

**MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
August 1, 2023**

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, August 1, 2023 at 5:00 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. He stated Wilkes County lost two former Commissioners in July Mr. Gene Brookshire who served 12/03/1984 – 12/05/1988 and Mr. Jim Beckwith who served 12/05/1994 to 12/02/1996. The Board wanted to recognize them and their service and send thoughts and prayers to their families.

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 Bill Sexton and unanimously adopted to approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on July 6, 2023.

OLD NORTH STATE LEAGUE BASEBALL – PRESENTATION – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Alec Allred, CEO The Players League and Kevin Anderson, Parks & Recreation Director. Mr. Allred thanked the Board and went through the below presentation at this time:

**ONSL &
WILKES
COUNTY**

COLLEGE SUMMER BASEBALL IN 2024

**THE OLD
NORTH STATE
LEAGUE**



- A collegiate summer baseball league based entirely out of North Carolina
- There are 16 teams in the Old North State League making it the 4th largest league of its kind in the country
- Current teams in the ONSL that are in the Western North Carolina region
 - Hendersonville
 - Lenoir
 - Marion
- The season runs from late May to the end of July
- Teams have a year round operation and presence in their community
- Dozens of former players have gone on to play professional baseball
- Old North State League teams typically play a 45-45 game schedule with 20-25 home games each season

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PHOTOS



BOGEY BALLPARK - HOME OF THE SANDHILLS BOGEYS

TRAMWAY PARK - HOME OF THE SANFORD SPINNERS



PHOTOS



3RD RIDGE STADIUM - HOME OF THE FAYETTEVILLE CHALITES



JACK HUGHES BALLPARK - HOME OF THE PINEVILLE PORCUPINES



BERKELEY MILLS BALLPARK - HOME OF THE HENDERSONVILLE HONEYCRISPS

WE WANT TO COME TO WILKES COUNTY

- Ideal population for an ONSL market
- The big field at Lowes Park at River's Edge consist of a good footprint to build a college summer baseball stadium at.
- Baseball Rich community and history
- Strong parks and rec program
- Fills a geographical void in the ONSL
- Ability to establish local rivalries with Marion and Lenoir

PREVIOUS BALLPARK RENOVATION PROJECTS COMPLETED BY WILKES COUNTY BASEBALL OWNERS



CRAVEN STADIUM - RAMSEUR, NC FALL OF 2014



CRAVEN STADIUM - RAMSEUR, NC SPRING OF 2015



PREVIOUS BALLPARK CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS COMPLETED BY WILKES COUNTY BASEBALL OWNERS



BOGEY BALLPARK - PINEHURST, NC SPRING OF 2022



BOGEY BALLPARK - PINEHURST, NC SUMMER OF 2022



PLANS AND INITIATIVES

- Hire a local General Manager with a pulse on the community
- Work with Parks & Rec as a community partner to help with initiatives
- Get involved with the County School system and their initiatives
- Renovate the big field at Lowes Park at Rivers Edge
- Create a year-round experience at the ballpark through collegiate summer baseball games, tournaments, concerts, and other events
- Drive economic revenue to other local businesses

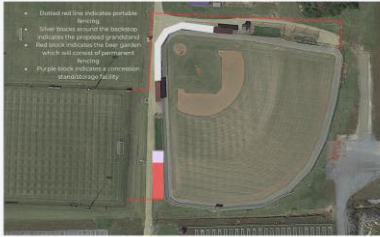
WILKES COUNTY BASEBALL CONTRIBUTION

- The estimated cost of Wilkes County Baseball's Investment is between \$250k - \$300k
- These include the following items that should be completed throughout the duration of the 10 year lease.
 - Expanded Dugouts (\$25,000 - \$35,000)
 - Speaker System (\$4,000 - \$5,000)
 - Beer Garden (\$10,000 - \$15,000)
 - Grandstand Seating (\$150,000 - \$175,000)
 - Portable Exterior Fencing (\$10,000 - \$15,000)
 - Concession Stand (\$20,000 - \$30,000)
 - This will be a metal or wood building and will not have plumbing

WILKES COUNTY CONTRIBUTION

- In exchange for this investment, we are asking for the following:
 - a 10 year lease at \$1 a year for 365 day control
 - Wilkes County will develop a plan with Wilkes County Baseball and other parties to add lights to the ballpark
 - Permission to sell beer with the proper permits
 - Ability to control advertising at the ballpark year-round
 - Including the naming rights of structures around the park including but not limited to:
 - Dugouts
 - Concession Stand
 - Grandstand
 - Field
 - A separate lease that coincides with the ballpark lease for the concession stand to ease the ability to receive food and beer permits
 - Authorization to rent field to other entities
 - Authorization to install baseball technology such as but not limited to:
 - Trackman, Live Stream Cameras, Rapsodo
 - A Non-compete with Wilkes County Baseball to not enter into an agreement with another baseball team that could be deemed as competition.

