

Board of Supervisors – March 9, 2023 Regular Meeting

The Wise County Board of Supervisors met in a Regular Meeting on Thursday, March 9, 2023, @ 6:00 p.m. in the School Board Education Center located at 628 Lake Street in Wise. The following members were present:

Honorable J. H. Rivers – Chairman
Honorable John Schoolcraft – Vice-Chairman
Honorable Fred Luntsford
Honorable Randy Carter
Honorable Robert R. Adkins
Honorable Steve Bates
Honorable Tim Boardwine
Honorable James R. Lawson – members of said Board and
Michael W. Hatfield – County Administrator
Karen T. Mullins – County Attorney
Annette Underwood – Executive Secretary

PRAYER

Bob Adkins led in prayer.

PLEDGE

All led in the Pledge.

MINUTES

A motion was made by John Schoolcraft, seconded by Randy Carter, to approve the minutes of February 9, 2023, as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

AGENDA

A motion was made by John Schoolcraft, seconded by James Lawson, to approve the agenda as presented to include the items in red. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCE #3-2021 - POLICY ON MARKERS, PLAQUES AND MONUMENTS

A public hearing was duly advertised for this date to receive citizens comments regarding a proposed amendment to the Ordinance on Policy for Markers, Plaques and Monuments located on property of Wise County.

Preston Mitchell and Frank Gravely voiced their opposition to the proposed amendment.

Mr. Mitchell spoke briefly on Black History and the importance of its history being recognized so that this generation, and those to follow will learn from the mistakes that have been made in the past, and move

forward to make America a better place. He asked that the Board consider placing the Hurst Lynching Marker at the Justice Center where it will be safe.

Frank Gravely noted that he found out that Black History is not being taught in Wise County schools nor the City of Norton school. He was concerned that the Hurst Lynching Marker represents our history and should be placed in a safe place to remind our future generations of our past, and actions such as this should not be repeated.

Chairman Rivers and Board Members Bates commented that our schools should teach the good and the bad in our history, which will allow our children to overcome racism and other injustices that has divided our country.

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

IN RE: AUDIT REPORT ENDING JUNE 30, 2022

Emily Viers , representing Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates, met with the Board by Zoom at which time she provided an overview of the County Audit ending June 30, 2022. Different line items were reviewed and explained. The audit has been completed with a clean unmodified opinion, which means that the books and records were in good order under the Quality of Standards and in general compliance.

IN RE: HIGH KNOB MUSIC FESTIVAL

Buddy Delp, representing the High Knob Music Festival, came before the Board to express their gratitude for the Board's support in the past, and to provide an update on projects that are planned for the future to further enhance the High Knob Recreation Area with all its potential for recreation and the benefits it offers for our citizens.

He explained that this is a Family-Friendly, no drugs or alcohol, free music festival that is made up of local and regional artists that will play a variety of music. One of the festival's goals is to work on enhancing the area for future generations, and to promote tourism in our region. Engineering work and fundraising has already begun to construct a handicap accessible observation platform and trail at the Recreation Area for a rough estimated cost of \$30,000. Other projects are also being planned as funds and volunteers become available.

Mr. Delp asked the Board for a sponsorship donation for the High Knob Music Festival in the amount of \$2,000 to assist with the ongoing projects.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Supervisor Randy Carter left the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

Walter Crouse, a resident of the Hurricane area, made the following comments:

- Do not continue with the Coalfield Expressway – not good for the County
- Do not implement a tax increase in the upcoming budget
- More recycling is needed

- Stop littering

Frank Gravely asked the Board to vote “no” on the proposed ordinance amendment to the Policy on Markers, Plaques and Monuments located on property of Wise County, and put the Hurst Lynching Marker at the Justice Center where it will be safe.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Bob Adkins, seconded by John Schoolcraft, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING – NAMING OF BRIDGE - PAUL E. TRAMMELL

Set public hearing (4-13-2023 @ 6:00 p.m.) naming of bridge located near Intersection of Callahan Avenue & Roda Road in Appalachia as the Paul E. Trammell Memorial Bridge

IN RE: APPROPRIATIONS 4TH QUARTER

Approved the 4th Quarter appropriations as presented

IN RE: PROCLAMATION – EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS’ WEEK

Approved the Proclamation Proclaiming March 19=23 as Emergency Management Professionals’ Week in Wise County

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCE OFF-ROAD RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

Set public hearing (4-13-23 @ 6:00 p.m.) on a proposed Ordinance for Wise County Off-Roads Recreational Vehicles

The motion to approve the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

IN RE: ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – POLICY ON MARKERS, PLAQUES & MONUMENTS

A public hearing was held on 3-9-2023, to receive citizens comments regarding a proposed amendment to Ordinance (#3=2021) Policy on the erection or displaying of any permanent Markers, Plaques & Monuments on properties, buildings or facilities owned or leased by the County.

