

**August 9, 2023**

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular meeting on Wednesday, August 9, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Martin County Governmental Center, Superior Courtroom at 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina.

## **ASSEMBLY**

Present in the Superior Courtroom: Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond, Jr., Commissioner Joe R. Ayers, Commissioner Emily Biggs, Commissioner David “Skip” (Webex) Gurganus, County Manager U. James Bennett, Finance Officer Cindy Ange, County Attorney Benjamin Eisner, and Clerk to the Board Julia Rease.

Others Present: Mayor of Bear Grass Charlotte Griffin, Mayor of Robersonville Tina Brown, Mayor of Parmele Jerry McCrary, District Director Kimberly Mack of Congressman Don Davis’ Office, Sheriff Tim Manning, Deputy Sheriff Drew Robinson, and a host of community leaders.

Chairman Smith welcomed all in attendance and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

## **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Commissioner Biggs made a **Motion** to approve the agenda as presented **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Commissioner Biggs conducted the pledge of allegiance. Father Vijaya Babu “Sleeva” Katta of the Holy Trinity Catholic Church (Williamston, NC) provided an invocation.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

### **Ms. Ginger Moore - Martin General Hospital**

Ms. Ginger – Ms. Ginger stated that she was a Clinical Education Director at Martin General Hospital who m interacted with everyone on a one on one basis. Ms. Ginger felt that everyone took a good situation for granted in having a good hospital and staff. There were things that Ms. Ginger stated she could have done better at as an employee. Ms. Ginger stated that everyone wanted to point fingers, play the blame game, but the hospital was closed at the end of the day. Emotions of anger and sadness were expected, but Ms. Ginger felt that all differences needed to be put aside to figure the best plan moving forward. Ms. Ginger stated that everyone could have done something different to change the outcome, but everyone needed to come together.

### **Ms. BJ Warren – Martin General Hospital**

Ms. Warren stated that she was employed with Martin General Hospital for 29 years and her life changed with the closing of the hospital on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Ms. Warren commented that her home and family were snatched from her. Ms. Warren reported on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, there were patients who were empathizing with her about the closure of the hospital. Ms. Warren felt that she should have been the person empathizing with the patients instead. Ms. Warren stated that that loss of the hospital was like a death as there was no warning or preparation. In continuation, Ms. Warren commented that County residents were uncertain as to how much was done to prevent the closure of the hospital. Ms. Warren stated that it would be a while before anyone could recover

from the situation and many felt betrayed. The hospital closure would reportedly affect the residents, Emergency Medical Service personal that were already short staffed, physician offices, nursing homes, pharmacy's, clinics, restaurants, and hotels. Ms. Warren commented on the patients that had transportation issues to Martin General Hospital and how they would have to travel to a further destination for medical services. Next, Ms. Warren discussed the Emergency Medical Transport having to travel outside of their jurisdictions and gas costs for this change. Ms. Warren gave an example of a patient who had cardiac arrest history and declined services due to needing transportation back to Martin County. Ms. Warren called for urgent action as she stated that this was a time sensitive issue. Lastly, Ms. Warren wanted to know how the hospital closure occurred and how the issue could be fixed.

**Ms. Princess Wilson – Martin General Hospital**

Ms. Wilson stated that she spoke on the behalf of 420 people that signed a petition. This petition was stated to have 1,384 signatures online. Ms. Wilson read a written statement “Ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, it is deeply concerning that the impending closure of a hospital was known, but no proactive steps were taken to address the critical issue. The community of 22,000 citizens, health and wellbeing are at stake and the lack of attention reflects a disheartening disregard for the welfare of those who depend on this facility. Urgent attention and accountability are needed to rectify the situation and ensure a viable solution for our healthcare needs.” Ms. Wilson commented that she was in attendance to propose a crucial initiative that addressed the imminent closure of the hospital. Ms. Wilson recommended hiring a professional team to actively seek out hospital companies interested in leasing the facility within a specific timeframe, and in the event at lease could be secured, the option to sell should be explored immediately. Ms. Wilson asked for reassurance that the community remained well informed and supported during this transition, Ms. Wilson stated it was essential that comprehensive information about the impending hospital closure and alternative medical resources available nearby, and Ms. Wilson stated that this information would help alleviate concerns and uncertainties among residents. Recognizing the potential impact on the local workforce. act suggests collaborating with our counties businesses, to decimate job listings and possibly organize the job fair. This proactive approach will contribute to maintaining stability and providing opportunities for those affected by the hospital's closure. By taking these steps, Ms. Wilson felt the challenging situation could be navigated with empathy and determination prioritizing the wellbeing of our community and securing a positive future for all residents of the county. Ms. Wilson read from the petition as stated: “To whom this May Concern We the undersigned residents of Williamston strongly urged to immediately reopen their Martin General Hospital. As members of this community, we believe the access to quality healthcare the fundamental right and an existential service that should be readily available to all residents. The closure of Martin General Hospital has a severe impact on our community living with leaving us with limited medical facilities and an increased burden on our neighboring hospitals. This situation has resulted in longer time to seek medical attention, putting the health and wellbeing of our residents at risk, especially in emergencies. We acknowledge that this decision to close the hospital may have been driven by financial challenges or other factors, but we firmly believe that investing in our community's health is a crucial priority. Reopening Martin General Hospital would not only address the imminent health care needs of our residents but also contribute to the overall growth and development of our city. Furthermore, reopening the hospital will create employment opportunities for healthcare professionals supporting our local economy and fostering a strong sense of community well-being. We call upon the regulatory authorities, government officials and healthcare organizations to take immediate action and reopening

Martin General Hospital. Together, let us ensure that our community's health needs are met and every resident has access to the medical care they deserve. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that you will carefully consider our planned works toward the timely reopening of Martin General Hospital.”

**Mr. Alonzo Brown – Martin General Hospital**

Mr. Alonzo Brown reported speaking with some of the Board members as well as the County Manager. Mr. Brown commented that the County was facing a crisis with the hospital closure. Mr. Brown stated that the hospital was shut down because somebody did not do what “they” were supposed to do. Mr. Brown referred to two articles that stated Qorum Health reached out to “them” and Affinity Health Partners reached out to the hospital and the Martin County Commissioners. Mr. Brown stated that Affinity wanted to buy the hospital from Qorum, but the County Manager and County Commissioners reject it. Mr. Brown reported being told that “they” put too much pressure on “them” that “they” backed out. Mr. Brown stated the County Commissioners knew that Quorum wanted to leave five years ago, but they refused because “they” got \$17 million. Mr. Brown commented that the \$17 million was seen as enough cushion to ride on. Mr. Brown stated that this \$17 million could not be spent for 15 years and the contract was for 30 years. Mr. Brown commented that “they” were able to take the interest and the dividends off the money to spend it. 15 years reportedly came, and Mr. Brown reported that “they” got the money. Mr. Brown stated that it didn’t matter what Qorum wanted to do, because “they” didn’t want “them” to get out of the 30-year contract. Mr. Brown stated that this was wrong. Mr. Brown stated that East Carolina University (ECU) reached out to take the hospital, which would have been a good deal for everybody. Next, Mr. Brown referenced a statement about Qorum reportedly asking for a meeting to negotiate the hospital. Mr. Brown read the statement: “It is unclear as to all the Commissioners that were involved. They postponed the meeting. August 1<sup>st</sup>, they couldn’t meet because they had to be in Austin, Texas for a meeting. Mr. Brown asked, “Do you realize that this is Martin County people that you affected and the City of Williamson is affected by the hospital that is shut down. Because y’all did not care. Y’all did not care. Mr. Brown was reminded of the rules for public comments but continued to make his public comment. Mr. Brown reported, “What happened here is that they had a congress conference meeting in Texas and they denied everybody to be at that meeting with Quorum to save the hospital. That was wrong. They did us wrong. They did us wrong. The commissioners do not care about you at all. They got that money and that's all they concern about.”

