

Carter County Commission



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Minutes of:

Health & Welfare Committee Zoom Meeting

August 4, 2020 6:00 PM

Members:

Chairman Dr. Robert Acuff - present

Ginger Holdren - present

Mike Hill - present

Randall Jenkins - present

Brad Johnson - present

Sonja Culler in for Ray Lyons

Austin Jaynes - present

Robin McKamey - present

- I. **Call to Order**
The Health & Welfare Committee was called to order by Dr. Robert Acuff at 6:05 pm.
- II. **Roll Call**
All members present except for Ray Lyons. Chairman Acuff asked for a motion to have Sonja Culler sit in for Ray Lyons. A motion was made by Mike Hill, second by Ginger Holdren. All in favor. Commissioner Sonja Culler will sit in for Commissioner Lyons.
- III. **Approval of Agenda**
Chairman Acuff asked for the agenda to reflect a change to allow Dr. Bullock President of Northeast State Community College to speak before section 5. Broadband Internet Discussion. A motion to approve the agenda with the amendment was made by Mike Hill, second by Randall Jenkins. Motion unanimously approved.
- IV. **Public Comments**
None
- V. **Dr. Bullock, President, Northeast State Community College**
Mayor introduce Dr. Bullock, President, Northeast State Community College to the meeting. He has been in meetings with Dr. Bullock discussing the lease for the college. The lease has been signed and NESCC will be remain in the current building for the next year.
Dr. Bullock informed the committee that as of today only one student has tested positive for Covid. There have been daily screenings all summer and will continue. Dr. Bullock informed the committee that enrollment was down about 5% from last year but others are down 30/40%. There will be about 30% of the onsite classes this fall. This was determined by a survey of the faculty to see what their teaching preference was. Everything has been reassessed, every space of the Elizabethton site will have a new maximum occupancy number posted on the exterior of that space. Classes will be starting a week early and will be finished by November 24. She spoke of the desire for the school to stay in carter county but that the building was not up to standard they want. She thanked the committee for having the parking lot paved. She mentioned a transfer of property, that if the school owned the property, they could do the improvements that are needed. Discussion began concerning helping the school obtain the property. Mayor Barnett believes that the lease is pricy and wants to discuss a show of good faith in giving the school one of the buildings. Mr. Hill expressed his support for the Mayors suggestion to donate a portion of the property saying it will encourage the Board of Regions to bring property up to standards. Dr. Acuff expressed his desire to find some way to help the school stay in Carter County. They

are good for the county and surrounding counties. Mr. Hill asked Dr. Bullock if she has any ideas at what kind of changes could be made if they owned the building. She stated she would have to have industry round table discussions and send out surveys to see what is wanted and needed in the area. She stated that she believed there should be new opportunities offered, it is her belief that the college should not offer the things others offer. We need to listen to what the industry in the region needs not tell them what we want to do. Mike Hill asked Dr. Bullock if she had survey data that shows where students have internet and those who do not. She responded that she does have that data and can forward that to the committee. She forward that to Dr. Acuff and he will forward that to the committee and the others that have shown interest in that information.

VI. Broadband Internet Discussion

Called Health and Welfare Meeting of July 24, 2020

Commissioner Hill informed the committee that the meeting with Skyline and Skybest was a good meeting. Need survey information to see just what is needed and where. Marie Rice, Commissioner from Unicoi County joined the meeting and told the committee that she would like to partner with Carter County to get internet into the hard to reach areas. Ken Ray with the First Tennessee Development District told the committee that the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Grant is about 3 years old and is funded at \$15 million, it is a 50/50 grant. He shared maps that have 10/1 and 25/3 speeds. He wants to state that the maps underreport but may be a starting point. Isaiah Grindstaff noted that the schools have fiber to them and could run off that. Mr. Hill reached out to schools for their survey information and spoke with the Chamber of Commerce director and they will be willing if needed to be a physical agent to distribute survey info. Mr. Hill wanted to ask Ms. Miller if she would be interested in helping write a grant for this. Mr. Ray stated that Crystal Ivy is over the Broadband Accessibility Grant Program and the committee should speak with her. Dr. Acuff reminded the committee that the deadline for the grant is October 8. Ms. Culler asked what the chances were of getting the school system to help with the survey. Dr. McClain stated that they have sent out several surveys over the last couple of weeks and would be happy to share them with the committee. He stated that these were internet surveys and Ms. Culler asked that once the students were back in school can a survey be sent home. Yes, that can be done. Ms. Culler expressed her opinion that continuing work should be done on this as a group effort. Involving the school system as well as the county people and including Unicoi County. Ms. Rice also wanted to remind that there could be a conflict with providers territories. One provider would not be able to encroach in the other's territory.

