

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

**April 21, 2025, 6:30 PM
Commissioners' Meeting Room
124 West Elm Street
Graham, NC 27253**

Board Members Present: Chairman John Paisley Jr
Vice-Chair Steve Carter
Commissioner Pamela Thompson
Commissioner Ed Priola
Commissioner Kelly Allen

CALL TO ORDER - CHAIRMAN PAISLEY

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - VICE CHAIR CARTER

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cheryl Sandford, Vice-Chair of the Library Committee, spoke that the Library Committee had voted unanimously to pass the new labeling policy. She shared a portion of the current library material selection on page 6. Ms. Sandford stressed that the Library Committee was not suggesting removing books from public libraries, but moving them to a restricted area. She continued they were not censoring any constitutionally protected speech. She said the Library Committee aimed to help parents choose books appropriate for their children.

Lilly Mikkelsen, a student, asked the Board to fund the Family Justice Center (FJC) by accepting and approving their new grant application request. She spoke about how domestic violence directly affected the lives of children. She pleaded with the Board to approve the FJC grant application request.

Camille Mikkelsen, a resident and member of Down Home NC, asked the Board to approve the grant application request for the FJC. She spoke about the FJC being the sole domestic violence service provider in Alamance County and how vital their services were to the community. She continued that the FJC has saved the lives of countless individuals by providing shelter during a crisis, connecting victims and families with invaluable resources. Ms. Mikkelsen mentioned that domestic violence did not discriminate by race, ethnicity, or income level.

Jasmine Alston, a resident, spoke in support of the grant application request from the FJC. She shared that she had been a victim of domestic violence and utilized the services of the FJC. She said FJC provided her with therapy resources, where she openly shared what she had been through. Ms. Alston commented that therapy had given her the strength to assist others in getting out of those situations and finding a safe haven. She noted that many people would be lost without the FJC's resources.

Ebony Pinnix, a resident, shared that she had experienced domestic violence. She continued that without the help of the FJC, she would not be standing there. Ms. Pinnix spoke that places like the FJC needed to be funded, as domestic violence not only affected the adults, but also affected children and other family members.

Aletha McKenzie, a resident, spoke about the benefits of the FJC and the opportunity to change people's lives. She said the FJC allows people space to get themselves together. She mentioned that the FJC needed more funding. Ms. McKenzie continued that the Board had the opportunity and privilege to improve people's lives. She thanked the Board for their service.

Teresa Draughn, a resident, spoke about the critical work of the FJC to help survivors of domestic violence. She commented that she was glad to see FJC pursuing opportunities and available resources. She mentioned the previous grant opportunity that the Board had turned down. Ms. Draughn said that the grant required no financial contribution from the county. She indicated that the Board denied it, citing concerns over language and the use of the word "inclusion". She asked the Board to commit additional funding to the FJC that matched or exceeded what they lost when the grant application was denied.

Kelly Stutts, a resident, spoke about the Library Committee and labeling of the library books. She shared her passion for protecting children and advocating for the prevention of child sexual abuse. She said it was the adults' responsibility to protect children. Ms. Stutts mentioned that movies and TV shows had labels. She supported labeling the library books because a four-year-old could not decide what was normal or safe.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Thompson requested item 5.b CRA Associates Contract -Change Order, be removed from the consent agenda for further questions and discussion. Commissioner Thompson, seconded by Vice-Chair Carter, moved to remove item 5.b CRA Associates Contract-Change from the consent agenda. The motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Thompson, Vice-

Chair Carter, and Commissioners Allen and Priola voting in favor. Chairman Paisley voted in opposition.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Chairman Paisley

Approval of the consent agenda as amended.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

GCC BYRNE-SCIP GRANT APPLICATION - Family Justice Center

Tax Refunds, Releases, and Exemptions March 2025

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Minutes of April 7, 2025.

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

Alamance County Senior Services Committee – Sandra Loy & Gregory Scott

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

CRA Associates Contract – Change Order

Commissioner Thompson asked what this change order meant. Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, explained that the Board had approved a large contract with CRA, a few meetings ago. CRA offered additional services, such as the audiovisual design in the telecom part of the courthouse, and plan approval from NCDOT and the City of Graham. Mr. Baker acknowledged that he did not think those services needed to be performed by the architects. After meeting the architects, he discovered the county needed them for those services. He stated that adding those services to the contract amended it to include those additional design services. Commissioner Thompson asked for those amounts. Mr. Baker said the audiovisual, security, telecom, and acoustical design work was \$304,000. The plan approval from NCDOT and the City of Graham was \$32,000. He noted that he was not asking to increase the budget for the overall courthouse project. He said he needed approval to spend amounts of this size. Chairman Paisley reiterated that the Board had already approved the project amount for the courthouse project, and this was not increasing that budget. Mr. Baker confirmed that the amount would come from the total construction budget of \$37 million. He mentioned they were still under 10% of the design portion of the project.

