

**GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 20, 2016**

The Gates County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 20, 2016 in the Gates County Court House, 202 Court Street, Gatesville. Commissioners Hofler, Owens, Jordan, Felton and Freeman were present. Also present was County Manager, Natalie Rountree.

Commissioner Owens led in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Hofler called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes are approved during the first meeting of the month.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Hofler stated Announced Delegation, Martin & Starnes, needs to be added to the agenda to give the Audit Report.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Delegations – Unannounced

None

Delegations – Announced

Lucas Jackson, Martin & Starnes presented the Annual Financial Report for fiscal year 2014-2015. Mr. Jackson provided highlights on the fund balance, top three revenue sources, top three expenditures, overview of the enterprise fund- water fund and the enterprise fund- landfill. Chair Hofler asked where we fall on the Local Government Commission brackets of based on general fund balances. In closing Mr. Jackson provided an overview of what it means to have an unmodified finding vs a modified finding.

Administrative Reports

Administrative reports are given during the first meeting of the month.

Public Hearings

None

Old Business

Natalie Rountree, County Manager, stated in November the Board discussed the part time Board of Elections job descriptions. The job descriptions that are being presented came directly from the Director of the Board of Elections. Ms. Rountree feels the job descriptions more accurately describe the job description than the previously presented cookie cutter description that was presented.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to approve the Board of Elections part time job descriptions as presented. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Jennifer Baptiste, County Planner, stated earlier this month the Board discussed the removal of Rev. Joseph Perry due to lack of attendance at meetings. Commissioner Jordan contacted Mr. Perry who explained his new employment does not allow him to attend the meetings but he would be willing to serve again in the future should something change with his current job.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to remove Mr. Joseph Perry from the Board of Adjustment. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Joe Green, Board of Adjustment, stated he received a phone call from Larry Pressnell to resign from the Board. Mr. Greene asked for the Board to accept his resignation so that it can be advertised.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Pressnell and to authorize advertisement of two Board of Adjustment members. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

New Business

Kathy Lane, Tax Administrator, presented a refund for Charles Wright in the amount of \$400.00 for two parcels, both parcels are vacant tracts of land incorrectly billed for fire fees. We do not allocate fire fees unless there is a building or dwelling on the tract of land.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to approve both refunds for Charles Wright for a total amount of \$400.00. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Jordan asked if we want to refund if a taxpayer has unpaid taxes. Ms. Lane stated when the original conversation took place there were unpaid taxes but taxes have now been paid on all parcels of land.

Commissioner Jordan requested the County Manager and the Tax Administrator develop terminology outlining the fire fees and how they are applied to be presented to the Board of Commissioner for review.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to direct the County Manager and the Tax Administrator to find the existing policy or develop a written policy for implementing fire fees. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Baptiste, County Planner, presented proposed text amendments for the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment. The Board had an opportunity to review the draft amendments to suggest changes and ask questions. Ms. Baptiste explained the traditional operations of the Board of Adjustment have been, these are processes that have historically happened but have not been documented in the ordinance. Section 13-01.04 Review of Administrative decisions was changed by general statute. For the Planning Board there is currently nothing in the ordinance to regulate what cases the Planning Board hears, how decisions are made, how recommendations are made, and the composition of the Board.

Chair Hofler suggested rewording the amendment that talks about the attendance policy. Commissioner Jordan has concerns about the removal of members and what criteria is used to evaluate removal as well as what qualifies an individual as a resident. Commissioner Jordan feels a resident needs to be a legal US Citizen and shouldn't be tied to being a tax paying citizen as some people may be renting and not paying tax but if they are required to pay tax then they should not be delinquent.

Commissioner Felton asked for a term length to be set for how long someone must be a resident before an application can be submitted. He also requested the amendment be revised to make citizens of Gatesville eligible to apply to be on the Board and he would like to see a set meeting location determined. Chair Hofler feels setting a permanent meeting location is hard because of space restrictions. Commissioner Felton requested the amendment specifically state meeting notices are posted in the local newspaper.

