

**MINUTES  
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
March 7, 2023**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 4:58 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Bill Sexton and Commissioner Greg 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 at this time.

**INVOCATION** – Vice Chairman Stoney Greene led the Invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Chairman Keith Elmore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Special Called Meeting held on February 21, 2023.

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**MOTORSPORTS RELIEF FUND – CHOATE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY – FIFTH GMP AMENDMENT TO DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACT** – Chairman Elmore welcomed Jon Jacek of Choate Construction. Mr. Jacek stated before the Board is the proposed Contract Amendment No. 5. He added this amendment includes carpentry/casework, caulking, coiling service door, elevator and plumbing. Mr. Jacek stated the total of this amendment is \$429,366.00, which leaves a balance of \$56,130,00. He will be back one more time with a final amendment to reconcile everything for awarded vs. actual cost within the maximum of \$14 million.

Chairman Elmore stated they did not realize there was an elevator at the race track. Mr. Jacek replied they wasn't, SMI had a new elevator at another facility they had not used and brought it to use at North Wilkesboro. This will be located in the new turn four building they are building at this time. Mr. Triplett handed out a new page 2 that is easier to read, which includes every amendment that has been approved to date to include amendment No. 5 before the Board tonight. He has reviewed this amendment, it looks fine and everything has been provided legally that is needed. Chairman Elmore asked if they are still on schedule. Mr. Jacek replied yes many improvements have been made in a very short time frame.

Commissioner Bill Sexton made a motion to approve Contract Amendment No. 5 to the September 23, 2022 Design-Build Contract between Wilkes County and Choate Construction Company for the Motorsports Relief Fund Project, establishing a Guaranteed Maximum Price in the amount of \$429,366.00 for Carpentry/Casework, Caulking, Coiling Service Door, Elevator, and Plumbing as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

**WILKES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT – ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT FUNDS**

– Chairman Keith Elmore welcomed and recognized Major Logan Kerr and Major Jason Whitley. Major Kerr stated Major Jason Whitley will explain the program, as he is much more familiar with it. Major Whitley thanked the Board and said this is for acceptance of \$1,460,385 million awarded by the state for the MAT (medication assisted treatment) program at the Wilkes County Jail. This is a non-narcotic opioid use disorder treatment program using Naltrexone injections which is an opioid antagonist. This blocks someone from being able to get high on opioids or heroin for 30 days after the injection. It also works with alcohol as an antagonist; after someone takes an injection, for 30 days they won't be able to have the drunk feeling or experience the effects of alcohol, however they would still have an increased blood alcohol level. They wrote the grant in cooperation with Project Lazarus. In this program, if an inmate volunteers while in jail to take the injections, once released from custody they would be sent to Project Lazarus to continue the treatment program with peer support specialists, group sessions, counseling, etc.

Major Whitley stated the injections are \$1,500 each, they hope this will cut down on the recidivism rate and coming back incarcerated and addicted to opioids and/or alcohol. The county has a big issue with overdoses as well. He added it was the Sheriff's idea to implement this program and the medical team at the jail is excited about it. Chairman Elmore asked if this is a three year grant. Major Whitley replied yes, but they expect the money to run out sooner due to the high cost of each injection. This is a strictly volunteer program they could have 100 to sign up the first year or 300. The goal is to help get people get off opioids and alcohol. Chairman Elmore asked if this would qualify as a permitted use of Opioid Settlement Funds. Ms. Felts replied this type of program would qualify under the settlement guidelines. She added the jail could apply for funding annually after this grant has been expended. Mr. Whitley stated he spoke with the Health Foundation and they indicated that as well. They also intend to add one jail staff member as a coordinator with all the transports to connect them with peer support specialists for the inmates at the jail.

