

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

May 6, 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
Melissa Miller, Deputy 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, May 6, 2024 at 5:00 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 May 6, 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.

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW:

Tax Director, Thomas Bernard said gentlemen, what we need to do tonight is just open up for the Board of E and R. You do not have anyone. Notices should be going out this week, but it allows a time frame or window of opportunity. You need to open up tonight and then just Recess on July 1st or a date in between there.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to open as the Board of Equalization and review. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

Then the Clerk asked the Board to take the oath as the Board of Equalization and review. The Oath follows:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and maintain the Constitution and laws of the United States, and the Constitution and laws of North Carolina not inconsistent therewith, and I will faithfully discharge the duties of my office as a member of the Caswell County Board of Equalization and Review, and that I will not allow my actions as a member of the Board of Equalization and Review to be influenced by personal or political friendships or obligations, so help me God.

All Commissioners present will sign the oath and it will be filed with the Register of Deeds.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to recess as the Board of Equalization and review. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

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Thomas Bernard said we will recess as the Board of Equalization and Review Mr. Chairman. Commissioner Yarbrough said Mr. Bernard, before you step out. Reevaluation notices are going out when? Mr. Bernard said we're hoping they go out in the end of the week. Right now, we got a new software, and we haven't done Reval. on this. They sent the plat file from South data this morning. Hopefully, we'll have that all straighten out some time this afternoon. Commissioner Yarbrough said can you give us a ball park average on how much the values went up. Gary Piner said around 38% overall. Commissioner Yarbrough said average of 38. Mr. Piner said yes sir. Commissioner Yarbrough said half more than that and half less, correct? Mr. Bernard said that's correct. Some will be a little more and some be a little less. Commissioner Yarbrough said all right. Mr. Bernard said the average is 38%. Commissioner Yarbrough said thank you.

Commissioner Dickerson said when will they be available online? Mr. Bernard said once those notices go out. Commissioner Dickerson said so anything that's currently up there is old. Mr. Bernard said correct. When the notices go out, that's when it will be updated. Commissioner Dickerson said thank you.

PUBLIC HEARING ON STREAM SETBACKS:

Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman if we can go ahead and have a motion to go into the public hearing.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Jefferies and **carried unanimously** to open the public hearing on the stream setbacks. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

Planning Director, Jason Watlington said Mr. Chair, Commissioners, Manager Meszaros, and Attorney Johnston thank you for having me. Does everybody have their email that I had sent out? I do have copies. So the following package before you is requesting changes to be made to the stream setback distances and text found in the HIDO, which is our High Impact Development Ordinance. For those that are not aware, the High Impact Development Ordinance categorizes commercial development in four classes based on the possible negative impact of their usage. This categorization allows us to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of our citizens and to promote peace and dignity. So class one having the least impact, and class four having the most impact. The standards within the ordinance shall allow for these developments, while maintaining again the health, safety, and general welfare standards of established residential and commercial areas in Caswell County. So for the purpose of this ordinance, streams are noted as intermittent or perennial stream, pond, lake, or reservoir determined by the North Carolina Division of Water Resources. So intermittent meaning not year round, and then perennial is year round. You should see water in that stream year round. So minimum stream setback distances are developed by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. They give local governments the ability to increase, if they feel necessary. These are minimal distances that an industrial use can be from a stream. In early 2023 during a solar farm application, the Planning

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Board determined an unclear explanation on how stream buffers were applied in their setbacks. Section 1471 in the HIDO regulations and standards currently requires 100 foot setbacks for class one and two and 150 foot setbacks for class three and four. Wording in the HIDO made it difficult to determine for example, if 100 foot meant 50 on each side of the stream or 100 across the entire stream. The other situation that came forth was the fact that the development of the property could consume the entire property and perhaps a stream ran through the middle. Setbacks would be required on each side of the stream in that instance. The Planning Board compared other surrounding County ordinances as well as looked into the requirements set forth by the North Carolina DEQ. We're proposing to change our setback distances and also proposing to change the text to better clarify how the setbacks are to be measured. We're requesting to set our setbacks at the current requirements set forth by North Carolina DEQ, and add the text stating the measurement applies to both sides of the stream. You'll see our requested setback changes on the following page along with the text changes. You'll notice that in the stream setback column. So our consistency statement is: Being pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 160D-604(d), the Caswell County Planning Board finds that the attached amendment to the High Impact Development Ordinance is consistent with the Caswell County Comprehensive Plan because it seeks to improve policies that assure a healthy environment for Caswell County. Furthermore, these regulatory changes are in line with North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's stream buffer setbacks and are in some instances stricter than Caswell County's current Watershed Protection. So I would like to go back up to H where it talks about stream setbacks. This is where we would make our text change. That is the second page that has the land use table. It says Caswell County Watershed Protection Regulations may require a stream buffer set back which is more restricted. So we're asking for 50 foot on each side. So in essence we're going back to 100. However, we're defining it better in our text. So 50 foot on one side, and then another 50 foot on the next side. This is to the area of operation of an industry. So in other words, wherever there may be anything involving that industry, it has to be 50 foot from that stream. That again is based on the minimum standards of North Carolina DEQ. However, if this piece of land is in a water shed, then it may require 80 foot. It will trump the 50 foot on that. Just for information, Hyco Lake uses the 420 line. Our riparian buffer, which is Stony Creek Watershed, requires a total of 80 foot. Most of these are 30 foot undisturbed. You cannot touch them, and then 50 foot you can actually plant. Then the watershed again is 80 foot also.

