

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

April 15, 2024
OTHERS PRESENT

Jeremiah Jefferies, Chair
Finch Holt, Vice Chair
John Dickerson
Ethel Gwynn
Rick McVey
Frank Rose
Tim Yarbrough

Scott Meszaros, County Manager
Melissa Williamson, Deputy County Manager
Jennifer Hammock, Finance Director
Russell Johnston, County Attorney
Carla Smith, Clerk to the Board

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a Regular Meeting on Monday, April 15, 2024 at 6:30 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library.

WELCOME:

Chairman Jefferies called the meeting to order, and welcomed everyone to the Caswell County Board of Commissioners meeting on April 15, 2024. Then all paused for a moment of Silent Prayer, and the Board of Commissioners and all the guest in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Rebecca Page: I'm Rebecca page. I live at 820 Page Road in Yanceyville. What else am I supposed to tell you? Is that all? Then Mrs. Page was asked to speak up. The clerk said the mic's not on.

I'm Rebecca Page. I live in 820 Page Road in Yanceyville, NC. I'm a board member on the Caswell Tourism Development Authority. Later this evening you'll be considering a resolution asking the legislature to increase the occupancy tax here countywide to 6% from 3%. I've already spoken to all of you about this, and I'm here in case you have questions when you get to this on the agenda. I also have, in case you haven't checked our website. We have a website, and you can check it out. It's on here. I hope I have enough. Anyway our website is visitcaswell.com. It's easy to remember. The website is visitcaswell.com, and I hope you'll go check it out. Also if you have any reservations about this resolution when it comes up on the agenda, I hope you'll ask me your questions so I can answer them. Thank you.

RECOGNITIONS:

There were no recognitions.

AGENDA:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Jefferies said I'd like to add before you approve it a closed session. We will need to go into Closed Session at the end of the meeting.

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A **motion** was made by Commissioner Gwynn and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to approve the agenda with the addition of the Closed Session. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Gwynn, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. April 1, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to approve the consent agenda. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Gwynn, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

PRESENTATION:

CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION TEAM REVIEW:

Good evening. I am Danielle Elmore. I am the Nursing Supervisor at the Caswell Health Department and also the chairperson for the Child Fatality and Prevention Team or Protection Team here in Caswell County. I'm Emily Hodges, and I am a Review Coordinator for the Child Fatality Team, and I am Program Assistant at the Health Department.

Danielle Elmore said so every year we are tasked to give an annual report of the deaths of the children of the age 17 and under that happen here in Caswell County. This is mandated by the State for us to do a report to our local Commissioners. So all of the counties have to do this every year. Emily and I have done it for the past six years. So here we are again, and unfortunately we had three deaths of minors here in Caswell County that the team reviewed. You have the information in your packet. We can't go into too much detail. These are always confidential meetings. We meet with DSS (Department of Social Services), and they do the protection cases. So we have a joint team here in Caswell County with DSS and the Child Fatality Team. The State mandates that it has to be like a multidisciplinary team, and with this multidisciplinary team we should have a parent that has lost a child under the age of 17, in addition to a judge, an officer, and EMS. If you want to know more details on who is on our team, just reach out to me. My email address is listed on there. Some of the positions have to be appointed by the Commissioners, but others do not have to be appointed by our Commissioners. So we thank you all for the work you all have done to put people on our team. Two of the three deaths were homicides, and its public knowledge. So one of the system reviews that the team came up with is to teach and educate our youth about gun safety and to hopefully get gun locks for our children that do not have safes in their home for the guns. Caswell County Sheriff's Department donated eight locks to us that they had from an event that they had had earlier. Since getting those eight locks, we also got a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services of North Carolina. They sent us a box full of locks. So if you all know of anyone in the public that the parents may have a gun and it's not safely locked, please send them to the Health Department. They can call

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me or they can email us, and I will get them a gun lock. So when we go out in the community and do the public events in addition to doing the other things for the Health Department, we will have the gun locks on site. So we have them until we run out, unless we can get some more funding to get additional gun locks. Thank you for your time.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no Discussion Items.