Preston Mitchell and Frank Gravely voiced their opposition to the proposed amendment.

A motion was made by James Lawson, seconded by Steve Bates, to table any action on the amendment to the Ordinance on Policy for Markers, Plaques & Monuments until next month for further discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: AUDIT REPORT ENDING JUNE 30, 2022

A motion was made by James Lawson, seconded by Tim Boardwine, to accept the County Audit Report ending June 30, 2022, as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: PROPERTY TAX RATE FOR FY 2023-24

A motion was made by Fred Luntsford, seconded by J. H. Rivers, for this year only, to keep the Real Estate and Personal Property tax rate as they are with no change, and direct the Commissioner of Revenue to assess vehicles @ 92% of their fair market value, which in essence reduces the amount of what citizens have to pay by 8%.

Board member Lawson spoke on inflation and how it has impacted our economy and or property owners. He said let this increase naturally ebb down as it will next year. This increase is helping the County with the added expenses brought on because of inflation.

The votes on the motion made were as follows:

Aye-	Tim Boardwine	Abstain – James Lawson
	Bob Adkins	
	Steve Bates	
	J. H. Rivers	
	John Schoolcraft	
	Fred Luntsford	

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – REDEVELOPMENT & HOUSING AUTHORITY

A motion was made by J. H. Rivers, seconded by John Schoolcraft, to re-appoint Mary Beth Allen to the Redevelopment & Housing Authority for a term of four (4) years. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – SPEARHEAD TRAILBLAZERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

J. H. Rivers nominated Natalie Chapman to the Spearhead Trailblazers Board of Directors for a term of three (3) years. John Schoolcraft made a motion that nominations cease and Natalie Chapman be appointed by acclamation. Steve Bates seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES COUNCIL

J. H. Rivers nominated Teresa Tyson to the Southwest Virginia Emergency Medical Services Council for a term of three (3) years. John Schoolcraft made a motion that nominations cease, and Teresa Tyson be appointed by acclamation. James Lawson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

IN RE: APPOINTMENT – PLANNING COMMISSION

A motion was made by Steve Bates, seconded by Bob Adkins, to table the Planning Commission appointment until next month. The motion was unanimously approved.

BOARD COMMENTS

Comments were made on the upcoming budget and the need to evaluate requests that have been made for possible adjustments.

James Lawson stated that the reason he abstained on setting the tax rate, is because he did not feel that there was enough information available to make that decision at this time. He asked that all department heads be invited to attend the next budget workshop to give input on their requests for the upcoming budget.

On another note, Mr. Lawson stated that he believed rare-earth elements could be a successful project for the County if pursued early. Other states such as Kentucky are reportedly receiving millions of dollars in grant funds to help build rare earth element facilities. Rare earth elements are needed for many high-tech consumer products such as batteries, computers, televisions etc. as well as defense systems. He further commented that our citizens are hurting from the downturn in our economy, and the Board needs to find ways to help relieve that burden.

Supervisor Schoolcraft stated that he agrees with Mr. Lawson. Wise County is sitting on rare elements practically everywhere, and the Board needs to pursue this as an economic engine to create jobs and move our region forward.

There was some discussion on the possibility of pursuing unearthed minerals, which would provide the opportunity for further development in our area.

Chairman Rivers asked County Administrator Hatfield to research the process for pursuing the rare-unearthed elements for further discussion.

Chairman Rivers suggested holding the next Budget Workshop on Wednesday, April 5, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the School Board Education Center. All Board Members were in agreement with this schedule for the next Budget Workshop.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by James Lawson, seconded by Bob Adkins, to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved.

ATTEST:

WISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Michael W. Hatfield, Clerk

J. H. Rivers, Chairman