Chairman Elmore asked who wrote the grant. Major Kerr replied Project Lazarus wrote the grant and did a great job. He and Major Whitley reviewed it as well as an outside grant writer before it was submitted. Vice Chairman Greene asked how many citizens do they think that this will help. Mr. Whitley replied based on the number of people they see come in on withdrawal medications they expect this program to help about 346 per year. He added they have to be incarcerated for 7 to 10 days before they can start on this program, and they must be drug tested to be sure there's nothing in their system before the injection can be given. Vice Chairman Greene asked if this is voluntary or involuntary. Major Whitley replied voluntary, they don't know how many will participate, but if they want to come off drugs, this will help them. Vice

Chairman Greene added it's a good place to start. Commissioner Sexton asked do they have any data on where this program has been applied before. Major Whitley replied no only five other jails in North Carolina applied for this grant, but they are all using narcotics-based treatment. They have no knowledge of any jails using a nonnarcotic treatment. Commissioner Johnson asked after the shot how long does it last. Major Whitley replied 30 days. Commissioner Johnson asked if they can only take this once. Major Whitley replied they can take it once and then after 30 days can take it again. The plan is to connect them with Project Lazarus while in custody and then for them to continue that outside of jail so they can receive ongoing treatment.

Chairman Elmore and the board thanked Major Kerr and Major Whitley and recognized Sheriff Chris Shew who is also in attendance at tonight's meeting.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to accept the Grant Funds from the North Carolina Department of Public Safety in the amount of \$1,460,385.00 for a Medication Assisted Treatment Program for the Wilkes County Sheriff's Department as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and unanimously approved.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS/TRANSFERS** – Motion was made by Commissioner Greg Minton to approve Budget Amendment No. 22 (Health – Programs Wilkes Health received \$2,500 from UNC Chapel Hill for the Diabetes Lifestyle Study. These funds will be used to purchase supplies and materials for the Diabetes program for underinsured/uninsured Wilkes County patients. No county money involved. Wilkes Health received \$2,000 from the state for the TB program. These funds will be used to provide additional screening and treatment for TB patients in Wilkes County. No county money involved. Wilkes Health needs to purchase a ground-penetrating radar for Environmental Health. This equipment is used for residents of Wilkes County septic repairs. They will purchase this equipment with General Funds and reimburse with a EH grant from Appalachian district. The cost of this equipment is \$18,000. No county money involved); and Budget Amendment No. 23 (General – DSS – Funds are needed to provide coverage for out of town foster children visits. No additional county funds required); and Budget Amendment No. 24 (General – Airport – The Airport has received additional CARES funding of \$21,828 from the NC Department of Transportation Division of Aviation, these funds will be used to do needed improvement's to county owned hangars. No county funds involved); and Budget Amendment No. 25 MAT Program – Jail – the Wilkes County Sheriff's Office had been chosen as a recipient of a Medication Assisted Treatment program through the North Carolina Department of Public Safety in the amount of \$1,460,385 and this is adding one additional full-time staff member at the Jail that will be paid for by this Grant). The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – UPDATE** – Chairman Elmore recognized John Blevins, DSS Director. Mr. Blevins thanked the Board for approving the budget amendment and added it will be helpful for DSS staff. This will allow them to contract with Vanguard Professional Services to provide trained, certified social workers in the area close to where the foster children are located. They will go see the kids, do to all the documentation needed for the files, send the information back to their office, and code it to the files so they will receive reimbursement for this. He added they have 14 foster children in the Raleigh area and further

down toward Fayetteville. They would like to start with this area to keep his workers in the office and not spending a full day in the car. Mr. Blevins said this meets the requirements and the state is fine with it, and it will be beneficial since they are still understaffed. They currently have five open positions and this will help efficiency, keep their workers here, and help with their stress. He intends to add money to next year's budget to continue this program until they can get fully staffed and trained. Chairman Elmore asked if this saves money, to contract. Mr. Blevins replied it doesn't necessarily, but it saves a lot of stress on the social workers. It might be a breakeven or a little bit of a cost, but it certainly helps efficiency and to keep the staff they currently have, which is a necessity.

Chairman Elmore asked if the state picks up any of this cost. Mr. Blevins replied yes, in a roundabout way. The contracted individuals code their time from the different pots of funding, and there is money that comes back to Wilkes DSS. How much funding comes back depends on each child, their situation, and the level of funding. Commissioner Minton asked how the contract is set up, is it per visit or per hour. Mr. Blevins replied it's an hourly rate plus mileage. He added he can cancel this contract at any time, can add kids, or take kids away.

