

February 13, 2019

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in an Emergency session on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 6:30 PM in the Commissioners' Room, 116 Adams Street, Plymouth, NC. Commissioners Johnson, Phelps, Sexton and Walker were present. Also present were County Manager/Attorney Curtis Potter, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett. Commissioner Riddick was unable to attend.

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order. Commissioner Phelps made a motion to stay in open session. The motion died due to lack of a second.

**Commissioner Walker made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(3) (attorney-client privilege) to discuss the Washington County Hospital.**

Commissioner Phelps read the following statement he had prepared:

*"I have thought long and hard about this issue. I tried to get the Chair and Manager to call for a meeting a couple weeks ago when the writing was on the wall.*

*Tonight, this meeting should be held in open session. By doing anything other than that is a disservice to our citizens. I have been trying to get a contingency plan in place for the hospital closure for the past year from the manager and board members.*

*Now in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour the chair calls an emergency meeting to discuss a situation that should have been discussed months if not years ago. And if it is such an emergency then the public deserves answers tonight—and not county leadership meeting in secret—nor does the public deserve a canned press release. They need to hear directly from county leadership-if we have any.*

*The public has no idea that the county is actually trying to lead in this matter. We need to inform them that we are just as much as interested in keeping this hospital open as they are. We must be transparent.*

*I am held accountable to the citizens of this county, just like each of you, and not held accountable by the manager. The citizens of this county elect me to lead and right now they feel the county has turned a blind eye. I can't tell you how many calls and texts and Facebook messages I have received about what the county is going to do to keep the hospital open. The citizens are in the dark when it comes to one of their greatest needs-- health care.*

*Since we are having an "emergency meeting" the public deserves to know what is happening and the status of their health care. So if this board goes into closed session over my objection, we need to be prepared to discuss it after so the public is aware of our plans moving forward.*

*So I will vote against this closed session because we are continuing to lose the public's trust by hiding behind a closed door in a secret session."*

**Commissioner Sexton seconded, motion carried 3-1. Commissioner Phelps voted nay.**

Back in Open Session, Chair Johnson reminded the Board that the Commissioners will be meeting jointly with the Board of Education and Rep. G.K. Butterfield on February 22 at 12:00 Noon – 1:00 PM in the Washington County Schools Central Offices on Washington Street to discuss funding a new school.

Mr. Dale Heberling, reporter from The Roanoke Beacon, asked Chair Johnson if she would make a statement regarding tonight's Closed Session. Chair Johnson said the public is not aware of things that the Board knows. The public also needs to remember that Washington County's name may be on the hospital, but the County does not own it. The meeting held tonight was for the Board to explore ways to help the hospital. The County has engaged counsel and they are researching options. The Board will have to make some tough decisions, but with County Manager/Attorney Potter and outside counsel, we will be ready for what arises.

At 7:50 PM with no further business to discuss, **Commissioner Sexton made a motion to adjourn . Commissioner Walker seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

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Tracey A. Johnson  
Chair

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Julie J. Bennett, CMC, NCCCC  
Clerk to the Board