

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

**September 3, 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 THOMPSON

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Lashley

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Lashley

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

Library Committee – Lindsay McKinney

Recreation & Parks Commission – Lee Isley

Tourism Development Authority (TDA) - Michael Hammond

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Budget Amendment 3

Year End Designations

Resolution Authorizing the Exchange of Property

Annual Settlement of 2023-2024 Taxes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Minutes of June 17, 2024

Closed Session Minutes of August 5, 2024

PUBLIC HEARING

Subdivision Ordinance Lot Size Changes - Matthew Hoagland, Planning Director

The county's Planning Director, Matthew Hoagland, presented four proposed amendments to the Subdivision Ordinance. The Planning Board approved those amendments during their July 11, 2024 meeting.

Those changes included:

Increasing the minimum size for new subdivision lots served by well and septic systems from the current size of 30,000 square feet to a new size of 65,000 square feet (roughly 1.5 acres).

- Increasing new lot minimums in watershed areas from one acre to 65,000 square feet.
- Increasing the road frontage width of cul-de-sac lots from 20 feet to a new standard of 26 feet as measured along the chord.
- Finally, creating a new width requirement for cul-de-sac lots of 175 feet at the building site while exempting new lots above two (2) acres from width rules.
- In approving the changes, the Planning Board issued the following consistency statement in accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. 160D-604(d):

“We find that this Subdivision Ordinance amendment is consistent with the following Alamance County Land Development Plan’s Land Use and Agriculture policy recommendations:

- Recommendation 2.1 encourages increasing base lot size requirements and improving open space preservation in new development.

- Recommendation 3 encourages reducing development pressure in rural and agricultural areas.”

Mr. Hoagland gave a brief presentation and history of this issue and how the proposed changes would function. He noted that the public hearing notice had run twice in the local newspaper as required by state law.

Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Commissioner Lashley, moved to open the public hearing. The motion carried without opposition.

The following speakers were heard from the floor:

Chris Faust, a septic and utility contractor/developer, spoke against the Planning Board's proposed recommendations.

Jeff Allred, a landowner, said making the lots bigger did nothing to make housing more affordable. He said restricting lot sizes does not make housing more affordable.

Jeff Throneberg, Alamance-Caswell Home Builders Association President, spoke against the proposed recommendations. He said he had provided previous data on average house prices to the Planning Board. He said increasing the lot sizes would cost a homebuyer an extra \$400 per month. He asked the Board to meet and have conversations with developers and builders before they made a decision.

Sandy Ellington-Graves, a realtor, provided background from the Planning Board Subcommittee during her time as a Planning Board member. She explained this debate arose after the failed Snow Camp Zoning Plan. She said after the failed plan, there was a suggestion to increase the minimum lot size from 30,000 to 5 acres. Ms. Ellington-Graves said the primary focus was stopping development in the county's rural parts. She mentioned that she had shared a full report from the subcommittee to the entire Planning Board, and the conclusion and general agreement was that a minimum of one acre was a gracious plenty. She said the increase in the lot size was an added financial burden to affordable housing. She supported a one acre lot size.

Nolan Kirkman, a licensed engineer, suggested that the proposed changes were grossly overscaled. He said a better approach to preserving rural land, promoting prosperity for landowners, preserving tax base potential, and keeping a low tax rate was employing dense development with proper view shed and buffer regulations.

Ken Walker, Mebane realtor, spoke against the recommendations.

Henry Vines, a farmer and Planning Board Member, spoke that the recommended changes would not restrict the amount he could sell his land. He said farmers were subsidizing all of the houses being built. Mr. Vines said the farmers were trying to preserve the rural part of the county. He said that he supported the amendments and the two acres. He said the Planning Board agreed on 1.5 acres. Mr. Vines asked the Board to approve the recommendations.

Dwight Eperson, a real estate agent and land developer, opposed the recommendations. He said the average new homeowner could not afford the larger lots. Mr. Eperson commented that the economy was already struggling, and this was not practical at this time.

Todd Lambert, a professional engineer, suggested the current Planning Board recommendations were their own personal agenda. He said he did not believe that they solved a problem. He mentioned that the proposed changes were a burden on the county. Mr. Lambert asked the Board not to approve the recommendations.

No other speakers were heard from the floor. Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Commissioner Lashley, moved to close the public hearing. The motion carried without opposition.

Commissioner Turner suggested having the Planning Department and the Planning Board take another comprehensive look and recommendations. He suggested bringing it back in 30 days.

The Board took no action.

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Courthouse Space Needs Discussion - Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager

Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, presented short-term space need options with a new judge starting on January 1. He explained that additional space was needed to hold small claims court. Mr. Baker reviewed the three short-term options and the approximate costs of \$3-\$5 million.

Proposal 1

- Moves Courts to the 1st floor of the County Office Building
- Moves the Tax Department to an alternative building in Graham
- Approximate 6-month timeline
- Total Cost: Approximately \$3-4 million

Benefits:

- Maintains the Jury Room in J.B. Allen Courthouse.
- Restores drive-thru service for the Tax Department.

Negatives:

- Would remove the Tax Department from the Main Graham Campus.
- Possible conflicts of use in the lobby of the County Office Building.

Proposal 2

- Renovate the J.B. Allen jury room into a small courtroom.
- Dedicate the County Annex for Court use, including jury assembly.
- Renovate the Elderly Services building for the Planning and Inspections Departments.
- Keep the Tax Department in its current location.
- Renovate Elderly Services Building
- Create a one-stop Development Services building by moving the Planning and Inspections Departments
- 14,000 sq. ft.
- Total Cost: \$4-5 million

Benefits:

- Creates 11,000 sq. ft of additional flex space for Courts to assist in the construction/renovation process.
- Creates a single location for all permitting needs on one campus.
- Maintains County Office Building for County Government purposes.

