

Board of Supervisors – September 10, 2020 Regular Meeting

The Wise County Board of Supervisors met in a Regular Meeting on Thursday, September 10, 2020 @ 6:00 p.m. in the School Board Education Center located on 628 Lake Street in Wise. The following members were present:

Honorable John T. Schoolcraft – Chairman
Honorable Steve Bates – Vice-Chairman
Honorable Robert E. Robbins, Jr.
Honorable J. H. Rivers
Honorable Fred Luntsford
Honorable Bobby Cassell
Honorable James Lawson
Honorable Robert R. Adkins (By Phone) – 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 July 30, 2020 (Special Called Meeting) and August 13, 2020 (Regular Meeting) as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

AGENDA

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve the agenda including the items in red as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Bonnie Aker a resident of Wise, addressed the Board with her concerns regarding Glade Creek that runs behind the Kelly building. She explained that this is a designated wetland area. A wetland serves a purpose, which includes the absorption of water and the prevention of flooding. She gave a brief overview of rules and regulations that must be followed to keep Glade Creek within the wetland designation

Ms. Aker asked the Board to look responsibly at all options when considering this \$10M building project. Just because the County has good credit rating does not mean you should borrow money.

Travis Kennedy a resident of Wise and a Wise Business Owner stated that last year his business flooded twice. Over the years, due to much paving, and construction throughout the Town and along Glade Creek, more water flows into the Town of Wise area. He noted that the proposed DSS Project has the opportunity for the Board to put some type of detention in place that will control the amount of water that goes into the Town. Due to the frequent floods, insurance

is unaffordable. He asked the Board to consider his request for the benefit of all citizens and businesses within this flood prone area.

Thomas Kennedy a resident of Wise and owner of Wise Hardware, spoke briefly on the Board's decision to direct the County Administrator to stop negotiations for the purchase of Cavalier Housing Apartments as the site for DSS, and proceed with the Kelly site. Mr. Kennedy voiced his concern that the Board is taking on more debt in our economic downturn and this will place a burden on taxpayers. He asked the Board to re-consider further options on the DSS site and take the best deal.

Billy Bartlett, owner Hometown Heating & Cooling in Wise, voiced his opposition on building another facility for DSS and other administrative offices that do not need to be move. He said the Board needs to create jobs and quit spending money foolishly. Move the County forward and build our economy. Working people cannot continue paying higher taxes for the bad decisions made by this Board.

Walter Crouse a resident of the Hurricane section of Wise County made the following comments:

- The County does not need solar panels at the Teck Park
- The County needs more jobs
- Do not need electric cars
- Need to open schools

There being no further comments, the public expression period was closed.

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 – ENDORSEMENT WISE COUNTY'S PROJECT PRIORITY LIST

Approved the resolution in support of projects via the "SMARTSCALE (House Bill 2) application process for the FY 2020 Six Year Improvement Program Cycle with all candidate projects prioritized for the County to begin submission with an application deadline of September 30, 2020

RESOLUTION # 33-2020

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

IN RE: COVID-19 INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

Approved the COVID-19 Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan 2020 as presented

IN RE: APPROPRIATIONS – 2ND QUARTER

Approved the 2nd quarter appropriations as presented

IN RE: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART (REVISED)

Approved the revised Organizational Chart for the County Administrator's Office Staff as presented

IN RE: RESOLUTION -SANDY RIDGE RESCUE SQUAD – ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT

Approved the resolution authorizing the Sandy Ridge Rescue Squad service to provide advanced life support

RESOLUTION # 34-2020

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

The votes to approve the consent agenda follows:

Aye- Fred Luntsford
Robby Robbins
Bobby Cassell
Steve Bates
James Lawson
Bob Adkins
John Schoolcraft

Nay- J. H. Rivers (He stated that he cannot support the revised Organizational Chart as presented. Specifically, economic development the way it is being treated in this administration. The other items he approves).

Motion carried.

IN RE: SOLAR INSTALLATION PERMIT FEE SCHEDULE

A motion was made by Fred Luntsford, seconded by Steve Bates, to approve the Permit Fee for Commercial Solar Energy System Permits as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: DSS SITE - CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY

Administrator Hatfield explained that there are two types of construction design and building contracts.

The first method involves hiring someone to design the facility, and then separately hiring a construction Company.

The second method is the construction manager-at-risk process, which Administrator Hatfield recommends. This method allows the County to set fixed costs for each phase and also gives the County the ability to complete all work in phases. A Construction Manager is hired to oversee costs and to work directly with the architect, which prevents excessive change orders and can shorten construction time up to six to eight months. It is possible to proceed with the beginning of construction without having the final plan completed. However, the first step is to hire an architect, and he recommended Thompson and Litton.

Supervisor Robbins voiced his concern regarding the cost of this building project even though the Board recently approved a tax increase, which included funds for this project as well as other capital projects. Another concern is the future of Dominion Power Plant at Virginia City, which could be short term due to the economic climate. Dominion is a great source of tax revenue for Wise County and the loss of that

revenue would place a financial burden on Wise County.

