

The Sampson County Board of Commissioners reconvened at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 18, 2020, in the County Auditorium, 435 Rowan Road, Clinton, North Carolina. Because the State and the County were under a State of Emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was broadcast via YouTube, proper notice of the virtual environment and broadcast information having been duly posted. Members present: as verified by the Clerk's roll call were: Chairman Clark Wooten, Vice Chairperson Sue Lee, and Commissioners Jerol Kivett and Thaddeus Godwin. Commissioner Harry Parker attended the meeting virtually via Zoom.

Chairman Wooten called the meeting to order and acknowledged Vice Chairperson Lee who provided details regarding the pre-recorded video, which included the invocation lead by Pastor Tim Ameen, the Pledge of Allegiance provided by Robert Smith, who recently earned the rank of Eagle Scout, and other special presentations in recognition of Mr. Smith's accomplishment.

Approval of Agenda

Upon a motion made by Vice Chairperson Lee and seconded by Commissioner Godwin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as published.

Item 1: Public Comment

Adopt Resolution Adopting Public Comment Rules for August 18 Meeting
County Attorney Joel Starling reviewed the resolution adopting temporary public comment rules for the August 18, 2020, meeting, citing that N.C. General Statute 153A-52.1 provides boards of commissioners the authority to adopt reasonable rules governing the conduct of the monthly public comment period. He noted that the proposed temporary rules were developed to facilitate social distancing, while allowing as many public comments as possible, all while suspending the typical order of services allowing for the comments to be received as Item 1 of the agenda. He concluded by noting that there will be two forms for public comment, the first being the reading aloud of the written comments submitted to the Clerk; immediately following, members of the public who have signed up to speak during the public comment session will have the opportunity to speak in-person for two minutes per person. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Godwin and seconded by Commissioner Kivett, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the resolution establishing temporary public comment rules; accept written and oral comments pursuant to established rules.

Reading of Written Comments into Record (30-minute period allocated) Assistant County Manager Susan Holder read aloud the written comments that were properly submitted, as follows:

Dave Odum: Please, please, leave our confederate memorial alone. The First Amendment rights include freedom of speech for our historical value. What has our little memorial done to anyone? Please leave the memorial in place. Thank you.

Jeanine Cook: I hope this email finds you well. I'm sure you have heard all the arguments from both sides. Since the statue belongs to the County, several residents feel that the whole county has not been included on this issue. With over 70,000 residents, there's more voices that need to be heard. Not just 3000 signatures. To be fair, we would like to see it on the ballot in November. This has upset many people in this county. We just don't protest about it. We prefer to vote on issues that concern all of us. This is the fair and democratic way. Please consider what the rest of us want by not letting our heritage be hidden away in a museum. Most of us grew up with that statue. We passed it on the way from school, we've taken comfort and confidence that it would always be there like an old friend. I did my high school term paper on him, as did others. I don't know anybody who ever thought about slavery when we looked at it. Many of us see it as a memorial to the soldiers that died here which is exactly what it stands for and not about our ancestors owning slaves. It means a lot to many people for various reasons. Many of us who want it to stay where it is, have been called racist ignorant rednecks. Most of us have had black schoolmates and lifetime friends so now we're offended and hurt too. I'm afraid this has caused division where there once was none. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kim Collier: I just wanted to let you know that I am against the removal of the confederate statue at the Courthouse.

Vicky Strickland: I am so disappointed in the decision to remove the statue from downtown. I would be willing to bet you that we would not be even talking about this if it were not for the BLM movement! That statue is a part of our history and should remain where it is. Personally, I don't want my taxes to be used for the removal of a that statue. Instead of worrying about that statue we all should be getting together around the courthouse to pray for our county and nation! Please consider asking the people by voting at the polls in November instead of making this decision on your own. Thanks for listening.

Gary Fryar: Leave the statue alone we have already given into them enough. It's been there over one hundred years. If my commissioner gives in, he has lost vote and I will tell everyone I know so he will be voted out of office.

