



**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 11, 2025
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All Board Members, Interim County Manager Warren Cabe, Deputy Clerk Tammy Keezer, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, and County Attorney Eric Ridenour were present, as were a number of county employees, media, and citizens.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- (A)** Mr. Cabe recognized Ms. Tammy Keezer, who has earned the designation of Certified Municipal Clerk with the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, which he said is a first for Macon County.
- (B)** Mr. Cabe announced that a copy of the report on animal services, as talked about in the January regular meeting, has been provided to board members and is now available on Macon County's web page. He said the report has some options for the board to consider, a recommendation to look at the ordinance, and gives some good discussion points to talk about as we move into our budget season.
- (C)** Commissioner Breeden said he should have said at the last meeting when Chairman Young addressed the Fontana Regional Library (FRL) contract that he is not interested in pulling out of the FRL. He said the board signed that contract for ten years, and at this time, he has no interest in doing that.
- (D)** Commissioner Shields expressed his thanks to *The Franklin Press* and reporter Thomas Sherrill for alerting us to a situation last week regarding the closing of the Franklin Social Security office. He shared an email from Senator Corbin saying the problem is resolved and the Franklin Social Security office will not be closing.
- (E)** Commissioner Shearl commented on the clock tower refurbishment, saying it looks fantastic and the crew did a great job at a very reasonable price. He informed board members that the Recreation Commission met this morning and has approved a new set of plans for pickleball courts and changed the plan for tennis courts and feels that everyone will be pleased when the plan is finalized. Commissioner Shearl also announced that the old senior softball field is being redone to make an outdoor amphitheater with a concert planned for May 3rd. Lastly, Commissioner Shearl said that anyone who wants to reach out to him with a pat on the back, a concern, or a complaint please include their name so he knows who to reach out to.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Young requested all in attendance rise, and a moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Commissioner Shearl, the pledge to the flag was recited.

PUBLIC HEARING(S):

(A) NAMING OF NEW ROADS AND CHANGING NAMES OF CURRENT ROADS – Commissioner Young opened the public hearing at 6:09 p.m. 911 Addressing Coordinator Brandon Crone informed the board that this was standard procedure and that a list of the road names had been provided in the agenda packet, the posting requirements for the public hearing had been met, and he needed approval for the name changes. With no one from the public signed up to speak, Commissioner Young closed the public hearing at 6:10 p.m. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields, to approve the road names as requested. The vote was unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: **James Burch** said he works for Macon County Convenience Center and has worked there for twenty years. He said he would like to make suggestions for severance or retirement benefits based on years of service for those part-time workers. **Scott Baste** said he thought we should make plans for any changes that should come down from the federal government review and changes that are happening currently. **Constance Neely** expressed thanks for improvements that have been made to the animal shelter. She encouraged citizen engagement in any discussions about privatization of the shelter and also mentioned being prepared for changes happening at the federal level. Pat Hedrick with the North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature spoke about what the group does and what they do for Region A. She explained that there is a delegate for each county that works on issues impacting NC senior citizens, and she is the Macon County Delegate. **Betsy Baste** expressed thanks to the board for being open to listening to the citizens regarding pickleball courts, animal shelter staffing, and the three-minute public comment rule. She requested the board choose wisely for the library board appointments and not take a cookie cutter approach.

ADDITIONS, ADJUSTMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to approve the agenda, as presented.

REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS:

(A) PROGRAM REPORT AND APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION DECLARING APRIL 20, 2025, THROUGH APRIL 26, 2025, MACON COUNTY VOLUNTEER WEEK TO HONOR THE VOLUNTEERS AT MACON COUNTY CRAWFORD SENIOR CENTER – Senior Services

Administrative Officer Jennifer Hollifield expressed appreciation for the volunteers at the Crawford Senior Center. She provided some data about the volunteer hours given and the dollar value of those hours and requested approval of a resolution in support of Volunteer Appreciation Week. Mr. Cabe read the resolution into the record and requested Commissioner Shields and Commissioner Antoine join him in recognizing Reesa Boyce, a part-time Community Support Services Assistant at the Crawford Center who turned 91 years old on November 17th. Ms. Boyce was presented flowers, a Macon County lapel pin, and a pen set. She shared a few words and closed by saying she was delighted and thrilled to work with seniors in the community.

(B) CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE - Mitch Brigulio with Davenport & Company, LLC provided a brief presentation as well as a full written report regarding credit ratings, use of fund balance for one time expenditures per the policies and usually for those items in the

capital improvement plan, compliance with the 10-year payout, debt to/assessed value, and debt service to expenditures policies. He said Macon County has debt capacity if we wanted to take on more debt with the purpose of tonight's presentation about capital projects is to give the board a look at all of the requests that have come in from the departments. Mr. Brigulio said no recommendations are being made at this time as the process for prioritizing and funding projects will occur through the budget process. He shared that the highest cost project received was East Franklin School, which included a to-be-determined date for public school capital fund grant and said the grant may not be possible to get as we got one for Franklin High School. Mr. Brigulio said that to fully fund this Capital Improvement Plan would require a mix of grants, pay-as-you-go capital cash funded – fifty percent debt funded. He shared two scenarios for funding the projects as requested by the departments, indicated that in either scenario we are in compliance with the policies, and to fund them as requested would require additional revenue. Mr. Cabe said he hopes the board likes this approach for the board to see the department requests early so the projects can be prioritized and we can look at options.