ACTION ITEMS:

RESOLUTION TO INCREASE OCCUPANCY TAX RATE IN COUNTY:

Chairman Jefferies said we have the resolution and we need a motion. What do you all think?

Commissioner McVey said we can't hear you.

Chairman Jefferies said next on the agenda will be a resolution to increase the occupancy tax rate in the county.

Commissioner Yarbrough said Mrs. Hodges. Mrs. Page replied do you mean Mrs. Page?

Commissioner Yarbrough said I'm sorry I had Hodges on the brain. That was the last speaker. I'm sorry. Mrs. Page, the rate in the city of Yanceyville now is 6%. Am I correct? Mrs. Page said that's correct. Commissioner Yarbrough said and 3% everywhere else in the county. Mrs. Page said that's correct. Commissioner Yarbrough said you all are asking to bring the county up to where the town is. Now other than the hotel found in the city limits, how many other businesses are you talking about? Mrs. Page said it's Airbnb and Vrbos, and it's 20 something. Most of them are on Hyco Lake on the Caswell County side.

Chairman Jefferies said I did talk to Milton, and she was all for this 6% tax here.

Vice Chairman Holt said what are your plans with the money? Mrs. Page said oh. Well what we've already been doing is we have awarded grants. This past year, we awarded seven grants and one sponsorship, and each one of these grants was to non-profit or a business that was doing something that would attract tourists to the county. They had to be promoting their activity or whatever it was outside of the county so people outside the county could go on them. So that's the primary thing. We're basically giving money out to organizations and businesses. Does that answer your question? Vice Chairman Holt said yes.

Chairman Jefferies said Milton told me they had received three grants One was for \$2,500. They said they had received some grants to help Milton.

Vice Chairman Holt said what is Raleigh's tax? Mrs. Page said what is Raleigh's occupancy tax? Vice Chairman Holt said yes. Mrs. Page said I think it's 6%, but I really can't tell you that. I know that the legislature allows up to 6%. The one exception I know about is Mecklenburg County who has 8%. There may be other exceptions, but I don't know.

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Commissioner Dickerson said Mrs. Page, we spoke on the phone, and I asked you about my concerns about the impact of a tax increase driving away potential people that would want to stay in these bed and breakfasts. You told me that was not a concern. I find it hard to believe that charging people more money to stay in a place is not going to entice them to look around elsewhere. Mrs. Page said well I guess in that situation, I think about myself when I'm going somewhere, and I'm quoted a rate at a hotel. I honestly don't think that much about the taxes and the mark up. I personally am an Airbnb host, and I'm not concerned about that affecting my number of guests. Our only hotel owner here in the County was very supportive of this tax. Commissioner Dickerson said did you say that he's already paying 6%? Mrs. Page said well he actually will not start until May, but yes. Commissioner Dickerson said so what that would do is level the playing field. Of course he would want everybody else to go up to 6%. That would put them in the same category he's in. Mrs. Page said well when we were talking about this and he is on the board, he is for it for him and also for the whole County just because it brings in more funds for the Tourism Development Authority. He sees the things that we do to promote bringing guests into the community to be to his advantage at the hotel.

Vice Chairman Holt said I just have trouble with the tax increase with me being conservative. There's no such thing as a tax that doesn't hurt somebody. Mrs. Page said well it is a charge to the guest. It's not a charge to our citizens here in the county, but yes, it is a tax to the guests who spend the night here. I mean when we go places and when we rent hotels in other communities, we pay these taxes in their communities. Sometimes they're a whole lot higher than 6%.

Commissioner Dickerson said it's politicians and taxes. I'm going to let it go. Most of them are all eager to raise taxes and have more money to spend. I'm not for that. I think holding the line on increasing taxes is the way to go. I'm not for it.

