

January 16, 2024

A regular meeting of the Bladen County Board of Commissioners was held at 6:30pm on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. The meeting was held in the Commissioners' Room, located on the lower level of the Bladen County Courthouse, 106 East Broad Street, Elizabethtown.

The following members were present:

Charles R. Peterson, Chairman
Dr. Danny Ellis, Vice Chairman
Ray Britt
Arthur Bullock
Michael Cogdell
Mark Gillespie
Cameron McGill
Dr. Ophelia Munn-Goins

Excused: Rodney Hester

Attorney: Allen Johnson, Johnson Law Firm

ITEM 1. Commissioner Cameron McGill provided the invocation. County Manager Greg Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Peterson stated that Commissioner Hester was unable to attend. He encouraged all in attendance to remember Rodney Hester in prayer due to ongoing health issues. He also asked everyone to remember Robeson County Commissioner David Edge and his family in the recent loss of his son.

ITEM 2. Consent Items:

Prior to consideration of Consent items including the Agenda, Chairman Peterson asked the Board to consider including item 2I-Resolution Opposing a Homeowners' Insurance Rate Increase by the North Carolina Rate Bureau, and under 14-Closed Session, including Attorney-Client Privilege (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3)).

Upon a motion by Commissioner McGill, seconded by Commissioner Ellis, the Board unanimously approved the following:

- A. Amended Agenda, with the addition of Item 2I-Resolution Opposing a Homeowners' Insurance Rate Increase by the North Carolina Rate Bureau, and under 14-Closed Session, including Attorney-Client Privilege (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3))
- B. Minutes of January 2, 2024 Regular Meeting.
- C. The following Budget Amendments for the period ending January 16, 2024:

Information Technology

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
104600.610.026	Contract Services-Cyber	28,527.00	
<i>Revenues</i>			
103190.050	Fund Balance Appropriation	28,527.00	

Identify Theft Guard Solutions invoices.

Emergency Services

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
104700.900.010	Unallowable 911 Expenses	19,842.60	
<i>Revenues</i>			
103190.050	Fund Balance Appropriation	19,842.60	

Unallowable expenses related to various equipment purchases for 911 center.

Sheriff's Office

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
105100.200.016	Supplies-Surplus	3,100.00	
<i>Revenues</i>			
103270.018	HELO	3,100.00	

Sale of helicopter parts,

Health Department

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
1059005915.610	Bio-Terrorism Contract Services		1,751.00
<i>Revenues</i>			
103190.050	Fund Balance Appropriation	15,600.00	1,751.00

Reconcile budget with Agreement Addendum.

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Health Department

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
105900.5986.840.597	AA719 Bridge Access	44,063.00	
<i>Revenues</i>			
103180.089	AA719 Bridge Access	44,063.00	

AA719 Bridge Access funding COVID 19

Parks & Recreation

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
106600.803	Insurance	1,235.00	
106600.610	Contract Services	4,500.00	
106600.126	Part-Time Salaries		4,500.00
<i>Revenues</i>			
103660.000	Insurance Fees	1,235.00	

Insurance and basketball officials.

Library

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
106700.200	Supplies	350.00	
<i>Revenues</i>			
103660.017	Library Donations	350.00	

Donations from patron and Friends of the Library.

Library

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
106700.231	Library Books	3,170.00	
106700.200	Supplies	25.00	
<i>Revenues</i>			
103660.017	Library Donations	25.00	
103630.010	F/S Library	3,170.00	

State Aid increase for library books and donation for book club refreshments.

Department of Social Services

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
146100.706	LIEAP	345,271.74	
<i>Revenues</i>			
143531.033	LIEAP	345,271.74	

FA #1

Department of Social Services

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
106900.903	To DSS		9,610.00
<i>Revenues</i>			
143531.221	LIEAP/Energy Asst ADM	9,610.00	
143550.080	FM – General Fund		9,610.00
103190.050	Fund Balance Appropriation		9,610.00

FA #1

Department of Social Services

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
146100.6160.650.001	FC Donations – Christmas, Angel Tree	200.00	
<i>Revenues</i>			
143190.027	FC Donations – Christmas, Angel Tree	200.00	

Donations from First Baptist Missionary Church.

E911

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
225301.739	Non Inventorable	81,511.34	
<i>Revenues</i>			
223190.050	Fund Balance Appropriation	81,511.34	

Cost increase in 911 purchases.

