

POLK COUNTY
May 17, 2010
7:00 PM BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' REGULAR MEETING
R. Jay Foster Hall of Justice
Womack Building
Columbus, N.C.

PRESENT: Chairperson Walker, Vice-Chairperson Gasperson, Commissioners McDermott, Melton and Watson. Others in attendance were County Manager Whitson, Interim County Attorney Egan, and Clerk to the Board Britton, citizens, staff, and media.

1. Call to Order/Welcome – Cindy Walker, Chairperson, called the meeting to order.
2. Invocation – Evangelist Warren Elliott, Coopers Gap Baptist Church, gave the invocation.
3. Pledge of Allegiance – Chairperson Walker led the pledge.
4. Approval of Regular Board of Commissioner Minutes for May 3, 2010 – Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gasperson and the motion carried unanimously.
5. Approval of Agenda – The agenda was amended with the following additions: 6a) QZAB transfer request by Superintendent Miller; 7a) Sunny View Fire Department; 8a) Report by Saluda Senior Center; 11(6) S&ME bore samples. Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Melton, and the motion carried unanimously.
6. Proclamation for Mental Health Awareness Week – Chairperson Walker requested this item be placed on the agenda. Kathy Romich, Chairperson of the Mental Health Advisory Board, read the proclamation, and Chairperson Walker introduced the following board members: Jan Whiting, Lou Parton, Barbara Trumble, Rob Fuller, Dr. Katherine Smith, Stan Bayne and Chairperson Walker. Ms. Walker spoke of her own personal experiences with mental health and her speech follows:

My sister was diagnosed with bipolar depression at the age of 34. Our family's struggle to make sense of this illogical illness was a steep uphill journey filled with much grief and little rest.

Losing someone to mental illness is like a death. And although they are still here, the person you knew all your life, the person that you grew up with, that you loved from the beginning of their days and laughed with at all those family jokes, is no longer present. Yet you look for them always.

Mental illness deeply affects the sufferer and their families.

It's like a freight train rumbles through your life, friends scatter (it's just too weird) and families struggle. Mental illness is scary; now you see them, now you don't; they look fine, but they act strangely.

It's not what you would call a "socially acceptable disease". Whenever someone gets sick with any illness, the whole family is affected, but with mental illness there is an undeniable stigma.

For both the victim and families of mental illness the financial and emotional toll is tremendous; the cost is high, the support low. Yet, with quality ongoing care and a gentle understanding, positive, livable outcomes are possible.

I would ask that as a governing body, we diligently seek to assist Mental Health organizations by whatever means possible and that through our own personal experiences and interactions we strive to rise above the stigma associated with this disease.

- 6a) School Superintendent Bill Miller – Mr. Miller made a request to release \$96,000 from the Public School Building Capital Fund (Lottery Distribution) to make a payment on existing debt for Tryon Elementary School. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
7. Fire Department Service District Boundaries – Commissioner Gasperson made a motion to approve the updated and revised boundaries, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
- 7a) Cooper Gap Township Fire Tax Rate to Fund Fire Class Reduction from a 9S to 7 – Discussion with Sunny View Fire & Rescue Chief Marty McGuinn. Chief McGuinn's presentation outlined the goal to lower the fire classification, which requires multiple additional water storage areas and increased equipment costs. Presently there is no public water supply in Cooper Gap Township. A copy of the complete report is on file in the Clerk's office. Commissioner Melton made a motion to hold the public hearing on June 1 at Sunny View Elementary School at 7pm as planned in order to allow input from the citizens, seconded by Commissioner Watson and the motion carried unanimously.
8. Schedule Public Hearing – For June 1, 2010, at 7:00pm at Sunny View School to hear public comment on the Sunny View Fire Department budget. The scheduling for this hearing was adopted in Agenda item #7a.