Chairman Smith informed Mr. Brown that he could continue speaking, but could not make a statement directly towards individuals. Mr. Brown took his seat.

**Ms. Bernadette Rodgers - Smiling Faces Daycare Center Sewer**

Ms. Bernadette Rodgers – Ms. Rodgers stated: “It was approximately 23 years ago that the County Board of Commissioners made a commitment to me to fulfill a promise to extend sewer to Smiling Faces Childcare Center. To date, this promise has not been fulfilled. A connection could exist right now, a fourth of a mile from my facility. I appeal to you tonight for fulfillment of your promise to provide sewer to our center. Smiling Faces Childcare Center has been in operation for 36 years. Your promise to me has been for 20 years. We opened as a result of my genuine love for children and to meet the desperate needs of working parents and the workforce in our community. Our Center serves children between the ages of birth through 12. Since our initial opening in 1987, we continue to serve approximately 120 children each day. Our center occupies an 8,000 square foot building with 16 bathrooms, which dictate our desperate need for

sewer. Smiling Faces was the first minority owned childcare center to receive a five star status within a five county radius in February of 2002. The Center is the only five star center in this in Martin County right now, with the exception of pre K. Our license serves as an indication of our hard work and most importantly, our commitment to providing quality childcare for the residents of this county.” Ms. Rodgers continued with her public comment stating, “Smiling Faces Childcare Center employs approximately 25 employees on a daily basis and has done so consistently for 28 years. As of today, August 9, the need for quality childcare continues to exist, as evident by approximately 80 to 100 children who remain on Martin County Department of Social Services waiting lists. As it relates to infrastructure, Smiling Faces Childcare Center contributes over \$1.4 million annually to this local economy. This money turns over more than 10 times in our community through the purchase of food, utilities, clothing and gas. Small businesses alone in Martin County contribute to the 70 to 75% of the revenue for the city and county. This fact alone makes it evident that small businesses are the nucleus of our community. Unlike many of the industries that have been recruited in the past year and given incentives, like tax breaks, water, and sewer, and they have walked away in one or two years and closed their doors with short or no notice. The small businesses that exist in our community today, they continue to work hard and we endure hard times to find a way to keep our doors open. Good economic development, especially rural economic development encompasses many aspects including the recruitment and support a small businesses and working with many partners to ensure a vibrant total business community. Smiling Faces Childcare Center provides a service that is unique and vital to the success of our local workforce. Tonight I appear before you with many mixed emotions; disappointment, confusion, anger, disgust, and frustration that after 36 years of being in business and a sewer connection is only one four of a mile from my business. Why has it not been a priority for each of you? I have appeared before many of you, Town Commissioners included. How many of you have visited our center? Worthy of note, approximately eight months ago, I was told by one of the Commissioners. “We’re gonna go in there tonight and we're going to vote for you to have sewer.” Of course, you know, I haven't heard from that since. Not long ago a Commissioner and a County employee made the comment to me that the county is not in the sewer business. You know what, that makes me angry. I took offense to that comment because it was a personal comment and definitely not a professional comment. Apparently you're not in the hospital business either and let me tell you, please don't confuse costs with quality. I am here this evening to remind you that our children are forefront of the situation for our need for sewer. Children are our future and they deserve the best we have to give and to give them anything less would be a disservice to the quality of life that they rightfully deserve. I have been patient in waiting for action from the Town and the County collectively, in regards to sewer connection tour to our center. Commitment comes with a price and that price is to ensure that commitments off the field. The facts support my appeal to each of you commissioners this evening, I implore you to see through the veneer coding and stand firm on what most importantly is right. I appeal to you to fulfill your commitment as elected officials of a promise made to me on trust. I appealed to you for your trust and responsibility as elected officials. A trust and in fact and passed over 120 families in our local labor force. So what is trust? Truly it is relying on individuals, boards, and elected officials to do what they have promised. Tonight I am requesting the County Commissioners bold initiative to keep a promise of trust made to me hopefully in good faith over 23 years ago. Thank you”

**Ms. Tanya Bowen – Martin General Hospital**

Ms. Tanya Bowen stated, “I have worked at Martin General Hospital for 24 years. I started at age 19. I have literally grown up in this hospital. I have worked beside so many very quality,

dedicated professionals, who have a lot of heart ,and are very passionate about serving the hospital within this community. To have a county you have to have housing, you have to have jobs ,and you have to have health care. Without that nobody's gonna to want to come and live in this community. We already have an issue with jobs and now we have a bigger issue with jobs because we're all out of one. We will look for employment somewhere, but more than likely there's no other options except for outside our county. There can be a lot of finger pointing. Corporations make decisions that we have no say about that affects how businesses run. Sometimes corporations when they feel there's no way out of a lease. They make a way out. We feel betrayed. We feel let down. Honestly, Sunday night I normally prepare to go to work the next day and I've got my whole agenda going. I was lost. It was like our house burned down and we had nowhere to go. Moving forward from today, instead of doing the blame game, what are we going to do from here on out? We need to come together with the community and Commissioners. Anybody who has any ideas of how to quickly turn this thing back around for the citizens of this counting. Time is tissue, they teach us that all the time in medical field. Time is tissue. You're having a heart attack, you're having a stroke, the longer it takes to get that medication that only emergency rooms have, the more tissue you're going to have that's lost and will not be able to regain. So emergency care close to home is very dire to the citizens of Martin County. This county has a lot of potential with the future interstate coming through. Our decisions today can grow this county for the future. This county can make decisions that can improve the quality of the livelihood of this county, bring more jobs, and bring more health care now that we don't have any. This County could be a place where people drive down the interstate, they stop, and they spend their money. If we don't do something now with healthcare and people leaving this county, when they drive, they will drive on by.” Ms. Bowen talked about people wanting to move to the country and away from the city, but these same people would not want to if there were no hospital. Lastly, Ms. Bowen stated that what was done was done, and that the focus needed to be on options moving forward.

Chairman Smith asked Attorney Tom Stukes for a timeline of efforts made by the Board and staff to resolve the hospital issue. Chairman Smith stated that Attorney Stukes was one of the attorneys that made the original hospital lease and had experience in the hospital field.

