

Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 17, 2012
9:00 am
Chowan County Public Safety Center
305 West Freemason Street

MINUTES

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 9:00 am in the Chowan County Public Safety Center, 305 West Freemason Street Edenton NC. Present: Chairman Eddy Goodwin, Vice Chairman Keith Nixon, Commissioners, Jeff Smith, Ralph Cole and John Mitchener. Staff Present County Manager Zee Lamb and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings. County Attorney John Morrison arrived later in the meeting.

Commissioners Lawrence and Winborne were absent.

Chairman Eddy Goodwin called the meeting to order.

Recognition of Service

Chairman Goodwin noted that on November 30, 2011, Tom Bulls retired from the Chowan County Water Department with 24 years of service. He noted that Tom served as the Water Plant Operator. In appreciation for the service provided to Chowan County and its residents, the Board presented Mr. Bulls with a plaque.

Public Comment

Chairman Goodwin called for public comment in accordance with NCGS 153A-52.1

6 mile Fire District

Jeremiah Copeland spoke with the board regarding consideration of expansion to 6 mile fire district for insurance purposes. He stated he was a resident of Cape Colony and received a large increase on his homeowners insurance.

Chairman Goodwin noted that Cord Palmer, the County's Emergency Management Coordinator has put together information on the expansion from 5 mile to 6 mile.

Mr. Palmer stated that for the county to expand its fire coverage to 6 miles, it would require Perquimans or Washington counties to have agreements with Chowan County.

Chairman Goodwin stated he felt the Board should investigate this to determine what it will take. He asked Mr. Copeland to allow the Board and staff time to review the request.

Walter Copeland the County Fire Inspector stated he has reviewed the maps and expansion of the fire district would cover some spots on Highway 32 but some places would not be covered.

Commissioner Nixon recommended this be discussed in negotiations with the Town.

County Attorney John Morrison arrived for the meeting.

Employee Health Insurance

Donna Nixon with Pierce Group Benefits provided the Board with information including a PowerPoint on her company regarding the employee benefits offered by Pierce Group.

Mr. Lamb asked if Pierce Group is a broker.

Ms. Pierce stated yes.

Mr. Lamb asked if the Pierce Group requires exclusive options to employees.

Ms. Pierce stated that employees will be able to keep their policies with other carriers or they can chose to change over to Pierce Group. She added that Pierce group will request that the other vendors are removed from the County Payroll deduction.

Chairman Goodwin thanked Ms. Nixon for her presentation.

Consent Agenda

a. Recommended Budget Amendments

BA-1112-052

3326	Soil Conserv.	\$ 4,000	Increase revenue from NC Dept of Ag and Consumer Services (Voluntary Ag District Grant)
4730	Soil Conserv.	\$ 4,000	Increase expenditures for Voluntary Ag District program

BA-1112-053

3616	Senior Center	\$ 2,803	Increase revenue from donations/building improvements
4268	Senior Center	\$ 2,803	Increase expenditures Building Maintenance and Repairs

Commissioner Mitchener moved that the Board approve item a. Chairman Goodwin asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

b. Approval of Journal Entries

Attached is the journal entry report for the month of December 2011 for Board review and approval.

Mr. Lamb noted that this is recommended by the auditor for segregation of duties while he serves as acting finance officer.

Commissioner Cole moved that the Board approve item b. Chairman Goodwin asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

c. Closed session minutes of the November 7th and 10th meetings.

No action was taken on approval of these minutes.

Resolutions

Lions Club Resolution

Chairman Goodwin stated that the Board is asked to consider a resolution recognizing the Edenton Lions Club for their work and in celebration of the local club's 75th anniversary declare January 23-29, 2012 as LIONS WEEK in Chowan County.

Commissioner Mitchener moved that the Board approve the resolution. Chairman Goodwin asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

**75th ANNIVERSARY OF EDENTON LIONS CLUB
(1937-2012)
RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Edenton Lions Club was organized January 29, 1937 and chartered by Lions International on March 1, 1937 to serve visually and hearing impaired people, and;

WHEREAS, Helen Keller (1886-1968) of Alabama became both blind and deaf at the age of 19 months following sickness with scarlet fever before later graduating from Radcliffe College in 1904, and;

WHEREAS, Helen Keller in 1925 challenged Lions everywhere to become "knights for the blind in the crusade against darkness", and;