Supervisor Rivers stated that he has “heartburn” at the thought of spending so much money during the present downturn in the economy. There needs to be a way to cut cost. \$10M is unacceptable.

Richard Houchins Vice-President of T&L, stated that the only options to bring the cost down is to cut square footage or quality. He explained that the bare minimum construction cost at the present time is \$200 per square foot and \$250 per square foot for commercial buildings.

Supervisor Rivers stated he supports the Construction Manager-at-Risk method, and suggested that getting started sooner is better than later.

Attorney Mullins explained that the Construction Manager-at-Risk method, if chosen, must follow the State Statutes because the County has not done this method before. This is an alternative type of procurement. The County must comply with the terms of the Statute, which calls for an ordinance or resolution to be adopted by the Board. She reviewed the rules and regulation that must be followed if this is the method the Board chooses.

Administrator Hatfield stated that during the process of doing a study for the DSS site / Community Facilities Building it was included in the RFP the ability to give the design to whomever was selected as part of this process. There were two firms that submitted an RFP. One was Thompson & Litton, and the other was Lane Engineering working with ATS. The selective committee that reviewed the RFPs consisted of three individuals: himself, Building & Zoning Administrator Jimmy McElrath, and Duane Miller of LENOWISCO. The Committee ranked Thompson & Litton as the # one architectural firm for this project. He recommended Thompson & Litton as the architect for this project for which ever method the Board chooses.

Supervisor Lawson was aggravated because cost estimates for this project have changed several times during the process of finding a suitable site for DSS. He is concerned with the current debt levels. He said it is the responsibility of this Board to spend taxpayer money wisely. The county needs more jobs and more revenue, not more debt. He said that he cannot and will not support something that could be done for less money if one of the other two sites had been chosen.

After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that the Administrator proceed with the Construction Manager-at-Risk Method for the DSS site.

IN RE: DSS FACILITY – BOND ISSUE

Administrator Hatfield stated that based on the recommendation of the County financial advisor, he asked if the County wants to take on debt while interest rates are low? If so, how much?

Supervisor Robbins has heartburn taking on anymore debt at all. He suggested keeping DSS where they are for the time being. He is very uncomfortable with the \$8.8M.

Administrator Hatfield stated that there is a possibility that the lease on the building now occupied by DSS may not be extended for another year. He also noted that there is a business that is interested in using a part of that building.

Supervisor Rivers said he will not vote for more than \$5M. The County does not want to have “slush”

money from this project. Keep the amount low.

There was some discussion on the existing bond debt that the County now has.

All Board members agreed that the cost must be cut and still maintain a quality build facility with less square footage.

Dick Houchins, representing T&L, cautioned the Board that in cutting corners to cut costs could come back to bite them in 10 years or so.

After further discussion, all Board members except Supervisors Robbins, agreed to apply for the issuance of a \$5M bond for the DSS facility.

IN RE: ENTERPRISE ZONE EXTENSION

Administrator Hatfield asked the Board if they had any objections to extending the Enterprise Zone, which is a state designated area that includes the Esserville Industrial Park. The state does allow extending a certain amount of an Enterprise Zone without going back to the Legislature. The caveat to this is it crosses from Wise County to the City of Norton because of the RIFA Project in the City of Norton. At this time, there is a company interested in moving into this area, and extending the enterprise zone would give this company more incentive to come into Wise County. This company will provide 500 jobs with a vast majority of those being Wise County residents. The County is trying to convince the state that there is not an issue with extending the Enterprise Zone because this is a RIFA Project of which the County will receive a portion of revenue.

It was the consensus of the Board to extend the Enterprise Zone as requested.

IN RE: ORDINANCE #3-2020 AMENDMENT TO EXTEND EMERGENCY MEETING

A motion was made by Robby Robbins, seconded by James Lawson, to approve the Re-adopted Ordinance #3-2020 to modify public meeting and public hearing practices and procedures to address continuity of operations associated with pandemic disaster as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

ORDINANCE # -2020

(Said ordinance 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 amendments #5 thru #8 as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by Steve Bates, to go into closed session as permitted by the Code of Virginia per the following Code Sections:

Section 2.2-3711(A)(6) Investing of public funds

(A)(7) Consultation with legal counsel

(A)(1) Personnel

The motion was unanimously approved.

After closed session, a motion was made by Fred Luntsford, seconded by Robby Robbins, to reconvene the regular meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: RESOLUTION – CERTIFYING CLOSED MEETING

Fred Luntsford read the certification for closed meeting

A motion was made by Fred Luntsford, seconded by Bob Adkins, to approve the resolution certifying that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard or discussed by the Board of Supervisors. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION # 35 - 2020

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

BOARD COMMENTS

Board members voiced their concerns regarding the high costs figures that have been given to provide needed space for DSS. All agreed that there must be cuts made in some areas to reduce the cost and not quality.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by Robby Robbins, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved.

ATTEST:

WISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Michael W. Hatfield, Clerk

John T. Schoolcraft, Chairman