# Official Minutes
# October 22, 2024
# Board of Commissioners Meeting

**In Attendance:**
Randy Church, Chairman
Jeff Branch, Commissioner
Donnie Potter, Commissioner
Robbie Wilkie, Commissioner
David Lackey, County Attorney
Abigail Rich, County Clerk

**Absent:**
Mike LaBrose, Vice Chairman

**Welcome:**

Mark Transou provided a welcome as a third party to the meeting.

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Church called the Board of Commissioners Meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

**Public Hearing:**

Chairman Church declared the public hearing open for the incentive agreement for Project Cardinal.

Ashley Bolick was the first speaker. Ms. Bolick provided a presentation for the Board as an overview for Project Cardinal. Ms. Bolick indicated that this project would boost the economy. Ms. Bolick then reviewed the tax structure for the project and noted the public benefits. After Ms. Bolick was finished with her presentation, Brad Hefner came up to speak in support of Project Cardinal.

Chairman Church then began calling individuals from the list of names signed up to speak on the matter.

Lynette Ramsey of 5140 JM Craig Rd., Granite Falls came to the podium. Ms. Ramsey thanked the Boards for the opportunity to speak and thanked them for looking toward growth and expansion for Caldwell County. Ms. Ramsey provided that she had conducted research on this project throughout the week. She went on to make comparisons with the amount of tax money that Google pays each year and the County services these funds could pay for.

Dr. Poarch of Caldwell Community College was the next to speak. Dr. Poarch stated he was bringing comments on behalf of CCC&TI. Dr. Poarch noted that Google has been a great partner with the College and in 2007 CCC&TI partner with Google to launch the first IT Institute. This Institute is a tailed workforce program that helps prepare students for jobs in the IT programs. Continuing, Dr. Poarch stated Google was the first company they contacted for technology needs when COVID-19 hit the area. Google provided several Chromebooks to students and provided hot spots to expand broadband, including equipping school buses with Wi-Fi. Dr. Poarch told the Board Google is a major supporter of programs with CCC&TI and assisted with getting free college courses to local high schools.

Jerry Church, of 9 Morningside Dr. Granite Falls, came to the podium. Mr. Church said that $600,000,000 is quite and investment and quite an amount of work for many years. He continued by saying that the benefit of this investment is going to be the tax dollars to the County. He noted that there are several upcoming projects that are going to need funding, including the building of a new courthouse and a new health sciences building at CCC&TI. Mr. Church said that he would highly recommend for the incentive to be passed this evening.

Bryan Moore of 208 Hibriten Ave., Lenoir came to speak. Mr. Moore said Google has great corporate citizenship and great local citizenship. Mr. Moore then provided a top-10 list of things Google has done for Caldwell County.

Bill Slagel was next to the podium. Mr. Slagel noted that he works with much of the leadership in Caldwell County. Mr. Slagel said that data centers are here to stay and they are just as important for water and sewer services in an area. He then told that Board that hosting Google in Caldwell County set a trend for Western North Carolina. Since Google established its data center, other companies such as Apple and Microsoft have came to this area. Mr. Slagel said as a result of this, billions have been invested in the communities and surrounding areas. He continued by saying that the impacts of Hurricane Helene showed the need for communication and data centers will help with this.

Dr. Don Phipps of 408 Woodridge Drive, Lenoir came to the podium. Dr. Phipps told the Board that Google is a significant value add for the Caldwell County Schools system. He noted that Google gives to the schools through monetary donations, services, and other outlets. Dr. Phipps said the schools would no be able to accomplish several of its endeavors without the help of Google.

Hannah Morrison, on behalf of Jamie Willis with United Way came to the podium next. Ms. Morrison read a letter than was provided by Ms. Willis.

Keith Hindman came to the podium to express gratitude to Google for their support of the Communities in Schools program. He said that Google's support strengthens the community as a whole.

Dr. Lowry, CEO of Caldwell UNC Health came to provide enthusiastic support of Project Cardinal. He noted that Caldwell UNC is expanding its resources and growing rapidly and he is

excited about the expansion. Dr. Lowry continued by saying that virtual services and people have located to this area for Google and he fully supports Google.

Bob Floyd, Mayor of Cedar Rock, was next to speak. He thanked the Boards for bringing the project to this point. Mayor Floyd said that the County cannot do everything it wants to do, generally because it has a lower tax base, but the County does what it can. Mayor Floyd said that this project is going to make a big difference in what the County will be able to do. He then noted that this project would be a gamechanger for citizens' children and grandchildren. Mayor Floyd continued by saying thank you and noting his support for the project.

Michael Dineen of 1504 Winsor Street, Lenoir, was the last to speak. Mr. Dineen said he works with Lenoir Housing and Google has been instrumental in providing money for laptops and Wi-Fi centers. He also noted a grant Google gave in the amount of $50,000 and said he supports Google.

With there being no more individuals signed up to speak. Chairman Church closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Branch made the motion to approve the incentive agreement for Project Cardinal. The motion carried unanimously.

***The City of Lenoir then completed the remainder of its action items on the agenda.**

**Project Identification:**

Mark Transou officially announced that Project Cardinal was an expansion of Google in Lenoir.

**Adjourn:**

With there being no more business to attend to, Commissioner Potter made the motion to adjourn at 7:18 PM.

The motion carried unanimously.