Mr. Blevins said they just had a physical monitoring report in June and September of this year. They have a new person handling this, she has been with DSS, but is new to this position, Jessica Wyatt. The monitoring report had no findings and no paybacks. They went through all the programs and found no errors, she is doing a great job. He added just as a reminder the FNS emergency allotments will end this month this will be a change for many citizens. Chairman Elmore stated they are cutting this supplement now that food prices are at an all-time high, it will be tough on folks.

Mr. Blevins stated Medicaid expansion is going to happen with the budget, which could happen in early summer. At this time, it looks like they will need seven workers. He added there is enough space in his office for all these folks, it will take one small conference room upstairs. The state is going to provide funding for the workers, but he has not seen the number specifically for Wilkes County. He added if the states money runs out, Medicaid workers are a 75/25 reimbursement so the most the county would have to pay would be 25% per worker. Chairman Elmore asked if they were going to help with the 25% at the beginning. Mr. Blevins replied they are either going to do that or give them other funds, all counties will have an issue paying for this. The state will do something they're just not sure what. Chairman Elmore asked if there would be cost in remodeling these offices. Mr. Blevins replied no, only the cost of the desks, but after this every office will be full. Commissioner Minton stated they are 7 down now and will need 7 more, correct. Mr. Blevins stated the seven new positions will not require a four year degree and it is easier to recruit for those positions. The social worker positions require a four-year degree and the difficulty of that job is a challenge, but it takes about a year to fully train an income maintenance worker.

Mr. Blevins provided the Commissioners handouts for January. He briefly went over the monthly caseload report, Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial report. He also went through the CPS Foster Care monthly reports for January as well. Vice Chairman Greene asked how much will FNS go

down after the cuts. Mr. Blevins replied they think it will go down to just under \$ 3 million, which is a drop of around \$500,000, it will make in impact.

The Board thanked Mr. Blevins for his update.

**SYNERGY RECOVERY, INC. – RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LEASE AGREEMENT** – County Attorney Tony Triplett stated there is a lease agreement and resolution in the packets. This is a follow-up from the last meeting where the Board voted to enter into a new 6-month lease agreement with Synergy. In order to formalize that, the Board will need to pass a resolution to approve the lease. He added this is exactly the same lease agreement that has been in place with Synergy up until now, all provisions including rent are the same except the term. The term is exactly 6 months and runs from June 1 to the end of November. Mr. Triplett said they would need to approve the Resolution and that approves the Lease Agreement between Wilkes County and Synergy Recovery, Inc. He added Carl Spake with Synergy is in attendance tonight if the Board has any questions.

Commissioner Bill Sexton made a motion to approve the Resolution Approving Lease Agreement between Wilkes County and Synergy Recovery, Inc. as presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

*RESOLUTION  
APPROVING  
LEASE AGREEMENT  
WITH SYNERGY RECOVERY, INC.*

*WHEREAS, Wilkes County (the "County") is the owner of certain real property situated in North Wilkesboro Township, Wilkes County, North Carolina, the same being located at 118 Peace Street, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659, consisting of 3.257 acres, more or less, together with improvements situated thereon and ingress and egress to and from the same, said property being a portion of that tract described in Deed Book 558, Page 069, Wilkes County Registry, and being more fully described in a survey performed by Micah Sidden, PLS L-3625, dated April 30, 2021 (hereinafter referred to as "the Property"); and*

*WHEREAS, Synergy Recovery, Inc., a North Carolina non-profit corporation providing mental health, developmental disability, and substance abuse services, with its principal office and place of business being located in Wilkes County, North Carolina (hereinafter "Synergy"), currently occupies and does business on the Property; and*

*WHEREAS, the County entered into a Lease Agreement with Synergy for the Property under date of June 1, 2021 (hereinafter "the 2021 Lease Agreement"); and*

*WHEREAS, the 2021 Lease Agreement was for an initial term of two (2) years, with the same to automatically renew for a maximum of four (4) additional terms of two (2) years each unless, at least ninety (90) days prior to the end of the initial or any renewal term, either party gave notice to the other of non-renewal, in which event the 2021 Lease Agreement was to terminate; and*

*WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners (hereinafter “the Board of Commissioners”) at its regular meeting of February 21, 2023, voted unanimously to give notice of non-renewal of the 2021 Lease Agreement, and the County notified Synergy of the same under date of February 27, 2023, the same being more than ninety (90) days prior to the end of the initial term; and*

*WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners at its regular meeting of February 21, 2023, further voted unanimously to enter into a new Lease Agreement with Synergy under the same terms and conditions as the 2021 Lease Agreement, but for a term of only six (6) months, the same to take effect upon the expiration of the 2021 Lease Agreement; and*

*WHEREAS, Synergy has agreed to the same; and*

*WHEREAS, G.S. §160A-272 authorizes the County to enter into a lease of one (1) year or less upon resolution duly adopted at a regular meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners; and*

*WHEREAS, the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners is convened in a regular meeting;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to G.S. §§153A-176 and 160A-272, that the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners hereby approves a new Lease Agreement with Synergy for the Property, under the same terms and conditions as the 2021 Lease Agreement, except with a term of six (6) months commencing June 1, 2023 and ending on November 30, 2023, and further authorizes its Chairman and Clerk to execute the same.*

*This the 7th day of March, 2023.*

ATTEST:

WILKES COUNTY:

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Sarah D. Call, Clerk

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Giddeon K. Elmore, Chairman  
Wilkes County Board of Commissioners

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT – WILKES COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN SURVEY– APPROVAL** – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Phil Trew and Michelle Ball, High Country Council of Governments. Chairman Elmore stated they have a plan for them to look at and the Planning Board has already reviewed it. Mr. Trew said they are working on a plan, what they are going to look out tonight is a citizen’s survey to send out to get public input on the plan. He added they started the plan back in the summer working with W.C. Scroggs and members of the Planning Board to develop the Growth Management Plan. The last one done for the County was in 2014. The plan is intended to satisfy the requirements of legislation passed in 2019 regarding plans and land use regulations. Mr. Trew stated this survey is part of a host of public involvement strategies the legislature suggests be used if the County adopts the plan, as it must include public involvement. He added the survey is the first step. The Planning Board meetings are open to the public and when they consider adoption of the plan it has to follow a public hearing.

Mr. Trew stated he and Michelle Ball drafted the survey and worked with the Planning Board extensively to refine it. They wanted Commissioner's approval before it was sent out to the public. The survey has 29 questions; questions 1-9 are general demographic information; questions 10-19 ask about strengths, challenges, regulations, and development patterns; questions 20-25 deal with transportation, infrastructure, broadband, and daycare; questions 26-29 deal with Parks and Recreation and tourism. Once this is approved, the strategies they will use to get it out are: to advertise it in the newspaper; Chamber of Commerce and asked them to send it to their membership; send to the Economic Development Corporation and ask Leanne Nixon to send to her contacts; they will also ask the Towns to place it on their websites as well as on the County's website. Mr. Trew said once they get feedback from the survey they will continue to work with the Planning Board. They hope to have the plan drafted by June and bring it to this Board in July or August.

Commissioner Sexton asked if this survey will be taken electronically or by paper. Mr. Trew answered it will be strictly electronic. Ms. Ball added they will add links to websites when they can, send it out in the newspaper, there will also be a QR code folks can scan with their phone and it will open right up. Commissioner Minton asked what was the survey response rate in 2014. Mr. Trew replied he does not recall it was possibly between 200-300. Chairman Elmore stated the survey would be available for anyone in the County. Ms. Ball added for anyone that lives or works in the County. Mr. Trew stated it will go out on the World Wide Web that's why first questions ask if you are a resident of Wilkes County and next, do you work in Wilkes County. Chairman Elmore asked if the folks filling out the survey are identified. Mr. Trew replied no. Ms. Ball added they don't ask for folks' names, as they get pushback when they do. Mr. Trew stated their biggest issue is getting folks to fill them out. Commissioner Minton added with only 200-300 responses last time that's a very low rate. Vice Chairman Greene stated hopefully the digital age will help them, a lot has changed since 2014, maybe they will have a much better response. Chairman Elmore stated they cannot fill out a paper copy it must be online. Mr. Trew replied yes. Commissioner Johnson asked will they see the results. Ms. Ball replied yes, they will be in the plan.