WHEREAS, for 75 years Edenton Lions have accepted Keller's challenge by funding eye exams and glasses, white canes for walking, books written in Braille, guide dogs, innovative eye research, pediatric cataract therapy, job training, daily living skills instruction, a scholarship for John A. Holmes Seniors, and;

WHEREAS, Edenton Lions have raised funds through public solicitations, gum ball machine sales, car raffles, broom sales, breakfasts of eggs, sausage and pancakes, recycling lens and glass frames no longer appropriate to the first owner, while supporting Peace Poster contests in the schools, and;

WHEREAS, Lions have responded in recent years to disasters such as tsunamis and earthquakes in Japan and floods in the American mid-west caused by the swollen Mississippi River. Lions have planted trees in Kenya to reduce soil erosion and restore moisture, helped with recovery in the Carolinas from hurricanes, and vaccinated children against measles in Sub-Saharan Africa in response to Keller's affirmation "it is a terrible thing to see and have no vision", and;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners by this resolution declare their appreciation for the work of the Edenton Lions Club, **FURTHERMORE**, the Commissioners salute Edenton Lions for their unselfish service to others over many years, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners declares January 23-29, 2012 as LIONS WEEK in Chowan County and urge all citizens to emulate their humanitarian work.

Adopted this 17th day of January, 2012.

Opposition to FSA Office Consolidation

Chairman Goodwin stated the Board is asked to consider a resolution in opposition to a proposal for consolidation of the Chowan County FSA Office to the Perquimans County Office.

Commissioner Nixon moved that the Board approve the resolution as presented. Chairman Goodwin asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED CONSOLIDATION OF CHOWAN COUNTY FSA OFFICE TO PERQUIMANS COUNTY

WHEREAS, a proposal by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas A. Vilsack, recommends the consolidation of the Chowan County FSA Office be consolidated with the Perquimans County FSA Office located in Hertford NC; and

WHEREAS, in 1995 the Chowan County Board of Commissioners expressed an interest in consolidation of FSA services with Soil Conservation and NC Cooperative Extension Service into one building; and

WHEREAS, Chowan County subsequently constructed a building in 1999 at the cost of \$2,039,700 which now houses FSA, Soil Conservation and NC Cooperative Extension Service; and

WHEREAS, Chowan County receives annual revenue of \$16,848 for the rent of the FSA office space from USDA; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Census of Agriculture reports that Chowan County has 190 farms and 74,689 acres of farmland; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Census of Agriculture reports that Perquimans County has 171 farms and 68,468 acres of farmland; and

WHEREAS, Chowan County FSA Office currently serves nearly 200 farmers and owners who had tobacco quota; and

WHEREAS, Chowan County FSA Office in addition to Chowan County residents serves farmers that reside in Gates, Perquimans, Washington and Bertie counties; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners strongly oppose the consolidation of the Chowan County FSA Office to Perquimans County and request consideration of allowing any consolidation to occur at the Chowan County Office; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners opposes consolidation of committee representation in the 2012 election process and requests that consideration be given to individual County representation.

Adopted this 17th day of January, 2012.

Personnel Manual Amendment

County Attorney John Morrison provided an amendment to the Chowan County Personnel Manual. The Amendment is to page 1 (date updated), page 6 Section 2 (d) and page 7 Section 5. The amendment further clarifies in the personnel manual the titles that are exempt to the policy. These positions include:

- County Manager
- County Attorney
- Finance Officer
- Tax Administrator
- Emergency Management Coordinator
- Clerk and Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners

He stated that these positions are appointed by the Board and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Nixon noted that some of the positions have dual roles, such as the Deputy Clerk also serves as Human Resources Officer and the EM Coordinator serves as a Deputy in the Sheriff's Office.

Board Clerk Susanne Stallings noted her position was dual as Administrative Assistant to the County Manager.

Mr. Lamb noted the Tax Administrator is appointed by the Board of Commissioners by terms.

Commissioner Smith asked if the EM Coordinator was a sworn position.

Mr. Morrison stated that he did not think the Tax Administrator and EM Coordinator should be listed. He added that the position of Deputy Clerk is not one required by law.

Commissioner Nixon moved that the Board amend the personnel policy to include County Manager, County Attorney, Finance Officer and Board Clerk as positions exempt from the personnel policy. Chairman Goodwin asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

DSS Relocation

Chairman Goodwin noted that staff has received a set of drawings for the relocation of DSS to the former Health Department Building located on Freemason St. He called on DSS Director Clifton Hardison to speak on the drawings.

