

**AGENDA  
CRAVEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION  
MONDAY APRIL 20, 2020  
8:30 AM**

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVE AGENDA

1. PETITIONS OF THE CITIZENS
2. CONSENT AGENDA
  - A. Minutes of April 6, 2020 Regular Session
  - B. Tax Releases and Refunds
  - C. K-9 Donation Budget Amendment
3. PRESENTATION OF 2019 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT: RSM Senior Manager, Robbie Bittner
4. HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT RECOMMENDED BUDGET 2020-2021 : Clayton Gaskins, Vice Chairman, Craven Aging Planning Board

**DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS**

5. SOCIAL SERVICES – ADDITIONAL FOSTER CARE FUNDS BUDGET AMENDMENT: Geoffrey Marett, DSS Director
6. PLANNING: Don Baumgardner, Planning Director
  - A. Request for Road Addition
  - B. Sweet Tea Solar Energy Facility
7. FINANCE – BUDGET AMENDMENTS: Craig Warren, Finance Director
  - A. Medical Examiner Increased Funding
  - B. School Capital Funding Request – HVAC Replacement at H.J. MacDonald Middle School
8. HUMAN RESOURCES – REQUEST FOR A TEMPORARY PERSONNEL RESOLUTION: Amber Parker, Human Resources Director
9. APPOINTMENTS

10. COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT: Arey Grady
11. COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT: Jack Veit
12. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

**THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF CRAVEN MET IN REGULAR SESSION IN THE COMMISSIONERS' ROOM OF THE CRAVEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 406 CRAVEN STREET, NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA, ON MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2020. THE MEETING CONVENED AT 8:30.M.**

**MEMBERS AND STAFF PRESENT IN COMMISSIONERS' ROOM:**

Chairman Thomas F. Mark  
 Vice Chairman Jason R. Jones  
 Commissioner Denny Bucher  
 Chairman George S. Liner  
 Commissioner Theron L. McCabe  
 Commissioner E. T. Mitchell  
 Commissioner Johnnie Sampson, Jr.  
 Jack B. Veit, III, County Manager  
 Craig Warren, Finance Director  
 Nan Holton, Clerk to the Board

**STAFF AND PRESENTERS PRESENT VIA WEBEX/PHONE:**

Gene Hodges, Assistant County Manager  
 Amber Parker, Human Resources Director  
 Arey Grady, County Attorney  
 Robbie Bittner, RSM Senior Manager  
 Clay Gaskins, Vice Chairman, Craven Aging Planning Board  
 Geoffrey Marett, Social Services Director  
 Don Baumgardner, Planning Director  
 Meghann Doyle, Superintendent of Schools

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, County Attorney, Arey Grady, recited the following invocation:

*God of mercy, thank You for giving us another day.*

*Bless the Members of this Board of County Commissioners and all those who are working for the common good. Give comfort to Your people, O Lord, as the news of sickness grows each day. Protect all our medical professionals and first responders from disease and all evil as they strive to extend Your healing power to the lives of so many.*

*Give us patience as we adjust to a new world and a new way of proceeding, and send us Your holy spirit to comfort and guide us along our way.*

*May everything that is done be for Your greater honor and glory. Amen.*

*Based upon the opening prayer given by Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, S.J. the April 3, 2020 session of the United States House of Representatives.*

Commissioner Liner motioned to approve the agenda, as presented, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved unanimously.

**PETITIONS OF CITIZENS**

There were no citizens from the public who wished to speak.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Mitchell motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, inclusive of the Minutes of April 6, 2020 Regular Session, Tax Releases and Refunds and K-9 Donation Budget Amendment. Commissioner Liner seconded the motion which carried 7-0 in a roll call vote.

