

 The Smyth County Board of Supervisors held its regular meeting on Thursday, February 22nd, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. The location of the meeting was held in the First Floor Board Room of the County Office Building, 121 Bagley Circle, Suite 100, Marion, Virginia.

**PRESENT:** Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins; Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff; Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris; Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener; Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill; Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call; North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings.

**ABSENT:** None.

**STAFF:** County Administrator, Shawn Utt; Assistant County Administrator- Development Clegg Williams; County Attorney Scot Farthing; Executive Administrative Assistant/Deputy Clerk Auna Louthian.

**OTHERS:** Smyth County News and Messenger, Sheriff's Office, and Citizens

**2/22/2024 5:01 PM** Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins called the meeting to order.

**2/22/2024 5:01 PM** Building Inspector Kenneth Pennington then led the pledge of allegiance.

**2/22/2024 5:01 PM** Utilities Department Billing Manager Jessica Davidson, led the invocation.

**2/22/2024 5:02 PM** Commonwealth Attorney Phillip Blevins recognized Deputy Gale Greer with a challenge coin he has given to officers that go "Above the blue line". Although Mr. Blevins could not discuss the matter due to ongoing investigations, he believes Deputy Greer is very deserving of this award.

**2/22/2024 5:05 PM** Executive Director of Mount Rogers Regional Partnership, Nichole Hair gave a year in review summary of the partnership with Smyth County.

**2/22/2024 5:15 PM** Chad Wyatt of Pearson's Appraisal gave a brief update of the property reassessment process within the County. Mr. Wyatt shared that all fieldwork has been completed and notices with new property assessments were sent out on February 15<sup>th</sup>. He also shared the current deadline for administrative appeal is set on March 4<sup>th</sup> but could be extended for as long as needed to allow for appointments to be made and for all appeals to be

heard. Mr. Wyatt shared the goal is to get each property assessment to 100% of fair market value. Mr. Wyatt did assure the citizens the assessors do live within Smyth County and are familiar with the area.

**2/22/2024 5:28 PM** Mr. Utt gave a summary of the proposed amendments to the County's *Dangerous Dog Ordinance* which will update the County code to mirror the Code of Virginia as it relates to fees and administrative charges and provided the following public hearing notice:

### ***Notice of Public Hearing***

*In compliance with the Code of Virginia of 1950, and amendments thereto, the Smyth County Board of Supervisors will conduct a public hearing to consider amending Chapter 8, Article V Section 8-132, entitled "Renewal of dangerous dog registration" of the Smyth County Code of Ordinances to mirror VA State Code Article 6 Section 3.2-6542.1. The Board of Supervisors shall hear comments from citizens concerning the amendments to this section of the Smyth County Code of Ordinances.*

*The public hearing shall be held on Thursday, February 22nd, 2024, beginning at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be heard, in the Board Room of the Smyth County Office Building, 121 Bagley Circle, Marion Virginia, to receive comments on the proposed amendments of Article V.*

*All interested persons may express their views by emailing [alouthian@smythcounty.org](mailto:alouthian@smythcounty.org) prior to the scheduled public hearing. Written comments may also be mailed or delivered to County Administrator, 121 Bagley Circle, Suite 100, Marion VA 24354, or by fax to (276) 783-9314. All emails, written comments and faxes must be received by 2:00pm on Thursday, February 22nd, 2024.*

*A copy of the Article being considered for repeal is on file in the County Administrator's Office located at 121 Bagley Circle, Marion Virginia or online at [www.smythcounty.org](http://www.smythcounty.org) for public review.*

*In compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons requiring special assistance to attend and participate in this public hearing should contact Clegg Williams, ADA Coordinator at (276) 706-8315, at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the public hearing.*

*Smyth County fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information, or to obtain a Title VI Discrimination Complaint Form, contact (276) 783-3298 or at <https://www.smythcounty.org>.*

**BY ORDER OF THE  
SMYTH COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
Shawn M. Utt, County Administrator**

**2/22/2024 5:28 PM** Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins opened the Public Hearing.

**2/22/2024 5:28 PM** Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins entertained a motion to waive the reading of the rules for the public hearing.

- *A motion was made by Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener to waive the reading of the rules for the public hearing. Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris seconded the motion.*

*After consideration, the motion PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

**2/22/2024 5:29 PM** With no citizens wishing to speak Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins closed the public hearing.

**2/22/2024 5:29 PM** Minutes from the February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting.

- *A motion was made by Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call to approve the meeting minutes of the February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting. Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener seconded the motion.*

*After consideration, the motion PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

**2/22/2024 5:30 PM** Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins opened Citizens Time.

**2/22/2024 5:31 PM**

Mr. Utt began by reading the rules of citizens time and sharing he knew most of the citizens in attendance were at the Board meeting due to the reassessment notices and shared the following statement:

