Caldwell County
North Carolina
Board of Commissioners Meeting

February 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM
City-County Chambers
905 West Avenue NW, Lenoir

MINUTES

Attendance:

Present:
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 February 12, 2024, Board of Commissioners meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

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

Invocation
Senior Pastor David Payne of Flemings Chapel Baptist Church provided the invocation for those in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance
Commissioner Donnie Potter led the Pledge of Allegiance for those in attendance.

Agenda Amendments from the Board, Manager & Public
The County Manager informed the Chairman that were no proposed amendments to the agenda.

Commissioner LaBrose made the motion to accept the agenda as presented by the County Manager and County Clerk.
The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Items

1. **Loyce Price Centenarian Award**
   Chairman Church read the Centenarian Award honoring Ms. Annie Loyce Price and her 100 years of life.

Vice Chairman LaBrose made the motion to approve this award.
Commissioner Branch made a second to this motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

2. Moving Mountains Award to Paisley Beane

County Manager, Donald Duncan, presented the Moving Mountains award to Miss Paisley Beane. Mr. Duncan said that Paisley was born with a rare genetic disease, but despite the numerous surgeries she has undergone, she remains passionate about basketball. The Board congratulated Paisley.

3. Recognizing the Retirement of Regina Goforth

Chairman Church read the Resolution honoring Veteran's Services Director, Regina Goforth's retirement. The Board members congratulated Ms. Goforth and Commissioner Branch shared that he was extremely pleased with the assistance provided by the Veteran's Services Office after the passing of his father.

Chairman Church made the motion to adopt the resolution.
The motion carried unanimously.

4. Updates from US Forest Service

Nicholas Larson with the US Forest Service came to the podium to present updates and information about various projects that the NC Forest Service is working on. Those updates included increased wildfire prevention in NC Forest Land, reducing the risk of wildfire, and the Wilson Creek corridor study. On Friday, February 16th, they will be pulling together stakeholders to target what improvements need to be made to the 2-mile stretch of Wilson Creek that is most visited. Commissioner Wilkie asked if the corridor study would address the traffic issues in the area. Mr. Larson provided that the study would not necessarily address the traffic. Commissioner Wilkie discussed the difficulty emergency response vehicles have in this area and stated that at some point this issue needs to be addressed. Commissioner Potter continued this discussion by saying he could talk about this issue for days. He thanked Mr. Larson for the work done in the forestry areas and continued by saying nothing has been done so far in the Wilson Creek corridor. Commissioner Potter then stated the only work that had been done was a guardrail that he had put in place. There was continued discussion about the Sheriff's Office patrolling the area and the environmental impacts of the number of visitors to Wilson Creek. Commissioner Branch asked if the horse trails were turned into bicycle trails to be leased. Mr. Larson said there are funds that are received when events are held for Outfitters Grants. A portion of these funds comes back to the County for payment in lieu of taxes, but these trails are not leased out. Commissioner Potter asked Chief Financial Officer Tony Helton approximately how much money the County receives from the Pelt Grant. There was discussion about who all the County shares these funds with. The conversation turned back to the discussion about not being able to an ambulance or emergency response vehicle the citizens that live in this area. Mr. Larson said that the study will help determine the number of facilities needed in the area and the Forest Service cannot issue permits without having a minimum number of facilities. Chairman Church said that Commissioner Potter carried the sentiments of the Board well. Commissioner Branch asked how many individuals the forest service had on patrol in the area and there was a discussion held with Caldwell County Sheriff Deputy John Runion about the number of individuals on patrol from the County and State. Chairman Church thanked Mr. Larson for coming.

5. StRAP Grant Accomplishments

Soil and Water Conservationist, Aaron Franks, came to the podium to present the accomplishments of the Soil and Water Department with their use of the StRAP Grant Funding. Mr. Franks showed before and after photos of several stream areas that were cleared. Commissioner Potter told Mr. Franks and team to keep up the good work.

6. RFP for Public/Private Partnership for Residential Development of County Owned Property

Charlie Chapman with the Caldwell County Economic Development Department came to the podium to present the public/ private partnership for property located at 1901 Connelly Springs Rd. in Lenoir. Mr. Chapman provided an overview of the RFQ process for the Board. Mr. Chapman also told the Board that the intent is to reserve 20% of the housing for public service workers such as teachers and first responders. Commissioner Branch asked if this would be a low income housing project. Mr. Chapman provided that it is not. There was a brief discussion about this project helping as a recruitment tool for Emergency Services. The Board thanked Mr. Chapman for his presentation.