PROPOSED BALLPARK RENOVATIONS - ALL PHASES
SITE PLAN



PROPOSED GRANDSTAND



PROPOSED BEER PATIO



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- In the initial 10 year lease before the exercised option, that puts a value of the year round lease at \$25,000 - \$30,000 a year in trade off for our investment in the venue.
 - For reference on the numbers above, Granger Stadium in Kinston, home of the Down East Wood Ducks (a minor league) pay a yearly fee of \$50k for a ballpark worth over \$10m.
- Wilkes County Baseball and Wilkes County will work together to provide the County any dates they need to utilize the field throughout the year.
- This investment is our belief in Wilkes County and its viability to host a successful sports entertainment venture.
- The County will have a partner in Wilkes County Baseball that will help with city initiatives, and drive economic revenue to the town through overnight stays, gas station fill ups, eating at restaurants, and much more.
- We will look to be a year round partner and have a year round presence to host more than just college baseball games each year. We will work to utilize the ballpark all year and drive people to Wilkes County.

Mr. Allred stated they want to be in Wilkes County, they identified it several years ago and have wanted to be here for several years. They feel this proposal would be a great opportunity for them to bring money to the table and help the community and enhance the baseball field at River's Edge. This proposal would also bring something to the community that local families can enjoy and drive economic revenue to local business.

Chairman Elmore asked what type of events will they use the field for year-round when they are not playing. Mr. Allred replied they want permission to sublease the field to bring in tournaments to be held at the field on the weekend throughout the year. This is where a lot of economic revenue will come from. Chairman Elmore stated the players they recruit are mostly college players, and asked if they will recruit them from the local colleges nearby. Mr. Allred replied they will hire a General Manager and he will find a head coach and typically they try to get 60%-70% of the players from a 30 mile radius of the ballpark. This helps to drive ticket sales in the community and they will go outside the area for the remaining 30%, which is usually pitchers. They will bring them in to stay with host families in the area. Chairman Elmore asked if the players are unpaid. Mr. Allred replied yes, they cover transportation and things like that. Chairman Elmore stated their revenue source is ticket sales, advertisers, and concessions. Mr. Allred added yes plus merchandise is pretty big for their league, they have wacky logos that his wife designs and creates for the teams.

Chairman Elmore asked if they have a standard lease/contract for the 10-years he is requesting. Mr. Allred replied they have 16 and all are a little different, they have some for 20 years, but most are 10 years. Vice Chairman Greene asked how many games will they have from May – July and are they on weekdays, weekends or both. Mr. Allred replied they have 25 home games with a 40-45 game schedule each year on most all days depending on how the schedule works out. They keep teams in their division so this team would never go play in Elizabeth City, it is too far. They will be in the Central division. Vice Chairman Greene asked if they handle the umpires and all

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the staff. Mr. Allred replied yes the GM will handle all gameday staff, the league handles all umpires across the state. Vice Chairman Greene asked how many tournaments would they have in the 9 months they are not playing and what is the estimated revenue to the county. Mr. Allred replied this is tough to answer, for example the Burlington Sock Puppets Summer League Team has their field activated 300 days a year, but they only play 60 days themselves. The goal is to do what they do and this has been done this in Pinehurst, but not to that level, so it is tough to say. They need tournaments happening at Appalachian State and this would be a secondary site for them to draw from that.

Vice Chairman Greene said their team names are very creative, will they have input into naming this team. Mr. Allred replied yes, they open it up to the community with the help of the County and City and push through Social Media. They are submitted and voted on. Chairman Elmore replied The Bootleggers would be a good fit. Vice Chairman Greene added it needs to be moonshine related and asked if they provide security. Mr. Allred replied they work with the County Sheriff's Department and do this everywhere they play. They have one field in the league that they do not sell beer at, but they still have security there. Chairman Elmore asked who maintains the field. Mr. Anderson replied Parks & Rec would maintain the fields, as they do this year-round anyway. They will mow and drag the field, which they already do whether someone is using it or not.