#### **Attorney Tom Stukes – Martin General Hospital**

In 1998, Attorney Stukes reported that the Martin General Lease was created and he was apart of the making. Attorney Stukes gave information on his experience working with hospitals. Qourum was stated to be a private equity healthcare chain that was in a Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization since 2020. Qourum reportedly was trying to find a way to get out of the hospital lease and they did before by bringing in a potential successor, Affinity Health Partners. Due diligence was reportedly conducted, the results were not positive, and Qourum was informed that Affinity was not a good successor to operate the hospital. Attorney Stukes reported on the Board and staff efforts to work with Qourum and stated that both the Board and Qourum were looking for successors to operate the hospital. East Carolina University (ECU Health System) and Atrium were two examples of many operators that were contacted by the Board to find another successor.

Next, Attorney Stukes explained a feasibility study was conducted to see if the hospital could be reconfigured for better results. Qourum then contacted Attorney Stukes on August 18, 2023 in regards to proposing a quick sale or filing bankruptcy. Attorney Stukes reported that the bankruptcy paperwork was already prepared at that time and a term sheet. The terms from the

term sheet for the Board to decide on, were not acceptable in Attorney Stukes experience. Attorney Stukes explained that the terms would allow Qourum to take money from accounts as they left and leave the County to pick up liability issues. Attorney Stukes also stated that the term sheet had a lot of vagueness and required more questions to be inquired. The next issue was Qourum giving the Board 5 business days to decide if the terms were acceptable, and if not, Qourum would file for bankruptcy. Attorney Stukes reported that time was brought with Qourum so the Board could meet on August 1, 2023. A proposal was made regarding reconfiguring services to make operations feasible going forward and Attorney Stukes stated Qourum did not respond to this proposal. Attorney Stukes stated his opinion that the offer of terms from Qourum was really a cover up for Qourum filing bankruptcy. Attorney Stukes stated that the terms being offered to the Board was just to say that Qourum offered them, the County declined, and Qourum is filing for bankruptcy in response to that.

Lastly, Attorney Stukes stated that the case was in bankruptcy court and the court would control steps moving forward. County Attorney Benjamin Eisner, whom is also a bankruptcy attorney, was announced as the firm to handle the case on behalf of the County. The bankruptcy case was reportedly filed in Delaware.

Chairman Smith stated that he was aware for the public comment section going beyond the 30-minute period, but he wanted multiple people to make them due to the issues at hand. Chairman Smith asked that County Manager James Bennett to explain the amount of funds spent on lawyers and consultants that were experts in finding solutions to this matter.

County Manager Bennett explained that the Board sought out remedies to try Qourum engaged in operating the hospital and assembled a Hospital Committee (Chairman Ronnie Smith, County Manager U. James Bennett, Finance Officer Cindy Ange, Dr. Dhruva Chawla, Martin-Tyrell-Washington Health Department Director Wes Gray.) During that period, the Board was also trying to negotiate with Qourum. Manager Bennett informed the audience that the Board visited hospital operators, including visiting Vidant about 2- 3 times, to speak with Chief Executive Operators (CEO's) about operating Martin General. County Manager Bennett added that letters were also sent out the hospital operators. Mrs. Bowen, who was noted as a Vidant Board member, reportedly attended meetings with Vidant. Even with Mrs. Bowen, County Manager Bennett announced that Vidant declined to operate the hospital. County Manager Bennett stated that \$13 million was in the Hospital Fund and was offered to help an operator with Martin General. County Manager Bennett stated that this funding was declined as well. Cape Fear was reportedly contacted next as they took on a similar situation as Martin General in Bladen County. The negotiations started moving in a good direction, but ended unsuccessfully. County Manager Bennett named Sentara, Atrium, Novant, and UNC Health Systems as examples of many hospital operators that were contacted by the County to resolve this situation. County Manager Bennett added that while the negotiations with hospital operators were active, the Board hired a consultant from the Ascendient group. Manager Bennett gave a breakdown of funding utilized in efforts to find an operator as of July 1, 2023; Ascendient Consultants: \$133,192.13, Attorney: \$129,000, and Jarrard Phillips \$50,000. The total balance was announced to be \$320,974.00 and that the Board hired this team of experts to resolve this situation. Manager Bennett mentioned Commissioner Gurganus, whom was remotely attending due to illness, wore himself down to find solutions as well as the other Board members. County Manager Bennett stated that it was not true when comments were made about the Board not working to save the hospital. County Manager Bennett stated that attorney fees were still being accumulated, which was currently

\$1600.00. This amount was a negotiated discount and without the discount, attorney fees would have been more expensive.

County Manager Bennett discussed the County Attorney being a Bankruptcy that could have taken on the hospital's bankruptcy case. Unfortunately, County Attorney Eisner was not licensed in Delaware, but was able to find another attorney to represent the County. It was reported that a couple of hospital providers would be discussed in Closed Session and that the Board were dedicated to ensure medical health for Martin County. County Manager Bennett stated that Qourum Health did a good job at making the County the scapegoat in this situation. A term sheet from Qourum was referenced as a confidential document. Qourum reportedly caused a communication barrier between hospital staff and the Board by informing the Board to remain silent on this matter and hospital staff were reportedly told not to communicate with the Board.

Chairman Smith asked County Manager Bennett to explain what the Tax rate would have been if the Board accepted the terms from Qourum. Manager Bennett informed the audience that the term sheet asked Martin County to take on the operation of the hospital and Martin County Government decided that they did not have the expertise to do so in 1998. Martin County Government decided to search for an operator, wherein Community Health Systems (CHS) was chosen. If the County were to take on operations of the hospital, the 210 dedicated employees would become county employees/ County Manager Bennett reported if the average salary of a hospital employee was \$40,000, the County would have to pay 210 employees this salary equaling to well over \$8 million. In addition, human resources and finance would have to add 13 cent for every dollar to cover retirement costs, equaling to around \$11 million. County Manager Bennett stated that the current County budget was at \$33 million. The tax rate was at 81 cents currently and in order to take on the additional 210 employees, the tax rate would increase to \$1.49. County Manager Bennett explained how this new tax rate would increase tax values of different sized homes and how this cost would not be acceptable for residents to pay. It was reported that Qourum knew about 8 months ago that they would file for bankruptcy, but did not inform the County. County Manager Bennett stated that there would be a meeting on Thursday at 2:00 p.m., with Williamston Town Manager Eric Pearson, Williamston Fire Chief Michael Peaks, and Emergency Management Director Jody Griffin to discuss health care being delivered at this time. County Manager Bennett ensured that the County was working on fixing the issue and that the Board would be transparent unless it was to negotiate a contract. County Manager stated he understood the community.

County Manager Bennett began answering questions as they came from the audience during his explanation regarding Affinity Health Partners not being a viable option for the County. Audience members began to interrupt County Manager Bennett until Chairman Smith calmed the crowd enough to continue the meeting.

Commissioner Ayers stated that Commissioner Gurganus was not able to attend in person due to a family and household member having COVID. Commissioner Ayers stated that Commissioner Gurganus joined the meeting via Webex for safety reasons and to be professionally correct in protecting those attending the meeting in person. Commissioner Ayers stated that Commissioner Gurganus was very passionate about serving as Commissioner and the citizens of the County and was deeply hurt that he could not attend the meeting in person. Commissioner Gurganus was stated to be a member of the Hospital Board.

Commissioner Gurganus stated that he wanted to address the crowd and apologize for not being attending in person. Commissioner Gurganus stated that his mother, who tested positive for COVID, lived his he and his wife. He felt that it would be irresponsible on his behalf to walk into a room of people with the situation at his home going on. Commissioner Gurganus stated that he felt everyone’s sentiments and that this was a terrible situation. He agreed with the fact that there had been hours and hours and hours of work into trying to figure out a solution to this issue. Commissioner Gurganus agreed with an audience member who talked about Affinity speaking with the Board and that Attorney Stukes reported on that situation. Commissioner Gurganus added that Affinity essentially told the Board to give them the hospital and worry about the funding later, which was not a good deal. As for trying to negotiate with Qourum, Commissioner Gurganus reported that he honestly had some of the same sentiments. Commissioner Gurganus stated that Board had 12 days and he did not know if talking to Qourum would have made a difference. Commissioner Gurganus stated that it felt like this was a done deal. Commissioner Gurganus stated that the fact that the Board could’ve spoken with Qourum and did not after being requested, he would never know if negotiating would’ve worked. Commissioner Gurganus stated that he could explain as to why the Board did not negotiate with Qourum, but he would live it to someone else

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Vice Chairman Bond Jr.** made the **Motion** to Approve the Consent Agenda, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs.

Commissioner Ayers asked about the Southern Albemarle Delegates item and a listing of names not being in the agenda packet. Clerk to the Board Julia Rease stated that the list was turned in late and there was a member that was in question for health reasons. Commissioner Ayers asked if the item would be null and void and if the Council of Aging Board Appointment was the same as there were no names listed for that Board. County Manager Bennett stated that a member of the Board had to be appointed to that Board as the previous Commissioner resigned from Council on Aging Board.

**Motion** was **Carried** with the Southern Albemarle Delegates item being removed from the agenda.

- 1. **Minutes** –July 12, 2023 Regular and July 12, 2023 Closed
- 2. **Financial Report – July 2023**
- 3. **Tax Assessor – Tax Refund Request – July 2023**
- 4. **Tax Assessor – Tax Relief Orders – July 2023**

Year Levy	Lname	Fname	Reason	Value	Total
2023	Arnold	Shaneka Yvonne	-----	\$56.96	\$83.93
2023	Services	MC Residential	-----	\$752.50	\$752.50
<b>Total Real &amp; Personal Releases</b>					<b>\$836.43</b>
2023	Bland	Monique and Anthony	Clerk Error	\$7,750.00	\$273.50
2023	Bland	Monique and Anthony	Clerk Error	\$ 0.00	\$780.00
2023	Bland	Monique and Anthony	Clerk Error	\$ 0.00	\$585.00



2023	Jr.	James D. Hardison	Vac. Land should not have a fee	\$ 0.00	\$195.00
2022	Jenkins	Horace	Error in Listing – DMV Error	\$371.00	\$3.31
2023	Raynor	Milton Earl	Vac. Lot, No Solid Waste Fee	\$0.00	\$195.00
2023	Reardon	Sherwood Heirs	Vac. Lot., No Solid Waste Fee	\$0.00	\$195.00
2023	Roberson	Thadus A.	Vac. Land, No Solid Waste Fee	\$0.00	\$195.00
2023	Scalpi	Shane	Munis Valuation Did Not Update	\$16,180.00	\$131.06
2023	Stevenson	John Henry	SW Fee Count- GFL did deliver	\$0.00	\$195.00
2023	Stewart	Haywood Lee	SW Fee Count, Vacant Lot No Fee	\$0.00	\$195.00
2023	Taylor	Elbert Roy	Err. In Listing BT was not remov.	\$2,244	\$21.98
2023	Walters	Jerry Q. and Regina B.	Vac. Land. No Solid Waste Fee	\$0.00	\$195.00
2023	Williams	Mackinsey Lamar	Err. In Val. 2023 Valuat. Appeal	\$10,480	\$100.86
2023	Woolard	Jasper D. Jr.	Vac. Lot No Solid Waste Fee	0.00	\$195.00
2023	Wynn	John Joseph III	Out of Town – Jamesv. Fire Only	0.00	\$10.97
<b>Total VTS Refund Requests</b>					<b>\$3,466.68</b>
<b>All Total</b>					<b>\$ 4,303.11</b>

### 5. Tax Collector’s Report – July 2023

	Category	July	7-21 Y-T-D
<b>Real Property</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>\$14,964.17</b>	<b>\$14,964.17</b>
<b>Personal Property</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>\$14,102.99</b>	<b>\$14,102.99</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$29,067.16</b>	<b>\$29,067.16</b>
<b>Motor Vehicle</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Total MV</b>		<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>All Total</b>		<b>\$29,067.16</b>	<b>\$29,067.16</b>

### 5. Board Appointments/Reappointments/Resignations

#### a. Southern Albemarle Association Delegates

The Southern Albemarle Association is an organization of six counties (Beaufort, Dare, Hyde, Martin and Washington) that was established in 1935 to ensure our area as a safe place in which to travel, work and live through promoting better roads, bridges, waterways and airports. The organization advocates for transportation improvements in the region.

This Item was **Tabled** until the next Regular Meeting

#### b. Council on Aging - Commissioner Vacancy

The Martin County Council on Aging Board had a vacancy due to the resignation of a County Commissioner. The Board of Commissioners were asked to appoint a County Commissioner to serve the Council on Aging for an on-going term.

**Commissioner Ayers volunteered to serve an ongoing term on the Martin County Council on Aging Board.**

### **c. Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)**

The Rural Planning Organization (RPO) has two committees - the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), which is made-up mostly of professional staff from the various municipal and county jurisdictions within the RPO, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which consists of one county elected official and one municipal elected official per county (up to six individuals, in total). The TCC makes recommendations to the TAC. The TAC is the official decision-making body of the RPO.

An ongoing term was vacant it was recommended that Mr. Steve Biggs fill the term of Mr. Mitch Manning.

This Item was **Approved** by the Board as part of the Consent Agenda.

### **6. Child Support Awareness Month Proclamation - August 2023**

August is Child Support Awareness Month, an annual time to raise awareness about a critical income support program that helps millions of children and families. In FY 2022, child support programs nationwide collected \$30.5 billion and served 1 in 5 children in the United States. This kind of support helps families thrive and sets kids up to succeed. The Board was asked to approve this resolution as part of the Consent Agenda.

This item was **Approved** by the Board as part of the Consent Agenda.

### **7. Martin Community College Performance Measures for Student Success Report**

Martin Community College President Wesley Beddard sent a letter regarding the Performance Measures for Student Success Report. On Friday, July 21, 2023, the State Board of Community Colleges released its annual performance Measures for Student Success Report. Martin Community College was the top-rated college in the system for College Transfer Performance. Martin Community College received several other high scores as stated in the letter.

This item of the Consent Agenda **did not require approval.**

### **8. Martin County Airport - T-Hangar and Taxilane Recommendation of Award and Construction Overage**

Martin County received bids for the T-Hangar Taxilane & Apron project at the Martin County Airport on July 12, 2023. The low bid was higher than estimated, resulting in a shortfall of grant funds to cover the total cost of construction. It was understood that a request would be presented to the NC Board of Transportation for an additional \$300,000 of grant funds to cover the complete cost of construction. The County received bids regarding the T-Hangar Taxilane & Apron Project on Wednesday, July 12, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. Two bids were received and read aloud publicly in accordance with North Carolina Bidding laws. Based on the review of the proposed documents, W.K. Dickson recommended that Martin County award the Barnhill Contracting Company for the base bid amount of \$1,036,572.90. W.K. Dickson also recommended award contingent on sufficient STIP grant funds being added to cover the total

construction cost, and on the contractor providing the required performance Bond, Payment Bond, and Certificates of Insurance, as outlined in the contract documents.

The Board was asked for approval of the above stated Barnhill Contracting Company and STIP grant funds being added to cover the total construction cost, and on the contractor providing the required performance Bond, Payment Bond, and Certificates of Insurance, as outlined in the contract documents.

This item was **Approved** by the Board as part of the Consent Agenda.

## **9. Resolution Approving the Local Supply Plan of Water Districts I & II**

The Board was asked to review and adopt this resolution, which was presented on behalf of the Local Water Supply Plan (LWSP). Since all the required information is complete, the LWSP for the 60-59-003 system meets the minimum criteria established in North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (1). The water system's Board of Directors must adopt the 2022 LWSP next. The LWSP cannot be considered compliant with the requirements of NCGS 143-355 (1) until an adopted resolution for District I and II is received.

### **APPROVING LOCAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN – WD 1**

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (1) requires that each unit of local government that provides public water service or that plans to provide public water service and each large community water system shall, either individually or together with other units of local government and large community water systems, prepare and submit a Local Water Supply Plan; and

WHEREAS, as required by the statute and in the interests of sound local planning, a Local Water Supply Plan for Martin County Water and Sewer District 1, has been developed and submitted to the Martin County Board of Commissioners for approval; and

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of Commissioners finds that the Local Water Supply Plan is in accordance with the provisions of North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (1) and that it will provide appropriate guidance for the future management of water supplies for Martin County Water and Sewer District 1, as well as useful information to the Department of Environmental Quality for the development of a state water supply plan as required by statute;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Martin County Board of Commissioners of Martin County Water and Sewer District 1 that the Local Water Supply Plan entitled, **2022 Martin County Water and Sewer District 1 LWSP** dated \_\_\_\_\_, is hereby approved and shall be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Martin County Board of Commissioners intends that this plan shall be revised to reflect changes in relevant data and projections at least once every five years or as otherwise requested by the Department, in accordance with the statute and sound planning practice.

This the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

**APPROVING LOCAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN – WD 2**

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (l) requires that each unit of local government that provides public water service or that plans to provide public water service and each large community water system shall, either individually or together with other units of local government and large community water systems, prepare and submit a Local Water Supply Plan; and

WHEREAS, as required by the statute and in the interests of sound local planning, a Local Water Supply Plan for Martin County Water and Sewer District 2, has been developed and submitted to the Martin County Board of Commissioners for approval; and

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of Commissioners finds that the Local Water Supply Plan is in accordance with the provisions of North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (l) and that it will provide appropriate guidance for the future management of water supplies for Martin County Water and Sewer District 2, as well as useful information to the Department of Environmental Quality for the development of a state water supply plan as required by statute;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Martin County Board of Commissioners of Martin County Water and Sewer District 2 that the Local Water Supply Plan entitled, *2022 Martin County Water and Sewer District 2 LWSP* dated \_\_\_\_\_, is hereby approved and shall be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Martin County Board of Commissioners intends that this plan shall be revised to reflect changes in relevant data and projections at least once every five years or as otherwise requested by the Department, in accordance with the statute and sound planning practice.

This the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

This item was **Approved** by the Board as part of the Consent Agenda

**10. Clerk Report**

**INTRODUCTION TO NEW EMPLOYEES**

Human Resources Director Donna Zube introduced Ms. Jessica Goddard as a new employee in the Finance Department as Ms. Bonita Whitaker planned to retired in September 2023. Ms. Goddard was reported to be a Martin County Native.

Ms. Robin Martin was introduced as a Martin County Native and a new Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Department of Social Services.

Ms. Treasure Biggs was introduced as a Beaufort County native and a new Social Worker in the Department of Social Services

Ms. Valorie Sanderson and Ms. Krista Kaufer were also new employees, but were unable to attend the meeting.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Unexpected Dream Step Team**

Director and Coach Robin Brown and staff introduced the Unexpected Dream Step Team. The Unexpected Dream Step Team was reported to be a nonprofit organization based in Williamston, North Carolina. In 2009, the team was built with brave and remarkable students. The team consisted of unique young students of all ages that display their talent and love through a complex mixture of footsteps, spoken word, hand clapping to rhythm and sound that showcase their talent in each show, at school parades, churches, and other community events. The Unexpected Dream Step Team introduced themselves and provided a performance for the Board, staff, and audience.

The Unexpected Dream Step Team and staff were thanked for their performance.

### **Department of Social Services Update – Director Angela Ellis**

Martin County Departments will give an update to the Board of Commissioners each month. Martin County Department of Social Services was scheduled to provide an update, but this item was moved to a later date due to a schedule conflict.

### **Congressman Don Davis’ Office Update District Director Kim Mack**

District Director Kim Mack of Congressman Don Davis’ Office gave an update on projects regarding Martin County. District Director Mack related comments from Congressman Davis stating, “The recent news of Martin General hospitals decision to file for bankruptcy and suspended operations is devastating for Martin County, for the elderly, for the viable, vulnerable population, and for our local economy. Given how critical this matter is for the residents of Eastern North Carolina, Congressman David strongly emphasized the necessity of accessible and affordable health care throughout the East. He remains dedicated to bringing back practical health care services to the residents of Martin County and is committed to finding viable solutions that not only reintroduce critical health care services back to the County, but also make sure fiscal responsibility in the process. Since last week, Congressman Davis has been proactive in his approach; engaging with local elected officials and community members; being a liaison with the governor; the state legislators as well as healthcare leaders; advocating for the Rural Emergency Hospital designation; which could unlock untapped federal funding opportunities and strengthening his legislative team to find workable solutions to address access to rural hospitals ;and recognizing the need for improved federal reimbursements for rural hospitals connected with stakeholders like North Carolina Hospital Association, and the American Hospital Association to bring attention to this matter and to emphasize the importance of the role. emergency hospital designation. Healthcare has always been a top priority for Congressman David, and he's doing his part in Congress to bring the people of eastern North Carolina the affordable and high quality health care they deserve. Furthermore, Congressman David acknowledges the economic significance of having a functioning hospital, Martin County, and his commitment remains unwavering in addressing the current healthcare challenges catering to the healthcare needs of the residents of Martin County and abroad in eastern North Carolina

region. We're here to lend a listening ear provide a helping hand and expand support to the residents of Martin County.”

### **Congressional Update**

District Director Mack stated the First Congressional District was comprised of 19 Counties including Martin County. District Director Mack explained the various services provided by the Congressional Office:

- **Congressional Casework**

Each congressional office was described to have a designated casework team that acted as a liaison between constituents of the district and federal agencies to work through whatever issue being faced. District Director Mack stated the office was a neutral third party in the process, caseworkers could not advocate or change a particular outcome of a decision, and some response wait times could be as long as 60 to 90 days. Federal agencies were reportedly required to respond to the Congressional Offices inquiries. The Congressional Offices would not be able to assist in any judicial matters. The office reportedly assisted in matters in relation to the Department of State for passport assistance, Internal Revenue Service’s disability, and the Department of Veteran Affairs. Martin County’s request for assistance averaged in about 3 cases a month and the office has closed 459 cases district wide. Director Mack gave a success story wherein the office was able to expedite a passport and recover over \$34,000 in Veteran Affairs funding for a surviving son of a veteran.

- **Constituent Programs**

District Director Mack reported that the Congressional Office made contact with constituents by contacting elected officials, civic groups, nonprofits, and other constituent groups. Every other month, oval office hours were provided. Last month, it was reported that a library was utilized in the community to provide Oval Office Hours. Students who lived or attended school in the first congressional district are able to participate in the congressional education opportunities for youth. These opportunities included the congressional art competition, ACT challenge, Military Academy nominations, as well as college student interns interested in the district or Washington D.C. office. District Director Mack stated that staff were meeting with superintendents to help with increased participation in these activities. In addition, the office provided accommodations and greetings such as condolences, a greeting for a letter, support for anniversaries, and more. Last month, it was reported that the Congressional Office provided 100 of these greetings and or accommodations. It was reported that the Congressional Office also accepted flag requests to honor someone by running the flag over the Capital and providing a certificate of authenticity score. District Director Mack informed the audience about the office providing grant assistance by providing letters of support, assistance regarding loans, non-financial assistance for projects, and private funding.

### **Direct Contact with Constituents**

Congressman Don Davis was available to assist and support constituents in all areas. Congressman Davis’ Office has been able to conduct direct outreach with town halls, telephone town calls, a channel with over 8,200 people online, listening sessions, roundtable sessions in which Martin County hosted the first discussion with mayors. District Director Mack stated that office visits had been conducted with the County Manager and Chairman Smith. In addition to this, tours, newsletters, Text and call messaging, and virtual seminars were implemented to make direct contact with constituents. District Director Mack reported that there was a Community

Project Funding (CPF) Webinar online that was hosted by the Congressional Office as well as community service outreach.

### **Legislative Update**

Congressman Davis was reported to be the Vice ranking member of the House of the Agriculture Committee, Vice ranking member on behalf of Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness. Congressman Davis introduced eight pieces of legislation (six of which were bipartisan), co-sponsored over 150 pieces of legislation (more than 100 bipartisan), co-led 21 pieces of legislation, one of the most bipartisan freshmen in the house (85% not partisan record on cosponsorships), Democratic Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Agricultural Labor Working Group, and a member of the House Armed Services Committees' Quality of Life Panel.

### **Appropriations & Community Project Funding Update**

District Director Mack stated that there was a project in the 118 Congress for the Robersonville Meter Replacement for \$960,598. District Director Mack reported that Congress had set the stage for a chaotic September with the House and Senate on a collision course over appropriations and the risk of a partial government shutdown was already being assessed. Out of the 12 annual appropriation bills that Congress has to pass every year, the Houses reportedly only passed one of these bills. This bill was Military Construction and Veteran's Affairs Funding. Due to members being in their districts until mid-September and the 12 bills not being passed yet, there would not be enough time to get government funding bills passed and negotiated before the end of the fiscal year (September 30, 2023).

District Director Mack stated this would likely mean consideration of a continuing resolution, which meant a continuation of current funding levels and not approving next year's appropriation bills that contained the community project funding. It was reported that even a short-term continuing resolution was not guaranteed to pass. District Director Mack stated the projects were in their respective committee reports accompanying appropriation bills. District Director Mack was not able to guarantee that these bills would pass because of the political will to decrease overall funding.

Two projects from Martin County were noted to be in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, wherein the County itself was responsible for one and the Town of Williamston responsible for the other. District Director Mack stated the office was working actively to keep these projects moving forward.

### **Full Circle Success Stories**

District Director Mack gave details about full circle success stories. District Director Mack stated that these stories came from being in the community and learning about the amazing work of constituents. District Director Mack talked about Mr. Joe Balogh, a 102-year-old U.S. Army Air Corps Veteran that lived in Lewisburg with an incredible life story. After meeting with Mr. Balogh, Congressman Don Davis reportedly highlighted his achievements on the House floor in a 1-minute speech. Following the speech, it was reported that the speech went live or active on all social media platforms. A Congressional Record was presented to Mr. Joe Balogh in his hometown, a noteworthy constituent was able to be recognized, and now is a student of history for the work that he's done. District Director Mack reported that this was one of the main reasons that community outreach was important. Lastly, District Director Mack informed the Board and

audience to follow the Congressional Office on all social media platforms to receive updates and make contact with the office. District Director Mack thanked the Board and audience for their time.

### **Martin County Schools Presentation – Superintendent Michelle White**

Dr. Michelle White was announced as the new superintendent for Martin County Schools. Dr. White made a presentation explaining new projects and goals for the upcoming school year.

#### *Martin Innovative Early College Program*

Dr. White stated that this program would be housed at the Martin County Innovation Campus and would be available for 9-12 grade students. This program Excel will be for all students in grades nine through 12. Program would provide the opportunity for students to earn a high school diploma and a 2-year college degree at the same time at no cost. Martin County Schools would pay all tuition, supplies, and resources needed for early college. Dr. White stated that students could complete an application designed to display their interests and needs. The application would then be used to determine a student's acceptance into the program based on their interest and needs, as the program may not be the right fit for every student. Dr. White added that any students, who are not accepted into the Martin Innovative Early College Program, would still have the opportunity to take as many college classes appropriate for them in their regular schedule. Their early college will be housed at the Innovation Campus.

Students who attend Riverside High School or South Creek would also be able to take college classes, but the early college students would actually be on a track to graduate with their two-year degree at the same time they graduate from high school. Dr. White stated that the degrees offered depended on the needs of each child. Dr. White also stated that communication with individual students, the community, and families would give insight as to what the students are interested in and how Martin County Schools could support that. Dr. White reported that this program would not be limited to certain degrees, but catered to the interest of the students. 68 students were reportedly accepted to the Early College program from 112 applicants. Dr. White stated she and other staff members spent two days traveling Martin County to visit the children who were accepted to congratulate them and show support.

#### *Personal Electronic Devices*

Dr. White reported that every single student in Martin County Schools would have a personal computer. Grades 3 -12 would be able to take the computer home. Dr. White stated Martin County would be a Google District, wherein students without internet would be able to complete their assignments using Google Drive. Google Drive reportedly has an offline mode that would not require internet access. The usage fee of \$25.00 would be charged to cover the insurance costs, as students would be able to take the computer home. Students K-2 would be provided with touch screen devices similar to tablets versus computers that they would have to type on. Every teacher in Martin County Schools would receive a touchscreen device that could connect to the classroom TV. When a student is asked to solve a problem, the teacher would give the device to the student to project their work onto the TV screen. Dr. White stated that technology was a great thing, but would be used when appropriate and pencils and paper would be used when technology is not the best option.

#### *Identifying Needs and Providing Solutions*



Dr. White reported that she toured every school, held parent meetings, and met all teachers from every school to identify problems and needs. One of the things Dr. White heard repeatedly was that different educational opportunities were offered, but this depending on where the student lived. Dr. White reported that Riverside High School had a championship tennis team and golfing team, but South Creek did not have enough students to form either team. Dr. White stated that this situation ended when she became the Superintendent and “One Team, One Dream” became the theme for the school year. Dr. White stated the goal was to be a catalyst to unite the communities of Martin County. All high schools sports would be united and transportation would be provided for students to attend practice at different school locations. Dr. White stated that this applied to Middle school sports as well. The participation numbers reportedly increased significantly during summer workouts to some of the highest numbers seen in Martin County Schools in the last 10 or 15 years.

#### Alternative Learning Program

Dr. White explained that an alternative learning program was started to provide support for students with behavioral and or social /emotional challenges. This program would be a completely separate program housed at Riverside High School, but in a completely separate building. If additional counseling, this would be provided. DR. White stated that if students were struggling behaviorally, they would be removed from that class setting so other children can continue to learn and the child struggling with behavioral challenges can get the support they need to be successful. This program would serve grades 6-12.

#### Improvements in Communication

Next, Dr. White reported that letters would go out to parents tomorrow and welcome packets would be sent to families as well. The packet would contain the student’s teacher, schedule, supply list, a copy of the school calendar, and a welcome back letter from your principal. This was to provide families the opportunity to review their child’s or children’s school information in advance to address any questions before Open House.

#### Curriculum Changes

There have been many changes to the curriculum as new state of the art resources were adopted for grades K-12. A curriculum fair was held for teachers to pick their curriculum and were provided with curriculum resources. Dr. White stated that samples of the best curriculums across the state of North Carolina were provided. The new curriculum was stated to be aligned with state standards and was engaging for the students. Dr. White stated that new curriculum pacing and planning for teachers was being implemented to ensure that all staff understand the standards and know the correct pace to teach in order to ensure that there are no gaps in instruction. Martin County Schools operated on a six-week calendar, meaning that report cards went out every six weeks. This was a quick turnaround, most of the state of North Carolina moved to nine - weeks, and Martin County transitioned to the nine – week calendar as well. The calendar has been posted the Martin County Schools website as well as progress report release dates. All Martin County Schools were reportedly using the nine – week calendar and would sent progress reports out at the same time. Dr. White stated that she would call parents to inform them of progress as well.

#### Floating Open House

This year, Dr. White implemented an Open House on August 24, 2023 floating from 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Riverside High School would be provided with a special presentation at 5:00 p.m. and

the Early College would report to the Innovation Campus at 6:00 p.m. During Open House, parents would be provided with communication stations. These communication stations would provide parents the ability to receive information and ask questions for the various sections of the student's school. Such sections include a transportation section to discuss and receive bus pick up and drop off times, a technology section to pay and receive devices for students, an administration section to allow parents to sign any paperwork for their child(ren), a nursing section for health needs of the student(s), and more.

#### Updated Student Handbooks

Student handbooks have been updated to improve such things as the cellphone policy and an updated discipline policy. Other changes implemented were:

- A new organizational chart to ensure communication between Dr. White and every single person in Martin County,
- An alternative school with added full time counselors and social workers in every single school as they should not be shared.
- Advanced classes were added at the Middle School where advanced learners would be placed together so that accelerated curriculum could be offered.
- Three high school credit options for eighth grade, so that they can enter the ninth grade as a sophomore.
- Safety Policy was updated to add additional resources for safety procedures.

#### Career Exploration Academy

This academy would provide middle school students with the ability to learn how to splint broken legs, inserting Intravenous (IV's), coding, plumbing, flying drones, tiling walls, you're gonna see the taller walls you can see the plumbing systems, and etc. This academy was implemented to provide students the ability to make an informed decisions about their desired careers and interests and to be prepared for college if they are interested. Students would be able to rotate through modules that correlate to Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes offered at the high school.

Dr. White addressed a possible question that would come from the Board regarding ESRP funds and provided a spreadsheet of every dollar that was expended. Dr. White also stated that this information could also be found itemized on the Department of Public Instructions website and if there were any questions she would be available to answer them.

Commissioner Gurganus thanked Dr. White for her presentation and made positive comments about the changes that were presented. Commissioner Gurganus offered his support and stated that he appreciated that trades were added to the curriculum as they were needed and were essential. Commissioner Gurganus stated that trade skills were essential to students as well as it provided them with opportunities for careers and for life.

Commissioner Ayers made positive comments about Dr. White and her passion to serve the students in Martin County. Commissioner Ayers stated that he heard about Dr. White's plan to combine the sports in the school system and thought that it would be an issue. Commissioner Ayers stated that Dr. White's plan was working successfully and he thanked her for her efforts.

**OLD BUSINESS – None**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Late Present Use Value (PUV) Applications (3) - Tax Assessor Melissa Phillips**

Tax Assessor Melissa Phillips explained three late Present Use Value Applications that the Board would have to approve or disapprove. The parcel information, application, and appeal letter will be included in the packet as well.

<b>1. PUV APPEAL; Parcel# 0500601, 0300738, 0504828, 0506047</b>	
<i><b>Date of Effort</b></i>	<i><b>Tax Assessor's Notes of Action</b></i>
January 9, 2023	• Transfer Notice
February 15, 2023	• PUV Application received & Additional Information letter mailed. -Forestry Management Plan -Income from agricultural crop sales
April 18, 2023	• Denial Letter due to not receiving the additional information
June 20, 2023	• Rollback bills processed
June 25, 2023	• Forestry Plan received
June 26, 2023	• Rollback taxes paid
July 8, 2023	• Post marked appeal letter

Chairman Smith asked Tax Assessor Phillips to repeat the efforts made on behalf of the Tax Assessor's Office and Commissioner Ayers inquired about the dates that the property owner was contacted. Tax Assessor Phillips clarified the questions.

Vice Chairman Bond Jr. commented that the Board declined a similar situation in the past, wherein the Board declined the appeal.

Vice Chairman Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to Deny the PUV Appeal, with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

<b>2. PUV APPEAL - Parcel# 0200504, 0100958, 0300065, 0401209, 0300568</b>	
<i><b>Date of Effort</b></i>	<i><b>Tax Assessor's Notes of Action</b></i>
April 28, 2023	Deed L-029/883 recorded with statement of delinquent taxes if any, to be paid by the closing attorney
May 19, 2023	Transfer Letter mailed to 1218 Maple Grove Church Rd.
July 19, 2023	Denial Letter along with deferred estimate of \$26,818 due no application being submitted.
July 26, 2023	Received PUV Application (would be approved if timely) and appeal letter.

Commissioner Gurganus inquired about the actions taken by the Tax Assessor's Office and the property owner. Commissioner Gurganus asked for leniency on the property owner due to the explanation given in the property owner's appeal letter.

Chairman Smith stated that he believed the property owner's explanation, but the PUV Appeals needed to be voted on with consistency.

Commissioner Gurganus made a **Motion** to **Approve** the Late PUV Appeal for parcel, with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers. Chairman Smith commented that he wanted to be fair and consistent when voting on appeals. Chairman Smith added that there were similar explanations given for past appeals that the Board disapproved.

Chairman Smith asked for all those in favor of Approving and those in favor of Disapproving the Late PUV Appeal for parcels #0200504, 0100958, 0300065, 0401209, 0300568.

**Approve:** Commissioner Joe R. Ayers and Commissioner David “Skip” Gurganus

**Disapprove:** Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs

**Motion** Carried to **Disapprove** the Late PUV Appeal for parcels #0200504, 0100958, 0300065, 0401209, 0300568 by majority vote (3-2).

<b>3. PUV APPEAL - Parcel # 0401508</b>	
<i>Date of Effort</i>	<i>Tax Assessor’s Notes of Action</i>
April 10, 2023	Transfer Letter mailed to 9425 NC 171
June 12, 2023	Denial Letter along with deferred estimate of \$2,548.39 due no application being submitted.
June 23, 2023	Leslie Hardison, heir to Melba M Hardison picked up PUV application.
July 31, 2023	Received PUV Application (would be approved if timely) and appeal letter.

Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to Disapprove the Late PUV Appeal for parcel #0401508, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

**Late Application for Disabled Veterans Exclusion- Tax Assessor Melissa Phillips**

Tax Assessor Melissa Phillips explained a Late Application for Disabled Veteran's Exclusion that the Board had to vote on. The Tax Assessor’s Office reportedly received an application for the Disabled Veterans Exclusion program on June 15, 2023. The office was unable to accept the Veterans Certification that was originally submitted as that individual was not authorize to sign the form. Tax Assessor Melissa Phillips reported that the property owner had to get the document resigned by a Veterans Service Officer. The deadline for the Tax Assessor’s Office to approve these applications was June 18. The property owner’s reason for the application being late is that he did not know about the program and had issues with physically moving around. The program information and deadlines are available on the County website. This information was also printed on tax notices that go out each year in August and the listing forms that go out in January. The parcel information, and appeal letter were included in the agenda packet as well.

Chairman Smith asked about the level of disability required of a person to be eligible for this program. Tax Assessor Phillips stated that a veteran had to be permanently disabled or totally disabled, not being paid at 100% disability.

Chairman Smith made the **Motion** to Disapprove the Late Application for Disabled Veterans Exclusion, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

### **Amendment to Noise Ordinance and the Discharge of Firearms Near School Property**

Sheriff Manning made amendments to the Noise and Discharge of Firearms Ordinances to be approved by the Board. The Noise Ordinance amendment included Installed devices of automobiles, buses, or any other vehicle (Section 12-183 Nuisance Noise.) The amendment also changed the control of nuisance noise from nighttime hours to “at all times”. The amendments were to control noise nuisance within all vehicles/ vehicles at all times. The Discharge of Firearms Amendment was to make it unlawful for any person to discharge a rifle, handgun, or other firearms within 300 yards of any school property.

Commissioner Gurganus made a **Motion** to Approve the Above stated Amendment to the Noise Ordinance and Discharge of Firearms Near School Property, with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

### **Budget Amendment(s)**

#### **Budget Amendment #6**

At the July 12, 2023, the Board of Commissioners approved an increase in salary of \$4,000 for all law enforcement officers excluding the Sheriff effective August 1, 2023. In order to help fund the increase in this fiscal year, the Sheriff agreed to reduce the number of cars purchased from 7 to 4. The estimated cost of the salary increase is \$207,024 including all benefits. The savings on the cars was estimated to be \$120,000, resulting in an additional \$87,024 needed from fund balance to fund the increases.

### **BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-6**

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Public Safety		
Sheriff	\$ 87,024	

This will result in an increase of \$87,024 in the expenditures of the General Fund. To provide an increase in the revenues for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	\$ 87,024
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Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

**Motion** by Commissioner Ayers and **Seconded** by Commissioner Biggs to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 9<sup>th</sup> day of August 2023. Motion was **Carried** unanimously

**Budget Amendment # 7**

In last fiscal year, The Board approved a storage building for Soil and Water in the amount of \$20,000. Director Lynn Whitehurst ordered the building in last fiscal year, but the building will not be arriving until this year. This amendment re-appropriates the funds for the building to this fiscal year. A portion of the building will be grant funded.

**BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-7**

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Economic & Physical Development		
Soil and Water	\$ 20,000	

This will result in an increase of \$20,000 in the expenditures of the General Fund. To provide an increase in the revenues for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Restricted Intergovernmental	\$ 20,000
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Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

**Motion** by Commissioner Biggs and **Seconded** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 9<sup>th</sup> day of August 2023. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Chairman Smith stated that the Board would relocate to the Commissioner's Boardroom for Closed Session and the Board would motion for Closed session.

**CLOSED SESSION(S)**

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to Enter Closed Sessions 1. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(3)Attorney-Client Privilege and 2. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5)Real Property Purchase/Contracts/Leases with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Around Commissioner Biggs made a **Motion** to Exit Closed Sessions 1. NC G.S. § 143-318.11. (a)(3) – Client/Attorney Privilege and 2. NC G.S. § 143-318.11(a) (5) – Real Property Purchase/Contracts/Leases, with a **Second** from Vice Chairman Bond Jr. Motion **Carried** unanimously.

**BOARD REPORTS / COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

County Attorney Benjamin Eisner stated that Qourum Health Partners filed a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy case in Delaware using an Accelerated Bankruptcy Petition, which required at least 13 pages of paperwork to file. County Attorney Eisner stated that there was probably more paperwork that had to be completed in order to file for Bankruptcy. County Attorney Eisner reported that estimated assets, estimated liabilities. The Chapter 7 trustee appointed in Delaware would force the filing of the remaining of the petition, which would provide full exposure of their assets and debts.

Chairman Smith stated that Qourum took all of the cash from the hospital and wanted the Board to sign off on taking their debts, not knowing what those debts were. Chairman Smith stated that there must have been a lot of debt in order for Qourum to file bankruptcy. Chairman Smith stated that everything was in the bankruptcy trustee's hands and as they allowed the Board to take control, the public would be updated. Lastly, Chairman Smith reported that it was understood that the County and Qourum were still in negotiation until there was notification of the bankruptcy filing.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 12:00 p.m. Commissioner Biggs made a **Motion** to adjourn the meeting, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

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Ronnie Smith, Chairman  
Martin County Board of Commissioners

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Julia S. Rease  
Clerk to the Board