

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Agenda Tuesday
September 7, 2021 - 5:00 PM
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice Womack Building Columbus, NC
Columbus, NC
MINUTES

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

1. Call to Order - Chairman Melton.
2. Invocation - Joyce B. Preston.
3. Pledge of Allegiance - Polk County Veterans and Boy Scout Troop.
4. Chairman and Commissioner Comments.

Chairman Melton began by recognizing the thirteen men who lost their lives in Afghanistan and thanking everyone for being in attendance tonight for the meeting to honor veterans.

Commissioner Yoder said he represented the Commissioners at the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Conference in Wilmington, NC. He said the importance of local government officials staying connected to the citizens, especially when resolving conflicts, was emphasized during the conference. Local officials are accountable to the citizens they serve, and when they work together, we can accomplish more things. He was also appointed as the district director for NCACC District 15 (Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, and Rutherford) for the 2021-2023 term. The last time the district director was from Polk County was in 2011.

Vice-Chairman Beiler said the Commissioners and the School Board both have important decisions to make at meetings tonight. Even though there is division or differing opinions, we do not need to give in to hatred, which is a key that will make you look at your neighbor as the enemy. When this situation is over, guard against hatred and come together and lift one another up as a community.

Commissioner Moore said he had received phone calls from citizens about defunding the schools. He said the state mandates the local government to fund schools adequately. He then shared two quotes. The first is from Samuel Adams, and the second he did not know the originator.

"The sum of all is, if we would most truly enjoy this gift of Heaven, let us become virtuous people."

"Your beliefs become your thoughts, Your thoughts become your words, Your words become your actions, Your actions become your habits, Your habits become your values, Your values become your destiny."

Commissioner Overholt said it is an honor to have so many veterans and citizens attend tonight's meeting. Although he may disagree with the decisions the School Board will most likely be making at their meeting later tonight, he knows the board members personally, and they are all incredible people. He encouraged everyone to treat the School Board members with respect and to be civil throughout the process. He said this weekend, as he watched college football and saw the stadiums filled with thousands of spectators, he was thinking of the school children, and it didn't feel right that they are carrying the burden.

Chairman Melton asked Manager Pittman to read the following:
The community is invited to take time during September and walk Stearns Park. The 132 sunflowers represent the number of lives lost each day to suicide in the US. The wall of lost hope & potential, donated by the Polk Sheriffs Dept last year, features many familiar, local faces who lost their battle with mental health issues. Polk Mental Health Board presents this initiative in conjunction with the Polk County Sheriff's Department. It is enabled through grant funding from the Polk County Community Foundation in support of the DoNotLoseHope effort.

5. Approval of Agenda

- A. Commissioner Moore moved to approve the agenda as written, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Consent Agenda - Motion to approve the consent agenda.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

- A. August 16, 2021 regular meeting minutes.
- B. Tax refund requests through August 31, 2021 in the amount of \$1,291.85.
- C. Budget Amendment new revenue source Kiwanis Club to Recreation Department \$2,500.
- D. Budget Amendment new revenue source WNC Health Network, Inc. mini-grant agreement with Polk County Health Department for \$5,000.
- E. Adopt joint resolution authorizing name change of Region C Workforce Development Board to Foothills Workforce Development Board.

7. Citizen Comments on Agenda Items.

There were no citizen comments on agenda items.

8. Polk County Veteran Services.

Gina Cashion, Polk County's Veterans Services Officer (VSO), was present and shared the following remarks: "This week marks the twentieth anniversary of the 9-11 attacks on the United States. During these dark hours in our history, we came together as a nation to aid and assist one another during this devastating attack. First responders, veterans, and fellow Americans risked and gave their lives to save others and showed not only the United States but the World our compassion, courage, and self-sacrifice to come together in times of conflict. Today, we remember and honor those brave patriots that risked their lives along with the ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their fellow Americans in a time of crisis. We must never forget that America is a strong nation and even stronger when its people come together and unite for the common good of humanity. We must always remember and instill future generations with continued Patriotism towards our beloved Country. This devotion and alliance with fellow Americans will continue to unite the Country while making us a stronger nation."

Chairman Melton thanked Ms.Cashion for her work with Polk County veterans and their families and recognized her four years of full-time service with the County

9. Military Suicide Awareness Proclamation.

Chairman Melton said Polk County has one of the highest per-capita veteran populations in the State, and the following is a very sobering statistic. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates that a Veteran will commit suicide every sixty-five minutes, an average of twenty-two per day. He stressed the seriousness of the topic as he read the Military Suicide Awareness Proclamation.

Commissioner Moore moved to adopt the Military Suicide Awareness Proclamation, seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Proclamation for Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing In Action (MIA).

