

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

October 7, 2024
OTHERS PRESENT

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

Renee Paschal, County Manager
Melissa Williamson, Deputy County Manager
Russell Johnston, County Attorney
Carla Smith, Clerk to the Board

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, October 7, 2024 at 6:30 pm at the Historic Courthouse.

WELCOME:

Chairman Jefferies called the meeting to order, and welcomed everyone to the Caswell County Board of Commissioners meeting on October 7, 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:

There were no Public Comments.

RECOGNITIONS:

Commissioner Rose: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Just a couple things I'd like to hit on. As many of you may be aware of, there may be some that don't, we had an accidental drowning last week at Farmer Lake. I just wanted to say on behalf of myself and I guess the Board, I just want to thank the ones who were involved for their professionalism during that tragic event. I'd like to thank our Deputy County Manager, Melissa Williamson, Farmer Lake Warden, Charlie King, Caswell County Fire Marshal, Vernon Massengill, members of the Alamance County Rescue Unit, members of the Caswell County Sheriff's Office, the North Carolina Wildlife Enforcement division, Caswell County Emergency Service Personnel, Caswell County Special Operations Team, and our Caswell County Solid Waste. I just want to thank all of those involved for everything they did over there that day and thank them.

Commissioner Holt: I'd like to acknowledge and recognize Mrs. Renee Paschal, our new Interim County Manager and welcome her here. Mrs. Paschal said thank you.

Commissioner Dickerson: I would like to ask that all the citizens in the county would remember the flood victims. They need our thoughts and prayers, donations, and support. I think there's one group from Caswell that are taking up supplies currently at Providence Baptist Church. They'll be there tomorrow, but if you look online, you can look on the Caswell Business Broadcast Network, they've got the collection times listed.

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APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. September 16, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes
- b. September 23, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items.

ACTION ITEMS:

PROCLAMATION HONORING JEREMIAH JEFFERIES:

County Manager Paschal said the voters league is requesting approval of the Proclamation that was in your packet honoring Chairman Jefferies for his many years of service as a County Commissioner, and this is on the occasion of his retirement from the Board. Would you like me to read the proclamation? Chairman Jefferies said well if you will. Go ahead. County Manager Paschal said give me one second. Then she read the Proclamation as follows:

Proclamation honoring *Jeremiah Jefferies*

Whereas, for thirty-two years, Jeremiah Jefferies has been a dedicated servant to citizens of the Caswell County as a County Commissioner; and

Whereas, *Jeremiah* served with honor, integrity, commitment, and respect; and

Whereas, the important work of Jeremiah and the County Commissioners cannot be quantified in the economic benefit to the County or in the compassion experienced by so many served; but, can only be measured by the tremendous gratitude we have for Jeremiah’s exceptional and selfless service; and

Whereas, Jeremiah Jefferies truly exemplifies the noble endeavor to leave a place better than when found and in doing so, inspires all of us to do the same; and

Whereas, residents of Caswell County appreciate the improvements made over the years such as building the new NL Dillard Middle School and Bartlett Yancey High School, road improvements such as Doll Branch Road, and the role he played in bringing broadband to the county. We would like to recognize Jeremiah for his legacy and for the imprint he leaves upon our community.

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Caswell County Board of Commissioners do hereby acknowledge and extend their appreciation to Jeremiah Jefferies and his service to our community.

Adopted on the seventh day of October, 2024.

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

REQUEST FROM COMMISSIONER HOLT TO CONSIDER THE ELIMINATION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR POSITION AND ASSIGNMENT OF THESE DUTIES TO THE COUNTY MANAGER IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE PAY RANGE FOR FUTURE PERMANENT COUNTY MANAGER:

Chairman Jefferies said that's on the table here, and we can discuss this.

Vice Chairman Holt said I know we've discussed this. I don't know where exactly we stand with everybody, but... Chairman Jefferies said kind of talk in the mic so they can hear you. Vice Chairman Holt said I'm sorry. I know talking with Ms. Cannon we all did. Most of the counties our size does not have a full-time Economic Director, and we had talked about the fact that we would like to take that money and put it to the County Manager position so we could try to get a higher pay grade County Manager. I'd like to do that.

