



THE RANDOLPH RECAP

MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

AGENDA ITEMS:

- Public Comment
- Confederate Monument Discussion
- Northgate Project
- Broadband Expansion
- Vehicle Procurement (RCSO)
- Abolishment of Fire Dept. Districts
- Fire Plans Examiner Position
- ARPA Funds
- Strategic Funding Allocations
- County Funded Projects
- Wastewater Design for I-74 Industrial Site
- 2022 Audit Contract



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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MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

Public Comment

Eighteen speakers took the floor during the public comment period, each addressing the issue of the Confederate Statue in front of the Randolph County Courthouse. The following is a summary of the public comment period.

Frederick Sharpless, citizen, spoke with commissioners about the importance of justice. **“It is very important that people receive justice fairly and partially. The belief that justice can and will be had is critical to the law of this country.”** Mr. Sharpless encouraged commissioners to embrace justice and move the statue.

Faye Cox, citizen, spoke with commissioners about representation. **“A lot of people have gone to war. Would we not want them represented somehow?”** Ms. Cox believes it is crucial to remember the sacrifices of individuals who served, and that the statue should remain in its current place.

Public Comment Period Continued...

Jane Gant, citizen, believes there is no legal standing that would prevent commissioners from acting to remove the monument. Ms. Gant spoke with commissioners about steps already taken by the NAACP regarding the monument. **“I have watched the president of the NAACP work tirelessly to give you every document, that you have created here in Randolph County that shows the treatment of slaves. It is not something we have made up. It is documented.”** Ms. Gant asked commissioners to consider the effects of slavery beyond her ancestors, on herself. She urged commissioners to act immediately in moving the monument to a more fitting location.

Dwain Roberts, Commander, Sons of Confederate Veterans, believes the issue of the Confederate statue is causing significant division. **“What is causing the biggest division in this community right now?”** Roberts asked commissioners to remember that their votes symbolize a voice for the fallen soldiers who were unable to speak for themselves.

Elizabeth Lanier, citizen, believes that the monument was erected to pay homage to those who served. **“Out of respect for the men who fought for me and my freedoms, I am here to speak,”** said Ms. Lanier. Ms. Lanier believes that the monument pays respect to the fathers, husbands, and sons who were not able to come back home to their loved ones after times of war. She asked commissioners to keep the statue at its current location.

Chip Foust, Randolph County NAACP President, shared that it was not, and has never been, the mission of the NAACP to destroy the confederate monument at the historic courthouse. **“We want the monument to be removed from a place where we have to do business with our government,”** said Foust. Mr. Foust believes the confederates went to war to promote and extend slavery. **“We are not asking that you tear it down, what we are saying is that what stands in front of our government offices represents all of us,”** said Foust. Mr. Foust feels that commissioners should consider forming a group dedicated to finding amicable solutions for the issue of the statue.



THE RANDOLPH RECAP

MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

Confederate Monument Discussion

Immediately following the public comment period, Commissioners discussed the issue of the state. The following is a summary of the discussion.

Chairman Darrell Frye, shared with attendees that while nothing has changed, the process of dealing with the issue of the statue has been ongoing for over a year.

“As you see tonight, the two sides are locked into their feelings on the issue and this county has been through a lot,” said Frye.

Chairman Frye shared that there were many other challenges ahead of commissioners outside of the statue, including building back a strong economy, the local hospital, the Megasite project, and the health and safety of citizens.

“We need for this board to take a position on where we are with the statue, and how this board sees the presence of the statue in front of the courthouse,” said Frye.

Chairman Frye believes it is important for the board to provide citizens with direction on the county’s position in regards to the confederate monument. He also shared that having a resolution in place could be helpful. “I know there is discussion, I know there are still issues. We would like to have a better resolution. But it is not there, we do not have it,” said Frye.

Confederate Monument Discussion

County Attorney, Ben Morgan, confirmed that it would be within the authority of the board to act on the issue of the statue during the March meeting. Mr. Morgan also shared with the board and attendees the highlights of GS 100-2.1, entitled the Protection of Monuments, Memorials, and Works of Art. The statute discusses the limitations of removal.

Vice-Chair Allen asked Mr. Morgan if the board would violate board procedure by acting on an item not on the agenda, or if there were any timeframe limitations. **“I ask this in the interest of transparency,”** said Allen. **“I would like to get this behind us, but I do not want to violate any procedures.”** Mr. Morgan shared that in his opinion while it was not explicitly outlined in the agenda, the board was within their bounds to act immediately, with no threat of policy violation.

Commissioner McDowell made a motion that the confederate memorial remains where it is, as it is. Commissioner Kidd seconded the motion.

