

PERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

AUGUST 1, 2022
OTHERS PRESENT

Gordon Powell
C. Derrick Sims
Kyle W. Puryear
Charlie Palmer
Patricia Gentry

Ralph Clark, Interim County Manager
Brenda B. Reaves, Clerk to the Board
S. Ellis Hankins, County Attorney

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Person, North Carolina, met in regular session on Monday, August 1, 2022 at 7:00pm in the Person County Office Building Auditorium.

Chairman Powell called the meeting to order and offered an invocation. Commissioner Puryear led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DISCUSSION/ADJUSTMENT/APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Powell requested to add Ms. Abby Sharlow to the agenda as a participant of Youth Voices at the NC Association of County Commissioners' Conference. He suggested adding to the agenda immediately following approval of the agenda.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Puryear and **carried 5-0** to add Ms. Abby Sharlow to the agenda and to approve the agenda as adjusted.

Ms. Abby Sharlow of Thee Hester Road, Roxboro addressed the Board of Commissioners noting she would be attending the NC Association of County Commissioners' annual conference participating in the Youth Voices Program representing Person County. Ms. Sharlow said she is the daughter of Mark and Whitney Sharlow and a rising freshman at Person High School noting she was on the college prep pathway to graduate not only with a High School Diploma but also with an Associate's Degree. Ms. Sharlow stated she is a member of National Honor Society and is involved with 4-H and her church.

INFORMAL COMMENTS:

Chairman Powell announced a three-minute time limit for citizens signed up to address the Board of Commissioners.

The following individuals appeared before the Board to make informal comments:

Ms. Brittany Farman of 168 David Lane, Roxboro said Commissioner Palmer has been asked to resign before, and she was requesting him to resign now noting his constituents have questions related to him shooting a dog in city limits to which he has not addressed publicly. Ms. Farman said he was supposed to be protecting citizen interests and she did not see him doing that.

Ms. Joann Hammond of 228 W. Gordon Street, Roxboro, and the owner of the boxer mix, named Sophia that Commissioner Palmer shot on July 20, 2022 while he was out walking his dog said Sophia was her 15-year old pet and best friend to her grandson. Ms. Hammond recounted the story how Sophia ran from her, breaking the cable, into the neighbor's yard, at which time, Commissioner Palmer shot Sophia in her side multiple times. She said Commissioner Palmer used expletive language to her as he walked away. Ms. Hammond said his behavior was an embarrassment to the county.

Ms. Sharon Slaughter of 207 Duck Pointe Drive, Roxboro said she supported Ms. Hammond and continued Ms. Hammond's comments, reading that Commissioner Palmer was waving his gun around; she read that the only complaint about Sophia was from Commissioner Palmer noting they have letters stating Sophia was not aggressive from neighbors, a veterinarian and the dog groomer. Ms. Slaughter continued and asked the Roxboro City Police and the District Attorney's Office to view this as a case of animal cruelty; lastly, she asked the Board to dismiss Commissioner Palmer of his duties.

Ms. Cynthia Lynch of 395 Union Grove Church Road, Hurdle Mills thanked the Board and the county attorney for their efforts advocating for the MVP pipeline continuing into North Carolina and, possibly into Person County.

DISCUSSION/ADJUSTMENT/APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Gentry and **carried 5-0** to approve the Consent Agenda with the following items:

- A. Approval of Minutes of July 18, 2022,
- B. Budget Amendment #2,
- C. Budget Amendment #3, and
- D. FY2022-2023 Library Annual State Aid Application and Local Funder Maintenance of Effort Report & Declaration appropriation of \$566,978.

Commissioner Gentry thanked staff for including the budget detail in the budget amendments noting it was very helpful.

