

**STATE OF NORTH  
CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF STOKES**

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**OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS  
STOKES COUNTY  
GOVERNMENT  
DANBURY, NORTH  
CAROLINA  
MONDAY DECEMBER 23, 2019**

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a regular session in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administration Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Monday December 23, 2019 at 6:00 pm with the following members present:

Board of Commissioners Present: Chairman Andy Nickelston, Vice Chairman Ronnie Mendenhall, Commissioner Rick Morris, and Commissioner Jimmy Walker

Absent: Commissioner Jamie Yontz

County Administration Present: County Manager Jake Oakley, Assistant County Manager/Clerk to the Board Shannon Shaver, Finance Director Julia Edwards, and County Attorney Ty Browder

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nickelston called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners to order.

### **INVOCATION**

Commissioner Morris delivered the Invocation.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Nickelston lead the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and invited those in attendance to join.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to approve the Agenda as presented with the exception of the DSS Board which will be moved to the Action Agenda at the next meeting due to a new application being received and the Board needing time to review, and Commissioner Yontz being absent.

Commissioner Walker seconded the motion. The motion Passed.  
Absent: Yontz

### **COMMENTS - Managers/Commissioners**

Commissioner Morris welcomed those in attendance and those watching at home through YouTube and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Commissioner Morris read a prepared statement as follows:

I would like to address and clarify a couple of items from my recent blog post concerning the renewal of the School Superintendent's employment contract as this subject was brought up at our last meeting. The major purpose of my post was to inform the public that an important issue would be taken up by the Board of Education (BOE) at their next meeting. A well-informed electorate is a major goal of mine for increased government transparency since most people are very busy and often don't have time to track the meeting to meeting activities of their numerous elected boards. With reference to the recent blog post, I don't have anything to add to the question concerning when the Superintendent's evaluation was "technically" completed as it had little to do with the major points I was attempting to make in the post. It was also not questioned until late in the game. The major points that I was attempting to make in the post were:

- 1) Remind the public that BOE elections were now partisan and these elections would now be in play for the upcoming March primary election;
- 2) Given the change from non-partisan to partisan, the public deserved to know before the primary election where each BOE member stood on an important issue like the School Superintendent's employment contract status; and
- 3) I wanted to publicly announce my personal position on our current School Superintendent's performance since I have personally dealt with him one-on-one for several years when I served as county manager.

I feel this blog post was perfectly appropriate as it met my intended purpose for creating the blog which was to make it easy for the Public to keep up on what's happening with their elected governing bodies. I will continue to use it for this purpose to get information out to the citizens that I think they would like to be aware of and I will continue to make it clear that this blog reflects my personal opinion as a board member and a citizen and not the opinions or positions of the entire board of county commissioners.

One of the most interesting pieces of feedback I received from a couple of folks on the blog post was that I needed to mind my own business as a county commissioner and stop meddling in the BOE's business. Sorry folks, not "gonna" happen because the critic's definition of meddling is my definition of required oversight. As a county commissioner I'm one of five who approves and oversees the execution of the county budget. The largest line item in the most recent county budget was approximately \$13 Million of local taxpayer funds provided to the School System to fund their operations. That's about 1/4 of the county's total budget. As I see it, I have a fiduciary responsibility to closely monitor and conduct oversight of the operation and health of the school system because the school system's success directly or indirectly impacts many other facets of county life, business and government. Our commissioner board provides funding to many departments and organizations who are overseen by their own individual boards but that does not relieve us of our oversight responsibilities for those organizations. Let me provide a couple of examples to illustrate my position on required budget oversight that by the way should not be confused with micromanagement of anyone, which I do not endorse.

- 1) If not for direct commissioner involvement and collaboration with the School System the BOE would still be paying \$400K per year instead of about half that amount for internet services and very few if any new unserved and underserved students would have been connected or given a competitive choice for Internet services during the past 4 years.