Michael White: I have written to you before about the confederate monument at the Courthouse in Clinton. The city council adopted a resolution to remove the monument. That is breaking the law. I encourage you and other commissioners not to let this happen. I have also written to the Sheriff, Jimmy Thornton, of Sampson County to uphold the law of this state. I also ask of you sir, and the commissioners, to uphold the law of the state. That monument is to veterans of this state and Sampson County, and is protected by law. You will be in neglect of duty of office, sir, if you or any of the commissioners try to remove it. And Sheriff Jimmy Thornton also would also be in neglect of duty. If he would let you do anything to it. I only ask sir that you uphold the law of the land that other commissioners also uphold. We have to go by the law. Everyone should. So I ask of you sir, read my last letter, uphold the law, and leave the monument alone. Thank you again for your time and I pray that this letter finds you and your family in great health. And please respond back.

Wilson Spencer: Thank you for your service in this very difficult time in our country's history. I am very glad we have citizens who are willing to serve. In regard to the above-mentioned subject. I suggest that you require those who want this removal and all that support this removal to survey all of Sampson County and identify any and all of the monuments, memorials, plaques, signs, tombstone's etc. that could be offensive in the future. After which you can address the entire issue once.

Michael White: I have written to you before about the confederate monument at the courthouse in Clinton. On the night between 11 July and 12 July, the monument was pulled halfway down by a group of people who broke the law. I have said it to all the commissioners before, that we a republic. A land of law. The symbol is the courthouse in Clinton. I urge the commissioners to put back the monument to the dead of the confederate soldiers on the pedestal that remains on the Courthouse property. I say again we are a republic, a land of law, where we are equal in the eyes of the law. That goes for the living and dead. But I ask you all today are you going to stand for the law of North Carolina or are you going to fail now and give in to the lawlessness that happens. We are the people that make up this community. We are friends, family, neighbors. When it comes to things like this we may have different view-points, but we live together, work together as a community, and as a community we have to condemn this action of vandalism that is happening in our community and to this monument to Sampson County's dead. I said in my last letter that we are a republic, a land of law. We should not reward for bad behavior and against the law, actions which have been done. I give the commissioners a sample of what I mean. Enclosed is a copy of rewarding bad behavior and punishing the good for the small, bad group. Without saying any names, even if it is public knowledge. I do have the right of saying the husband's and wife's names but they got charged with a hate crime for taking pride in their community, and the law, and painted over graffiti on a state maintained highway (references exhibits). It is people being rewarded for breaking the law and bad behavior. We as a community cannot let our

country become like the rest of the state with lawlessness in the streets and taking down anything that we may not agree with to please only a small group of troublemakers in our community. I ask the commissioners to put back the monument of Sampson County confederate dead upon his pedestal because it is the right thing to do. And when it gets to the law and the proper way of going about it with a healthy debate on the subject. Just because it's down now don't mean it should stay down, totally opposite because that's what these individuals wanted and as a community we should say no to that and it's going back up because we are going to talk about it the right way, not your way. I conclude with this, it was never about our monument to our confederate dead but only to divide us as a community, as a county. If it was only about the monument then why in the (second copy enclosed) you will see our nation flag ripped off of the courthouse flagpole in Clinton, that symbolizes our faith, family, love for our country, and that symbolizes our Republic as a nation in front of the symbol of the community that represents law and order in our community, the courthouse. So Commissioners the question is not should it go back up, but when can we get it back up to show that we are a community of all and we stand for the law and that we are acceptable to everyone and that we honor them who give up their lives, give up on being a dad, give up being a husband. We are a land of law. For us who are living and the same for the dead, for we have laws to protect them and their memory and sacrifice to our community and state. I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your time and patience. I truly thank you.