Commissioner Freeman stated on removal of members there are some typos.

Commissioner Jordan asked for more specific wording be added to explain submittal dates and deadlines. Ms. Rountree stated the zoning ordinance talks about a public notice being in a newspaper circulated in the county.

Commissioner Jordan said under the consistency statement it would be beneficial to include the general statute number.

Chair Hofler expressed concerns on 13-02.03 where it states a decision must be rendered within 30 days. Commissioner Jordan feels that it is a necessity to have a reasonable expectation of when a decision should be made.

Commissioner Felton would like definitions of maps to be added under map amendments as well as a definition of what is required in a sketch map.

Commissioner Owens requested every time something is included or amended based on a General Statute that the General Statute number is referenced.

The Board will receive a revised copy for a second review at the February 8th Board of Commissioners Meeting.

Tom Morgan, EMS Board of Directors Chairman, read the following letter:

Dear Madam & Sirs:

This letter is to serve official notice that Gates County Rescue Squad, Inc will terminate the current contract with the County of Gates to provide Rescue & EMS services effective June 30, 2016. This notification is intended to comply with the 180 day termination clause of the current contract.

Gates County Rescue Squad, Inc is unable to provide these services for \$25,000 as stated in the current contract.

Gates County Rescue Squad, Inc will submit a new contract to provide these same services to the County of Gates for the budget year July 1, 2016- June 30, 2017.

We look forward to serving the citizens of Gates County for many years to come.

Sincerely,
Tom Morgan, Chairman
Board of Directors
Gates County Rescue & EMS

EMS services rarely pay for themselves and shortfalls are common and expected nationwide. EMS Revenue is only 27% of the budget in Currituck County, 55% in Perquimans, 76% in Chowan, 69% in Pasquotank and 93% currently in Gates. If the requested funding is approved Gates will reduce to about 70% of budget is from revenues. The requested funding would allow 1 ambulance to be 24 hours a day a 2nd ambulance between 8-5 and a second ambulance to be on call during the night. It is predicted that both ambulances will be needed 24 hours a day very soon.

Commissioner Jordan asked out of the five ambulances in the fleet how many handle non-emergency transport. Mr. Morgan stated around 50% of runs are non-emergency. Commissioner Jordan stated in 2011 Medex from Ahoskie submitted an application for non-emergency transports. Mr. Morgan explained if Medex would have been allowed to handle non-emergency transports Gates County Rescue and EMS would not have received the revenue which has allowed them to survive from then to now. On emergency calls only half of the amount billed is typically collected whereas 99% on non-emergency transport costs is collected. Commissioner Owens stated it is nice when an organization non only presents a problem but also presents a solution.

Commissioner Owens stated everything concerning the fee sounds do-able but there is concern about the comment from Cara Millanzi with the SOG. Mr. Billy Winn, Emergency Management Director explained what she is saying is the established fire fees cannot be replaced by new fees. EMS fees must be separate. The additional fee is do-able without further legislation. It only requires legislation from the County Board of Commissioners.

Chair Hofler stated she contacted surrounding counties and found that Chowan accesses a fee, Camden considered a private contractor and decided against it and Bertie went with a private contractor who went bankrupt after 4 months of the contract.

Commissioner Jordan asked how many other counties operate with private EMS? For medical transport the some of the surrounding counties do allow separate entities to assist with non-emergency transport.

Commissioner Jordan asked to see a financial statements to include all revenue and employee salaries. Chief Butts stated he will make all financial statements available to the County Manager to share with the Board.

Commissioner Felton thanked all of the rescue members for their time, service, and training. In the terms of economic development we are reviewing a local business that provides service to all residents, provides jobs to citizens and in the grand scheme of things the \$350,000 that is being asked is minimal for the services being rendered.

Commissioner Jordan said in order to be able to answer citizen questions and let them know that we made the best decision we need to make sure we have reviewed all information including the financial statements.

Commissioner Freeman stated when you look at our aging society our senior citizens are at least 4,000 individuals and rapidly growing, this large number of citizens will continue to need more and more services.

Billy Winn clarified non-emergency transport calls vary greatly for example in December there were 7 dialysis patients and in January there was only 1.

Commissioner Jordan asked if non-emergency transport fees are a set fee. Chief Butts stated it is a set fee and mileage can be recouped. EMS knows before the non-emergency transport ever takes places that EMS will receive the payment. The billing amount is set by the Department of Social Services by the Medicare rate. The money that is being lost is being lost on emergency 911 calls, the profit is being gained by non-emergency transport is being supporting the emergency 911 calls.

Billy Winn explained the 2014 census put Gates County into a metropolitan status due to the majority of the County's population goes to tidewater to work. By having that designation the County it cutes the collection rate that we are able to bill Medicare by 8.5%. The change effected very few counties, we are the only county out of the only surrounding counties with this designation. This change was all over the country but in NC if effected two counties.

Mickey Lee, Gatesville, feels the motion that was made some time ago to keep MedEx out was the right motion to make because it was a benefit to Gates County EMS.

Commissioner Jordan feels we need to take a look at some additional information as well as the process to implement an EMS fee as a tax appropriation.

Ms. Rountree stated the County has a generator that is no longer being used and the school system has requested the generator.

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to approve the surplus request of the generator for disposal to the school system. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

The Albemarle Rural Planning Organization needs someone appointed to the bicycle committee.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to appoint Natalie Rountree to the Albemarle Rural Planning Organization Bicycle Committee. Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to approve the Resolution Requesting the Albemarle Rural Planning Organization to Delay Consideration of Tolling Ferry Routes. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to approve the letter of support for Foreign Trade Zones to include Gates County in the area of port authority. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Comments

None

Commissioner Comments

Chair Hofler thanked citizens for attending with special thanks to EMS and Rescue, the presentation was very informative and we look forward to working with you in the future. The next commissioners meeting is Monday February 8th at 10a.m.. There will be a benefit dinner next Friday night from 4-7pm at Eure Baptiste Church to benefit Scott Powell.

Commissioner Owens thanked everyone for being in attendance. We have had plenty of opportunities to brag on our County and certainly our Rescue Squad and EMS services are something to be very proud of. We would be sucking without the services provided and the quality of service provided.

Commissioner Jordan thanked everyone for attending including EMS. Often times it seems like a thankless job but each of you is called to this service and we thank you for answering the call. Sometimes decisions can't be made based on emotion and a process must be followed, if we look at all angles and follow a process the best decisions will surface.

Commissioner Felton thanked everyone for attending, almost everyone in the audience has had a comment to make which is a very good thing. Everyone on our Rescue Squad is professional and that professionalism is truly appreciated by everyone. Anyone that has ever volunteered and knows what you do really appreciates your service.

Commissioner Freeman said God Bless everyone. We set direction through the citizens and the decisions that are made are shared. Thank you for being here and supporting us, we support you.

Central Middle School Discussion

Chair Hofler stated due to the lateness of the hour and the weather situation it may be best to table the topic and reschedule a separate meeting.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to table the Central Middle School discussion. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to schedule a special meeting on Monday February 15th at 4pm to discuss Central Middle School. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Closed Session

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to enter into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 a (3) Legal, (4) Economic Development, (6) Personnel. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to exit closed session. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion carried without opposition.

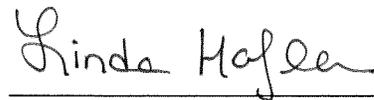
Adjournment

Commissioner Owens made a motion to direct the County Manager to have finance cut a check for the URP Grant Application in the amount of \$50 to come out of the Commissioners Emergency Funds budget line. Commissioner Freeman seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Owens made a motion to direct the County Manager to send a letter of reply to the complainant concerning the matter discussed in closed session. Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Jordan made a motion to direct the County Manager to send a letter identifying suitable sites to the company seeking sites for a business location. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.

Commissioner Felton made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jordan seconded the motion; motion passed unanimously.



Linda Hofler, Chairman



Melissa C. Lawrence, Clerk

GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