Chairman Jefferies said anyone else have any questions for Mrs. Page? What's the pleasure of the Board? A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to put the 6% tax in.

Commissioner Rose said first of all I think we need to keep everybody on the same playing field. The Town of Yanceyville gets 6%, and we're doing three. Like Mrs. Page said she is an Airbnb owner herself, and she already said that she has no problem with it. I think we need to get everybody on the same playing field, and it will increase revenue for the Tourism Development that they can utilize. They've been utilizing this to attract more businesses into the county, and I'm going to vote yes.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Jefferies and **carried 5 - 2** to put the 6% tax in. (Ayes: Commissioners Rose, Yarbrough, McVey, Gwynn, and Jefferies. Nays: Commissioners Holt and Dickerson)

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PERSONNEL POLICY AMENDMENT:

Ashley Powell said good evening Commissioners. I am here tonight to propose an important amendment to our Personnel Policy regarding the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy for Caswell County. Recently, we were fortunate enough to secure a federal grant for the Sheriff's Department, which indicates a stipulation requiring us to have an EEOP in place. To fulfill this requirement and to ensure our compliance with the grants terms, I'm proposing a specific language change for our existing Personnel Policy, and all that was included in the agenda packet. I gave you a copy as well.

Commissioner Dickerson said is the wording here what's going to be in...? Ashley Powell said yes sir. So the yellow is the new changes, and the strike out is what we're removing.

Commissioner Dickerson said there are some redundant phrases in there: natural hair and hairstyles, and then you have it again natural hair and hairstyles. Ashley Powell said okay yes. Correct. I see.

Chairman Jefferies said does anyone else have anything for Mrs. Powell?

Commissioner Rose said you say this language has to be in there for the grant to be approved? Ashley Powell said yes sir, and that way if we want to receive any additional funding from the Federal Government as well we will be in line.

Commissioner McVey said so if I'm reading this right, if we don't pass this, you have a budget increase of 100,972. Ashley Powell said yes sir. Commissioner McVey said so that will increase the budget.

Commissioner Yarbrough said why? Why is it, if we don't approve it, we have a budget increase? Ashley Powell said so we have to... well we received the grant from the Department of Federal Justice, and the stipulations of the grant was that we have to have an EEOP in place.

Commissioner Yarbrough said okay. Ashley Powell said and so this is why we have to have that wording in place. Commissioner Yarbrough said I got that, but if we don't approve this, how is it going to cause us to have an increase in our budget? Ashley Powell said because we won't be in compliant with that grant. Commissioner Yarbrough said so we've already got this money?

Ashley Powell said yes. So this was brought to my plate. Commissioner Yarbrough said I remember that. Ashley Powell said and this, we brought this back up in January. I think it was or late December it was brought to my plate, and we needed to have some things in place. We had already been rewarded the grant, so we are making sure we're in line where we need to be.

Commissioner Dickerson said where did the wording for this come from? Ashley Powell said so Jamie Andrews is here. He can maybe help us with that. He's from the NCACC; he helped me with this policy as well. Jamie Andrews said sure. So Ashley called me in last fall to see if I could help out with this, and that was soon after you all had discussed it the first time. And the kind of guidance we took at that time was from Buncombe County's EEOP Policy, and I looked at a couple of other neighboring counties and other counties in south North Carolina. What you

see in this packet is pretty in line with what other counties have in place. It's also very in line with policies that you're already executing. Nothing that's being added here is going to fundamentally change what is done, we're just making sure that we are in line with other counties who follow federal standards and to comply with staff needs like that.

