

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular and Organizational Meeting
December 7, 2020 - 7:00 PM
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice Womack Building Columbus, NC
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioner Beiler, Commissioner Gasperson, Commissioner Melton, Commissioner Moore, Commissioner Overholt, and Commissioner Yoder. Also in attendance were County Manager Pittman, Attorney Berg, and Clerk to the Board High, media, and citizens.

1. Call to Order - Chairman Yoder.

2. Invocation - Pastor Timothy Fortune, Columbus Baptist.

Vice-Chairman Melton introduced Pastor Timothy Fortune who gave the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance - Led by local Veterans in observance of National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. Today marks 79 years since the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii where more than 2,000 service members and civilians died on December 7, 1941.

4. Approval of Agenda

A. Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Consent Agenda

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

A. October 19, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

B. Tax refund requests through November 30, 2020 in the amount of \$265.36.

6. Citizen Comment(s)

There were five citizen comments. One was physically present, four presented their comments remotely, each were given four minutes to speak.

7. Commissioner Gasperson Plaque Presentation.

Chairman Yoder, and Commissioners presented Commissioner Gasperson a plaque commemorating him for his twelve years of service to the citizens of Polk County.

8. Polk County 2020 Annual Financial Report.

Dan Mullinix, Gould Killian CPA Group, presented the unmodified, clean opinion of the annual audit, a copy of which is hereby incorporated by reference into these minutes. He said they are still waiting on Medicaid numbers from the State then they will send the Board the final copy of the report. Mr. Mullinix commended Polk County for submitting the more detailed and complex, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) even though it is not required. He said Polk County has been awarded the CAFR for twenty-three consecutive years, and applauded the accomplishment.

9. County Employee Compensatory Time Discussion.

Manager Pittman said as in the two years prior, when the county receives a good audit report and has a surplus, the Board has chosen to pay off the debt of employee compensatory (comp) time. He said he is recommending doing so again this year, but prefaced the recommendation with the statement that this is not a requirement, or obligation (until a certain level is reached, which at that time, must be paid out to the employee by law) just good fiscal management to reduce a growing debt. He stated there may be a time in the future when the Board would choose not to pay off the comp time, and he wanted it on the record there is no obligation for them to do this each year.

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to pay the employee compensatory time balances earned as of December 6, 2020 in the amount up to \$140,000, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Amendment to the Broad River Water District (BRWD), County of Polk, and Inman Campobello Water District (ICWD) Management Agreement.

Manager Pittman presented the revised document extending the maintenance agreement with Inman Campobello Water District (ICWD) two years until December 31, 2023. Chairman Yoder said he is happy with the extended timeline. Commissioner Gasperson said keeping ICWD maintaining the lines is a huge benefit to Polk County, saving money by not having to fund our own water department to manage a small system that is far from being self supporting.

Vice-Chairman Melton moved to approve the Amendment to the Broad River Water District (BRWD), County of Polk, and Inman Campobello Water District (ICWD) Management Agreement, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

11. Resolution to Amend the Current Tier Designation System in North Carolina.

Manager Pittman said the North Carolina Department of Commerce released the county tier designations for 2021 on November 30th and Polk County's designation changed from a tier two to a tier three. He said the designations are mandated by state law and play a role in several programs that assist in obtaining grants from the State of North Carolina. He welcomed Representative

Jake Johnson who thanked the Board for allowing him to come to speak about what the tier designation system is, and the effects it has on counties across the state. He said each county is assigned a tier designation ranking from one to three with Tier 1 counties generally being the most economically distressed and Tier 3 counties the least economically distressed, according to the assessment. He said the key factors used to determine the designation are the unemployment rate, median household income, population growth, and assessed property value per capita, and each the law calls for 40 counties to be designated as Tier 1, 40 counties to be designated as Tier 2, and 20 counties to be designated Tier 3. This year 22 counties will change tier designations including Polk. Representative Johnson said when you look at a county like Polk as a whole, the system doesn't factor in economic disparities within the county's boundary, He said there is diversity across county borders that should be considered and he would like this issue put on the radar for discussion, and he supports the resolution being presented for the Commissioners consideration. Commissioner Moore moved to adopt the Resolution to Amend the Current Tier Designation System in North Carolina, seconded by Vice-Chairman Melton and the motion carried unanimously.

12. Commissioner Comment(s)

Commissioner Gasperson requested his comments be inserted verbatim: When I review my 12 years on the Polk Board of Commissioners, my frequent approach toward contentious issues on which the BOC needed to take action would result in me on many occasions getting myself into "Good Trouble". This is a phrase coined by the late Representative from Georgia John Lewis. As Representative Lewis would say, "Good trouble philosophy is very simple, when you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, say something, do something, get in trouble, good trouble, necessary trouble". I believe this philosophy helps summarize the approach I took as Commissioner. I have always focused on taking the necessary actions that would put the interests of all the citizens of Polk County first and foremost, regardless of political affiliation.

Ten years ago, during the process needed to approve the site and build the county DSS building, known as the Howard B. Greene Human Services Building, I got myself into whole lot of "good trouble". It proved to be a very contentious issue, especially with many members of the community, for a desperately needed project that I was spearheading. Fortunately, in the end, the majority of the Board worked with me to see this project to completion. Through the years I have frequently engaged in "good trouble" over many issues, for example (just to name a few): zoning, subdivision regulation, Lake Adger and waterlines, annual county budgets, county revaluations, county personnel, and county Health District issues. Even though I often felt like a "voice in the wilderness", I was always working to find common ground with the public and other members of the Board. And, more often than not, through compromise we did find common ground.

