

July 21, 2021

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Called Session on Wednesday, July 21st, 2021 at the Martin County Government Center, Commissioners' Boardroom, 305 E. Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina. Martin County provided the opportunity for virtual participation through Cisco Webex.

ASSEMBLY

Present in the Commissioners' Boardroom: Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond, Jr., Commissioner Joe Ayers, Commissioner Emily Biggs, Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus, County Manager James Bennett, Clerk to the Board Julia Rease, Sheriff Tim Manning, NC Weeklies Leslie Beachboard, and IT Director Jeb Gardner.

Others present: MTW Health Director Wes Gray, Martin County Economic Development Committee President and CEO Jason Semple, Mayor of Bear Grass Charlotte Griffin

Others present via Webex: Martin County Attorney Nate Peele

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order around 7:02 p.m. Commissioner Bond led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Gurganus provided the invocation.

Commissioner Smith welcome everyone participating in person and virtually.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Vice Commissioner Biggs made a MOTION to approve the agenda as presented, with a SECOND by Commissioner Gurganus. The Board APPROVED the motion unanimously (5-0).

PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE

Chairman Smith asked if there were any public comments and there were none.

PRESENTATION – BROADBAND - ALTICE

Chairman Smith stated that he spoke with the Closed Session group to inquire if they were ready to present as the first group presenting was not at the meeting to present. The closed session group agreed to present first to give the first presenters time to arrive. Chairman Smith asked for a motion to go into closed session.

CLOSED SESSION - NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(4) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MOTION to enter Closed Session pursuant to NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(4) Economic Development made by Commissioner Gurganus, with a SECOND by Commissioner Biggs. The Board APPROVED the motion unanimously.

MOTION to exit Closed Session pursuant to NC G.S. §143-318.11(a)(4) Economic Development made by Commissioner Gurganus, with a SECOND by Commissioner Biggs. The Board APPROVED the motion unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

Chairman Smith asked Sheriff Manning if the first presenters were in the building. Sheriff Manning stated that there was no one in the hallway or lounge areas.

BOARD REPORTS/COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

County Manager Bennett reported on the Viable Water Study stating that two days ago he received a call from Ms. Linda Culpepper of the LGC and water resources. Martin County Manager Bennett also reported that Martin County helped Bear Grass, Hamilton, Jamesville, Robersonville, and Parmele with the contract for the viability study. County Manager Bennett announced that Martin County received \$150,000 for the AIA (Assess Inventory Assessment), Williamston received the \$150,000, Jamesville which wasn't assessed as a distressed unit received \$150,000, and all towns with an exception of Robersonville received the \$150,000. Next, County Manager Bennett reported Robersonville received \$50,000 and this is because they wanted to complete their own application and they asked for \$50,000. Robersonville did not receive funding for the \$100,000 rate study or \$100,000 county wide regionalization study. County Manager Bennett stated the awarding agency would like to have one entity to handle the rate and county regionalization studies, in which Manager Bennett shared with the new administrator for Williamston. Manager Bennett expressed that the best lead agency would be the water authority, not Williamston or Martin County, so that the towns could be represented equally. Martin County Manager Bennett reported that he will share this information at the MCRWASA meeting tomorrow at 3:00pm. County Manager Bennett expressed that Robersonville was the key to a lot of things, especially county wide regionalization, and the state has said that it's tired of giving out small or large amounts of monies to small towns repeatedly.

Commissioner Gurganus asked for clarification of where the matching funds were coming from to match the Viability Study Grant funds. Commissioner Gurganus reported that \$800,000 was stated to be the amount of matching funds needed in order to receive Viability Water Grant monies. Commissioner Gurganus then stated that there were other grant monies in discussion of being used to prevent the usage of county funds and asked if this was still true.

County Manager Bennett stated that Congressman Butterfield and Martin County staff, brought notice to the study and the county was able to submit applications in 2 days. County Manager Bennett stated that the Viability Study Grant monies were initially \$2.5 million, next \$3.5 million, and now it is \$4.5 million. County Manager Bennett stated that the county made the short list as there were 40 counties engaged, but now there are 10 counties participating. Chairman Smith and County Manager Bennett spoke with commissioners in Washington, DC from Pitt County and their county was faced with \$70 million. County Manager Bennett stated that there was conversation of using some of the ARP monies to help leverage the county wide water system without using county funds per say.

Commissioner Gurganus stated it was reported that ARP funds could not be used as a matching fund for the Viability Water Study Grant and this would now come out of tax monies to receive the grant funds. County Manager Bennett agreed, but stated that the ARP guidelines were being changed as they spoke.

Commissioner Gurganus asked of the moment, if the county would be obligated to pay \$800,000 to match the Viability Water Grant funds. Chairman Smith agreed and stated that the county would receive 4.5 million.

Commissioner Gurganus stated that he asked before what the county's obligation would be, and at the time it wasn't going to be anything because the money was coming from another grant. Chairman Smith agreed and responded that at the time the grant could not be matched with a federal grant, but only a state grant.

Commissioner Gurganus asked if the county were to receive the grant monies, Martin County would pay \$800,000 and County Manager Bennett stated that Commissioners Gurganus was correct

Chairman Smith stated that Williamston, Hamilton, Jamesville, Parmele, and Everetts each received \$150,000 because of County Manager Bennett whom actually did the paperwork because there was reluctance. Chairman Smith reported that the reluctance was not personal reluctance, but due to a lack of resources. Chairman Smith stated that County Manager Bennett completed the application for each town. County Manager Bennett, Mayor Tina Brown of Robersonville, Finance Officer Cindy Ange, Chairman Smith, and Mayor of Bear Grass Charlotte Griffin went to speak with the different towns about the Viability Water Grant. Chairman Ronnie Smith reported discussions about quality water, especially environmental quality and wanting the LGC to come down and explain some things. Chairman Smith stated that there was a very critical time and the LGC couldn't come, so he scheduled to have a meeting with them. Chairman Smith said the LGC had everyone at the table from every department and he explained what was being asked of the LGC, which was to lighten the burden for water. Chairman Smith stated that the monies were needing to be saved for a rainy day because the LGC is tired of giving money repeatedly.

Mayor of Bear Grass Charlotte Griffin stated that she believed the ARP guidelines will be changed as she has been listening for updates in meetings and reading documents.

Chairman Smith agreed and stated that ARP monies can be tied into COVID- 19. There is an interim regulation as of now, but one thing was a fact to not spend the ARP monies. He stated that there was a county that spent half of their ARP monies without knowing the guidelines and misinformation was a cause, in which Martin County needed to stay informed.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Commissioner Biggs made a MOTION to adjourn, with a SECOND from Commissioner Gurganus. The Board APPROVED the motion (5-0). Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting around 9:18 p.m.

Ronnie Smith, Chairman

Julia S. Rease
Clerk to the Board