

Board of Supervisors - April 9, 2020 Regular Meeting

The Wise County Board of Supervisors met in a Regular Meeting on Thursday, April 9, 2020 @ 6:00 p.m. in the School Board Education Center located at 628 Lake Street in Wise. The following members were present:

Honorable John T. Schoolcraft – Chairman
Honorable Steve Bates – Vice-Chairman
Honorable J. H. Rivers
Honorable James Lawson
Honorable Robert E. Robbins, Jr.
Honorable Robert R. Adkins (By phone)
Honorable Fred Luntsford (By phone)
Honorable Bobby Cassell – members of said Board and
Michael W. Hatfield – County Administrator
Karen T. Mullins – County Attorney
Annette Underwood – Executive Secretary

PRAYER

Robby Robbins led in prayer.

PLEDGE

All led in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve the minutes of March 12, 2020 as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

AGENDA

Supervisor Rivers asked that a resolution opposing a wage increase due to the coronavirus be added to the agenda for discussion.

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve the agenda as presented to include adding a resolution on a proposed wage increase. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: RATIFY SETTING PUBLIC HEARING

Ratify setting a public hearing for 4-9-2020 @ 6:00 p.m. on a proposed amendment to the Dual Real Estate Tax Ticket Ordinance #4-1998.

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to ratify setting a public hearing for 4-9-2020 @6:00 p.m. on an amendment to the Dual Real Estate Tax Ticket Ordinance. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT TO DUAL REAL ESTATE TAX TICKET ORDINANCE #4-1998

A public hearing was duly advertised for this date to receive citizens comments regarding a proposed amendment to the Dual Real Estate Tax Ticket Ordinance #4-1998 to extend the May 31, 2020 real estate tax due date only until June 25, 2020.

There were no public comments for or against the proposed amendment.

Administrator Hatfield noted that an email was received from David Cox stating that he would suggest authorizing the Treasurer to eliminate penalty until a minimum of two months after the expiration of the "Stay-at-home" order, which would make the due date August 10th for the first half or could even make that date simply be August 31st. This would keep the due date of May 31st but only accrue interest instead of penalty and interest.

There being no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

NOTE FOR RECORD: The following email was received from David Cox to be read during public expression: The Governor has issued a stay-at-home order through June 10. Numerous businesses have closed or have greatly reduced customers due to the stay-at-home order. Numerous citizens have had to reduced work hours or furloughed due to the stay-at-home order. My opinion is that the stay-at-home order will only have been lifted for 15 days (two weeks) prior to the revised due date of June 25th. I recommend that the Board consider the following:

1. Authorize the Treasurer to eliminate penalty until a minimum of two months after the expiration of the stay-at-home order, which would make the due date August 10th for the first half or could even make that date simply be August 31st. This would keep the due date of May 31st but only accrue interest instead of penalty and interest.

The benefits of this option are:

1. There is still uncertainty as to how the economy will be even in June as we are only in April.
2. Citizens will not be penalized for non-payment until the date approved by the Board of Supervisors
3. Follows the same guidelines as the IRS did for individual tax returns (two months extension)
4. Citizens should not be penalized for late tax payments while they are concerned for how to protect their families, their businesses, and their livelihoods

In other issues, I would like to request a copy of the lease purchase financing of equipment as I do not believe this is in the County's best interest. I recommend that this be tabled as the public cannot attend this meeting and I nor any other citizen has had the chance to make comment on this matter. The agenda for April is the first time that it will be discussed by the Board (well at least in public).

Finally, I am firmly against plans for J. J. Kelly. The County cannot afford \$20-25M when the only need is the Social Services Building. The crisis we are going through is going to have yet to be determined ramifications as well as the 2020 census effects. Finances for Wise County could drastically change, and I have 10 years of experience with Wise County Finances. I think the public needs more information on the plans for J. J. Kelly. Let's look at prioritizing instead of overspending.

