

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JULY 14, 2015  
MINUTES**

Chairman Corbin called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. All Board Members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director, County Attorney, members of the news media and interested citizens were present.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Chairman Corbin announced that a dedication ceremony and open house are planned for the Parker Meadows Recreational Complex on Tuesday, August 25, 2015 from 6 to 9 p.m. Those in attendance then watched a video from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) that provided an update on recent NCACC activities.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Chairman Corbin asked those in attendance to observe a moment of silence.

**PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:** Led by Commissioner Shields, the pledge to the flag was recited.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED NAMES FOR NEW ROADS:** Chairman Corbin called the public hearing to order at 6:14 p.m. and recognized Angie Kinsland, the county's 911 Addressing Coordinator. She explained that the public notice for the hearing as well as the list of proposed road names and the range of road numbers associated with them had been advertised and posted as required by state statute. Chairman Corbin pointed out that no one signed up to speak during the hearing. Following further explanation from Mrs. Kinsland and a question from Commissioner Beale, the County Attorney explained that he would have an amendment to the county's road naming ordinance for the board's consideration following the close of the hearing, and the list of new road names and number ranges would be attached as Exhibit A to that amendment. Chairman Corbin closed the public hearing at 6:15 p.m. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the

board voted unanimously to approve a document entitled “July 14, 2015 Amendment to Macon County Road Naming and Numbering System Ordinance Heretofore Codified as Chapter 14 of the Macon County Code,” a copy of which is attached **(Attachment 1)** and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** **Margie Sweeney** told the board members that more help needs to be hired for the county’s Animal Control Department, adding that there is too much area and too many calls for the officers to handle. After highlighting the need for the department’s transport program that keep animals from being euthanized, she also addressed complaints against the animal shelter’s staff, stating that the staff deals with verbal abuse and even racial slurs. She invited the board members to come to the shelter and to “walk in their shoes for a while, please.” **Debby Dillon**, a volunteer at Macon County Animal Control, said that she was initially warned not to go to the shelter, but told the board members she was “blown away” by the dedication of the staff. “I’ve never seen a bunch of government workers so dedicated to what they do and loving what they do,” she said. She also invited the board to come out and spend one hour at the shelter and told them, “Your mind will be changed.” **Brittney Raby** informed the board about a Read 2 Me program called “Story Walks,” and after describing the program asked for permission to bring Story Walks onto county property, either at the Little Tennessee River Greenway or at the new Parker Meadows Recreational Complex. Chairman Corbin said that while he thought this was a great idea, he asked the County Attorney to check and see if there are any legal issues involved as the program would add permanent structures at either location. **Susan Schlaeter** spoke on behalf of Appalachian Animal Rescue Shelter, which she described as a “helpmate” to Macon County Animal Control. She noted that the rescue shelter receives no funding from the county, but is in “desperate need” of assistance. Chairman Corbin encouraged her to apply to the Community Funding Pool. **Lowell Monteith** spoke on behalf of “The Father’s House,” and after praying, told the board that his work with the homeless has resulted in “a lot of push back from the community and county.” Mr. Monteith said that while he does not want money from the county, he was seeking the board’s assistance as county inspection officials are “coming after him” and were threatening to pull the electric meter at the shelter located off Jim Mann Road. He asked the board for “a little bit of moral support” and after noting the county’s \$200,000 budget for the animal shelter, added “at least concern yourself about the people.” He noted that sheriff’s deputies, Franklin Police and the Department of Social Services send or drop people off at the shelter. Mr. Monteith said that county Fire Marshall Jimmy Team wants him to install a \$20,000 fire sprinkler system at the shelter or risk being shut down. Chairman Corbin told Mr. Monteith that this was “the first we’ve heard of this,” but added that the county commissioners have no authority to suspend the state building code. The County Manager addressed Mr. Monteith, stating that he had been in touch