Phase V - Chemours

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>
234703.610	Contract Services	20,000.00	
234703.990	Contingency		20,000.00

Alex McPherson Construction Invoices

D. The following Johnson Law Firm Attorney Fees:

Date	Department	Amount
12/29/2023	January 2024 Retainer	300.00
	Total	\$ 300.00

E. Tax Releases No. 12-23, incorporated by reference and made a part of these Minutes.

F. Public Hearing Scheduled for 6:30pm on Monday, February 5, 2024 to Receive Comments Regarding a Rezoning Request (PIN No. 0372-00-84-7508).

G. Bladen County Health and Human Services Advisory Committee Operating Procedures.

H. The following Resolution Honoring the Years of Service of County Manager Greg Martin:

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- I. The following Resolution Opposing a Homeowners' Insurance Rate Increase Requested by the North Carolina Rate Bureau:



ITEM 3. Individuals/Delegations Wishing to Address Commissioners:

- A. Chairman Peterson recognized NC Association of County Commissioners County Risk Group Director Charlie Eaton. Mr. Eaton expressed appreciation to the Board. He recognized County Manager Greg Martin for his tenure as a Trustee of the County Risk Group. He expressed appreciation for Mr. Martin's professionalism and for his service. The Board and all in attendance expressed support.

No one else in attendance addressed the Board.

ITEM 4. Special Recognition:

Chairman Peterson switched the agenda order and recognized first retiring County Manager Greg Martin.

- B. Chairman Peterson and the Board presented to Mr. Martin a Resolution honoring the years of service Mr. Martin provided to the County and its residents. Chairman Peterson read aloud the Resolution. County Attorney Allen Johnson shared sentiments and gratitude from Senior County Attorney Leslie Johnson, who was unable to attend the meeting.
- A. Chairman Peterson and the Board recognized the following employees upon their years of service:

Employee	Department	Years of Service
Sally Downing	DSS	5
Amy Tatum	DSS	5
Dawn Edwards	DSS	10
LaShannon McDonald	DSS	10
Sheila Manuel	DSS	15
Heather Harvey	DSS	20
Jackie Dennis	Health	20
Grant Pait	Parks & Recreation	25
Dean Morris	Soil & Water Conservation District	30
Lisa Coleman	Finance	30

Chairman Peterson briefly recessed the meeting at 6:49pm.

Chairman Peterson reconvened the meeting at 7:02pm.

ITEM 5. Emereau: Bladen Charter: (Polly Hancock, Head of School)

- A. Mrs. Hancock presented to the Board construction plans which were discussed during a previous Board of Commissioners' meeting held on November 6, 2023. She provided a quote in the amount of \$1,143,690 to construct the planned expansion. She also provided an architectural drawing of the

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expansion project. She shared that the intended start date is February 14, 2024. Emereau: Bladen Charter has submitted an ARPA-Enabled project application in the amount of \$135,000 in order to fully fund the project. She also shared that once this project is complete, the next expansion project includes constructing a multi-purpose building which will provide gymnasium facilities and performing arts space. Following discussion, the Board expressed appreciation.

ITEM 6. Health Department: (Dr. Terri Duncan, Director)

A. Dr. Duncan expressed appreciation and presented a unanimously approved recommendation from the Health and Human Services Advisory Committee (HHSAC) for two (2) additional Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) positions. These two positions are not currently budgeted but the HHSAC, in an attempt to alleviate permitting backlogs and response times, fully supports a request for two additional positions. State standards recommend 7-10 days for permitting response times. However, Bladen County Environmental Health is currently more than thirty (30) days out. Local building contractors, homeowners, and businesses have expressed frustration due to extended times for service.

Required funding in the amount of \$132,148.54 was requested to establish two additional Environmental Health Specialist positions.

Following discussion, the Board will address the topic at the February 5, 2024 meeting. Chairman Peterson expressed support to establish one (1) additional position as quickly as possible, with the second position to be considered during the 2024-2025 budget process.

ITEM 7. Advisory Board Appointments for Consideration During February 19, 2024 Meeting:

- A. Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (1)
- B. Nursing Home Advisory Committee (1)

ITEM 8. Matters of Interest to Commissioners:

Chairman Peterson recognized Commissioner McGill to address the Board. Commissioner McGill inquired regarding an update related to the vehicle which was removed from the Cape Fear River Bridge and possible damage to the bridge which is still under construction. The vehicle was removed following the January 2, 2024 meeting. He expressed concern that the construction site is not properly illuminated. Following discussion, Mr. Martin was asked to check into temporary lighting while the bridge is still under construction.