Commissioner Priola asked where that amount would come from. Mr. Baker answered that amount would come from the approved \$37 million project budget. Commissioner Priola asked if it was coming from a specific line item. Mr. Baker said the money allocated was not broken out for what would be spent on design and what would be spent on construction. Commissioner

Priola had more questions about the budget and items budgeted in the project. Mr. Baker explained that a detailed budget had not been prepared, as this was one of the largest projects that the county had done. Staff relied on the industry standards and wanted to spend 10% on design and save the rest for construction.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

The motion carried 4-1 with Chairman Paisley, Vice-Chair Carter, and Commissioners Allen and Priola voting in favor. Commissioner Thompson voted in opposition.

APPROVED

Appointment of Tax Administrator

County Attorney Stevens asked the Board to release both Interim Tax Collector, Cindy Miller and Interim Tax Assessor, Aimee Perkins, from their duties, respectively, and accept the bond issued in favor of Brad Fowler as Tax Collector for Alamance County and appoint him as the County's Tax Collector under G.S. § 105- 349, effective tomorrow, April 22, 2025, charging him with the collection of the County's taxes beginning tomorrow; appoint Mr. Fowler as the County's Tax Assessor under G.S. § 105- 294 and appoint him to perform the duties of assessor for the remainder of the current tax assessment term, beginning tomorrow, April 22, 2025, and ending on June 30, 2025; further to appoint Mr. Fowler as Alamance County's tax assessor for the term beginning on July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029."

Moved by: Commissioner Allen

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

The motion carried 4-1 with Chairman Paisley, Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Allen and Priola voting in favor. Commissioner Thompson voted in opposition.

APPROVED

Book Review Form and Policy - Susana Goldman, Director of Alamance County Public Libraries & County Attorney Stevens

County Attorney Stevens explained the policy allowed labels to be placed on books. There would be an archive of those materials related to books that have been challenged and reviewed. Those challenged and reviewed materials would be kept somewhere in each library for parents to learn about the content of various books that might be labeled. He said the book review form invited people to express concerns and ask for a review of content that might contain graphic violence, explicit sexual content references, substance abuse, self-harm, suicide themes, profanity, or objectionable material. Designated library staff and the review committee would review the

book, perform an objective screening, and decide whether or not it seemed appropriate. Based on the evidence in their review, they could place a content label on the book. The content label would inform parents that others had issues with that material. County Attorney Stevens said this did not put all labeled books in one part of the library. He said they were trying to avoid a stigmatizing approach.

Susana Goldman, Director of Alamance County Public Libraries, said a lot of work was done by the library committee working with the county attorney's office to ensure the policy was legally defensible.

Commissioner Priola read a statement and had follow-up questions. He said he would support the sticker policy, but it should be stronger. He said children should not have access to inappropriate materials without parental consent. Commissioner Priola expressed concerns with aligning the policy with the Library Bill of Rights and the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement. He voiced that he did not find their statements to be neutral. He felt they reflected a specific ideological orientation and agenda. Commissioner Priola, seconded by Vice Chair Carter, moved to strike the language that connected the sticker policy to the American Library Association under Section X. Legal and Ethical Compliance. County Attorney Stevens confirmed with Commissioner Priola that he wanted to strike out the second bullet and the first completed paragraph under Section X.

Chairman Paisley offered a modification to 4. under Section V, which reads, "The decision will be communicated in writing to the requestor." Chairman Paisley suggested adding "and the entire Library Committee " at the end of that sentence. Add a sentence to the remainder of that paragraph to read that all decisions shall be included in the next minutes of the library committee, so that the public had knowledge, and to let everybody know what had happened.

Moved by: Commissioner Priola

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

Approval of the Book Review Form and Policy with the amendments to strike out the second bullet and the first completed paragraph under Section X. Legal and Ethical Compliance.

Modification to Section V. 4. which reads, "The decision will be communicated in writing to the requestor." Adding "and the entire library committee". Add a sentence to the remainder of that paragraph to read that all decisions shall be included in the next minutes of the library committee, so that the public had knowledge, and to let everybody know what had happened.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

ALCOVETS Balloon Festival Update - ALCOVETS

Richard Shevlin, Vice-Chair of AlcoVets, announced that AlcoVets would not hold the Balloon Festival this year. He said the weather had been terrible the past three years during the fall. Since

the weather is more predictable in May, they planned to move the festival to Mother's Day weekend starting next year.