Chairman Jefferies said are you for making a motion of doing that? Vice Chairman Holt said I'd like to make that motion.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson to eliminate the Economic Development Director position and assign these duties to the County Manager.

Chairman Jefferies said the motion has been moved and properly seconded. The motion to this request that Vice Chair Holt have made. You heard the motion. Are there any questions?

Commissioner Yarbrough said Mr. Chairman. Vice Chairman Jefferies said yes sir. Commissioner Yarbrough said while I don't have a problem with Mr. Holt's idea of maybe doing away with a full-time Economic Developer and using part of that salary to go towards a new County Manager whenever that time gets here. I would like to hold off until we started the process of looking for a County Manager. This is my only thing. I don't know when that'll be, but in my mind, we kind of might be putting the cart before the horse.

Commissioner McVey said I think it would be the Board's mercy to let the new Board handle this. Table this because there are three of us coming off this Board. It would be better if we let the new Board handle it.

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Commissioner Dickerson said I think given some certainty to the process and being able to know that we have the money to roll into the new position. We've got the current Economic Developer running for a position on this Board. He's an odds on favorite to win. All we're doing is putting a plan into place to assure us the ability to be able to pay a County Manager of the caliber this county is looking for. So there shouldn't be any kind of direction trying to refill that position, if this Board is going in that direction. We don't need to bring a new person in, and then wind up having to cut that position once they have gotten accustomed to it. So I don't think waiting is the proper thing to do. I think it needs to be acted upon now.

Chairman Jefferies said anyone else.

Commissioner Rose said Mr. Chairman. I'm kind of like Mr. Yarbrough. I have no problem in discussing it. I think right now we're early on in this process. As you see what we're trying to hopefully get cleaned up here in the next several months with the audit situation, I don't want to get back into that issue again. If you've got a County Manager taking on a dual role, well something's going to give one way or the other, and I don't want to get back into the financial issues for some reason falling by the wayside. I have no problem in considering it or talking about it, but as of right now, I think we just got Mrs. Paschal here. She's been here a week. I think we're still early on in this process, and I just feel like we just need to wait a little while. Thank you.

Chairman Jefferies said well we have a motion on the floor....

Commissioner Dickerson said Mr. Jefferies. Mr. Jefferies, I have another comment. It may be better to wait and make this vote after the Closed Session because some things may come out in the Closed Session that would sway this Board as to which way they want to vote on this. It's not something that can be talked about in an open meeting because it's a personnel matter, but it has a direct reflection on what we're proposing here.

Chairman Jefferies said I'm not sure. You want...

Commissioner Dickerson said is there a way that we can put this vote off to after we come out of Closed Session. Chairman Jefferies said before we vote on this? Commissioner Dickerson said yes. Chairman Jefferies said we'll come back to open session. Can we do that? County Manager Paschal said they don't have closed session for personnel on the agenda to Attorney Johnston. Attorney Johnston said Commissioner Jefferies, as Mrs. Paschal reminded me, you do not have personnel issues on the Closed Session tonight. Chairman Jefferies said so we can table this though until next meeting. Commissioner Dickerson said we have some personnel issues to talk about. If the one that was on here is not going to be talked about, there's another one. So I think we need to continue on with that Closed Session. County Manager Paschal said so the Board needs to make a motion... When you go into Closed Session, you need to add personnel to the motion. Commissioner Dickerson said so what do I need to make as my motion. Help me out here. County Manager Paschal said when you go into or when you make the motion to go into Closed Session, there are two other matters, add personnel, if you wish to discuss it.

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Commissioner Dickerson said okay. So with that said, are we okay to wait until after the Closed Session to vote on the issue. County Manager Paschal said it's up to the Board. Commissioner Dickerson said I'm just speaking from a technical standpoint, if that's what we want to do. We're okay to do that? County Attorney Johnston said that's correct Commissioner Dickerson. It's in the Board's discretion. Commissioner Dickerson said I propose we wait till after the Closed Session to take a vote on Mr. Holt's motion.