OLD BUSINESS:

(A) CONSIDERATION OF SURPLUS PROPERTY OFFER FOR PROPERTY

LOCATED AT 651 EAST MAIN STREET – Attorney Ridenour said an offer had been made in the amount of \$175,000. Commissioner Shearl said he had looked at the property and, based on his assessment of the needed repairs on the property and the use of the building, that it is a liability for the County. He said he would like to move forward with accepting the offer and entering into the upset bid process. Commissioner Breeden said we had done our due diligence. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to accept the offer of \$175,000 and enter into the upset bid process. Attorney Ridenour said the successful bidder would be liable for the publication costs. Commissioner Young said we typically try to follow the tax assessed value of a property, but he cannot see a use for a County department out of this building, agrees with entering into the upset bid process, and encourages additional bids. Attorney Ridenour explained that the ten days for the upset bid would begin at each publication date in *The Franklin Press*. The vote was unanimous.

(B) CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR AND HIRING OF COUNTY MANAGER

– Attorney Ridenour said he was asked by the board to prepare an employment agreement, and a copy of the proposed contract has been provided to the board. Commissioner Young said we had some interest from applicants, but very few were qualified and made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields, to approve the contract for Mr. Warren Cabe. The vote was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS:

(A) CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION TO ABANDON A PORTION OF SR1300 BYRD GAP ROAD

- Attorney Ridenour said we had a request from Andy Russell, Division Engineer with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, showing this road is deemed as a public road. He said he was unable to find any evidence of it being a public road, and it is privately maintained. Attorney Ridenour said if the board approves the request to deem the road private, the State will not maintain this road. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by

Commissioner Shields, to approve the request as presented. The vote was unanimous.

(B) CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AMERICA'S 250 CELEBRATION - Mr. Cabe stated that 2026 will be the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and requested approval of a resolution acknowledging the significant date and establishing a committee that will establish some priorities and events to commemorate the year. Mr. Cabe suggested a kick-off meeting with the core group consisting of representatives from the Town of Franklin, the Town of Highlands, the Tourism Development Commission, Commissioner Shearl, and Commissioner Breeden, and then bring in others as appropriate. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to approve the resolution as presented. The vote was unanimous.

(C) DISCUSSION REGARDING A CHANGE TO THE MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RULES OF PROCEDURES, RULE 12(3) - Commissioner Young said we have discussed this change two to three meetings in a row and explained the total time for public comment is 45 minutes, with each speaker allotted five minutes. He said that if we cut the time to three minutes, this gives more people the opportunity to speak. Commissioner Antoine made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shearl, to decrease the time from five minutes to three minutes per speaker as requested. Commissioner Young stated the change will be effective at the April meeting. The vote was 4-1 with Commissioner Antoine, Commissioner Shearl, Commissioner Breeden, and Commissioner Young voting in favor of the motion and Commissioner Shields opposed.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented which includes: (A) Minutes of the February 11, 2025, regular meeting, the February 13, 2025, joint meeting, and the March 4, 2025, continued session, (B) Budget Amendments #208-210, (C) Approval of FY 2024-25 audit contract with martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A., (D) Wantoot-Playmore tax refund in the amount of \$4,318.48 for overpayment of City of Highlands tax, (E) Report of unpaid taxes in the amount of \$2,409,232.40 and approval for the Tax Collector to advertise the tax liens, (F) Tax releases for the month of February 2025 in the amount of \$3,759.01, (G) Monthly ad valorem tax collection report - not action necessary.

APPOINTMENTS:

(A) REAPPOINTMENT OF TAX ADMINISTRATOR ABBY BRASWELL - Mr. Cabe said this is a routine action that has to be taken every four years. Ms. Braswell read her request letter included in the packet including identification of the achievements of her department and the goals for the next four years. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to approve the appointment as requested. The vote was unanimous.

(B) BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW (5 SEATS) - Attorney Ridenour explained the role of the Board of Equalization and Review as basically your appeal process for property tax issues and then explained the voting and appointment process. Attorney Ridenour distributed paper ballots and read the results into the record. Board

members consented to discuss these appointments further during a closed session before making a final decision.

(C) MACON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD (2 SEATS) - Attorney Ridenour distributed paper ballots and read the results into the record. The results were approval of the appointment of Vivian Honey and Kathy Smith.

(D) FONTANA REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD (1 SEAT) - Attorney Ridenour distributed paper ballots and read the results into the record. The results were approval of the appointment of William McGaha.

(E) PLANNING BOARD (1 SEAT) - Attorney Ridenour distributed paper ballots and read the results into the record. The results were approval of the appointment of Mark Hehn.

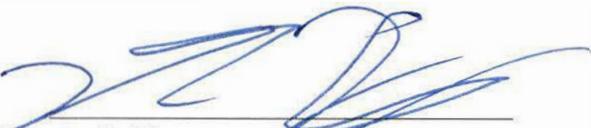
CLOSED SESSION: At 7:58 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session as allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with the attorney to preserve the attorney-client privilege. At 8:08 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session and return to open session.

Commissioner Young called the meeting back to order at 8:10 p.m. and stated that the closed session was to allow for discussion about whether William Trick and Gary Drake were able to serve as a representative of Highlands on the Board of Equalization and Review. He said that both Mr. Trick and Mr. Drake are from District 1, and a revote was needed to select the fifth member of the Board of Equalization and Review. Attorney Ridenour distributed paper ballots and read the results into the record. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to approve the appointments of Kristine Flag, Donald Holland, Richard Lightner, William Trick, and Dwight Vinson to the Board of Equalization and Review. The vote was unanimous.

ADJOURN: With no other business, at 8:14 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.



Warren Cabe
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board



Josh Young
Board Chair