

**AGENDA
CRAVEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021
7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVE AGENDA

1. PETITIONS OF CITIZENS – AGENDA TOPICS
2. CONSENT AGENDA
 - A. Minutes of January 4, 2021 and January 19, 2021 Regular Sessions
 - B. Tax Releases and Refunds

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

3. TAX – REPORT OF UNPAID 2020 TAXES & TAX LIEN ADVERTISEMENT
DATE: Ronnie Antry, Tax Administrator
4. FINANCE – BUDGET AMENDMENT CITY OF NEW BERN UTILITIES:
Craig Warren, Finance Director
5. APPOINTMENTS
6. COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT: Arey Grady
7. PETITIONS OF CITIZEN – GENERAL TOPICS
8. COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT: Jack Veit
9. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF CRAVEN MET IN REGULAR SESSION IN THE COMMISSIONERS' ROOM OF THE CRAVEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 406 CRAVEN STREET, NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021. THE MEETING CONVENED AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Jason R. Jones
 Vice Chairman Denny Bucher
 Chairman George S. Liner
 Commissioner Thomas F. Mark (remote by phone)
 Commissioner Theron L. McCabe
 Commissioner E. T. Mitchell
 Commissioner Beatrice R. Smith

STAFF PRESENT:

Jack B. Veit, III, County Manager
 Gene Hodges, Assistant County Manager
 Craig Warren, Finance Director
 Amber Parker, Human Resources Director
 Arey Grady, County Attorney
 Nan Holton, Clerk to the Board

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, County Attorney, Arey Grady, recited the following invocation:

Loving God, You are author of life and origin of all created things.

We ask that Your grace and blessing be bestowed upon the men and women who have been called to serve our County on this Board of Commissioners.

Help them to represent their constituents wisely with an eye toward safeguarding the deeper truths of human life that come only from You.

Bless the people that they represent. Bless our country and our County. Help our Commissioners to make decisions that will uphold the values of peace and justice in our land and throughout the world. We ask this in God's name.

Amen.

Chairman Jones requested to add Item #2.C to the agenda to allow Health Director, Scott Harrelson, to provide the Board with a Covid update.

Commissioner McCabe motioned to approve the agenda, as amended, seconded by Commissioner Liner and approved unanimously.

PETITIONS OF CITIZENS – AGENDA TOPICS

There were no citizens from the public that signed up to speak.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Liner motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, inclusive of the Minutes of January 4, 2021 and January 19, 2021 Regular Sessions and Tax Releases and Refunds (**Credits = \$13,329.91; Refunds = \$369.83**). His motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved 7-0 in a roll call vote.

COVID UPDATE

Health Director, Scott Harrelson, highlighted the spike in Covid cases following the holidays, which averaged over 90 new cases each day. He indicated that both Craven County and the state, as a whole, are currently seeing a downward spiral.

In regards to the vaccine, Mr. Harrelson reported when ramping up to administer the vaccine, they were under the impression they would receive approximately 3,000 dosages on a weekly bases. Allotments were diverted to mass clinics and the state came back with a revised plan which affected the weekly dosages provided to Craven County. He assured the Board and the public that getting the second dose of the vaccine is not, and will not, be an issue.

Mr. Harrelson reported that a baseline has been set and the county would be receiving 500 dosages each week for the next three weeks. The Health Department is operating their vaccine clinics out of the Convention Center, which is proving to be a very efficient model in that there are no waits and clients are in and out in about 20 minutes. He explained the State requirements for receiving more vaccines and how the Health Department is meeting every standard that has been set. Mr. Harrelson shared information regarding how CarolinaEast and the CCHC physicians are operating as well. He explained why creating waiting lists are not viable options due to the inconsistent supply of vaccine.

The Board inquired about how to vaccinate the marginalized communities throughout the county, information regarding distribution based on demographics, the possibility of being designated as a mass site, and what could be done to influence the flow of the vaccine to Craven County.

The Board expressed their compliments on how smoothly the operation is going at the Convention Center and appreciation of the Health Department staff for their dedication and fortitude during this pandemic. It was determined that staff and several of the Commissioners would meet with Mr. Harrelson to determine an equity path going forward.