Vice Chairman Holt asked what class was the solar farm? Mr. Watlington said the solar farm is going to be a class one.

Commissioner Yarbrough said no class three and four where it's recommend 75 ft. Is that, I know you said it goes to what state requirements are, is that 75 foot buffer required by the state for those type of industries? Mr. Watlington said 50 foot. Commissioner Yarbrough said 50 is the State requirement regardless. Mr. Watlington said yes sir. Commissioner Yarbrough said 75 is a step up or what the Planning Board is recommending. Mr. Watlington said yes sir. 75 on

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each side. Commissioner Yarbrough said is that measured from the edge of the stream bank? Mr. Watlington said top of the bank, and Commissioner Yarbrough said okay.

Commissioner Rose said now what about if that that parcel of land was not or the stream bank separated or the other side belong to somebody else. Would you just go with the 75 on the current side that they are on? Mr. Watlington said yes sir. That's what happened. I think it was the Pelham solar farm that they were discussing several years ago when they come on board. The stream actually split the property therefore there was industrial per se on each side. So this just better explains it in text also.

Commissioner McVey said can you tell us where this farm is at that you're talking about? I know you want to do this in general, but do we have a farm set up already where we're 50 foot? Mr. Watlington said no. The Pelham solar farm is going to maintain what it had originally. That's 100 foot. They've already completed it. This was supposed to be proposed to you ladies and gentlemen back in August or September of last year.

Commissioner Dickerson said well the elephant in the room would be by decreasing the amount of setback, you're decreasing the amount of protection for the water in that stream. What is the risk that we do this and it has a negative impact on environmental concerns? Planning Director Watlington said that is always a risk, even if we were to go 100 foot on each side. I am not so sure that's the way we were determining in the past. Again by explaining our text and being more precise in our text on how we measure, that would be what I'm after today. It's actually changing to say each side versus the 100 foot. Is that 100 foot on the front side of the river and the rear side? Commissioner Dickerson said so the Planning Board has looked at this, and this is what they're recommending? Mr. Watlington said yes sir?

Commissioner McVey said is there any type of course over a period of time, you probably have solar panels get broken. If the company takes them down, say they just lay them down there and this solar farm is on the side of the hill going toward the creek. Is there any hazardous materials whatsoever involved in those solar panels? Planning Director Watlington said probably more so the gas from the mowers, if there's any grass that needs to be cut, leaking versus the actual solar panels. But I'm not going to attempt to answer that any further because I'm not knowledgeable on what solar panel contaminants may cause. Commissioner McVey said or what they contain? Mr. Watlington said or what they may contain.

Commissioner Dickerson said Mr. Watlington you just reminded me of something. Our current County Manager was working on this at one time. I had a discussion with you, but in the event that a solar farm, the life of it is over with and the cleanup is left to be had. What protections are in place that the county won't get stuck with that, if it's excessive and the landowner walks away. They were talking about making all new applicants have a bond that would cover that. Where are we at on that? Do you know? Mr. Watlington said a bond would be great. However, what we do have now is a decommissioning plan. The decommissioning plan is a contract between the county and the development that states what cleanup efforts will be made and how the site will

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be left. There is also an agreement between the developer and the homeowner or the landowner, and that is also present. But anything that happens now through HIDO has a decommissioning plan which is contracted. Commissioner Dickerson said does this plan have teeth where we do not get stuck and the taxpayers more to the point don't get stuck. Would it be wise to put a bond in place as a requirement for all new farms coming in? Mr. Watlington said I personally think the bond would be the answer.

Vice Chairman Holt said if the company went bankrupt that agreement would kind of be useless. Mr. Watlington said yes sir. Vice Chairman Holt said we'd have to go to the landowner and then that's the whole another battle. Mr. Watlington said yes sir. I can refer that over to Mr. Johnston, if he has any input on that. Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman and members of the Board, the Town of Yanceyville actually has a Solar Farm Ordinance, which requires a decommissioning plan that Mr. Watlington mentioned as well as a bond in place. It requires the solar farm company to keep a bond in place to cover the decommissioning project. I remember being on the Planning Board, and that was discussed as part of the HIDO and Solar Farm Ordinance. If that language isn't in there already, we can certainly make a recommendation to the Planning Board to review that if the Board so desires.

Commissioner Dickerson said personally I think that would be a good idea. What do the rest of you all think?

Commissioner Yarbrough said fine with me. I don't have an issue with it either way.

Commissioner Rose said I don't have a problem with it.

Commissioner McVey said I'd like to know what kind of contaminants might be, and it may not be any. I don't know. It's the reason I'm asking you, but I would like to know if there is any contaminant or hazardous materials that may be involved within the solar panel itself before I vote on this.

Commissioner Yarbrough said I like to keep things simple, if at all possible. As far as these stream setbacks, personally I would like for all of them to be equal regardless of what the industry is. Where you've got class one and two at 50 and class 3 at 4 at 75, I don't think that that 25 ft either way would change anything as far as runoff down to the stream. I think they either need to all be 50, all be 75, or whatever number the Board goes with. I think it would be just a little bit simpler or a simplification of the guidelines.

Commissioner Dickerson said Attorney Johnston, if the rest of the Board is in agreement, can you check on the bond issue to put that before the Planning Board as well as the solar panels.

