

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
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COUNTY OF STOKES)
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**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2018**

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Recessed Meeting (recessed from the November 26, 2018 Regular Meeting) in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administration Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Thursday, November 29, 2018 at 6:30 pm with the following members present:

Chairman Ronnie Mendenhall
Commissioner James D. Booth
Commissioner Ronda Jones
Commissioner Ernest Lankford

County Personnel in Attendance:
County Manager Jake M. Oakley
County Attorney Ty Browder
Finance Director Julia Edwards
Sheriff Mike Marshall
Economic Development Director Will Carter
Register of Deeds Brandon Hooker
Support Services Supervisor Glenda Pruitt

Chairman Mendenhall called the Recessed Meeting to order.

INVOCATION

Chairman Mendenhall invited those who wished to join in the invocation to please do so.

Commissioner Jones delivered the invocation.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT-GOVERNING BODY-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Mendenhall invited the citizens in attendance to join the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Mendenhall entertained a motion to approve or amend the minutes of:

- October 15, 2018 – DSS Board Meeting
- November 19, 2018 – Board of Health Meeting
- November 26, 2018 – Regular Meeting

Commissioner Lankford moved to approve the minutes for October 15, 2018 – DSS Board Meeting, November 19, 2018 – Board of Health Meeting, and November 26, 2018 – Regular Meeting as presented.

Commissioner Booth seconded and the motion carried unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

Presentation of Plaques

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- During my first two years here I have gained so much knowledge.
- There is a lot of experience sitting around me.
- There is 28 years of combined experience.
- This gave me a good learning background my first two years.
- They have embodied two things.
- The first one is being a public servant.
- If you have ever been a public servant you realize how much time it takes.
- It takes a lot of time and effort to do it right.
- They have put in the time and effort.
- The second thing I want to talk about is success.
- Success means something different to everyone.
- Some think it is about money, while others think it is about family.
- When you leave a position like these three Commissioners, success to me means that I can look at them and say three words; job well done.
- You should all be proud of yourselves.
- It has been an honor and a privilege for me to serve with you these two years.

Chairman Ronnie Mendenhall on behalf of Stokes County, presented Commissioner Lankford with 12 years of service, Commissioner Jones with eight years of service, and Commissioner Booth with eight years of service each with a plaque for their sincere dedication and service to Stokes County and its citizens.

The following expressed their appreciation and gratitude to Commissioner Lankford, Commissioner Jones, and Commissioner Booth for their dedication, service to Stokes County citizens and employees, and for always putting Stokes County first:

County Manager Jake M. Oakley commented:

- I want to personally thank Commissioner Booth, Commissioner Jones, and Commissioner Lankford for their many years of great leadership.
- You have all possessed a rare combination of vision, fairness, and understanding. Qualities like these and your willingness to work together have contributed greatly to improvements for the citizens of Stokes County.
- The commitment and teamwork invested by each of you for the greater good of the citizens of Stokes County has been nothing short of amazing.
- One comment made by Commissioner Booth on numerous occasions resonates in my mind; his goal to move the county forward when he was elected.
- This is a simple statement with a more significant meaning.
- This seems to have been adapted by the whole Board with all of the many things they have accomplished in moving the county forward.
- It would be difficult to name all of the accomplishments of this Board.
- A few examples are the new schools and college that has been built, the generous increases in salaries to county employees, and the execution of a plan to bring high-speed internet to all of Stokes County.
- You have worked tirelessly for the people of Stokes County; sometimes with more criticism than thanks.
- You are leaving your fellow and newly elected Commissioners in the best possible financial situation with the fund balance that you have built during your time on this Board.
- You certainly will be missed.
- I have enjoyed working with this Board for many years as Tax Administrator and most recently as County Manager.
- I appreciate the opportunity to have had the chance to work with each of you.
- Enjoy your retirement and the next phase of life.
- Always put God first and he will guide you.

Sheriff Mike Marshall commented:

- I want to say thank you for all you have done.
- You have certainly made my job easier.
- Everything that I have presented to you over the years, you have worked with me and made it happen.
- I can't stand here and say I am not a little nervous about the upcoming years.

- I always knew where you stood at.
- I felt good coming to talk with you about anything.
- You always took the time to listen to me and try to help.
- I appreciate you all and will miss you.

Mabel Booth commented:

- I want to say something from the spouse's point of view.
- James would sometimes be gone 4 to 5 hours to a meeting.
- We have had to share our spouses with the County to do the work for the County.
- I have to make an appointment with my husband.
- We have prayed about the meetings and decisions to be made.
- We have prayed for all of the Commissioners and we will continue to do that for the new Commissioners coming in.
- I am glad that James had 8 years but I am glad to have my husband back.
- We are going to enjoy ourselves.
- I want to thank everyone for all the work that has been done.
- The County really has moved forward.