The "good trouble" that I created over the location of the new Sheriff office and

Detention Center has been proved to be one of the most positive for me. Five years ago, the other four members of the Board, at that time, had chosen a location that I was convinced was inferior and would prove to be very problematic. Fortunately I was able to work behind the scenes to help secure the option to purchase the site where the new Sheriff office and jail is now located. The vote for this property purchase was unanimous! And, as a major bonus, we also now have a prepared site for a future Polk County Courthouse and County Government Services Building.

It's important for me to note that the current members of the Board has worked very well together. Over the last couple of years this has greatly reduced me engaging in "good trouble".

I am convinced that doing the hard work of having a vibrant and healthy democracy often requires getting into "good trouble". My challenge for all citizens of Polk County is to commit yourselves to doing the hard work of democracy, and when necessary, not hesitating getting into "good trouble". Finally, I would like to again thank the citizens of Polk County. My journey over the last 12 years serving on the Polk County Board of Commissioners has been one of the most challenging and satisfying experiences of my adult life. I have had the privilege to work with many remarkable and talented elected officials, county employees and volunteers all striving to make our county an excellent place to live, work, play, raise families, be educated and worship. I am very grateful to everyone who has supported me through several election cycles and years of public service, especially my wife Sue and my adult children Laura, Corey and Julia. I realize that "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven". And now for me, the time has arrived to transition from serving as a Commissioner to other purposes and experiences. Of course I will continue to work to improve our county and, most likely, will occasionally get into "good trouble".

Commissioner Moore said it was a pleasure serving with Commissioner Gasperson and wished him well.

Commissioner Beiler thanked Representative Johnson for coming to the meeting. He said he felt like the Board was unified with Commissioner Gasperson, and his wise counsel will be missed.

Vice-Chairman Melton said Commissioner Gasperson can walk away with his head held high, he has brought a lot to the Board as he served for the past twelve years. He said Commissioner Gasperson's family is impeccable, and he is proud to have served with him.

Chairman Yoder said he appreciates all the commissioners, and each one has their own thoughts and opinions. He said as a Board they sometimes have to deal with hard things, and he has appreciated being the Chair this year as each of them have gotten into good trouble.

13. Five minute recess.

14. Incoming Board Swearing In Ceremony

A. Oath of Office - County Commissioners. Sheila Whitmire, Register of

Deeds administered the oaths of office for the newly elected Commissioners J. David Moore; Andre Overholt; Myron Yoder.

15. Five minute recess.

16. Reconvene Meeting - Attorney Berg.

A. Election of Chairman - Attorney Berg.

Ms. Berg opened the floor for nominations for chair of the board. Commissioner Yoder nominated Commissioner Melton. Ms. Berg asked if there were any more nominations. Having none, she asked for a motion for nominations to cease and each commissioner voted unanimously to appoint Commissioner Melton as Chairman.

B. Election Vice-Chairman - Attorney Berg.

Ms. Berg opened the floor for nominations for vice-chair of the board. Commissioner Moore nominated Commissioner Beiler. Ms. Berg asked if there were any more nominations. Having none, she asked for a motion for nominations to cease and each commissioner voted unanimously to appoint Commissioner Beiler as Vice-Chairman.

17. Organizational Meeting Agenda Items - New Chairman Presiding.

Chairman Melton addressed the Board and thanked the county employees, veterans, hospital,, sheriff, emergency personnel, small businesses, school system, and citizens for making Polk County the best place to live. He said maintaining the rural character is a top priority for him, and he would like each Commissioner to think about what their goals are for the upcoming year to discuss at the next meeting. Commissioner Yoder thanked the citizens for their votes and said they made it clear they want a conservative, non-socialist government.

A. Annual Examination of Public Official Bonds as required by § 58-72-20.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve the required public official bonds and pay the associated premiums, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Polk County Code of Ethics – This information has been provided to the Commissioners, and is available for review in the County Manager's office.

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to Motion to approve the Polk County Code of Ethics, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Meeting Procedures, Rules, Agenda Items Procedure, and Decorum.

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to approve meeting and agenda item procedures and rules, and meeting decorum guidelines, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Commissioner Appointments to Boards.

Chairman Melton suggested Commissioner Overholt replacing Commissioner Gasperson and everyone else remaining the same until the next meeting. He said at that time they can make changes.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve Board appointments as stated, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

E. 2021 NCACC Legislative Goals Conference Voting Delegate.

Commissioner Moore moved to appoint a voting delegate for the 2021 NCACC Legislative Goals Conference, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

F. 2021 Polk County Local Government Holiday Schedule.

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to Motion to approve the 2021 County Holiday Schedule, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

G. Board of Commissioners' Regular Meeting Schedule January 2021 through June 2021.

Commissioner Moore requested the Board consider changing the meeting time to earlier in the day. The Board agreed to discuss at a future meeting. Commissioner Overholt moved to approve the Board of Commissioner regular meeting schedule for January 2021 through June 2021, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

18. Commissioner Comments.

The Commissioners thanked everyone for coming out, and said they are looking forward to working together for the citizens Polk County. They also gave their condolences to the James Jolly family who the Sheriff shared had passed away earlier today.

19. Adjournment

Commissioner Moore moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

Attest:

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS

Ange High
Clerk to the Board

Tommy W. Melton
Chairman