

Cherokee County Board of Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
March 15, 2021  
6:30 p.m.  
Cherokee County Courthouse

**Members present:** Dr. Dan Eichenbaum, Chairman; Jan Griggs, Vice-Chairman; Cal Stiles, member; Randy Phillips, member; and Gary Westmoreland, member.

**Staff present:** Randy Wiggins, County Manager; Maria Hass, Assistant County Manager/Clerk to the Board; Candy Anderson, Finance Director; and, Darryl Brown, County Attorney.

**Also present:** WKRC Radio, Local TV4 and Cherokee Scout.

**Call to order and ethics statement by Chairman.**

**Invocation and Pledge**

**Modification of Agenda**

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to add a budget revision to the agenda for replacement of carpet in Sheriff Palmer's office. Motion seconded by Commissioner Westmoreland. Motion passed unanimously.

**Agenda Adoption**

Motion made by Commissioner Westmoreland to adopt the agenda, as modified. Motion seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing for the following proposed road names:** Longbrook Road and Valley Farm Road.

Motion made by Commissioner Westmoreland to open the floor for public comments. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.

There were no public comments.

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to close the public hearing. Motion seconded by Commissioner Westmoreland. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Griggs to adopt the road names, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stiles. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Forum**

Several people signed up to speak about Cherokee County Schools (CCS) consolidated high school plan. The Chairman stated that several people had signed up, but that persons who didn't speak at the last meeting would have the opportunity to speak first.

List of persons speaking for and against the CCS consolidated high school plan.

- Mary Hoesch: AGAINST
- Alex Higdon, speaking for Ryan Christy and for himself: FOR
- Holly Christy: FOR
- Dane Rickett, MES principal: FOR
- Misty Bennett, AGAINST
- Cale Curtis, Local business owner: AGAINST (Mr. Curtis submitted a signed petition from 1,035 citizens, who are also opposed to the plan.)
- Daniel Murphy, parent: AGAINST
- Margaret Ackiss: AGAINST
- Hannah Johnson, student: FOR
- Jordan Mixon, speaking for Juliana Aiken and herself: FOR
- Alaina Ledford, CCS teacher: FOR
- Eddie Wood: FOR
- Michael Milligan: AGAINST
- Jose Berreira: FOR
- Andrea Berreira, CCS teacher: FOR
- Jo White, speaking on behalf of Scott West and herself: FOR
- Mark Kephart: AGAINST
- Jack Simons: AGAINST
- Shannon Raper: AGAINST
- Elliott Southworth: AGAINST (Mr. Southworth submitted a signed petition from 830 citizens, who are opposed to the plan.)
- Chuck Hoesch: AGAINST
- Shawn Massey: AGAINST
- Jamie Ellis, CCS Board Member: AGAINST
- Joe Wood, CCS Board Member: AGAINST

There were also concerns about possible historic significance and archaeological disturbance on or around the high school property site.

CCS Superintendent, Jeana Conley, spoke about the continual decline of student population and utilization percentages of current high schools. CCS Transportation employees, Justin Clapsaddle and Justin Dockery, spoke about the proposed bus routes. CCS Board members, Arnold Matthews and Jeff Tatham spoke in support of the plan.

*Public forum concluded at 9:10 p.m.*

Following public forum, a Motion was made by Chairman Eichenbaum to support and fund the CCS Consolidated High School project at a maximum cost of \$40 million, and with a property tax increase of up to four (4) cents to service the debt, if necessary. Chairman Eichenbaum said approval is contingent upon compliance with all applicable state laws governing school consolidation and construction projects. Motion seconded by Commissioner Westmoreland.

Commissioner Griggs read a prepared statement, which is incorporated herein as Attachment A.

Commissioner Stiles asked the Board to slow down and revisit once the pandemic has passed. He shared concerns of the negative impact that closing Andrews High School would have on the town, recalling the effects to Andrews when District Memorial Hospital closed several years ago. He mentioned the ability for virtual learning and questioned how many students would actually return to the classroom and how that could further impact student population. He said he would like to see the School of Innovation and Technology and Early College finished and see how many students choose to attend, before beginning another project. He also shared concern over increasing the millage rate. He said according to a chart from finance, if the county were to finance \$37 million for fifteen (15) years, it would require a six (6) cent increase, not a four (4) cent increase. Commissioner Stiles said that CCS has the opportunity to apply for another \$15 million grant in two years, and he would like to see them step back and take that time to form a better plan, as he doesn't feel this is the right plan. He also said he does not support the design-build method and thinks projects of this magnitude should be bid out. He said that only 4 of 7 school board members support the plan and 3 of 5 commissioners support the plan. He said he would like to see a plan that could receive unanimous support.

