

**Chowan County Board of Equalization and Review
Meeting
Monday, May 1, 2023
Chowan County Public Safety Center
305 West Freemason Street
6:00pm**

Minutes

Present: Chair Bob Kirby, Commissioners, Tray Taylor, Ron Cummings, Chris Evans, Larry McLaughlin, Alex Kehayes and Ellis Lawrence.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard, Finance Officer Cathy Smith, Attorney Lauren Arizaga Womble and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings.

Oath

Board Clerk Susanne Stallings administered the oath of office to the Board of Equalization and Review.

Presentation of Appeals

- Chair Kirby read the following statement:
Citizens having appropriately and timely appealed their property valuations to the Tax Department will be scheduled for appeal hearings at a later date.

The deadline for appeals to be submitted to the Chowan County Tax Office was May 1, 2023 at 5pm.

Kevin Howard, Interim Tax Administrator updated the Board on the status of appeals that have been received. Due to the potential for multiple appeal hearings, staff will work with the Clerk to develop a hearing schedule. A notice and schedule of the Board of Equalization and Review Appeal Hearings will be advertised.

Adjourn

Chair Kirby noted that it is in order to Adjourn the Board of Equalization and Review. The North Carolina General Statutes allow the Board of Equalization and Review to continue to meet after adjournment for the purpose of hearing and deciding appeals that have been timely filed, meaning appeals which were:

- actually received by the board or the assessor by or before the published date and time of adjournment; or
- made in person before the board by or before the published date and time of adjournment; or
- received by the board or the assessor at any time bearing a U.S. Postal Service postmark which is dated on or before the published date of adjournment.

Commissioner McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Regular Meeting
Monday, May 1, 2023
Chowan County Public Safety Center
305 West Freemason Street
6:00pm

This meeting was recorded. A copy of the recording is in the meeting file labeled May 1, 2023.

Present: Chair Bob Kirby, Commissioners, Ron Cummings, Alex Kehayes, Ellis Lawrence, Tray Taylor, Larry McLaughlin and Chris Evans.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard, County Attorney Lauren Arizaga-Womble, Board Clerk Susanne Stallings and Finance Officer Cathy Smith.

Regular Meeting

Chair Kirby called the regular meeting to order and led all in the pledge of allegiance.

Commissioner McLaughlin then offered the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Stallings noted a request to amend the agenda to add item 10a – HVAC repair for the Health Department

Commissioner Cummings moved to approve the agenda as amended.

Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Public Comment

Chair Kirby opened the floor for public comment.

Librarian Jared Jacavone thanked the Board for their support of the of the Library Board of Trustees. He stated the Board of Trustees has reviewed the applications and ranked them as shown in the Commissioner packet. He stated the Trustees recommend Herlong, Tatem and Little in that order of priority. He stated that the Board considered the choices of the applicants as to which Boards they would like to apply for (applicants are given the option of listing 3 Boards in which they are interested in applying for). He stated that also two of the top candidates have volunteered and are very active patrons of the Library.

Rachael Johnson, 738 Virginia Rd. stated she was not speaking on behalf of the school however she is the swim team coach. She shared information on the costs of bussing the swim team to Elizabeth City to practice noting this costs \$94 per day. She stated that not having a pool in Chowan increases concerns because there are many children who cannot swim. She stated she wished a pool could be built in Chowan County and asked the Board to consider her request.

Andy White, 103 Kimberly Drive stated he was there to advocate for the pool. He stated he was born in Bertie County and moved to Chowan. He stated he currently drives senior citizens from

Chowan County to Elizabeth City to utilize the pool there. He stated the pool could be used locally for aqua therapy as well as to teach local children how to swim.

Donna Angell 909 North Broad Street stated that the Senior Center is an asset to the community. She encouraged the Board to look into making some repairs at the facility, specifically the parking lot pot holes. She stated she fell in one of the pot holes and is concerned about other Senior Center patrons falling and being injured.

Consent Agenda

All items on the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine and may be enacted by one motion. If a County Commissioner requests discussion on an item, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.

- a. Approval of Minutes
Minutes of the April 17, 2023 Regular and Special Meetings.

- b. Tax Refund Release Report
Felton, W. \$122.78 Overpayment

- c. 2023 Meeting Schedule Amendment
At the last meeting, the Board requested that the Clerk identify a meeting date to hold a regular meeting in the northern end of the County. The Clerk has provided the Board with an amended meeting schedule for 2023 that changes the location for the regular meeting on August 21, 2023 to be held at the Northern Chowan Community Center at 6:00p.m.

Ms. Stallings noted a typo in the minutes of April 17th. She stated she would request approval of the minutes with the one correction noted.

Commissioner McLaughlin moved to approve the consent agenda as amended. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Coastal North Carolina Local Foods Week 2023 Proclamation

Extension Director Mary Morris presented the Board with a proclamation for the Board to consider that declares June 11-16 and hereafter the second full week of June as Local Foods Week in Chowan County.

