Official Minutes
Caldwell County Board of Commissioners Meeting

Date: August 8th, 2022

In Attendance:
Chairman, Randy Church
Vice-Chairman, Mike LaBrose
Commissioner, Donnie Potter
Commissioner, Jeff Branch
Commissioner, Robbie Wilkie
County Manager, Donald Duncan
County Attorney, David Lackey
County Clerk, Abby Rich

Call to Order:

At 6:01 PM, Chairman, Randy Church, called the Board of Commissioners Meeting to order.

Public Comment Period

There were no citizens signed up to deliver public comments.

Invocation:

Chairman Church introduced Ashley Crouse, Senior Pastor at New Vision Baptist Church, to lead the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Immediately following the invocation, Commissioner Wilkie led the Pledge of Allegiance for those in attendance.

Agenda Amendments from the Board, Manager, & Public

County Manager, Donald Duncan, made one amendment to the agenda. This addition is Item P, a STRAP grant for stream bank restoration.

Vice-Chairman, Mike Labrose, made the motion to adopt the agenda as presented by the County Manager and Clerk.

The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Items:

Item 1: Presentation from Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce

Bryan Moore, Executive Officer for the Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce, came before the Board to present information about projects that the Chamber is currently working on. Moore told the Board that there is a large focus on bringing tourism to Caldwell County. These tourism efforts were reviewed in detail. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Moore for looking at what Caldwell County has to offer and thanked him for coming.

Item 2: Resolution in Support of Naming John Muir Parkway in Caldwell County

(Exhibit A)

Clay McCreary came before the Board to present a resolution to support naming US Highway 321 as a scenic byway in the State of North Carolina. McCreary began by providing a famous quote to the Board. This quote, by John Muir, was “The mountains are calling and I must go”. McCreary told the Board that John Muir was considered the father of our national parks. He provided another quote from John Muir that states “The drive from Roan Mountain to Lenoir is I think, the finest in America, of its kind”.

McCreary continued his presentation by explaining how supporting US 321 as a scenic byway would promote tourism in Caldwell County and stated that local support is a key component of the decision process when naming a scenic byway. McCreary provided more information about the scenic byway process and how this stretch of road would benefit from being designated as a scenic byway.

Chairman Church told the Board he would entertain a motion to adopt the resolution. Commissioner Potter made the motion to approve the resolution that the Chairman presented based on the information that Clay presented to the Board as well. Chairman Church asked if there were any other discussions or comments. Commissioner Potter told Mr. McCreary how much he appreciates his efforts and that the passion that McCreary has for the outdoors shows the passion that he has for his community and shows that he has done a lot of research. Commissioner Potter also noted that there was a significant amount of time put into these efforts and had Mr. McCreary not taken on this effort, no one else would have. Commissioner Potter then thanked Mr. McCreary for bringing this resolution to the Board this evening. The motion was carried unanimously.

Item 3: Public Hearing for Rezoning request: Residential-Agricultural Zoning to General-Business Zoning at 2389 Connelly Springs Rd

Planning Director Shelley Stevens came before the Board to present a request for rezoning from residential-agricultural to general business zoning. The property is located at 2389 Connelly Springs Rd. in Granite Falls. The applicants for the rezoning are Daniel Alcantara Mendoza and Carina Ibarra Martinez and they are also the property owners of this rezoning request. Ms. Stevens told the Board that the adjacent property is general business, the zoning to the South and Northwest is also general business, and the zoning to the northeast and west is residential agriculture. Ms. Stevens then reminded the Board that the rezoning would allow for any potential use that is allowed in that zoning district, not just the intended use of this particular applicant. The applicant will be placing a food truck on the property. The food truck is currently located on the property adjacent to this parcel. Commissioner Potter asked for clarification about where the food truck is currently located. Ms. Stevens provided this for him. Ms. Stevens told the Board that she and the Planning Board have reviewed the comprehensive plan, the watershed ordinance, and the zoning ordinance to create a consistency and reasonableness statement. Ms. Stevens stated that the Planning Board recommends approving this rezoning.

The Board and Ms. Stevens discussed multiple aspects of this rezoning. Some of the Commissioners expressed varying concerns regarding the rezoning including the home that is currently occupied by the applicant on the property. Ms. Stevens answered the questions the Board had and the applicant answered relevant questions as well.

Commissioner Branch made the motion to approve the application for rezoning.