Attorney Johnston said certainly Commissioner Dickerson. I'll be glad to.

Chairman Jefferies asked if there were any more questions.

Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman, we are still in the public hearing, could you ask if anyone in the audience has any comments? Chairman Jefferies asked if anyone had any comments? Hearing none he asked for a motion.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to go out of the public hearing on the stream setbacks. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

Chairman Jefferies asked if we had a motion to approve the setbacks? Planning Director Watlington said if it's the Board's pleasure I'll come back with new distances along with answering. The Board thanked Mr. Watlington.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ronnie Carroll: My name is Ronnie Carol. I've been a resident of Caswell County all my life, which I'm 69. So 69 years, and I run a business in Caswell County, the 86 Convenient Mart. First of all, I'd like to thank the Commissioners for allowing me to be here to talk with y'all tonight. But I'd like to just express my concern about Sunday beer sales. I've been in business like I said for 47 years here, and the state requires 10:00 a.m. sales on Sunday morning. No earlier, but the Commissioners years ago decided that the stores in the county are not to sell beer until 12:00. After Yanceyville City and Milton Incorporated, they decided that they would allow in their district or their territory that their stores could sell it at 10:00 a.m., which puts all the other county stores at a little disadvantage. Especially stores down toward Semora that people going to the lake, they want to carry some beverages with them. They can't. They got to wait. In my case, I'm near a Virginia line, which they allow sales at 6:00 a.m. in the morning. So it puts me at a big disadvantage, but I still have people there that want to get gas, their snacks, beverages, and ice. A one-stop shop, but when they find out I can't sell them the alcohol, a lot of times they say we're going to go somewhere we can get it all at one place. So I'm losing money on sales, the county loses tax money, and I just think it ought to be all the same at 10:00 a.m. They allow hunting on Sundays now. They used to not do that. The world around us is changing every day. Not necessarily saying it's a good thing, but it is changing. So I would like the Commissioners to consider allowing the stores in the county to have alcohol sales at 10 a.m. like the state requirement says they could do. Thank you.

RECOGNITIONS:

Commissioner Yarbrough: One Mr. Chairman. I'd like to recognize Leasburg Volunteer Fire Department. They had their 40th anniversary get together here back in the last month. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend. It was 40 years like I mentioned, but more importantly, they have a new substation on the Leasburg end of the Ridgeville Road. This will enable Leasburg Fire Department to more adequately serve that area. It is being served. Let's just say maybe it's being underserved, and I want to recognize them for making that step forward to help the county residents hopefully receive a little better fire protection and personal property protection.

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Commissioner Rose: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank everyone that came out tonight.

AGENDA:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. April 15, 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, Dickerson, and Jefferies)

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

DETERMINATION REGARDING EARLY SUNDAY ALCOHOL SALES:

County Manager Meszaros said first of all I'd like to apologize because my email trail from the State Liquor Enforcement Division is not in the packet, but this issue came up with one of the Commissioners. It may have been the gentleman that spoke. He was approached by a convenience store owner asking why Yanceyville, and we can't control Virginia and out of state issues obviously, but ask why the rest of the county was at noon and Yanceyville was at 10. So we researched that. I actually reached out to our ABC Board. I talked to Mike at the ABC store, and the ABC Board actually met. In 2017 they passed the House Bill known as the Brunch Bill. Most of the state has actually gone and adopted that countywide. There's 100 counties. I don't have the current count, but it's more than half. So that requires the county to pass an ordinance if they choose to do that 10:00 early sales or not. If not, it stays at the noon statutory time. So Yanceyville actually did have an ordinance passed. They're the only place in the county that's ever have had a referendum on alcohol. So that means that Milton and the unincorporated areas, we have never had a referendum. So if you were to adopt this, it would take effect on the entire County. They would not have to opt in, but they could still choose to not be open. So like ABC Stores by state are closed on Sundays, but the other entities within the county, all convenience stores whether in the municipal or non-municipal areas, would be eligible to do this. The ABC Board was meeting last month, and I had them discuss this. They did not want to provide a written recommendation. They said that should be at your discretion. So I guess where that stands is the decision. If you decide to do this, just pass the ordinance and adopt it. It'll take effect. If you choose not to, no action is necessary. You don't have to take any action and that's it. I don't really have any pros or cons. I mean you heard from the gentleman that has been in business here. I presume it would have some financial impact. Do you have more questions about it or issues?

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Commissioner Dickerson said what kind of feedback have you gotten from the public? County Manager Meszaros said so I personally haven't been approached about this. We presumed I might have heard from the clergy or some of the religious institutions in the in the county. I haven't gotten any feedback on that. Commissioner Dickerson said this will be the first time it's really been made public. County Manager Meszaros said it is. I think, you know, it could be a discussion item. If you want to table it, bring it back and get some more input. I do know that a lot of the places within the state adopted that when that took effect. I don't know what their reasoning for that was. I did have the email trail, and I can forward that to you tomorrow, if you want to think about it more. It has the secretary, who's the budget division person from ABC, and it spelled out all kinds of reasoning, why this is permitted, and how they went about adopting it. I think I was just trying to answer the question as to why Yanceyville allowed it and the county didn't. It's weird; every state's a little different. Every jurisdiction is different. It's at your discretion. We're in a state where they sell alcohol in grocery stores. It's just different.

