

January 5, 2021 (Recessed)

**MINUTES  
BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
RECESSED MEETING**

Both Burke County and the State of North Carolina had previously declared a state of emergency which was ongoing as of January 5, 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Following the N.C. Governor's Executive Order limiting mass gatherings and to protect the health of all meeting participants, the Burke County Board of Commissioners met in a recessed session at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom, a virtual meeting / teleconferencing platform with simultaneous communication. The Commissioners, the County Manager, the County Attorney, the Clerk and County staff as well as any citizens that joined the virtual meeting, could hear, and see one another for the duration of the meeting. Citizens that joined by telephone, could only hear the meeting. The meeting was streamed live on the County's YouTube channel, BurkeCountyNC, and it was broadcast later on the local cable systems. During the meeting, the Clerk shared each agenda item on her computer screen so that meeting participants could see the item being discussed and the agenda, in its entirety, was posted to the County's website, [www.burkenc.org](http://www.burkenc.org), several days prior to the meeting. A verbal roll call was conducted.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman  
Scott Mulwee, Vice Chairman  
Wayne F. Abele, Sr.  
Johnnie W. Carswell  
Maynard M. Taylor

**STAFF PRESENT:** Bryan Steen, County Manager  
Margaret Pierce, Deputy County Manager/Finance Director  
J.R. Simpson, II, County Attorney  
Kay Honeycutt Draughn, Clerk to the Board

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Brittain called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Motion: To approve the agenda.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Scott Mulwee, Vice Chairman
<b>AYES:</b>	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Johnnie W. Carswell, Maynard M. Taylor and Wayne F. Abele, Sr.

**ITEMS FOR DECISION**

**CM - FY 20-21 BUDGET FOLLOW UP**

Information from the agenda packet:

As you may recall during the budget process, the County Manager wanted to hold off on certain expenditures until later in the budget year to receive and

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evaluate actual sales tax distributions and see if the trend was such that addressing the additional expenditures was warranted.

Budgetary Effect: Increase revenue and expenses by \$575,000. Net effect is zero.

Increase sales tax revenue by \$575,000.

Increase budgeted salaries and benefits by \$300,000 to fund a 1% bonus to all County employees based on their annual earnings for 2020. This would be paid out January 22 for employees employed as of January 15.

Increase budgeted salaries and benefits by \$75,000 to fund a 1.5% cost of living increase for all County employees. This increase would be effective beginning January 9. The balance of funds needed for this increase is already included in the FY 20-21 budget.

Increase budgeted vehicle purchases for EMS by \$200,000 to fund a new ambulance purchase. The balance of funds needed for this purchase have been received from an insurance settlement on an EMS vehicle wreck.

County Manager's Recommendation: Approval is recommended.

County Manager Steen reported staff was very cautious during the budgeting process based on the revenue projections that were received from the State. Six (6) months has passed since the FY 20-21 budget was adopted and property tax collections are running ahead of budget. He then asked the Finance Director to address sales tax revenues. Margaret Pierce, Deputy County Manager/Finance Director, reported the State projected that the county sales tax revenue would be down approximately 25 percent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and encouraged counties to reduce their budgets accordingly. She said that Burke County did decrease its budget somewhat, but not 25 percent. The sales tax reports from October arrived yesterday and Burke County is up, over last year for the same four (4) months, by approximately 14.5 percent. Ms. Pierce said not only has Burke County not seen a decline, but the County has also seen an increase in sales tax, which is why the requested funds for this item should be available. First, County Manager Steen said they originally delayed a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and included an amount equal to one (1) percent in the budget; however, now a one and a half (1.5) percent COLA is requested which would require an additional \$75,000. Second, he said local governments across the state have searched for ways to reward their staff for their service during the COVID-19 pandemic and a one (1) percent (one time) bonus would acknowledge and reward their service. The third requested item, County Manager Steen said, is to purchase a new ambulance to replace one that was totaled in a crash and another unit with high mileage and a blown motor. He said the County can use the insurance funds and appropriate up to \$200,000 to purchase a new ambulance. He further advised it can take three (3) to six (6) months to receive a newly ordered ambulance and put it into service.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions and comments from the Board. In reference to the Sheriff's decision item heard at the pre-agenda meeting, Commissioner Taylor said the

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reason he voted for the Sheriff’s item was not because he thought the County should add another employee. He noted that both the National Association of Counties and North Carolina Association of County Commissioners recommended during last year’s budget season against increasing wages and employees, and Burke County has ignored both those warnings. Commissioner Taylor expressed concern over raising employee salaries mid-year and said it sets an unhealthy precedent. He further expressed displeasure over the “out of control” budget and noted that last year the auditors told him that in five (5) years the cost to run the County has doubled per month. Commissioner Taylor said it would better serve the Commissioners, the County, and the employees if this item was considered for next year’s budget. However, he agreed that the County should proceed with purchasing the ambulance because insurance is paying half of the cost.

