

STATE OF NORTH)
CAROLINA)
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COUNTY OF STOKES)
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OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONERS
STOKES COUNTY
GOVERNMENT
DANBURY, NORTH
CAROLINA
MONDAY APRIL 14, 2025

Regular Meeting of the Stokes County Board of Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Regular Meeting in the Stokes County Administration Building in the Commissioners Chambers located in Danbury, North Carolina on Monday April 14, 2025 at 6:00 pm with the following members present:

Board of Commissioners Present: Chairman Keith Wood, Vice-Chairman Wayne Barneycastle, Commissioner Brad Chandler, Commissioner Sonya Cox, and Commissioner Rick Morris.

County Administration Present: County Manager Jeff Sanborn, Assistant County Manager/Clerk to the Board Amber Brown, Director of Finance Tammy Keaton, and Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Michaud.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wood called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION

Chairman Wood invited those in attendance to join the Board in the Invocation, if desired.

Chairman Wood delivered the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Wood invited those in attendance to join the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to amend or approve tonight's agenda.

Vice-Chairman Barneycastle moved to approve the agenda as presented.

Commissioner Chandler seconded. The motion Passed.

Public Comments

Chairman Wood opened the floor for public comments at 6:02 pm.

The following individuals signed up to speak in public comments:

Kris Dearmin

326 Holly Ridge Drive
King, NC 27021
RE: Library Budget Request

Sandra Robinson
RE: Animal Control

Rebecca Sullivan
RE: Schools/Economic

Ellen Peric
RE: Animal Control
Yielded time to Shannon Shaver

Shannon Shaver
RE: Animal Control

Kathleen Edwards
126 Rogers Road
Stokes County, NC
RE: Animal Control Ordinance

Mary Burton
RE: Animal Ordinances

JoAnne Silvia
Stokes County, NC
RE: Animal Ordinances

Angie Gamble
RE: Animal Control

Katie Tedder
1282 Crystal Road
King, NC 27021
RE: Habitat for Humanity

Donna Lawrence
116 Haverty Drive
High Point, NC 27265
RE: Animal Control

Django Burgess
801 North Main Street
Danbury, NC 27016
RE: Animal Ordinances

Kimberly Rich
4392 NC 772 Highway
Walnut Cove, NC 27052
RE: Animal Ordinance

Tonya Hart
1040 Chad Drive
Walnut Cove, NC 27852
RE: Animal Ordinance

Debby Craig
1075 Brown Plantation Road
Walnut Cove, NC 27052
RE: Animal Control
Yielded time

Amy Jenkins
201 Westridge Drive
King, NC 27021
RE: Animal Ordinance

Bryan G.
1025 Brookridge Drive
Walnut Cove, NC 27852
RE: Animal Ordinance

Leah Batista
RE: Nuclear Power

Chairman Wood closed the floor for public comments at 7:07 pm.

COMMENTS - Managers/Commissioners

Chairman Wood opened the floor for comments from the manager and commissioners.

Commissioner Chandler commented:

- Good evening. It's good to see a big crowd. I guess I can touch more on the discussion part about the animal control ordinance, but I think that one thing we'll share that I don't think anyone disagrees with is that our pets and our dogs and cats and animals, they all need to be treated humanely. And I'll talk more about that, but it's good to hear this many people come out and talk about the safety and the humanity for our animals. So, I appreciate that.
- The one other thing that I just want to get ahead of, and we will get into it later on our proclamation, that we are very strong supporters of public safety and I just want to personally recognize the National Telecommunicator Public Safety Week. We will have a proclamation later tonight if we ever get to the Action Agenda. I do want to personally say that you are a very important part of our infrastructure here when it comes to emergency services. 24/7 you get somebody professionally trained. And sometimes they feel more when a Deputy or a firefighter or a paramedic that is in danger or hurt than we do when we are actually on the scene as law enforcement. So please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

Commissioner Morris commented:

- Welcome, everybody. It's good to see a big crowd tonight. We really do appreciate you speaking in public comments. That's what we have it for, so we can get input from the citizens and that's a very important part of our decision process is to hear what the public has to say. So, it's great to see such a big crowd come out and talk to us tonight.
- I want to remind everybody that reevaluation is coming. If you have a problem with your property values, we have an appeals process up this Board if it can't be resolved with the tax office. We had our first meeting about a week ago and nobody was there to appeal their

values. But we have three more, both in the afternoon and the evening schedule. So, if you have a problem with your property values that you can't get resolved, be sure to bring it to us.