*Credits*

<b>TAXPAYER NAME</b>	<b>TICKET #</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
ALBRECHT, KURT & LESLIE G DID NOT OWN JANUARY 1	2019-201478	\$88.39
DAWES, BRIAN ADOLPH MILITARY EXEMPT	2019-211359	\$11.95
DAWERS, BRIAN ADOLPH MILITARY EXEMPT	2018-91682	\$15.66
DEANS, ANNIE LOUISE DOUBLE BILLED	2019-90026	\$6.48
GARNER, CODY D CORRECTED DISCOVERED PROPERTY VALUE	2018-91288	\$208.70
KIDD, CARL RECYCLE FEE CORRECTION	2019-212558	\$62.55
LILLY, ANDREA MICHELLE RECYCLE FEE CORRECTION	2019-201118	\$62.55
LILLY, ANDREA MICHELLE RECYCLE FEE CORRECTION	2018-35221	\$40.77
LILLY, ANDREA MICHELLE RECYCLE FEE CORRECTION	2017-35236	\$44.01
STRICKLAND, ZACHARY NELSON NOT TAXABLE TO CRAVEN COUNTY	2019-211655	\$11.11
WILEY, TAYLOR A CORRECTED DISCOVERED PROPERTY VALUE	2019-212018	\$148.96
WILSON, KENNETH LEE DID NOT OWN JANUARY 1	2019-211205	\$276.66
WILSON, KENNETH LEE DOUBLE BILLED	2019-210050	\$1,182.98
WILSON, KENNETH LEE DOUBLE BILLED	2018-64411	\$1,245.04
	14 – CREDIT (S)	\$3,405.81

*Refunds*

GAVIN, MYRON M DOUBLE BILLED	2019-203202	\$655.76
UNDERWOOD, JOHN C & MARGARET J NOT TAXABLE TO CRAVEN COUNTY	2019-210362	\$213.20
	2 – REFUND (S)	\$868.96

*Sheriff's Office 2001*

REVENUES	AMOUNT	EXPENDITURES	AMOUNT
1014310-38301 Miscellaneous Donations	\$60.00	1014310-43222 Supplies-Donations	\$60.00
TOTAL	\$60.00	TOTAL	\$60.00

**Justification:** The Craven County Sheriff's Office has received a donation check in the amount of \$60.00 from a private citizen to support the Sheriff's K-9 program. The donation is to be made available for the purchase of K-9 related supplies, training, medical care, food, etc.

*The Presentation of the 2019 Annual Audit Report by RSM Senior Manager, Robbie Bittner was delayed due to connection issues.*

**HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT RECOMMENDED BUDGET  
2020-2021**

Craven Aging Planning Board (CAPB) Vice Chairman, Clayton Gaskins, presented the Board with the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) 20-21 recommended budget, totaling \$514,888.00.

Mr. Gaskins reviewed the block grant funding allocations from the CAPB, highlighting the shortfall of \$19,458, requiring cuts to be made due to reduced federal and state funding. He stated that the County's required local match is \$57,209.00. Mr. Gaskins referenced the recent CARE Act and the possibility of incoming funds from this.

Commissioner Bucher motioned to approve the HCCBG budget as presented by the CAPB. His motioned was seconded by Commissioner Sampson.

Discussion ensued regarding disparity among how decisions were made to cut from the various programs, versus an across the board, fair and equal cut. Concerns were expressed that services to the County's seniors are being cut annually and their needs are not being met adequately. A desire to revisit this during 20-21 budget discussions was declared.

County Manager, Jack Veit, and DSS Director, Geoffrey Marett, spoke about the Care Level 2 and 3 home bound patients and how it is more cost effective to keep funding those at a higher rate.

Commissioner Jones motioned to amend the approval of the HCCBG budget as presented; stating the County would take \$19,458 from the Fund Balance if those funds are not forthcoming by July, to keep the program as is, going into the next fiscal year. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and carried in a 7-0 roll call vote.

**PRESENTATION OF 2019 AUDIT REPORT**

RSM Senior Manager, Robbie Bittner, presented the 2019 Annual Audit Report. He informed the Board of the minimum requirements, and the types of opinions that could be rendered. He stated that Craven County received an Unmodified opinion, which is considered "clean" and the highest level of assurance on all major federal and state programs other than Medical Assistance, which received a Qualified opinion. Mr. Bittner reviewed the compliance section findings where there were weaknesses in internal controls. References to the installation and implementation of the new finance program Munis and the retirement of several key personnel were made in regards to affecting the bank reconciliations and the delay of this presentation.

**DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS: SOCIAL SERVICES – ADDITIONAL FOSTER CARE  
GRANT FUNDS BUDGET AMENDMENT**

Social Services Director, Geoffrey Marett, presented the Board with a budget amendment in the amount of \$225,000 for additional foster care funds.

Mr. Marett explained that they are requesting increases in the previously stated amounts for Foster Care IV-B and Foster Care IV-E. He reported that Craven County, in conjunction with counties with the state and across the nation, has continued to see a significant rise in the number of children in custody. The County is mandated to provide room and board payments for children who are in a licensed foster home/facility. As of March 2020, 78% of the current cases in foster care involve a combination of mental health and substance abuse and 44% of these were opioid involved.

Some disruptions leading to placement are that of extreme suicide attempts; extreme physical aggression, excessive inappropriate internet usage, stealing, suspensions from school/foster parents unable to take leave from work; drug use, sexualized behaviors; destruction of property and runaway behaviors. These behaviors result in children having to be placed in leveled homes or therapeutic group homes which require increased costs above standard room and board rate.

Commissioner Sampson was excused from the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

Commissioner Mitchell motioned to approve the following budget amendment, as requested, seconded by Commissioner Bucher and approved 6-0 in a roll call vote.

**DSS 1015213**

<b>REVENUES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
101521-333423 Foster Care IV-B State	\$52,500.00	1015213-43921 Foster Care IV-B State	\$105,000.00
1010000 39900	\$52,500.00		
1015213-33422 Foster Care IV-E	\$99,516.00	1015213-43928	\$120,000.00
1010000-39900	\$20,484.00		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$225,000.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$225,000.00</b>

**Justification:** Foster Care IV-B state funds are reimbursed at 50% for eligible room and board payments. Foster Care IV-E funds are reimbursed at approximately 66% Federal funds and 17% State funds for eligible room and board payments.

**DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS: PLANNING**

*Request for Road Addition*

Planning Director, Don Baumgardner, requested that the Board approve Jacqueline Drive in the Cherry Branch Subdivision, less than 8.67/10 of a mile to be turned over to the State of North Carolina for maintenance. Commissioner McCabe motioned to approve the standard SR2 Road Addition Resolution, as requested, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved unanimously.

*Sweet Tea Solar Energy Facility*

Mr. Baumgardner announced that Craven County has received an application for a Solar Energy Facility, Sweet Tea, which was approved by the Craven County Planning Board on March 26th, 2020. The property is located within Township 8 off of Stevenson Road (SR 1419). The Solar Energy Facility will have approximately 11,016 solar panels and will occupy 16 acres out of the total property size of 31 acres.

The Solar Energy Facility will produce 4.5MW of electrical power, which will be sold to Duke Energy. The solar energy facility will require a bond which will be provided before a building permit is issued. The Sweet Tea Solar Energy Facility meets or exceeds the standards of the Solar Energy Facilities Ordinance.

Commissioner Jones inquired if any negative responses had been received from any of the required written and hand delivered notices delivered to neighboring property owners. Mr. Baumgardner indicated they had not had any negative input.

Commissioner Bucher stated that he disagreed with any project that requires the federal government to subsidize it to be successful, but they do meet all the requirements set in place by the County. Commissioners Liner and Mark concurred with his statement.

Commissioner Mitchell motioned to approve the Sweet Tea Solar Energy Facility, as requested, seconded by Commissioner McCabe and approved 6-0 in a roll call vote.

**DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS: FINANCE**

*Medical Examiner Increased Funding*

Finance Director, Craig Warren, presented the Board with a budget amendment in the amount of \$65,000 to increase funding for the Medical Examiner.

