

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
January 3, 2019

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Thursday, January 3, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, Commissioner David Gambill, and Commissioner Brian Minton.

Also present for the meeting were Tony Triplett, County Attorney; John Yates, County Manager; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION – Vice Chairman Eddie Settle led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Commissioner Gary D. Blevins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Motion was made by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on December 18, 2018.

Chairman Elmore stated Item E. will be removed from the Agenda, Mr. Gene Faile and Mr. Chad Brown sent a message that they were not going to make the meeting.

WILKES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY – INTRODUCE COUNTY LIBRARIAN AIMEE JAMES – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Jane Blackburn, Regional Director and Aimee James, County Librarian. Ms. Blackburn stated she is happy to be here and bring Aimee James tonight, she is the new Wilkes County Public Library Librarian. She added Ms. James comes from Horry County, South Carolina and worked there for 6 years at two branches and was the interim Director for 6 months as well. Ms. Blackburn said she has experience in running a local library as well as running a system of libraries. She added Ms. James went to school in South Carolina and has a Master's Degree in Library Science and History. Her first day was December 3rd and they are so pleased to have her in Wilkes.

Ms. James stated she was raised in South Carolina, but her husband is from Lexington, North Carolina and they moved to this area to be closer to family. They lived in the Myrtle Beach area and it is rapidly growing with no off season and traffic was very hectic. They wanted a slower pace of life and this job opportunity seem like the right fit. Ms. James said when she came for the interview it clinched it. Everyone has been so welcoming and friendly, the residence truly appreciate their library, and this means a great deal to her. She said that says a lot about the service they offer to the community and she plans to extend that service. Ms. James stated Wilkes is a large geographic county and not everyone can come to them and they will need to go

to where the need is. She added one of the focuses for this year will be outreach and they need everyone's help with that. They plan to keep the programs they have as well as add new. They thanked the Board for their time and support.

The Board welcomed Ms. James to Wilkes and added they are very happy to have her at the Library.

WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE – ENERGY CONTRACT RESOLUTION – UPDATE – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Dr. Jeff Cox, President and Morgan Francis, Senior VP of Administration. Dr. Cox said the first item is the Resolution related to their energy savings that they came in December to present. He added they would like to finalize this now. He stated Mr. Francis will go over that first and then they will provide a quick update on the Culinary Arts Building progress, and an update on their strategic plan.

Mr. Francis stated they have been working on this for the past 2 years. He added they have identified an energy savings company by RFP and working with the State Energy Office and a third party engineer. There are several capital project items that they will do and the energy savings from the projects is guaranteed to pay for the cost over the life of the projects. Mr. Francis said they have approval from the Board of Trustees and are now coming to this Board for approval. He added the next step is to go to the Local Government Commission for final approval before any work can begin.

Mr. Francis said they will do almost \$1.1 million in capital project renovations primarily converting all campus lighting to LED, some HVAC upgrades to controls and a few smaller items. They are asking the Board to approve the resolution that the Board agree to not reduce their appropriations due to the energy savings over the life of the contract. Commissioner Blevins asked the length of the contract. Mr. Francis replied 17 years is what they project. Vice Chairman Settle asked if the \$1.1 million is for the lights or the total project. Mr. Francis replied the total project, the lights are about \$500K.

Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins to approve the Resolution acknowledging the Execution and Delivery by Wilkes Community College of a Guaranteed Energy Savings Contract as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and passed unanimously.

***RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY BY
WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF A GUARANTEED ENERGY SAVINGS CONTRACT***

*BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners (the "Board") of the County of Wilkes,
North Carolina (the "County") as follows:*

1. *The Board hereby finds, determines and acknowledges that:*

(a) Wilkes Community College (the "College") plans to enter into a \$1,100,000.00 (estimated) guaranteed energy savings contract pursuant to G.S. 143-64.17 et. seq. for the purpose of providing certain energy conservation measures authorized thereby (the "Project") so as to reduce energy consumption and/or energy-related operating costs;

(b) *the College intends to finance the Project by entering into an installment contract (the "Contract") pursuant to G.S. 143-64.17C and G.S. 160A-20, as amended;*