Vice-Chairman Barneycastle commented:

- It's great to see everybody tonight and everybody watching the livestream. Personally, I would like to send a special prayer out to the young man's family - that tragic accident over the weekend.
- One thing I've seen about this is how our community and our county can come together. They started raising money for this young man and the last time I looked today it was already over \$11,000. So that just shows you how our county and community can come together if they want to.
- One other thing I want to touch on, and I had phone calls about this. I don't get paid anything except for here. And I don't know what I get paid. I really don't care. I do this for the love of the county, not the money. I don't like being accused of getting paid to adopt a policy or approve a policy. But no policy has been adopted here whatsoever. To tell me I don't love animals, I got one in my fire station. He's been there four years. He's not mine, but he's mine now because I look after him. I buy Charlie a \$350 doghouse. He lives in the fire station. So, I got a big, strong heart for animals, trust me. I've got three of them in my house and they live in my house with me. And I love them to death, so I just wanted to clarify. I see it on Facebook, social media and I make no comments to none of that. None of that whatsoever. It don't bother me what people say about me. It does not bother me whatsoever, but I try to make the best decision I know how when it comes to people's feelings and animals and stuff like that. I just want people to understand that. Thank you.

Commissioner Cox commented:

- It's good to see this crowd here. It's always good when the community turns out to let their voices be heard cause that's what this is all about, for sure.
- I want to echo what Wayne was saying about the Will Turner family. I don't know how many of you know, but we had a young student at North Stokes tragically killed in a car crash going to prom Saturday night. That's what we have been referencing. And we just wanted to take time out to remember that family, his friends, and the school and all that they're dealing with regarding that. It is a tragic thing. They did a GoFundMe for his funeral expenses which is what Wayne referenced. I think it has raised over \$11,000 to pay for his burial. We do have really good communities, and this county comes together when they need to, and that is evident of that.
- Also echoing what Brad said about our telecommunicators. April 13th through the 19th is National Telecommunicators Week. we'll talk about that more later in the agenda, but they have a really tough job there. The first and most critical contact in an emergency. Our telecommunicators do their job with compassion and professionalism and I'm proud of the job they do and for the ones that we have working here in our county.
- Also remind everybody that April is Child Abuse Prevention month. There will be a "Ring Out Child Abuse" event here at the hill past the library on Friday the 25th of April. Just wanted to remind everyone of that.
- I will save my comments regarding animal control and ordinances for when we discuss it, in interest of our time here. I don't have any dogs currently, but I have lots of grand-dogs. And they are treated like they are grandkids. They laugh at me when I go into the pet store, and I come out with \$80 worth of treats and toys, and they ask what kind of dog I have. I don't even own a dog, these are for grand-dogs. They are a very important part of our lives, that's for sure.

Chairman Wood commented:

- I want to welcome everybody. I love seeing this place full. This is probably my last meeting because y'all have made me break two rules. There's too many people in here. The fire marshal will tell you in heartbeat. This many people shouldn't be in this room. And I was only supposed to give y'all 30 minutes to talk so I am a bad example for the Board of Education and everybody else in the county. But I am glad y'all showed up. I am a big advocate for freedom of speech, and I don't care if I sit here until 10 o'clock all of y'all are going to talk that wanted to talk. So let's get this show on the road.

Conflicts Of Interest

Chairman Wood asked if any Board member had a conflict of interest with any of the items of the agenda for tonight or one that could be perceived as a conflict of interest.

No conflicts of interest were stated by the Board.

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.