The motion carried with a vote of 4 in favor to 1 opposed.

Item 4: Public Hearing for Ambulance Franchise Agreement

Chief Dino DiBernardi came to the podium for a public hearing regarding an agreement between Caldwell County and North State Medical Transport. Chief DiBernardi told the Board that the applicant met all of the ordinance requirements for this franchise agreement.

Carlie Coward with North State Medical Transport came to the podium to answer any questions that the Board had. Ms. Coward and the Board discussed the logistics of how NSMT would operate with UNC Caldwell. Chairman Church called the public hearing open. Ms. Coward along with Heather Foust, administrative liaison with UNC Caldwell, answered the questions and concerns that the Board had regarding this franchise agreement.

There was a discussion about how long the initial term for the agreement would be.

Commissioner Wilkie made the motion to enter into a franchise agreement with North State Medical Transport for a one-year term.

No one from the public had signed up to speak on the matter and the public hearing was declared closed.

There was more discussion concerning the logistics of the franchise operations.

The motion carried with a vote of 4 in favor to 1 opposed.

Item 5: Public Hearing for Land Acquisition on Helton Rd.

EDC Director, Deborah Murray came before the Board to present a parcel on Helton Rd. in the Town of Sawmills. Ms. Murray showed the property to the Board and also showed possible renderings of the property called *Evergreene Industrial Park.*

Chairman Church declared the public hearing open. With no one signed up to speak on the matter the public hearing was declared closed.

Commissioner Branch made the motion to approve the land acquisition located on Helton Rd. as presented by Ms. Murray.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda:

County Manager Donald Duncan reviewed the consent agenda with the Board. Item A was approved in the original budget, the funds are just being moved over. This is funded with ARPA funds. Item B is for the LIHWAP (low-income water assistance funds) has doubled from $62,000 to $124,000, this will help citizens who need assistance in paying for their utility bills. Item C is for the purchase of a library van using asset funds. This vehicle has shelving and drawers to help move items between the branches. Item D is a budget increase of $11,500 for the LINKS program. These are federal funds to help foster children. Item E is a budget revision to purchase additional narcotics gear. Item F is for $30,000 for Munis support from Tyler Technologies. This will update Munis to a newer generation and allow for better support. Item G is for water tank maintenance for cleaning on a routine basis. This revision is $88,788. Item H is a budget revision for the proceeds of the sale of the Whisenant property to MDI to fund the Evergreene project. Our share is almost $800,000 that the County will spend on building another industrial site. Item I is a budget revision for the County Clerk for the purchase of agenda management software from CivicPlus. Item J is a budget revision of $1,700,000 for the purchase orders that have carried over from the previous fiscal year because of supply chain issues. Item K is a roll-over of the proceeds of the insurance settlement on the ambulance that was involved in an accident this winter. Item L is the approval of the minutes from the July Board of Commissioners Meeting. Item M is the appointment of Vice-Chairman LaBrose as the voting delegate for the NCACC Annual Conference. Item N- Various Change Orders for the Animal Care Shelter. Item O- Reappointment of Clay Wilson to the Planning Board. Item P is for the STRAP grant in the amount of $259,437 for stream bank restoration. This is at no cost to the County.

Vice-Chairman LaBrose made the motion to approve the consent agenda as the County Manager has presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Item A: Budget Revision- ARP Funds for Fire Department Support and Medical Director

Item B: Budget Revision- Increase for LIHWAP Funds to meet State Allocation for FY 2023

Item C: Budget Revision- Purchase of Library Van Using Asset Sale Funds

Item D: Budget Revision- Increase County Budget Appropriation for LINKS Program Funds

Item E: Budget Revision- Purchase of Protective Gear for Narcotics Officers

Item F: Budget Revision- Support of Munis by Tyler Technology

Item G: Budget Revision- Water Tank Maintenance Program

Item H: Budget Revision- Proceeds of Whisenant Property Sale to Building Reuse Fund.

Item I: Budget Revision- Purchase of CivicClerk Agenda Management Software

Item J: Budget Revision- Purchase Order Roll Over from Previous Fiscal Year

Item K: Budget Revision- Ambulance Insurance Proceeds Roll Over from Previous Fiscal Year

Item L: Approval of July 11th Meeting Minutes

Item M: Appointment of Vice-Chairman LaBrose as Voting Delegate for the NCACC Annual Conference

Item N: Approval of Various Change Orders for New Animal Care Shelter

Item O: Reappointment of Clay Wilson to Planning Board

Item P: Budget Revision- STRAP Grant Funds for Stream Restoration

Closed Session:

Closed Session Pursuant to § 143-318.11 (a) (4): To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations, or to discuss matters relating to military installation closure or realignment.