IN RE: CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates to approve the consent agenda as follows:

IN RE: RESOLUTION - DECLARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY

Ratified the Declaration of Local Emergency for the County of Wise, Virginia

RESOLUTION #13 - 2020

IN RE: RESOLUTION SETTING PROPERTY TAX RATE FY 2020/21

Approved the resolution setting property Tax Rate for FY 2020/21

RESOLUTION # 14- 2020

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: ORDINANCE DUAL REAL ESTATE TAX TICKET ORDINANCE #4-1998

Approved an amendment to the Dual Real Estate Tax Ticket Ordinance #4-1998 extending the May 31, 2020 real estate tax due date (only) until June 25, 2020

(Ordinance amendment)

IN RE: LAW ENFORCEMENT MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT

Approved the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement between the Wise County Sheriff's Office, the City of Norton, the Town of Big Stone Gap, the Town of Appalachia, the Town of Coeburn, the Town of Wise, the Town of Pound, the Town of St. Paul, The UVA-Wise Campus Police and Mountain Empire Community College Campus Police authorizing localities and sheriffs to assist each other and to enter into reciprocal agreements for cooperation and to furnish certain law enforcement services

IN RE: LAW ENFORCEMENT MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT BETWEEN CONTIGUOUS LOCALITIES

Approved the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement between and among the Wise County Sheriff's Office, Scott County Sheriff's Office, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Dickenson County Sheriff's Office and Russell County Sheriff's Office recognizing by the agreeing parties that during situations including national emergencies, in which may deplete the workforce of sheriff's offices, it is necessary to develop a contingency plan to utilize the workforce of other counties that share common borders

IN RE: RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Approved the Resolution of Support for the City of Alexandria, Virginia

RESOLUTION # - 15 -2020

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

The motion to approve the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

IN RE: ORDINANCE TO MODIFY PUBLIC MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING PRACTICES

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve the Ordinance to Modify Public Meeting and Public Hearing Practices as presented. The motion was unanimously approved

ORDINANCE # 3--2020

(Said ordinance is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: RESOLUTION LEASE PURCHASE FINANCING OF EQUIPMENT

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve the resolution approving the lease purchase financing of vehicles.

Supervisor Rivers asked what the monthly or annual cost of the vehicles will be compared to current maintenance cost and current purchase cost. Also, does the County have the money to take on this debt, and does this price include having the vehicles road ready?

Administrator Hatfield explained that the cost is \$900,000 per year. The impact for the first two years will cost a little more. The major impact is the years three through five. The cost for spending will be \$1.2 or 1.3M. In the long run, the County is saving money but in the first couple of years the spending will be more. In the past, the cost was between \$600,000 & \$700,000, which included maintenance per year. This contract is for 70 vehicles, which includes 35 vehicles for the Sheriff's Department and includes funds to make the vehicles road ready.

He also explained that the County will immediately be selling vehicles now being used, which will make up for the balance of the payment between what has been paid in the past and what is being paid now. The first payment is not due until October 2020. There will be two extra vehicles purchased; one will be given to the Airport and the other to the Extension Office. The Extension Office has received a grant to pay for the vehicle they will be getting. He noted that the Sheriff's Department may keep a couple of their best vehicles to use as backup if one goes down.

Supervisor Bates asked if Workforce Development could get a vehicle.

Administrator Hatfield stated that he would need to discuss that with the Board.

Supervisor Lawson felt that entering a contract at this time does not seem to be the most financially responsible thing to do as a County. The Board needs to look at spending and realize how the census and the coronavirus have impacted the County. This needs to be looked into, in depth, before entering a contract of this amount.

There was some discussion on how this may affect the bond rating. Administrator Hatfield said he has spoken with Davenport and he was more concerned about cash flow than he was the bond rating.

Administrator Hatfield stated that he has been working on this contract for some time. Notice was sent out for procurement and a good price for the vehicles was received. All vehicles must be ordered at once or the low interest rate will be lost. The closing is set for Monday.

Supervisor Luntsford noted that some towns are struggling financially, and the County could work with the towns on the possibility of purchasing one of the County's used vehicles at a fair price.

Administrator Hatfield stated that if the vote is to approve this resolution, he could get with the towns to see what they are willing to pay prior to selling to someone else. Freedom Ford will sell the vehicles for

the County for more than a trade-in price, and any cost above the black book value would be split 50/50 with them.

Attorney Mullins explained if the Board does not go by the government route to sell the vehicles, the County will have to sell the used vehicles by auction.

Administrator Hatfield stated that he would recommend going the government way, and he could first work with the towns as to their need, and then proceed with Freedom Ford if the towns do not need a vehicle.