Budget Amendments

FY 24/25 Martin Starnes & Associates Audit Engagement Letters and Contracts

Resolution of Support for Senate Bill 248

Appointment of Clerk to the Board

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which included the below:

- Budget Amendments
- Fiscal Year 24/25 Martin Starnes & Associates Audit Engagement Letters and Contracts
- Resolution of Support for Senate Bill 248
- Appointment of Clerk to the Board

Commissioner Morris moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Cox seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

DISCUSSION 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.

Text Amendment Request for Stokes County Zoning Ordinance

Chairman Wood turned the floor over to Planning Director Eric Nance to present.

Planning Director Eric Nance presented the Text Amendment Request for Stokes County Zoning Ordinance to the Board, requesting to include **(nuclear)** as a definition under **(Electrical power generation)** section **91.2, M1-CZ (Light Manufacturing Conditional Zoning)**. This request will add clarity to the definitions under **(Electrical Power generation)** under section **91.2** and prepare Stokes County and its Citizens for future improvement to the power infrastructure as noted in chapter 7, 1.0 in the Stokes County Long Range Plan.

The Board asked for clarification that the County would not be responsible for inspections and safety regulations of the nuclear power plant. Planning Director Eric Nance confirmed this, stating that it would be handled by the federal government.

Chairman Wood opened the Public Hearing for Zoning Text Amendment at 7:12 pm.

Martha Hartley

King, NC

RE: Duke Energy Plans

Hartley did not support adding the term nuclear to the zoning ordinance due to the potential for accidents, sabotage, or terrorism. Hartley also cited the possible release of radioactivity into the air or water, accumulating nuclear waste, and long-term potential contamination. Hartley stated support the Duke Energy Solar Initiative.

Michael Hartley

King, NC

RE: Nuclear Ordinance

Hartley asked the Board not to formalize the welcoming of nuclear power in Stokes County in the Zoning Text Amendment. Hartley stated his support of solar power farm in the county.

Time Mabe

Walnut Cove, NC

RE: Solar Advocate

Mabe stated that he is an advocate of the solar farm in Stokes County.

Chairman Wood closed the Public Hearing for Zoning Text Amendment at 7:21 pm.

This item was moved to the Action Agenda for tonight's meeting.

Solar Farm Rezoning Request

Chairman Wood turned the floor over to Planning Director Eric Nance to present.

Planning Director Eric Nance presented a request by applicant **Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC, DFC Stokes, LLC and DFC Stokes 2, LLC** to rezone four parcels of 667 +/- acres from RA (Residential Agricultural) and M1 (Light Manufacturing) to M1-CZ (Light Manufacturing-Conditional Zoning) for the construction of a 667 +/- acre large-scale solar farm consisting of 263,648 fixed tilt Canadian Solar brand modules. Duke Energy has stated that this facility will provide 130 MW (Megawatt) of renewable energy each year, which is enough emission-free energy to power approximately 22,700 homes and will provide 46 MW (Megawatt) of energy storage. Duke Energy has stated that this facility would create 300 new construction jobs, increase tax revenue for Stokes County, generate economic benefits to local businesses during construction and help improve overall reliability of the electric grid. This proposal does provide a potential tax base increase due to expansion of commercial property; however, the Stokes County Planning Department does not support this proposal because it is not in line with or support the land use policy established in the Stokes County 2035 Long Range Plan.

Planning Director Eric Nance turned the floor over to Duke Energy to present their proposal.

Director of Local Government and Community Relations Jimmy Flythe and other individuals from Duke Energy spoke on the proposed solar farm.

Chairman Wood opened the Public Hearing for Rezoning Request (Solar Farm) at 8:07 pm.

Jill Rolfes

RE: Solar Farm

Rolfes brought up a point of clarification about the Canadian Solar brand modules used in solar farm. Rolfes stated that this project should be approached responsibly due to long term chemicals used in solar panels and the health risks these chemicals can pose. Requested that the Board initiate groundwater testing around the solar farms and pause new solar development approvals.