Vice Chairman Greene asked if they have economic impact numbers from the others fields. Mr. Allred replied he can get this for them, Reidsville did a study a couple years ago. Commissioner Sexton asked if they have leases less than 10 years. Mr. Allred replied they have two that are 5 years, but they did not invest money. They just pay a rental fee; those two parks were already stadiums. Chairman Elmore asked what is located at the county field. Mr. Anderson replied currently there are 4 sets of moveable 5-row aluminum bleachers, two on each side that will seat about 200 people total. Commissioner Minton stated they mentioned their intent was to obtain ABC permits, for on premise beer only and would this be through the parent corporation. Mr. Allred replied correct, but it would be through the LLC that owns this team. Commissioner Minton asked if the local LLC would be based in Wilkes. Mr. Allred replied yes. Commissioner Minton asked about liability insurance, it is a county asset, but leased by them, so how will that work. Mr. Allred said in all the other locations the County tells them how much insurance they have to cover and it is up to them to get the insurance.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the one county that does not sell alcohol. Mr. Allred replied that is in Hendersonville but only because that ballpark is on county school property. He added it is almost impossible for them to be successful in today's age without this. Chairman Elmore stated he looked at their website and it is exciting, Alec and his father started this in 2018 and they have several employees, and asked how many would they have here locally. Mr. Allred replied they have 10 staff members, and locally they will have the GM and on games days will have about 10 employees to include broadcaster, athletic trainer, gate and sponsorship folks. Mr. Anderson stated he hopes the opportunity presents itself, they believe it will be good for the County. It will upgrade that facility and they do have some state tournaments that may come in 2025, that he will find out about later this month. This facility could be used for that as well. Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Mr. Allred and Mr. Anderson for the presentation.

WILKES VOLUNTARY & ENHANCED VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS:

1. BOARD APPOINTMENTS – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Claude Shew, Jr, Chair, Julia Hardy, Conservation Education Specialist, and Rob Baldwin, Wilkes SWCD Director. Ms. Hardy thanked the Board and said the Wilkes County Voluntary & Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District would like to request reappointment of three current Board Members for Mr. Donald Parker, Mr. Dennis McGrady, and Mr. James Motsinger. She added all have been on this Board since it was formed back in 2008 with the original ordinance and they are asking for their approval. Chairman Elmore stated this started out as just the Voluntary Ag District and then added the Enhanced. Ms. Hardy replied this was added in March 2022, last year with the new ordinance.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to approve the reappointments of Mr. Donald Parker, Mr. Dennis McGrady, and Mr. James Motsinger to the Wilkes County Voluntary and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Boards as requested and presented at tonight’s meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson and unanimously approved.

2. UPDATE – Ms. Hardy gave the following agriculture update for totals acres enrolled:

Farms Currently Enrolled in EVAD:	Farms Currently Enrolled in VAD:
Owners – 4	Owners – 50
Acres – 645.62 (since March 2022)	Acres – 6592.48

Ms. Hardy said they are getting ready to send a promotional mailer to everyone in the Present Use Value program to see if they would like to enroll in this program. Chairman Elmore asked how the mobile classroom is coming along. Mr. Baldwin replied it is going well and will be ready March 2024. The trailer is being constructed at this time, they have contracted with an artist once the trailer is constructed. He added they will bring it by when it is ready. Mr. Shew said they are excited about this, Mr. Baldwin and Ms. Hardy have worked hard on the project.

Commissioner Johnson asked if having 4 in the EVAD is typical for a county this size. Ms. Hardy replied with it being new it is pretty good, some other districts that added this took a couple years to get folk to enroll. Mr. Shew said this is the second stage from VAD to EVAD then farmland preservation would be next. Chairman Elmore asked how Wilkes ranked in the state for Agricultural. Mr. Baldwin replied Wilkes is in the top 10 Counties in Farm Cash receipts according to the 2021 Ag consensus at 6th with \$331,237; 2nd in broilers; 4th cattle; 6th dairy; 7th eggs; and 4th in all cattle. Chairman Elmore asked about corn. Mr. Baldwin replied they did not rank in corn. Commissioner Johnson asked who was # 1 for broilers. Mr. Baldwin replied Duplin County. Chairman Elmore said they do a great job, he has attended a few Board meetings and the Ag Board Members and Wilkes County is held in high esteem across the state because of these folks and all their Board Members. Mr. Baldwin added that is due to the support from this Board. Mr. Shew agreed and said it would not happen without the Board of Commissioners and they

appreciate them. Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Mr. Shew, Mr. Baldwin and Ms. Hardy for the update and all they do for Agriculture in Wilkes County.