Vice Chairman Greene asked how long will they advertise in the newspaper; one of the local County paper representatives is here tonight. Mr. Trew replied two months. Ms. Ball added they can reevaluate at the end of that. Commissioner Sexton asked when do they start recording the data. Ms. Ball replied as soon as the first person completes the survey, the system is set up where she could check the responses daily. They will start and get it out as soon as the Board approves the survey. Chairman Elmore stated they may limit responses from the older people that are not technology savvy by only offering this electronically, they may get a younger point of view, has this been taken into consideration. Mr. Trew replied they're hoping that the Senior Center will help them to get this out and folks can take it there. Maybe their children or grandchildren can help them. Chairman Elmore added the Senior Center is a very good idea. Ms. Ball stated in one small town they were doing a plan for parks and rec. and they kept an iPad at Town Hall for folks take their survey while they were there, something like that would help. Chairman Elmore stated this is much needed and appreciates them coming tonight and hope they have lots of participation.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to approve the Wilkes County Growth Management Plan Citizens Survey as requested and presented at tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

**SWEARING IN CEREMONY – BRIAN L. PARKER – NORTH CAROLINA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION** – Chairman Elmore recognized and congratulated Brian Parker who has been appointed by the Governor to the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission. He welcomed the Parker Family and all of the Soil and Water folks in attendance.

Mr. Parker thanked the Board. Chairman Elmore read the following letter addressed to Mr. Brian L Parker: *“Dear Brian I am pleased to appoint you to serve as a member of the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission. Pursuant to N. C. Gen. Stat. § 106 – 840 your appointment is effective immediately. Your term will expire on January 10, 2026. Your board or commission is covered by the State Ethics Act.... I am grateful for your willingness to serve the people of North Carolina. Your leadership and commitment to this commission are key to our efforts to strengthen our communities and improve the quality of life for our people. With kind regards, I am Roy Cooper, Governor of North Carolina.”*

Chairman Elmore recognized Honorable Judge Michael D. Duncan, Superior Court Judge. Judge Duncan stated it is his honor and privilege to be here and would like to thank Brian and his entire family for the hard work and dedication and what they do. It has certainly not gone unrecognized by the Governor of all the accolades and achievements he has been able to accomplish. They are proud of Mr. Parker on behalf of Wilkes County. At this time, Mr. Brian L. Parker was sworn in by Judge Duncan.

Bill Davis stated this is important to them at Soil & Water, this is significant for them and they have three of their top administrators from Raleigh who are here to witness this today. They include Mr. Vernon Cox, Director N.C. Division of Soil & Water Conservation; Mr. Brian Evans, Executive Director, NC Association of Soil & Water Districts; and David Williams, Deputy Director N.C. Division of Soil & Water Conservation. These people came because they recognize and realize the important role that Brian will be participating in as a Commission member representing the Western part of the State. This is important for all of them. Chairman Elmore stated the Board thanks them for coming tonight and allowing them to share in this important event and it was certainly good to see everyone this evening. Mr. Parker stated they thought this would be a perfect opportunity for the Board to recognize what they do and what these guys do throughout the State. Also, to recognize how important agriculture is to the economy, agriculture is the number one economy for the state. Agriculture is number five in Wilkes, which they are very proud of. Mr. Parker thanked the Board for having them tonight. Chairman Elmore thanked the Parker Family for attending tonight and added this is one of the best families in Wilkes County.

**OLD BUSINESS** – Mr. Yates stated he has good news to share, as trash on the roadsides has been a big concern for the Commissioners. Last week they picked up almost 2 tons of trash on Red White and Blue Road and 1 mile around each of the four middle schools and the four high



schools. He added this is a good start. Mr. Yates added the State was picking up Hwy 268 this week as well, which is very good. Chairman Elmore thanked Mr. Yates and said they appreciate all the efforts. Commissioner Sexton added amen for the trash pickup. He added he sees lots of comments on social media from folks that are pleased to see trash being picked up. Vice Chairman Greene added they want folks to know they are making an effort on the roadside trash.

Chairman Elmore stated he would like to recognize Charlie Sink at this time who is a former Commissioner.

**ADJOURN** – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 5:54 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk  
Chairman

Giddeon Keith Elmore,

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: March 21, 2023