Commissioner Evans moved to approve the resolution as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Whereas, Coastal North Carolina Local Foods Week is being celebrated throughout the region June 11-17, 2023 in order to bring greater awareness of the nutritional, economic, and social benefits of local foods in North Carolina and

Whereas, Healthy eating is vital to building a healthy regional food system in Chowan County and addressing obesity and related chronic illnesses can be strengthened through greater consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other locally produced foods; and

Whereas, Chowan County is home to community gardens, farm stands, farmers markets food related businesses and numerous community organizations which address issues related to food production, nutrition, and food business development for Chowan County residents; and

Whereas, agriculture generates more than \$50 million dollars in cash receipts each year in Chowan County, providing a large share of the economic output in the county; and

Whereas, Chowan County is supportive of numerous community initiatives to develop, expand, and strengthen a local food system which is accessible, resilient, environmentally compatible, and inclusive of all citizens; and

Whereas, both consumers and farmers benefit from the expansion of a local food system which includes direct sales of food products from farmers to consumers, development of value-added food products by local businesses in Chowan County, and institutional purchases of locally produced foods directly from farmers.

Whereas, consumers can make a substantial positive impact on local, regional, and state economies by purchasing food from local farms and producers, Chowan County encourages citizens to commit to purchasing local foods during the week of June 11-17, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT Resolved, that the Chowan County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim **June 11-17, 2023 and hereafter the second full week of June as Local Foods Week in Chowan County,** and urges citizens of our community to support local agriculture and purchase more high-quality, locally produced foods, and learn about the benefits of agriculture and local foods in Chowan County.

Shepard Pruden Memorial Library Appointments/Reappointments

Chair Kirby noted that the Shepard Pruden Memorial Library Board of Trustees recommend the following:

Appointment
Cynthia Herlong
Rev. Melvin Tatem

Reappointment
Carlette Pruden
Marie Perry

Chair Kirby noted that there is a third applicant for consideration. He stated that there is a pressing need for DSS Board members and one of the recommended applicants for the Library Board has extensive experience in social services.

Commissioner Kehayes stated that the DSS Board in which he serves as the Commissioner representative has been short Board members for over a year. He noted some spots will open up on the DSS Board this summer. He stated he would like to have a conversation with one of the applicants to see if she is interested in serving on the DSS Board.

Commissioner Lawrence stated he was okay with the recommendation from the Library Board. He noted the applicant, Ms. Herlong listed the DSS Board as a second choice not her first.

Commissioner Evans stated that Ms. Herlong's educational background would make her a perfect fit for DSS. He then moved to appoint Melvin Tatem and George Little to the Library Board and to reappoint Marie Perry and Carlette Pruden.

Mr. Howard recommend the Board table consideration and speak to the applicants to see if they are interested still in serving on these Boards as the applications are over a year old.

Commissioner Evans asked to withdraw his previous motion. He then moved to table the matter for the May 15th agenda.

Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Chair Kirby encouraged the public in attendance to apply for these Board vacancies.

Enterprise Maintenance Management Agreement

Mr. Howard presented the Board with a Maintenance Management Agreement that adds the Enterprise vehicles used by the Sheriff's office to a maintenance schedule maintained by Enterprise. He stated that this would allow 25 vehicles to be on the program which is maintained by Enterprise and records would be kept to determine when repairs are no longer cost effective and to keep a regular maintenance schedule on all vehicles. He noted that the Sheriff wants to test this program and if it is successful he may recommend later to put all County vehicles on the program.

Ms. Womble noted that the contract will require an amendment to reflect North Carolina law.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked how maintenance is being handled now.

Mr. Howard stated that currently maintenance is scheduled locally but the rotation for repairs is managed by Sheriff staff.

Sheriff Basnight stated that Enterprise will track repairs. They will be able to contact local companies for repairs and ensure that the County is paying the best price for repairs. He stated he hopes this program will save the County money.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the County is at a point where it needs to change the program currently in place.

Mr. Howard stated there are multiple benefits to the contract including better pricing on repairs.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the program is a one year trial.

Mr. Howard stated yes.

Commissioner Cummings noted the cost for the program is \$150 per month and a total cost of \$1,800 per year.

Commissioner McLaughlin moved to approve the contract with the suggested correction from the County Attorney.

Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Tax Relief

Interim Tax Administrator, Kevin Howard, presented the Board with a recommendation to relieve the 2022 tax bill for assessment of a business that was registered but never actually started.

Commissioner McLaughlin noted he was familiar with the situation and the property owner moved, received his bill late and never got the business off the ground. He then moved to approve the tax release as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Interlocal Agreement between Chowan and Bertie Counties

The Board will review and consider approval of an interlocal agreement that allows Chowan Building Inspectors to assist Bertie County with building inspections. Mr. Howard stated the agreement states Bertie will pay the County \$45 per hour and inspectors will use their vehicles to perform inspections.