Joyce B. Preston, President Polk County Memorial Auxiliary to VFW Post 9116, said the Department of Defense last reported that 81,900 Americans were still considered Missing In Action (MIA). She said there are two from Polk County that had still not been found or returned:

PFC Clarence E. Lane of the US Army - C CO 1/32 Regt 71D Unit - Killed in action on 11/30/1950

SGT Earnest E. Rackley of the US Army – G CO 2/9 Regt 21D Unit Missing In Action on 11/30/1950

Mrs. Preston read the Proclamation for Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing In Action (MIA).

Vice-Chairman Beiler moved to adopt the Proclamation for Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing In Action (MIA), seconded by Commissioner Overholt, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Preston stated they would place twenty-two yellow ribbons on the light poles around the Polk County Courthouse to represent the twenty-two veterans who lose their lives each day to suicide.

11. Proclamation in Remembrance of September 11, 2001.

Michael Collins, Commander, and Paul Stout, Jr. Vice-Commander VFW Post 9116 came representing the Memorial Honor Guard, American Legion Post 250 in Tryon, and VFW Post 9116 in Columbus. Commander Collins read the Proclamation in Remembrance of September 11, 2001.

Commissioner Yoder moved to adopt the Proclamation in Remembrance of September 11, 2001, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

Jane Stout, Sr. Vice-President VFW Auxiliary Post 9116, read the names of the thirteen servicemen and women killed in Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 26, 2021.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David Espinoza, 20, of Rio Bravo, Tex.

Marine Corps Sgt. Nicole Gee, 23, of Roseville, Calif.

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Darin Taylor Hoover, 31, of Utah

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Knauss, 23, of Corryton, Tenn.

Marine Corps Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22, of Indio, Calif.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Rylee McCollum, 20, Jackson, Wyo.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, 20, of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kareem Nikoui, 20, of Norco, Calif.

Marine Corps Cpl. Daegan William-Tyler Page, 23, of Omaha

Marine Corps Sgt. Johnny Rosario, 25, Lawrence, Mass.

Marine Corps Cpl. Humberto Sanchez, 22, Logansport, Ind.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jared Schmitz, 20, of Wentzville, Mo.

Navy Hospital Corpsman Max Soviak, 22, of Berlin Heights, Ohio

Commander Collins said they would hold an Everlasting Remembrance Ceremony at 7:00 pm tonight outside their building in Tryon to remember the fallen veterans that passed this year and the thirteen killed in Afghanistan.

12. Constitution Week 2021 Proclamation.

Chairman Melton requested this item be added to the agenda and read the Proclamation for Constitution Week 2021.

Commissioner Moore moved to adopt the Proclamation for Constitution Week 2021, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

13. Feed the Foothills Proclamation.

Commissioner Yoder said he asked for this to be placed on the agenda because it is a way to help others in our community. Fred Nixon, a Foothills

Chamber of Commerce representative, explained the event and said they expect eight hundred people to attend. Commissioner Moore suggested placing a public drop-off box in the Womack Building for those who would like to donate food items but may not participate in the event. Manager Pittman said staff would have it arranged with Feed the Foothills.

Commissioner Yoder read the Feed the Foothills Proclamation. Commissioner Yoder moved to adopt the Feed the Foothills Proclamation, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

14. Resolution Authorizing K-9 Sale - Sheriff Wright and Attorney Berg.

Sheriff Wright said that a deputy and their K-9 partners develop strong bonds in law enforcement, especially after several years working together. He said tonight he is asking to retire K-9 Karak and allow him to remain with his deputy partner.

Sheriff Wright read the resolution declaring K-9 Karak to be surplus property and authorizing his assigned handler to take ownership.

Commissioner Yoder moved to adopt the resolution declaring K-9 Karak to be surplus property and authorizing his assigned handler to take ownership, seconded by Commissioner Overholt, and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Melton asked Attorney Berg, since the School Board meeting will be beginning soon, and many citizens in attendance here would also like to attend that meeting, could we move Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items to be the next item of business?

Attorney Berg said the Board could choose to amend the agenda.

Commissioner Overholt moved to amend the agenda, making Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items the next item of business, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

**Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items occurred at this time.*

15. Polk County Libraries New Logo.

Marcie Dowling, Library Director said literacy will always be at the heart of the library's mission, but they want the community to know they are so much more than books. She said in the past year more than 55,000 visitors have come to the Columbus and Saluda libraries and took advantage of the physical spaces to access the libraries' collections, study rooms, meeting spaces, and unique learning opportunities, and more than 15,000 residents of all ages attended library programs. She said Polk County Libraries have offered more than 7,400 computer lab sessions, more than 39,000 wireless internet sessions, and have circulated almost 26,000 digital ebooks and audiobooks that can be checked out 24/7 without visiting a library location. Also during this year's ten-week summer learning program, they had 256 children participate. She showed a comparison of the old and new logos. She said the old logo was

more literal for a library, an open book with the outlines of trees on a green background. She said they wanted the new logo to reflect that the Library is clearly more than just books. She said they worked with Summit Marketing Group in Hendersonville to create the new logo. The logo is to feel fun, creative, welcoming, imaginative, a center for the community, a resource that surprises and enriches those in the community. She said they wanted the logo to embrace where the future of the library was going. They added the new library vision "Create Connections, Ignite Imaginations", reinforcing their pledge of each individual's connection with the community around them to enrich their inner life.