Ben Rolfes

RE: Solar Farm

Yielded a minute of time to Jill Rolfes. Rolfes asked the Board to research more on solar farms before voting on this item.

Rosanna Jarvis

RE: Solar Farm

Jarvis opposed the solar farm in Stokes County. Jarvis believes that the funding for the solar panels should be invested into the tourism of Stokes County.

Chad Jarvis

306 Summit Street

Walnut Cove, NC 27052

RE: Solar Regulations

Jarvis supported the solar farm for the tax revenue for the area and cites that it is a safe, clean option for energy.

Kathy Dix

Walnut Cove, NC

RE: Solar Farm

Dix states that the solar panels are affecting the beauty of Stokes County. Dix questions what areas the solar energy is helping.

Martha Hartley

King, NC

RE: Duke Energy Plans

Hartley voiced support for renewable energy for Stokes County.

Yvonne Crever

King, NC

RE: Solar Farm

Crever voiced reservations for the solar farm proposal.

Eric Crever

King, NC

RE: Solar Farm

Crever expressed concern for the land use in Walnut Cove. Not opposed to solar energy, but questions about much solar energy will be produced from these panels and what is lost with their placement.

Patti Dunlap

Walnut Cove, NC

RE: Solar Panels

Dunlap voices concerns over the site where the panels are planned to be placed, citing historical significance of the property with reference to enslaved persons and Saura Indians.

Chad Bailey

Walnut Cove, NC

RE: Solar Panels

Supports the idea of a solar farm, but not at the planned location due to historical significance.

Dr. Donna Price-Merrills

215 Frontier Drive

Kernersville, NC

RE: Solar Panels

Price-Merrills states the historical significance of the area nearby to the solar farm and how this land could be impacted by the adjacent solar panels. Price-Merrills voiced concerns about the sufficiency of the current solar panels and the impact they are having on the beauty of Stokes County.

Chairman Wood closed the Public Hearing for Rezoning Request (Solar Farm) at 8:46 pm.

Chairman Wood recessed the meeting at 8:47 pm.

Chairman Wood called the meeting back to order at 8:58 pm.

Chairman Wood reopened the Public Hearing for Rezoning Request (Solar Farm) at 8:58 pm.

Maria Camaria

RE: Nuclear

Camaria expressed concerns about the nuclear power plant in Stokes County. Camaria details prior issues with nuclear power and an increase in health issues when living in New York. Camaria states that the move to Stokes County was in order to get away from nuclear power and urged the Board to consider the possible issues of nuclear power.

Chairman Wood closed the Public Hearing for Rezoning Request (Solar Farm) at 9:02 pm.

Project Development Manager Steve Hendrickson and Energy Expert Tommy Cleveland addressed comments and questions from the Public Hearing and the Board.

This item was tabled and moved to the Discussion Agenda on the next regular meeting on April 28, 2025, at 2:00 pm.

Request to Amend the Stokes County Animal Control Ordinance

Chairman Wood turned the floor over to Animal Control Director Tommy Reeves to present.

Animal Control Director Tommy Reeves presented revised amendments to the Animal Control & Animal Welfare Ordinance of Stokes County after a prior presentation to the Board on March 24, 2025. These new amendments pertained to Section 2: Definitions, article c, Adequate Shelter. The changes proposed here are that enclosed have a minimum of four sides and the means for adequate shade and bedding for tied animals. There was also an added article in Section 3: Animal Control Advisory Board wherein there will be an ongoing basis to review and evaluate animal-related issues, needs, and services in Stokes County.

The Board tabled this item until the May 12, 2025 Regular Meeting at 6:00 pm and requested Director Reeves meet with the Animal Control Advisory Board.

FY 2026 Operating Plan Preview

Chairman Wood turned the floor over to County Manager Jeff Sanborn to present.

County Manager Jeff Sanborn presented an update on budget recommendation for fiscal year 2026. The following was discussed:

- FY 2026 General Fund Overview
- FY 2026 School Current Expense Fund
- FY 2026 Fire District Funds
- FYs 2026-2030 Five-Year Financial Forecasts and Significant Initiatives
- Key Upcoming Dates

ACTION 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.