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS: TAX – REPORT OF UNPAID 2020 TAXES AND LIEN ADVERTISEMENT DATE

Tax Administrator, Ronnie Antry, reported on the unpaid 2020 taxes, as he does each year at this time and he requested a tax lien advertisement date, which is the first step in a foreclosure process. He reported that there is \$1,999,668.64 in uncollected 2020 taxes, which are a lien upon real estate. Mr. Antry indicated he is required by NCGS 105-369(a) to advertise the liens for 2020 in a newspaper of general circulation in the county. Mr. Antry requested authorization to advertise the liens in the April 12, 2021 edition of *The Sun Journal*.

Commissioner Liner motioned to receive the report and authorize the Tax Administrator to advertise the liens in *The Sun Journal*, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and in a roll call vote approved 7-0.

DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS: FINANCE – BUDGET AMENDMENT CITY OF NEW BERN UTILITIES

Finance Director, Craig Warren, relayed that recently the County was notified by the City of New Bern Utilities Department that multiple billing errors had been discovered across several County utility accounts resulting in incorrect consumption and unbilled electricity usage of \$69,063.33. According to the City's Utility Department, these billing errors date back to August 2019 and consist of multiple keying errors on meter reads and the application of an incorrect multiplier at the Human Services Complex. The departments most impacted by these errors were Health, DSS, and most recently Parks and Recreation when they were notified in December of additional billing errors associated with lighting at Creekside Park. The City's customer service policy allows for the repayment of the unbilled utility usage over the course of 12 months; however, staff has elected to resolve this issue in the current year's budget so that it does not roll into the next fiscal year.

Mr. Warren stated that now that the current bills have been adjusted to reflect both the unbilled usage and corrected multiplier, a budget shortfall of \$203,500 is projected in the utility budgets of DSS, Health, and Parks and Recreation Departments. With the DSS portion reimbursable by the state at 50%, and actual revenues coming in higher than anticipated at the Health Department, staff proposed the following budget amendment increasing budgeted revenues in Health and DSS and appropriating additional fund balance of \$133,000 to cover the amount needed through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Commissioner Liner expressed discontent over this issue, given the City’s errors were being pressed upon the County. He inquired about documentation of proof and what other facilities and businesses have incurred similar billing inaccuracies. Mr. Liner wanted to know how this transpired without being detected through internal audits. He emphasized that people and businesses have been paying their bills on good faith.

County Manager, Jack Veit, shared information from a conversation with the City of New Bern Manager on this topic, and the burden this places on the County budget mid-year and going forward.

Mr. Warren added that he was informed that there were two defective transformers that were replaced in August, 2019 and that something happened within the system to affect the multiplier. He relayed the monthly billing was averaging \$3,000 at the Human Services building and now is at \$9,000; while Parks and Recreation was averaging \$4,500; now is at \$9,600 monthly.

Commissioner Mitchell stated that this does not inspire confidence in the City of New Bern’s electric billing department. She asked if there was proof that they had fixed the problem.

Commissioner Smith remarked that if the transformer went out and was calibrated wrong when replaced, then the problem would have been caught at that time, so she did not see how that made the difference.

Commissioner Jones highlighted that this creates a need to increase the fees being charged for lighting at Parks and Recreation to be able to offset this billing error.

After further discussion the Board expressed the desire not to pay the balance in one lump sum but to spread out payments over a one-year period as the City allows.

Commissioner Liner motioned to authorize the Budget Amendment in the amount of \$203,500, to be paid off on a monthly basis over a 12-month period. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved in a 7-0 roll call vote.