2) My son in law happens to be a private equity investor. The first thing his team does when acquiring a new company is to evaluate the CEO and senior leadership team and decide if they will stay or go. The school superintendent is likewise critical to the success of the school system for many of the same reasons and that is why I feel my strategic oversight role both as a citizen and county commissioner is very relevant and required. I will not be throwing \$13 Million per year over the fence to any organization the county funds and just check back a year later to see how things went. That would be a dereliction of my duties that are expected of me by those who elected me.

In closing, I would remind everyone that if you have any questions about the information included in my blog please contact me directly instead of complaining to or questioning other commissioners or government officials about its content. They are at a disadvantage answering questions about the blog since they are not involved in its publication. I will be pleased to discuss any aspect of my posts with anyone who desires to do so.

Commissioner Walker welcomed those in attendance and those watching at home and noted that he doesn't use many modern means of communication and that he has never actually read one of Commissioner Morris's blogs. He stated that he has confidence in the School Board in that they can handle the business to do with the schools. He noted that after being out and about he had a moment where he realized that Christmas is not like it used to be and that he prefers the old way that Christmas used to be. Commissioner Walker wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Vice Chairman Mendenhall welcomed those in attendance and those watching at home and noted that he concurred with Commissioner Walkers comments on Christmas. Vice Chairman Mendenhall wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and noted that this is a special time of year as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Chairman Nickelston welcomed those in attendance and those watching at home and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

County Manager Oakley welcomed those in attendance and those watching at home and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Absent: Yontz

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The following spoke during Public Comments:

Will Carter  
152 Carter Farm Road  
King, NC 27021

RE: Thanks to the Board

- I want to the thank this Board for all they have done this year for my department.
- There are a lot of blessings coming to Stokes County this year, including some that we can't talk about yet.
- There is a lot of negativity going on right now among some people who think we don't do anything up here and I just want to thank the Board for their support.
- I want to wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

All attachments presented on the Agenda are available in the attachments of the Agenda on the County Website and are available upon request from the Clerk, with the exception of the minutes approved which are located on the County Website under the minutes tab.

Minutes

Budget Amendments

Resolution to Reimburse Ourselves for the Meadows Water Project

Tax Administration Monthly Report-Items for Approval

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Absent: Yontz

## **INFORMATION AGENDA**

Chairman Nickelston noted that there were no items on the Information Agenda at tonight's meeting.

## **DISCUSSION AGENDA**

### **Stokes County Health Department - Bad Debt Write Off Request**

Health Director Tammy Martin presented the Board with a request from the Stokes County Health Department to write off \$2,293.89 in bad debt and noted that this was a smaller amount than usual.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any discussion/questions/comments.

There was favorable discussion among the Board and with full consensus of the Board this item was moved to the Action Agenda at the next meeting.

### **Board of Health -Appointment Requests**

Health Director Tammy Martin presented the Board with the list of individuals to serve on the Board of Health and requested approval of the list at the next meeting as well as for the Board to set the rate of pay per meeting.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any discussion/questions/comments

Commissioner Morris commented that the DSS and Health Boards had been paid \$30 per meeting in the past and noted that the Board of Commissioners gets paid \$40 per outside meetings and

would like to see these Boards paid the same. He also requested that in the event the position that Pam Tillman currently fills were to be filled that they find a way to keep Pam Tillman due to her vital role to the Health Department. He also asked for clarification on the last four members on the list and if those were non-voting members.

Health Director Tammy Martin noted that Pam Tillman could stay on the Board of Health as a General Public Member but stated that she did not anticipate the Veterinarian position being filled due to lack of interest from those she had inquired with. She also noted that the last four members on the list, which include the County Manager, Health Director, DSS Director, and Recording Secretary were not voting members.

Chairman Nickelston recommended changing all of the Stokes County Board Fees to be the same, such as the Board of Elections, Planning Board, Board of Adjustments, and any others that may need to be changed as well.