Stephen Hulen: To the Sampson County Commissioners. With the recent vandalism of the Sampson County Memorial on Sunday morning, July 9, 2020, I feel it necessary to resend this email to make sure that my address is on the bottom so that it will be read into the meeting for August 2020. Let me remind you that the bronze statue that was pulled off of the top of the Confederate Memorial remains the responsibility of Sampson County to have repaired and replaced within 90 days from which it was vandalized. It has come to our attention that you are considering the removal of the monument in your municipality/Sampson County honoring Sampsoinans who fought and died for this county, state and for the Confederate States of America during the American War Between the States. After consulting with legal counsel, we wish to remind you that under North Carolina law, specifically, under Chapter 100 of the North Carolina General Statutes, related to "Monuments, Memorials and Parks[,]" which is commonly referred to as the Heritage Protection Act or the "HPA," it is unlawful to remove Confederate monuments (or any object which includes monuments) from public spaces. In short, a local government must follow the requirements of this law and keep the Confederate monuments currently where they are, with very limited exceptions. As you are aware, on July 23, 2015, the General Assembly, with overwhelming bi-partisan support and with almost no objection, enacted the Cultural History Artifact Management and Patriotism Act of 2015. (See 2015 North Carolina

Laws S.L. 2015-170 (S.B. 22)). As is relevant here, the substantive provision of the Act is codified as N.C. Gen. Stat. § 100-2.1, and places clear restrictions on the removal and relocation of statues and memorials located on public lands. In its entirety, the Statute provides as follows: (a) Approval Required. – Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b) of this section, a monument, memorial, or work of art owned by the State may not be removed, relocated, or altered in any way without the approval of the North Carolina Historical Commission. (b) Limitations on Removal. – An object of remembrance located on public property may not be permanently removed and may only be relocated, whether temporarily or permanently, under the circumstances listed in this subsection and subject to the limitations in this subsection. An object of remembrance that is temporarily relocated shall be returned to its original location within 90 days of completion of the project that required its temporary removal. An object of remembrance that is permanently relocated shall be relocated to a site of similar prominence, honor, visibility, availability, and access that are within the boundaries of the jurisdiction from which it was relocated. An object of remembrance may not be relocated to a museum, cemetery, or mausoleum unless it was originally placed at such a location. As used in this section, the term “object of remembrance” means a monument, memorial, plaque, statue, marker, or display of a permanent character that commemorates an event, a person, or military service that is part of North Carolina’s history. The circumstances under which an object of remembrance may be relocated are either of the following: (1) When appropriate measures are required by the State or a political subdivision of the State to preserve the object. (2) When necessary for construction, renovation, or reconfiguration of buildings, open spaces, parking, or transportation projects. (2) (c) Exceptions. – This law does not apply to the following: (1) Highway markers set up by the Board of Transportation in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as provided by Chapter 197 of the Public Laws of 1935. (2) An object of remembrance owned by a private party that is located on public property and that is the subject of a legal agreement between the private party and the State or a political subdivision of the State governing the removal or relocation of the object. (3) An object of remembrance for which a building inspector or similar official has determined poses a threat to public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition. As set forth above, the HPA establishes grounds for removal and relocation of monuments that are exceedingly narrow. See the University of North Carolina Law Review note by Kasi E. Wahlers; *North Carolina’s Heritage Protection Act: Cementing Confederate Monuments in North Carolina’s Landscape*, 94 N.C. L. Rev. at 2176, p. 2185 (2016), which states “...the [HPA] effectively prohibits any object of remembrance from being permanently removed, and it only permits relocation in two narrow circumstances;” The author also notes “[w]hen considering the way the statute operates as opposed to how it appears on its face, the North Carolina HPA is functionally a complete prohibition of monument removal.” *Id.* at 2188-89. Pursuant to the HPA, the only circumstances under law which permit the temporary removal of an object of

