

Cherokee County Board of Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2025

Board members present: Dr. Dan Eichenbaum, Chairman; Cal Stiles, Vice-Chairman; Ben Adams, member; and Alan Bryant, member.

Others present: Randy Wiggins, County Manager; Candy Anderson, Chief Financial Officer; Maria Hass, Assistant County Manager/Clerk to Board; and, Darryl Brown, County Attorney.

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Cherokee County Courthouse, Room 342.

Call to Order by Chairman Eichenbaum

Invocation

Pledge

Ethics Statement

The Clerk to the Board read the Ethics statement.

Filling of Vacancy of District 2 Commissioner

The Chairman asked the Clerk to the Board to read a letter from Dallas McMillan, Chairman of the Cherokee County Republican Executive Committee recommending the appointment of Mr. Mark Stiles to the Board of County Commissioners to fill the vacancy left by Commissioner-Elect Justin Hyde. Following the reading of the letter, the Chairman instructed the Clerk to call the roll for a vote on the appointment of Mark Stiles. The vote was as follows: Commissioners Ben Adams – Yes; Commissioner Alan Bryant – Yes; Commissioner Cal Stiles – Yes; and Chairman Dan Eichenbaum – Yes. The Clerk to the Board called back each vote and then passed the vote sheet to the Chairman, who announced the unanimous vote for Mark Stiles.

Chairman Eichenbaum then asked the County Attorney to read the Resolution of Appointment.

Following the reading of the resolution, the Chairman asked the Clerk to the Board to administer the oath of office to newly appointed Commissioner, Mark Stiles. Mr. Stiles was accompanied by his mother, Jo Stiles, who held the bible for him during his oath.

Chairman Eichenbaum's Points on Conduct and Decorum of Commissioner Meetings, Meeting Schedule, and Joint Education Committee

Commissioner Protocol

- Enforce Rules of Procedure. No more “shoot from the hip” voting. Once the modified agenda has been approved, those are the only items that can be voted on. Any other items proposed (e.g., under “commissioner items”) are not allowed for vote except by unanimous consent of the board. Items not approved for immediate action can be placed on the next meeting’s agenda.

- Robert's Rules of Order – Chairman feels Robert's Rules of Order are too rigid and formal. He prefers introducing an agenda item, asking the administrative team to explain the item and then have commissioner discussion, one person speaking at a time. Once a general consensus is reached concerning the item of business, the Chairman will call for a motion.

Meeting Decorum

- Chairman will reinforce Rules of Procedures for meeting. Public Forum participants have 3 minutes to talk, and must clearly state their name and speak clearly so all can understand. The Chairman suggests participants research the facts. No abusive language or abuse of any person is allowed. Public Forum is not a debate. Commissioners will listen and take notes. If a participant needs specific information, they should contact administration officials or individual commissioners after the meeting.
- The public is allowed to attend all public commission meetings as observers. Attending members of the public are allowed to speak only as part of Public Forum, or if they have items on the agenda. Private conversations make it difficult for others to listen and often disrupt the meeting. Disruptions will no longer be allowed. Persons who feel the need to discuss issues with others during the meeting should leave the room to do so. Persons out of order will be removed.

Schedule of Commission Business Meeting

- Commission Meeting. One meeting a month, to be held on the third Monday of the month at 6:30 pm.
- “Chairman’s Forum” Community meetings 1st Monday of each month at 7 pm, beginning in March and running through November. Chairman and fellow commissioner from the respective district will attend. This is considered a voluntary event, not an official event. The Chairman’s Forum will provide citizens and residents an opportunity to discuss county issues directly with commissioners and administration officials. To start, the March Forum will be in Commissioner Bryant’s district and the April meeting will be in Commissioner Mark Stiles’ district.
- No other commissioner may attend, as this is NOT an official meeting, and no business will be conducted. Someone from county admin (county manager, clerk, attorney) will attend every meeting, and the Chairman also asks that the Sheriff provide a deputy at every meeting. Chairman will send the schedule to the county manager. County admin will work out logistics with the community clubs and secure key access to each facility prior to each meeting.