Mr. Hardison stated that he worked with John Basset in preparation of the drawings. He stated that DSS could make the plan work. He added that if services remain the same then the space proposed is adequate. He stated he hoped to use the freezer area for file storage which should be a cost savings for the space currently rented for file storage. He stated that all of the space in the building would be utilized.

Commissioner Nixon asked if there is a budget for this renovation.

Mr. Hardison stated that the previous county manager stated he estimated \$250,000.

Commissioner Nixon asked if the federal government would reimburse the county over time for the costs of the renovation.

Mr. Hardison stated yes, but the plans do require state approval.

Commissioner Nixon stated his concern over removal of two bathrooms.

Mr. Hardison stated that DSS meets the requirements for restrooms.

Mr. Lamb asked if the Board has proposed a way or budget to pay for the renovation.

Commissioner Nixon stated the Board has set aside \$100,000 for contingency. He stated there will be savings in the next budget of \$80,000 for utilities at the old county office building. He stated he felt strongly that the project needed to start before the next fiscal year.

Mr. Hardison agreed to forward the plans to the state for review and approval and work closely with the manger to bring the plans back for bids.

DSS Annual Report

DSS Director Clifton Hardison provided a PowerPoint report on DSS activities for the past year. A copy of the PowerPoint is in the meeting file labeled January 17, 2012.

Filing Fee for Register of Deeds

Mr. Lamb noted that by authority in NCGS 153A-92 the Board of Commissioners may set the salary of an officer to be elected in the general election. He added that the Board must give notice of the salary no later than 14 days before the last day for filing of candidacy for the office.

Chairman Goodwin noted that this adjustment is not for the current Register of Deeds should she be reelected, but rather if she were defeated in the election; the incoming Register of Deeds would not start at the salary of a Register of Deeds with a 20+ year career.

Commissioner Mitchener moved that the Board approve the resolution as presented. Chairman Goodwin asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

RESOLUTION – REGISTER OF DEEDS SALARY AT ELECTION

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 153A-92(b)(1) limits the ability of the board of commissioners in reducing salaries of county officers elected by the people during the term of their office; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 153A-92(b)(2) however sets forth the procedures a board of commissioners must follow if it wishes to reduce the salary of a county officer elected by the people in the year of a general election; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Register of Deeds is up for election during this general election and the Chowan County Board of Commissioners wishes to set the salary for the position of Register of Deeds at the starting salary for this position within the county's classification and pay plan; and

WHEREAS, the starting salary for the Register of Deeds position is \$38,652.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners hereby reduces the salary for the Register of Deeds for the upcoming general election to an amount of \$387 and that the filing fee for that office be based on that salary accordingly; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this reduction in salary is to take effect at the time the person elected in the general election to the Office of Register of Deeds takes office.

Adopted the 17th day of January, 2011.

Manager's Report

County Manager Zee Lamb provided the Board with an update on his activities for the past two weeks.

Timely and Important Matters

Delinquent Tax Collection

Mr. Lamb noted that once taxes are delinquent he feels the County should begin to use every avenue available. He stated that without objection from the Board, the Tax Office will begin to be more aggressive with tax collection of delinquent accounts.

Commissioner Nixon asked if there was an old policy on the books and if so, should the Board vote on a new policy.

Commissioner Cole left the meeting.

Chairman Goodwin noted that he needed to be excused from the meeting for a personal obligation. He requested that the Board excuse him from the meeting.

Commissioner Mitchener moved that the Board excuse Chairman Goodwin. Vice Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed (5-0).

Chairman Goodwin came back to the meeting room as requested by the Board to vote on a timely matter.

Grant Application Approval

Mr. Lamb requested approval of a grant application by Emergency Management which is a yearly reoccurring grant that requires a 50% county match. He stated the newly adopted grant policy requires that the application be approved by the Board.

Commissioner Mitchener moved that the Board approve the application; Vice Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed (5-0).

The Board discussed the need to meet in closed session with the County Attorney but would not have a quorum.

Commissioner Smith moved that the Board adjourn the regular meeting and appoint an Ad-Hoc committee to meet and receive a report from the county attorney in closed session. Vice Chairman Nixon asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

(The minutes from the 3 member Ad-Hoc Committee will be included in the closed session minutes; no action was taken during this meeting. The minutes of this committee meeting will remain sealed as the committee reviewed a personnel matter).

Adjourn

Being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned

Chairman
Edward C. Goodwin

Clerk