

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALAMANCE COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS FOR ALAMANCE COUNTY**

**August 5, 2024, 9:30 AM
Commissioners' Meeting Room
124 West Elm Street
Graham, NC 27253**

Board Members Present: Chairman John Paisley Jr
Vice-Chair Steve Carter
Commissioner William "Bill" T. Lashley
Commissioner Pamela Thompson
Commissioner Craig Turner

CALL TO ORDER - CHAIRMAN PAISLEY

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - COMMISSIONER LASHLEY

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by: Commissioner Turner

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

Approval of the agenda as amended to move item 7.c. Courthouse Space Needs Discussion to 7a. to allow the Court System personnel to return back to their duties.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

PROCLAMATIONS

Proclamation: Hispanic Family Rotary Day

Chairman Paisley asked Vice-Chair Carter to read the proclamation recognizing Hispanic Family Rotary Day in Alamance County, designated as the second Saturday in August.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Lashley

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Barry Joyce, a Burlington resident, spoke about his displeasure with the Tax Department. He provided a comparison of the number of tax employees in Union County compared to Alamance County. He said Union County collected \$270 million in property tax revenues with 40 employees. Mr. Joyce noted that Union County did not outsource its revaluation.

CONSENT AGENDA

County Attorney Stevens asked the Board to allow the amendment to the consent agenda to add an addendum to the Municipal Engineering contract. The addendum was not included in the agenda packet, but he provided the Board with a hard copy to consider.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Lashley

Approval of the consent agenda with the added addendum to the Municipal Engineering Contract.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

Burlington Board of Adjustment ETJ Member – Steve Heineman

Library Committee – Joan Ruelle

Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Teena Koury

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Budget Amendment 2

Revised 2024 Municipal Engineering Contract

2024 Updated Central Carolina Holdings Tire Recycle Contract

Economic Development Services Agreement

Second Reading of Proposed Ordinance for Ambulance Franchise

Adoption of the Ambulance Ordinance at the second reading.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Minutes of May 20, 2024

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Courthouse Space Needs Discussion - Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager

Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, presented an update on the courthouse renovation process and some immediate needs. He reviewed that the county had started this process five years ago, including a facility plan to determine the upcoming needs of the court system. He indicated that the plan was adopted in 2019. The plan called for adding 2-4 courtrooms, 15,000-25,000 square feet of space for the court system, and about 15,000 additional space for county government. Mr. Baker noted the price tag of the first design for the addition was \$99 million, which was more than the county wanted to commit. He said the architectural firm returned with a building addition of \$65-\$75 million, which was still out of the funding range. Mr. Baker explained that they have been unable to move forward because they must find a building within the price range.

Mr. Baker reported that the court system immediately needs an additional courtroom to hold small claims court one day a week. They had asked to use the Commissioners' Meeting Room because no additional rooms could be converted to a courtroom immediately in any court or county buildings. He advised that a decision needed to be made to permit them to use the Commissioners' Meeting Room.

Mr. Baker discussed the next deadline of January 1st when the new district court judge would start. Again, he noted there was not a lot of space available for renovation in that short period. He said there was an option to renovate the current jury room in the J.B. Allen Courthouse into a small courtroom for small claims court. This would move the current jury room across the street to the County Office Building Annex conference room. He mentioned a fair amount of traffic going in and out of that building with Planning, Inspections, Veterans Services, and some of the Sheriff's Office currently housed there. He offered that was the only idea they had at that moment to get them there by the January 1st deadline. He noted that this would not be a seamless integration with incoming traffic from Veteran Services, Planning, and Inspections occupying offices on both sides of the new jury room. Mr. Baker explained that over the long-term trying to do county functions in the County Office Annex while the jury room was over there was not a great plan. He mentioned that the county could give that building to the court system entirely and move those current county departments elsewhere. He continued that the old, empty Elderly Services Building could be an option for those county departments he mentioned. Mr. Baker noted that the Elderly Services Building desperately needed significant repair. He said the long-term plan would be to renovate the Elderly Services Building and relocate those county departments there.

Chairman Paisley spoke that the Commissioners' Meeting Room was used for a number of meetings. He suggested holding small claims court in the County Office Annex Building. Commissioner Turner countered that security would have to be added in order to hold small claims court in that building. Commissioner Turner said the request was to use the Commissioners' Meeting Room one day a week for eight weeks. He thought that was a reasonable request to allow them to utilize the Commissioners' Meeting Room. He said it would help the court system move the cases through the system. Commissioner Thompson agreed

with Commissioner Turner. She said it was a public building to be used by the citizens and that the Board did not own their meeting room. Commissioner Lashley agreed with Commissioner Turner. He said he wanted to ensure the Sheriff's Office could handle the additional security of small claims being held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room. Sheriff Johnson said his office already had court security downstairs. He said he had concerns about moving the jury room across the street to the County Office Annex because he would have to have someone with that jury. Sheriff Johnson indicated that it could be a volatile situation for the jurors once they walked out of that courtroom, and now they would have to walk across the street. Vice-Chair Carter shared that his initial concern was all of the paraphernalia that was required for e-Courts. He said he was informed that there was no permanent installation of computer systems, just using laptops to run small claims court, and that it was only one day a week.