He stated that Craven County has experienced an increase in the number of autopsies performed by the Office of Chief Medical Examiner than what was originally budgeted. Currently the budget is 97% expended. The current fee for each autopsy performed is \$1,750 and \$200 for investigations. It is estimated \$65,000 will be needed to cover Medical Examiner fees through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Commissioner Liner motioned to approve the following budget amendment, as presented, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved 6-0 in a roll call vote.

*Medical Examiner*

<b>REVENUES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
1010000-39901	\$65,000.00	1014370-440028	\$55,000.00
Current Year Fund Balance		Medical Examiner	
		1014320-44029	\$10,000.00
		Investigations	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$65,000.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$65,000.00</b>

**Justification:** The medical examiner fund is 97% depleted with several more months to go for this FY. Craven County has experienced an increase in the number of autopsies performed by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner than what was originally budgeted for.

*School Capital Funding Request – HVAC Replacement at H. J. MacDonald Middle School*

Mr. Warren presented the Board with a budget amendment in the amount of \$57,957 for a school capital funding request.

He reminded the Board that earlier this fiscal year Commissioners approved the Craven County Board of Education’s request to re-allocate \$250,000 originally approved in the school capital fund for bathroom renovations at Graham A. Barden Elementary School towards the replacement of an HVAC unit at H.J. Middle School. The cost quoted to replace the unit came in at \$356,245, which is \$106,245 above what was approved for this project. In order to make up the difference, the Craven County School Board has submitted a request asking for the authorization to utilize any savings in the school capital fund that have carried over from prior fiscal year projects that have been completed. As of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, there was \$57,957 available in the school capital fund that has carried over and can be allocated for this purpose. The remaining \$48,288 will come from the school’s existing fund balance.

Commissioner Liner motioned to approve the following budget amendment, as requested, seconded by Commissioner McCabe and approved 6-0 in a roll call vote.

*Schools*

<b>REVENUES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
4050000-39901 Year Balance Current Year	\$57,957.00	4056110-43704 Schools Capital Outlay	\$57,957.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$57,957.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$57,957.00</b>

**Justification:** Craven County Board of Education requests the Board of Commissioners authorize the transfer of \$57,957 to their Capital Outlay fund for the replacement of the HVAC system at H.J. MacDonald Middle School.

**DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS: HUMAN RESOURCES – REQUEST FOR A TEMPORARY PERSONNEL RESOLUTION**

Human Resources Director, Amber Parker, presented the Board with a request for a temporary personnel resolution. She provided the following overview:

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (the “Act”) was signed into law on March 18, 2020 and it created the Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) and the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) which went into effect April 1, 2020. The Act applies to employers with 500 or less employees as well as all government employers and it will remain in effect at least through December 31, 2020. The Act expands the scope of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA); and it provides for emergency paid sick leave for certain COVID-19 related absences.

The Act creates a new basis for protected FMLA leave for an employee needing to stay home to care for a child whose school or care facility is closed because of COVID-19. Eligible employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave to care for their children. The Act also states full-time employees are entitled to a maximum of 80 hours of emergency paid sick leave for certain COVID-19 related reasons. Part-time employees are entitled to paid leave equal to the average number of hours they would typically work in a 2-week period. Employees are eligible for emergency paid sick leave if they are unable to work because:

1. The employee is subject to a federal, state or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.
2. The employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.

Commissioner Mitchell motioned to approve the following recommended temporary personnel resolution, as requested, seconded by Commissioner McCabe and approved unanimously.

**CRAVEN COUNTY TEMPORARY EMERGENCY FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT AND EMERGENCY PAID SICK LEAVE ACT POLICY**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide employees, with some exclusions, with expanded family and medical leave as well as emergency paid sick leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19 effective April 1, 2020.

**EMERGENCY FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE EXPANSION ACT (EFMLEA)**

Eligible Craven County employees (full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal) who have worked for Craven County for at least 30 days prior to the designated leave are eligible for Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) leave. Please note this new act does not change the eligibility requirements for regular Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

**EFMLEA QUALIFYING REASONS**

The EFMLEA amends the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 by the following:

- Added a new qualifying reason that provides 12 weeks of leave when an employee is unable to work – either onsite or remotely - due to a need to care for the son or daughter under 18 years of age of such employee if the school or place of care has been closed, or the child care provider is unavailable due to an emergency with respect to COVID-19 as declared by a federal, state, or local authority;
- A “childcare provider” under the Act is defined as one who provides childcare services on a regular basis and receives compensation for those services. It excludes the situation where a family member has been providing childcare and is no longer available.
- Leave taken under the EFMLEA is paid leave after a 10-day waiting period; an employee may choose to use accrued leave for the 10-day waiting period. In no instance can Craven County require employees to use accrued leave during the waiting period;
- After the 10-day period, Craven County is required to pay full-time employees no less than two-thirds the employee’s regular rate for the number of hours the employee would otherwise be normally scheduled. The new Act limits this pay entitlement to \$200 per day and \$10,000 in the aggregate per employee; employees who work a part-time or an irregular schedule are entitled to be paid based on the average number of hours the employee worked for the six months prior to taking leave; employees who have worked for less than 6 months prior to leave are entitled to the employee’s reasonable expectation at hiring of the average number of hours the employee would normally be scheduled to work.
- The regular rules under the FMLA will apply to job reinstatement. Craven County has the same obligation as under traditional FMLA to return any employee who has taken Emergency FMLA leave to the same or equivalent position upon the return to work;

#### **EFMLEA LEAVE RULES**

- Employees are still limited to a total of twelve weeks of FMLA leave within a 12-month period for all reasons combined.
- Employees who have already used up their FMLA allotment for the year are not entitled to EFMLEA leave.
- As with regular FMLA leave, where the need for leave is foreseeable, employees must provide Craven County with as much advance notice as practicable.

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#### **EMERGENCY PAID SICK LEAVE ACT (EPSLA)**

Craven County will provide eligible employees with Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) leave under certain conditions in accordance with FFCRA.

#### **EPSLA ELIGIBILITY**

Employees eligible for EPSLA include full-time, part-time, temporary, and seasonal.

#### **REASONS FOR EPSLA**

An employee qualifies for EPSLA if unable to work (or telework) due to a need for leave because the employee:

1. is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine because of COVID-19;
3. is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual or are advised to quarantine or isolate;
5. is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed, or whose childcare provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions; or

6. is experiencing substantially similar conditions as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

#### **DURATION/COMPENSATION**

You may elect to use EPSLA before using any accrued paid leave. Employees are entitled to:

- Full-time employees: 80 hours of pay at their regular pay rate. However, when caring for a family member (for reasons 4, 5, and 6 above on Page 2), sick leave is paid at two-thirds the employee's regular rate.
- Part-time employees: Pay for the number of hours the employee works, on average, over a two-week period.
- Paid leave under this policy is limited to \$511 per day (\$5,110 in total) where leave is taken for reasons 1, 2, and 3 described on Page 2 (generally, an employee's own illness or quarantine); and \$200 per day (\$2,000 in total) where leave is taken for reasons 4, 5, or 6 (care for others or school closures).

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#### **EXCLUSIONS**

FFCRA final regulations permit employers of health care providers or emergency responders to exclude those employees from EMFLEA and EPLSA. The U.S. Department of Labor defines an emergency responder as: anyone necessary for the provision of transport, care, health care, comfort, and nutrition of such patients, or others needed for the response to COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to military or national guard, law enforcement officers, correctional institution personnel, fire fighters, emergency medical services personnel, physicians, nurses, public health personnel, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, emergency management personnel, 911 operators, child welfare workers and service providers, public works personnel, and persons with skills or training in operating specialized equipment or other skills needed to provide aid in a declared emergency as well as individuals who work for such facilities employing these individuals and whose work is necessary to maintain the operation of the facility.