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NEW BUSINESS:

Assistant County Manager, Katherine Cathey introduced Person County's Lead Fellow, Keshav Javvadi, who will be working in Person County for one-year.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION UPDATE & CONSIDERATION TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A PARTNERSHIP WITH CLOUDWYZE TO EXPAND BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE IN PERSON COUNTY:

Assistant County Manager, Katherine Cathey provided the Board with the following Broadband Infrastructure Expansion updates:

Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Grant Program

The N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) received 305 applications for this \$350 million round of GREAT grants. On July 18, 2022, Governor Cooper announced that the state has awarded GREAT grants totaling more than \$23.4 million to expand broadband infrastructure in 12 counties. On August 1, 2022, Governor Cooper announced that the state has awarded GREAT grants totaling \$30M to 11 more counties. Person County was not among these first recipients, however, Ms. Cathey said additional GREAT grant awards will be made on a rolling basis throughout August.

Person County has committed GREAT grant matching funds in an amount not to exceed \$2.75 million from the county's ARP funds for the provider(s) selected by the state for grant awards. Brightspeed, Charter Communications (Spectrum), and ZiTEL submitted proposals for projects that would serve Person County homes and businesses.

Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) Program

The CAB Program is a competitive bidding program that provides an opportunity for individual North Carolina county governments to partner with NCDIT to fund broadband infrastructure projects in unserved and underserved areas of each county. Identifying unserved locations to be served by the GREAT Grant Program will help define eligible areas for the CAB Program. CAB Program Guidance - Part I is now available online. Part II of the guidance will be posted in the coming months. An Information Session for Interested County Partners is not yet scheduled, although the projected awards are estimated by the end of the calendar year.

Middle Mile Grant Program

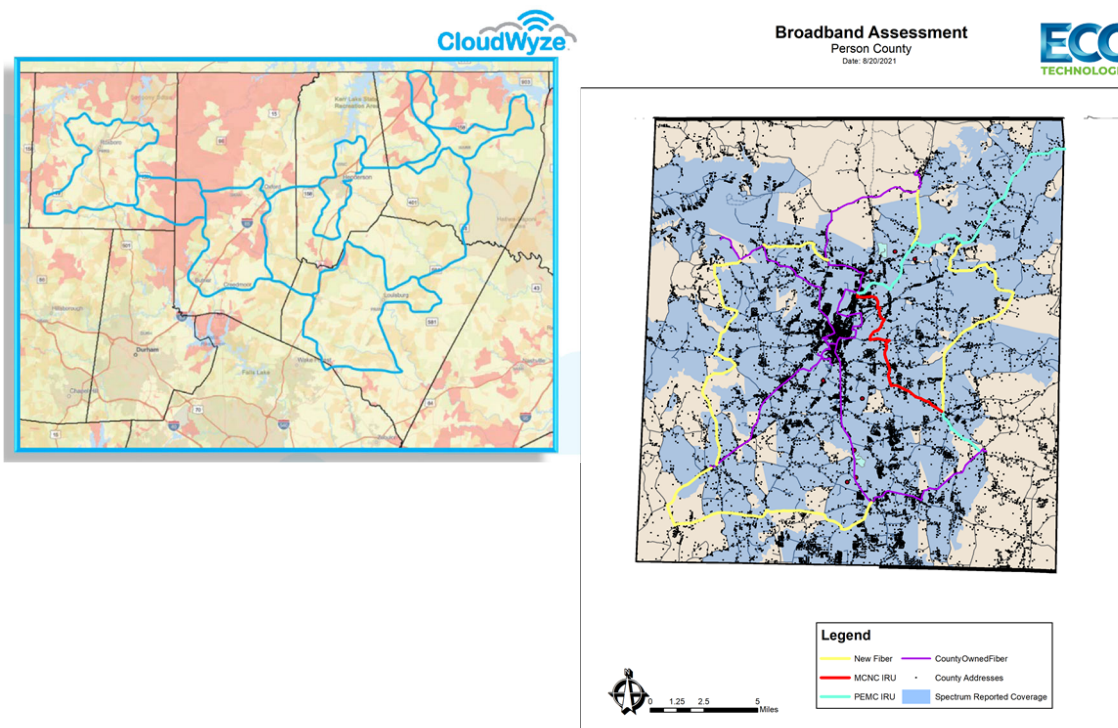
The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) federal program provides funding for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle mile infrastructure. The purpose of the grant program is to expand and extend middle mile infrastructure to reduce the cost of connecting areas that are unserved or underserved to the internet backbone. It seeks to fund middle mile to unserved/underserved areas and near anchor institutions with strong county/local support.