COUNTY MANAGER UPDATES:

County Manager Paschal said thank you Mr. Chairman. I did send an email last week encapsulating a lot of this. I'm sorry if I'm redundant, but I want to make sure everybody has gotten the information. First is the Accessory Dwelling Units Ordinance. I think our County Attorney indicated during the discussion on this at the last meeting that the state law has not passed that governs accessory dwelling units. Therefore, we would recommend waiting until the policy or until the law has been passed before finalizing our regulations because we may have to revise what we do if we don't wait. So that was our recommendation. I wanted to let you know why that was not on the agenda.

I sent information about the ABC requests to retain funds for Capital Improvements. He sent a lot of information. If you have additional questions, please let me know, and I'll have him ready to answer those at our October 21st meeting.

The Finance Director reclassification, I spent a good deal of the afternoon looking at this position and gathering some information. So we will bring that back hopefully at the 21st or on the 21st.

Our Emergency Management Department is also spearheading an effort to collect supplies for hurricane victims. A copy of the flyer was in your packet or in your email that I sent out. I also want to just give a shout out to both our Emergency Management Director, who's been in the western part of the state over a week now and has been sent back for a second deployment, and our Solid Waste Director AJ Fuqua, who was previously in Emergency Management so he's been trained. He was deployed by the state as well. So we are doing what we can to help our neighbors in this dire situation.

I do want to point out we are trying a new agenda process to make sure that the items that come before you have all of the detail and information that you need to make a good decision. We are moving the deadline for the agenda back to the Friday, 10 days before the meeting. The Manager, Attorney, clerk and Department Heads that have agenda items will meet Monday morning a week before the meeting to go through the agenda, see what needs to be addressed, what might need to be postponed, and that kind of thing. So we hope that that moving forward we will have complete information when we get to the meeting.

The Arts Council mural that you considered at the last meeting has been unanimously approved by the Town of Yanceyville. As we understand, the motion then that they can move forward.

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Then finally I just want to say I'm going to send you a weekly email with updates. You can expect that either Wednesday or Thursday. I'm working mostly Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday or Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. I just want you to know what my schedule is, and I will include that in the email. This week I will actually be out of the state starting early Thursday morning. My niece has a wedding in Houston so I will make Melissa Williamson Acting County Manager while I'm away. And that way if any issues come up that require County Manager approval, she and I can discuss by phone, and she can carry that action out.

Just a couple more things. There's a free drive-thru flu shot clinic on October 8th, which is tomorrow from 1 to 6 at Caswell County Parks and Recreation, and on Friday, October 11th NC Med Assistance will hold a mobile free pharmacy program that gives away free over-the-counter medication also at Parks and Recreation. Thank you.

Chairman Jefferies said do anyone have any question for Mrs. Paschal.

Commissioner Dickerson said yes, I have one. Is there anything else that the county can do for the victim of the flood in the western part of the state? Anything that we have within our power that we can do to help them out. County Manager Paschal said so deploying personnel is probably the biggest thing, for which we are reimbursed by State Emergency Management. I've reached out to colleagues in that area to see if there's anything that we can assist with, other than donating money personally and supplies. I don't really know how else we can be helpful at this time. In fact, I heard the Buncombe County Manager say please don't come into Buncombe County unless you're here on official business just because things are so chaotic. Commissioner Dickerson said thank you.

Chairman Jefferies asked if anyone else had questions. Hearing none; he moved on.

COUNTY ATTORNEY UPDATES:

County Attorney Johnston said thank you Mr. Chairman. Members of the Board following up on the County Manager's comments about the Arts Council mural. At the last meeting there was a question as to the ownership of Co-Square here in the Court Square, and back on September 20th of 2018, Caswell County purchased the property. But in speaking with the Town Manager of Yanceyville, she did indicate that when the construction was being processed on Co-Square and the building was being retrofitted that the Town of Yanceyville did contribute \$30,000 to the construction. They did appreciate the Board of Commissioners giving them consideration and input as to the mural.