- 8(a) Saluda Senior Center – Henry Bright, member of the Saluda Senior Center Board of Directors, presented an update of the Center and the many benefits it provides to the community. He explained that they are a volunteer/non-profit organization and thanked the County for funding the Director’s position, which is a vital position to the Center. Judy Ward, Chairperson of the Saluda Senior Center Board of Directors, shared their activities calendar. Vice-Chairperson Gasperson felt Saluda, Green Creek and the Skyuka Road Centers were all vital to the communities and to the seniors and supported all of them. Commissioner McDermott has been to the Saluda Senior Center and is happy that the interest and needs of that part of the county are met by all the events and programs. Commissioner Watson commended all the citizens for coming out. He said it is important that we recognize that we are on a tight budget and in a recession and we have to look at how we spend our dollars. This is a well organized group and very active and you have come and proven that you can justify your existence. He wished more of our departments and boards could do such a good job. That doesn’t mean that he still won’t ask questions – he thinks it is important to know what is going on. The Commissioners need to know what is going on in the community and if our money is being spent wisely. After listening to this board, he thinks that it is being spent wisely and is glad to hear that. He also said that it doesn’t mean that questions are not going to be asked of other boards and other departments. The Board of Commissioners has to be good stewards of the taxpayers’ money and it is good to hear that the Saluda Senior Center is practicing good stewardship. He appreciated all the work that the Saluda Center is doing. Commissioner Melton thanked the Saluda citizens for coming to the meeting and educating them. He invited them to come again and bring the Board up to date on what they were doing. Chairperson Walker also thanked the Saluda citizens for attending the meeting.
9. Schedule Public Hearing – Secondary Road Annual Hearing with NCDOT for June 8, 2010, at 2:00 pm in the conference room of the Health Department. Commissioner Melton made a motion to schedule the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
10. Mental Health Advisory Board By-Laws – Commissioner Melton made a motion to adopt the revised by-laws, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.
11. County Manager’s Report - 1) Melvin Hill Road waterline size was increased to 8”, which increased the County difference by \$5,530. Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the increase, seconded by Commissioner Melton and the motion carried unanimously. 2) Mr. Whitson would like to begin work on replumbing the Jail by meeting with Cecil Cannon, Mickey Edwards, Sheriff Hill, and the Jail Administrator. Vice-Chairperson Gasperson made a motion to authorize the County Manager to move forward, seconded by Commissioner Melton and the motion carried unanimously. 3) Mr. Whitson read the quarterly report from Western Highlands Network. 4) Mr. Whitson read a resolution to amend the personnel policy regarding eligibility for health insurance.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to table the resolution for further study until the June 7, 2010 board meeting, seconded by Commissioner Melton and the motion carried unanimously. 5) Mr. Whitson updated the Board on the Polk County 2010 Census. 6) Mr. Whitson recommended that S&ME do the bore samples on the DSS building site, which is included in the site budget. Vice-Chairperson Gasperson made a motion to approve the work, seconded by Commissioner McDermott and the motion carried unanimously.

12. Budget Amendments – Ag. Econ. Dev. BA #22 Addition, \$2,000, to increase revenue and expense for a grant from the Polk County Community Foundation for the Gardens of Hope Family Gardens. Commissioner McDermott made a motion to approve the addition, seconded by Commissioner Gasperson and the motion carried unanimously. Project Budget Ordinance – Melvin Hill Road. Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the Project Budget Ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Melton and the motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report for April – Finance Officer Sandra Hughes gave the April report. The information is filed in the Clerk’s office.

13. Board Vacancy (Review) - Harmon Field Board of Supervisors. 2 applications, 2 County appointments - Rob Fuller and Jim Patterson.

Board Vacancy (Vote) – Saluda Fire Tax Commission (1 Vacancy) – Mark Oxtoby. Commissioner Melton made a motion to approve the appointment, seconded by Commissioner Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

14. Citizen Comments on Non Agenda Items – There were none.
15. Commissioner Comments – Commissioner McDermott and Vice-Chairperson Gasperson were happy to see the Mental Health Advisory Board, the Saluda Senior Center Board of Directors and the students attend the meeting.
16. Adjourn – Commissioner Melton made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Watson and the motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST: POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Anne Britton
Clerk to the Board

Cindy Walker
Chairperson