with Bobby Bishop, the county's chief building inspector, as well as Mr. Teem. The County Manager said that both Mr. Bishop and Mr. Teem had told Mr. Monteith the steps that were needed to bring the building into compliance, and that both county officials were "charged with doing their job accurately and without prejudice" as the county has adopted the state building code. The County Manager said there are "numerous violations" at the location and to knowingly continue them is a violation of state law. The County Manager told Mr. Monteith that he was not questioning the merit or the sincerity of his efforts, but that county officials were simply upholding the law. Mr. Monteith said that while the code book might be the "Bible" for the county officials, he could not ignore his Biblical standards. He told the board that the facility was not a shelter but a church, and that those who stayed there were members of it. He said his church operates a program to "see the power of Jesus Christ change their lives," and again asked the board to "help support what we're doing." Chairman Corbin responded that there is "no action we can take," as the state building code is "not our laws to suspend." He encouraged Mr. Monteith to work with the county's building officials and the County Manager on this matter. **Dr. Gordon Mercer** told the board that he wanted to "speak favorably" about The Father's House. He described homelessness as a major problem in the county, and cited a portion of the North Carolina Administrative Code which he interpreted would not require churches to have sprinkler systems. He told the board members that they "need to be supportive of this kind of mission." **John Decker** told the board that he spends lots of time at The Father's House, and described in greater detail the program that is in place to assist the homeless in becoming accountable for their actions. Chairman Corbin again reiterated that the county doesn't have the authority to override the state building code, while Commissioner Higdon cited the efforts of The Father's House as "admirable."

**ADJUSTMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as adjusted, as follows:

- To add a report from Commissioner Tate regarding services to Jackson County under Old Business as Item 9B.
- To add consideration of a sublease agreement with Sutton Radio Broadcasting regarding the use of space on a communications tower and the associated transmitter building under Old Business as Item 9C, per the County Manager.
- To add Budget Amendments #5 through #7 to the Consent Agenda under Item 11B, per the Finance Director.

**MACON NEW BEGINNINGS:** Bob Bourke with Macon New Beginnings, Inc. also addressed the board on the issue of the homeless in Macon County. He said that the group’s mission is to “come up with the best solution to solve this challenge.” He listed a number of activities that Macon New Beginnings would engage in, including helping the homeless to take advantage of services, focusing resources to assist them and eventually transitioning them into a home. “We’d like to lead that charge,” Mr. Bourke told the board. He said the group would need the community’s help and that he had initiated conversations with other organizations like CareNet, MPP and REACH. Commissioner Beale noted that Mr. Bourke and Mr. Monteith who spoke earlier had “started out together” and asked what happened. Mr. Bourke said that while he and Mr. Monteith both share a “passion to help the homeless,” he said that “his approach is a little bit different than ours.”

**QZAB CONSTRUCTION BIDS:** Bid tabulations for the improvement projects at Highlands School and Union Academy were presented by the Finance Director. Emily Kite with Novus BEW Architects was also present to provide additional information and to answer questions. The Finance Director said that three bids were received on the Highlands School project, with the lowest of the three coming from Carolina Specialties. She explained that with the base bid and Alternates A-1 through A-8 (with the exception of A-3), the bid total comes to \$1,255,440. A copy of the bid tabulation is attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. With the bids for Union Academy, the Finance Director told the board that there is “a bit of an issue here,” as all three bids came in over the budgeted amount. However, state statute allows the county to negotiate with the lowest bidder, and in this case, the architects at Novus BEW devised a “value engineering” solution that came up with \$155,392 in deducts from the lowest base bid. Kearey Builders submitted the lowest base bid at \$1,580,000, and with the deducts, the new number is \$1,424,608, which comes in under the total funds available for construction of \$1,451,570. A copy of the bid tabulation (Attachment 3) and the Value Engineering Meeting Summary from Novus BEW (Attachment 4) are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes. Commissioner Tate asked if the Macon County Board of Education had reviewed the bids, and the response was no. Commissioner Beale questioned the need for the school board’s approval, and the County Attorney explained that it was necessary. Chairman Corbin asked if the commissioners could approve the bids contingent on the school board’s approval. The County Manager said that with the approval of the loan by the state Local Government Commission (LGC) not scheduled until August 4<sup>th</sup>, the county will likely encumber some expenses on the projects, and recommended that the board adopt a capital project ordinance for the two schools, even though the county may not receive invoices until after the loan is approved. Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to approve a Capital Project

Ordinance for Union Academy and Highlands School as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 5) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to award the bid for Union Academy to Kearey Builders in the amount of \$1,424,608 based on the value engineering solution presented earlier, and to award the bid for Highlands School to Carolina Specialties in the amount of \$1,255,440 which includes the base bid and all of the alternates with the exception of Alternate A-3 as presented earlier, with both awards pending the approval of the Macon County Board of Education.