Chairman Church made the motion that the Board enter into closed session pursuant to § 143-318.11 (a) (4): To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations, or to discuss matters relating to military installation closure or realignment.

The motion carried unanimously and the Board entered into closed session.

In the closed session, the Board was briefed on the upcoming Economic Development projects in Caldwell County. Ms. Deborah Murray, provided detail regarding new EDC initiatives and allowed for feedback from the Board.

With there being no more business to attend to, Commissioner Wilkie made the motion to exit the closed session at 8:16 PM. The motion carried unanimously.

At 8:16 PM Commissioner Wilkie made the motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Exhibit A

Resolution

2022-002

SUPPORT OF NAMING JOHN MUIR PARKWAY IN CALDWELL COUNTY BY THE CALDWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, John Muir was an important historical leader and is a world-renowned conservation figure today. He remains widely regarded as the "Father of the National Parks" and his contributions as a naturalist, author and botanist are of great consequence to many natural places and public lands across the United States; and

WHEREAS, John Muir's own writings chronicle how he traveled the stretch of roadways existing between Roan Mountain and Lenoir, NC in 1898. He specifically commented several times in regards to the scenic beauty of this route in his extensive eastern travels: "The drive from Roan Mountain to Lenoir, 75 miles, is I think the finest in America of its kind;" and

WHEREAS, The Lenoir Topic of September 28, 1898 lists John Muir as a guest of the Commercial Hotel which once stood adjacent to the Square in historic downtown Lenoir and Muir further recounts walking in downtown Lenoir in his journal while he awaited the train to Hickory on the Carolina and Northwestern Railroad. These historical references being useful to the interpretation of local history detailing the history of the Commercial Hotel and the Carolina and Northwestern Railroad in Lenoir; and

WHEREAS, the scenic stretch of roadway Muir traveled still exists today and remains a place of undeniable beauty, recreational opportunity and Appalachian cultural significance. This stretch of roadway encompasses US Highway 19E for 2.4 miles, NC-194 for 5.6 miles, NC-181 for 3.4 miles, US-221 for 19.8 miles, US-321 for 18.3 miles and Main Street NW (Lenoir) for 1.7 miles; and

WHEREAS, a significant portion of this proposed scenic byway travels along US-321 which was once the historic Lenoir-Blowing Rock Turnpike that was considered one of the best roads in NC at the time especially into and out of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Muir recognized this in his own writings praising the roadway as well; and

WHEREAS, this proposed stretch of roadway merits scenic byway designation as it meets many of the intrinsic qualities for designation, including cultural, natural, historic, recreational, and scenic qualities; and

WHEREAS, the stretch of roadway travels through places of historic and cultural significance in Caldwell County, and would promote tourism and statewide interest in these areas and their unique history and scenery associated with the byway and Appalachian culture; and

WHEREAS, the proposed stretch of scenic byway in Caldwell County touches many significant places of exceptional beauty and recreational opportunity in the county, including: (i) the Blue Ridge Parkway lands adjacent to the byway as it travels NC-221, (ii) Pisgah National Forest lands adjacent to the route for significant portions of US-321 and vast viewsheds and vistas preserved by Pisgah National Forest's proximity to the route, (iii) passing the future site of the Blairs Fork Trailhead for the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail providing trail access along Main Street NW section of roadway, (iv) proximity to future greenway near conclusion of byway that will serve as part of the officially designated Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail through downtown Lenoir, (v) signage showing Lenoir is a Civil War Trails community along Main Street NW, including an important Civil War Historical Marker relating to Stoneman's Raid near the end of the byway in downtown Lenoir; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Caldwell County Board of Commissioners urges the North Carolina Board of Transportation to officially designate this stretch of roadway as a state scenic byway and to name it the John Muir Parkway in honor of Muir's travels on the route and the noteworthy quotes he made regarding the unique beauty and exceptional road quality contained along this historic segment of parkway.

Chairman, Randy T. Church

Attest: Abby Rich, County Clerk

CALDWELL COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA