

The Bethlehem Star

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County budget approved June 20, retains current 79¢ property tax rate

Alexander budget totals \$53,653,167

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted the 2022-2023 county budget at the June 20th meeting, according to a news release. The budget totals \$53,653,167 and includes no local tax or fee increases, except for a 3 percent increase in water rates by the City of Hickory.

The proposed budget was presented at the May 16th meeting by County Manager Rick French. A public hearing was held on June 6 and a budget work session was held on June 13.

"We considered lowering the property tax rate in this budget, but with the uncertainty of the national economy and rising inflation, we ultimately decided to wait until the 2023-2024 budget after the county has gone through the revaluation process," said Ronnie Reese, Chairman. "Alexander County is in good financial condition, and we want to ensure that it remains that way so we can serve our citizens to the best of our ability."

Mr. French said the budget includes a 5 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for county employees and an increased allocation to Alexander County Schools.

The budget also includes several new positions: Assistant County Manager, Planner,

Accounting Assistant, License Plate Agency staff position, Paralegal, Environmental Health staff position, Dental Assistant, Animal Control Officer, Park Assistant, as well as part-time/seasonal parks and recreation positions for Wittenburg Access Area and Alexander County Courthouse Park. In addition, a part-time office assistant in the Soil & Water department will be reclassified to a full-time position.

The budget includes funding for numerous capital items such as fiber/internet networking, vehicle replacements, 9-1-1 radio system/equipment, replacement of a boiler at the courthouse, an ambulance remount, a power lift for EMS, and replacement of the roof on the sheriff's office evidence building.

In addition to the fire district property taxes already in place, the budget includes \$63,000 from the county's general fund for each of the county's eight volunteer fire departments. Mr. French said the county hopes to provide increased funding to the fire departments each year, especially if a 1/4-cent local sales tax is approved.

In other business:

- Pamela Bowman, Education Coordinator/Administrative Specialist with the Alexander County Soil & Water Conservation

District, said the department has been awarded a \$384,805 grant from the Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (StRAP) to assist with the cleanup from the November 2020 flooding. She said there were approximately 35 people who signed up for funding from the StRAP money totaling \$2.4 million, but the awarded amount will only help with the top three or four sites. Commissioners voted unanimously for the county to sponsor the StRAP funds for stream debris removal and then be reimbursed 100 percent from the grant funds.

- Commissioners unanimously approved an agreement with Hyper-Reach to provide emergency mass notification services for Alexander County. Fire Marshal Mark Earle said that Hyper-Reach will replace the OnSolve/CodeRed system that the county has used for the past several years. He said the new emergency notification system provides additional services and a more user-friendly interface for a cost of \$8,200 per year for three years, which is savings of approximately \$1,000 per year. Earle said the system is used in multiple nearby counties and comes highly recommended. He said the only drawback is that citizens

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2022 ALEXANDER COUNTY SCHOOLS RETIREES — The 2022 Alexander County Schools retirees were recognized May 31. Shown above, left to right: Dorothy Echard, Debra Lowe, Tamara Odom, Lora Rosamond, Eric Walker, Pamela Jolly, Elizabeth Pennell, Terrilyn Fincannon, and Donna Abernathy. Not pictured: Brent Dula, Van Smith, Victoria Braswell, James Fennell, Charmon Friszell, Robyn Helton, Angela Hines, Dona Johnson, Sonia Pearson, Robin Rogers, Cindy Greene, Lisa Collins, and Rory Allen Price.

Alexander County Schools administrative changes announced

Renee Meade, retiring Director of Communications for Alexander County Schools, announced there are several administrative changes from the Central Office.

Alexander County Head Start Director

Ms. Cathy C. Knepp was named the Alexander County Head Start Director, effective July 1, 2022. She will replace Mrs. Charmion Friszell, retiring from the school district on June 30, 2022.

Ms. Knepp has over twenty years of experience as the child development coordinator for Head Start & Early Head Start with Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. in Morganton, NC. She also served as an adjunct instructor for Caldwell Community College & Technical

Institute.

Public Information Officer

Dr. Denita Dowell-Reavis was named the public information officer for the school system, effective July 1, 2022. She will replace Mrs. Renee Meade, retiring from the school district with over 20 years of service, on June 30, 2022.

Dr. Dowell-Reavis has served as the principal at Hiddenite Elementary School since July 1, 2021. Before moving to Alexander County Schools, Dr. Dowell-Reavis served as a principal for five years in Rowan-Salisbury Schools.

She served four years as an assistant principal, two years as an instructional facilitator, and taught high school journalism. Prior to her role in education, she was involved in television news broadcasting.

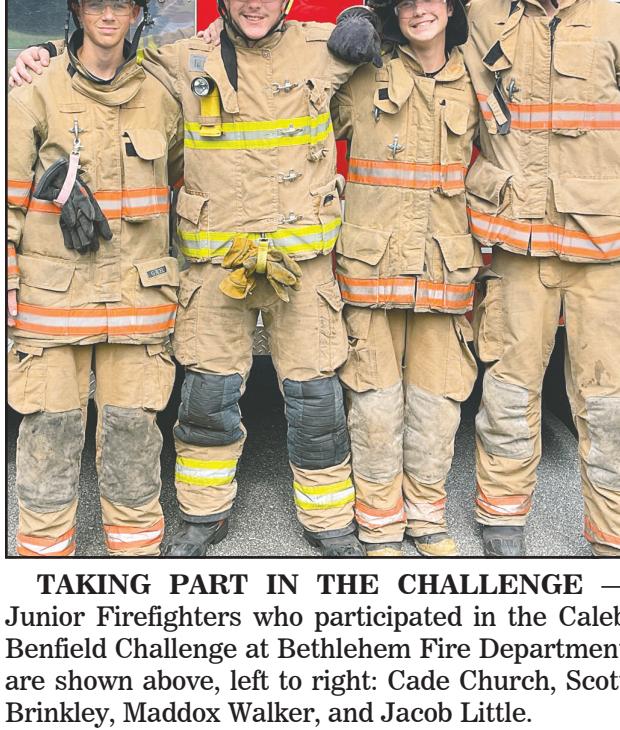
Federal Programs and Testing & Accountability Director

Mrs. Andrea Robinette was named the federal programs and testing & accountability director effective June 13, 2022. She replaces Mrs. Jessica Anderson, who advanced to the executive director of exceptional children and student support services.

Mrs. Andrea Robinette served as an assistant principal at Alexander Central High School from 2016 to 2022. Mrs. Robinette was the instructional coach at East and West Alexander Middle Schools from 2015 to 2016. She was the media coordinator from 2008 to 2015 and taught from 2002 to 2008 at Wittenburg Elementary School. She has a bachelor's degree

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Tenth Caleb Benfield Challenge held



TAKING PART IN THE CHALLENGE — Junior Firefighters who participated in the Caleb Benfield Challenge at Bethlehem Fire Department are shown above, left to right: Cade Church, Scott Brinkley, Maddox Walker, and Jacob Little.

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Alexander County Independence Celebration on July 16 features On The Border concert, fireworks

The public is invited to the Alexander County Independence Celebration on Saturday, July 16, which will feature a free concert at the new Alexander County Courthouse Park and a free fireworks display at Alexander Central High School. On The Border — The Ultimate Eagles Tribute Band will perform on the Rotary Performance Stage from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Following the concert, the public can enjoy fireworks at ACHS around 9:45 p.m. The Independence Celebration concert and fireworks are provided by Alexander County Government.

On The Border will treat the audience to an authentic concert experience while journeying through The Eagles' songbook. The band covers every big hit, from ballads such as "Desperado" and "Layin' Eyes" to rock hits such as "Life in the Fast Lane" and "Heartache Tonight" with such accuracy that listeners are amazed. The band has entertained at major concert venues and festivals

around the country and has even performed at the famous "Whisky a Go-Go" in Los Angeles.

Each member of On The Border was selected to emulate both the sound and overall feel of each member of The Eagles. Their passion, showmanship, and precise attention to replicating the details of The Eagles' music have earned them critical acclaim, name recognition, and a loyal following. Together, they reproduce The Eagles catalog with

stunning guitar work, multi-lead vocals, and six-part harmonies which make you feel like you're attending an Eagles concert.

During the concert at Courthouse Park, there will be food trucks, a fire station bounce house, a large inflatable slide, and the park's popular splash pad which will help cool off the kids.

Following the concert, there will be a crowd-pleasing, patriotic fireworks display beginning

at approximately 9:45 p.m. at Alexander Central High School, near Cougar Stadium. The best locations to view the fireworks will be in parking areas at the high school, the county administration building, the board of education, the county senior center, and other nearby lots.

For more information about the Alexander County Independence Celebration concert and fireworks, go online, <https://visitanderne.com/calendar>.



ON THE BORDER -- THE ULTIMATE EAGLES TRIBUTE BAND

ACHS trio voted All-State in Softball



In late June, the NC Softball Coaches Association announced the 2022 All-State Teams. Three members of the 2022 ACHS Softball Team earned 4A All-State recognition as voted on by coaches across the state. ACHS seniors Faith Carrigan, left, and Peyton Price, center, were selected for the NCSCA All-State 4A Team. The senior pair was joined on the All-State Team by rising Cougar junior Kirstyn Herman, right. Earlier in the month, the NCSCA announced the All-Region Teams. Five Cougar players were named All-Region.

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COOPER GRADUATES FROM WEST POINT — Taylorsville had the rare privilege of being home to a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point recently. Alexander Central alumna Paige Cooper graduated West Point on May 21, 2022, and was immediately commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army and headed to Ft. Benning, Georgia, for Infantry Training then Ranger School. Her duty station after training will be JBLM (Joint Base Lewis McChord) in Washington State, according to her mother, Marissa Cooper Winstead, of South Carolina (formerly of Taylorsville).