#### **AUTHORITY**

Craven County will implement EFMLEA and EPSLA provisions created by the FFCRA that went into effect April 1. Craven County excludes health care providers and emergency responders, as defined above, from the EFMLEA and from reasons four (4), five (5), and six (6) of the EPSLA. The County Manager and or his designee are authorized to determine which specific positions fall under the U.S. Department of Labor definition of health care providers and emergency responders. Craven County maintains the right to amend this policy to exclude all provisions of the EFMLEA and EPSLA allowed by law should it become a necessity to maintain continuity of County Government operations.

#### **REQUESTING LEAVE**

Employees who need to take EFMLEA or EPSLA leave should provide notice to their supervisor as soon as possible. The process for requesting EFMLEA will be similar to the standard FMLA request process. Employees are still required to follow Craven County's sick and annual leave policies to report all absences from work to their supervisor.

#### **RETALIATION**

Craven County will not retaliate against employees who request or take leave in accordance with these policies.

**EXPIRATION**

EFMLEA leave is available only as long as a federal, state or local COVID-19 state of emergency is in effect and in any event only through December 31, 2020. In addition, EFMLEA leave cannot be carried over after December 31, 2020. EPSLA expires December 31, 2020 and cannot be carried over. Should the provisions of the FFCRA, EFMLEA or EPSLA be extended by the federal government, this policy will automatically adjust to terminate or expire on date set by federal law.

**RATIFICATION**

Ratified this 20<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2020 by the Craven County Board of County Commissioners.

**APPOINTMENTS**

There were no appointments made.

**COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT**

County Manager, Jack Veit, thanked the Board for their continued support of the county employees during this crisis. He reminded them of the upcoming budget process and stated he would be contacting them individually in the next week to discuss what that is going to look like with the social distancing rules in place.

Mr. Veit informed them that he had received notice at the beginning of the meeting that there had been a third COVID19 death in Craven County. He reviewed that as of 04.19.2020 at 12:30 p.m. there were 33 confirmed cases, of which 11 were active, 20 were recovered, and 5 were hospitalized.

Mr. Veit reported that he was working on the budget with Craig Warren, and reminded them that the sales tax from March won't be known until June 15<sup>th</sup>. He reported that it is a barometer used in budgeting, as is the occupancy tax which hoteliers and Bed & Breakfasts state are down less than 20% of occupancy. These factors indicate the need to be conservative in projecting revenues.

Mr. Veit presented a request from the Health Director for a temporary on-call pay policy for the Communicative Disease Nurses, through June 30, 2020. He reviewed that the current COVID 19 crisis requires them to work longer hours and weekend work as they are responsible for contact tracing, dealing with the patients directly, working with their physicians and communication with the state organizations. The policy proposes \$50 per night, \$75 per weekend day, and \$100 for holiday pay. The total cost would be \$10,990.61 inclusive of FICA, retirement, 401K, workers comp. Mr. Veit indicated that the Health Department would receive approximately \$800,000 in COVID 19 Grant funding which would cover this expense through the remainder of the fiscal year. The policy would be retroactive to the previous pay period.

Commissioner Mitchell motioned to approve the new policy, as requested, seconded by Commissioner Liner and approved unanimously.

**COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

*Commissioner Bucher* remarked that closing the US economy is unprecedented and causing local businesses to teeter on bankruptcy. He stated his personal belief was that keeping people apart was to primarily give our health agencies the opportunity to stay ahead of the virus and not be overrun, and that has been accomplished. Mr. Bucher further stated this virus will continue and probably increase, with a vaccine still at least a year away. He spoke in favor of sending a letter to Governor Roy about reopening the economy.

*Commissioner Mitchell* expressed her gratitude to the essential personnel, the health care workers, and the public safety officers working to ensure our safety. She spoke in support of Commissioner Bucher's comments, remarking that people in severe financial hardship is an equal threat in severity as to the virus.

Mrs. Mitchell also commented that not being able to receive medical care not related to the virus is another threat, as many people have had to postpone surgeries and are dealing with pain. She highlighted that each county's situation is different and that is why she would support a letter requesting the ability for each county to move forward.

*Commissioner McCabe* made no comments.