WILKES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – REQUEST FOR SERVICE WEAPON AWARD TO RETIREE – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized Sheriff Chris Shew. Sheriff Shew stated Lieutenant Phillip Hemric retired with over 30 years, he started out in the Jail in 1995, moved to patrol, then detective, and finished his career as a Lieutenant in the Civil Division. He was second in command of Courthouse security and took care of the inmates back and forth to the jail and serving Civil papers. Sheriff Shew respectfully requested they allow them to present him with his duty weapon and badge. Chairman Elmore said this is a great request and asked how long the Sheriff has been here. Sheriff Shew replied 42 years counting his part-time. Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Sherriff Shew.

Vice Chairman Stoney Greene made a motion to approve the service weapon and badge carried by Lieutenant Phillip Hemric be awarded upon his retirement, as requested and presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and unanimously approved.

WHEREAS, G.S. 20-187.2 provides that retiring members of county law enforcement agencies may receive, at the time of their retirement, the badge worn or carried by them during their service with the county; and

WHEREAS, G.S. 20-187.2 further provides that the governing body of the county law enforcement agency may, in its discretion, award to a retiring member the service sidearm of such retiring member; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Philip Hemric served as a member of the Wilkes County Sheriff's Office until he reached a period of 30 years in law enforcement; and

NOT, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners that the badge and service weapon worn and/or carried by Lieutenant Philip Hemric (SN: 47A196213 Sig Sauer 226) be awarded to her on the occasion of her retirement.

ADOPTED this, the 1st day of August , 2023.

Sheriff, Wilkes County

Clerk to the Board, Wilkes County

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – UPDATE – Chairman Elmore welcomed and recognized DSS Director Kevin Brown. Mr. Brown thanked the Board and provided the Commissioners with handouts for June. He stated the state has gotten approval to go ahead with Medicaid expansion effective October 1st, this date could change if the budget is not approved by September 1st. They are working to get the additional Medicaid positions filled and plan to be

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ready when it starts. Mr. Brown said in April 2022 it showed Wilkes County could possibly pick up an additional 5,100 Medicaid cases, with first year estimates of 3,900 and they will be ready. Mr. Brown said on Foster Care placement staff sat with at least one child 17 nights in July and 121 nights year-to-date as of the end of July. This is less than June, but is still an issue for the agency. Vice Chairman Stoney Greene asked if they utilized the Curtis Bridge facility for the nights they had the kids. Mr. Brown replied yes and they are so thankful for this space. They just took in a third child today and this is saving at least \$80 per night on hotel bills as well. This is a huge help to staff and they appreciate it a lot.

Mr. Brown went over the monthly caseload report, Foster Care financial report, Adoption Services financial report, Child Development and Subsidized Child Care financial report. They reduced the subsidized child care it was a preliminary allocation since the budget has not been passed. They hope when it passes this amount will go up, it is a \$1 million cut. Next he went through the CPS Foster Care monthly reports for June. Mr. Brown said it is busy, but things are going very well. All the Social Worker positions are filled and they have very good applicants for the open positions. They only have 5 Medicaid expansion positions to fill and believes they will fill these quickly. Chairman Elmore asked how NC Fast is doing. Mr. Brown replied it is going well, it took years to get the kinks worked out, but it works very well now.

The Board thanked Mr. Brown for his update.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES - PERSONNEL – Chairman Elmore recognized Tim Pennington, EMS Director and Jason Reavis. Chairman Elmore said the Board just toured the new EMS facility currently under construction, it looks amazing and will be a great facility for many years. Mr. Pennington thanked the Board and stated Mr. Reavis just handed out a packet of starting salaries in counties they have lost personnel too. They were not able to obtain real numbers from them, they got hesitation when they asked them for pay numbers for their services but, they did get their starting pay. He added there are many factors taken into consideration when hiring which includes certifications, years of service, education, etc. when setting their pay.

Mr. Pennington stated since the Pandemic, the healthcare profession has taken a hit from burnout and it's scared people off so there is a healthcare provider shortage. All of this has affected the salaries of healthcare providers. He added there are many other options for paramedics to work in practice settings; oral surgeons, ER's, Urgent Care, and multiple others. Mr. Pennington said 10 of their employees have left to go to neighboring counties since April for a few reasons; more appealing schedule and more money are the top two. They have talked with staff and surveyed them to see what would help and what they would like to see. He added when the results came in they wanted an appealing schedule and pay compression was at the top. Mr. Pennington said they can address the operational changes and make the schedule more appealing. They are looking at a 24/72, 12 hour, and 10 hour option. He added they feel this will help them to retain and recruit people that want flexible schedules and they would have this option.