Commissioner Yarbrough said did I understand you correctly? That if the Board decided to approve this ordinance, that the local store owner, be it Mr. Carrol or anybody else, if they chose to still wait until 12, they had an option. This will not make them sell it at 10:00. County Manager Meszaros said correct sir, and they could choose not to even be open on Sundays or whatever day of the week they choose not to operate. But if we adopt the ordinance it would allow them to begin selling. If we get approval of this, we'd file it with the state, and then that would allow the enforcement to know that they are allowed to do that. Commissioner Yarbrough said they have the option to do it, but they're not required. County Manager Meszaros said correct.

Commissioner Rose said Mr. Chairman, Mr. Carrol approached me probably a month ago concerning this matter. Once he did, I reached out to the County Manager and County Attorney, and asked them to look at what would it entail for us to allow the business owners in the county to sell alcohol at 10. I went back and looked and what I call Mom and Pop stores or family owned; you've got 86 Convenience Mart, Sam's number two, Pagetown Mart, Teddy Smith's Grocery on Cherry Grove Road, Ma Barker's in Semora, Oakview Grocery, Leasburg Grocery, Casville I think's got two stores, and Chiltons on Highway 150. All of those are not franchise stores. They're not your up and coming company stores. They're not. They're mom and pop businesses. Like Mr. Carroll said, he felt like the county stores was kind of somewhat being punished that they couldn't sell, and somebody could ride right on the Yanceyville and do the same thing. So what I told him I would do, is what I did. I reached out to the County Manager and County Attorney to get the information to bring to the Board; so the Board could discuss it in a board meeting. I told Mr. Carrol the Board would have to vote just to allow this or not. Me personally, in my opinion, if they can come to Yanceyville and buy it, why can't they stop two miles up the road to the stores in the county.

Chairman Jefferies said something like in Semora, if they stop there and get gas going to the lake, the bulk is gone by 12 o'clock.

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Commissioner Rose said if I'm in church on Sunday morning, I'm in church by 10:00. Well most people going to church, they're at church. I just looked at it from the aspect of the county business. You know, why not get everybody on the same timeframe. Make everything even across the board.

Commissioner Yarbrough said do you know what's surrounding counties are doing? County Manager Meszaros said I have the contacts for the enforcement; I can find that out.

Commissioner Yarbrough said I'm fairly certain Alamance is at 10:00 because I had one store owner hit me up about 12 months ago about this same issue. That it was hurting him tremendously on Sunday morning.

Chairman Jefferies said I mean I feel this way. If you want to do it, fine. But you don't have to do it. What's the pleasure of the Board?

A **motion** was made at 7:41 pm by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried 4 - 2** to promote the sales at 10: 00 am. (Ayes: Commissioners Yarbrough, Rose, McVey, and Jefferies. Nays: Commissioners Holt and Dickerson.)

ACTION ITEMS:

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

Caswell Regional Economic Development Commission: This Board has one vacancy due to a resignation, and we received 1 application.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Jefferies and **carried unanimously** to **appoint Elin Claggett to the Caswell Regional Economic Development Commission.** (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Jefferies, McVey, Rose, Yarbrough, and Dickerson)

Piedmont Triad Workforce Development Board: This Board has one inactive member, and we received 1 application.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to **appoint Dr. Pamela Senegal to the Piedmont Triad Work Force Development Board.** (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Jefferies, McVey, Rose, Yarbrough, and Dickerson)

COUNTY MANAGER UPDATES:

County Manager Meszaros said I have several updates for you tonight. The first one is the council sound system. The last item they're waiting on is a large speaker, part of the system, that should be here on Wednesday. They are scheduled to start the work next week on the 13th. So assuming that they get that operational and working, it's possible that we could be back in the other facility on the 20th. I want to make sure before the agenda goes out that we know that that's working so that we can have a decent facility. So that's that item.

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They did reach out to us the Division 7 engineer regarding the Co-Square signage. So they were looking at the rumble strips and some other things like that. They're suggesting one of the things is larger stop signs. They were worried about the historical landmark poles so they are reaching out to the Town of Yanceyville and to the other entities to get those. Usually our emergency management team ordered those, but that's just one update. I did also want to tell you that they finished the brick right before I came to this meeting. They have the door on order. The facility at Co-Square: the painters finished up today, the interior front half is still left, but they should be able to clean it and get it reoccupied, the entire thing behind that false wall, probably by the end of the week. The art gallery is going back in there on Wednesday. So she will be in there as of Wednesday.

The courthouse invoice issue, our Maintenance Director reached out to them contesting some of their bills recently. They did reduce the \$3,500 bill to \$1,400. Commissioner Yarbrough said is this related to the elevator? County Manager Meszaros said from Kone. They hey did zero out \$4,000 on another to zero. So we're still looking at some of the other options with that issue.

