



THE RANDOLPH RECAP

FEBRUARY 7, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

AGENDA ITEMS:

- Public Comment
- Voluntary Ag
District Annual
Report
- SCIF Directed
Grants
- Deep River Trails
Organization
- Farm, Food, and
Family Education
Center
- Child Fatality
Prevention Team
Annual Report
- CCPT Annual
Report
- Tourism
Development
Authority Annual
Report



Critical issues facing our community and county government have never been greater as we progress in the 3rd decade of the 21st Century. The Randolph County Board of Commissioners holds regular public meetings on the first Monday of each month, beginning at 6:00 pm, in the 2nd Floor Meeting Room at the Historic Courthouse, 145 Worth Street, Asheboro, N.C. At each meeting, issues impacting our county and citizens are presented and evaluated by the County Commissioners.

Randolph County government is committed to providing citizens with the opportunity to access information and obtain the latest news and public updates regarding the county and its government. The Randolph Recap is a new addition to the Randolph County web page. It will provide monthly highlights and summaries from County Commissioner meetings. It will also highlight information on current issues facing the County Commissioners and the Departments and agencies of Randolph County government. The Randolph-Recap will serve as one of the various communication outlets, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and print media, that will update and communicate with our Randolph County citizens.

We hope the Randolph Recap is helpful to you and would appreciate your input and comments as we move forward.



Hal Johnson
Randolph County Manager



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Public Comment

Five speakers took the floor during the public comment period, each addressing the issue of the Confederate Statue in front of the Randolph County Courthouse.

Bob Morrison, Randolph County resident urged commissioners to act immediately in voting to remove the statue. **"I do not ask you to change history, I ask you to change which parts of our history receive public honor,"** said Morrison.

Dwain P. Roberts, commander, Sons of Confederate Veterans of Randolph County, asked commissioners to move forward with a decision on whether or not to relocate the statue. **"This has been drug out for six months. No history has changed,"** said Roberts.

Darrell Frye, Chair, assured attendees that the issue of the statue will be addressed. **"We are going to deal with this issue. We are going to have a vote by this board, as it applies to that statue. That is going to happen,"** said Chairman Frye.

Voluntary Ag District Annual Report

The Randolph County Volunteer Agriculture District Program was established in 2007. The district exists to promote agricultural and environmental values and the general welfare of the county by increasing identity and pride in the agricultural community. Kenneth Sherin, Randolph County Cooperative Extension Director, shared program benefits with commissioners. **"This program allows us to advance the cause of agriculture in Randolph County and helps landowners be recognized as farm owners,"** said Sherin.

In 2021, the Voluntary Agricultural District Board admitted farms into the program totaling 101.4 acres of land. As a result, Randolph County now has over 26,049.41 acres of land enrolled in the Voluntary Agriculture District Program. Although the pandemic has affected almost every aspect of normal life, this wasn't the case for Randolph County crops. Crop yields were above the state average in Randolph County in 2021. **"The pandemic took a lot of things out of play. But we had great crops. Corn and soybeans were great producers this year. We had close to record-breaking yield,"** said Sherin.

Sherin also thanked commissioners for their support of Randolph County's agricultural programs. **"The VAD Board wishes to thank the commissioners for their support of the Ag Center, also known as the Farm, Food, and Family Education Center, as they have put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into this project. We appreciate that support,"** said Sherin. Commissioner David Allen spoke to the benefits of the VAD Program, saying **"it is beneficial to not only the public but farmers as well. It provides an economic burst for the county along with increased opportunity to produce locally grown agriculture commodities,"** said Commissioner Allen.



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SCIF Directed Grants

Randolph County will receive State Capital and Infrastructure Fund (SCIF) Directed Grants.

The 2021-23 Biennium State Budget allocated \$400,000 for general capital needs and \$16 million for the Farm, Food, and Family Education Center to Randolph County.

Will Massie, Assistant County Manager, asked commissioners to consider combining the grant money. Thus, \$16.4 million could seed the Food, Farm, and Family Education Center project. **“We have not determined the scope of that project yet, but it is expected to be more than \$16.4 million,”** said Massie.

Commissioners voted to accept the \$16.4 million SCIF grant and approve the associated budget amendment to the Agricultural Center Capital Project Fund.

Deep River Trails Organization

In 2007, The Deep River State Trail was designated as one of North Carolina’s first State Trails. With 12 State Trails, State Trails/State Parks is formalizing State Trail designation by requiring a master plan and a memorandum of understanding with the non-profit organization associated with each State Trail. Of five involved counties, Randolph County is the only one with a Conceptual Plan and actual trail system for its portion.

The memorandum has become necessary because each State Trail, through its memorandum organization, will receive a \$50,000 grant to be used in Capacity Building, and an allocation of the \$29.25 million from the State’s Complete the Trail Fund “CTF”. Since the DRST has neither a non-profit manager nor an official trail coordinator, PLC has agreed to receive the funds on behalf of Randolph County. They will not complete trail projects on their own but will facilitate the trail work of the County and the municipalities.

The Piedmont Land Conservancy needs someone in an official capacity to coordinate the CTF projects. Mary Joan Pugh, Randolph County Trail/Natural Heritage Coordinator, asked commissioners to formalize the County’s role of coordinating with the DRST municipalities to give the County more control over its invested funds. Over the last three years, the county has worked with the municipalities to increase trail visibility across Randolph County.

“This partnership would give the county more control over what has been invested, and what is planned to be invested. The idea would be to establish an official county coordinator position,” said Mary Joan Pugh, Randolph County Trails/ Natural Heritage Coordinator. **“It is important for citizens to understand that Ms. Pugh has been working as a trail coordinator since 2019, completely voluntarily. However, we have reached a point where we cannot access these funds unless we have a non-profit organization who will be in charge of this, or we as a county have a paid trail coordinator,”** said Commissioner Haywood.