ACTION ITEM: After discussion, a Motion was made by Chairman Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to change the Board of Commissioners meeting schedule to one meeting a month, to be held on the third Monday of the month, with the time remaining at 6:30 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Education

- Chairman Eichenbaum said it is his personal goal to improve the quality of education in our county so that each child is taught necessary basic knowledge and, on graduation, can attend college without remediation or has the skills and/or certifications required to join the workforce successfully.
- Chairman Eichenbaum said it is the job of the Cherokee County Board of Education to achieve those goals, but questioned how the Board of Commissioner's would get input from the Board of Education.
- Chairman Eichenbaum said professional negotiations are held in private, and gave an example of NFL players union and owners group, Autoworkers Union and Automobile manufacturers. He said the Board of Commissioners need to be able to have unofficial private meetings between commissioners and school board members (less than quorum in number) to negotiate a plan for Cherokee County Schools. He said the ideas from these private discussions can be then discussed at meetings of each of the boards to reach an agreement. He said it is the school board's job to make decisions, but he would like to propose "informal" input in the decision-making process.
- Chairman Eichenbaum said he would like to invite Board of Education member, James Ellis to meet with him and one other commissioner and one or two members from the school board.

ACTION ITEM: After discussion, a Motion was made by Chairman Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to abolish the Joint Education Committee. Motion passed unanimously.

Modification of Agenda

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to add a closed session to the agenda, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Eichenbaum and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to add discussion of abolishing the Joint Education Committee between Board of Education members and Board of Commissioner members. Motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda

Motion made by Commissioner Mark Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to adopt the agenda, as modified. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2024 and December 2, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

Budget and Finance

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve a budget revision in the amount of \$25,994.00 for use of Article 40/42 sales tax for various Cherokee County Schools capital expenditures. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Mark Stiles to approve a budget revision in the amount of \$1,100.00 for a Latitude 3550 laptop for jury management for the Clerk of Court. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Motion made by Commissioner Mark Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Adams to adopt the annual resolution establishing the 2025 Special Board of Equalization & Review. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to approve the Tax Releases, Tax Refunds and NCVTS Report. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Adams shared his vision for Cherokee County. A copy of his statement is attached to these minutes as ATTACHMENT A.

County Manager Items/Comments

The county manager provided an update to the Board on the following facilities: 911; Senior/VA; and EMS Station 2.

Luke Silver, Constituent Representative, from Congressman Edwards office was in attendance and introduced himself and shared ways the Congressman's office is helping, and can help Cherokee County citizens.

Closed Session

Motion made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Cal Stiles to go into closed session, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged. Motion passed unanimously.

During closed session, the Board received an update on the Kloepfer case.

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to return to open session. Motion passed unanimously.

Open Session

After returning to open session, no action was taken on matters discussed in closed session.

Adjourn

Motion made by Commissioner Cal Stiles and seconded by Commissioner Bryant to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.

THESE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025.

ATTACHMENT A

I spoke last year on Vision and Even sent out emails with information to all sitting commissioners and newly elected commissioners on this topic with input from everyone on what we should work toward in the coming years. I am sad to say I only received back one response. I blamed this on budget so I resent the same email a second time, also with no response. So today I come here requesting that we sit aside a time to discuss this issue in length.

Nelson Mandela, once said”

“Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is merely day dreaming, but vision with action can change the world.”

It’s time we change this county and set our goals for not only this budget but also toward the future of this county. I personally see three areas that the future of this county needs to focus on:

- Protection
- Education
- And Recreation

This process needs to involve not only us sitting up here but our entire staff. I, last year, sent out 27 Letters and only received 22 letters back, requesting the departments visions for the next three years and five years. I had only one request, that the departments heads leave raises out of the equation. One thing ran consistent in all 22 letters, Passion. All 22 people had passion for their jobs and the future of their departments. We must harness this as leaders and develop something that not only will improve services for this county, but also moral to our employees.

It is our responsibility as elected county commissioners to

Model the way

- Set personal example
- Following through on our vision
- Ask for feedback on how our policies work
- Be clear

Inspire a shared Vision

- Talk about the future
- Share our vision
- Paint the big picture
- Challenge The process
- Seek out the new ways to Improve our work

Enable other to work

- Develop relationships with our departments and department heads
- Listen to their vision and involve them in our decisions

- Giving opportunities for our employees to grow in their jobs and be comfortable with stepping out

Encourage Encourage Encourage

- Recognize our employees
- Praise our employees
- Get personally involved with their accomplishments and celebrate those accomplishments

We have already set unwritten goals that involve Infrastructure, but what about other areas.

We already have data from the needs and advisory committee past work we need to go through. I also believe we should have certain data presented to us every other month so we can follow the trends and see what we could possibly be facing in the future.

See Handout

This isn't something we can just let sit back and let stay stagnant. Currently I feel we are on auto pilot, being reactive instead of proactive. This is not leadership.

Leadership Is Credibility + Vision

Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.

Governing is easy, Leading is hard.

I personally believe we should set aside two commissioners to work with the staff, department heads, to help come up with a clear vision that involves the future of this county and present those findings to the board in a clear concise report that not only will direct our current needs/desires but the future to come for this county.