remembrance (e.g. monuments) as outlined above, are set forth under subsections (b)(1) and (b)(2). From the plain and unambiguous statutory language set forth therein, there appears no viable argument related to any action regarding the removal of the monument located within your jurisdiction, as your locality is a subdivision of the State of North Carolina. Moreover, relocation is intended to be temporary to preserve and protect monuments during construction and other related activities. However, among the three listed exceptions set forth under the law, subsection (c)(3), does permit removal of a monument (e.g. object of remembrance) only when “...[the] object of remembrance for which *a building inspector or similar official has determined poses a threat to public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition.*” (Emphasis added to original). It is this exception which is now used as a rationale for removing monuments due to violent protests and criminal activity. But unlike the analysis with respect to subsection (b) requiring preservation, subsection (c)(3)’s reference to “public safety” and “dangerous condition” are doubtful rationale in relation to violent protests and the like. Unfortunately, this argument was employed by Governor Cooper this past Saturday, as a pretense to remove the Confederate Monuments on the Capitol Square in Raleigh. We understand that a number of communities around the State may be inspired to act in the same manner. Nevertheless, the clear language of subsection (c)(3) specifically limits removal due to the physical condition (e.g., weakness, decay, etc.) of a monument, which has been verified by a building inspector or other official inspector. This does not permit an exception to the law based on exterior threats by violent protesters, rioters or vandals. This clear legal interpretation was confirmed in a judgment entered by the North Carolina Historical Commission, the body with exclusive jurisdiction under the HPA or “Monuments Law” related to temporary or permanent removal of monuments owned by the state or political subdivision of the state, at a formal commission meeting held on August 22, 2018. At that meeting it examined a proposal from Governor Cooper incorporating that incorrect interpretation to relocate the three Confederate monuments from the State Capitol grounds. Interestingly, the vote supporting the correct interpretation of the HPA, and against Governor Cooper, was a 9 to 2 decision, which included support from members of the Commission appointed by the governor. And the monuments remained in place legally until the Monuments Law was violated by Governor Cooper’s order. We sincerely stress that actions taken in derogation of the law because of violent mobs, rioters, protestors or vandals cannot be supported. In this case, the law clearly supports the monuments remaining in place. Please understand we wish to work with localities within the state, but we do ask that they abide by the controlling principle in our republic, that if laws passed by a state legislature are ignored, then the mob controls thereby making ineffectual the rule of law. Accordingly, it is up to you to ensure law enforcement protects the monuments located within your jurisdiction as required under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 100-2.1

Further, the State and its political subdivisions have an obligation to hold all of those who act in a lawless manner, whether in direct violation of the HPA or other state laws – accountable. As we are a nation of laws, there is a prohibition against rewarding those who willingly break such laws by failing to enforce the very laws they violate. If local governments wish to move these statues, they need to either present their case before the North Carolina Historical Commission or work to have the law changed. We respectfully ask you not to ignore the law or cynically attempt to say the law allows action that it clearly does not.

Donald Herndon: My name is Donald Herndon. My address is 5061 Cornwallis Road, Turkey, NC 28393. Because of the Chinese virus pandemic the Sampson County Board of Commissioners is holding a 'virtual' monthly meeting rather than their regular publicly attended meeting. Public comments must be submitted prior to the 'virtual' meeting and are read into the record at the end of that meeting. The following are comments I am requesting be read into the record at the end of the August 3, 2020 meeting: Whereas, there have been several protests at the Sampson County Courthouse during late June into mid-to-late July, thus far, and where an elected official of Clinton City Council knowingly and publicly, falsely stated, multiple times, with NO evidence, documentation, facts or substantiation, “...to those entering the courthouse, as people of color, have no rights and neither will you find justice”; and Whereas, no elected officials on Board of Commissioners have publicly pushed back on and emphatically denied this false allegation, leaving people in the Community-at-Large to wonder, is it true; and Whereas, some of these protesters support the Black Lives Matter movement who have, as one of their primary goals, is to, Defund the Police; and Whereas, these protests have incited and lead to the graffiti, vandalism, and destruction of County property in the City Square of the City of Clinton; and Whereas, similar protests have incited rioting, looting, violent assaults, and/or shootings of innocent civilians in many cities, which continues to spread, across our Nation, including cities in our own State such as Gastonia, Raleigh, Charlotte, Fayetteville; among others; by Antifa, Black Lives Matter and other anarchists movements; and Whereas, the basic rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness are under siege; and Whereas, elected officials First Duty is to provide Safety, Security, and Protection of People and their Property and to assure and re-assure the Community-at-Large, that they recognize and will fulfill this solemn duty; especially in times of ongoing rioting, looting, violent assaults, and/or shootings in cities around our State and/or Nation; and Whereas, these kinds of lawless actions should not be allowed to occur in Sampson County; and Whereas, the Sampson County Sheriff's Department and Criminal Justice System has, in the past and continues each and every day to provide fair and impartial treatment and equal justice to ALL people regardless of race, color or creed; and Whereas, Sampson County Commissioners have *not* publicly assured or re-assured the Community-at-Large they will provide adequate funding for Safety, Security, and Protection of People and their Property, and, have *not* publicly pronounced support for the Sampson County Sheriff's Department and Criminal Justice System; and Whereas, Sampson County Commissioners have *not*

publicly denounced & rejected false comments such as *"...to those entering the courthouse, as people of color, have no rights and neither will you find justice"* and have *not* publicly denounced & rejected any calls for defunding, or re-directing funding of the Sampson County Sheriff's Department and the Criminal Justice System; Now therefore; Be It Resolved, I am requesting the Board of Commissioners of Sampson County North Carolina adopt and pass the attached Resolution titled: A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING THE SAMPSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT AND THE COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Justin Lucas: I was outraged to see that individuals decided to take matters into their own hands regarding the confederate statue, in front of the Sampson County Courthouse. Evidenced by the vandalism being done in the cloak of night, the criminal(s) who decided to commit this act showed that they are true cowards. Despite this, I believe that the Sampson County Board of Commissioners should vote to permanently remove the statue, if state law allows. The appropriate place for a statue of this nature, in the year 2020, is in a museum. Separately, all leaders, local, state, or federal, need to be mindful that their rhetoric has an effect on the people they serve. We do listen! Thank you.

Margaret Norton: Upon reading the article in newspaper I see there will be a hearing Monday night concerning the Confederate monument. I urge our county leaders to make a stand to support our county. Our grandparents, uncles, dads, fought in that war. Many died defending our community. Young boys, men young and old, died. Some were drafted with no chance of saying no. It was a long and brutal war, fought locally, and across the miles. These men and their families deserve this monument to be in full view for all to see what was done for this generation. Do not hide it behind closed doors or in a museum as though we are ashamed of our forefathers. They fought for all peoples. Not white, not black, not Indian, but every single one who was living in that time. We need leaders that will serve for all the city, all the county, not just portions. We do not need leaders who give into diversity just to appease. Our county did not ask for that war, but our men and boys fought it with pride and integrity, and many gave all they could. Look at battles all the way from Georgia, through Fayetteville, Sampson County, all through Newton Grove, Four Oaks. A lot of people died at the hands of the Union army and much property was destroyed. The monument is a reminder to families of the dead, as to what they did to preserve our communities. We have never thought about it being a monument for bondage, but a monument of freedom. Freedom from the North trying to enslave and rule the South. I urge all to read your history, then make your decision. Please leave the monument at Courthouse so those coming behind us, will remember the freedom we have was not free. Not whites, blacks, Indians, Mexican, Hispanic, Asian, but all peoples living here in our communities and county have received their freedom to be free to have a business, walk around, have a job, feel safe...because these Confederate men sacrificed their time, energy and lives to keep US free.

Alexander Tatum: My name is Alexander Scott Tatum and I am a native of Harrells. My people have lived in the southern part of the county for more than 200 years and have done so as peaceful, upholding members of the community. Some Black, some Indian, and some White. Some labored in the fields to produce the bountiful agricultural harvest year after year, some taught and still teach, some served as law enforcement. Over the years, history will have it that my family have fought in every American War, including the American Revolution, to date. While Sampson County is truly a jewel of our state and nation with its history and all of the amazing people that it's produced there are atonements that need to occur for us to move forward. We find ourselves here to discuss a statue that was commemorate the very people who committed treason for the right to use my people as free labor to line their coffers. To hold sell kill hurt over work and tear apart my people for money and power. They fought and lost that war. And furthermore, these statues were put up for the sole reason of making sure the Southern slave owners and Confederate soldier's grandchild didn't look down on them for enslaving blacks but rather revered them for 'fight for their rights'. This statue was placed here as a part of a meticulous and very public social program of disinformation by the Daughters and Sons of the Confederacy and other groups. As a kid, I'd ride by that statue and I can remember finding out what it was there for. Even to this day, I cringe when I ride past. The years of overt racism, institutional racism, intimidation and fear used against Blacks and people of color here is in fact disgusting. Let's take this time to heal and do what is right. Move the statue to the Confederate cemetery or to a museum where it belongs. Teach your sons and daughters the truth. Treat people right. Be and do what is right. I implore the entire board to take this time and be on the right side of history. Your children are watching. Your grandchildren are watching. We are all watching. Let's get this done so we can move forward to more of the systemic issues of poverty, food access, education, our seniors, and more that we see our communities.