Commissioner Dickerson said is it necessary to have the gender identity or expression, or is that something that was put in here based on another county like Buncombe County had it in there? Do we have to have that phrase in there? Ashley Powell said so we are going along with neighboring counties and local counties conforming to their policies. That part was not as specific in far as the grant requirements. Commissioner Dickerson said then why are we putting it in there? Ashley Powell said because we're just going to be in line just to cover because the world is changing. That way we meet all standards. Jamie Andrews then said that's also in line and we had recent Supreme Court cases around employment law finding that gender identity and expression of sexual orientation are both under protection under sex. So this is just making that part explicit. Commissioner Dickerson said why do you have to name it specifically like that because you have down here, if you read further into which you're proposing that it says, or any other legally protected class under federal law or North Carolina state law. So if they're protected by a Supreme Court ruling, then we don't need to specifically put that in there. They're covered under a different ruling. Then we don't need it. Ashley Powell said we can remove that wording. Commissioner Dickerson said I would like to see it removed. Ashley Powell said so which wording are you specifically replacing? Commissioner Dickerson said gender identity or expression, and Ashley Powell said okay.

Chairman Jefferies said what's the pleasure of the Board? Does anybody else have any more questions for Mrs. Powell?

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn and **carried unanimously** to approve after the words are stricken that Commissioner Dickerson highlighted. (Ayes: Commissioners Rose, Yarbrough, McVey, Holt, Gwynn, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

COUNTY MANAGER'S UPDATES:

County Manager Scott Meszaros said Mr. Chairman, we did hire a new Family Services Director. I might have told you that already. Bonita Graves, she started last Monday. I know that our Deputy County Manager is very excited about that. She's been helping to cover a lot of their operations. She looks like she's going to be a great hire.

The Co-Square building, we did order the replacement brick today. That was put in. The contractor is here this week. They should have that wall supported, and that work started this week. So the brick takes three weeks to come so to kind of give us an idea of the timeframe on the frontal construction. They continue inside and are actually progressing pretty well. They've been painting. The painting, floors, and cleaning should be wrapped up in another two weeks or so should be.

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The parking lot, I don't know if any of you came by the courthouse today, but they did crack seal and refinish the back parking lot and restripe that today. So that's up and finished.

We are waiting for a couple of pieces on the sound system. I'm told as soon as that comes in they'll schedule, or I'm told that they should have that done it says to expect to be completed by the middle of May. I'm not sure how that will affect us for the second meeting, but we'll try to get that done and be in there.

With the updates, there's a lot of meetings this week in town. So legislators are here, and there's some ag events going on tomorrow night. There are some events at the college. I think the notices were all sent out on that. I'm not sure. If you do have an interest in going to those and we have more than a quorum, we just need to know that so that we advertise it so we meet the requirements. That's all we have.

Chairman Jefferies said I think we kind of talked a little bit about May 6th about the budget coming out. It's kind of late. County Manager Meszaros said let me hand out this. This was the original calendar that was passed out. This doesn't mean you have to adhere to it. If you wanted to go with this initial schedule that they provided, this keeps us to the Mondays if you wanted to do a different time. This is what they proposed when Johnna was here from the association, and then of course Jennifer was in on it. So we are trying to get our initial preliminary budget to you by May 6th, and then of course the first workshop would tentatively be like on the 13th. I'm trying to get our Enterprise Representative to come and talk about the lease cars and the vehicle asks so that you have an idea how that all works on the front end. I know that more than half of the existing Commissioners were not here when she did her last presentation. I think it's important to have that presentation on general leases before the work, but outside of that we still have meetings this month with the school district, college, and then finishing up the departments. So it's in your court if you want to adhere to this schedule or if you want to make changes. This would give us three work sessions. The public hearing would be on the 3rd of June, and then the adoption would be on the 17th. So there's a lot of time in in May to do additional meetings or change the dates if you choose. Chairman Jefferies asked have you gotten all the budget in from everybody? County Manager Meszaros said yes, we've been meeting with all of the Departments, so the Finance Director, the Deputy County Manager, and myself. I've met with, I'd say, over half. Tomorrow we have four. We're trying to get all of them met with and look at all their requests. As you know, we're going with the base budget system so a lot of them don't have substantive changes. If they do have additions, it will be very clear. That way when we go through them, most of that'll be presenting on here's a line by line total budget. Right here's the additions, here's your requests, and here's your recommendations. It'll be very clean cut.