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CloudWyzé is a combination of both internet service provider (ISP) and managed service provider (MSP), located in Wilmington, NC. CloudWyzé has proposed a Middle Mile Grant Program project for the Kerr-Tar Region. It would create a middle mile ring in each county and a regional middle mile ring, including approximately 250 miles of fiber at a cost of approximately \$25 million. Upon receipt of a Middle Mile Grant award, CloudWyzé would assume all other costs associated with the project.

Grant applications are due Sept. 30, 2022, and awards will be made March 1, 2023. Although the grant criteria stipulates projects must be complete by March 1, 2028, CloudWyzé anticipates completion of the middle mile infrastructure within two years of the grant award. CloudWyzé would then utilize the middle mile ring to provide last mile service to Person County homes and businesses. Their last mile internet service may be provided via fiber or fixed wireless, depending upon the number of homes per mile. CloudWyzé will leverage its network to provide other managed services, such as hosted phone, cloud, and IT support.

Pictured below, CloudWyzé's proposed fiber route within Person County is very similar to the new fiber (yellow) in the major fiber project route suggested by ECC Technologies in the county's 2021 Broadband Infrastructure Inventory Study.



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At this time, Ms. Cathey noted CloudWyze was requesting that the county confirm its interest in partnering on this opportunity. The county's role in the partnership will involve confirming its support, assisting with identifying unserved and underserved areas and anchor institutions and garnering support from local stakeholders. CloudWyze has not requested any monetary support from Person County.

Ms. Cathey introduced a Resolution Supporting a Partnership with CloudWyze to Expand Broadband Infrastructure in Person County for consideration at the Board's August 15, 2022 meeting noting that she would have additional information at that time. Ms. Cathey asked the Board if this was something of interest to which Commissioner Gentry stated she was interested, and it was at no cost, to which the Board agreed.

Commissioner Gentry asked Ms. Cathey if she could share the GREAT grant scoring criteria to which Ms. Cathey said she could send that along to the Board.

Vice Chairman Sims asked Ms. Cathey to also share the list of awarded counties as well for their review, to view, for instance if they are Tier 1 or Tier 2 counties.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Powell reported the following:

- He and Commissioner Gentry attended the first of two public informational meetings related to the County Farm to Green Space Park project; he said the next meeting would be held on August 3, 2022 in the County Office Building Auditorium at 6:00pm.
- He and Commissioners Gentry and Sims attended a Person County focus group for a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy organized by the Kerr Tar Regional Council of Governments to develop a regional plan.
- Noted the Attorney General, Josh Stein letter regarding the opioid pandemic settlement for NC totaled \$26B with Person County's share over 18-years at \$2,595,543.
- Assured the citizens that Person County, a named intervener in the Duke Energy's Carbon Reduction Plan before the NC Utilities Commission, are working with attorneys for good results related to the potential closure of the two Duke Energy coal powered plants in Person County.

MANAGER'S REPORT:

Interim County Manager, Ralph Clark stated he was working on the following initiatives and requested direction from the Board:

Up-fit PCOB Auditorium BOC Boardroom

In the current budget, funds (\$120,000.00) are allocated for this purpose in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The description as described in the CIP was not clear if the room would be a dedicated space for the Board of Commissioners and/or was to remain available for other uses or if there was a plan to hold other uses in another location(s). Mr. Clark asked the Board of its intent for the up-fit of the PCOB Auditorium before staff seeks an architecture firm. Vice Chairman Sims requested the seating for the Board with cosmetic up-fit to make it look more like a boardroom but also allowing other uses within the same space. Commissioner Gentry agreed with Vice Chairman Sims noting they had outgrown its dedicated boardroom upstairs but wanted a permanent board platform much like the Roxboro City Council's chambers with non-permanent seating so that the room could be used for multi-uses. Commissioner Puryear agreed with using the auditorium for multi-uses but asked staff to look at the City of Clayton chambers for comparison. Mr. Clark added with the tile floor and concrete walls, sound was an issue for participants.