(c) *the energy savings resulting from the Project are expected to equal or exceed the total costs payable under the Contract as shown in an evaluation performed by a licensed engineer on behalf of the College;*

(d) *the payments under the Contract are not expected to require any additional appropriations to be made to the College nor any increase in taxes; and*

(e) *the Board does not intend to reduce appropriations to the College based upon a reduction of energy costs in a manner that would inhibit the ability of the College to make the payments under the Contract, provided that the County is not bound in any manner to appropriate funds to the College in amount sufficient for the College to make such payments.*

2. *This resolution shall take effect upon its passage.*

[SEAL]

*Giddeon Keith Elmore Chairman,
Board of Commissioners of the County of Wilkes*

I DO HEREBY CERTIFY that this is a true and correct copy of the resolution duly adopted by the Board of Commissioners of the County of Wilkes at a [regular/special] meeting held on January 3, 2019.

Date

Sarah D. Call, Clerk to the Board

At this time Dr. Cox gave them a photo of the Culinary Arts Building and Mr. Francis stated this project began in early May with an original completion date of March. They had a significant delay, the building is a pre-engineered steel metal building and the delivery was delayed due to the steel tariffs and the demands from everyone ordering at the same time due to the threat of them. It was due to come in August and arrived mid-November. It is under roof now and will be dried in, in 30-days. The final completion date at this time is late June. Mr. Francis said this is a \$2.4 million project, funded primarily with the State Bond funds at \$2 million and foundation monies. Chairman Elmore asked the square footage and completion date. Mr. Francis replied June 26 is the expected date at this time and it is about 8,000 sq. ft. Dr. Cox added Culinary Arts is an outstanding program and they have needed more space for years, currently it is co-located with the Wilkes Early College High School. He added that is growing as well and they want to offer this to more students in Wilkes and by moving that program out it will allow them to add a kitchen at the early college high school where now they are brought in from another school. It will give them more space for the early college and will be a double benefit. Vice Chairman Settle asked if this will allow them to take more students for the early college. Dr. Cox replied yes, they added some this year and will be able to add even more over the next few years.

Commissioner Gambill added he had the pleasure to go to the culinary arts recently and the food is really good. Commissioner Blevins stated it would be great to get the horticultural program and culinary working together, which is becoming very popular. Dr. Cox agreed, and added they are discussing this and the food to table concept. They will now be located beside the horticultural and they can grow that program.

MINUTES

January 3, 2019

Page 4 of 8

Dr. Cox stated Chairman Elmore asked him to also give a quick update on the strategic plan. He showed the Board their website and added in the top right corner is a link for strategic planning. They have all of their material there under this link and it gives a good overview of the last year and what they have been up to. He said they have a 5-year strategic plan and have broken it down to year-by-year implementation plans that are specific, measurable, and achievable. Dr. Cox said he will also provide paper copies of the plan. He said on January 22, 2019 at 10:30 AM they will have a forum at the Walker Center. They will invite community stakeholders that helped develop this plan and give their first annual update. Dr. Cox invited the Board to come and join them if available to get an overview of what they are doing.

Dr. Cox said they have 5 major areas or broad themes and have certain initiatives and specific strategies in each. This year they have 20 things they are doing and one of these strategies is the Career Coach program. The Bob Strickland Family gave a generous donation of \$1.1 million to fund this program for 4-years. They have hired and placed a career coach in every high school in Wilkes, as well as Ashe and Alleghany. These are full time college employees that work in the high schools to help kids understand the opportunities in Wilkes County to go out and earn a living wage and help fill the jobs that have gone unfilled. This will connect the kids living in poverty that want to do better to know what to do and how to do it. Dr. Cox said this will build the bridge and educational pathways needed to get there. He added the Health Science areas are great jobs and very successful programs, but people don't always think about Tyson. They are a large employer in the county and now they have students that are graduating from the Animal Science program and going to Tyson on a management track starting out at \$47,500 annually. Most of the high schoolers had no idea they could get this two year degree at the Community College and go into a leadership track and make \$50K in a very short period if they do well. The career coaches are an essential part of making the connection so the kids can understand the opportunities and guide them along the path needed. Which could be directly to a four year university which is good as well. Dr. Cox said this is just one of the strategies and there are many more listed in the plan. He ask the Board to please come January 22nd at 10:30 to the Walker Center if they can and hear more details about all they are doing.