Vice Chairman Holt said how many hours are we talking for say the 6th, the 13th, and the 20th. County Manager Meszaros said really that's going to depend on how much detail you want me to get into. It shouldn't take us too long to present it. You should get the whole package on the front end. If you get into it and have specific questions, it makes it go faster when we come to

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meetings. A good for instance is, I'll use your department. Some of the CATS program, they have increases in the budget, but they're offset by federal grants so it's almost a neutral wash. So those things will all be presented, but if it has a budget impact, we'll present that and say here's an additional cost or reduction so you see what the changes are. I think generally you don't really like to go in budget meetings over two hours in the night session. When they start to go into two or three plus hours, it gets very cumbersome, and it starts to get kind of tiring for everyone. So I presume that three would be sufficient. Vice Chairman Holt said we did more than that last year. Finance Director Hammock said we did it in sections last year. This time on May 6th you will have the entire budget. Vice Chairman Holt said so this is going to be at night? Finance Director Hammock said it's totally up to the Board as to how they want to proceed.

Commissioner Yarbrough said you have to think with this being a reevaluation year, you have to present us with a revenue neutral budget. Am I correct in that? County Manager Meszaros said no. We have to present you with the mill calculation. So once we get the total appropriation and collection, then we will go back and recalculate how does the budget look and how does that calculate. So if you don't take a reduction in the mill levy, you would take a full appraisal on all the increase, which would make our budget, I don't know, 30. I'm hearing 45%; it would make our levy 45% bigger than it is today. I'm assuming that's not going to happen here.

Commissioner Yarbrough said I don't think so. County Manager Meszaros said so we do the calculation and take a reduction in the mill levy to come down to where the budget is at. That budget may be very similar to this year's budget, or it could include the enhancements, changes, and needs that the Departments and staff have. Commissioner Yarbrough said do you know when the Tax Office is planning on presenting the new values? County Manager Meszaros said we met last week. I've had some attorneys call me asking for the numbers. Those have not been mailed out yet; they should have been mailed this week.

Commissioner Gwynn said did you say what time that meeting on May 13th is going to be? County Manager Meszaros said so it's up to the to the Commissioners. If you want to meet, I mean, we're open. Obviously staff is here during the day, but if you want to meet in daytime, if you want to meet at 5:00, 6 o'clock, we can meet at our normal time 6:30 p.m. On the on the 6th we'll be at our regular meeting so we don't need to set a time for that. But if you prefer to have a different time, it's whatever you propose to do.

Chairman Jefferies said well what about you Rick. Do these dates work for you?

Commissioner Yarbrough said well they're all on all Monday. Commissioner Yarbrough said two of them are regular meetings. Are we going to do budget plus regular meetings? County Manager Meszaros and Finance Director Hammock said that is up to you all. Finance Director Hammock said this can be changed to whatever you prefer. It doesn't have to be these dates.

Chairman Jefferies said are we going to get a book like we used to get, or are we going to do like certain projects like we had last year? The first time I had seen that was last year. Finance Director Hammock said everything will be in this one. Yes, sir. Chairman Jefferies said then we

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have a chance to really go through it at home. Finance Director Hammock said yes sir. Chairman Jefferies said thank you. Chairman Jefferies said well I'm looking at this, is everybody happy? Vice Chairman Holt said no. We got to decide on a time. I mean the calling on the regular meeting, that doesn't work. Either we got to come in way earlier or get to staying later. Chairman Jefferies said we going to try to have a short agenda when that happens. On the 6th and the 20th make sure those agendas are short.

County Manager Meszaros said so just to clarify the public hearing and the adoption do need to be on there. Those are official functions.

