

**MITCHELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**SPECIAL SESSION**

**MINUTES**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2005**

**NORTH CAROLINA**

**MITCHELL COUNTY**

The Mitchell County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on, February 23, 2005 at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room, Administration Building, Bakersville, NC. Those present for the meeting were Keith Masters, Chairman; Phil Byrd, Member; Mike Hensley, Member; Jim Saylor, Member; Phil Castro, Acting County Manager and Kathy Young, CMC to the Board. Commissioner Hollifield was absent from the meeting. Also present were Congressman Patrick McHenry, Carl Braswell, Ray McKinney, Haines Hughes, Shirley Hise, Steve Murphy, Andy Ashurst, Van Phillips, Chuck Vines, George Wilson, Lisa Sparks, Richard Canipe, Wes Voy, Ed & Jana Reid, Jean Saylor, Jay Swain, Lloyd Burleson, Dan Brown, Phil Nobblitt, Jason Dean, John Causey and Kathy Manship.

1. **Call to Order** - Chairman Masters called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.
2. **Invocation** – Commissioner Hensley gave the invocation.

The Mitchell County Board of Commissioners and citizens met with Congressman Patrick McHenry to discuss the needs of the county. Congressman McHenry introduced his staff. Congressman McHenry stated that he would be opening up an office in Mitchell County. Kathy Manship will be heading up the Mitchell County Office along with Caldwell, Burke and Avery Counties. He stated that he knew that Mitchell County had been under represented and it is important to him that he is responsive to our county. He shared that we have a direct line to him through this office that will be opening.

The first thing that Congressman McHenry set out to do is to hire a competent staff. The second thing that he has done is to get on good committees. He is actually on three (1) Government Reform and Oversight (2) Budget and (3) Financial Services Committee.

His main reason for being here is to let the county know that we have a direct point of contact to him and that is Kathy Manship. It is important to him to keep in touch with local needs. He wants the County Commissioners and his office to work together. These offices represent the same people. He wants to improve our job climate, make sure that we have the right transportation infrastructure and make sure that we have the appropriate help from the federal government in order to get things done. At this time Congressman McHenry asked for questions.

Chairman Masters thanked him for coming and let him know that it had been a considerable amount of time or if ever that a Congressman had come directly to his constituent base at this level.

The following is a list of the main concerns of the Commissioners. Number one is our concern for our loss of jobs. This is causing a lot of problems for us. We need any kind of economic development help that could assist us. Another problem that we have is roads in Mitchell County. We feel that we are neglected in this area. Chairman Masters addressed Highway 19E and 226. We also have a problem from a Department of Commerce standpoint with the Parkway. We need to expedite the opening of the Parkway. Chairman Masters also stated that Congressman McHenry might be aware that we had a tragic jail fire and at this point we do not have a jail. Any funds that would be available to help with building a jail or site prep would be greatly appreciated. These are the top issues that Mitchell County is facing among others. He also stated that the board as a whole has taken economic development as its number one priority.

Commissioner Saylor stated that Chairman Masters had expressed the most important needs of the county. He also extended his appreciation to Congressman McHenry for attending this meeting.

Acting County Manager, Castro stated that he would also like assistance with obtaining jobs within our three county area especially in Mitchell County. We would also like any help with looking at what we can market from in this area.

Commissioner Byrd stated that Chairman Masters had covered everything. Economics is our biggest issue as it is with your other counties. He also stated that our current Board of Commissioners is the most aggressive Board that he has seen. This Board has an ambitious agenda as well. In two to three months time they have covered as much as they did before in two years. He reiterated that 226 coming out of McDowell County is huge factor along with the Parkway. In addition we have problems with water and sewer. He also extended his appreciation for Congress McHenry and his staff's time.

Commissioner Hensley stated that he agreed with what Chairman Masters and fellow Chairman Byrd had stated. He reiterated that the Parkway needs to be cleared of the two slides.

Phil Noblitt, with the Blue Ridge Parkway gave an update on where the Parkway stands due to these slides. The one slide has already been contracted out and the other one is in the works. He extended his appreciation to the county for their perseverance and interest that they have shown in the restoration of the Parkway.

Congressman McHenry asked if there was anything his office could do and stated that the Parkway Office has been great to deal with and appreciates all the work that they have done.

Congressman McHenry stated that in terms of 226 he is very aware of the need for that as well as for 19E. As far as 226 he feels that this is the first need. His office is putting in a request for that. It will be a tough and competitive process in order to get the resources, but that is tops on his list. He stated that this is how he can help with economic development. Van has done a great job. The main thing that Congressman McHenry can do to help recruit and maintain businesses that we have here is to help with the transportation infrastructure.

Congressman McHenry asked John Causey to address the two questions regarding the jail and the water and sewer infrastructure.

Mr. Causey stated that there may be funds for the jail. It is very difficult through the appropriations process to find money for brick and mortar. There may be a pot or two out there and he will look into that. There are some grants that are through other federal agencies and he will look for that information and pass it along. They will then offer letters of support and phone calls to relay that is important to their office as well.

With the water and sewer there are several different pots of money available for this. They will also get this information to the county as well. The deadline for requesting these monies is March 18<sup>th</sup>. So he would need our information by March 11<sup>th</sup> so that he can get the appropriate information to the appropriate people.

Economic Development Director, Van Phillips thanked Congressman McHenry and his office for their support of Mitchell County. He also thanked the Board of Commissioners for their support and help with economic development.

Congressman McHenry stated that he felt that Mitchell County was lucky to have Van doing the job that he is doing. He feels that Mitchell County is in great hands with Shirley and Van and he appreciates the work that they do.

Bakersville Town Mayor, Charles Vines, stated that in 14 years in public office that Congressman McHenry is the first Congressman that he has seen outside election time and he appreciates this. He also mentioned 226. He stated that he is the General Manager of soon to be the largest manufacturer in Mitchell County. He gets somewhere between 100 and 125 truck loads of steel out of Pennsylvania a year and he had not seen a driver come back again after they had climbed Cox's Creek. Secondly, he wants help with the infrastructure to the high school. He is on the committee for the development of the infrastructure plan and that plan should be completed very soon and he will make sure that a copy of that plan is available to the Congressman's office.

Chamber of Commerce Director, Shirley Hise stated that she was appreciative of the Congressman and his office's support. She reiterated the impact of the parkway slides to Mitchell County. Shutting off of the Parkway has cost us 200,000 people coming into Mitchell County. She also thanked the Commissioners for the money that they had given to the Chamber to advertise alternative routes to enter into Mitchell County. She also stated that we had four businesses that had been affected by two floods in September that have not had anything done.

Congressman McHenry stated that he would continue to support Mitchell County in economically as well as with supporting moral and family issues. He stated that he appreciated everyone taking time to meet with them. He hopes to have ribbon cutting ceremony in April when the Spruce Pine office is opened.

Chairman Masters also stated that there might be some property rights issues that he may have to discuss with him at a later date. Congressman McHenry stated that the EPA and Federal Government are overstepping their bounds.

Others attending the meeting also expressed their appreciation and are willing to assist in any way.

The Board of Commissioners extended their appreciation again to the Congressman and to his office.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

MITCHELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Keith Masters, Chairman

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Ken Hollifield, Vice-Chairman

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Phil Byrd, Member

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Mike Hensley, Member

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Jim Saylor, Member

ATTEST:

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Kathy Young, Clerk to the Board