ITEM 9. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Enabled Projects:

A. Mr. Martin reviewed for additional information an updated listing of unassigned eligible applications, as well as incomplete applications. The current unappropriated balance, not including funds earmarked to applications which have not yet been completed, is \$533,333. Following brief discussion, Commissioner Britt made a motion to approve the following eligible applications:

<u>App #</u>	<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Requested</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>The Mercy House</u>	<u>\$ 6,942.00</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Dublin Peanut Festival</u>	<u>\$ 60,000.00</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Bladenboro Historical Society</u>	<u>\$ 80,628.00</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>Bladen County Solid Waste</u>	<u>\$ 50,000.00</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Spaulding-Monroe Alumni Assn.</u>	<u>\$ 55,000.00</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>Bladen's Bloomin' Agri-Industrial</u>	<u>\$ 100,000.00</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>Emereau: Bladen Charter</u>	<u>\$ 135,000.00</u>
	<u>Total</u>	<u>\$ 487,570.00</u>

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Commissioner Britt also stated that following Open House scheduled for Saturday, January 20, Bladen County Youth Focus (application #1, in the amount of \$89,200.00) would be revisited. Commissioner McGill provided a second to the motion.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Munn-Goins shared that an application is being developed by a Kelly community group for submittal. She expressed concern that funds are being earmarked without all of the intended applications being received. Commissioner Cogdell expressed concern that requested funding has now exceeded ARPA-enabled funding. Commissioner McGill stated that he and Commissioner Ellis had earmarked \$17,500 to applications which have not been completed. He stated that the \$17,500 should be returned to the available balance to be earmarked to other eligible applicants. Chairman Peterson reminded Board members that eligible applications may be funded from the general fund. Board members expressed frustration regarding earmarking funds to Solid Waste and Bladen's Bloomin' using ARPA-enabled funding. Commissioner Britt reminded Board members that appropriations to Bladen's Bloomin' Agri-Industrial (BBAI) is an investment in Bladen County's future, and if BBAI would cease, ownership of assets and properties would revert to the citizens of Bladen County. During discussion, Mr. Martin reminded the Board that a Public Hearing is required to expend funds for economic development activities, referring to application #7 in the amount of \$100,000 submitted by Bladen's Bloomin' Agri-Industrial. Commissioner Britt stated that the amount requested by BBAI would assist in funding the next phase of development in Bladenboro, and he would like to earmark the request, but not appropriate the funds until all requirements are met.

Chairman Peterson revisited the motion on the floor to approve applications #2-#8, and return Commissioners Ellis and McGill's unspent balance of \$17,500 to the available balance. Upon a show of hands, the motion was approved by a vote of five (5) AYES (Britt, McGill, Peterson, Ellis, Gillespie) to three (3) NOES (Cogdell, Munn-Goins, Bullock).

ITEM 10. County Manager: (Greg Martin)

A. Mr. Martin reviewed calendars for the months of January and February 2024.

ITEM 11. Individuals/Delegations Wishing to Address Commissioners:

No one in attendance addressed the Commissioners.

ITEM 12. Matters of Interest to Commissioners:

Chairman Peterson recognized Commissioner Bullock to address the Board. Commissioner Bullock expressed appreciation those in attendance who participated in and supported the Annual Martin Luther King parade.

Chairman Peterson recognized Commissioner Cogdell to address the Board. Commissioner Cogdell stated that he would like to publicly support the application in the amount of \$89,200 submitted by Bladen Youth Focus.

Chairman Peterson reminded the Board that the FY 2024-2025 budget development is imminent and asked for volunteers from the Board to participate on a Personnel Compensation Review Committee. Commissioners Britt, Cogdell and Bullock volunteered to participate along with Chairman Peterson.

- A. Upon a motion by Commissioner McGill, seconded by Commissioner Gillespie, the Board unanimously entered Closed Session in Accordance with NCGS 143-318.11(3) Attorney-Client Privilege and NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel at 7:44pm.
- B. Upon a motion by Commissioner Gillespie, seconded by Commissioner McGill, the Board unanimously exited Closed Session at 8:56pm.

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Chairman Peterson recessed the meeting at 8:57pm until Thursday, January 18, 2024. He stated that the meeting will reconvene at 5:00pm in the Elizabethtown Airport Conference Room.

ATTEST:

Maria C. Edwards, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board

Charles R. Peterson, Chairman
Bladen County Board of Commissioners