An update on the status of the audit: so Melissa's here tonight. The Reps that we usually have working with us from NCACC are not here this evening, but I do have a thorough update if you want me to read that to you. Would you like a thorough update or just kind of a brief update? So the auditor testing, the auditors have completed all the on-site testing for both fiscal years 22 and 23. They provided the county with final list of questions and additional documentation that they needed on April 21st. Finance staff along with Johnna Sharp from NCACC have been actively working with the auditors on any outstanding items. The fiscal year 22 status: they received the trial balance for fiscal year 22 this morning or yesterday afternoon. There are still some remaining entries, but the numbers are 95% done. The biggest outstanding piece for fiscal year 23 is to complete the bank reconciliations for the main checking account. Fiscal year 23 trial balance is 50% done. So when they get the trial balance done, that's when the auditors are able to go through all your stuff and basically do their findings. So the 23 balances are half complete, but they can't finalize that till all the bank reconciliations are complete. The current estimate for completing fiscal year 22 audit is early June, and June 30th for fiscal year 23. So they're going to be very consecutive and rapid. We're hoping to get the June 22 fiscal audit completed before June is up because that allows us to open Tyler and do our budget in the active system. You can't have more than one fiscal year open. So if we can close this out, activate the budget system, and actually go live before we do the budget for the next year. Preparation for the 24 audit because ironically you receive that notice, electronic notice, you get that link with on the 23 audit. That's just an automated generated email that goes out. As staff has worked on the 22 and 23 issues, applicable 24 use issues have been corrected and have provided a head start on the 24 close out. So because we've been in audit so much, they're already working on the 24 stuff so that we're going to be ahead of schedule. There're still a high level of confidence that the 24 audit will be completed timely. Then so you saw the notice.

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For tonight's budget item, my intention was to hand you a budget this evening, and then we would have some discussion. Then in the next several Mondays, we would go through those departments and all that information. As you heard tonight, the tax department was here, and the tax notices are generally mailed out in early March. That gives you the time to go through, process, and do all of the budget revenue. It's impossible to give you a budget with no revenue estimates or predictions. I need to have the budget neutral rate. I need to have the estimated total valuation, which I was presented a tentative number of \$2.645 billion which is 38% above what the previous valuation was. So the revenue side of the budget is half of your budget. On the expenditure side, we have completed all of the department requests. Melissa participated in most of them. The whole finance department has been very helpful. The budget requests, we're entering those. We should be completed with that I would hope this week. So we should be able to get the expenditure side, but without having the revenues and all of the estimates, it's hard without the 22 or 23 audit. To give you kind of an idea where we sit financially, in 22 we had a \$1.9 million deficit that was used to balance from the reserve funds. Last year, they had a \$2.4 million reserve. Well if both years carry forward a fund balance of an increase, we didn't really use those amounts of monies even though that was operational to supply those things you should have done in the budget. So if that's the case, we're fiscally pretty healthy. We're hoping that the trial balances look good, but that really impacts how we do the next year's budget determining if we actually have a surplus or deficit. So I think at this point, our best intention is to give you a completed budget unless you choose to go through and do just the expenditure side. We could do that. We could start in on the departments. We could start having presentations and talk about the requests, or if you prefer, I'm estimating we really want to try to get that by the 20th. In past years, they always gave it to you on June 1st. That's the statutory deadline of when you have to do it. We were trying to do that a month early to give us a lot of time. We still have till June 30th to do all of the budget meetings. It's not ideal. We'd like to try to do that before June, but I think at this juncture with the issues that we have, I don't have an answer. The Tax Director is probably becoming impatient with me because every week I go over and I say when is it getting mailed. You know it's out of their control. They have turned it over, and I feel that's where we sit. I don't know if you want deeper answers. I do have Melissa here from Finance. She's been a godsend in doing the audit work, and they have been doing some for next year. I think it's just as vital to close out the audits and get us on track as it is to create next year's budget because without those numbers... It's kind of like telling you to go buy a vehicle that you don't know what your budget is or what you need.

Vice Chairman Holt said isn't that what we did last year and the year before? County Manager Meszaros said sir I was not here, but yes I think that is the methodology. Vice Chairman Holt said is that not what we did? Melissa Miller, Deputy Finance Director said we had revenues when we presented the budget to you guys last year I thought. Vice Chairman Holt said we would still have revenue this year. Melissa Miller said we don't know the tax. We don't know the

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rates from the Tax Department. Vice Chairman Holt said okay. Melissa Miller said so you could base it on last year's, but that's not a very accurate way to do it.

Commissioner Yarbrough said am I wrong? Mr. Holt, Mr. Rose and myself, this will just be our second one that we've ever been through, but last year didn't we just go through expenses for several meetings and not revenues? Melissa Miller said yes. Chairman Jefferies said that not what we usually had. Commissioner Yarbrough said it wasn't. Okay. Like I said, this is just my second one. Chairman Jefferies said it was all new to us too. Commissioner Yarbrough said okay.

Commissioner Rose said we had a contact between or with this reval company. County Manager Meszaros said so I don't want to throw anyone under the bus so to speak, but the explanation I was given was that it's not changed companies. It's the same company that was originally contracted, and the employee that they had doing our reval basically had some issues and walked away. Then they found this out and it delayed them. It's a recourse. Commissioner Rose said the reason I'm asking that is, I mean, I would like for you to look and see if there was a contract, or if there was a certain date that stuff was going to be submitted to be sent out. This is pushing us back. I mean until these things get out because once they get out, you got to make notifications and adhere to all of that. I'd like to see if there was any deadline or any dates that said we will have this to go out you know at this time. I understand things happen, but when things happen in companies and sometimes if there was a deadline, I would love for them to look at possibly compensating us a little bit for the amount of time we've had to wait. County Manager Meszaros said we do have contracts and there is a budgeted amount for each of those years. It's hard. Whether we performed or didn't perform with our contractor, it still puts us in a very peculiar situation to not be able to formulate what we need to have. Commissioner Rose said the second thing I was going to get to is Co-Square. Stop signs are great, but that's not going to stop your problem. If there they're running from somebody, a stop sign is not going to stop them. I would like to see some type of barrier up there that will stop the car from going into that building. A stop sign is great to look at. If he wants to change it that's fine, but that is not going to stop that car from going in. I guess a brand new sign is going to make you stop. I mean I would like to see something out there because I've got the feeling the insurance company at some point in time is going to say we're tired of paying, and they're going to cancel it.