EMS workers deal with tragedies, insects, dangerous animals, and many violent people all the time and they do a great job, but a dangerous job. Mr. Pennington stated he would like to use the Sheriff's quote "*they take care of everyone so we have to take care of them*". This is why he is

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here to propose an across the board 5% increase to get them to market rate compared to the surrounding counties.

Commissioner Johnson asked if other counties offer all these options or is it they all work 24/72 or all work 12. Mr. Pennington replied it would be rare to have three options, he does not know of anyone that offers this. Commissioner Sexton asked when will the 24/72 shifts be implemented. Mr. Pennington replied possibly September or October, this is the plan. Vice Chairman Greene asked if they would have to hire more people to do this. Mr. Pennington replied no they can do this with current staff. Vice Chairman Greene said based on the survey is this what the staff wants. Mr. Pennington replied yes 75% want 24/72 and 25% want 12 hours. Vice Chairman Greene asked can they satisfy all the folks that want the 24/72 and the 12 hours both. Mr. Pennington replied they will have eight 12-hour shifts, so there may be a couple that don't initially get the 12-hour shift, but it will be very close and will be determined according to longevity. Vice Chairman Greene asked if a sleeping area is provided for the 24/72. Mr. Pennington said this is a logistical issue they would have to work through for the outpost basis. In the new facility they toured earlier today, there is room to make these accommodations. Commissioner Sexton stated they will add this to the new facility. Mr. Pennington replied yes there is room to add bunks in the new EMS.

Chairman Elmore asked them to explain the handouts. Mr. Pennington stated the EMT basic starting pay in Wilkes is \$41,972. Mr. Reavis stated the first page is Yadkin and their starting salary is highlighted, the second is Alexander. Commissioner Sexton asked if this is the most recent numbers. Mr. Pennington replied these are the most recent that were posted, they are not sure if this includes what the other counties did July 1st or not. Mr. Reavis added when they reached out to them they stated it is posted online and it will update, but they could not tell him when. Vice Chairman Greene asked is this for the 24/72 pay rates they are comparing to. Mr. Pennington replied yes. Mr. Reavis said Alleghany is 24/48, Alexander and Yadkin are 24/72, they have not lost anyone to Surry so they didn't include it, but they are also 24/72.

Chairman Elmore thanked them for coming and sharing this and said if the Board has more questions they will reach out to Mr. Yates or them. Vice Chairman Greene stated the last two years the county has given a 7% pay raise, 14% over two years. Does he know what these counties did the past two years for raises or are they in a re-val and raised taxes to compensate for this. Mr. Pennington replied he does not know the raises these counties gave the past two years. Vice Chairman Greene stated he commends the Commissioners before that did not put them through a re-val during a pandemic when property prices and values were excessively high. This has saved the taxpayers money; but, like a piggy bank, if money is not coming in, they can't take it out. He added he does know that Alexander County raised taxes 12 cents.

Chairman Elmore stated they will take this into consideration. Mr. Pennington thanked the Board for their consideration. Chairman Elmore and the Board thanked Mr. Pennington and Wilkes EMS for all they do, they very much appreciate all of them and what they do for the citizens of Wilkes County every day.

NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE (NCACC) – DESIGNATION OF VOTING DELEGATE – Chairman Elmore

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stated they need a voting delegate for the conference in August held in Raleigh. He asked if there is anyone that would like to volunteer.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene to appoint Greg Minton as the designated voting delegate for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Casey Johnson and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS – Vice Chairman Stoney Greene stated they have EMS folks in attendance tonight and they appreciate what they do. No one needs them until they need them, when the phone call is made it is the most desperate time in someone's life for their family and the citizens. He added they greatly appreciate all they do, it is not an easy job and they take a lot home with them that most don't realize. Commissioner Sexton said he sees some in attendance that he worked with and if he was hurt or on the side of the road, these are the folks he wants to come and help. He understands why they want the 24/72 shift, you have to work there to realize what they miss in spending time with their families and he supports the 24/72.

CLOSED SESSION – Motion was made by Commissioner Casey Johnson to go into closed session to discuss qualifications, competence, performance, or conditions of employment for a county employee or prospective county employee pursuant to the personnel exception under G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6); and under Section 143-318.11(a)(3) of the North Carolina General Statutes and to consult with and give direction to the Board's attorneys with respect to one or more potential judicial or administrative actions. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene and unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene seconded by Commissioner Casey Johnson and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn back into regular session. No action was taken in the closed session.

ADJOURN – Motion was made by Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, seconded by Commissioner Bill Sexton and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the meeting of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 6:42 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Giddeon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: August 15, 2023