Bradley Lankford commented:

- I just want to say to all the Commissioners, thank you for your service.
- As the son of a County Commissioner, I know the long hours, the criticisms, and the phone calls that go along with it.
- To my Dad, I appreciate the time you have spent in office, 20 years on the School Board, and 12 years as a County Commissioner.
- It is time for you to take a break and be a father and grandfather.
- Thank you.
- I am proud of you, and I love you.

Ronnie Morris commented:

- I want to say thank you to all of you.
- I didn't always agree with everything but thank you.
- We have new Commissioners coming on and if we go back to what Jake said earlier in putting God first then we cannot go wrong.

Finance Director Julia Edwards commented:

- I have enjoyed working with all of you.
- I have been here a long time and seen hardships.
- We have always come through it.
- Thank you for your service and all of the work that you have done.

County Attorney Ty Browder commented:

- From a County Attorney's perspective, I want to thank each one of you for putting up with me.

- I have not been here through your entire tenure but for the time that I have been here I have thoroughly enjoyed working with each of you.
- I know you haven't always liked what I told you.
- I have told you many times, you may not like what I have to tell you but you need to hear it.
- I appreciate you putting up with me.
- I hope you enjoy your time off.
- We appreciate your leadership and service.

Economic Development Director Will Carter:

- I want to thank you for your service.
- I appreciate you giving me a chance to make a difference in the County.
- You have supported and guided me as I learn my new position.
- I wish you all the best in retirement or the next phase of life; however you want to look at it.

Register of Deeds Brandon Hooker commented:

- Thank you for your service.
- To be a public servant you have to have a servant's heart.
- I know all of you have that, including Jake.
- If you don't believe how long the meetings are just come down to my office and look at all the minutes.
- They have quadrupled over the years.
- That is a lot of time put in and a lot of work.
- Thank you all for your service.

Virginia Smith commented:

- Do not get too comfortable with retirement.
- Just remember you are still on another Board.
- I have known all of you for a long time.
- I have stood here before many Boards.
- I have been here a long time.
- I appreciate your service.
- You all know my phone number and if you need me you can call me.
- Jake, it is good to see you.
- I remember when I was pursuing James to run, he said, "I have got to talk to Mabel."
- She finally gave in and he served two terms.
- I will be seeing you all around and remember you are still on my Board.

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- I would like to personally thank each person for coming out tonight.
- It shows me personally just how much you think of the job we have tried to do.

- We have not done everything perfect but we have tried our level best to do the things that are best for the County.
- Some of the long hours spoken about is right.
- We were up here having fights and it took us that long to get over it.
- It seems like every time we have a new Chairman, we have more to do.
- We have had a good leader.
- We have had a lot of opportunities to make things better.
- It has been my objective to be a public servant.
- My Bible tells me that Jesus came and his mission was not to be served, but to serve.
- I have always taken this to heart.
- My main goal has always been to be fair, honest, and consistent.
- If you can do that, you will get along just fine.
- Five people is a team.
- One person cannot do anything alone but a team can.
- It takes doing your homework.
- Nora will tell you, I spend a lot of time at home on the computer, reading, and on the phone.
- You need to be prepared when you get to meeting to make informed decisions.
- There are some here tonight who have served before and they will tell you the same thing.
- The most important thing is to serve God and serve your family.
- I appreciate all of the people who have given me the opportunity to serve the people.
- I have enjoyed it and thank you for it.

Commissioner Booth commented:

- It has been a pretty fast eight years for me.
- It is bittersweet leaving.
- The Lord has called me to do this for the last eight years.
- I have went to him many times in prayer, and not only I but my wife, and others I have asked to pray for me when I come to a meeting.
- I want to make the right decision, for the Lord first, and then to the people of Stokes County.
- I have said many times what this Board has accomplished over the past eight years.
- When I came on board, we had an 8% fund balance.
- The year before I came on board, I came to every meeting.
- I spoke to one of the members going off about how the schools would be paid for and I was told the new Board would have to figure that out.
- When I came on board, we had schools that were being built; and we had pods on land we had acquired.
- We built Nancy Reynolds School, Poplar Springs School, the community college, new construction at Southeastern Middle School, and Lawsonville School.
- Over 45 million dollars that the County put in for new schools.