Commissioner Haywood shared that while she did not believe the statue should be completely removed from government property, there may come a time in the future when the county may want to consider making it less prominent. Commissioner Haywood believes that the monument is a part of history and that all sacrifices made are important. **“We all need to remember that we each look through a different lens based on our experiences,”** said Commissioner Haywood.

Chairman Frye shared that due to receiving an intelligence report from the Asheboro Police Department of potential trouble at the March meeting, he felt it necessary for the board to move forward with a decision.

Vice-Chair Allen agreed with the sentiments of both Chairman Frye and several speakers during the public comment period that more important issues need to be addressed.

“However, the issue is I don’t know if this will be behind us. I am certainly in favor of preserving the monument, but there may be other areas that we need to address. There are other ramifications of making this vote,” said Vice-Chair Allen.

He believes that it is important to be careful regarding the perception of Randolph County, and how that could affect the recruitment and retention of industry. Vice-Chair Allen recognized that acting on the issue of the statue would be an arduous decision and that he would like to see citizens channel their energy into other issues facing Randolph County.

Commissioner Kidd said that he represents all citizens of Randolph County. **“I have been clear with both sides, about my stance from the beginning,”** said Commissioner Kidd. Commissioner Haywood also believes that it is her job to be a voice for all Randolph County citizens. **“I represent everyone in this county and anybody who calls me for a conversation gets one,”** said Commissioner Haywood.

Commissioners voted 5-0 to approve the motion to leave the confederate monument at the Randolph County Historic Courthouse, where it is, as it is.



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MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

Northgate Project

Randolph County's current lease with Rent-A-Center will expire at the end of March, and the company will vacate the space at Northgate Commons.

The county plans to complete minor interior demolition of the area to prepare it for construction.

Smith Sinnett Architecture has been hired to design the renovation of the space for the Randolph County Department of Social Services. Robert Carmac, architect, Smith Sinnett Construction presented the final design to commissioners at the March board meeting.

Commissioners unanimously approved a motion to authorize the Randolph County DSS Northgate Commons project out for bid.

Broadband Expansion Partnership Program

The final rules established by the Treasury Department concerning the use of ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds broadens eligible high-speed broadband infrastructure investments that will help ensure better connectivity for residents. The rules give counties broad flexibility to define needs in a community and are specific in defining the high-speed technical standards that must be met by the providers of new internet projects. The ARPA goal is to help grow rural economies with improved access to technology and reliable broadband connection.

The State has established a special grant program called the GREAT Grant (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology). N.C. GREAT is a competitive grant program that provides funding opportunities for private sector broadband providers to deploy broadband infrastructure to unserved areas.

Randolph Communications is seeking a partnership with Randolph County to apply for a GREAT Grant that will enable them to extend their footprint to provide more citizens in rural Randolph County with quality high-speed internet. Randolph Communications is proposing fiber-to-the-home which will meet standards for broadband internet. The total cost of the proposed project would be \$3,811,102.

Randolph Communications is asking that the County provide a 15% match up to \$300,000, with 100% ARPA Funds. Randolph Communications will provide a 15% match of the same amount.

County Manager, Hal Johnson, shared that the county would be considering further requests for ARPA broadband funds for private providers over the next month.

Commissioners approved the motion to partner with Randolph Communications in applying for the GREAT Grant, with a 15% match of up to \$300,000.



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MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

Vehicle Procurement (RCSO)

Justin Baker, Business Officer, shared with commissioners the Randolph County Sheriff's Office plans to purchase 10 Dodge Chargers, and 6 Dodge Durangos through the NCSA Procurement Program.

"This program allows all 100 sheriff's offices across North Carolina to participate in a competitive bid process," said Baker.

Ilderton Dodge has been awarded the bid for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. County purchasing policy mandates that all purchases greater than \$90,000 be approved by the board. The total price for the six Dodge Durangos and ten Dodge Chargers is \$493,458.

Funding for these purchases was included in the sheriff's 2021-2022 budget. Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the request.

Abolishment of Current Fire Department Districts

Several years ago fire districts were created in county service districts for fire protection, first responder, rescue, and emergency services. These districts were created with a fifteen-cent cap on the tax rate to mirror the rural fire protection districts that they were replacing.

Recently, a few of the fire departments servicing these districts indicated the need to request a tax rate in excess of the fifteen-cent cap, and it is expected that others will need to do so in the future. To remove the fifteen-cent tax cap, the current districts need to be abolished and replaced with districts that do not have the cap.

The process for the abolishment of current districts includes setting a public hearing, upon the conclusion of the public hearing a resolution to abolish a district can be passed. The creation of a new, uncapped district contains more steps.