Chairman Jefferies said on the town. I remember the town, and you were there too Rick. When we were purchasing this property, the town was supposed to pay half. They were going to go 50/50, but I never knew they was going to pay \$30,000. I never heard talk about they paid \$30,000. This is the first time I heard that they paid the \$30,000. Attorney Johnston said that's my understanding Commissioner Jefferies. That was based upon a conversation I had with the Town Manager, but I'll be glad to try to gather additional documentation if you would like. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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So the next item involves the ownership of the ABC Store building located here in Yanceyville at the intersection of Old 86 and New 86. That property was purchased by the Caswell County Board of Alcoholic Beverage Control back in 2007. So that building and property is not owned by the county. It's its own entity.

Next, I wanted to update the Board on the Caswell County delinquent tax foreclosure process. We currently have 110 parcels that have been turned over to our office from the Caswell County Tax Office. 81 of these parcels have either been paid in full or currently in a payment plan. The remaining parcels either have had a lawsuit drafted, or the lawsuit has already been drafted and we're waiting for a sale or we're in the process of completing the title examinations. We do have three parcels that'll be scheduled for sale on October 25th. I have a spreadsheet for the Commissioners, Mr. Chairman, if I could approach and hand it out to each member. Mr. Chairman that concludes my updates, and I'll have further updates in our Closed Session tonight. Chairman Jefferies said okay. Thank you. Are there any questions for the attorney?

Commissioner Dickerson said yes, I do have a few. Let me see. Give me a second. I'm kind of looking through this list. I've got a printout that came off line where you have Michael and Cindy Willis and co-owner of George Daniel on two properties for multiple spectrum of years where the taxes have not been paid. I'd like an update on that. Do you have any information on the parcels I'm talking about? I've got the printouts here. Attorney Johnston said do you have the map and parcel number Commissioner Dickerson. Commissioner Dickerson said well, it depends on what year you asking for. This goes all the way back to 2015 on one of them and the year 2000 on the other one. Attorney Johnston said give me one moment Mr. Chairman. Chairman Jefferies said okay. Commissioner Dickerson said this is going to be the next parcel here and that's the other parcel number there. Attorney Johnston said okay. Mr. Chairman and Commissioner Dickerson, I do not have those properties listed on my spreadsheet, but I'll be glad to contact the Tax Office so we can get an update. Commissioner Dickerson said while you're at it, can you shed some light on a lawsuit that was filed by the Daniel Firm. Thomas being the lawyer that has filed it against him for delinquent taxes he has not paid. I want to get the details on this because help me out here, I'm having a hard time understanding. I mean I'm a layman. I'm not a lawyer. So kind of walk me through this. This appears to be that the man's law firm is suing him for delinquent taxes. So if that's the case if Mr. Daniel's Law Firm is suing Mr. Daniel for not paying taxes for the last 15-20 years by this, then he controls both the speed at which it will go through the system because in effect he's the defendant and the prosecutor of the case. So this could drag out forever, and the statute of limitations just run out. And the years he owes these taxes are going to keep dropping off. I'd like to see what we can do about this and make sure that this doesn't fall between the cracks because I want to remind everyone on this Board that Mr. Daniels was the man responsible for collecting delinquent taxes. By my total here, he owes over \$24,000 to this County on taxes he has not paid on properties. Could you please give me the information on that where we could make some kind of rational decision about this? Attorney Johnston said yes sir Commissioner Dickerson. I'll be glad to. Commissioner Dickerson said I'll

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be glad to give you any of these papers that you want to be able to find this stuff. Attorney Johnston said yes sir. Also in the records it's got 2023, were any of these properties turned over to you for the collections after that time when we took the contract and changed the law firm that's doing it? Anything after the date in which the contracts were changed, all delinquent taxes and collection processes should have been done by the current County Attorney. I'm not seeing that. That's the case because it's still listed under Mr. Daniel's collection of his own taxes. It seems to me that a real simple solution to this is if it's taken away from his law firm and given to the one that's currently collecting the taxes, then we take out that duality of lawsuit being filed by the same persons being sued. You're really going to have to explain that one to me because my next question to you is: can we get in touch with the state to have an ethics probe of whether or not it is even legal for a man that's responsible for collecting delinquent taxes in this County to have his own Law Firm sue him in collection of said taxes. Attorney Johnston said Commissioner Dickerson before I give this Board an answer, I should probably perform some due diligence and consult with the county Manager. That may be a matter better reserved for a Closed Session, but I'll be glad to conduct the research and perform our due diligence. Commissioner Dickerson said yes sir. I appreciate that. Like I said, any of this information you want let me know. I don't want you to think I'm just pulling this out of the air. This is all printed off the Internet. It's public information. Not anything that anyone else couldn't find. Attorney Johnston said yes sir.