Commissioner Gwynn said it's not a time down for May 13th. That's the one I had asked about. It's not a regular meeting so we need a time.

Commissioner Yarbrough said why don't we make all of them at 5:00 pm. John, will that work for you. Commissioner Dickerson said yes. Commissioner Yarbrough said if we just set them all up to 5 o'clock, we can do either regular meeting to start and then the budget work session or vice versa. I'm just throwing that out there. Chairman Jefferies said is that satisfying to the Board? The consensus was yes.

Vice Chairman Holt said is that on the... Are we leaving the ones that fall on the meeting dates? So May 6th is 5? The 13th is not a meeting, right? Chairman Jefferies said it is not a meeting. Commissioner Yarbrough said we need to keep it simple? Vice Chairman Holt said what about the 20th? Commissioner Gwynn said that's a regular meeting.

Commissioner Yarbrough said we can get done with regular business in hour be through by 6. Then a couple of hours on budget or three hours. Vice Chairman Holt said so you want to have the regular meeting first? Commissioner Yarbrough said it doesn't matter. Vice Chairman Holt said I was going to say Ms. Carla will need to send that out. That change. Commissioner Yarbrough said it doesn't matter to me. Either way. Vice Chairman Holt said I'll be fine with that. Chairman Jefferies said let's have the regular meeting first then go right into the budget. Vice Chairman Holt said the regular meeting is at 5, and then budget. Chairman Jefferies said if that's okay with everybody, we will move on. Do you have anything else County Manager? County Manager Meszaros said no sir.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Rose: One thing I had was is there any update on the, I guess the new, who would be the new internet provider since Zitel left. County Manager Meszaros said so they have been working on reissuing some of the work that was under Zitel to two different companies. One is a local company. I'm not familiar with them. The other part is Spectrum. So they're trying to get those initiated to get through that initial part of the grant, and then when that part of the money is spent, they'll go into to the second phase. So they are proceeding with that now. You know regardless of how much money we have, they're not going to serve every single person in the community. But when like Spectrum comes in and they put in big fiber trunks in areas, the

take rate will be much higher for those people that they didn't do initially because just dropping them the line to their house or their business is a lot less costly if the lines are already there. Commissioner Rose said does that have to be brought back before the Board? County Manager Meszaros said yes. That will be brought back before us to make a selection. Yes.

Commissioner Dickerson: Who was the other local Company? County Manager Meszaros said Crystal? I'll find out and email it out to you. It is a local Broadband company just in this area.

Commissioner Gwynn: Recently I was asked to attend a meeting in Pelham about a club. They have had a lot of problems over there, and the Sheriff's Department, really they're there about every weekend. They have had one murder and many, many shootings over there. One lady shared with me that she slept in her bathtub, and another lady, no it was a guy who was telling me about he had to get rid of his horses because it was so much shooting that it frightened the horses. They were terrified. That's a community of a lot of retired people. They have had one murder and numerous shootings. One lady that slept in her bathtub all night and some slept on the floor. At the meeting the DA or District Attorney's office was there, the Assistant DA and the DA. So they're going to be working on some things. It had been closed once before. It's not a regular supper club. What they were saying is it's a strip club. So the DA, their Assistant DA, and the ALE, Alcohol Law Enforcement, Board from Raleigh were all looking at how they could potentially close the business. The owner was there, and they think it was, well I know it was closed before. So they think what happened was his buddy reopened it or somebody in his family or something. They have put up no parking signs, and now they parking there in the neighborhoods. They just park on the dirt paths that lead them to get to their houses. They're taking over that, and they're also parking in the grass spots. The citizens have asked them not to do that. So that is something the DA and the Sheriff's Department are dealing with at this time. A lot of those people are retired, and the man had to get rid of his horses because of the shooting. It was really hard for him to do that. Commissioner Rose and County Manager Scott Meszaros was there.

County Manager Meszaros said I don't want to stop the topic, but I do have an update on my phone for Commissioner Dickerson about the providers. But I don't want to interject.