Bobby Chin asked the Board to rescind the proclamation for the festival to be held in September and change it to the third weekend in May.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

Moved to proclaim the Balloon Festival be held the third weekend of May starting in 2026.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

ACSO Sheriff's Office 2024 Activity Report/Statistics - Sherriff Terry Johnson

Moved to the next meeting.

Library Committee - Shelbi Fanning (City of Mebane Representative)

Moved by: Commissioner Thompson

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

Approval of Shelbi Fanning to the Library Committee as the representative for the City of Mebane.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Approval of the Strategic Plan - Susana Goldman, Director of Alamance County Public Libraries

Susana Goldman, Director of Alamance County Public Libraries, presented the recommended strategic plan for the library system for approval. She commented that libraries were eligible to receive state funding if they had a strategic plan in place. The strategic plans were required to be in place for five years. She noted the current strategic plan expired in June 2024, so they needed a current plan to apply for state aid when the application process opened on July 1. Ms. Goldman explained they worked with a consultant to hold 12 community forums and received feedback on what the community thought the libraries should be committed to.

Commissioner Priola mentioned that he did not see any mention of DEI in the strategic plan. He said he saw a lot of DEI on the library website as a policy statement. He asked about some of the training classes over a 12-week period. He opined that equity in government was improper and that bureaucrats should not be making decisions on who gets the resources. Commissioner Priola said elected officials should be making those decisions.

Ms. Goldman responded that the community had determined the priorities in the county. She mentioned that anything on the website was part of the previous plan approved five years ago. Ms. Goldman indicated that the current proposal includes the priorities of the current community.

Commissioner Priola asked Ms. Goldman to confirm whether the core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the policy statement would disappear from the website once the new strategic plan was approved. Ms. Goldman answered yes.

Moved by: Commissioner Priola

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Carter

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Audit Services Contracts - Susan Evans, Finance Officer

Susan Evans, Finance Officer, asked for Board approval to award the contract for audit services for fiscal years 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2026-27 to Martin Starnes and Associates. She asked the Board for further approval of the fiscal year 2024-2025 audit contract. She explained the county had issued a "request for proposals" to 33 firms for audit services. Ms. Evans said four proposals were received. Based on the qualifications, Ms. Evans recommended Martin Starnes be awarded the contract.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

County Attorney Stevens read back the language he drafted for Chairman Paisley's modification in Section V., sub-section 4 of the Book Review Policy. He wanted to make sure it was correct. He read that the decision would be communicated in writing to the requester and the Library Committee members. Regardless of the decision made, decisions, regardless of the outcome, would also appear in the Library Committee minutes following the date of any decision made. All decisions were final, unless appealed. See Section VI.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

County Manager York mentioned that the 3rd quarter financial reports were included in the agenda packet. She reminded the Board of the special meeting on Monday, April 28th at 9:30 am.

FY 2025 3rd Quarter Financial Report

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Thompson had questions about stats for the Sheriff's Office. She said she had requested a presentation on the ICE contract. County Attorney Stevens advised that the Sheriff's Office could answer those questions.

Commissioner Allen said she had voted against the first FJC grant because it excluded some of the populations, and was against excluding any populations. She commented that it should be all-inclusive.

Vice-Chair Carter said he was informed the county was not statutorily required to have an FJC. County Attorney Stevens confirmed that it was correct. He mentioned that many of the services provided there are services that other parts of the county government might provide if they were not housed in one place. County Attorney Stevens thought the idea was to offer adjacent services in one place, effectively. Vice-Chair Carter commented that Alamance County had been ahead by establishing one of the first FJCs in the state. He stated that they were not trying to stop the service and that he would like to see it enhanced. He continued that it was a critical place for many people and did not want anyone excluded. He noted that AlcoVets did a fabulous job for the county and that he held them in high regard.

Chairman Paisley commented on AlcoVets' work in going into veterans' homes, building ramps, and remodeling bathrooms. He said he was glad AlcoVets changed the Balloon Festival date to a better weekend. He spoke about the domestic violence cases he had observed as an attorney for over 50 years. Chairman Paisley mentioned that former Judge Jim Roberson had instituted a program at the FJC to help victims obtain an electronic 50-B.

ADJOURNMENT

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

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board