Charters of Freedom Presentation

Since the presentation last month, Mr. Clark stated he has had some conversations with representatives of this group to obtain a clearer understanding of this project noting there are local cost in the project. The Foundation only provides the cases that houses the documents and the documents themselves. All other will be local expense including any future maintenance that is required. The concrete work and the electrical are the two main items in the initial installation that will be required under the local cost. Ms. Clark stated as he understands, the design will be performed by the group with county input. The next step in this process is the selection of the site. Once the site is confirmed, a letter of intent spelling out all of the details of the project will be forthcoming for Board approval and signature. Mr. Clark stated he and the Assistant County Manager have been discussing this project with a business that has connections to the community about covering the additional cost but until an estimate can be prepared, it will be difficult for anyone to commit to taking on this cost. County Attorney, Ellis Hankins added the Board may, if desired, call a special-called meeting to visit sites in the county, if three or more commissioners are to be present. Vice Chairman Sims noted his preference to see site-specific architectural concept plans/pics to know what it will look like on a particular piece of land. Commissioner Puryear voiced consideration of the Person County Museum of History location as they already have a Constitution Day event on-site.

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Roxboro Square Lease Discussion

Mr. Clark stated two-years of 20-year lease remains on the Roxboro Square Lease for the building that houses the Department of Social Services, Health Department, Freedom House and Probation Services. Mr. Clark recommended to the Board to authorize him to begin negotiations on a lease extension to determine if this is the best alternative. Mr. Clark said the lease has provisions for a 10-year renewal as well as an option to purchase. Mr. Clark noted the county may opt to review construction of a new office building. Mr. Clark explained the tenant has complied with the terms of the lease minimally however he suggested the county review taking on the maintenance and custodial duties of the lease as part of negotiations; in addition consideration for needed up-fits, improvements and adjustments. Chairman Powell asked the Board if there was consensus of the Board to have the Interim County Manager to negotiate the Roxboro Square Lease.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Gentry and **carried 5-0** to authorize the Interim County Manager to move forward with investigating possibilities of extending and/or renew the Roxboro Square Lease.

Mr. Clark made the Board aware he would be out of the office on Thursday, August 4, 2022 due to a medical treatment in New Bern.

COMMISSIONER REPORT/COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gentry commented on a possible bill passed related the MVP pipeline to which the County Attorney, Ellis Hankins noted a bill was not passed however an article in the Washington Post indicated a positive development of a bill to be drafted to remove procedural roadblocks and speed up the approval of the permits for the natural gas MVP pipeline construction from West Virginia into southern Virginia; this will also positively impact the construction of the MVP Southgate natural gas pipeline continued into North Carolina possibly through Rockingham County, Alamance County thus making it closer to Person County.

There were no reports/comments from Vice Chairman Sims or Commissioners Palmer and Puryear.

CLOSED SESSION #1

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Sims and **carried 5-0** to enter into Closed Session at 7:50pm per General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) for the purpose to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee with the following individuals permitted to attend: Interim County Manager, Ralph Clark, Clerk to the Board, Brenda Reaves, County Attorney, Ellis Hankins and Renee Narloch via video call.

Chairman Powell announced a brief recess at 7:50pm to transition to the Closed Session #1. Chairman Powell called the Closed Session #1 to order at 7:55pm.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Puryear and **carried 5-0** to return to open session at 8:21pm.

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Sims and **carried 5-0** to adjourn the meeting at 8:22pm.

Brenda B. Reaves
Clerk to the Board

Gordon Powell
Chairman