Commissioner Holt said my understanding of this is it's like more of a nuisance law or something that they could get like Rockingham has where they could go after these problems. Commissioner Rose said basically what it is is a night club. It's been alleged that it's a strip club. I don't know because I've never been there so I can't tell you. But I do know that our ordinances do address strip clubs. Our ordinance does not do much for this club itself. I think what the Sheriff's Department and ALE are finding too is if you go after the club owner, you will find it vacant.

Commissioner Gwynn said I know the DA and Assistant DA were working on somethings, but he has an update and I would like to hear that update. Vice Chairman Holt said no, it was on something else.

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County Manager Meszaros said that's ongoing and I have Jason, County Planner, here. He actually is up to date on if they applied for a permit and were denied.

Jason Watlington said they are not permitted for a sexually oriented business. They have attempted since 2015 twice, and they've been rejected. We can't stop a night club, but we do have ordinances. Now one thing that could possibly come up is they appeal on the Article 19, Freedom of Speech, which can carry you down other avenues. Attorney Johnson may be able to interject on that. However, I have been working with the Sheriff's Department this week or last week and today getting them the documentation.

Commissioner Gwynn said the Sheriff's Department has really been working hard on this because it ties up the entire Sheriff Department. It's a lot of traffic based on what some of them were saying. It be at least 300 people there at any given time. One of the little old men told me they call it a strip club, but they don't be wearing anything to be stripping. I couldn't answer him. I said I'm not sure because I haven't been there. I didn't volunteer an answer to him.

Jason Watlington said I will tell you the main reason they were rejected in the past is due to our ordinance which states that a sexually oriented business cannot be within 3,000 feet of a residence. They are definitely.

Commissioner Gwynn said that's where they are parking. That community is basically a retired community.

Chairman Jefferies asked if they serve alcohol there? Commissioner Rose said yes. They have a liquor license.

Commissioner Gwynn said the ALE person was there and I'm sure things were in order. They were there, and they presented.

Chairman Jefferies asked Attorney Johnston could the judge get this place closed down? Attorney Johnston said the nuisance and abatement from the Sheriff's Department. That's correct, Commissioner Jefferies. As Mr. Watlington said we do have a strong section in our UDO, Unified Development Ordinance, that addresses sexually oriented businesses. It does recognize that the county must respect the right to have freedom of speech, but the county also has the ability to regulate these activities. It's very restricted. I feel like we do have a strong UDO. As Mr. Watlington mentioned, there are several violations. I think those violations have also been reported to the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Gwynn said I just want to report that it is still working. Vice Chairman Holt said we need to investigate it more. Chairman Jefferies asked where was it located and Commissioner Gwynn said it is over in Pelham on Old 29.

Scott Meszaros: Before we adjourn, I can provide that update concerning the fiber. So this is from NCDIT from Jeff. He said Spectrum has been awarded approximately 46% of the GREAT Grant household connections previously awarded to Zitel, and it's expected that Brightspeed will

receive the contract for the remain 54%, which is roughly 538 total connections. Once the GREAT Grant contracts are signed, they will immediately intake talks with NCDIT regarding boarding the CAB contracts to approve providers. Those negotiations are scheduled for mid-April. It does say the GREAT grant targets only unserved areas; while CAB programs are intended for both unserved and underserved. So we should be moving forward on that this week.

Commissioner Dickerson said Brightspeed, that is part of the old Mebtel or CenturyLink. Wow. County Manager Meszaros said those are the two that were selected and already submitted, but they can't just award it to next.

Commissioner Dickerson said I have some reservation about that. I had that outfit before Spectrum came in with internet, and ours was horrible. They never would upgrade their lines. It was not fiber, and they got the contracts to put fiber in for other people in the county. What about their existing customers who are struggling and having a hard time?