The votes to approve the resolution were as follows:

| | | | |
|------|------------------|------|--------------|
| Aye- | Bobby Cassell | Nay- | James Lawson |
| | J. H. Rivers | | |
| | Steve Bates | | |
| | Fred Luntsford | | |
| | Bob Adkins | | |
| | John Schoolcraft | | |
| | Robby Robbins | | |

Motion carried

Resolution #16- 2020

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

IN RE: BUDGET AMENDMENTS

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve Budget Amendment #34 thru #38 as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – LONESOME PINE OFFICE ON YOUTH

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by James Lawson, to table the appointment to the Lonesome Pine Office on Youth until next month. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY ACTION & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Supervisor Robbins nominated Michael D. Abbott for re-appointment to the Appalachian Community Action & Development Agency. Supervisor Rivers made a motion that nominations cease, and Michael D. Abbott be appointed by acclamation. James Lawson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: WISE COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE

A motion was made by Steve Bates, seconded by Bob Adkins, to re-appoint Bonnie Aker to the Wise County Tourism Committee. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: RESOLUTION OPPOSING WAGE INCREASE

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by J. H. Rivers, to approve the resolution opposing a wage increase in wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. The motion was unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION # 17 - 2020

(Said resolution is on file in the County Administrator's Office)

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Hatfield gave the Board an update on the renovations of Kelly High School. Several Board members have raised concerns that all the organizations mentioned to go to the Kelly building do not want to move from their present location. After talking with Superintendent of Schools Greg Mullins and Dr. Cantrell at the Health Department, neither of them needs to be moved elsewhere since their present buildings are sufficient. One concern is that the judges have the ability to sign a court order requiring the County to make improvements to the courthouse. This has been discussed with Judge Elkins and he indicated that was not something he would do. He would like to see the administrative offices out of the courthouse mostly due to citizens having to be in contact with inmates that are going to court. Otherwise, he has no problem with things as they are now. With Social Services lease at the Sykes facility being up in 14 months, several options were mentioned as possible locations for them. One option mentioned was to combine Norton Social Services and Wise Social Services, which has been discussed with Norton City Manager Fred Ramey. Mr. Ramey has already talked with the State on the possibility of combining the two services, and it was found that it was not the best option economically.

Several members voiced their concerns on the cost for renovating the Kelly facility with the economic downturn. Perhaps another option would meet the time frame for Social Services to move and save the County money. All agreed that at this point there is a need to move forward and search out other potential sites and make a decision as soon as possible. There are many options available to meet the need and save the County money.

Administrator Hatfield stated that he would have a power point presentation at the next meeting on things that have been discussed that will help the Board make a decision.

BOARD COMMENTS

Supervisor Lawson asked that the Board step up and help businesses that are hurting during this coronavirus pandemic. He made a motion to use the \$700,000 set aside for the Kelly facility and offer a 5-year, interest free, forgivable loan to help the small businesses make payroll and expenses.

It was noted that this was not an agenda item for this meeting. To discuss this item, it must be voted on to be added to the agenda.

Supervisor Lawson withdrew his motion.

A motion was made by James Lawson, seconded by Fred Luntsford, to modify the agenda by adding funding for small businesses due to COVID-19. The votes were as follows:

Aye- James Lawson
Robby Robbins
J. H. Rivers
Fred Luntsford

Nay- Bobby Cassell
Bob Adkins
Steve Bates
John Schoolcraft

Motion failed

Board members voiced their concerns for citizens that have lost their jobs and the businesses that have been forced to close due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Hopefully, the stimulus money from the government will arrive soon, and businesses will be able to reopen in the near future. There were concerns that this money would take too long to reach the businesses to help them and some money from the County would help until the money from the government comes through. If funding is not available for the small businesses soon, many will have to close their doors. The time has come that everyone must work together to get through this pandemic, and hopefully get the economy back to normal.

Administrator Hatfield stated that he understands that the local banks are available to help with the business loans at this time.

Chairman Schoolcraft stated that he has been getting calls regarding the increase in Comcast Cable. He asked Administrator Hatfield to touch base with Comcast to ascertain the reason for the increase.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by J. H. Rivers, to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved.

ATTEST:

WISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Michael W. Hatfield, Clerk

John T. Schoolcraft, Chairman