Commissioner Walker requested to put this topic off to a future meeting for discussion of the Board Fees as a separate agenda item from the appointments of the Board of Health and DSS Board.

With no further discussion and full consensus of the Board, the request for approval of the Board of Health Members was moved to the Action Agenda at the next meeting.

### **VHF System Upgrade Request**

E-911/Communications Director Del Hall presented the Board with information related to a VHF System Upgrade Request at a cost of \$297,000.00.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any discussion/questions/comments.

Chairman Nickelston concurred with E-911/Communications Director Del Hall that this seemed to be the only option and is mandated by statute.

There was much discussion among the Board on this item and with full consensus of the Board this item was placed on the Action Agenda for the next meeting with a request for Finance Director Julia Edwards to present a Budget Amendment at the next meeting.

### **Architectural/Engineering Services for the Public Works Maintenance/Storage Building**

Support Services Supervisor Glenda Pruitt presented the Board with a request to contract with Peterson and Gordon Architects for the Architectural/Engineering Services for the Public Works Maintenance/Storage Building.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any discussion/questions/comments.

There was favorable discussion among the Board and with full consensus of the Board this item was moved to the Action Agenda at the next meeting.

## **ACTION AGENDA**

### **Reagan Building Flooring Quotes**

Chairman Nickelston entertained a motion on the item presented.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any comments/questions/discussion.

There was discussion among the Board and with full consensus of the Board the Board elected to replace the carpet in the Commissioners Chambers back with carpet while going with vinyl plank flooring as quoted for the rest of the building.

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to approve the quote from Carpet Connections to replace the flooring in the Ronald Reagan Building and Budget Amendment #56 in the amount of \$67,080.00 with there being some funds left over due to the change to carpet in the Commissioners Chambers.

Commissioner Walker seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Absent: Yontz

### **LKC Letter Agreement for Engineering Services**

Chairman Nickelston entertained a motion on the item presented.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any comments/questions/discussion.

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to approve the LKC Letter for Engineering Services and give authorization for the County Manager to sign..

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Absent: Yontz

### **Architectural/Engineering Services EMS Station W/C**

Chairman Nickelston entertained a motion on the item presented.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any comments/questions/discussion.

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to approve contracting with Peterson and Gordon Architects for the EMS Station in Walnut Cove.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Absent: Yontz

### **Architectural/Engineering SolidWaste/Scale House**

Chairman Nickelston entertained a motion on the item presented.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any comments/questions/discussion.

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to approve contracting with Peterson and Gordon Architects for the Solid Waste / Scale House.

Commissioner Walker seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Absent: Yontz

### **Voting Equipment Resolution**

Chairman Nickelston entertained a motion on the item presented.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any comments/questions/discussion.

Commissioner Morris moved to approve that the Stokes County Board of Commissioners shall adopt and acquire the following certified voting equipment pursuant to G.S. 163-165.9(a)(1): Voting Type: Model DS200 Precinct Scanner- 23 (# of units)/ES&S Unity 3.4.1.1 Voting System Vendor: Election Systems & Software Total Cost to County: \$122,165.00 (excluding state and local taxes) with Payment Terms as indicated in sales agreement.

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall seconded the motion. The motion Passed.  
Absent: Yontz

### **Propane Vehicles**

Chairman Nickelston entertained a motion on the item presented.

Vice Chairman Mendenhall moved to approve the RFP for converting the additional eight vehicles on the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion.

Chairman Nickelston opened the floor for any comments/questions/discussion.

After discussion from the Board this item will be updated to reflect the requested changes and brought back to the Board for final approval at the next meeting on the Action Agenda, therefore the motion was not approved.

Absent: Yontz

### **Adjournment**

Vice-Chairman Mendenhall moved to to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm with no further business to come before the Board.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. The motion Passed.  
Absent: Yontz

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**Shannon Shaver**  
Clerk to the Board

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**Andy Nickelston**  
Chairman