Mrs. Dowling said the Library Board of Trustees has approved the new logo, and she is requesting the Commissioners approval.

Commissioner Moore moved to approve the Polk County Libraries new logo, seconded by Commissioner Overholt and the motion carried unanimously.

16. Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grant application.

Laura Baird, Interim Director Parks & Recreation, said this is the same grant she wanted to apply for last year. The Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grant application is \$100,000 to build two additional loops at the White Oak Bike Trail. Mrs. Baird said volunteers had completed one trail; however, it took them four years. She told the board that this grant would provide the funds for a professional company to construct these two trails. Commissioner Yoder asked the length of the trail built by volunteers, and Mrs. Baird said one and a half miles. She said this grant would be in addition to the PARTF grant the County applied for in June.

Commissioner Yoder moved to submitting the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grant application with the letter of support, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

17. Recruitment, Retention, Comp Time Discussion and Resolution.

Manager Pittman briefed the board on the difficulty of hiring and retaining employees, particularly public safety positions. Tommy Oakman, Human Resources Officer, said the County currently has approximately twenty vacancies, and seven are in the Sheriff's Department. Manager Pittman said he is asking them to consider three different things.

First, a permanent change in the Polk County Human Resources Policy and Procedures Manual, Employee Referrals Section 4.3.3. to increase the amount the referring employee receives from \$200 to \$500.

Second, to retain employees in specific departments, pay those employees overtime instead of earning compensatory time. He said this would be for the next three months correlated with payroll dates. Also, to recruit new employees in all departments with vacancies, offer a \$1000 bonus for any new employee hired now until the end of the fiscal year. He said both temporary changes are detailed in the resolution and would be brought back to the board after the trial period to discuss their continuation.

Third, Manager Pittman said he and Sandra Hughes, the Finance Director, had discussed implementing a reserve fund to pay out non-exempt employees their comp time when they leave the County. He said currently, when an employee leaves, it is taken from the department's salary line, which affects their budget.

Commissioner Overholt asked how the amount of \$50,000 was determined. Manager Pittman said it is an arbitrary number; however, they do not expect to exceed it, and any unused funds will go back into the general fund.

Commissioner Moore moved to amend the Polk County Human Resources Policy and Procedures Manual, Employee Referrals Section 4.3.3. increasing the amount paid to \$500, seconded by Commissioner Yoder, and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Overholt moved to adopt the Recruitment and Retention Resolution, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler, and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Yoder moved to approve the budget amendment reducing contingency \$50,000 to fund comp time payouts to departing employees, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and the motion carried unanimously.

18. ARP Business and Non-Profit Funding Survey.

Manager Pittman said he worked with Cathy Ruth, Polk County Planning and Community Development, and Karyl Fuller, Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC), to create a survey to send to local businesses and nonprofits. He said the survey intends to gauge the impacts of COVID-19 on the businesses and nonprofits within the County. He said the information gathered would be used to determine interest and the best, feasible ways the County could use a portion of the American Recovery Plan funds to help the business and nonprofits in Polk County directly. A copy of the survey questions is included in the packet. Each local business and nonprofit will receive a postcard regarding the survey, and links will be on our website and social media.

19. Volunteer Board Application(s)

- A. The following applications were received for consideration to serve on a Polk County Volunteer Board: Appearance Commission - Donald Dicey; Mental Health Advisory Board - Mary Prioleau.

Commissioner Yoder moved to approve the volunteer board applicants as presented, seconded by Commissioner Moore and the motion carried unanimously.

20. Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items.

The Commissioners amended the agenda to move this to after item 14.
There were three citizen comments on non-agenda items.

21. Closed Session

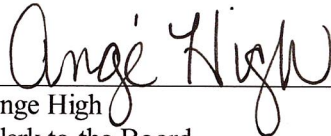
- A. Commissioner Moore moved to go into closed session for the purpose of attorney client privilege seconded by Commissioner Yoder and the motion carried unanimously.
- B. Commissioner Moore moved to return to open session, seconded by Vice-Chairman Beiler and the motion carried unanimously.

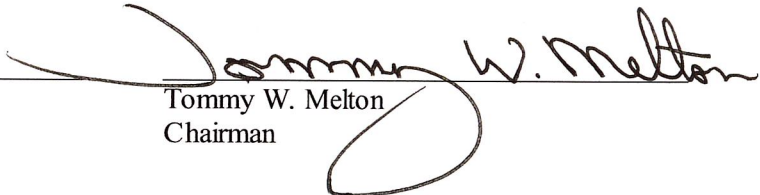
22. Adjournment

Commissioner Overholt 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