Health/DSS/Recreation

REVENUES	AMOUNT	EXPENDITURES	AMOUNT
1015040-33002	\$ 12,500	1015040-42300	\$ 12,500
Maternity/Medicaid		Utilities (Maternity)	
1015050-33002	\$ 12,500	1015050-42300	\$ 12,500
Child/Health Medicaid		Utilities (Child/Health)	
1015100-33002	\$ 12,500	1015100-42300	\$ 12,500
Adult Primary/Medicaid		Utilities (Adult Primary)	
1015211-33415	\$ 16,500	1015010-42300	\$ 12,500
Income Maint Staff Overhead		Utilities (Health Admin)	
1015212-33416	\$ 16,500	1015060-42300	\$ 12,500
DSS Service Staff Overhead		Utilities (Env Health)	
1010000-39901	\$133,000	1015060-42300	\$ 12,500
		Utilities (WIC Admin)	
		1015090-42300	\$ 12,500
		Utilities (Hospice)	
		1015210-42300	\$ 66,000
		Utilities (DSS)	

		1015910-42300	\$ 50,000
		Utilities (Parks and Rec)	
TOTAL	\$203,500	TOTAL	\$203,500

APPOINTMENTS

Pending

Chairman Jones reviewed the following pending appointments:

- Adult Care Home Advisory Committee
- Community Child Protection Team
- Coastal Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (CRSWMA)
- Cove City Library
- Craven Aging Planning Board
- Craven/Pamlico Regional Library
- Nursing Home Advisory Committee
- Regional Aging Advisory Board
- Voluntary Agriculture District Advisory Board

Commissioner Liner presented the Board with two applicants for the Craven Aging Planning Board: Anita Douglas and Lorraine Gardner. Commissioner Mitchell motioned to proceed with their appointments, seconded by Commissioner McCabe. Both were appointed by acclamation.

Current

Fire Tax Commissioners

Commissioner Mark motioned to reappoint Allen Gaskins and Chris Wetherington. Commissioner Mitchell motioned to reappoint Dallas Brown. There being no additional nominations, Mr. Gaskins, Mr. Wetherington and Mr. Brown were reappointed by acclamation.

Commissioner Liner deferred the reappointment of Martin Hernandez until the Board's next meeting.

Fireman's Relief Fund Board of Trustees

Chairman Jones motioned to reappoint Theron McCabe and Carl Jarman. There being no additional nominations, Commissioner McCabe and Mr. Jarman were reappointed by acclamation.

Upcoming

Chairman Jones reviewed the following upcoming expiring terms to boards and committees and asked Commissioners to reach out to those in their district to discuss their interest in reappointment.

Fire Tax Commissioners

- Howard Carrier-TWP 9 (*since 2/2013, 4 terms served*)
- Marjorie Gonzales-TWP 9 (*since 2/2013, 4 terms served*)
- Chris Register-TWP 9 (*since 2/2013, 4 terms served*)

Hwy 70 Corridor Committee

- Danny Walsh (*since 2003*)

Fireman's Relief Fund Board of Trustees

- Wesley Griffin – TWP 2 Little Swift Creek (*1st appointed March, 2019*)
- Roger Wetherington-TWP 9 (*since 2/2013, 4 terms served*)

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Initial Offer to Purchase Real Property – Sand Hill Rd., Dover, NC (Parcel # 3-058-071)

County Attorney, Arey Grady, reported that Craven County has received an offer in the amount of \$1,750.00 for the property located on Sand Hill Rd., Dover NC, which was acquired through a tax foreclosure, with past due taxes and costs of foreclosure totaling \$2,410.39. The tax value of this property is \$2,700.00.

Should the Board of Commissioners approve this transaction, the proposed resolution should be adopted, which will in turn authorize advertisement for upset bids. Once the upset bid process is concluded, this transaction will be brought back before the Board of Commissioners for final approval.

Commissioner Mitchell motioned to adopt the following resolution approving the transaction and to advertise for upset bids, seconded by Commissioner McCabe and approved unanimously.

WHEREAS, Craven County owns certain real property identified as Tax Parcel Number 3-058-071 (hereinafter “the Real Property”), the Real Property having been acquired by Craven County in deed recorded in Book 2562, Page 880 in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Craven County; and,

WHEREAS, Craven County has received an Offer to Purchase the Real Property, a copy of said offer being attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and,

WHEREAS, the Craven County Board of Commissioners is authorized to sell Craven County’s interest in real property pursuant to North Carolina General Statute §160A-269.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CRAVEN COUNTY THAT:

1. The Craven County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes the initiation of the upset bid process for the Real Property by advertising notice of the offer to purchase in accordance with the provisions of North Carolina General Statute §160A-269.
2. The County Manager, the Assistant County Manager, the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners and/or County Attorney are authorized to take all actions necessary to accomplish the transactions contemplated by this Resolution.