Chairman Jefferies said any more questions by any other commissioners. Okay we will move on.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gwynn: Yes, I think this is the proper time, or should I do it later. County Manager Paschal said I think this is a good time. Mrs. Gwynn said I wanted to report that PTRC, Piedmont Triad Regional Council, is active, and they received two million dollars to help with renovation of houses here in Caswell and Alamance County. It's a good amount of money between the two counties that we haven't used. There were two people referred, and they were denied. They met the requirements except they had had adult children to move in with them. It was just for the elderly and not for adult child if they're working or adult children, grandchildren, and all of that. So they were turned down. So if you know anyone, they're really focused on, well in one situation they were focusing on if the whole house needed some renovation including water, electricity, and everything. They were unable to do it because her daughter had moved in with her baby, and it was for the elderly basically. They were not eligible. The other person had moved in her daughter and three or four children, and I'm not sure. So they were both denied. So if you have someone that might be interested, please let me know, and I will contact I believe his name is Michael Blair or either Adrienne Calhoun. They will follow up with it, but we do have funds that we did not use last year at all. They have gotten another grant for the two counties valued at \$2 million.

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Commissioner McVey: Yes, sir. I do have one. I had a constituent come to me this past week and question some things that were going on down at the library. Supposedly there was quite a bit of a scuffle down at the library with some of the young people. One of the young people finally had to get the library ladies to call the Sheriff's Department, but also I have been told that there was a gun involved and that nobody has done anything about it to this point that I'm aware of. The constituent has not called me back. It's a little rough being able to send your children to the library when a scuffle is going on and a gun is involved. I would like maybe the County Manager and Attorney Johnston to check into this, and see what needs to be done about this. County Manager Paschal said we've had some discussion on this incident. So first of all the library has a policy about behavior, and they will start enforcing that policy. We do have a Deputy stationed at the library after school from school time to six o'clock. On that particular day, they moved the Deputy to Bartlett Yancey for the football game, and that's why there wasn't a Deputy at the library. The Sheriff, as I understand it, and I'll be glad to provide more detail about this once I have had another chance to talk with the Sheriff. The Sheriff has made some arrests I believe as a result of this fight. Commissioner McVey said thank you. I appreciate you checking on this.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:

- October 21, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse

CLOSED SESSION:

A motion was made at 7:02 pm by Commissioner Gwynn. Then Commissioner Dickerson asked to add the Personnel statute to the Closed Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** 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, which privilege is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3), to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged. NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4), and 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, which is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6). (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Holt, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

The Board came out of Closed Session and the motion regarding the elimination of the Economic Development Director position was brought back up. Chairman Jefferies asked how did the Commissioners feel about this issue. Commissioner Rose said he felt like the priority should be to get a Finance Director and not focus on terminating this position. Commissioner McVey said this matter should be given to the next Board. Chairman Jefferies asked what did the current County Manager think. County Manager Paschal said she was not asked to do Economic Development when she accepted this position. No other comments were made so the vote was taken.

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A **motion** was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson and **carried 3 - 4** to eliminate the Economic Development Director position and assign these duties to the County Manager. (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, and Dickerson, and Gwynn. Nays: Commissioners Rose, McVey Yarbrough, and Jefferies.)

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made at 9:00 pm by Commissioner Rose and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson and **carried unanimously** to adjourn the meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Holt, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

Carla R. Smith
Clerk to the Board

Jeremiah Jefferies
Chairman

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