Commissioners voted to accept funds from the Piedmont Land Conservancy in the amount of \$20,000 for the next two years, to be used for a part-time Trail Coordinator position.



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Farm, Food, & Family Education Center

The need for a county agricultural center was identified in the 2016 Randolph County strategic plan. In 2018, ideas for the center included space for large-scale events that could increase tourism and business development opportunities for the local agricultural community. However, as project expenses increased, other capital projects were prioritized. Final decisions by commissioners were postponed.

In June 2021, Randolph County Cooperative Extension presented a proposal for a more educationally focused agricultural center. The proposal included space for the Randolph County Cooperative Extension and Soil & Water Conservation offices on-site. Services needed to enhance agricultural development in and around the Randolph County community were also included in the updated proposal.

As a result of the \$16 million Directed Grant allocation by the State of North Carolina, the county would like to resume the agricultural center project as described in the 2021 proposal. County Commissioners voted to approve the contract with HH Architecture to move forward with Farm, Food, and Family Agricultural Center Project.

Child Fatality Prevention Team Annual Report

The Child Fatality Prevention Team assessed twenty-three child deaths in 2020. The purpose of the Child Fatality Prevention Team is to review the deaths of all Randolph County children. Causes of death included accidents, birth defects, illnesses, perinatal conditions, suicide, and other. The review determines if system problems exist that contributed to the delay or lack of services that might have prevented the death. If gaps exist, the team works to improve/add services that will prevent problems for families in the future. The Child Fatality Prevention Team made the following recommendations.

- No identifiable gaps.
- The team requested and received education on safe sleep practices and car seat safety
- The team will seek and obtain suicide prevention in childhood education in 2022
- The team will continue to address unsafe sleep conditions by making Pack 'n Play portable cribs available along with safe sleep education through the Books for Babies Program in partnership with the Randolph Partnership for Children and Randolph Health

Tracie Murphy, Director Randolph County Department of Social Services, spoke to the challenges that families have faced over the last year. **“2021 was a tough year for families and our community. Not just in Randolph County, but all across North Carolina. The effects of COVID-19, but also the ongoing number of opioid deaths that affect families and affect children, created a systemic syndemic of deadly crisis that families are dealing with and our numbers show that,”** said Murphy.



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CCPT Annual Report

The Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) met virtually 6 times during the 2021 calendar year. The purpose of the Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) is to identify systemic deficiencies in child welfare services or resources.

The team reviewed 10 current cases of children under the protection of Social Services. Areas of concern include; substance abuse, adult mental health issues, adolescent mental health issues, improper discipline, injurious environment, physical abuse, emotional abuse, improper care, domestic violence.

The following gaps and recommendations were identified:

- Increased incidence of child deaths related to co-sleeping: CCPT had a training on safe sleep Tuesday, June 8, 2021 presented by the Randolph County Health Department
- Mental Health services for low-income families: CCPT recommended looking into more intensive in-home preservation providers
- Increase public awareness about conditions that impact on child protection within the community: CCPT recommended continuous community education with law enforcement, school system, daycare centers, all medical professions, mental health facilities and churches

Tourism Development Authority Annual Report

The mission of the Randolph County Tourism Development Authority is to unify and lead the County in developing the Heart of North Carolina as a family-friendly, affordable, and strategically located destination serving leisure and business travel, group tour, meetings, and sports and recreational tournament markets.

A quick snapshot of the numbers shows the accurate, realistic devastation COVID-19 had on the tourism industry and Randolph County. There was a decrease of 35.5% in visitor spending, and occupancy tax revenues suffered a decline of 44.25%.

Amber Scarlett, Executive Director of Randolph County Tourism Development Authority, spoke about the shared efforts of the nine Randolph County municipalities in marketing Randolph County as a tourism destination. **“Our tourism message that we share is not defined by any of the numbers in this report. But our marketing efforts are supported by each of our nine municipalities that possess unique attributes shining each day. Those tourism partners are the true workhorses and heroes that help solidify our message with their commitment to Randolph County, the heart of North Carolina,”** said Scarlett.



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Kraftsman, Inc. Expansion Project

Kraftsman, Inc. is a North Carolina manufacturing company with plants in Ramseur and Albemarle. The company was established in Ramseur in 2000 and has 60 full-time personnel. Kraftsman, Inc. is a manufacturer and direct-seller of open trailers, including but not limited to single-axle utility trailers, flatbed equipment trailers, and three-axle heavy equipment trailers. Kraftsman, Inc. plans to expand its Ramseur plant by doubling the painting/paint preparation area, along with associated capital upgrades, to allow for an increase in its production capabilities.

The project is eligible for a Building Reuse Grant from the N.C. Department of Commerce in an amount of up to \$140,000. Program guidelines would require the county to apply for the loan on the company's behalf. The program is structured as a forgivable loan that is administered by the County. In return for Randolph County serving as the loan applicant and administrator, Kraftsman, Inc. plans to invest approximately \$390,000 in the property and will create 20 new full-time jobs with an average annual salary of \$45,000.

Kevin Franklin shared with commissioners the opportunity for industry development and how Randolph County could be positively affected. **“The EDC believes that this expansion project at Kraftsman is a very good economic development project for the county, that will increase the value of the building and result in the creation of 20 new jobs across the company. We love to see our existing industry grow. This building reuse grant is really a great opportunity for the county to accept state dollars to invest in one of our local companies. Anytime that we can state dollars here in Randolph County we are really excited about that,”** said Franklin.

Commissioners voted to approve the resolution allowing the county to apply for a building reuse grant for the Kraftsman Economic Capital Project.