Negatives:

- Eliminates only large meeting space on the Graham campus

Proposal 3

- Renovate the J.B. Allen jury room into a small courtroom.
- Dedicate the County Annex for Court use, including jury assembly.
- Move the Tax Department to an alternative location building in Graham.
- Move Planning and Inspections to the County Office Building. (Veterans Services to remain in the annex).

Benefits:

- Creates 10,000 sq. ft of additional space for Courts to assist in the construction/renovation process.
- Restores drive-thru service for Tax Department.
- Maintains County Office Building for County purposes.

Negatives:

- Would remove Tax Department from the Main Graham Campus.
- Would not create a single location for all permitting needs on one campus.

Judge Overby said she appreciated everyone trying to offer solutions. She did not want to see courts shut down on January 1 because they did not have the space to hold court. She said the proposal to use the JBA jury assembly room was too small. She expressed concerns about adding a fourth building to run jurors back and forth and asked the Board to take that into consideration.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Turner

Approval of Proposal # 2 carried 4-1 with Chairman Paisley, Vice-Chair Carter, and Commissioners Lashley and Turner voting in favor. Commissioner Thompson voted in opposition.

APPROVED

ABSS Needs-Based Grant Application - Greg Hook, ABSS Chief Operations Officer

Greg Hook, ABSS Chief Operations Officer, presented a needs-based grant application request. He said a 25% match was required because Alamance County was a Tier 2 county. Mr. Hook noted that a 25% match was needed on each grant. He commented that the county already had funding in place of \$5.2 million. He continued that if the school system were awarded the grants, that would save the county \$4.2 million, which would go back into the available bond funds or the capital reserve funds.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Turner

Approval of the Needs-Based grant applications.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Alamance-Burlington School System Capital Request - Greg Hook, ABSS Chief Operations Officer

Greg Hook, ABSS Chief Operations Officer, asked the Board to approve a budget amendment for \$462,278 from the Southern High School roof project and transfer it to the Graham Middle School roof project. He explained that the Southern High School roof project was \$992,000 under budget. He said that unsuitable roof decking was discovered at Graham Middle School, requiring a change order and redesign fees.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Chairman Paisley

Approval of a budget amendment in the amount of \$462,738 from the Southern High School roof project to the Graham Middle School roof project.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Resolution rejecting Surplus Property

County Attorney Stevens presented a resolution rejecting ABSS surplus property. The state will receive a small amount of property near the front of Eastlawn Elementary School for the widening of the road.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Lashley

Approval of the resolution rejecting the ABSS surplus property.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

ALCOVETS Balloon Festival Update - Richard Shevlin, ALCOVETS

Richard Shevlin, President of AlcoVets, gave an update on the balloon festival. He requested that the Board relieve AlcoVets of the \$4,000 fee for using the park for the balloon festival. Mr. Shevlin said AlcoVets contributed over \$100,000 to putting on the balloon festival.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

Approval to waive the amount of \$4,000 for AlcoVets to use Cedarock Park in conjunction with their coordination of the balloon fest. That motion carried 3-2 with Chairman Paisley, Vice-Chair Carter, and Commissioner Lashley voting in favor. Commissioners Thompson and Turner voted in opposition.

APPROVED

Alamance County Sheriff's Office Additional Funding Request - Sheriff Terry Johnson

Sheriff Terry Johnson reported that 93 employment applications had been received since July 1st. He mentioned that 65 of those applications were rejected for various reasons, including the inability to pass psychological testing, drug use, criminal history, and no driver's license. He continued that 28 applicants remained in the application pool. Sheriff Johnson commented that 12 of those 28 applicants have moved on through the process and received conditional

employment offers. Sheriff Johnson said he was back to as the Board to hire 10 more applicants eligible for the sign-on bonus program.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

Approval of funding for the hiring of 10 more officers under the sign-on bonus program.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Roofing and HVAC Assessment Studies – Final Report - Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager

Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, gave an update on the Roofing/HVAC Assessment studies. He reminded the Board that at the end of last year, they began a comprehensive evaluation process of the roofs and HVAC systems of the school system and the county. He continued that after receiving the interim report early this year, they were able to decide how to spend the available bond proceeds. He said the consultants had finished their evaluations and worked together to prioritize the upcoming needs after the bond funding expenditures. Mr. Baker reported \$10.8 million in roof expenses and \$15 million in HVAC expenses for ABSS for a total of \$26 million.

Mr. Baker said the county's needs were less pressing, but three primary needs needed to be addressed relatively quickly. He shared that there was remaining work to do on the Human Services Building, some additional work on the J.B. Allen Courthouse, and roof work was needed on the prison annex building. Mr. Baker said the estimated expenses for the county were a total of \$2.7 million.

Chairman Paisley asked if any action was needed at that time. County Manager York said no action was required at the time. She suggested planning for this in the long-term capital improvement plan.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

No was report given.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

No was report given.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Thompson mentioned that she still had unanswered questions about the items she had brought up at the last meeting about the Alamance Behavioral Health Center.

Commissioner Lashley spoke about a memorial service for the son of one of the Public Health employees later that day.

Chairman Paisley mentioned the monthly meetings with the superintendent and the Board of Education Chair would resume in October.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Commissioner Lashley, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 1:37 PM.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board