County Attorney, Aimee Scotton, laid out steps and parameters that will take place to create a new uncapped district. Commissioners voted unanimously to accept resolutions to begin the district creation process for the four fire districts of Climax, Guil-Rand, Westside, and Franklinville.

Fire Plans Examiner Position

Fire Marshall, Erik Beard requested approval for one new Fire Plans Examiner position. Due to the steady increase of construction, in addition to the Toyota Battery Plant construction, there has been an increased need for services provided by the office of the Fire Marshall. The full-time, benefited, position will focus primarily on plan reviews and permitting. Commissioners approved the request for the new position to begin April 1, 2022.



THE RANDOLPH RECAP

MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

The Board of County Commissioners has discussed several programs that would be good choices for the use of federal ARPA funds:

- *Food Insecurity: \$219,000*
- *Digital Literacy: \$265,050*
- *Rehire TDA personnel: \$400,000*

“We have had a number of requests for using the ARPA funds as well as a lot of capital needs,” said Will Massie, Assistant County Manager/Finance Director.

Commissioners voted unanimously to move forward with using ARPA funds to support the three proposed initiatives.

Strategic Funding Allocations

The 2016 Randolph County Strategic Planning process was a countywide effort to identify long-term strategic issues impacting Randolph County’s public health, safety, and well-being. Recognizing the need to plan for future challenges, the Randolph County Board of Commissioners asked that a process be developed that would help identify and focus on long-term issues impacting our county’s health, safety, and well-being. Although the goals and strategies embodied in the 2016 Randolph County Strategic Plan are not binding upon the County or its municipalities, the Board of County Commissioners approved a specific revenue source that could be used for the implementation of some of the strategic objectives.

“What made this so important, and so different than any other planning process was that the board of county commissioners dedicated a specific funding source to looking at that strategic plan and providing funds for projects that were consistent with the goals and strategies of our 2016 strategic plan. The guidance of the board of commissioners is that these projects impact all areas of Randolph County. I don’t think anything that the county has done that I’ve seen has impacted so many different projects,” said Hal Johnson, County Manager. The revenue source is the yearly payment to Randolph County from Waste Management Inc.

County Manager, Hal Johnson, explained that support for the following projects had been requested by State Senator Dave Craven, with funding provided by the State:

- *RhinoLeap Productions - \$12,500*
- *Seagove Area Pottery Association- \$22,000*
- *VOB Initiative for Change - \$2,500*
- *Uwharrie Youth Sportsmen - \$20,000*
- *SerCo Club of Archdale-Trinity - \$10,000*
- *NC Aviation Museum - \$20,000*

Funding for the following projects would be provided by existing County Strategic Planning funds:

- *City of Archdale- \$75,000*
- *Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation - \$40,000*
- *Keaton’s Place - \$156, 315*



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MARCH 11, 2022

COMMISSIONER MEETING AGENDA SUMMARY

County Funded Projects

In February 2020, the Board authorized the courthouse renovation project. To account for all costs related to the project, a multi-year capital project fund was established, separate from the General Fund.

This project is being funded with county reserves dedicated to capital. The General Fund transferred the initial \$2,000,000 to fund the project in FY20 and FY21.

However, additional costs will be incurred to complete the front desk area. In addition, the amount of sales tax refunds for the project will be less than anticipated.

Accordingly, a budget amendment is needed to update the total project cost to \$2,251,129, an increase of \$9,500.

Commissioners approved a motion to accept the budget amendment to the Courthouse Renovation Capital project.

Wastewater Design for I-74 Industrial Site

Randolph County Economic Development is promoting an Industrial Site in the outskirts of Randleman City. This Site consists of approximately 160 acres and is in the vicinity of Wall Brothers Road. Randleman City has agreed to provide water to the site but has proposed that sewer be provided by Asheboro City, and has asked the County to control the design and building of the system.

The county has selected the Wooten Company to provide a proposal for the design, building, and construction administration of this system. The Wooten Company has provided a proposal and contract for these services for a fee of \$540,450.

Commissioners approved a motion to move forward with the project by contracting the Wooten Company for design, bidding, and construction administration of the I-74 industrial site.

2022 Audit Contract

Federal and state laws require a local government's annual audit to encompass testing of both financial statements and legal compliance, thus making it a specialized service. The County has historically maintained a lasting relationship with its independent audit firm, resulting in better service and a more efficient audit.

However, the last time the County's audit was competitively bid was for the 2004-05 fiscal year. The County requested audit proposals from qualified CPA firms for a three-year term. However, the county only received a proposal from its current audit firm, Cherry Bekaert, LLP. The proposal was expected to increase in price due to market conditions, as well as compliance testing on ARPA funds.

Commissioners unanimously voted to award the County's audit contract to Cherry Bekaert, LLP.