*Commissioner Liner* concurred with both Commissioner Bucher and Mitchell's comments, stressing that local businesses are hurting. He remarked that the county to date has stood up and done everything that has been asked, and the public has complied. Mr. Liner referenced the churches and other organizations and individuals who have donated masks and other PPE to protect the health care workers.

*Commissioner Jones* related that the Board has received many phone calls and had several conversations with their constituents on this topic. He remarked that there has not been consistency in the orders that have come down, favoring some businesses over others. Also, Mr. Jones expressed deep concern over the treatment of houses of worship during this crisis. He spoke in favor of a letter to the Governor allowing the county to make decisions on behalf of its citizens based on local data.

*Chairman Mark* stated he was very proud of the community and that most of his calls have been supportive of the county. He congratulated the staff on putting the employees and the Board in a safe environment, while also getting information out to everyone. Mr. Mark then read the proposed letter to Governor Cooper for recording in the Minutes.

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Roy Cooper  
North Carolina Office of the Governor  
20301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Dear Governor Cooper,

Craven County has seen challenging times over the last two years beginning with Hurricane Florence and now dealing with both the public health and economic pitfalls of the novel coronavirus pandemic. I want to thank you on behalf of the rest of the Craven County Board of Commissioners and all of our citizens for the leadership and assistance the State of North Carolina has provided during these events. We are a resilient County and our citizens have worked hard to find some normalcy in their lives. We very much value our partnership with the State of North Carolina and look forward to working together to overcome the challenges related to reopening Craven County after Executive Order 121 has expired or is rescinded.

I write you today with the support of the Craven County Board of Commissioners and all of our concerned citizens about how best to move Craven County forward upon the expiration or rescinding of Executive Order 121. We recognize the importance of continuing to slow the spread and protecting our most vulnerable populations. The Craven County Board of Commissioners are all strong advocates for public health and we all understand the importance of reviewing metrics and data collected locally to address the protection of our citizens. In the same manner as how we view public health, we also must consider the extreme hardship placed on our local economy. As you are well aware, our local businesses big and small were still recovering from the devastating effects of Hurricane Florence as the coronavirus pandemic hit. Hurricane Florence was a once in a generation storm that changed fundamentally how our County's economy is structured.

We have worked very hard as a local government to do everything within our power to position our County citizens and businesses in a manner to recover more quickly and robustly. We now face a second economic catastrophe and we must work just as hard to overcome this challenge to be positioned to help nurture and revive our local economy and the thousands of jobs vital to our County's wellbeing.

I am sure you recognize the restrictions imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus are having extreme detrimental effects on local economies. We understand very clearly the need for these restrictions and the very difficult balancing act in decision making that has taken place to protect our citizens; however, we are hearing from many Craven County citizens and their desire is to have a firm, descriptive pathway to normalcy. The Craven County Board of Commissioners very much agree with the desire expressed by our citizens and we encourage you to reopen North Carolina while providing clear guidance or control to local counties to best judge further or future restrictions.

As the local government that serves all of the citizens in Craven County we know our decision making would be based on local data, metrics and expertise that we develop specific to our County. We have full faith in our public health department and local County hospital to provide the Board of Commissioners with all of the information we need to make the right decisions for our citizens.

We want Craven County, Eastern North Carolina and all of the State of North Carolina to remain a desirable economic development growth choice area where we can continue to build our cutting edge manufacturing sector and nurture our homegrown small businesses we are known for across the United States. We need your help moving forward by empowering county governments with future decision making authority to make determinations locally to reopen our economies and work with our citizens to bring normalcy back to Craven County. We want to again thank you for your leadership and all the hard work you and the members of your team have provided during this crisis.

With Regards,

Thomas Mark  
Chairman, Craven County Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Jones motioned to approve the letter, as requested, seconded by Commissioner Liner and approved unanimously.

At 10:28 a.m., Commissioner Liner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved unanimously.

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Chairman Thomas F. Mark  
Craven County Board of Commissioners

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Nan Holton  
Clerk to the Board