- This was at a time when we were in an economic downturn and other counties were not building new schools.
- With putting 50% up we will be able to secure some grants for the new Wellness Center.
- We have been talking about this for over a year.
- I have asked lots of questions and finally received answers.
- It will be almost 20,000 square feet for 4.2 million dollars.
- This is something that I am proud to have been a part of with my fellow Commissioners.
- When I came on board, Baptist turned the hospital back over to the county as they didn't want to finish out their lease.
- We became the trustees of it and ran it for a little over a year at the cost of the county.
- Pioneer came in and built up to about 270 to 280 employees and then they filed bankruptcy.
- We had to take it over again and spent over a million dollars to keep it open.
- If you close a hospital, it take 3 years or more to get all the license back, so basically it is done.
- We kept it open a while and then LifeBrite came along.
- I'm not sure why they did.
- It was a blessing of the Lord that it happened.
- They ran it from August to February, not knowing if they would get the bid through the bankruptcy court.
- Thank goodness they did get it.
- I appreciate the comments from the Sheriff and his plan he brought to us on the jail expansion.
- We were able to get the Autumn Square property for the garage.
- It was financed at low interest for 10 years and we receive enough in rent to make the payment.
- We received grants to run sewer to the early college and other places.
- This was 4 million dollars that did not cost the taxpayers anything.
- We met with RiverStreet recently and I am hoping with what we told them they will really expand their service.
- If you put the Lord first and go to him in prayer, you will have wisdom.
- Always be conservative.
- This is a conservative county.
- We are leaving a good fund balance for the Commissioners coming in.
- The property in Pine Hall, donated by Mr. Petree, is another example of the county moving forward.
- He donated 36 acres of land to the county and over 1.2 million dollars to build a medical and community building.
- Recently, 16 more acres were donated to build a picnic shelter and walking trails.
- This was a blessing.
- We are getting ready to build a vocational/trade school over at the college.
- It is actually under roof.
- At the early college, kids can graduate in 5 years (some complete it in 4) with a high school diploma and an associate's degree.

- What a blessing for the citizens of Stokes County.
- Thanks to all of you.

Commissioner Jones commented:

- I am going to change the dynamics here.
- Other than the obvious, that I am the only female here and I am the youngest.
- I am also a working Commissioner; as a matter of fact I just left work to come here.
- I have been living on Christmas cookies today, so I am really hungry and will be brief.
- I often times wonder if you all were thankful you had spouses.
- I am widowed and I work.
- I have given this County my all.
- We do not always agree on everything.
- Because I am a woman that is younger, widowed, and with a different educational background, I see the world differently.
- I am proud of what we have done here.
- We are all conservative in our own way.
- We are a conservative Board that has accomplished a lot.
- I am proud of every accomplishment that we have made together.
- I can tell you from my perspective that I made the best decisions I could with the information I had at the time.
- Sometimes I questioned myself afterwards but I did the best I could.
- I have tried to make all of us as a unit look the best as I could in promoting this County inside and out.
- I also wanted to make women look good.
- One of my main reasons for running, was that I wanted to make my family proud and be a positive voice for women.
- I wanted to show women you can do all these things and still remain a lady.
- They tested me sometimes and made it tough.
- It has been a real honor.
- It has gone fast.
- I have tried to make good on everything I promised with education and economics.
- I want to thank you guys.
- Whether you voted for me or anyone sitting up here, we would not be here without you, and I appreciate that.
- I have often thought as much as I would love to have the support of a spouse, I would have neglected them during this time.
- If my kids would have still be home, they would have been neglected.
- If you will notice, there is no one here for me because I did not even have the time or think about inviting anyone.
- I guess I will hear about that later on.
- I am proud to be here among all these good people.
- Although I am not from here originally, and have only one family member here, everyone is family here.
- I don't talk a lot about my religion and my God because that's just not who I am.

- You can be sure that I have faith in our Creator and I pray every day.
- No matter what your religion is prayer works.
- You won't hear me talking about religion much, as we all come from different backgrounds but that doesn't make me any less a Christian.
- It does not make me have any less faith than the next Christian and I have taken some heat for that at times.
- We are all different in this world and we have to love and accept our differences.
- We have tried to work together to make the County better and move the County forward.
- It has been a real honor getting to know all of you.
- We don't know what the future holds.
- You may see me again.
- I get asked by people and I say I don't know.
- My heart is here.
- It is so beautiful here.
- Unlike some who were born and raised here, I chose to be here.
- I moved myself and my kids here because that's where we needed to be.
- My kids say moving here is the best gift I ever gave them.
- I hear people talking junk about Stokes County Schools and I fight for them fiercely.
- I have two children with Dr. in front of their names and they came through Stokes County Schools.
- So please don't sit there and down our schools.
- At the end of the day, it is what you make of it and you have to instill that as parents.
- Thank you again for being there for us, and for supporting myself, and the rest of the Board.
- I cannot tell you how much that means to me.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- I want to thank everyone again.
- This meeting tonight was really to honor these three people.
- We only had approval of one thing, which was the minutes.
- It is very unusual when you have three people going out with 28 years' experience.
- I am asking that you go upstairs and enjoy the reception for two reasons.
- One is that you socialize with all the Commissioners on their last evening as Commissioners.
- The other is that I was raised right; I am a smart man and my wife worked hard to put this food together.
- Thank you all again for being here.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Mendenhall adjourned the Recessed Meeting.

Shannon Shaver
Clerk to the Board

Ronnie Mendenhall
Chairman