

Haywood County “Toeprints”

September 30, 2010

Vol. #1 Issue #16 (Subject: **Gag Order trounced, HCC Verbatim Transcript, Highway Grant, Pruett**)

What’s Happening?

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform Haywood County Taxpayers of what transpires at the bi-monthly County Commission Meetings. This newsletter will be written from the perspective of a casual observer, myself. Any opinions expressed will be mine.

Public Hearing - Schedule of Values, 9/20/2010 Meeting.

Complicated new rules applied to revaluation presented by David Francis. If you own land classified under **forestry**, your rates will go up, per Raleigh, Francis said. When you get your new valuation, if you have a problem, don’t hesitate to speak out and challenge it.

Call to Public Hearing - Animal Control Ordinance Revisions.

Jean Hazzard presented revisions, and there appears to be a group of people who are following these changes closely. One speaker was allotted six (6) minutes (before the gag order took effect), and it looks like some areas need to be compromised before the Public Hearing. The Public Hearing for the Animal Control Ordinance Revisions will be held on Monday, October 18, 2010, a 5:30pm meeting.

Public Comments.

Most of the public comments dealt with the **Gag Order**. A new feature as been added to the speaker podium: a little set of lights, **green - yellow - red**, to let speakers know when there time is up. (It’s very annoying). Perhaps the Chairman will consider using the three (3) minute egg timer I left for him at the last meeting (it’s less annoying).

A significant number of people spoke against the Gag Order, i.e. **Public Comment Session Guidelines**. One particularly good speaker, Justin Carmack (sp) requested permission to speak, as he was not a resident of the county. **Kirkpatrick** consented. He spoke on constitutional grounds and was very compelling - worth watching on the video.

Another interesting new aspect was that a blogger attended from another county, representing the news. Bobby Coggins posted a comprehensive summary and analysis of the meeting on his blog site: www.westcarolinareport.com. Video is on YouTube he included a plethora of photos. [Editors Note: we have people coming in from different counties to cover and speak against this gag order, but there was no one from the Smoky Mountain News - why?]

The commissioners were trounced. The 30 minute limitation was killed. Speakers will be allowed more than 3 minutes, based on the chair’s discretion, which is how it is now. The requirement for 14 copies was eliminated [this came from

David Teague who had used this arcane rule since the beginning of time to insure there were enough copies to hand out to important people, like the press]. The commissioners passed the revised Gag Order, pending changes discussed at the meeting. The new Guidelines are posted on www.haywoodtp.net.

HCC Verbatim Transcript.

I judiciously used my 3 minute time allocation to speak about the HCC Verbatim Transcript approved in the minutes. [See [My Public Comments regarding HCC - Rose Johnson and Mark Bumgarner at the Haywood County Commission Meeting on 9/20/2010...](#), www.haywoodtp.net].

Kirkpatrick never bothered to address the question I posed:

“So, you ask a direct question, this “project” which includes the solar thermal with your reference to the 6/5 decision, and **Bumgarner** answers a completely different question, and neglects to include anything about the status of the solar thermal project.

Who comes off looking worse here?

Bumgarner?, who avoided answering your simple direct question, or, The County Commissioners?, who didn’t realize that **Bumgarner** failed to answer your simple direct question?”

Old Business - Governor’s Highway Safety Program.

As you recall, commissioners punted on this issue at the last meeting. There were two additional speakers at this meeting, Ellen Pitt, Representative from MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), and a lady from either the Federal or State government, cognizant in the implementation of this program in other parts of the state. The compelling reasons for approving this program, they emphasized, were:

- Better position to enforce and apprehend drunk drivers, and
- Better position to make drug stops, which has increased revenue in other counties.

The problem here is that this is grant. Grants, in general, come with a whole bunch of strings attached, which make life miserable. In addition, this grant provides limited funding, but the county will need to co-pay. Over a four year period, the county will need to contribute nearly 50%, or about \$236K.

Generally speaking, I am against any grant, as it is my (our) money in the first place that is being granted, and the potential for waste implementing grants is enormous.

However, I had mixed emotions about this particular grant.

Why?, I asked myself? Then I realized...

When I first stepped into Julie Davis’s office last year to begin an earnest review of the 2010-2011 new budget, I commented that everything was on the table to look at, with two (2) exceptions:

- The Sheriff’s Office, and
- Public Schools.

Why? Because when politicians are forced to cut / trim budgets, and you all know this, the police, firemen and schools are the first thing on the chopping block. Politicians rely on public outrage to say - “You can’t cut these!”, and use that as the excuse to then raise taxes. They fail (or don’t want) to look at all the excess spending (fat) in the current budget that can be cut, and there are plenty of places. The **Erosion and Sediment Control Department** is at the top of my list to go, for example. Again, Julie Davis and Marty Stamey did an outstanding job of preparation of the 2010 Budget.

This brings us back to this Governor’s Highway Safety Program Grant. The county co-pay is graduated:

- First Year 15%
- Second Year 30%
- Third Year 50%
- Forth Year 100%

We will simply have to work hard to take money from other parts of the budget to pay for this increase over this period of time, so that the overall budget will not increase due to this grant. Who knows, there may be some fat in the Sheriff’s budget as well.

Kirkpatrick commented during the vote (as he has done many times before), that people yell and scream about the budget being increased, yet want programs like this, and he can’t understand it.

Well, here’s an idea, Chairman **Kirkpatrick**. When you ask that question again, why don’t you let someone raise their hand during the meeting, call on them, and let them tell you why, like I just did here? Seems like this is the only way [Toeprints] I can get a word in edgewise at these meetings.

Notice of Meeting - Haywood County Erosion and Sediment Control Board.

The following notice was posted on www.haywoodnc.net:

The Erosion and Sediment Control Board will hold a Special Called Meeting at 10 a.m., Wednesday, October 6th in the Conference Room of County Annex II, located at 1233 N. Main Street in Waynesville. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss a Notice of Violation and Continued Violations of County Ordinance 154: Erosion and Sediment Control issued

for the subdivision Estates at Boulder Creek (previously Twelve Oaks) located at the top of the mountain off Hwy 276 between Waynesville and Bethel. Ron Leatherwood, Chairman

What’s happening here?

Tim Surrett, who works for **Marc Pruett**, indicated this special meeting was likely to set the level of fines for Estates at Boulder Creek violations. He indicated the Sediment Control Board Members levies the fines, not **Marc Pruett**. If you recall, fines were levied up to the amount of a half million dollars against the Cameron’s by this board. [re: released Closed Minutes]. We’ll need to follow this meeting.

Who are the Sediment Control Board Members?

- Ron Leatherwood Contractor
- James Ferguson Soil & Water Conservation Dist.
- Kevin Ensley County Commissioner
- Ellene Francis Soil & Water Conservation Dist.
- Dawson Spano Home Builder
- Bill Yarborough Alternate

Who are the Erosion & Sediment Control Employees?

- **Marc Pruett**
- **Tim Surrett**
- **Jennifer Bradish**

Status on current Closed Minutes...

Haywood County Commissioners have still not released the closed minutes on the purchase of the old Walmart building yet. What are they hiding? My guess is that they will not release the closed minutes until after the election in November.

Updated Commissioner Voting Guide.

You will need to vote for three (3) county commissioners. This handy list will be expanded completely before voting day for your convenience.



(Toeprint seal of approval)

- Denny King
- Michael Sorrells



(Not approved)

- **Kirk Kirkpatrick**
- **Bill Upton**

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