

March 15, 2023
Special Call Meeting

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 1:33 p.m. in the Moratoc Park Building, 102 River Drive, Williamston, NC 27892.

ASSEMBLY

Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs, and Commissioner David “Skip” Gurganus were present. County Manager U. James Bennett, County Clerk Julia S. Rease, and Finance Officer Cindy Ange were in attendance.

Commissioner Ayers was not in attendance.

General Public Attendance: Ms. Patricia Moore, Mr. Roy Gray, and Mr. Walter Whitfield

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Commissioner Gurganus offered the Invocation following the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by Commissioner Biggs.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Gurganus made a **Motion**, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. to approve the Agenda as presented. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. to **Enter** Public Hearing – Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization Funds with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING – CDBG – NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION FUNDS

Chairman Smith gave background on the Rosenwald Schools stating that Mr. Julius Rosenwald saw that African American children were not being educated correctly or at all. Chairman Smith reported Mr. Rosenwald was financially well off and built many Rosenwald schools so that African American children could attend and received their education. Chairman Smith reported that the Public Hearing was to discuss plans to apply for a N.C. Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant through the Rural Economic Development Division. Chairman Smith announced that public comments were welcomed and opened the floor for questions and or comments.

Ms. Patricia Moore from the Town of Hamilton was in attendance. Ms. Moore stated that this was a good grant for the Town of Hamilton and the Rosenwald School because it represented history from the cotton and tobacco fields on up to the White House. Ms. Moore reported that the father of the first African American U.S. General Attorney attended the Hamilton Rosenwald School. It was stated by Ms. Moore that the Hamilton Rosenwald School could be renovated with the help of the community and county. The name of the grant administrator and company were requested in which County Manager Bennett provided.

Commissioner Gurganus stated that he agreed with Ms. Moore. Commissioner Gurganus stated improving and investing in the historical elements of the county, would draw people into the County for various reasons. Commissioner Gurganus stated that this would increase economic development and this would be something the County would be proud of.

Mr. Walter Whitfield was in attendance for the public hearing. Mr. Whitfield asked if the grant being discussed was just for the Rosenwald School. Chairman Smith commented that it was for the Roanoke River Project as well. Mr. Whitfield reported he had an interesting fact that Booker T. Washington was in cooperation with Mr. Julius Rosenwald in building the Rosenwald Schools. Mr. Whitfield stated that this was important because people that had money were giving it to the less fortunate to receive their education. Mr. Whitfield asked if the grant funding would be used for the entire County or the community. County Manager Bennett stated that this grant would only fund the Rosenwald School and Roanoke River project, wherein a parking lot and restorations would be made. County Manager Bennett stated that these restorations were being conducted in phases and the school was going to be a museum, office, and venue. County Manager offered Mr. Whitfield a tour. Mr. Whitfield stated that he was familiar with the school as he and another individual made plans for the school. Mr. Whitfield stated his concern was hearing that walkways and parking lots were going to be installed. Mr. Whitefield asked if this would be on a County level or for the Hamilton community. County Manager Bennett stated that the grant funding would only fund the Rosenwald School and Roanoke River Project that were on the same grounds. Mr. Whitfield stated he thought the grant funding was \$550,000 and County Manager Bennett stated that there were additional funding received from the group handling the projects. Manager Bennett stated that the grant funding being discussed at the meeting was \$440,000. Mr. Whitfield was given the history of the Rosenwald School receiving grant funding and the project as a whole.

Mr. Bennett credited the relationship with the Secretary of Commerce and a Rural Community Capacity Program (RC2) that he and Finance Officer Cindy Ange attended, for information on the grant. County Manager Bennett reported that the funding was applied for and the application was successful. County Manager Bennett also credited the Tourism Development Authority as they provided a short movie of the project and the efforts of Mayor Charlotte Griffin of Bear Grass. The idea was still the same in focusing on increasing and creating more tourism for Hamilton, while emphasizing the importance of the Rosenwald School for African Americans. Mr. Bennett stated that project was

going into its second phase and encouraged Mr. Whitfield to submit any ideas he may have. Mr. Whitefield asked if there were any administration cost and Mr. Bennett stated that he was not sure. Mr. Whitfield asked about the \$550,000 that he heard was being funding to the project. County Manager Bennett reiterated that the group working directly on the project raised and found funding elsewhere, but the funding discussed in the meeting was \$440,000. County Manager Bennett also reiterated that the meeting was to have the public hearing and approve an administrator for the grant.

Motion by Commissioner Bond to **Exit** Public Hearing – Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization Funds with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

Approval of Consulting Company Being Named Administrator of the Community Development Block Grant Neighborhood Revitalization Funding

Motion was made by Commissioner Gurganus to Select McAdams and Associates to Administer the Community Development Block Grant Neighborhood Revitalization Funding, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

At 1:53pm, Commissioner Gurganus made a **Motion** to adjourn, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Ronnie Smith, Chairman
Martin County Board of Commissioners

Julia S. Rease
Clerk to the Board