County Manager Meszaros said it's our intention as staff to propagate that. It is state right-a-way. So our recommendations still have to go before them. Commissioner Rose said what about the sidewalk? County Manager Meszaros said so the right-a-way it goes all the way to the doorway. We can't just put things in, and even if we do, we have to request an encroachment. That is our intention. Commissioner Rose said I mean I think we can look at it and approach it with the state as far as a safety issue. I mean if that would have happened 8-5 on Monday through Friday with personnel in there, it would have been a mess. I think that's the only thing that's going to stop it is something out front. I don't think one strip or the stop sign is going to do it. I think the last time or last few times it's happened; it's been because somebody was evading law enforcement.

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County Manager Meszaros said that's not a good situation. Commissioner Rose said that's all I have. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Holt said I'm like Tim over here to say a little bit. Work with me here on this because I'm just... When you say you have to have these numbers, are you figuring on the 38% that he's estimating as the number that you're using as your revenue, or are we still looking at revenue neutral. County Manager Meszaros said so their job is to give you the revenue neutral rate, to give you the total assessed valuation of all property in county, and to give you the revenue from all the vehicle taxes and all of the real property. They give us an estimate of what our budget to work with is going to be from all the new cars here, all the new houses, and all the new valuations. So that's not just a status quo like what we had eight years ago. The county has grown, and there's new payers. There's new inventory. So they give us kind of a balance of here's what's grown and here's what's taxable to keep us at that budget neutral. The budget neutral, it's a mandated requirement that they give us, but then going back and calculating. We use that in the form we calculate the mill levy, but the mill levy is created off of what your approved budget is versus what the property value is. It's calculated to determine the mills. So we get into all kinds of things such as one of the things in our budget proposal is the school district tax. Right. For three years they have not taken it. Last year it was 1.9, but that's about \$350,000 a year that the voters here past the referendum. It's coming out of the general fund to pay for the school district issues. So when you remain budget neutral, all of those funds are not being enhanced to the school district. They are coming out of county projects. So that's just one small issue. You know to do the budget you really need to see where departments want to grow. We want to get into the departments. Small things like Parks and Rec, they have 30% more kids. They get \$30 t-shirt and hat, and the expenditures there don't go down. To provide the service as we do, we need to figure out what that costs, and our job is to present you a recommended budget. Our job isn't to present to you the feasible best budget for the taxpayers. Say what is the bare essential quality services that we have today and how does that look moving forward because we could, our team, could whittle it down and keep taxes real great, but then 10 years down the road the county has to have a major tax increase because of deficiencies. That's not being a good steward on our end. So we have to try to group up our team to do that. There's a lot of mandates, especially have in all the state and federal departments. We do with DSS Health and Human Services. There's a lot of things that are budget neutral to us, like some of their operations get federal or state grants that have increased. Our budgets can increase, but that doesn't necessarily mean those things impact us in a negative way or that we pay for them all. When they match us like there's a 90% State or Federal match, we only pay 10% for those increased services. So instead of paying for all those services, we're paying for a portion. So we've been working through all the developments, and I think we have it whittled down to where we just need to compile that and get it all written up. But we need to have that revenue side to write the narratives to explain all of the details of how it works together. Vice Chairman Holt said so my job is to look for the taxpayer. County Manager Meszaros said absolutely. Vice Chairman Holt said it's opposite of what you're saying. County

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Manager Meszaros said my job is to give you the best recommendation, and our staff is going to do that. That's the political element of what taxation is in this county. So if I tell you we should cut half of those Sherriff Deputies and the service level decreases, I can give you that recommendation but it doesn't mean it's going to be good for the future. It's a political thing. My team's job is to give you the true needs, to keep this county moving forward, and invest in the future. If I just keep things real cheap for everybody and then 10 years from now they get a 30% tax increase just to operate, I didn't do my job. If you can show me where the county electric bills should be at the neutral rate where we don't have increases, I'd say where do you cut to pay that. That's your job; it is not an easy job. My job is to give you the best recommendation that our staff get. So I will make sure you get that. It's never easy to pallet those decisions, but whether you live here, Beverly Hills, or anywhere in the country, nobody likes to pay more for services. That's the cost of doing business. Food's not cheap; travel is not cheap.

Commissioner Dickerson said I'm glad to hear you said that. Food is not cheap. Travel is not cheap, and the people paying the taxes are under the same burden that you're talking about everyone else is sharing. County Manager Meszaros said yeah a lot of those folks have gotten decent salary increases and kept up. This county hasn't kept up so it's my job to show you that and explain what expected. Commissioner Dickerson said please step up to the plate and get us what we need to start the budget process because it sounds like it's going to be a long continuous process going through it. Because I think your folks focused solely on increase in the budget, and there are those of us that believe in protecting the taxpayers. So we're going to have to find some kind of common ground. It's not going to be rubber stamped procedure.

Chairman Jefferies said Mr. Scott, did he give you a time that he will have things ready? County Manager Meszaros said I don't know what their timelines are looking like. That's why I have concerns for getting the revenue side. I think when our side is completed with the expenditures, we're going to have to start moving forward with the expenditure side and not have the revenue yet. It's not ideal, but I think we're going to have to do that.