Commissioner Westmoreland said this is the right plan. He said there are only two options, one consolidated high school or two new high schools. He said he supports the one high school plan because of its proximity to the college.

Commissioner Phillips said that it is the county's responsibility to build and maintain school facilities. He said the county has maintained 60 year old buildings long enough. He agreed that closing Andrews High School will hurt Andrews, but said the School of Innovation and Technology will hopefully draw industry back into county. He said too many kids are falling through the cracks. Concerning complaints and statements that Commissioner Phillips should recuse himself from voting, due to Dr. Conley being his employer, he said he disagreed.

Chairman Eichenbaum said he believes a single school gives all kids equal opportunities and he wants the process to start. He said the greatest gift that you can give a kid is an education so they can compete in the world. He said nothing compares to in-school learning. He said that this subject has been talked about for years and previous commission boards have kicked the can down the road year after year. He said, "It is time for the commission to say the buck stops here and that we are willing to take this on as our responsibility".

Voting in favor of the Motion was Commissioners Eichenbaum, Westmoreland, and Phillips. Voting against the Motion was Commissioners Griggs and Stiles. Motion passed.

## **Minutes**

Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to approve the meeting minutes of 12/7/20, 1/21/21 (work session with BOE), and 2/15/21. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Finance and Budget**

- Motion made by Commissioner Phillips to approve a budget revision to replace a portion of the roof at the detention center. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stiles. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion made by Commissioner Phillips to approve a budget revision to purchase sanitizing foggers for the senior center. Motion seconded by Chairman Eichenbaum. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion made by Commissioner Phillips to approve a budget revision to repair hydraulic lifts on the courthouse elevators. Motion seconded by Commissioner Westmoreland. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to approve a budget revision to replace the carpet in the sheriff's personal office. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.

## **New Business**

- Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to approve tax releases, tax refunds, and NCVTS report, as submitted. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion made by Commissioner Griggs to order the tax collector to advertise delinquent tax liens. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to appoint Gail Stansell to the Cherokee County Board of Health. Motion seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Motion failed. Motion made by Chairman Eichenbaum to re-appoint C.B. McKinnon to the Board of Health. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Voting in favor of the Motion was Commissioners Eichenbaum, Phillips and Westmoreland. Voting against the Motion was Commissioners Stiles and Griggs. Motion passed.
- Motion made by Commissioner Westmoreland to appoint Dr. Lynn Taylor to the Cherokee County Board of Health. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion was made by Commissioner Phillips to approve a licensing agreement between Cherokee County and Hiwassee Dam VFD to access the county's property for the installation and maintenance of a septic system for the new fire department. Motion seconded by Commissioner Westmoreland. Motion passed unanimously.
- Motion made by Commissioner Stiles to approve an ordinance prohibiting the unlawful possession and unlawful transport of catalytic converters in Cherokee County. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.
- Commissioner Griggs gave an update on the Anti-Litter in Action Coalition. She said that she currently has six volunteers, who she will be meeting with to establish the initial committee. Once established, the committee will recruit additional volunteers. The Anti-Litter in Action Coalition will be established as an autonomous committee.
- After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Stiles to approve Murphy Rural Fire Department's Response District Map. Motion seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Motion passed unanimously. NOTE: This action corrects the meeting minutes of September 14, 2015, which incorrectly stated that the Board approved a "fire tax" district

map for Murphy Rural Fire Department. It was actually a "response" district map that was submitted for approval at the 2015 meeting.

### **Commissioner Items**

- Commissioner Griggs said she would like the Board to establish an annual volunteer recognition program. Her vision is for different organizations within the county to submit the name of their "volunteer of the year", so that the Board can recognize them in a public meeting and present them with a certificate of appreciation. Tim Radford, of WKRK, volunteered to promote the program through his radio's Facebook site.
- Commissioner Westmoreland asked the Board to set a work session date to discuss capital projects and fund balance planning. After discussion, a Motion was made by Commissioner Stiles to schedule a work session for March 29th at 6:30 p.m. at the courthouse. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, a Motion was made by Commissioner Stiles to adjourn. Motion seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Motion passed unanimously.