Commissioner Evans asked if there will be any lapse in local inspections because of helping Bertie.

Mr. Howard stated that we will assist Bertie based on our availability and it will not impact Chowan inspections.

Commissioner Evans moved to approve the agreement as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0). A copy of the agreement is in the meeting file labeled May 1, 2023.

Purchase Agreement – 817 Soundside Road

Mr. Howard presented the Board with a purchase agreement to purchase 817 Soundside Road for \$238,000. He stated this property is adjacent to the County Water Tank on Soundside Road. He stated the property is needed to allow the County to have dedicated access to the County owned property behind it. He stated this will also allow Verizon Wireless to locate on the tower as they require dedicated access.

Commissioner Lawrence moved to approve the purchase agreement as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0). A copy of the purchase agreement is in the meeting file labeled May 1, 2023.

Elevator Door Repair

Mr. Howard presented the Board with a quote to replace the elevator door edge at the Courthouse. The current door safety edge parts have become obsolete. The cost of the repair is \$3,575.67.

Commissioner Cummings moved to approve the quote as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Health Department HVAC

Mr. Howard presented the Board with a proposal to options to repair or replace the HVAC at the Health Department building. He stated he would recommend the Board go with option three that recommends replacement of the system at a cost of \$8,750. He stated this option also allows the County to take advantage of a longer warranty.

Commissioner Lawrence stated that the quote suggests installing one 5 ton 14 SEER system. He stated 16 SEER would be more efficient.

Mr. Howard stated he can check with the Maintenance Director and find out why 16 was not recommended.

The Board agreed to delay decision on the matter to allow Mr. Howard time to contact the Maintenance Director during the meeting to find out why a 16 SEER unit was not in the quote.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the repair was budgeted.

Mr. Howard stated that it is unbudgeted and the monies for the repair will be found in the existing budget.

This item was voted on later in the meeting agenda.

Capital Purchase – IT Department

IT Director Cord Palmer presented the Board with two capital outlay requests.

The first request was for Security Camera replacement, \$29,000 is already included in this years' budget. This request is to replace all cameras and wiring. Total cost is \$43,000. This can be covered by using remaining capital funds in the IT budget.

The second request was for Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) replacement. Total cost is \$23,000. This can be covered by using remaining capital funds in the IT budget.

Commissioner Lawrence asked about the use of the UPS and the time allowed.

Mr. Palmer stated this would allow enough time for Maintenance to respond to manually switch the generator.

Mr. Howard noted that currently the generator needs parts and they cannot be purchased. He stated the county has requested that the maintenance contractor for the generator come up with another solution to get the generator back online. He stated adding the UPS will protect the County's systems.

Commissioner Cummings asked how the purchase would be covered.

Ms. Smith noted that the budget has \$70,000 in capital outlay.

Commissioner Cummings moved to approve both purchases as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Annual Reports – Animal Shelter and Animal Control

Chair Kirby noted that written annual reports to the Board were included in the agenda packet from Animal Control Officer Louann Fisher and Animal Shelter Director Dana Comer.

Financial Items

Finance Officer Cathy Smith presented the following:

- a. Current Fiscal Year Budget Amendments
2023-068

Account Number	Account Description	Revenue (Inc+/Dec-)	Expense (Inc+/Dec-)
DSS			
12-3531-230-20	LIEAP Supplement - Revenue	17,600.00	
12-5380-539-38	LIEAP Supplement - Expense		17,600.00
	Balanced	17,600.00	17,600.00
Justification:			
<i>To amend the 2023 budget for DSS to include additional funding for the LIEAP Program. This is a one-time supplement through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.</i>			

Commissioner McLaughlin moved to approve the budget amendment as presented. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

- b. Financial Report March 2023

Finance Officer Cathy Smith provided the Board with financial reports for March 2023. A copy of the report is in the meeting file labeled May 1, 2023.

External Board/Committee Report

Chair Kirby stated that Board members are asked to report on the activities of the external boards to which they have been appointed.

Commissioner McLaughlin reported on the Destination Downtown Edenton Board that a director has been hired.

Health Department HVAC

Mr. Howard stated the contractor stated the cost for 16 SEER would be an additional \$1,500.

Board members discussed the cost benefit and determined it was worth paying the additional \$1,500 .

Mr. Howard asked that the purchase be approved up to \$11,000 in case the totals are more than what was previously quoted.

Commissioner Cummings moved to approve the revised repair for a 16 SEER unit, with costs for the replacement to not exceed \$11,000. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Manager's Report

County Manager Kevin Howard updated the Board on the following:

- Mr. Howard recommended that the Board discuss the Board's plans to have the pool and other capital projects on the ballot as a referendum in 2024.

Timely and Important Matters

Ms. Stallings reminded Board members of the upcoming NCACC District meeting.

Adjourn

Being no further business, Commissioner Cummings moved that the meeting be adjourned. Chair Kirby asked for all in favor, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Bob Kirby, Chairman

Susanne Stallings, Clerk