Chairman Elmore stated he is aware of kids coming out of a four year university that can't find a job. He added WCC is a great value with impressive programs. Dr. Cox agreed and added the more students that they can get to come to WCC first and then transfer or finish the two year degree and go into the work force are very successful and save their parents a small fortune. This is a great opportunity that Wilkes students have. Commissioner Gambill asked if that is now the trend he has heard of more and more going to WCC first then transferring. Dr. Cox replied it is, they are starting to see this, especially with the Career and College promise which is a dual enrollment program that very few colleges do. They send their instructions out to every high school in the service area to teach college level classes in the high school so juniors and seniors can take college classes and get college credit at the high school. They get almost 1 year of college credit when they finish high school. This has really picked up and kept their employment steady from building this program. These course only cost \$20 for the text book. That does not near pay for the book, but is a great advantage and keeps growing. Dr. Cox added they need the Board and community's help to overcome the stigma, there are many that think college is beyond them. There are many parents that have the financial means and think they are

doing a disservice to their kids by sending them to WCC for the first year or two. He added they are working to overcome both of these stigmas. The more students they serve the better off the community will be. Chairman Elmore stated they appreciate them and the passion they have for the college and students. Dr. Cox replied they appreciate being here and serving the community. Vice Chairman Settle added one of the best assets this county has is Wilkes Community College.

The Board thanked Dr. Cox and Mr. Francis.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE – Chairman Elmore welcomed John Blevins, DSS Director. Mr. Blevins stated first he would like to provide an update on NC Fast, they are still on track for January 21st to start with intake and assessment. They had the state training in Wilkes at the Ag Center, they ask for volunteers to host training which they did to keep their folks close and bring others to Wilkes. Mr. Blevins said most everyone is trained, the intake part was easy and went well, but the assessment part is very cumbersome with duplication. They are concerned about this and the time it will take. He added the full roll out for P4 is May part I and June part II. Mr. Blevins stated they will keep working on this and he will provide updates as he gets them. Chairman Blevins asked why the assessment is so complicated. Mr. Blevins replied the intake is fairly simple, they are building a case from scratch and it's a form and questions that they go through. It is really good because it requires them to answer all the questions and nothing cannot be skipped. The assessment is after a case has been accepted, it has many more forms and avenues that it can go. It could go to case management, investigations, and so on, it is much more complicated. Mr. Blevins stated it is all online, there are multiple screens and they have to enter the same information several times. They should be able to enter it one time and it carry to all the forms, but that is not the case. He added this is an issue, these folks need to be out of the office with children not in the office working on forms. Mr. Blevins said as of now these are the dates for the full roll out, they hope it will get better as it rolls out.

Mr. Blevins briefly went over the monthly caseload report for November. He also went over the Foster Care financial report. He next went through the Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial reports for November. He said last month the Board asked about Foster Care paid placement, Ebenezer's is the highest with 36, Foster homes are the next with 32, Barium/Rainbow has 16, are the top there. He gave a copy to the Board that list all the facilities and the number of children at each. Chairman Elmore asked if it included the cost at each facility. Mr. Blevins replied it does not, he will add that and bring back to the next meeting. He added it is a lot of money. Commissioner Blevins said it depends on the level of care, like Crossnore which is much more expensive, but provides a high level of care. Mr. Blevins agreed it is a very good facility, but is expensive. Commissioner Blevins asked if they could break down the child care subsidy to include the number of children being served. Mr. Blevins replied yes, they will be happy to add this next month as well.

Chairman Elmore stated they are very fortunate to have Mr. Blevins at DSS. Mr. Blevins thanked the Board and added they have a very good staff at DSS that work very hard. Chairman Elmore said they are fully staffed at this time as well. Mr. Blevins replied yes and they hope it

stays that way. He added this is due to the support from this Board and it is very much appreciated. The Board thanked Mr. Blevins for his update.

