Caldwell County
North Carolina
Board of Commissioners Meeting

December 4, 2023 at 6:00 PM
City-County Chambers
905 West Avenue NW, Lenoir

MINUTES

Attendance:

Randy Church, Chairman
Mike LaBrose, Vice Chairman
Jeff Branch, Commissioner
Donnie Potter, Commissioner
Robbie Wilkie, Commissioner
David Lackey, County Attorney
Donald Duncan, County Manager
Abby Rich, County Clerk

Call to Order
Chairman Church called the December 4, 2023, Board of Commissioners meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Public Comment Period
There were no individuals signed up for public comment.

Invocation
Waterlife Church Pastor of Connections, Chris Eidse, led the invocation for those in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance
Commissioner Robbie Wilkie led the Pledge of Allegiance for those in attendance.

Agenda Amendments from the Board, Manager & Public
There were no amendments to the agenda.
Commissioner LaBrose made the motion to adopt the agenda.
The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Items

1. **Organizational Meeting**
   Chairman Church turned the meeting over to the County Manager for the organizational meeting.

   Vice Chairman LaBrose made the motion to nominate Commissioner Randy Church as the Chairman.

Commissioner Potter made a second to the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Church made the motion to nominate Commissioner Mike LaBrose as the Vice Chairman.
Commissioner Potter made a second to the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Church had a brief discussion, noting that the Board of Commissioners represent the entire County, and they strive to make it a better place.

2. 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Audit

Kang Moua provided the audit presentation for the 2022- 2023 Fiscal Year. Ms. Moua pointed out the highlights of the audit. There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Ms. Moua continued by going through the top revenues and expenditures of the General Fund. Next, Ms. Moua showed the tax collection percentages for 2021, 2022, and 2023. There was no change from 2022 to 2023 and the tax collection percentage remained at 97.82%. After reviewing the Fund Balance and the Water Fund, Ms. Moua provided a list of the key indicators for the Board. Those indicators were a timely audit submission, a stable property tax valuation and collection percentage, Water operating net income and cash to expense ratio, and there was one flag present - Water and Sewer Capital Asset Condition. Commissioner Potter asked Ms.Moua if she would explain the flag to the Board. Chief Financial Officer, Tony Helton, came to the podium to explain the flag to the Board. Mr. Helton told the Board that the flag indicates the ratio between the value of the County's fixed assets in the Water fund and the accumulated depreciation of these assets. Mr. Helton continued by saying that when you have a ratio that is low, such as this one, it indicates that there are a lot of assets that are approaching full depreciation. Meaning, that these assets are older and may be approaching the end of their useful life. Mr. Helton told the Board that this is pointed out to make the Board aware in the event that repairs are needed. Mr. Helton continued by saying that he feels good about this because there are a number of Water projects in the works that are going to help add new assets. The current assets have been used for a long time, and Mr. Helton said that this is a good thing because the County has not had to make purchases here. Chairman Church asked Mr. Helton if the County is purchasing new dump trucks for the Water Department. Mr. Helton told Chairman Church that dump trucks were being purchased. Commissioner Wilkie mentioned that a couple of years back there was a change in the Fund Balance requirement from the State from 8% to 20% and now the County has met that 20%. Commissioner Wilkie then asked what the percentage is once we cross the $100,000,000 threshold. Ms. Moua told Commissioner Wilkie that she could look into that and get the information back to him. There was also a brief discussion for clarity about over budgeting, stating that the County over budgeted, not went over budget.

The Board thanked Ms. Moua.

3. Lenoir Mills Phase II Presentation

Economic Development Director Ashley Bolick came to the podium and introduced York Lawson and Tom Niemann. Mr. Lawson came to the podium and also introduced Mr. Bob Lackey with Imagine One Hospitality and architect Don Tise. Mr. Lawson thanked the Board for making time for the presentation. This is an extension of the Blue

Bell Project and the buildings that will be renovated are the JM Bernhardt Box Company and the Steel Cotton Mill from the late 19th Century. These buildings are located along Underdown Avenue and College Avenue. There will be 65 market rate apartments at this location. Mr. Lawson continued by saying that Imagine One has a concept for the train depot and there will be roughly 100 new jobs with 40 of those being full-time positions.