A motion was made by Mike Hill, second by Ginger Holdren to proceed and form a committee, inviting anyone who wishes to join to keep pushing this issue.

Roll Call:

Randall Jenkins – yes

Mike Hill – yes

Robert Acuff – yes

Brad Johnson – yes

Austin Jaynes – yes

Ginger Holdren – yes

Sonja Culler - yes

Robin McKamey – yes

The motion unanimously passed.

VII. Resolutions:

a. Honoring the Life of Truman Clark

Attorney Hardin has written a resolution honoring the life of Truman Clark, a prominent figure in the county.

A motion was made by Mike Hill, second by Sonja Culler to accept the resolution.

Roll Call:

Randall Jenkins – yes

Mike Hill – yes

Robert Acuff – yes

Brad Johnson – yes

Austin Jaynes – yes

Ginger Holdren – yes

Sonja Culler – yes

Robin McKamey – yes

The motion unanimously passed. The resolution will be read at the full commission. The committee is hoping that Mr. Clarks family will be in attendance.

b. Commemorating the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution – Commissioner Ginger Holdren

Ginger Holdren was asked by the Republican and the Democratic Women's organizations to speak about the roll Tennessee had in ending women's suffrage and the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution. Together, the two parties' women's organizations are donating a yellow rose bush to be planted on county property as a reminder of the important roll Tennessee held in the fight for women's rights. Attorney Hardin has written a resolution containing the significance TN played in Women's Suffrage. The resolution will be read at the full commission. A motion was made by Randall Jenkins, second by Sonja Culler to accept the resolution.

Roll Call:

Randall Jenkins – yes

Mike Hill – yes

Robert Acuff – yes

Brad Johnson – yes

Austin Jaynes – yes

Ginger Holdren – yes

Sonja Culler – yes

Robin McKamey – yes

The motion unanimously passed.

A motion was made by Ginger Holdren, second by Robin McKamey to accept the yellow rose bush and commemorative plaque donated by the Republican and Democratic Women's organizations. All in favor, the motion unanimously passed.

VIII. Status of Health and Welfare Initiatives:

a. Homeless Task Force

The city has on their agenda a resolution to join Carter County in the Homeless Taskforce. Several people have come forward to join in the task force.

b. Food Sufficiency

Dr. Acuff has spoken to several organizations working hard to supply food to those who need it. Carter County Schools are going to continue to serve food to those in need.

c. Opioid Epidemic

Need to get back to work, data shows more overdoses with higher unemployment – significant problem in the area and around the county.

IX. Old/New/ Commissioner Comments

Old – None

New – None

Commissioner Comments

Ms. Holdren asked if we need to make it official to meet again to work on Broadband? And will there need to be at least five members attend that meeting to vote. Dr. Acuff asked Attorney Hardin if we need to adjourn or recess? Attorney Hardin replied that the meeting can recess but will need to set and announce a date and time now to reconvene and if a vote is needed then yes at least five members will need to be in attendance. Dr. Acuff asked if 6:00 pm on August 18 for a Zoom Meeting fit schedules?

A motion was made by Mike Hill, second by Sonja Culler to recess the meeting and reconvene via Zoom at 6:00 pm on Tuesday, August 18, 2020.

Roll Call:

Randall Jenkins – yes

Mike Hill – yes

Robert Acuff – yes

Brad Johnson – yes

Austin Jaynes – yes

Ginger Holdren – yes

Sonja Culler – yes

Robin McKamey – yes

The motion unanimously passed. The meeting recessed at 7:24 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by

Gwen Crowe