County Manager Meszaros said sure. That's part of the overall problem with fiber. A lot of them were told they were going to get fiber, and they wanted it to be fiber. In general, not specifically. That's part of these grants. It's trying to enhance the network not just actual ones. We're trying to upgrade the system. It's systemic.

Commissioner Rose said Melissa, you were here at that time. When this thing came about, didn't it say that when Spectrum came in like Comcast or Brightspeed's area, that if Brightspeed could not provide that, then they had to allow Spectrum to do it. Melissa Williamson said yes.

Commissioner Rose said well I hope that Brightspeed is going to put this fiber in because we used to have telephone with them, and it was a while before we could get them to come fix it. So I hope if they are going to get this that they will at least upgrade, but I also would like to see like John said some of the ones that have it now at least get upgraded. County Manager Meszaros said so that's where the underserved person comes in rather than the unserved completely. So it's not just going to locations that don't currently get fiber; it's upgrading the system. So it's connectivity.

Melissa Williamson said they must be getting ready to start working on something. I had CenturyLink as well, and with Brightspeed. When I called to disconnect to go to Spectrum, well this has been a year ago, I did it last March. They were like could you hold on a little longer we're getting ready to work over to the fiber optic. I was like no, because I was like you. I had had enough. So apparently they must have been trying to work on something at that point because she was saying they were getting ready to get more with fiber optic, but I'm like you. When I got an opportunity to, I did. Commissioner Dickerson said yes, I jumped ship too. Our service would go out, and they would send repair person after repair person and none of them could get it right. I mean the third time would be a charm. They may get it then, but a hard rain would take it out.

April 15, 2024

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:

- April 20, 2024 10 am to 2 pm 40th Anniversary Celebration and Substation Open House at Leasburg Volunteer Fire Department (9798 Ridgeville Rd, Leasburg, NC 27291)
- May 6, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting at 5:00 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library

CLOSED SESSION:

A motion was made at 7:20 pm by Commissioner Gwynn and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson and **carried unanimously** to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between attorney and the public body, which is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3), and to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, which is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (4). (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Gwynn, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made at 7:41 pm by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Holt and **carried unanimously** to adjourn the meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners Yarbrough, Rose, McVey, Holt, Gwynn, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

Carla R. Smith
Clerk to the Board

Jeremiah Jefferies
Chairman

April 15, 2024

Caswell County Board of Commissioners

Resolution R2024-03 in support of Increasing the Caswell County Occupancy Tax from 3% to 6%

WHEREAS, tourism is the number one industry in the southeast and the second largest industry in the state of North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, a national Chamber of Commerce study compared the relationship between 100 manufacturing jobs to a community and 100 tourists and found that tourism produces significant revenues and is a clean industry because it requires little infrastructure, water or sewer and is a clean, non-polluting, non-consumptive industry; and

WHEREAS, Caesars Resort in Danville, VA is projecting up to 2 million visitors per year when the resort is complete; and

WHEREAS, Caswell County has two major access roads (US 29 and Hwy 86) to Danville that, conservatively, one fourth of those 2 million visitors (500,000 visitors/year) will travel; and

WHEREAS, Caswell County is very limited in the funds it can generate to promote tourism with a 3% occupancy tax rate from its Airbnb's and VRBO's, as the only entity authorized to collect 6% (3% Town of Yanceyville occupancy tax and 3% county occupancy tax) is the hotel located in the Yanceyville town limits.

WHEREAS, NC counties are allowed to collect up to 6% in Occupancy Taxes.

WHEREAS, Occupancy Taxes are only collected from overnight hotel, Airbnb and VRBO guests and NOT Caswell citizens

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Caswell County Board of Commissioners endorse a 3% increase in Occupancy Tax rate, bringing the tax up to 6% on the gross receipts derived from the rental of any room, lodging or similar accommodation in the County.

This the 15th, day of April, 2024.



Jeremiah Jefferies, Chairman

Caswell County Board of Commissioners