

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD AT THE RUTHERFORD COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING IN THE AUDITORIUM ON MAY 15,
2012 AT 9:00 A.M.**

**PRESENT: CHAIRMAN JULIUS OWENS
VICE CHAIRMAN WILLIAM ECKLER
EDDIE HOLLAND
ROGER RICHARD**

ABSENT: SUSAN CROWE

ALSO PRESENT: SENATOR WES WESTMORELAND AND REPRESENTATIVE MIKE HAGER

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Owens called the meeting to order and welcomed Senator Wes Westmoreland and Representative Mike Hager.

LEGISLATION

County Manager Carl Classen presented legislation that would have an impact on Rutherford County and the county budget. On behalf of the Commissioners, he asked that Senator Westmoreland and Representative Hager consider these requests when approving a state budget.

- A. No Cost Shifting – Balance the State budget without shifting costs to Counties or cutting County revenues.
- B. Lottery Proceeds – 100% of Rutherford County Lottery Proceeds (\$620,000 estimated for FY2012-13) are dedicated to paying existing school capital debt. Any cut or diversion of Lottery Proceeds will require the County to increase property taxes or cut other General Fund programs (e.g., Sherriff, College, K-12, Library , etc.).

Representative Hager told the Board that the state budget in its present form has not changed any allocation of lottery funds from the 2011-2012 budget. Commissioner Holland pointed out that the lottery funds had been approved because they were to be used for education. Representative Hager replied that though the lottery funds are being used for this education, they are now supplanting funds that had previously been approved for education but had been diverted to other uses. He will clarify information about the lottery funding and report to the Board.

- C. HAVA Grant (Resolution) – Funds to maintain election equipment - The State needs to fund the federal match so the County can receive \$43,000 – or this will need to come from County Funds. North Carolina has already received federal funds but cannot release the funds due to lack of State match.

According to Representative Hager, there are constraints tied to the funds from the federal government that legislators are not supporting. He will update the Board on this issue.

- D. 9-1-1: Allow funds to be used not just to make a call into 9-1-1, but allow funds to be able to pay for towers and radios so deputies, polices, ambulances and firefighters can RESPOND to those calls. Rutherford County has \$250,000 in reserve ready to use on receiving 9-1-1 calls in the field but is not allowed by the State to use it for that purpose. Rutherford County is working towards implementation of the State VIPER system but cannot afford the \$3+ million cost to implement right now. Hence, it is upgrading its VHS radio system to plug "holes" in coverage due to federally-mandated frequency changes that decreased coverage through existing towers and radios.

Representative Hager was not sure that any action would be taken in the short session on this issue. There is a possibility that there is enough flexibility to allow funding for radios and towers in Rutherford County, and major system reforms which is sorely needed could be addressed in the following year.

- E. Advertising Delinquent Taxes: Advertising delinquent taxes does not substantially aid in collecting taxes. Letters are mailed preceding the published notice and then the delinquencies are submitted for collection through the set-off debt program so as to collect during the tax refund process. If allowed by State law, a more cost-effective option would be to post the delinquencies on the County website and then publish an ad saying the delinquencies were available on that website. Possibly, this could be a local bill but there would likely be opposition from the newspaper publishers (Press Association).

Representative Hager said a similar bill had been presented in the previous session that he had been instrumental in stopping. This is due to the fact that there is a vast majority of Rutherford County citizens who do not have access to the internet. Eliminating only the requirement for publication of delinquent taxpayers could be a possibility. Senator Westmoreland said there is an ongoing debate about electronic notification and there has been a lot of resistance which he believes is well founded. Publication provides a permanent record.

Commissioner Richard pointed out that many publications are required by North Carolina General Statutes. However, listing delinquent taxes has ceased to fulfill its purpose which was embarrassment of these taxpayers.

The legislators reported that education is going to be the hot item in Raleigh during this session. Funds must be found to fill a gap of \$270,000,000 for teachers' salaries and assistants.

Senator Westmoreland said his desire is to refrain from pushing funding for programs down to counties.

Representative Hager reported that there is a bill regarding capping gas tax. They will work on this to give some relief.

County Manager Carl Classen pointed out that the unemployment funds for Rutherford County have skyrocketed.

The Board also discussed the problems with the possible location of the four laning of Highway 221. An historical property owner has indicated that the historic structure could be moved in order to save jobs at a local lumber yard; however, confirmation from DOT for their willingness to accept this change has not been received.

Vice Chairman Eckler mentioned a very serious problem with the location plans of the Highway 221 project as it relates to the Rutherford County Landfill. It is proposed to change the access to the Rutherford County Landfill via Laurel Hill Drive to Industrial Park Drive. Due to the steep grade on Industrial Park Drive, large trucks will experience a real problem when traveling to and from the landfill. Even though this problem has been presented to DOT several time, no solution has been forthcoming.

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| ADJOURNMENT |
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The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting after a motion was made by Vice Chairman Eckler and a second was made by Commissioner Holland.

9:46 A.M. - Adjourned.

Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Vice Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Attest:

Clerk, Board of Commissioners