 58% reduction. In addition, in 2019 there had been 66 reports of violent crimes and in 2020 only 23, which is a 65% reduction. Sheriff Kersey stated that he attributes this drop in incident reports to being proactive and implementing programs that have been geared toward crime prevention. Sheriff Kersey also stated that there have been issues in the City of Laurinburg and that he has offered assistance to the chief of police for the city. According to Sheriff Kersey, there is not a gang problem in the County per say but more of a friends and family problem. One minute a group is friends and the next minute they are shooting at each other. The sheriff also highlighted programs that had been used with inmates that has made a difference. Commissioner Gholston stated that she had asked the sheriff to attend the meeting to give a report on crime because she hears of at least 1 black man every month is shot and killed and she realizes that a lot of the crime is in the city but she wanted to know if there was gang activity. Sheriff Kersey responded that he believes that the chief is just as concerned as he is about trying to improve. Sheriff Kersey also reported that most of the violent crime he sees is white on white, black on black, and Native American on Native American, there is not a lot of racial crime. Commissioner Gholston asked Sheriff Kersey that after he coronavirus calms down if there could be community meetings in churches. Sheriff Kersey stated that there needs to be more church community watches. Sheriff Kersey also commented that he as proud of people in Scotland County because they have shown the state and the country how to protest. Commissioner Gholston stated that she would like to talk more about organizing church groups when the pandemic is over because it is always good to see the sheriff in the community. Commissioner Alford stated that he had spoken to a senior citizen who received a call to check on them. Vice Chair McCall stated that need to include language of anti-violence and talk about the level of violence. Sheriff Kersey stated that most violent crime is drug related in some way. Commissioner Ivey stated that he had seen Chief Williams and he had a prior commitment. County Manager Kevin Patterson stated that he had spoken with the city manager today and he

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said that Chief Williams would be happy to speak to the Board at any time but had a prior commitment tonight.

Budget Update

The Board heard from County Manager Kevin Patterson concerning an update on the 2020-21 budget. Mr. Patterson informed the Board that the numbers they are seeing today will change before adoption. One change is a grant obtained by the sheriff's office for \$56,000 from the federal government. Mr. Patterson stated that the recommended budget is \$44,176,077 with a 1% cost of living (COLA) increase for employees, no change in the tax rate, and current expense funding for the schools unchanged. Commissioner Ivey inquired if the Board could exclude itself from the 1% COLA. Mr. Patterson responded that it was standard personnel policy but the Board could change it with budget adoption. One item that Mr. Patterson called the Board's attention to is the unfreezing of the QA Trainer position in DSS to enhance employee training programs. Mr. Patterson also highlighted that the budget would reclassify the finance officer position to assistant county manager. Discussion followed on continuity of operations. Mr. Patterson also stated that the new voting equipment is included in the budget. Commissioner Ivey stated that he and Commissioner Gholston had attended the voting equipment presentation. Discussion followed concerning the voting equipment. Mr. Patterson also stated that there was an increase for the school bond debt service that was offset by the lease payment from the schools. Mr. Patterson updated the Board on projected property tax decline as well as a 10% anticipated reduction in sales tax. Mr. Patterson then reviewed with the Board charts of expenditures as well as allocation of tax dollars. According to Mr. Patterson, personnel makes up 48% of the expenditures of county government. Mr. Patterson highlighted personnel expenses in the budget including a reclassification for maintenance, custodians, library workers, and the finance officer as well as COLA increase, as well as an increase in retirement and health insurance. Chairman Davis asked about the starting salary for custodians and Mr. Patterson stated that it was about \$10 per hour. Mr. Patterson also informed the Board that the liaison committee recommended that the funding for schools remain flat. Chairman Davis stated that he remembers the liaison committee members agreeing to keep funding flat this year. Mr. Patterson reminded the Board that the school's budget request had been \$10,289,213 but Mr. Patterson said that he had done the calculation and came up with \$10,137,824 based on the funding formula. Commissioner Ivey commented that the correct numbers are so hard to get for the funding formula and that part of the problem is anticipated ADM because the State and the County have different numbers. Commissioner Gibson also stated that he remembered that all members of the liaison committee were to go back to their boards and keep funding flat. Mr. Patterson then reviewed the solid waste budget which includes a proposed \$2 per ton increase to the tipping fee. Mr. Patterson reported that during the pandemic that there have been more light loads (loads that take up space but weigh less). Mr. Patterson did say that if the Board wanted to delay the \$2 per ton increase to the tipping fee by a year the solid waste budget would still be okay. Mr. Patterson stated that the increase would impact the City of Laurinburg and commercial haulers the most. Chairman Davis stated that he felt the fee increase was appropriate especially since the tipping fee hadn't been increased in a few years. Mr. Patterson then reviewed the expenditure categories for the solid waste budget as well as the tipping fee paid for the last five years. Mr. Patterson next stated that there was no change in the water district budget, but an engineer has been contracted with to develop a plan for the Cascades water tank. Mr. Patterson next moved to the fire tax budget. Mr. Patterson reported that one fire truck was to

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be purchased this year. In addition, an additional \$10,000 will be allocated to all departments in total and funds were going to be allocated for major repairs on county-owned trucks. Mr. Patterson then reviewed the restricted 911 funds budget. Vice Chair McCall commented that she felt it was amazing the things that have been outlined in the budget all with decreasing revenues and with keeping the tax rate flat. Commissioner Ivey stated the he still didn't feel like the sales tax numbers were going to be as bad as projected. Mr. Patterson also stated that there was an appropriation in parks and recreation of \$20,000 for a site plan for the Laurel Hill Community Center.

Public Hearing

Chairman Davis then opened the public hearing for purposes of receiving comment concerning the 2020-21 fiscal year budget. The Board heard from Kyle Wychoff, Leon Butler, and Jeff Shelley from the Laurel Hill Community all expressing a desire to have a community center in Laurel Hill. Upon no further comment from the public, **motion was made by Vice Chair McCall to close the public hearing. Motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Ivey. Vote to close public hearing: unanimous.**

Commissioner Comments

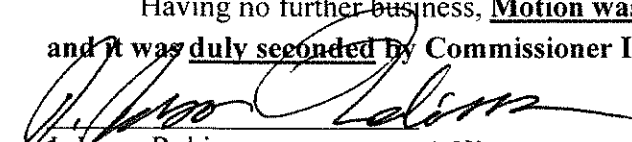
Vice Chair McCall brought before the Board for information a flyer from Scotch Meadows about a corporate membership. This would allow county employees to take advantage of reduced rates for membership at Scotch Meadows for golf and pool privileges. The cost to the County would be \$1,000. Commissioner Gholston then stated that she didn't feel the commissioners could ignore the protests over the last two weeks. Commissioner Gholston further stated that the Board needed to look at laws and policies. She also stated that the Board needs to take their oaths seriously and provide fair policies and affect laws in a fair and just and positive way. Commissioner Alford also stated that the Board needs to address this with the sheriff about policies and make sure his department has cameras.

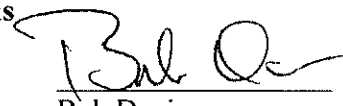
Closed Session

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, concerning litigation of Owens vs Scotland County. Motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Ivey. Vote to go into closed session: unanimous. When the Board came out of closed session no business was taken up.

Adjournment

Having no further business, **Motion was made by Commissioner Alford to adjourn and it was duly seconded by Commissioner Ivey. Vote: Unanimous**


J. Jason Robinson
Clerk to the Board


Bob Davis
Chair

(County Seal)