Stokes County Fees and Charges Schedule

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to approve the item as presented.

Commissioner Cox moved to approve the Stokes County Fees and Charges Schedule.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation

Chairman Wood presented the Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation. Commissioner Morris read the proclamation aloud.

WHEREAS, in calendar year 2024, 514 reports were made to child protective services in Stokes County; and

WHEREAS, child abuse and neglect is a serious problem affecting every segment of our community, and finding solutions requires input and action from everyone; and

WHEREAS our children are our most valuable assets and will shape the future of Stokes County; and

WHEREAS, child abuse can have long-term psychological, emotional, and physical effects that have lasting consequences for victims of abuse; and

WHEREAS, all children deserve to have the safe, stable, nurturing homes and communities they need to foster their healthy growth and development; and

WHEREAS, child abuse and neglect is a community responsibility affecting both the current and future quality of life of a community; and

WHEREAS, communities that provide parents with the social support, knowledge of parenting

and child development and concrete resources they need to cope with stress and nurture their children ensure all children grow to their full potential; and

WHEREAS, effective child abuse prevention strategies succeed because of partnerships created among citizens, human service agencies, schools, faith communities, health care providers, civic organizations, law enforcement agencies, and the business community; and

WHEREAS, prevention remains the best defense for our children and families.

THEREFORE, we, the Stokes County Board of County Commissioners, do hereby proclaim April 2025 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Stokes County and call upon all citizens, community agencies, faith groups, medical facilities, elected leaders and businesses to increase their participation in our efforts to support families, thereby preventing child abuse and strengthening the communities in which we live.

Dated this 14th day of April 2025.

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to approve the item as presented.

Commissioner Cox moved to approve the Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation.

Commissioner Chandler seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Proclamation Recognizing National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

Chairman Wood presented the National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week Proclamation. It was read by Commissioner Chandler.

Whereas emergencies can occur at any time that require police, fire or emergency medical services; and,

Whereas when an emergency occurs the prompt response of police officers, firefighters and paramedics is critical to the protection of life and preservation of property; and,

Whereas the safety of our police officers and firefighters is dependent upon the quality and accuracy of information obtained from citizens who telephone the Stokes County Emergency Communications center; and,

Whereas Public Safety Telecommunicators are the first and most critical contact our citizens have with emergency services; and,

Whereas Public Safety Telecommunicators are the single vital link for our police officers and firefighters by monitoring their activities by radio, providing them information and ensuring their safety; and,

Whereas Public Safety Telecommunicators of the Stokes County Emergency Communications Center have contributed substantially to the apprehension of criminals, suppression of fires and treatment of patients; and,

Whereas each dispatcher has exhibited compassion, understanding and professionalism during the performance of their job in the past year.

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Stokes County Board of County Commissioner's declares the week of April 13 through 19, 2025, to be National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in Stokes County, in honor of the men and women whose diligence and professionalism keep our city and citizens safe.

Signed this 14th day of April 2025

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to approve the item as presented.

Commissioner Barneycastle moved to approve the Proclamation for National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

Commissioner Chandler seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

Text Amendment Request for Stokes County Zoning Ordinance

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to approve the item as presented.

Commissioner Cox moved to approve the Text Amendment Request to include **(nuclear)** as a definition under **(Electrical power generation)** section **91.2, M1-CZ (Light Manufacturing Conditional Zoning)** in the Stokes County Zoning Ordinance.

Commissioner Barneycastle seconded the motion. The motion Passed.

CLOSED SESSION

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to enter closed session at 10:50 pm.

Commissioner Cox moved to go into closed session for the following rationales:

- To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged pursuant G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3)

Commissioner Barneycastle seconded.

With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The Board entered closed session.

Adjournment

The Board reentered open session.

Chairman Wood entertained a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Cox moved to adjourn at 11:07 pm.

Commissioner Barneycastle seconded. The motion Passed.

Amber Brown
Clerk to the Board

Keith Wood
Chair