Short-term Needs:

Mr. Baker referred back to using the jury room in the J.B. Allen Courthouse as a small claims courtroom. He said that was the only option they had at that time to meet the deadline for January 1st. He offered that the big room in the County Office Annex was the largest conference room the county had that could fit more than 10 people. Mr. Baker mentioned that the biggest change for that room was adding wireless connectivity in there. He noted that the county internet and the state internet were different.

Sean Boone, District Attorney, spoke about his concerns of moving the jury lounge from the J.B. Allen Courthouse. He clarified that the jury room was misnamed because it is a compulsory attendance; it is a jury assembly room. He said that room was a safe space for jurors and a protected space. Mr. Boone expressed strong opposition to asking jurors to use the same vending machines and bathrooms as defendants and their family members, especially during criminal trials. He voiced that taking 12-13 people out of the courthouse and parading them across the street was a bad idea.

Commissioner Turner inquired whether there was space in the tax office to add a jury assembly area since court security was already present. Mr. Baker indicated there was space, but he had that under the long-term options because he was not comfortable guaranteeing the availability of that space by January 1st. He said about five offices with modular walls could be opened into one large room. He said the \$4 million price tag was if they moved folks out of tax, they had to acquire another space for them to go. Mr. Baker said in the long term, you would want to move the entire tax office out and not just half of the office. He said there were no empty offices in the County Office Building, so they would have to acquire another building to house the tax office.

Sheriff Terry Johnson spoke that the court system was clogged up with cases. He continued that the county had a history of "kicking the can down the road" while the county was growing tremendously. He said if they were going to do something, then they needed to build for the future so the county would not be back in the same predicament 10 years from now.

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Chairman Paisley, moved to table the short-term proposal options until the next meeting and continue with the remainder of the presentation. That motion carried without opposition.

Long-term options:

- Give the entire County Office Annex Building to the court system.
- Give the entire first floor of the County Office Building to the court system.
- Build a new building with an additional 2-4 courtrooms.

Mr. Baker said a two-story addition would cost approximately \$28 million and a three-story addition would cost approximately \$37 million.

Judge Overby thanked the Board. She said the 5th district court judge will move into the judges' conference room because they do not have a fifth office available. She mentioned there had been an increase in termination of parental rights cases. She noted they were looking forward to implementing recovery court, but without the additional court space, they were not able. Judge Overby said they had to have an additional courtroom by January 1st. She wanted to emphasize that if all of the courtrooms were moved out of the Civil Courts Building, the court system would not have four additional courtrooms, only one additional courtroom.

Chairman Paisley, seconded by Vice-Chair Carter, moved to table the long-term proposal options until the next meeting. That motion carried without opposition.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Thompson

Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Commissioner Thompson, moved for approval to allow the court system to use the Commissioners' Meeting Room on Thursdays for small claims court until January 1, 2025. The motion carried 4-1 with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Lashley, Thompson, and Turner voting in favor of the motion. Chairman Paisley voted in opposition.

APPROVED

Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Appointments - Grace VandeVisser, Executive Director of Alamance County Visitors Bureau

Grace VandeVisser, Executive Director, said multiple applications were submitted to fill only two vacancies on the Tourism Development Authority. She said the recommendation was to appoint Stephanie Williams to the full two-year term. Ms. VandeVisser said there was an unexpired term, and the recommendation would be to appoint either Kim Williard or Anna Rooney to that vacancy.

Moved by: Commissioner Turner

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Vice-Chair Carter, moved to appoint Stephanie Williams to the full two-year term and appoint Anna Rooney to the unexpired term. The motion carried without opposition.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Reimbursement Resolution-Emergency Radios - Susan Evans, Finance Officer

Susan Evans, Finance Officer, presented a resolution for Board approval that would allow staff to start the process of replacing the emergency radios for Central Communications and the Sheriff's Office.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Chairman Paisley

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

County Manager York reported that the State Board of Elections had visited Alamance County on July 19th to assess the Elections Department, the facility, security, personnel, and staffing. They passed the assessment with flying colors.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Thompson shared a piece of metal from Cummings High School bleachers to demonstrate the "wear and tear" of the school facilities. She said they could not let things like that erode and get to that point of deterioration.

Commissioner Turner indicated from conversations with the Board of Education Chair that the Cummings High School bleachers should be completed before the first home game. He also mentioned concern about the Eastern High School bleachers and that plans were being made to complete them before their home opener.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

At 11:20 am, County Attorney Stevens asked that the Board move into Closed Session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6), to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee.

Further, pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(5), County Attorney Stevens asked the Board to move into closed session to establish or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract, as well as to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by, or on behalf of, the public body in negotiating the potential purchase of the real property described as parcel numbers 145816 and 145817 (owned by Alamance Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance), parcel numbers 145839 and 145790 (owned by Bank of America), and parcel number 144074 (owned by 832 South Main, LLC) for use as additional office space for existing County functions.

Finally, pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3), County Attorney Stevens asked the Board to move into closed session 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. The attorney will advise the Board on ongoing legal matters, including the Wells v. Johnson (MDNC 1:23-cv-00427) matter.

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Lashley, moved to enter Closed Session. The motion carried without opposition.

At 3:17 pm, the Board reconvened in open session.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Turner, seconded by Commissioner Lashley, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 3:17 P.M.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board