**Motion: To approve the budget amendment as presented.**

**Increase sales tax revenue by \$575,000.**

**Increase budgeted salaries and benefits by \$300,000 to fund a 1% bonus to all County employees based on their annual earnings for 2020. This would be paid out January 22 for employees employed as of January 15.**

**Increase budgeted salaries and benefits by \$75,000 to fund a 1.5% cost of living increase for all County employees. This increase would be effective beginning January 9. The balance of funds needed for this increase is already included in the FY 20-21 budget.**

**Increase budgeted vehicle purchases for EMS by \$200,000 to fund a new ambulance purchase. The balance of funds needed for this purchase have been received from an insurance settlement on an EMS vehicle wreck.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED [4 TO 1]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Scott Mulwee, Vice Chairman
<b>AYES:</b>	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Wayne F. Abele, Sr. and Johnnie W. Carswell
<b>NAYS:</b>	Maynard M. Taylor

**CM – RECLASSIFICATION OF ENGINEER/GENERAL SERVICES DIRECTOR TO GENERAL SERVICES DIRECTOR AND RECLASSIFICATION OF ASSOCIATE ENGINEER TO ASSISTANT GENERAL SERVICES DIRECTOR**

County Manager Steen reported information regarding the reclassification request as follows:

Burke County’s Engineer/General Services Director position has recently become vacant. The position and job duties have been reviewed by the County Manager, Deputy County Manager/Planning Director and Human Resources Director. During this review process, it was determined that the duties of the position that require a greater degree of attention and focus are related to the efficient management and operations of the various units that comprise the General Service Department. The engineering aspects of the position can be performed by outside engineering firms, as has historically been the case over the past several years.

The job duties of the Associate Engineer position have also been reviewed to ensure proper organizational alignment in association with the recommended changes to the Engineer/General Services Director position. It is recommended

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that the title of the Associate Engineer position be reclassified to Assistant General Services Director.

County Manager Steen reported during his tenure there have been three (3) individuals in the General Services Director position and that the position has required the applicant to have an engineering degree/background. However, he said he needs a manager more than an engineer and that the County has typically utilized a local engineering firm for engineering services. He expressed the need for flexibility and while an engineering background would be helpful, he said it would not be an absolute requirement. For consistency, he requested both titles be reclassified to General Services Director (GSD) and Assistant GSD. However, the paygrades would remain the same for both positions, he said.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions and comments from the Board. County Manager Steen responded to questions from Commissioner Taylor.

**Motion: To reclassify the Engineer/General Services Director position, pay grade 34, to General Services Director, pay grade 34 and to reclassify the Associate Engineer position, pay grade 27 to the Assistant General Services Director, pay grade 27 and update the Burke County pay plan.**

**RESULT:** APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]  
**MOVER:** Maynard M. Taylor, Commissioner  
**AYES:** Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Johnnie W. Carswell, Maynard M. Taylor and Wayne F. Abele, Sr.

**COMMENTS**

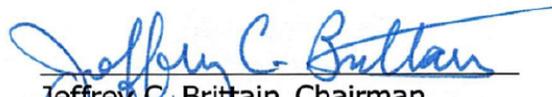
Commissioner Taylor said he attended the receiving for former County Commissioner Bruce Hawkins' mother and was told to thank the Board for everything they have done for him and his mother.

**ADJOURN**

**Motion: To adjourn at 4:14 p.m.**

**RESULT:** APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]  
**MOVER:** Maynard M. Taylor, Commissioner  
**AYES:** Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Johnnie W. Carswell, Maynard M. Taylor and Wayne F. Abele, Sr.

Approved this February 16<sup>th</sup> day of 2021.

  
Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman  
Burke Co. Board of Commissioners

Attest:



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Kay Honeycutt Draughn, CMC, NCMCC  
Clerk to the Board