*As many folks now know, Smyth County has been working through the reassessment process. The state code requires the County to do this reassessment at least once every 6 years (Smyth County has chosen to continue with a 4-year interval). Normally, using the shorter timeframe concept helps to avoid drastic changes in property values and minimizes the tax increase burden. The previous assessment was conducted prior to the Covid pandemic and as I am sure you are aware, things in the country have greatly changed since then. Home values have increased much higher than expected, not just locally, but regionally and nationally with many new home buyers choosing to pay well above appraised value for homes. In doing so, this causes the market value of neighboring properties to increase which resulted in the much higher assessments this year. The Board of Supervisors had anticipated an increase and partnered with our local news outlets to help to get the word out early in the process. We have also begun discussions on how the current rate of \$0.74/\$100 can be adjusted to lower the overall effect on the taxpayers. Please know that as with any reassessment process, some will undoubtedly pay more this year than in previous years while some will pay less and even others will likely pay nearly the same in taxes. Also, we ask that you keep in mind that while we have all personally experienced the effects of inflation on everything we purchase in our daily lives, please know the County has experienced those increases in the overall operations of the County as well. The Board will work to balance that overall need of minimizing the effect on property owners while also ensuring the financial needs of operating the County are met.*

Sheriff Chip Shuler of 1815 Rye Valley Lane, Sugar Grove shared his appreciation to the Board for the recently approved increase to the VRS multiplier for the Smyth County Officers and presented each Board member with a letter of gratitude on behalf of the department.

Joseph Guthrey of 142 Rabbit Hill Lane– Bill Stamper of 659 Spruce, Roger Boman of 844 Edmond Drive, Timothy McClusky of 1067 St. Clairs Creek, Ralph Price of 721 Dogwood Lane, Christina Haynes of 1341 Matson Drive, Tonya Bower of 216 Church Ave., Patricia Wyatt of 728 Lincoln Ave., Ann Still of 720 Lincoln Ave., and Steve Rue of 516 Pearl Ave. all spoke about concerns with the property tax reassessment.

**2/22/2024 6:19 PM** With no one else wishing to speak, Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins closed citizens' time and called for a brief recess.

**2/22/2024 6:29 PM** Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins called the Board of Supervisors meeting back to order.

**2/22/2024 6:29 PM** Mr. Utt read the minutes from the February 15th, 2024 Appointment Committee meeting and presented the following committee recommendation:

- *Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener made a motion to recommend appointing Doug Armstrong, Vickie Stamper, Lou Don, Norman Sparks, and Tom Copenhaver to the Board of Equalization to a term to expire one year after the effective date of the assessment of 2024. Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

*After consideration, the Committee recommendation PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

*After discussion the following motion was made:*

- *Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris made a motion to appoint Joe Robinson to the Board of Equalization to expire one year after the effective date of the assessment of 2024. North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings seconded the motion.*

*After consideration, the motion PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

**2/22/2024 6:32 PM** Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff read the minutes from the February 15th, 2024 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting. The meeting was informational only, no action taken.

**2/22/2024 6:35 PM** North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings read the minutes from the February 15th, 2024 Transportation Committee meeting and presented the following committee recommendation:

- *A motion was made by Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris to schedule a public hearing for April 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm or shortly thereafter to hear comments on the proposed continuation of the 6 Year Plan with no additional roadways to be added at this time. Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

*After consideration, the Committee recommendation PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

**2/22/2024 6:38 PM County Attorney Report:**

County Attorney Scot Farthing stated he had nothing new to report at this time.

**2/22/2024 6:38 PM County Administrator Report:**

Mt. Utt shared he had nothing new to report at this time.

**2/22/2024 6:38 PM Supervisor Comment Time**

Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener shared we are all in the reassessment process together and is thankful to see citizens coming to share their concerns. Mr. Widener also thanked staff.

Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call thanked the staff for all they do and also shared that everyone is in this together.

Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff shared he knows the burden of taxes but the County is required to provide a reassessment, but we are all in the same boat.

North Fork District Rick Billings shared he was glad to see so many citizens come to the meeting. He encouraged citizens to stay informed and ask questions.

Vice Chair, Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill shared information about the upcoming Manufacturers' Excellence trip planned. Mr. Sturgill also congratulated Dennis Carter on being named the Region 7 Superintendent of the Year. He also thanked everyone for working together towards common goals.

Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris encouraged citizens to do their homework and not just read what they see on the internet. He asked that they stay informed and continue to come to meetings.

Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins thanked staff and shared his appreciation for citizens being kind and orderly and assured everyone the Board would do all they could to ease the burden on taxpayers.

**2/22/2024 6:53 PM**

- *Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener made a motion to enter into closed session under Code of Virginia Section 2.2-3711(a)(7) – Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation pertaining to the Jerico case. Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call seconded the motion.*

*After consideration, the motion PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

**2/22/2024 6:57 PM** *Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener made a motion to adopt the following resolution and enter back into open session. Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill seconded the motion.*

**RESOLUTION  
CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED SESSION**

WHEREAS, the Smyth County Board of Supervisors has convened in a closed session on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Smyth County Board of Supervisors that such a meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Smyth County Board of Supervisors hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed session were heard, discussed or considered by the Smyth County Board of Supervisors.

*After consideration, the motion PASSED by the following vote:*

*AYES: Chair Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins,  
Vice Chair Chilhowie District Supervisor Michael Sturgill,  
Rye Valley District Supervisor Jason Parris,  
Saltville District Supervisor Roscoe Call,  
North Fork District Supervisor Rick Billings,  
Royal Oak District Supervisor Courtney Widener, and  
Park District Supervisor Kristopher Ratliff.*

*NAYS: None.*

*ABSTAINERS: None.*

*ABSENT: None.*

**2/22/2024 6:57 PM** *With no further business to discuss, Chair, Atkins District Supervisor Charles Atkins recessed until the joint meeting with the Planning Commission at 7pm.*