ADOPTED THIS 1st DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2021.

PETITIONS OF CITIZENS – GENERAL TOPICS

There were no citizens from the public that signed up to speak.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

County Manager, Jack Veit, requested Mr. Warren to present the Commissioners with the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for year ending June 30, 2020. He indicated the auditors would be presenting in two week and this would give the Board time to review and prepare. Mr. Veit expressed his gratitude to Mr. Warren and his financial team. Commissioner Jones referred everyone to page 17 to make note that the beginning and ending Fund Balances only had a difference of \$5,392 for the entire year and how that speaks highly of county staff.

Mr. Veit reported that Craven County has received correspondence back from the State Attorney General’s Office in reference to the letter sent in regards to Suddenlink. He read from a portion of the letter, highlighting the AG’s sense of urgency and willingness to meet and discuss further. Mr. Veit indicated he continues to have conversations with one of the Suddenlink Vice Presidents and encouraged the Board to send any complaints they receive to the Admin office as further evidence.

Mr. Veit referenced the need for a Work Session and requested the Board to check their calendar for availability on March 15th from 10:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., immediately following their regular morning session. There was consensus to schedule the work session at that time.

At the request of Chairman Jones, Mr. Veit provided an update on the Craven-Pamlico Re-Entry Council. He reviewed that the Board had given them \$20,000 to fill a gap while awaiting an RFP from the State. He highlighted that the ECC Council of Government (COG) had been the administrative agency of the grant. Last week the RFP had dropped, leaving a funding gap of \$10,000 until March 1, 2021.

There was discussion amongst the Commissioners regarding other funding options, what this meant in the interim, and the benefits gained from this program.

Commissioner Liner motioned to authorize \$10,000 for the Craven-Pamlico Re-Entry Program to carry it through until March 1, 2021. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and carried in a 7-0 roll call vote.

Commissioners/Special Appropriations

REVENUES	AMOUNT	EXPENDITURES	AMOUNT
1010000-39901 Fund Balance Current Year	\$10,000	1014111-49671 Special Approp/CC Re-entry	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$10,000	TOTAL	\$10,000

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Mark had nothing to report.

Commissioner Mitchell expressed her thanks to everyone for their condolences upon the death of her father, and for their prayers and concerns while she and her family had Covid. She reported that the Viet Nam Veterans Traveling Wall would be coming to New Bern the week of April 6-11 and would be located at Lawsons Creek. Mrs. Mitchell reminded the Board of the ribbon cutting on March 9th at 2:00pm at the VOLT Center for the Law Enforcement Simulator and remarked how that capability will enhance local law enforcement agents in conflict resolution. She reported that Senator Tillis announced a \$102.9 million grant from FEMA to NC Emergency Management today to aid in vaccination distributions. Mrs. Mitchell requested that discussion about 2 axle vehicles going to the convenience sites be added to the work session in March.

Commissioner Liner provided the Board with some handouts from a recent Trillium meeting and requested that Dave Peterson appear at the next Board of Commissioners' meeting to present a PowerPoint on the Medicaid transformation which will be going live next year. He stated it is important for them all to understand the impact this is going to have. Mr. Liner thanked the Commissioners for submitting their top ten legislative priorities to him.

Commissioner Smith stated her intentions have been to visit constituents in her District to promote taking the Covid vaccine, but she will wait until she can speak personally to Scott Harrelson to determine how to reach them. She stated that some community members are more susceptible to Covid, yet may be reluctant to receive the vaccine, and she wants to appeal to everyone to take the vaccine when offered.

Commissioner McCabe had nothing to report.

Commissioner Bucher had nothing to report.

Chairman Jones had nothing to report.

At 8:08 p.m. Commissioner Liner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved unanimously.

Chairman Jason R. Jones
Craven County Board of Commissioners

Nan Holton
Clerk to the Board