Commissioner Branch asked Mr. Lawson when they would start the project and how long it would take. Mr. Lawson said that once all the capital is in order, it will take about 6 to 9 months before they begin and 12 to 14 months for building. Commissioner Potter asked what the timeline was for starting the project. Mr. Lawson said that they are working on that now, and they are shovel ready in that they have received their part 2 approvals for historic tax credits on both buildings. Commissioner Potter asked if it would be about 2.5 years and Mr. Lawson said it would be about 2 years. Commissioner Potter also said that he's a big fan of Mr. Lackey's restaurants. Mr. Lackey told the Board that Hickory was his hometown and that he wanted to make Hickory a better community. Mr. Lackey continued by saying that hospitality is the focal area of his company in terms of community betterment, and his company has now grown to include 10 restaurants. Mr. Lackey then stated that Lenoir is a great place to expand, and the company wants to conduct market research to determine what type of restaurant would be best. At the conclusion of Mr. Lackey's remarks, Commissioner Potter stated that he's a big believer in Mr. Lackey's vision of hospitality and that many people in the community feel as though hospitality is something that Caldwell County is missing. Commissioner Potter continued by saying that these ideas will make Caldwell County more of a destination. Don Tise with Tise Keister Architects then came to the podium to thank Caldwell County and the City of Lenoir. Commissioner Branch asked what the estimated cost of the project is. Tom Niemann came back to the podium and stated that the estimated cost is $25 million for the project. Mr. Neimann said there is also $16 million invested in the land to bring the total investment to $41 million. Commissioner Potter asked Mr. Lackey what type of restaurant his company would be bringing in. Mr. Lackey said they will do market research to determine this based on demographic and needs.

Chairman Church thanked all of the speakers for coming and noted that housing and a fine dining establishment were needed in Caldwell County. Commissioner Potter thanked them for their time and investment.

4. 2024 Regular Meeting Schedule

The County Manager noted that there was a conflict with having the regular meeting on Monday, November 11, as that day is Veterans Day. Instead, the meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 12th.

Commissioner Potter made the motion to adopt the resolution for the 2024 Regular Meeting Schedule.
The motion carried unanimously.

Consent

Chairman Church turned the meeting over to the County Manager to present the Consent Agenda.

5. Reappointment of Lisa Deal to Library Board of Trustees

Lisa Deal is requesting reappointment to the Library Board of Trustees.

6. Library- Acceptance of SFRF Grant Funds

The amount of the grant is $79,330 and these funds need to be accepted and brought into the budget.

7. Library SFRF Grant Funds

This budget revision accompanies the previous item.

8. Hudson EMS Base

Approval is requested to move the funds in the amount of $405,000 from the Hudson Property sale into a multi-year capital project fund for the Hudson EMS Base.

9. Approval of Minutes from November 13, 2023 Meeting

Approval of the November 13, 2023 minutes is being requested.

10. Approval of Minutes from November 16, 2023 Meeting

Approval of the November 16, 2023 minutes is being requested.

Vice Chairman LaBrose made the motion to accept the consent agenda as presented.
The motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

At 6:41 PM Vice Chairman LaBrose made the motion to enter closed session pursuant to GS 143-318.11 (a) paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 to discuss matters relating to an economic development opportunity, the County Manager's annual evaluation, and the acquisition of real property and noted that there will be a decision made after closed session.
The motion carried unanimously.

11. Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (4)

12. Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6)

13. Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (5)

Return to Open Session

Commissioner Potter made the motion to adjourn the closed session at 9:33 PM.
Commissioner Wilkie made a second to this motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Wilkie made the motion to return to open session at 9:35 PM.
The motion carried unanimously.

14. Approval of Option to Purchase Agreement

Chairman Church made the motion to enter into a contract to purchase with a 90-day due diligence period the property at 625 Harper Avenue and if we cannot obtain a clear title, Caldwell County will get out of the contract.
The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

With there being no more business to attend to, Commissioner Potter made the motion to adjourn at 9:37 PM.
The motion carried unanimously.

Calendar Year 2024

Caldwell County Commissioner Meeting Schedule

City-County Chambers
905 West Ave. NW
Lenoir, NC

Date	Day	Time	Meeting
January 8, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
February 12, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
March 11, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
April 8, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
May 13, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
June 10, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
July 8, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
August 12, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
September 9, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
October 14, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
November 12, 2023	Tuesday	6:00 p.m.	Regular
December 2, 2024	Monday	6:00 p.m.	Regular

Adopted by the Caldwell County Board of Commissioners during a duly held meeting on the 4th day of December 2023.

*All meetings will air live on the Caldwell County Government TV channel (Spectrum Channel 190) and may also be viewed anytime by visiting www.caldwellcountync.org

ATTEST:

Abigail Rich, County Clerk

Randy T. Church, Chairman