Commissioner Rose said did he say they would go out Wednesday of this week? Hopefully they go out this week. He should have all those numbers. The other thing is and I'll address the Board with it. I know we meeting on Mondays or whatever but I have no problem meeting another day during the week if we see that we need to meet. Just food for thought. I know it's a lot we got to work through, and it may take more than just one day.

Chairman Jefferies said I think we going to meet again on the 13th. County Manager Meszaros said so we have been you know, some of the team working on this is working all weekend. They're working late evenings. My intention is to get it wrapped up as soon as possible so I can get it out to you, and then when that happens to start having a series of meetings. I think it's safe to say the 20th our next meeting. I wanted it to be this meeting as my deadline. Commissioner Rose and Holt asked what about the 13th? County Manager Meszaros said well I recommended that we go the 20th because I'll be honest I don't think I'm going to get the revenue side. I still

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have part of my team working tomorrow and Wednesday and the association will be here all day with me.

Commissioner Yarbrough said you do not think you're going have to expense side done by the 13th? County Manager Meszaros said I hope so. I'm expecting to have them done by Friday. Commissioner Yarbrough said my suggestion is we meet on the 13th to start doing them.

Commissioner Dickerson said gentlemen, fair disclosure. I've been called out of town, and I will not be here on the 13th.

Commissioner Yarbrough said we won't take a binding vote on anything.

Vice Chairman Holt said I don't why we can't start going through some of it. We don't have to vote on each individual one. I mean we can discuss them.

Commissioner Yarbrough said I think so.

Commissioner Rose said see what we got, what needs to stay, and what needs to go.

Chairman Jefferies said I think we can meet on the 13th and discuss some of them. You have somewhat in mind, right? County Manager Meszaros said we definitely already have several things. Some of the issues we're going to have is leasing and vehicles and capital projects. Some of the things don't really impact us, but there's still budget issues. Some of the school projects, lottery funds, and other funds definitely impact the budget. There is equipment and departmental needs that I think is our job to present to you. Some of the equipment is state mandated equipment for the Dispatch Center. Some of the departmental requirements, they're not ask. Some of the CATS things or transportation system, there's huge increases, but they come with revenues. So those are offset. Those aren't the ones I'm worried about. I'm worried about a couple of the staffing issues that we have.

Commissioner Rose asked have you been in contact with the new superintendent yet? County Manager Meszaros said he came by and provided their budget. The college has a large capital need. To prioritize you have to see all the requests and our recommendation. So I think even just our facilities, the hvac systems, in the county that we're responsible for, several of them and I don't know what the status is with Stoney Creek Elementary, but it looks like they never maintained this system ever. It's 20 years overdue, and it's really hard to not approve a budget item when there's kids with no air condition or no heat. Commissioner Rose said so the school and PCC both have submitted theirs. County Manager Meszaros said they have. Our building has been on there for several years. It's \$196,000. The schools is \$223,000. Commissioner Rose said I don't need to the amount. I didn't want them to be where they wait until the last minute.

Chairman Jefferies said we should have enough to meet on the 13th.

County Manager Meszaros said I just don't want you to be in a position where...

Chairman Jefferies said is this correct with the Board that we meet on the 13th? Consensus of the Board was to meet. Vice Chairman Holt said that was the plan. I'll talk with John because he will be out of town.

County Manager Meszaros said I do want to get your Tax Director to do a public presentation about the mill levy and about the tax reeval. I mean that's part of their role. So I would like them to do a presentation on what that means to the taxpayer and public and how they determine these things. I have reached out to the state, and they have some people with the Department of Commerce that can do that as well. But it's important to understand those things. Then you know some of these things with our Lease program manager, some of those people probably need to get before you as well as Department Heads to justify the rest.

❖ Commissioner Gwynn entered the meeting.

Commissioner Rose said one thing, Mr. Chairman, jumping off topic and I apologize. Is there any update from the state on Zitel about that BrightSpeed and the other about their work? County Manager Meszaros said I haven't had an update since about a week ago, and I will follow up with that. We've been communicating with them. Commissioner Rose said I would appreciate it because a lot of this coverage area Zitel was supposed to take care of in my district. I'm getting a lot of phone calls about it. County Manager Meszaros said I get a lot them, but I transfer them to NCDIT. Commissioner Rose said but I was elected to talk and that's what I'll do. I would love get an update as to when they'll get started.

Chairman Jefferies said are there any more questions for the County Manager? Hearing none they moved on.

COUNTY ATTORNEY UPDATES:

County Attorney Johnston said thank you, Mr. Chairman. Member of the Board, I mentioned at the last meeting that I would give you all an update on the county delinquent tax collection process, and since the last meeting, I've received 80 delinquent tax notices from the Tax Department. I have a list here I'd like pass out to you. Members of the Board, there's 80 delinquent tax files here. We did not receive them all at once. They were sent to me in batches, and our office sent out letters to the delinquent tax owners as soon as these notices were received. So the list as you can see outlines the name, address, parcel ID number, and taxes owed. Then one of the more important parts is the far right column, which indicates the status. As time goes on there will be four classes of status. They'll either be paid, payment plan, bankruptcy, or the foreclosure process. So the status was updated last week from the Tax Office, and we should reach out to them tomorrow to get an update. But I would foresee over the next 30 days most of these parcels being paid or on a payment plan, and moving beyond that, if all efforts have been exalted, then we'll move forward with the foreclosure process. I plan on giving you all an update at least once a month.