TAX DEPARTMENT:

1. TAX RELEASES – LISTINGS – UNCOLLECTABLE – Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator asked the Board to approve tax releases for listing that are uncollectable in the amount of \$10,150.54. He stated these are personal properties that were listed that they are not able to find the owners and had to get them off the books. These are untagged motor vehicles that folks had listed over the years. Mr. Hamilton stated they are going through the records and cleaning up which makes this list longer. Chairman Elmore stated they are going through the reevaluation which only applies to property and does not affect personal property. Mr. Hamilton replied it does not affect vehicles. Chairman Elmore stated those are included in the total property tax. Mr. Hamilton replied yes it is part of the tax base. Chairman Elmore added it includes property tax, personal property tax, and sales tax, but the reevaluation will only affect property values. Mr. Hamilton replied yes, but they have seen an increase in motor vehicle tax in the past few years as the economy gets better folks replace their vehicles with newer ones.

Commissioner Blevins said if folks are not going to the tag office to renew tags those taxes are not collectable. Mr. Hamilton agreed and added untagged motor vehicle is an honor system. Many folks choose to do it and some choose not to, they have no way to enforce it.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases for listings that are uncollectable as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

A detailed listing of tax releases is maintained in the Wilkes County Tax Administrator's office.

2. TAX RELEASES – LISTING – Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator asked the Board to approve tax releases for listing in the amount of \$34,707.71. These are mobile homes that were double listed, or properties that the county has foreclosed on, and some of these are mistakes in billing.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases for listing as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and unanimously approved.

A detailed listing of tax releases is maintained in the Wilkes County Tax Administrator's office.

3. TAX RELEASES – COLLECTIONS – Alex Hamilton, Tax Administrator asked the Board to approve tax releases for collections in the amount of \$3,994.93. These are due to bankruptcies or deceased and only individual personal property, real estate taxes are never released. Chairman Elmore asked the age to apply for senior discount. Mr. Hamilton replied 65.

Commissioner Gary D. Blevins made a motion to approve the tax releases for collections as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

A detailed listing of tax releases is maintained in the Wilkes County Tax Administrator's office.

4. EXTENSION OF THE LISTING PERIOD - Tax Administrator Alex Hamilton stated North Carolina General Statute Section 105-307 is entitled the "Length of Listing Period; Extension; Preliminary Work". He stated this Statute gives the Board of County Commissioners the authority to extend the listing period by thirty (30) days. He stated he is requesting that the Board extend the listing period until March 1, 2019. Mr. Hamilton stated the statute also allows the County Commissioners to grant "individual extensions of time for the listing of real and personal property upon written request and for good cause shown"; the statute allows the Commissioners to delegate this authority to the Tax Administrator. Mr. Hamilton stated the extensions granted under this paragraph shall not extend beyond April 15, 2019. He requested the Board delegate the authority to grant the individual extensions to him as Tax Administrator.

Vice Chairman Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the request to extend the listing period until March 1, 2019 and to delegate the authority to the Tax Administrator to grant individual extensions of time for the listing of real and personal property until April 15, 2019, as requested. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brian Minton and unanimously approved

N.C. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ROADWAY MAINTENANCE PETITION – SYDNEY LANE – County Manager John Yates stated the Department of Transportation recently received a petition form SR-1 requesting consideration of the addition of Sydney Lane to the State Maintenance system. He added Commissioner approval is needed before this road can be added to the State Maintenance System. After the approval is sent back to their District Office, property information researched, and the road investigation will follow. This is located off Hwy 115 in North Wilkesboro. Chairman Elmore asked if these request go to the Planning Board first. Mr. Yates replied no.

Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins, seconded by Vice Chairman Eddie Settle and unanimously adopted to approve the Road Petition for Sydney Lane to be added to the State Maintenance System as presented and requested.

CLOSED SESSION – Motion was made by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins to go into closed session under Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statute to consult with the Board's attorney to protect the attorney-client privilege. The motion was seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by David Gambill, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn back into regular session. No action was taken in the closed session.

ADJOURN - Motion was made by Commissioner David Gambill, seconded by Commissioner Gary D. Blevins and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 8:20 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: