December 13, 2023

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular meeting on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 7:00 p.m. in the Commissioner's Boardroom at the Martin County Governmental Center, 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina.

ASSEMBLY

Present in the Boardroom: Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr. Commissioner Joe. R. Ayers, Commissioner Emily Biggs, and Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus, County Manager U. James Bennett, Clerk to the Board Julia Rease, and Finance Officer Cindy Ange.

Others Present: Town of Williamston Commissioner Anthony Gianpoalo, Town of Williamston Commissioner Ruth Coffield, Town of Williamston Commissioner Glinda Fox, Town of Williamston Mayor Dean McCall, Town of Williamston Mayor Pro-Tem Alton Moore, Town of Williamston Administrator/Manager Eric Pearson, Mayor of Bear Grass Charlotte Griffin, Sheriff Tim Manning, and more.

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commissioner Biggs led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Commissioner Gurganus provided the invocation.

Chairman Smith extended a welcome to all in attendance.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to approve of the agenda with a revision to table September 13, 2023 Closed Session Minutes, with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

BOARD REORGANIZATION

Interim County Manager Benjamin Eisner took over the meeting after Chairman Smith relinquished himself as Chairman for Board Reorganization.

Nomination of Chairman

Interim County Manager Eisner asked for any nominations for the Chairman position pursuant to NC General Statute 153A - 39, which was in the Board agenda packet. This year qualified as a non-election year, but called for Board Reorganization since it is an odd number year.

Commissioner Gurganus **nominated** Commissioner Joe R. Ayers as Chairman.

Commissioner Smith **nominated** Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., as Chairman.

An audience member, Mr. Hubert Coltrain, stated aloud that the steps in the agenda were in violation of the Martin County Rules of Procedure. Mr. Hubert Coltrain further stated that the rules of procedures stated, "You will have the public the comments prior to any other item of business," and that the Board had to go through the public comment period before going any further.

County Attorney Eisner stated that he appreciated the comment, could address the issue with the agenda, and referred back to the Board of Procedures Section 6 Order of Business and stated:

"Section (6) Order of Business
Items shall be placed on the agenda according to the "Order of Business." The Order of Business of each regular meeting, which is what we're in right now, will usually be as follows:

Call to Order
Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
Invocation

1. *Agenda Approval*
2. *Public Comments*
3. *Consent Agenda*

... And so on so forth. We flip to the next page, which is continuing on; *The Order of Business of an organizational meeting during an election year will usually be as follows:*

Call to Order
Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag Invocation

I. *Agenda Approval*
2. *Presentation of Plaque and Minute Book (Outgoing board member, if any)*
3. *Swearing- In Ceremony*
4. *Recess*
5. *Board Reorganization*
6. *Public Comments*

So again, my interpretation is that it says, *usually be as follows,* it's not a requirement. In looking at the minutes back from odd numbers of years, back to 2017, the public comment period has always trailed the Board Reorganization. So, I think that's a fair comment, but I don't think that it's against the Rules of Procedures. Now if the Board wants to consider changes to that, I think they are free to do so, but I don't think the Rules of Procedures requires that."

Mr. Hubert Coltrain wondered what the advantage was in going into the Board Reorganization before Public Comments and asked if it was just tradition at the time. County Attorney Eisner reported that Mr. Coltrain would have to ask the original drafters of the Rules of Procedures and those that drafted the last few amendments. Mr. Coltrain stated that he honored the clarification.

Commissioner Ayers asked what the comment was for the position of Chairman.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that there were nominations for Commissioner Ayers and Commissioner Bond Jr., for the position of Chairman.

Commissioner Ayers asked to **Second** Commissioner Gurganus' nomination for Commissioner Ayers to become Chairman.

Interim County Manager Eisner reported in reviewing previous minutes, the nominations were submitted in the form of a motion, and asked Commissioner Smith to rephrase his nomination as a motion.

Commissioner Smith made a **Motion** to nominate Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., as Chairman, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the motions for nominations would be taken in order as stated.

Commissioner Gurganus asked if voting would be conducted by raise of hands due to there being difficulty hearing in the room. Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the Rules of Procedures did not mandate on form or another of voting, Board members could vote audibly or by a show of hands, and that both methods were legal methods of voting.

Interim County Manager reiterated that the motions for nominations would be taken in order as presented, opened for discussion, and voted on.

Nomination for Joe R. Ayers as Chairman
Interim County Manager Eisner asked if there was any discussion in the motion to appoint Commissioner Ayers as Chairman for the upcoming year.

Discussion: None

Vote – By raise of hands (2 - 3)
Ayes: Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus and Commissioner Joe R. Ayers
Nays: Commissioner Ronnie Smith, Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs.

Nomination for Dempsey Bond Jr. as Chairman
Interim County Manager asked if there was any discussion in the motion to appoint Commissioner Bond Jr., as Chairman for the upcoming year.

Discussion:

Commissioner Ayers stated, "I've got some discussion. Commissioner Bond has been Vice Chairman for five years running now. He had the opportunity to take the Chairmanship two different times and declined two different times. So, I guess my question is, why all of a sudden does he think he would like to take the Chairman and in previous times, he seemed to indicate that he didn't think he could handle the job. So, I just want to know what's changed.

Interim County Manager Eisner asked if there was any other discussion.

Commissioner Bond responded, "Mr. Ayers, I would like to answer that question for you. With what has been going on in this County for the last six months, I think that I can bring some calmness to what is going on.

Commissioner Ayers stated, "I beg to differ, I think it would cause the exact opposite, but that's your opinion.

Interim County Manager Eisner asked if there were any further discussion and there were none.

Vote – By Ayes and Nays (3-2)
Ayes: Commissioner Ronnie Smith, Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs.
Nays: Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus and Commissioner Joe R. Ayers

Motion to nominate Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., as Chairman was **Carried** (3-2). The Ayes and Nays are recorded above.

Audience members made comments aloud from their seats regarding their uneasiness about the reorganization and their distrust in the Board as Board members rearranged their seating.

Newly nominated Chairman, Dempsey Bond Jr. greeted everyone once in his new place setting. Chairman Bond Jr. stated, "I would like to say Good Evening and I would like to ask that this is a meeting and everything that is being done here is being done according to the way it is spelled out, according to General Statute."

An audience member began to comment aloud that things should have been done that way for the last few years. Chairman Bond Jr. hit the gavel twice and the audience member continued to comment. Chairman Bond Jr. asked that everyone withhold comments being made.

Another audience member yelled out that if the Board moved forward with the public comments, the audience would refrain from making comments aloud.

Chairman Bond Jr. stated that the Board was trying to conduct a meeting and asked that it be conducted in an orderly fashion. Chairman Bond Jr. also stated that if needed and if someone caused a disturbance, the Board would stop the meeting and he would ask the Sheriff to remove that person from the meeting because the Board would have a meeting. Chairman Bond Jr. stated that if the audience heard him hit his gavel, that everyone be quiet and if there was no order, he would call the Sheriff.

Nomination of Vice Chairman

Commissioner Ayers **Motioned** to appoint Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus as Vice Chairman.

Commissioner Smith **Motioned** to appoint Commissioner Emily Biggs as Vice Chairman.
There was an outcry from the audience while Seconds for the Motions were being stated.

Commissioner Gurganus **Seconded** Commissioner Ayers **Motion** to Appoint Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus as Vice Chairman.

Commissioner Biggs **Seconded** Commissioner Smith's **Motion** to appoint Commissioner Emily Biggs as Vice Chairman.

Nomination for Commissioner David "Skip "Gurganus as Vice Chairman
Chairman Bond Jr. asked for a vote to nominate Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus as Vice Chairman.

Discussion: None

Vote - By Raise of Hands (2 - 0):
Ayes: Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus and Commissioner Joe R. Ayers
Nays: None taken

Nomination for Commissioner Emily Biggs as Vice Chairman
Chairman Bond Jr. asked for a vote to nominate Commissioner Emily Biggs as Vice Chairman.

Discussion: None

Vote – By raise of hands (3 - 0)
Ayes: Commissioner Ronnie Smith, Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs.
Nays: None taken

Commissioner Gurganus asked that the votes were conducted again as those opposed were not asked for. Interim County Manager Eisner agreed and asked for a revote.

The final votes are as follows:

Nomination for Commissioner David "Skip "Gurganus as Vice Chairman
Ayes: Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus and Commissioner Joe R. Ayers
Nays: Commissioner Ronnie Smith, Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs
Motion did not Carry – Vote (2-3)

Nomination for Commissioner Emily Biggs as Vice Chairman

Ayes: Commissioner Ronnie Smith, Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs.

Nays: Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus and Commissioner Joe R. Ayers

Motion was Carried (3-2)

Appointment of Attorney

Commissioner Ayers **Motion** to Appoint Benjamin R. Eisner as County Attorney with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Appointment of Clerk

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Appoint Julia S. Rease as Clerk, with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Approval of 2024 Meeting Schedule Resolution

According to N.C.G.S. 153A - 40, The board of commissioners shall hold a regular meeting at least once a month, and may hold more frequent regular meetings. The board may by resolution fix the time and place of its regular meetings. If such a resolution is adopted, at least 10 days before the first meeting to which the resolution is to apply, the board shall cause a copy of it to be posted on the courthouse bulletin board and a summary of it to be published. If no such resolution is adopted, the board shall meet at the courthouse on the first Monday of each month or on the next succeeding business day if the first Monday is a holiday.

Also, According to N.C.G.S. 143-318.129(a), Public notice of official meetings, (a) If a public body has established, by ordinance, resolution, or otherwise, a schedule of regular meetings, it shall cause a current copy of that schedule, showing the time and place of regular meetings, to be kept on file as follows: {1) For public bodies that are part of State government with the Secretary of State; (2) For the governing board and each other public body that is art of a county government, with the clerk to the board of county commissioners ; (3) For the governing board and each other public body that is part of a city government, with the city clerk; (4) For each other public body, with its clerk or secretary, or, if the public body does not have a clerk or secretary, with the clerk to the board of county commissioners in the county in which the public body normally holds its meetings. If a public body changes its schedule of regular meetings, it shall cause the revised schedule to be filed as provided in subdivisions (1) through (4) of this subsection at least seven calendar days before the day of the first meeting held pursuant to the revised schedule.

2024 Meeting Schedule			
January 10, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	Jan. 01 , 2024
February 14, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	Feb. 07, 2024
March 13, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	March 11, 2024
April 10, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	April 01, 2024

April 24, 2024 (Tentative)		Joint Budget Meeting with Board of Education	TBA
May 08, 2023	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	May 01, 2024
To Be Announced		Budget Workshop (s) (After Receipt of Bd of Ed Budget)	TBA
June 12, 2024	7 p.m.	Budget Public Hearing	TBA
June 12, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	June 01, 2024
June 12, 2024	7 p.m.	Adopt Budget	TBA
June 26, 2024	7 p.m.	Year End Budget Ordinance Amendments	If Needed
July 10, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	July 01, 2024
August 14, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	Aug.01, 2024
September 11, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	Sept. 01, 2024
October 09, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	Oct. 01, 2024
November 13, 2024	7 p.m.	Regular Meeting	Nov. 01, 2024
December 02, 2024	9 a.m.	Regular Meeting	Nov. 20, 2024

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE MARTIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2024

WHEREAS, N.C.G.S. 153A-40 authorizes the Martin County Board of Commissioners to adopt a resolution fixing the dates, time and place of its regular meetings and further requires a copy of such a resolution, after its adoption, to be posted on the courthouse bulletin board and a summary of it to be published at least ten (10) days before the first meeting to which the resolution is to apply; and

WHEREAS, N.C.G.S. 143-318.12 requires the new meeting schedule to be filed with the Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners for at least seven (7) calendar days before the day of the first meeting held pursuant to the revised schedule and to post the schedule of regular meetings to the County's website; and

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of Commissioners proposes to adopt the attached Martin County Board of Commissioners' Meeting Schedule for 2024 for its regular Board meetings; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Martin County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the attached Meeting Schedule for 2024, which is incorporated herein by reference, and that Board meetings will be held in the County Commissioners Boardroom on the first floor of the Martin County Governmental Center located at 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina; and the Board directs the Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners to provide such notice of the Meeting Schedule as set forth hereinabove.

Adopted this the _____day of December 2023.

_____
Ronnie Smith, Chairman Martin County Board of Commissioners

_____
Julia S. Rease Clerk to the Board

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to Adopt the 2024 Meeting Schedule and Resolution, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Chairman Bond Jr. asked that everyone listen carefully to the procedures read by County Attorney Eisner and asked that everyone address any comments and or questions to the entire Board.

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** for County Attorney Eisner to moderate the public comment section, with a **Second** by Commissioner Ayers.

Discussion: Commissioner Smith stated that public comments were part of the duties of the Chairman and it was the responsibility of the Chairman. Commissioner Smith stated that if any legal issues occurred, that's when the Attorney was supposed to step in and advise of the general statute that dealt with that issue. Commissioner Smith stated that he was not in support of the Attorney taking over, as it was the Chairman's job.

Vote - By Raise of Hands (2-3)
Ayes: Commissioner Joe R. Ayers and Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus
Nays: Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Ronnie Smith, and Commissioner Emily Biggs

The **Motion** for County Attorney Eisner to moderate the public comment section **was not carried.**

County Attorney Eisner read the public comment procedures aloud.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. **Ms. Marie Perry – 2161 Jones Road, Williamston** - "Y'all act like a bunch of kids. I wish y'all could sit back here and see what y'all look like with the mess y'all pulling. Y'all diving us black and white. Y'all tried to divide us, that's a no-no. You're not going to divide us; we are going to stand together for the County. Ok? We are a County that should stand and fight for each other right? "The audience agreed. " Fight for each other, that's what we're going to do. Y'all act like a bunch of children. Now, I know you see my sign. We still got people dying. There are people that called, last week. I had a phone call and they said *ugh, we had two people to die at the Carrolton because the Rescue squad could not get to them on time.* Do you know how that feels? That's somebody mama or grandmamma that died because we didn't have a rescue squad to pick them up. Do y'all understand this? And y'all sitting here with this little petty mess y'all doing, but we got people dying? This is petty mess. You got this one; you got this one, and not only that, my understanding is y'all wanting someone to reelect you for next year, for Commissioners? We're not going to vote for y'all no more. You think we trust y'all? Dempsey, I'm not voting for you anymore. Emily, we're not voting for you anymore. This is it. When your time is up, if you don't resign, this is it. Y'all have not proved nothing to us, but y'all people out here dying. We had helicopters set up on 264. We had a lady who had been having seizures on 264. Stopped traffic, picked her up out of her house. Had another young

girl, 19 years old, was having the same seizures in another place. Her parents couldn't get her to the hospital. She died. From seizures. This what we want y'all for Martin County? Is this what we want? What are y'all doing? And then y'all doing this mess right here, voting for this one, this one, this one, pulling this one and that one. All this crazy mess. This is pathetic. Y'all make me sick. I think I got a few minutes, * Ms. Perry called a member of the audience to stand and continued her public comment * "She had a heart attack, but thank you to God her husband had a car that was worth driving her to the hospital to get her there on time. In Greenville. How many didn't get there in time? How many don't have a car, how many didn't get there in time? Thank you to God her husband drove her to the hospital and had a car."

2. **Mr. John MacDonald – 20770 HWY 64 Williamston -** We have had a chance to look around to see what's happening in the County. No hospital, we got a sign out there that's covered, nothing will ever happen with that hospital building ever again other than maybe being bulldozed. We look around and see what's going on right now. We're seeing little games being played up here, 1, 2, 3. 3, 2, 1. We ain't getting anything done people. When you're going to learn. When you're going to learn this Ronnie? Emily? When are you going to learn this? Well, I had the chance to look at some receipts this week and apparently, you all had a good time in Houston. Had a real good time. Ronnie, you'll be lucky if you don't go to jail behind it."

Chairman Bond Jr. hit his gavel and stated that there was no name calling and Mr. MacDonald was to address the whole Board.

Mr. MacDonald continued with his public comment, "I looked at some others with Emily's name on it…"

Chairman Bond Jr. hit his gavel and ended the public comment and thanked Mr. MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald stated that he was not needed to be thanked because he didn't do anything, but they did.

3. **Mrs. Martha MacDonald - 20770 HWY 64 Williamston** – "I can't say names, but y'all will know who I'm talking about." Ms. MacDonald gave her name and address. "Majority of this Board has total disregard for the safety and well-being of the citizens of this County. What your oath should be, for some on this side of the room, should be; *I strive, we strive to spend as much of the taxpayers' dollars on deceitful, conniving, self-serving projects as possible.* We strive to be just three politicians who put their own ambitions and agenda above the public good. Declined virtue, deviant behavior. Integrity and honesty? That doesn't work over here, (points to one side of the Board) over here it does (points to the other side of the Board). There is no shame. Conspiracy to defraud the citizens, unprofessional conduct in and out of office, violation of open meetings, and violation of their oath of office. Those three knowingly participated in unofficial meetings, discussed County business in which a qourum was presented and that my friends is how we got James Bennett. They attend conferences, some of which could have been on, stayed right here in the County and been on teleconference and not spent the County's money, but no they opted to spend thousands of dollars on extravagant meals, plane tickets, and deluxe king hotel rooms. The conference in Texas cost our County

somewhere between $8,000.00 and $10,000.00. We haven't gotten it all sorted tallied yet. What did the citizens of this County get from that? Absolutely nothing. No information on upcoming grants was brought back, no information on current grant opportunities, no shared information for Ayers or Gurganus. In essence, it was a paid vacation at the taxpayers' dollars. The airplane tickets alone were almost $4,000.00 and I want to know why one particular person in here had to pay $55.00 a day for valet parking, since we can't talk about who's no longer the Chair. Our local economy should be booming by the amount of monies are being spent on local meals. Hitchin' Post, Georgia Deans, Mama's Pizza, Subway, Dominoes, Cakes by Becky, the Oyster Bar, Oh, the Oyster Bar A ticket, a receipt, a receipt for $326.53 and folks it wasn't just food. There was alcohol involved. My tax dollars don't pay for alcohol. That was done by the Manager that is no longer here and some he was closely related to that he enjoyed the company of. So, when did the County start paying for alcohol. I would've thought that the Finance Office would have dinged on that one, but they didn't. It was paid for by a Martin County credit card. So now, is Finance complaint with this behavior? Makes me and a lot of other people wonder. Back to the plane tickets, since I can't say a name, we'll just say a certain person took his wife to the conference and paid for his ticket using the County credit card. Now, that's unethical. Now not only, I mean that person did reimburse the County, three months later, three months later, which to me really tells me that he knew better than to do that, but my point is perhaps, and this person is not on the Board so I can say it, perhaps Mrs. Smith should have stayed at home if her husband could afford the ticket."

Chairman Bond hit his gavel and Mrs. MacDonald continued with her comment.

"Martin County's money is not a lending tree for you Commissioners. Acting County Manager Eisner, I'd like to know why the Commissioner's minutes are so late in being published. The last minutes were September, that is unacceptable. You have lost the respect of a lot of citizens in this County. Ms. Biggs, you're behavior makes me question your ability to be an educator, much less a Commissioner. Maybe your job at the Dollar Tree is where you belong. Ronnie you were sitting in that Superior Court Judges chair a few minutes ago, looking just as smug and arrogant as you are right now. Hopefully, in the near future you will be sitting over here at the defendant's table answering questions. All of you need to resign and resign right now."

Chairman Bond Jr. hit his gavel and called time.

Commissioner Smith asked Chairman Bond Jr. to make a comment. He was interrupted by the audience whom stated aloud that they could not hear and concerns about the public comment period. Commissioner Smith began his comment again reporting that traditionally in the County and Counties in the State of North Carolina and across the Country, Commissioners could take their spouse to conferences. Commissioner Smith added that the reason why there was a gap between the time that the tickets were brought and reimbursed, was that traditionally members reimbursed any ticket that was brought, for a spouse, when members returned from the meeting and this was the reasoning why there was a three-month gap.

Members from the audience began to make comments aloud before Commissioner Smith could finish his comment.

Mrs. Martha MacDonald stated aloud that she was a County employee, she went to multiple conferences and workshops, and it was never a time where she could pay for her husband to go with her. Mrs. MacDonald continue to state that her husband did accompany her on several occasions, but it was paid for out of her or her husband's pocket.

Commissioner Smith stated that his tickets were paid from his pocket and Mrs. MacDonald asked why Commissioner Smith didn't pay for the plane tickets from the beginning. Mrs. MacDonald stated that Martin County was not a lending tree for Commissioner Smith and that he knew that it was wrong and he did it anyway. Commissioner Smith began to explain, but there were multiple comments made aloud from the public.

4. **Mrs. Sara Stalls** – "Just a couple of years ago, I attended this meeting regularly as a newspaper reporter. During that time, I covered crisis regarding health insurance for our County retirees. This was one of the hardest stories I ever covered. Recently, I had the opportunity to review the Board's travel and split before the short turnaround at the same time that our County retirees were told their new reality regarding health insurance. Expenditures ranged from nothing, which a couple of Commissioners actually filed nothing against the County monies. Some were pretty much moderate and some were very understandable, others were over the top. There's no way other than to say, expenses seemed shady at best and if not criminal in some cases. On numerous occasions, when a group traveled to these events, conferences, or whatever they were called; we never heard much of, if anything, about what benefited was all for our County. It appears a little bit more like a wining and dining. A good time was had by all. End of story. I call on the Board starting tonight, to turn the page and do better. Travel is always going to be necessary, sure. How about, send one, and bring back information to the entire group or to the County. Hold that one-fourths person accountable to report back what they learned and how to put it to work. Start looking at the travel budget as if it were your own money because looking at it as it's my money is not seeming to work out very well. I call on you to start tonight to see the bigger picture and start helping this County heal. Healing could lead to trust and God knows we need that back in the equation."

Commissioner Gurganus asked Chairman Bond Jr to make a comment. Commissioner Gurganus stated that the last two speakers were absolutely right. Commissioner Gurganus stated in this day and age, there was absolutely no reason, no justification what so ever, to spend taxpayer money at the rate that it's been spent to run up and down the road to conferences when there were telephones, broadband that was being installed, webex meetings, and a thousand different ways to communicate and to find out what's going on and bring back what was learned. Commissioner Gurganus made a comment about a sore subject for him, which was when people on retirement and on a fixed income, have benefits taken away from them, in other words have to spend more money to live, when others were spending money for no apparent reason, it did not sit well with him.

The next public comment speaker was called to the podium, but a member of the public began to make comments aloud. Chairman Bond Jr. hit his gavel, but more comments continued until satisfied.

6. **Mrs. Princess Foster – 112 Henderson Street, Williamston** – "Hello, my name is Princess Foster and I reside at 112 Henderson Street, Williamston, NC where my sink is still being held up on a stick in public housing that I complained about two months ago. So um, tonight I sit as a citizen being disgusted in half of this Board. Y'all are sitting here shuffling y'all self around like a deck of cards. Everybody knows that the vote is going to go the same way. We need some kind of difference. We need y'all to understand that the citizens want better and if you even, if you, if y'all would just give us the chance to have somebody else sit up on the Board in those position, maybe y'all will get a little bit more favor than y'all been getting. We just want y'all to know that we know law, after law, after law, after law has been broken, constantly. It's not helping us. It's all adding up and all the truth is going to come out. You can't hide forever and you can't hurt these citizens forever and something else is going to be done about it whether you like it or not. You can sit on your high horse now and act like everything is all good, but it's not and your walls are crumbling down. Thank you."

5. **Mr. Robert Mack Stalls – 1125 Bobby Roberson Road** - "For the Boards consideration, given the recent disclosure of some of the expense records of the County Commissioners and the former County Manager, I'd like to share some truths about the consequences of and remedies for greed, narcissism, and hubris. Psalm 36 versus 1-3: Transgression speaks to the heart, excuse me, *transgressions speaks to the wicked deep in his heart. There is no fear of God before his eyes, for he flatters himself in his own eyes, that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit: he has ceased to make wise, excuse me; he has ceased to act wise and make good choices.* Psalm 7 versus 12-16: *If a man does not repent,* there's a chance for a change, *if a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts. Behold the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has dug. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull, his violence descends.* So, please if this shoe fits, please, stop wearing it."

6. **Mr. Hubert Coltrain – 1031 Scenic Drive Williamston** - "And if you don't mind me adding, just so you know that I'm not hitch hiking through town, This is my 50th year that I've been in business here in Martin County and it's my home. I have a lot of passion for the success of the County. Some matters that our County are embroiled, now embroiled in can be seen by looking at the front page of our local newspaper. *Multiple agencies probing Martin County Situation. Attorney General involved in Martin General Hospital medical records case. Citizens demand Ronnie Smith's resignation. Citizens file suit against three Commissioners. SBI serves warrant on Martin County seeking documents and information relating to personnel matters.* This will be your legacy. This is what you're going to be remembered for. These and other forthcoming accusations of what you will be remembered for and what your families will remember about your time serving as Martin County Commissioners. Be aware that the resolve of your critics

is strong. We are on the side of the truth and the truth will prevail. We will search for that truth and you might want to write this word down and look it up if you have any questions about it. The word is relentlessly. We will search for that truth relentlessly and if you don't mind me, a little theatrics from me, as I turn to walk away, I'm going to say whoops and there's just one more thing. Mr. Smith have you ever been employed in *Chairman Bond hit the gavel* Edgecombe County by the lawyer associated with Clark Jenkins, *Chairman Bond hit the gavel* and if so, would you consider allowing me the interview you to obtain more information of your time being employed there? Thank you very, very much."

Commissioner Smith stated to answer Mr. Coltrains' question, he had not known a Clark Jenkins and thanked Mr. Coltrain.

7. **Mr. Billy Leggett – 1528 Mill End Road, Williamston, NC** - "I'm a retired state employee, NCDOT. I am the owner of Leggett Land Surveying and I am a veteran that served in the Army as a Military Intelligence Officer. I want to talk about perception and I want to thank you Commissioners for what y'all have done this evening because I had no idea you were going to do it when I wrote my comments. I want to talk about perception. Anyone can be a representative, a Commissioner, or officer; either elected or appointed. They are required to perform their duties as entrusted to them by those they represent. Some of us in this room are of an age to remember the 1960's and what went on in the streets here in this County. I'm not proud of those times and neither is anyone else, I'm sure. If you remember the 1960's, there was a term that went about; *Dixicrats*. If you don't know what that meant, that's when the *good ol' boys* got in a back room, smoked filled room, and decided on what they were going to do, what was going to be voted on, who was going to vote, and what was decided was not good for everybody. As many of us remember those votes were generally not to the benefit of all the citizens. Some of us remember having being on the streets, town, when this was going on and under the Dixicrats rules. Commissioners, it is my perception, that perception, and many others that I have spoken to, that you are functioning in the same manner as the Dixicrats. I am ashamed to be a citizen of the County at this time. Previous people so quote scriptures. Other folks have talked about oath, respect, and following through for what you were supposed to do and I appreciated the scripture that Mr. Stalls tonight , and I'm sorry that he stole my line, but shoot, it is said in a scripture that *if two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there also.* Commissioners, it is my perception, there has been times when two or three have been gathered and I'm not sure that the lord was in the room or the interest of the citizens of Martin County were in the room.

The buzzer rang marking that the three-minute period had concluded. Mr. Stalls continued his public comment stating,

"Commissioners may be elected or appointed to any office, but you will see you achieve the title of the Chairman, based on your actions while you are fulfilling those duties. Perception is the garden that's truth until facts prove otherwise and I'd like to add tonight, one fact that I hadn't put in here. Arrogance is not an answer to the people's concerns; it is an affront to their intelligence. I thank you."

Chairman Bond Jr. thanked the public for the comments and moved forward with the Consent agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Ayers stated that the September 13, 2023 minutes did not have his name listed as he attended and he spoke with the Clerk regarding the changes who was in agreeance.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the minutes could be tabled until January.

Commissioner Ayers asked for clarification and agreed to table the minutes until January.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to approve the Consent Agenda with stated changes a **Second** by Commissioner Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

1. **Minute Approval**
   August 21, 2023 Special,
   August 21, 2023 Closed,
   September 13, 2023 Special,
   September 13, 2023 Closed – **Tabled during meeting**

2. **Financial Report – November 2023**
3. **Tax Assessor – Tax Refund Request – November 2023 - $4.25**
4. **Tax Assessor – Tax Relief Orders – November 2023 – $ 17,861.53**

Year Levy	Lname	Fname	Reason	Value	Total
		Real & Personal Releases			
2023	Bowen	David W.	SW Fee Count	$0.00	$1,170.00
2023	Bowen	David W.	Error in Listing	$56,260	$500.71
2023	Bowen	David W.	SW Fee Count	$0.00	$1,170.00
2023	Bowen	David W.	SW Fee Count	$0.00	$1,170.00
2023	Coltrain	Ricky & Mary	Double Billed	$0.00	$143.36
2023	Financial Service	Hewlett Packard	Error in Late List Penalty	$0.00	$6.11
2023	Financial Service	Hewlett Packard	Error in Late List Penalty	$0.00	$1.70
2023	Jones	Debbie Denise	Double Listing	$0.00	$65.31
2023	Jones	Debbie Denise	Double Listing	$0.00	$65.70
2023	Jones	Debbie Denise	Double Listing	$0.00	$63.08
2023	Jones	Debbie Denise	Double Listing	$0.00	$63.08
2023	Jones	Debbie Denise	Double Listing	$0.00	$52.46
2023	Jones	Debbie Denise	Double Listing	$0.00	$50.63
2023	Corporation	La Princesas	SW Fee Count	$0.00	$195.00
2023	Mederos	Teodolo, Pineda-Medrano, Antonia	SW Fee Count	$0.00	$195.00

2023	RH	Griffin Co, LLC.	SW Fee Count	$0.00	$195.00
Total Real & Personal Releases					***$5,107.14***
		VTS Refunds			
2023	Barnard	Earle, Eugene	Adjustment	$153.13	**$148.75**

Total VTS Refunds	***$148.75***
Total Tax Relief Orders - $5,255.89	

5. Tax Collector's Report – November 2023

	Category	November	11 -21 Y-T-D
Real Property	20	$8,016.92	$61,887.71
Personal Property	25	$597.73	$29,429.12
Total		**$8,614.65**	**$91,316.83**
Motor Vehicle	30	$0.00	$0.00
Total MV		**$0.00**	**$0.00**
All Total		**$8,614.65**	**$91,316.83**

6. Board Appointments/Reappointments

A. Fireman's Relief Fund Trustees
Fire Chiefs for the various local fire departments asked the Board of Commissioners to appoint reappoint the following persons as Fireman's Relief Fund Trustees for two (2) year terms each, which would expire December 31, 2025. It was recommended that the following members be reappointed:

1. James R. Ward
2. Gary Griffin
3. Lin Boyd Jr.
4. Phillip Pierce
5. Willie Bunch
6. Tim Boddie
7. Charlie Gurganus
8. Thomas Roberson

The above listed Board Appointments were approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

B. Bertie - Hertford - Martin (BHM) Regional Library
The Beaufort - Hyde - Martin Regional Library system has been in operation since 1941. The governments involved in the system include Beaufort, Hyde and Martin Counties and the towns of Belhaven, Robersonville and Williamston. As a regional system, BHM Regional Library

provides a higher level of quality library service at a lower cost than any of the counties could afford on their own. BHM Regional Library Director Karey Blanchard contacted the County Manager's office to recommend the reappointment of **Phyllis Parker**. If reappointment, the 6 year term would end on December 31, 2029.

The above listed Board Appointments were approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

C. Choanoke Area Development Association (CADA)
CADA is a private, non-profit organization, a Community Action Agency, whose mission is to assist low-income citizens to achieve self-sufficiency and a better quality of life. The purpose of CADA is to promote through regional cooperation, the industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational and general economic wellbeing and health and welfare of the citizens of Bertie, Halifax, Hertford, Martin, and Northampton Counties. CADA Director Chris Moody and Human Resources Assistant Kielee' A. Highsmith made contact with the County Manager's Office by way of fax , email, and phone calls regarding the change in the CADA by laws to reduce the amount of Board members. CADA also contacted the County Manager's Office regarding a Commissioners vacancy needing to be filled. The revised By-Laws were included with the Board agenda packet for informational purposes. Choanoke Area Development Association of NC, Inc. (CADA) has revised its By-laws to reflect a reduction in County Appointee seats from two members to one member. CADA requested one Board position to be appointed by Martin County Commissioners. Those appointed by the County may be County Commissioners themselves or may be selected by the Commissioners from other County residents that can represent the County. The term of office is two years. There is no limit to the number of terms a County Appointee may serve.

No vote required – Informational purposes only.

D. Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC)
The Juvenile Crime Prevention Board recommended that the Board of Commissioners appoint/reappoint the following members for two (2) year terms each, which would expire December 31, 2025. The following members are:

1. Asim McGill
2. Julia Rease
3. Allen Overby
4. Raven Bland

The above listed Board Appointments were approved as part of the Consent Agenda.

7. North Carolina Cooperative Extension Refund Request
Due to the Farmers Market's - Christmas Market on November 25th, the Farmers Market Association used the sign outside of the building from November 14th – 25th to advertise the upcoming event. The Farmers Market was rented to Barnabus Missionary Baptist Church for an event on November 18th. The church requested to use the sign to promote their event, but the

Christmas Market event was already posted on the sign. Because rent of the building should include the use of the sign, $100 has been deducted from the rent charged to Barnabus Missionary Baptist Church. In addition, the building needed to be cleaned prior to the church's event and members cleaned the building before they set up their event. For this reason, an additional $50 has been deducted. The building was left in good condition after the church's event, which allows a full deposit refund.

Full deposit refund:	$100
Not able to use sign:	$100
Cleaning prior to event:	+ $50
	$250.00 - Total amount to Barnabus Missionary Baptist Church

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

8. Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) Program Strategic Plan

Through CORE, Martin County collaborated with N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and position communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposed a vision, strategies, goals, objectives, and actions that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.

The plan crafted a vision for the next 5 years and makes recommendations (endorsed by the Outdoor Recreation Economy Planning Committee) on Strategies, Goals, Objectives, and Actions that local stakeholders can take to accomplish the purpose of increasing economic vitality through leveraging outdoor recreation. The plan's actions are subdivided into Organization, Marketing, and Projects. This template built upon the current Martin County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Strategic Plan, and many TDA actions are addressed in this outdoor recreation plan. The CORE Program Strategic Plan was included in the Board's agenda packet.

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

9. Clerk Report- *included for informational purposes*

INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEE(S) - NONE

PRESENTATION (S)

Tax Assessor's Departmental Update

Tax Assessor's Office Staff and Certifications
The Tax Assessor's Office reportedly had four staff members that handled the listing and assessing of all real & personal property and were responsible for the approval and denials of all exemption applications.

In 2023, one staff member was certified as a Real Property Appraiser and another staff member was certified as a Personal Property Appraiser by the North Carolina Department of Revenue (NCDOR). One other staff member submitted their certification to NCDOR for a Personal Property Appraiser. In 2022, Tax Assessor Phillips received her certification as a Tax Assessor by the NCDOR. The staff reportedly completed classes and passed exams by the School of Government and Department of Revenue that stated they were knowledgeable in these fields. The staff of the Tax Assessor's Office have to maintain 30 continuing education hours every 2 years to keep their certification active.

Software Updates and Upgrades
The Munis Software used by the Tax Assessor's Office was reportedly upgraded in mid-September of 2023 for the entire County. The Office was stated to be in the process of implementing a new *CAMA* software vendor by the name of *Bi-Tek* and removing the current vendor. The Bi-Tek software was being implemented due to the Tax Assessor's Office having issues with retrieving data from the current vendor. The Tax Assessor's Office was supposedly converting the scheduled values from the 2017 reevaluation to the new software. Tax Assessor Phillips had hopes that the new software would be running within the next few months. The Tax Assessor's Office would reportedly benefit from the Bi-Tek CAMA program by having access to historical records. Instead of updating a parcel, value, or etc., there would be a history of what the parcel or value was prior. The Tax Assessors Office had a CAMA software and a personal property billing software that did not cooperate with each other. Everything was reportedly being double keyed into both systems due to this issue and an import process was being implemented to prevent errors that may occur in double keying information. A unified system was recommended as a solution to reduce the time and errors associated with double keying data.

2025 Revaluation Updates
Martin County was reportedly on an 8-year revaluation cycle, which was stated to be the longest a County could go without a revaluation per statue. NCDOR reportedly recommended a countywide reappraisal of all real property at least once every four years. NCDOR also recommended that a physical review, including an on-site verification of property characteristics, be conducted at least every 4 to 6 years. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that the recommendations from NCDOR could be found in the Reappraisal Standards Guide on the NCDOR website. Piner Appraisal was reportedly hired to conduct the 2025 reevaluation and have begun by conducting

walk around inspections of properties. Tax Assessor Phillips stated that the walk around inspections were conducted to correct any listing errors or update any changes since the last revaluation of the property. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that Piner Appraisals would have Martin County ID badges and would be driving their personal vehicles with magnetic revaluation stickers. The Piner Appraisals staff were stated to knock and notify the property owner of who they are and what they are doing.

Listing Period - What shall be listed?
The Listing Period was stated to take place between January 1-January 31, wherein the personal property could be listed.

Personal Property reportedly included, but was not limited to; mobile homes, boats, motors, jet skis, aircrafts, unlicensed automobiles, trucks, campers, and motorcycles.

Business Personal Property included, but was not limited to; machinery, equipment, furniture, fixtures, signs, purchased software, supplies and materials, leasehold improvements, construction in progress, unlicensed vehicles and special truck mounted equipment.

All items must be listed at 100% cost including installation, sales tax, freight and other associated costs. Real estate is on permanent listing system. Property owners are responsible to list all improvements or changes made to the real estate during the previous year, which a building permit was or was not purchased. We send out listing forms to taxpayers who have been listing personal property. If you do not get a listing form, we have some in the office and blank copies can be found on our website.

Unlisted Personal Property - Why is it important that unlisted personal property gets listed?
Per G.S., 105-274(a) all property, real and personal, within the jurisdiction of the State shall be subject to taxation unless it is:

- Excluded from the tax base by a statute of statewide application enacted under the classification power accorded the General Assembly by Article V 2(2), of the North Carolina Constitution, or

- Exempted from taxation by the Constitution or by a statute of statewide application enacted under the authority granted the General Assembly by Article V 2(3), of the North Carolina Constitution.

It is being fair and equitable that all taxpayers list and pay taxes on all property that is required to be listed per statute.

Our staff is constantly reviewing data to see what personal property has not been listed through a variety of resources. This includes DMV records, documents brought into the office, and social media to name a few. Letters were reportedly sent to individuals and businesses that were found to not have listed personal property. Majority of those individuals and businesses reportedly have

already been billed. Staff have been also reviewing the Register of Deeds website for assumed names to know when a new business came to the County. The Martin County Chamber of Commerce website was stated to have a list of business members at the end of November, which is reviewed by staff. Tax Assessor Phillips has conducted a drive - by of businesses and staff searched their software to verify if they already had listings for these businesses. The businesses that could not be located in the Tax Assessor's system would be sent a notice on December 15, 2023, stating that they did not list their business personal property, if they were in business before 2023 that could be verified through research. The process that the Tax Assessor's Office would be canvasing and looking for unlisted property was reportedly discussed last year during the July 2022 meeting. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that the process would not occur during office peak times.

Compliance Reviews

Per G.S 105-296(l), *the assessor shall annually review at least one-eighth of parcels in the county exempted or excluded from taxation to verify that these parcels qualify for the exemption or exclusion.* This process was stated to have already begun with the Tax Assessor's Office mailing out compliance letters. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that responses were already being received, but the responses needed to be reviewed by staff. This process was reported to continue next year with additional exempt/excluded properties. Tax Assessor Phillips recommended contracting this process out to a County Tax Service to handle compliance reviews for the Business Personal Property Accounts.

State Auditor Report Update

The recommendations from the State Auditor's Office was for the Tax Assessor's Office to review all 259 properties that were reappraised outside of the eight-year general appraisal cycle to determine and document if the reappraisal meets one of the Statutory reasons for reappraisal. If the appraisal did not meet one of the required reasons then the value should be returned and the property owners refunded. One of the requirements in G.S. 105-287 stated that *the assessor shall change the property's values resulting from one or more of the following reasons:*

(1) Correct a clerical or mathematical error
(2) Correct and appraisal error resulting from a misapplication of the schedules, standards, and rules used in the county's most recent general reappraisal.
(2a) Recognized an increase or decrease in the value of the property resulting from a conservation or preservation agreement subject to Article 4 of Chapter 121 of the General Statues, the Conservation and Historic Preservation Agreements Act.
(2b) Recognize an increase or decrease in the value of the property resulting from a physical change to the land or to the improvements on the land.
(3) Recognized an increase or decrease in the value of the property resulting from a factor other than one listed in subsection (b)

* This statue is not limited to the exterior of the improvements. It includes changes to the interior of the improvements as well.

Tax Assessor Phillips stated that there were concerns about staff visiting properties and entering inside homes. Taxpayers have reportedly voiced concerns that staff could not accurately value a property without going inside and other taxpayers stated that they did not want staff inside of their homes. Tax Assessor Phillips assured that the Tax Assessor's Office staff would never force themselves into a home. If staff was not granted permission, then they do not enter the home. This standard reportedly applied to property visits as well. If staff were not allowed on a property, they will have to estimate the value of the property.

The Tax Assessor's Office reportedly reviewed all 259 parcels in office and found that 40 parcels had justified changes and the reason for the change were notated in the CAMA system. 75 parcels were found to be land adjustments. Tax Assessor Philips stated that 167 letters were mailed to property owners that required a site visit, as there was not enough information for the review. In this letter, it requested that property owners schedule a time that staff could visit the property. This was so staff could see and document if the change in value was due to G.S. 105-287. If the reason for the change in value could not be determined as a change made per the statue, a refund was issued, and the property value was adjusted back down. If staff found that some change was warrantied then the value was adjusted. Out of those letters, staff only received responses and scheduled visits to 70 parcels. All property owners were reportedly sent another letter notifying them of their new value and that they had 30 days to appeal the new value. No appeals were received by the Tax Assessor's Office for any of these values.

Refunds Approved due to Auditor's Report	
August Refunds:	$23,239.99
September Refunds:	$16,653.50
October Refunds:	$6,188.20
November Refunds:	$0.00
December Refunds:	$1,008.34 (estimated)
Total Refund Amount:	$47,090.03

All towns within Martin County, except the Town of Williamston, contract with the County to collect taxes and handle refunds. When the County mails the refund, it will reportedly include the refund amount for the County and the towns. The towns would reportedly receive a list of all affected properties after the Tax Assessor's Office has completed all reviews. Tax Assessor Phillips stated the Town of Robersonville was notified of all refunds for the years it collected taxes. The Town of Williamston was also stated to receive monthly reports of their refunds.

Changes Recorded in the Office

Tax Assessor Phillips reported that if the department changed a value on a property, the property owner would receive a value change letter along with a new property record card. In that letter, it would give the property owner 30 days to appeal that value. It was stated that the office would keep copies of all paper documents regarding the change as well as notate the reason for the change in the system. Tax Assessor Phillips stated the steps to change a value:

- Submittal of an informal appeal to the Tax Assessors Office within the 30 days of a value change letter or submittal of an informal appeal to the Tax Assessors Office between January 1st and the day the Board of Equalization and Review comes into session.

- If the property owner disagrees with the Tax Assessor's decision, they can appeal to the Board of Equalization and Review (BOER).

- Once the BOER adjourns for that year, the appeal process for real estate concludes. If property owners disagree with the BOER decision, then they can appeal to the Property Tax Commission (PTC) in Raleigh.

- If property owners disagree with the PTC decision, they can appeal to the NC Court of Appeals.

- If property owners disagrees with the NC Court of Appeals, they can appeal to the NC Supreme Court.

Tax Assessor Phillips noted that all appeals had to be filed timely in order for the appeal to be heard.

In addition, Tax Assessor Phillips informed the Board and audience of Personal Property appeals. Per General Statute 105-317.I (c), *the taxpayer may appeal the value, situs, or taxability of personal property within 30 days after the date of the initial notice of value.* If a timely appeal was filed, the Tax Assessor's Office would review all evidence supplied by the taxpayer to support their appeal and determine if there should be a change of value, situs, or taxability. If the taxpayer does not agree with the Assessor's findings, they can appeal to the Board of Equalization and Review, or if not in Session, by the Board of County Commissioners. If the taxpayer wishes to appeal the decision by previously mentioned entities, the taxpayer will have to appeal to the PTC, then the NC Court of Appeals, and finally the NC Supreme Court. Tax Assessor Phillips asked if there were any questions.

There were no questions.

Commissioner Ayers thanked Tax Assessor Phillips for her detailed overview.

OLD BUSINESS

Beaver Trapping Policy (Tabled from last meeting)

The Beaver Trapping Policy was presented in a previous meeting to discuss a possible change in the Beaver Trapping Season from November 1 – March 31 to October 1 - February 31. Beaver Trappers reportedly contacted Commissioners and staff to explain the inability of trapping beavers without the month of March and asked if the County's Beaver Trapping program could be set from November 1 - March 31. NC Wildlife was contacted for clarity in the change of their schedule and

how it would affect the County Beaver Trapping Program. The previous Beaver Trapping policy is as stated with changes marked in red.

Commissioner Ayers stated that beaver trappers in the County discussed the need to keep the season open until March 31st. This was due to undesirable weather conditions for beaver trapping in October and the weather being more conducive in March. Commissioner Ayers stated that if the beaver trapping schedule was changed to match the states season, the beaver trappers would lose two months to trap beavers. Commissioners Ayers talked briefly about the advantages of beaver trapping especially in the matters of beavers blocking streams, creeks, and or rivers.

MARTIN COUNTY
BEAVER CONTROLLED
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ORDINANCE ATTACHED)
ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED

1. **BEAVER SEASON** - The State season runs from November 1 until March 31. **(October 1 – March 31).** The Martin County Program will coincide with the State season or until funds are depleted, whichever comes first.

2. **PERMITS** - Trappers will need a beaver controlled management program permit. They must be licensed by the State of North Carolina to acquire a Martin County permit. Cost of permit will be $20.00. The trapper will have to submit a signed application indicating his agreement and compliance with the ordinance before a permit is issued. Each permit will be numbered and recorded at the county office.

3. **FINES** - Fines will be imposed on persons bringing beaver tails from outside Martin County. The fine will be $500 for the first illegal beaver tail and then $500 for each additional beaver tail. Each illegal beaver tail will be considered a separate violation. The permit will also be cancelled. A $500 reward will be given to anyone that has any information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone bringing beaver tails from outside Martin County and trying to or collecting a bounty on them. Any, rewards that are paid will be deducted from the maximum amount allotted for this program.

4. **STATE LAWS** - All bounty trappers will have to follow all state laws according to the North Carolina Wildlife Commission. The County will pursue any violations of these laws.

5. **PAYMENTS** - The collection site will be the animal control office located at the Martin County Landfill off McCaskey Road.

   The beaver tail will have to be turned in before it is counted. The beaver tails will be disposed of at the animal control shelter at the Martin County Landfill, McCaskey Road, Williamston, NC. The enforcement officer will receive the beaver tails and give receipt to each trapper at that time.

Receipts have to be turned into the county office. The enforcement officer will also record each receipt. All checks will be mailed and will not be hand delivered to any individual trapper. The payment will be $25.00 per beaver tail, and the maximum amount of this program is as determined by the Board of Commissioners.

6. **MONITERING PROGRAM** - There will be an enforcement officer monitoring the beaver program. He has the authority to check all trappers at any given time or any given place. If trappers refuse, his permit will be revoked immediately. Permits will have to be carried by trapper at all times. Any violations that require legal action will be turned over to the Martin County Sheriffs s Department.

7. **LANDOWNER FORMS** - Landowner permission forms will be available at the County Manager's office when permit is bought. Each trapper will have to have signed proof that he has permission to trap on each form. A form signed by the landowner, stating the number of beaver tails that were collected off his farm and the farm number will have to be presented and turned in before payment will be made. This has to be done at the same time beaver tails are turned in. No receipts shall be issued unless beaver tails and forms of proof from landowner are turned in at the same time. These forms will be available at the County Manager's office.

8. **PERMIT LIST** - A list of all permits issued will be available at the County Manager's office and are open to public inspection.

Commissioner Ayers made a motion to allow the County Beaver Trapping and Clerk Rease asked if the motion could include the changing of the policy, wherein the policy stated that the state schedule would be adhered to.

Commissioner Ayers made the **Motion** to change the Beaver Trapping Season to October 1st – March 31st and that the Beaver Trapping policy would be changed, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

Chairman Bond briefly talked about the benefits of the beaver trapping program as well and Commissioner Smith in regards to damage that is caused to property by beavers.

Board Appointments (Tabled from last meeting)

This item was tabled from last month's Board meeting. Several Boards had a vacancy due to the resignation of the former County Manager. The following Boards have a vacancy and or expired term in which the Board of Commissioners will appoint someone to complete and or fill the Board terms. The Boards are listed as:

- *Martin County Water & Sewer Authority (MCRWASA)*
  Mr. James Bennett was the chairperson and Julius Patrick was nominated as chairperson in their October Meeting. Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr. was previously an alternate member

before Mr. Bennett resigned and would like to be reappointed as a Board Director. Water Systems Manager Cody Cratt was recommended to replace Commissioner Bond Jr. as an alternate Board Director.

- *Airport Commission – Secretary Position*
  Mr. Bennett was the Secretary for the Airport Commission and contact has been made to the Chairman of the Board to see if this position was filled. The position was still vacant.

- *Martin-Tyrell-Washington (MTW) Health Department Board*
  It was discussed in a Board meeting this year that a Commissioner was needed to serve on this Board. The by-laws of this Board were amended to state that the County Manager could serve in the Commissioners capacity. The County Manager or a Commissioner could be appointed to this Board.

Commissioner Gurganus stated that he spoke with the Deputy Health Director, Vickey Manning regarding the MTW Health Board vacancy and his interest in serving if there were no objections.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Appoint Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus to the Martin – Tyrell- Washington Health Board, with a **Second by** Commissioner Biggs. Motion was Carried Unanimously (5-0).

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Appoint Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr. as a Board Director and Martin County Water Systems Manager Cody Cratt as the Alternate Board Director, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the Airport Commission Board vacancy did not have to be a Commissioner.

Commissioner Ayers stated that the position was previously held by the County Manager. Commissioner Ayers asked if Interim County Manager Eisner would be able to take the position, as he did not want to overload his job duties.

Interim County Manager Eisner responded that he could potentially take the position, but suggested to table the matter for discussion in another meeting.

Commissioner Ayers reported that the meetings were generally short and someone could step in if the Interim County Manager Eisner could not attend.

Interim County Manager Eisner suggested to discuss the matter in another meeting and that it was not necessarily urgent to fill the position.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Tax Assessor Late PUV Applications (2) and Discovery Appeal (1)

Late Present Use Value (PUV) Application – Parcel # 0502354
Tax Assessor Melissa Phillips reported that on June 13, 2023 a deed was recorded that transferred ownership and on July 17, 2023, a letter was mailed to the property owners notifying them of an application that was needed for continued use within 60 days. On September 18, 2023, a letter was mailed stating that the office did not receive a timely application and the property would be removed from the program. A deferred estimate for $1,026.43 was also sent to the property owners. On October 16, 2023, a letter explaining why the application was late, an application, and a forestry management plan was submitted. The letter stated that the property owner, who receives the mail for this property, was called to active duty during this 60-day timeframe. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that statutes stated that the Board of Commissioners could approve late PUV applications for "good cause". A letter from the property owner dated October 16, 2023 and an Order to Report from the Army National Guard was included in the Board agenda packet.

Commissioner Gurganus asked for clarification regarding what was being requested for approval.

Tax Assessor Phillips reported that the Board would vote on the approval of the Present Use Value (PUV) late application, and if approved, would keep the property in the PUV program and the taxes would be billed

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve the Late PUV Application for Parcel #0502354, with a **Second** by Commissioners Ayers. **Discussion:**

Commissioner Ayers stated that the property owner was called to serve on active duty and he felt that that was a good reason to approve the late Prevent Value application.

Vote: Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

Late Present Use Value (PUV) Application - Parcels #0401059 and #0401058
Tax Assessor Phillips reported that on February 7, 1984 a deed was recorded that transferred a property to Jerry B. Cherry. In July of 2023, the Tax Assessor's Office received information regarding the Last Will and Testament for Margaret Cherry and Jerry Cherry with the Estate File numbers written on the top of each. The Tax Assessor's Office also received an attached 2022 Property Tax Notice that showed the property in Jerry B. Cherry Heirs. The property was transferred per the information submitted to the Tax Assessor's Office. Per Mr. Cherry's will, the property transferred to Richard Harris Cherry and Margaret Cherry. His estate file was recorded in 2016. Per Margaret's will, her interest went to Elizabeth Cherry Smith. It was reported that no death certificates were provided and that there was no mention of Richard Harris Cherry being deceased.

On July 17, 2023, the Tax Assessor's Office mailed a letter along with a Continued Use application to the address listed on file from Mr. Jerry Cherry owning the property. The wills reportedly did not provide addresses and there was no other address provided with the information submitted to the Tax Assessor's Office.

On September 18, 2023, a letter was mailed stating the Tax Assessor's Office did not receive an application. The letter also stated that the property would be removed from the program along with deferred estimates for $7,710.50 (parcel #0401058) and $1,494.64 (parcel #0401059), totaling $9,205.14 that was good until October 31, 2023.

An attorney reportedly conducted an office visit to notify staff that the property address was filed incorrectly and gave staff the correct address information. Tax Assessor Phillips added that the attorney received the application, supporting documents for the application, and letters stating why the application was late.

Tax Assessor Phillips stated that there was an address error in the system unfortunately due to the incorrect addresses on the certificates and wills received by the office.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Approve of the Late Present Use Value Application for parcels #0401059 and #0401058, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Discovery Appeal - Parcel #0100190

Tax Assessor Phillips stated that the statute that applied to properties receiving an Elderly and Disabled Exemption program reportedly stated to include the dwelling, the dwelling site, not to exceed one acre, and related improvements. Tax Assessor Phillips stated that a dwelling could be a single-family residence, a unit in a multi-family residential complex, or manufactured home. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that a property owner could not have two permanent legal residences and get the exemption on both.

Tax Assessor Phillips stated that a relative of the property owner located at the parcel conducted an office visit to inquire about exemptions. At that time, it was discovered that this parcel had two residential structures on it and both of the structures were receiving the elderly and disabled exemption. The resident was reportedly advised of this and that he would be receiving a discovery on the matter. Once the Tax Assessor's Office was aware of the issue of the exemption being on both properties when one did not qualify, staff reportedly conducted a discovery on this property and fixed the record for 2024 and years going forward. A discovery letter was also mailed advising the property owner of these findings. Tax Assessor Phillips stated that the discovery bill included the current year and the last five years, per statute, which amounted to $ 11,798.00 and the property value that had been excluded. This was reportedly not the tax bill the property owner would receive. Tax Assessor Phillips provided documents in the agenda packet that informed the Board of what the tax bill would look like.

Per statute, Tax Assessor Phillips reported that the property was taxable and the Tax Assessor's Office did not have the right to waive any taxes on this property.

The property owner decided to appeal the discovery because they reportedly felt that the Tax Assessor's Office made an error. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that staff had to conduct the discovery because the property was not eligible to receive the exemption and per statute was taxable.

Commissioner Smith asked the Chairman to speak before asking Tax Assessor Phillips for clarification of the reasoning for the property owner appealing the decision. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that in the appeal letter from the property owner, the property owner felt that it was not their fault that the property was receiving the exemption on both properties. Tax Assessor Phillips added that whether it was the Tax Assessor's Office error or not, per *N.C.G.S. 105-273.(6a) Discovered property. – Any of the following: a. Property that was not listed during a listing period. b. Property that was listed but the listing included a substantial understatement. c. Property that has been granted an exemption or exclusion and does not qualify for the exemption or exclusion,* therefore staff had to tax and bill the property.

Commissioner Smith asked Chairman Bond Jr., if the matter had to be approved or disapproved at this meeting.

Tax Assessor Phillips stated that the statutes stated the property was taxable, but if Commissioner Smith wanted to table the matter, that was his decision. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that the property would be billed and taxed.

Commissioner Ayers reported that Tax Assessor Phillips had already conducted due diligence, sent the bill to the property owner, and the property owner was appealing her decision. Commissioner Ayers stated that this matter was like any other appeal and that he could make a decision. Commissioner Ayers stated that if someone wanted to review the facts again, he could understand. The Tax Assessor Report, Commissioner Ayers stated that the property owners had not paid taxes for multiple years already and he wanted to follow the recommendations given by the Tax Assessor.

Chairman Bond Jr. asked for clarification of the property exemption in regards to whether it was a Veteran's and or disabled tax exemption. Tax Assessor Phillips provided clarification, stating that there were two houses on one parcel that were both receiving the tax exemption, but one of the houses was not qualified for the exemption.

The son of the property owner (hereinafter referred as property owner) was in attendance at the meeting and asked if he could speak on the behalf of the property. The property owner stated that there was one parcel and both properties was being taxed together. The property owner referenced a document that showed that the property values of both properties were added together. The property that was originally on the parcel first was stated to be a house and a doublewide trailer was added to the parcel. The double wide was placed on the property due to the main home needing

work conducted to it. In 2018, his father reportedly inquired about a discount since he was a senior citizen. He reportedly did not ask for an exemption for one house, both houses were reportedly assessed, and added together. The property owner stated that both exemptions were added, taxes were being paid, and there were two homes on one parcel. The property owner stated that he was unaware that anything different needed to occur and he had been paying the taxes billed. The property owner stated that this issue was only discovered because he went to the Tax Assessor's Office inquiring about other programs offered for veteran's and the Tax Collector's Office did not make the discovery on their own.

Tax Assessor Phillips stated that regardless of there being one parcel or not, only one of the structures qualified for the exemption.

Commissioner Smith asked to speak. Commissioner Smith stated that listening to the property owner's explanation; staff could divide the property starting from this tax year.

Tax Assessor Phillips reported that staff could not split the parcel without a deed being recorded splitting anything because staff had to go by the recorded document on the parcel itself. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that staff went into the system and corrected the exemption, but by statute, staff had no choice but to discovery the exemption and tax the property.

Commissioner Smith asked if both properties would be together on the tax bills going forward.

Tax Assessor Phillips responded that in the Tax Assessor's system, there was one house with a value and a separate house. Tax Assessor Phillips reported that she separated the land, so half of the parcel would receive the exemption and the other house did not qualify so it would not receive an exemption on the land. It was stated that the values were same as before.

Commissioner Smith asked if the Tax Assessor was going to 2018 to collect those funds.

Tax Assessor Phillips reported that she had to do this and that she was following North Carolina General Statute.

County Attorney Eisner gave a legal aspect of the Board's position and stated a portion of a statute regarding the powers of the Board in matters as such: N.C.G.S. 105-312 (k) Power to Compromise – *"... the board of county commissioners, upon the petition of the taxpayer, may compromise, settle, or adjust the county's claim for taxes arising therefrom."* County Attorney Eisner reported that the Board. County Attorney Eisner reported that there was a broad ability to compromise or settle.

Commissioner Smith asked if this matter was basically put into the Boards hands. County Attorney Eisner agreed. Commissioner Smith asked regardless of the other statute, did this statute give the Board the option to make a decision.

Tax Assessor Phillips responded that she understood the statue stated by County Attorney Eisner did give the Board the ability to release the penalties, but according to N.C.G.S. § 105-380. No taxes to be released, refunded, or compromised: "*(a) The governing body of a taxing unit is prohibited from releasing, refunding, or compromising all or any portion of the taxes levied against any property within its jurisdiction ...*" so if it was supposed to be taxed, it needed to be taxed.

Commissioner Smith asked why the matter was being brought to the Board if the Tax Assessor told the Board that they had an option, but the general statute stated different. Commissioner Smith stated that either the general statute had to be followed or the Board needed to be given the option to make a decision.

Tax Assessor Phillips reported that the taxpayers had the ability to go before a Board if they disagreed with the Tax Assessors decision and this was what she was doing, which was giving them the ability to be heard.

County Attorney Eisner reported that he believed that the Tax Assessor had the ability to follow the path in which they felt was right and the tax payer had the ability to appeal, which they had done. County Attorney Eisner stated that there were two ways of looking at the matter and he did not disagree with the view of bringing this matter to the attention of the Board. County Attorney Eisner reported that he felt the statute gave the Board a wide latitude to compromise or settle. County Attorney Eisner stated that he had not reviewed how "taxes" were defined in the statutes, but the statute did state "taxes" in it. Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the Board was sitting as a Quasi-Judicial Board, a Legislative Body, the Board could take make a moment for him to review the matter or the matter could be tabled, but he thought that the statute gave the Board a broad ability to compromise or settle.

Commissioner Smith asked Chairman Bond Jr. if the item could be tabled and Commissioner Gurganus stated that he was trying to understand and asked the property owner for clarification of his explanation. The property owner reiterated his explanation, stated that his father only initially asked for the exemption for one home, the taxes billed were always paid and have never been delinquent, he felt that he was being penalized, but for the Board to do what they needed to do.

Commissioner Gurganus stated that the property owner was not being penalized. Commissioner Gurganus stated that the Tax Assessor studied the law in and wanted to follow the law regarding these matters and for the property owner not to misunderstand him as making an excuse, but he did not think this was done in the past. Commissioner Gurganus informed the property owner that this issue was not his fault and asked if the agenda item was going to be tabled.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to table this item with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

2. NCDOT Division of Highways Abandonment Petition - Secondary Road (School Street) Resolution

Property owners on School Street, also known as State Road 1165 by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, petitioned for the street to be closed. The street is located in between two properties in Robersonville and the property owners requested to close the road due to littering, trash, and unwanted guests on the property. The property owners submitted a petition to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), requested a resolution in support of the abandonment petition, and a public hearing was conducted as required.

RESOLUTION REQUESTING, ABANDONEMENT OF A PORTION OF STATE ROAD 1165, SCHOOL STREET, FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE MAINTAINED SECONDARY ROAD SYSTEM

WHEREAS, as authorized by N.C.G.S 163-63, attached petition, by the only affected property owners, has been filed with the Martin County Board of Commissioners requesting that a portion of State Road 1165, School Street, the location of which had been indicated on the attached map, be abandoned from the North Carolina State Maintained Secondary Road System; and

WHEREAS, the County reviewed the petition requesting abandonment and finds that no property owner would be derived of reasonable means of ingress and egress to his/her property, the petitioners own all of the adjacent property, and there would be no negative impact from maintenance being abandoned on the portion of State Road 1165, School Street; and the County therefore recommends in favor of the petition to abandon the said portion of road; and

WHEREAS, based on the recommendation of the County, the Martin County Board of Commissioners hereby requests the Board of Transportation, to review the proposed abandonment of the above described portion of State Road 1165, School Street, and if in its opinion the public interest demands it, to abandon the said identified portion of the road from the State Maintained Secondary Road System.

Adopted this _____ day of the _____, 2023.

_____

Dempsey Bond Jr., Chairman
Martin County Board of Commissioners

_____

Julia S. Rease
Clerk to the Board

*Attachment - North Carolina Department of Transportation, Division of Highways, Abandonment Petition:

Date Petition Received by NCDOT:_____

North Carolina Department of Transportation
Division of Highways
Abandonment Petition

North Carolina
County of Martin

We the under signed, being all of the property owners on Secondary Road SR 1165 School St. in Martin County do hereby request the Division of Highways of the Department of Transportation to abandon the road from the State Maintained System.

PROPERTY OWNERS

Printed Name and Signature		Address
PAUL D. Smith	Paul D. Smith	3487 Bear Grass Rd Williamston N.C.
Elizabeth Ann B. Smith	Elizabeth Ann B. Smith	3487 Bear Grass Rd Williamston NC

Form SR-3 (8/2022)

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to approve the resolution, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

3. Emergency Medical Services

County Attorney/Interim County Manager Eisner stated that there was a discussion at last month's meeting regarding EMS during public comment. Interim County Manager Eisner stated that EMS was preparing a robust presentation that may appear at the January 2024 meeting. Interim County Manager Eisner informed the Board that the County was awarded $90,000.00 through Federal Assistance funding that came from the North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office and the Office of budget management. The County would need to consider how the funds would be spent and to cover eligible cost to begin March 31, 2021 and those incurred at the end of next year. This was reportedly for information purposes only.

4. Update on Medical Examiner Cases

County Attorney Eisner stated that there was an issue mentioned in the November 2023 meeting regarding deceased citizens, funeral homes, etc, but another issue come from that. Interim County Manager Eisner reported that every county was required to have a morgue, but Martin County did

not due to the closure of the hospital. There was an agreement that all medical examiner cases to be sent to Greenville, NC. Interim County Manager referred to a document in the agenda packet with a statement. There was a small cost for to ship the cases to Greenville. The second part of this agenda item was in regards to the size and number of cases that the Greenville morgue held. Interim County Manager reported that there was a possibility that the Board needed to look at other morgues to serve as an alternate. Interim County Manager Eisner reported that this agenda item was for information purposes only at this time.

5. Budget Amendment(s)

Budget Amendment #27

Martin County has been awarded an additional $300,000 from the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to be used at the Martin County Airport for the T-hanger Taxilane and apron construction project. The State is funding this project at 100%, or with no county match. With the change order that was approved last week to the Barnhill construction contract, the County is over budget on this project by approximately $10,000. WK Dickson has stated that additional grant funds are available to cover this shortfall.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-27

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 Airport Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Transportation	$300,000	

This will result in an increase of $300,000 in the expenditures of the Airport Fund. To provide an increase in the revenues for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Intergovernmental Revenue	$300,000

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 Gurganus and **Seconded** by Commissioner Smith to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 13th day of December 2023. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Budget Amendment # 28

The Martin County Department of Aging received the final notification of the HCCBG Aging Grant for fiscal year 2024 for $289,363. This is $14,363 over the budgeted amount for the fiscal year. Of that amount, $4,550 is for transportation, and $5,000 is for Housing and Home Improvement. The remaining $4,813 can be used as general senior center operations, which can include a wide variety of expenditures including office supplies and salaries.

In addition, the Department of Aging has had increased salary expenditures from several different issues. In the current year budget, the county budgeted to remove a position beginning July 1. The employee returned to work this fiscal year on a temporary basis for a couple months to provide assistance, but these funds were not budgeted. In addition, part time employees were given an increase to $12 an hour before June 30th and then raised by 2% to $12.24 in the current year. However, the budget for these employees was not increased for the current year.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-28

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 Revaluation Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Human Resources		
Department of Aging	$ 23,796	

This will result in an increase of $23,796 in the expenditures of the Revaluation Fund. To provide an increase in the revenues for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	$ 9,433
Intergovernmental Revenue	$14,363

Account #	Account Name	Increase
1158610-512100	Salaries	1,495.00
1158610-512600	Salaries - temp	1,561.00
1158610-518100	Social Security Exp	190.00
1158610-518105	Medicare	45.00
1158610-518200	Retirement	395.00
1158610-518400	401K	153.00
1158640-512600	Salaries - temp	6,255.00
1158640-518100	Social Security Exp	388.00
1158640-518105	Medicare	91.00
1158640-518400	401K	326.00

1158650-518400	401K	326.00
1158665-512100	Salaries	338.00
1158665-518200	retirement	45.00
1158665-518300	hospitalization	1,241.00
1158665-518400	401K	17.00
1158610-539780	Cost of transportation	4,550.00
1158610-549117	Housing & Home Imp	5,000.00
1158610-526100	Office Supplies	1,000.00
	Total	23,416.00
1100025-455510	Aging grant	14,363.00
1100090-499099	Fund Balance	9,053.00

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.

Interim County Manager Eisner reported that this budget amendment was in response to a clerical error and steps were made to prevent the same error in the future.

Motion by Commissioner Smith and **Seconded** by Commissioner Ayers to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 13th day of December 2023. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Budget Amendment #29
The final award to Martin County Department of Social Services for the APS Essential Service Fund is $1,371 higher than budgeted for fiscal year 2024.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-29

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
Human Services		
Social Services	$ 1,371	

This will result in an increase of $1,371 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 $ 1,371

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 Smith and **Seconded** by Commissioner Biggs to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 13th day of December 2023. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Budget Amendment #30

On July 9, 2023 during a storm, several trees fell on the fence at animal control. The estimate to repair the fence was $2,600. An insurance claim was filed and the County received a check in the amount of $1,600, which is the estimate minus the deductible of $1,000.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-30

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	$ 1,600	

This will result in an increase of $1,600 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 $ 1,600

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 Gurganus to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 13th day of December 2023. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Budget Amendment #31

Each year the county is required to file a PSAP Revenue-Expenditure Report with the 911 Board that details each expenditure in the Emergency Telephone Fund. As you know, funds received from the 911 Board are only to be spent on approved items, and the 911 board staff uses this report to verify the expenditures. The 911 Board staff has completed their review of the 2023 report with a total of $15,652 of expenses deemed non-eligible. This includes $15,119 for VIPER Consolettes and $533 for an all in one printer, which was deemed to be only ¼ eligible. County Staff has adjusted coding to recurring items as to not have them charged to the 911 fund. Please see the attached email from Communications Director Jason Steward regarding the VIPER Consolettes.

"The NC 911 Board has amended it's "Use of Funds List" numerous times with regard to radio hardware/software/licensing over the past several years. Previously, radio infrastructure was not allowable at all. In 2018, the policy was changed to allow certain radio elements directly related to 911 call taking and dispatch to be charged to the ETSF or "911 Fund". Radio maintenance for the Sheriff's Office, Emergency Management, or Transit is not eligible. Certain elements in Communications are also not eligible. We were advised this year that radio consolettes were not an eligible expense despite being deemed eligible in the past. The radio consolette is a radio transmitter and receiver that is installed in the server room of the 911 Center. It serves as the connection between the radio console (operated by the 911 Telecommunicator) and the radio tower or VIPER transmitter. It is necessary to ensure that the radio signals travel from the console, to the tower, and ultimately to the emergency radios installed inside of emergency response vehicles. These hardware components are under a maintenance agreement with Motorola Solutions, which ensures that, in the event of a failure, a technician will be dispatched to repair them 24/7/365. It also covers preventative maintenance and programming. The maintenance on these pieces of infrastructure is critical. We respectfully request continued funding of maintenance for these emergency communications devices."

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-31

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 Emergency Telephone Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Operations		
Supplies/Equipment	$15,652	

This will result in an increase of $15,652 in the expenditures of the Emergency Telephone Fund. To provide an increase in the revenues for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Transfer from general fund	$15,652

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 13th day of December 2023. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-32

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
Transfers		
Emergency Telephone Fund	$15,652	

This will result in an increase of $15,652 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	$15,652

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 13th day of December 2023. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

A member from the audience, Mr. Hubert Coltrain began speaking aloud regarding a past employee and allegations of a crime that occurred over 3 years ago. Mr. Coltrain began asking questions of the Board members Commissioner Smith and Chairman Smith and County Attorney Eisner stated that Mr. Coltrain could speak with him during an office visit. Commissioner Ayers and Commissioner Gurganus made comments regarding the matter and the residents having the right to ask questions and fight for their rights.

County Attorney/Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the Attorney/Client Privilege was lo no needed.

CLOSED SESSION(S) - 1. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11. (a)(4) Industry/Economic Development, and 3. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11. (a)(6) Personnel (Attorney/Client Privilege was removed from the motion)

Around 9:05 p.m., Commissioner Biggs made a **Motion** to Enter Closed Session, 1. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11. (a)(4) Industry/Economic Development, and 3. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11. (a)(6) Personnel, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-1).

AYES: Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr., Vice Chair Emily Biggs, Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus, and Commissioner Ronnie Smith.
NAYS: Commissioner Joe R. Ayers

At 9:27 p.m., Commissioner Smith made a **Motion** to Exit Closed Session 1. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11. (a)(4) Industry/Economic Development, and 3. N.C.G.S. §143-318.11. (a)(6) Personnel, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

OPEN SESSION

Project Richmond
Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner stated that there was an Economic Development closed session item that was discussed. Economic Development Director Steve Biggs reportedly attended the Closed session and explained Project Richmond. In the project, there was a projected creation of 10 permanent full time jobs above the County wage over the next 24 months. The project was also eligible to apply for a Building Reuse Grant through the Department of Commerce Rural Division Building Reuse Grant Program. The maximum amount was stated to be $125,000.00 and the request was for the Board to approve a resolution authorizing a grant proposal or application on behalf of Project Richmond and provide a 5% County match equaling to about $5,000.00 - $7,500.00. The resolution would state an "up to amount" of $125,000.00.

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve the Resolution as stated, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

Interim County Manager Monthly Statement – November 2023
Interim County Manager Eisner reported that he submitted his monthly statement to the Finance Officer Cindy Ange and Human Resources Director Donna Zube for an independent reviewing, before discussing the monthly statement in Closed session with the Board. The compensation total was stated to be $6,218.23 for time and mileage per the agreement.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Approve the monthly statement for Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** Unanimously (5-0).

BOARD REPORTS/COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS - NONE

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, at 9:32 p.m., Vice Chair Biggs **Motioned** to adjourn with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. The vote was not taken and Chairman Bond Jr. called for a vote to adjourn. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

Ronnie Smith, Chairman
Martin County Board of Commissioners

Julia S. Rease
Clerk to the Board