

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CONTINUED SESSION
JUNE 3, 2019
MINUTES**

Chairman Tate reconvened the meeting at 4 p.m. in the commission boardroom as recessed from the May 21, 2019 continued session. All board members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director, County Attorney, members of the news media and interested citizens were present.

Highlands Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart told the board that the department was requesting a tax increase that would allow for the purchase of property and a new fire station. He said the department is also looking to go to 24-hour staffing. The current rate is 1 cent per \$100 of valuation, and would rise to 3 cents if approved. Chief Gearhart said town officials are “very close” to securing the property. Following further discussion, no action was taken.

The board then agreed to add several items to the agenda, including (1) discussion of a North Carolina Forest Service budget request, (2) discussion regarding an employee/position in Nantahala, (3) comments from Tamara Zwinak, (4) a matter concerning the LBJ Job Corps and (5) a rescission of an agreement to provide recreation opportunities followed by a new agreement on that same matter.

The board members and the County Manager spent the next hour discussing specific needs with Macon County Schools officials, including Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin and Board of Education Chairman Jim Breedlove. The County Manager recommended additional funding of \$310,000 for the system to cover expenses associated with the STEM program, teacher assistants and the “cost of doing business,” which was followed by discussion of potentially raising the ad valorem tax rate to cover the system’s needs. The discussion then turned to salaries of school system personnel and a lengthy conversation about the STEM program, followed by topics such as capital needs and technology. No action was taken.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2019 regular meeting as presented.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the following Budget Amendments: #243 for the Transit Department to appropriate \$3,622 from an insurance settlement for vehicle repairs and maintenance; #244 for the Sheriff's Department to appropriate \$24,913 from an insurance settlement (copies of the amendments are attached).

The County Manager told the board that he had met with B.J. Keener with the North Carolina Forest Service regarding the purchase of a new vehicle, of which the county would pay a portion. However, the County Manager pointed out that the matching funds are not in the recommended budget for next fiscal year. Following discussion on this matter, the topic shifted to paving of the parking lot at the Southwestern Community College (SCC) Jerry Sutton Public Safety Training Center. Following much discussion, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to move the \$23,058 budgeted in Fiscal Year 2019-20 for the paving project to the Forest Service line item to pay for the county's share of the NC Forest Service vehicle (\$22,748) and move the remaining \$310 to contingency in the FY 2019-20 budget and to move the \$46,365 remaining in the FY 18-19 contingency line item to the SCC line item for the SCC paving project. The County Attorney said he would prepare an interlocal agreement with SCC stemming from this action.

Commissioner Higdon raised the possibility of allowing Gary Selsebee, the Parks and Recreation Site Supervisor in Nantahala, to stay in Nantahala as opposed to working some days at the Parker Meadows Recreation facility in Franklin. Commissioner Higdon said he believed there was "enough (maintenance) work over there for one guy" at other locations such as EMS. The County Manager told the board he would "look into it." No action was taken.

Commissioner Beale raised the issue of a situation with the LBJ Job Corps, adding that as liaison to the facility, he felt obligated to bring it to the board's attention, and would "bring this back around at our next meeting."

Following an explanation by the County Attorney, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve two documents: (1) a "Rescission of Agreement to Provide Recreation Opportunities" and (2) an "Agreement to Provide Recreation Opportunities," both involving the Upper Cartoogechaye Community Development Club. The first document rescinds the agreement approved by the board on May 15, 2019, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 1) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. The second document is a revised agreement that essentially corrects some of the financial numbers, with the

County Attorney pointing out that the “real” cost of the project is \$24,662, but with the community club having \$5,985 available, the county will commit \$18,677 to the project as opposed to the \$18,750 (half of the initial projected \$37,500 cost) that was originally approved. A copy of the new agreement is also attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. The motion also authorized the County Manager to execute the documents.

Tamara Zwinak asked the board to consider a feasibility study that would look at pulling all three libraries in the county out of the Fontana Regional Library system. She cited her reasoning for wanting to bring the libraries under full county control and closed by saying, “I know it’s a radical idea.” No action was taken.

Prior to ending the meeting, the board returned to the subject of the proposed budget. Chairman Tate told the other members to bring up for discussion any items that they could not support, and suggested that the board raise the tax rate by another half-cent over and above the County Manager’s recommended rate in order to provide for the school system’s requests. This led to further discussion, with Commissioner Higdon asking the County Manager to bring a recommendation back to the board at its June 11th regular meeting.

At 5:53 p.m., with no other business, and upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chairman