Chairman Jefferies said does the Board have any questions for the attorney.

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Commissioner Dickerson said I do. Is the Tony Smith listed on here the same Tony Smith running for Commissioner? Attorney Johnston said Commissioner Dickerson, I could look into that. It appears there's an address here for 633 Burke Road Pelham. I'm not sure Commissioner Dickerson, but I'll be glad to look into that. Commissioner Dickerson said yes sir. Thank you.

Chairman Jefferies said anyone else have any questions? Hearing none, they moved on.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Yarbrough: A couple things Chairman. I'm hesitant to bring both of them up, and I just want to throw them out there for the Board to begin thinking about them. I'd like to wait until after the budget time is over. Mr. Wallington was here tonight, the County Planner, talking about the changes in the HIDO. I've been asked by some fellow citizens for the Board to look at the HIDO classifications, and maybe consider adjusting classification of some of those businesses. Some of those that are in class three and four, maybe they could be brought back to class two. I can't give you specific names of businesses or types of business right now, but that's something I'd like the Board to look at.

The second thing, this came from County residents or county taxpayers as well. I'm really hesitant to bring this up. They are complaining about deer hunting dogs. Not rabbit hunting dogs or coon hunting dogs or no other type of dogs but deer dogs. They don't like it coming on their property when they are out in a tree stand hunting. They are fed up with that. I told them I would get it in front of the Board. That's what I will do after July 1.

Commissioner Dickerson said that's the bravest thing I've heard said here tonight.

Commissioner Yarbrough said well the fact of the matter is, if I'm not mistaken, is that Caswell County is the western most county that allows deer hunting with dogs. You get to the Rockingham County line and there to Tennessee, it's not allowed. So folks that like to hunt with dogs from that part of the state, they get to Caswell County, and they can find someone who will let them hunt....

Commissioner Jefferies said that subject has come up many many times.

Commissioner Yarbrough said it has. A lot of times. That is a hot topic.

Commissioner McVey asked how does that affect game lands?

Commissioner Holt said it would not.

Commissioner Yarbrough said I don't know if the county could, Mr. County Attorney, if the county could have an ordinance to say that no deer hunting with dogs. Would that encompass the Caswell game lands as well?

County Attorney Johnston said I will look into that Commissioner Yarbrough. I'm inclined to say that the county does not have jurisdiction over the game land. It's a state issue, but I'll be glad to research it for you.

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Commissioner Yarbrough said we also don't get any tax money off that land either do we?
Attorney Johnston said not directly.

Commissioner Yarbrough said how many thousands of acres does the state own? Vice Chairman Holt said 18,000. Commissioner Yarbrough said we receive zero tax dollars. Commissioner McVey said it's 17,000 something. Commissioner Yarbrough said well Finch said 18,000. It's a hot button issue.

Commissioner Rose said I've been hunting my whole life.

Chairman Jefferies said it's not as bad as it used to be.

Commissioner Yarbrough said oh, it's not because there just is not as much of it.

Commissioner Rose said funny, I've sat in the tree stand many days and dog come up. You know I let it be, but you know that's just me. That is a hot button topic. I think the last time we had it I wasn't on the board, Mr. Chairman, but you might have been.

Chairman Jefferies said I think so. If you are going to stop one dog, stop them all.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:

- May 13, 2024 Board of Commissioners Budget Work Session at 5 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library
- May 16, 2024 Joint Town Meeting at 6 pm at the Thomas Day House in Milton, NC.
- May 17, 2024 Shred it Day at the Pavilion 10:30 am to 6:30 pm. Electronics also accepted.
- May 20, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting and Budget Work Session at 5 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made at 6:10 pm by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey 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

May 6, 2024



CASWELL COUNTY
Board of Commissioners
“Preserving the Past – Embracing the Future”

ORDINANCE
Authorizing to allow Early Sunday Alcohol Sales
Ordinance # 2024-01

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 18B-1004(c) made it unlawful to sell or consume alcoholic beverages on any licensed premises from the time at which sale or consumption must cease on Sunday morning until 12:00 noon on that day; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has, since the adoption of the aforementioned prohibition, enacted N.C.G.S. § 160A-205.3, permitting a county or municipality to adopt an ordinance allowing for the sale of malt beverages, unfortified wine, fortified wine, and mixed beverages beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday pursuant to the licensed premises’ permit issued under N.C.G.S. § 18B-1001; and,

WHEREAS, the Town of Yanceyville has adopted and allows for such early alcohol sales, approval by the County Commissioners subsequently allows for “Umbrella Blanket Approval” to jurisdictions within the County to include such areas as; Milton, Pelham, and any other municipal areas in the county such allowance as they have never had a different referendum then the County on alcohol sales; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners considers it to be in the best interest of the health, safety and welfare of the County’s residents, businesses and visitors to allow licensed premises to elect to sell malt beverages, unfortified wine, fortified wine, and mixed beverages beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Caswell County Board of Commissioners hereby acknowledge and authorize Caswell County Alcohol vendors to elect to provide the sale of malt beverages, unfortified wine, fortified wine, and mixed beverages beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday within Caswell County.

Adopted on the sixth day of May, 2024.


Jeremiah Jefferies, Chairman

Attest:


Carla Smith, Clerk to the Board