**SERVICES TO JACKSON COUNTY:** Commissioner Tate said that officials in Jackson County took a “huge step forward” with the passage of a fire district tax that will go directly to the Highlands Volunteer Fire Department, which serves some homes in Jackson County that are only accessible through Macon County. While Jackson County “leveled the playing field” in this one area, Commissioner Tate said funds for other services provided by Macon have not been provided. The County Manager said that he and the Jackson County manager, Chuck Wooten, have not yet reached agreement on a formula for calculating the amount Jackson would pay Macon, but that discussion will continue and that Macon is “asking to be made whole.” Saying that Jackson should compensate Macon, Commissioner Tate said, “What’s right is right. What’s fair is fair.” Commissioner Beale predicted that while it will take time, he believes Jackson officials will come up with the funds.

**RESOLUTION REGARDING SUBLEASE OF TOWER SPACE:** Following a brief explanation by the County Attorney, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to approve a “Resolution of the Macon County Board of County Commissioners Declaring Property to be Surplus and Approving Sublease of the Same by Macon County to Sutton Broadcasting Corporation.” A copy of the resolution is attached (Attachment 6) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Also attached (Attachment 7) is a “Use of Space on Communication Tower and Use of Associated Transmitter Building Sublease Agreement,” which is also hereby made a part of these minutes.

**RESOLUTION REGARDING “STEPPING UP INITIATIVE”:** After a recap of the recent National Association of Counties (NACo) conference held in Charlotte, Commissioner Beale asked for the board’s consideration of a resolution regarding the “Stepping Up Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails.” Noting that this idea originated in North Carolina, Commissioner Beale noted that Governor Pat McCrory has now formed his own mental health task force. Commissioner Beale said the resolution is “a call to action” on this issue, and that the NCACC is working to get it adopted in all 100 counties and sharing it with other states. Upon a

motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adopt the resolution as presented, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 8) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

**GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE FOR WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:** Following an explanation from the Finance Director, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to adopt a Grant Project Ordinance for the Weatherization Assistance Program Contract #6508 in the amount of \$169,604 as presented. A copy of the ordinance is attached (Attachment 9) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

**AIRPORT OPEN HOUSE:** Commissioner Tate, the liaison to the Macon County Airport Authority, announced that the authority was planning an open house at the Macon County Airport on August 15<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Due to a “very limited budget,” the authority was requesting \$3,000 from the county to help prepare for and hold the event. Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to allocate the funds for the event as requested, with the \$3,000 to come from contingency.

**NCACC VOTING DELEGATE:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to designate Chairman Corbin as the county’s voting delegate for the upcoming NCACC Annual Conference, which will be held in Pitt County August 20-23, 2015.

**CONSENT AGENDA:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the following items on the consent agenda were approved unanimously: **Minutes** – Approved the minutes from the May 18, 2015 continued session, the May 21, 2015 continued session, the May 26, 2015 continued session and the June 9, 2015 regular meeting. **Budget amendments** – Approved the following budget amendments: #1 for Public Health to allocate \$6,000 in grant funds received from the Community Foundation of WNC to cover WiseBuck expenses; #2 for Public Health to allocate \$102,534 in additional funds received from the state; #3 for Soil and Water Conservation to carry forward \$257 in grant funds from the previous year; and #4 for Maintenance to appropriate \$2,373 in insurance settlement funds for the repair of a truck. (Revisions with corresponding numbers attached). **Monthly ad valorem tax collection report** – No action necessary.

**APPOINTMENTS:** (1) **Community Funding Pool:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to reappoint Sandy Vinson, Frances Dewitt and Bobbie Contino to the Community Funding Pool for terms of three years each. (2) **Board of Adjustment:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by

Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to reappoint Gary Drake, Dwight Vinson and Sue Waldrop to the Board of Adjustment for terms of three years each. **Board of Health:** The Deputy Clerk told the board that Stacy Shannon (pharmacist) informed the county that she could not accept her June 9, 2015 reappointment to the Board of Health, and that a new candidate would be forthcoming.

**RECESS:** At 8:22 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to recess the meeting until Thursday, July 23, 2015 at 6 p.m. at the Lazy Hiker Brewing Company, 188 West Main Street, Franklin, NC, for the purpose of holding a joint meeting with the Town of Franklin Board of Aldermen and the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Tate, Commissioner Higdon, the Finance Director and the County Attorney all noted that they would be out of town on that date and would be unable to attend.

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Derek Roland  
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

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Kevin Corbin  
Board Chairman