7. Ripple Fiber

Jason Farjeski with Ripple fiber came to the podium to discuss the company's expansion into Caldwell County. Ripple Fiber hopes to have an office within Caldwell County, and if not, a nearby County. They currently employee 70 North Carolina workers with offices located across North Carolina. Mr. Farjeski provided the Board with a breakdown of their current cost and noted that Ripple Fiber will also offer phone service. He then noted that Caldwell County will get new fiber, infrastructure, and competition with other fiber providers. These will increase the livability index and typically areas with fiber see a 3.1% home price increase. The goal of Ripple Fiber is to build fiber in areas where fiber is currently not available. Vice Chairman LaBrose asked about the reliability of this fiber. Mr. Farjeski told the Vice Chairman that the reliability rates are in the high 99%. Commissioner Potter asked if there were plans for rural development. Mr. Farjeski told Commissioner Potter that he would not use the term rural. For example, Gamewell is a densely populated area. Mr. Farjeski ended his presentation by saying development would begin in 6 to 9 months and construction could begin as soon as 2 months from now. Mr. Farjeski thanked the Board for their time.

8. Tax Liens on Real Property

Tax Administrator Josh Angle came to the podium to request approval to advertise the 2024 tax liens on real property. The total number of outstanding accounts is 5,128 and the sum of these accounts is $2,543,082.77.

Commissioner Wilkie made the motion to approve the advertisement of these tax liens as presented.
The motion carried unanimously.

9. Call for Public Hearing for Road Name- Woods Rd.

GIS Administrator Micah Kelly came to the podium to request a public hearing for the naming of a road in Lenoir. The name of Woods Rd. was proposed by the landowners. There was discussion about an alternative road name because there is a Woods Dr.

already in Caldwell County. Commissioner Potter asked if the landowners could come up with an alternative name to reduce confusion for Emergency Services.

Commissioner Potter made the motion to hold the public hearing at the March 11, Board of Commissioners Meeting.
The motion carried unanimously.

10. Acceptance of Bid for Lake Park Water System

The County Manager told the Board that this is the 2nd bid for the Lake Park Water System. The bid amount is $532,710 and the acceptance will go to North State Water and Sewer Incorporated.

Commissioner Branch made the motion to accept the bid.
The motion carried unanimously.

Consent

Chairman Church turned the meeting over to the County Manager to present the consent agenda.

11. Honoring Black History Month

The Proclamation Honors Black History Month for 2024.

12. Emergency Services- Radio Purchase Grant

Additional federal funding for purchasing radios. The county will be allowed to purchase six radios for a total of $49,985.34.

13. Sheriff's Office- Use of Donated Funds for Safeguard Kit Purchase

The funding will allow the County to have "Stop the Bleed" kits at each school. The amount of the funds to be spent is $11,820.

14. Health Department- Acceptance of Bridges Access Grant

The Health Department received the Bridges Access Grant, this allows for $74,679 in additional vaccine access for those who are uninsured or underinsured.

15. DSS- Use of Grant Funds for Emergency Placement

DSS has received funding for emergency placement of children with behavioral health issues in the amount of $27,996.

16. SCADA Contract between Water Department and ForTech

This is a $30,000 grant that will start the beginning of a supervising control and data acquisition system. It allows for the digital monitoring of valves and filling of tanks.

17. 2024 Appointments Board of Equalization and Review

The Tax Office requested for Thomas (Larry) Andrews, Reba Barlow, Phil Case, Phyllis Mitchell, Wayne Parson, Bob Price, Barbara Teague, and G. David Waechter, (Chairman) to be appointed to the 2024 Board of Equalization and Review.

18. Approval of Agreement for Miscellaneous Services Between Water Department and Wither's Ravenel

This agreement is for on call services relating to emergencies or other urgent needs.

19. Approval of Tri-County Speedway 2024 Schedule

For 2024, Tri-County Motor Speedway has 17 events planned and has provided a list of rain dates and test dates.

20. Conveyance of Property to Governmental Entity

Two Sheriff's Office Patrol Vehicles are being donated to Brookford Police Department.

21. Approval of Minutes from January 11, 2024, Meeting

The approval of the January 11, 2024, meeting minutes is requested.

Chairman Church made the motion to approve the consent agenda.
The motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

Commissioner Potter made the motion to enter closed session pursuant to NC GS 143-318-11 (4) at 7:30 PM.
The motion carried unanimously.

22. Economic Development

Commissioner Potter made the motion to exit the closed session at 8:27 PM.
The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

Commissioner Wilkie made the motion to adjourn at 8:28 PM.
The motion carried unanimously.