Carla Peterson: I did not witness the Civil War first-hand; nor did any of you. I rely upon annals of history, documentaries, biographies, folklore, and other information to unveil what happened preceding, during, and after the War. Based on what I have read and what I know today, I think most of us will agree that there were two issues at the center of the conflict: slavery and states' rights. If a person makes an exhaustive study of both of these issues, it will not explain what happened during the Civil War. The Civil War was the bloodiest and deadliest war we've ever fought. The South, in particular, was devastated by the war. The number of men...some very young...who died was staggering, especially for a sparsely populated region. The death toll for the South was, and continues to be, a lesson to not ever be forgotten. Many of these young men died in hand-to-hand combat. They died in a combat characterized by fighting with bayonets and dismembering with swords. And, again, many were very young. As a mother of two sons, I ask myself: what would trigger so much emotion and passion that I would send my sons into this kind of combat? I have thought long and hard about this question. A memoir and biography of an officer of the Confederate Army has helped me to find the answer to that question.

This man was a Virginian. He was opposed to slavery and secession, like many others in Virginia. Virginia, as was North Carolina, was one of the last four states to secede. These states did not secede until after the Battle of Fort Sumter. This Virginian made publicly known his distaste for secession and slavery. So why did he align himself with the South when it was all said and done? According to a contemporary and editor of a local paper, his thoughts on secession were: "Do you know what secession means? It means bloody war, followed by feuds between the border States, which a century may not see the end of." In the same conversation, this Virginian told the editor he would fight for the Union Army. [The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby] This Virginian was John Mosby, a small frail man who would come to be known as "The Grey Ghost." He would rise to the rank of Colonel and earn a reputation that traveled even as far as Europe. When the editor ran into him after the conversation referenced above, he reminded Mosby of what he had said about fighting for the Union. Mosby's response was: 'No more of that,' said he, with a twinkle of the eye. 'When I talked that way, Virginia had not passed the ordinance of secession. She is out of the Union now. Virginia is my mother, God bless her! I can't fight against my mother, can I?'" Therein lies the answer to my question. For a good number of people, an allegiance to a particular region, group of people, way of life, a culture, or a set of principles is so powerful that it helps to define who they are, even if they can discern flaws or inconsistencies with other beliefs. The Confederate monuments represent an allegiance so strong, so powerful that mothers would send their sons into gruesome combat. The Confederate monuments are a reminder of the price Southerners were willing to pay. They are a reminder to us all of the price we may have to pay in future combat. For all those families in the South who lost so much and for us all now living and unborn, I am in favor of re-installing the monuments at the Courthouse, a place of prominence and respect in our small community. We should have reminders of the cost of war in all small communities. In my opinion, these monuments are very well suited for the South, given the extent of our losses in the Civil War. I also believe they are befitting our county's and region's passion for history and culture.

Dwight Williams: Dear County Commissioners and Citizens of Sampson County, please put our county's historical statue back on its original pedestal in front of the County Courthouse. I would also ask that it be returned in the condition it now exists, with its bumps, bruises, bends, scrapes, scratches and all. For you see, these too are now part of its history. These too cannot be erased or repaired to the exclusion of history, or memory. It is now a part of us, Sampson County. I remember from a movie in the 1950's titled "THE TEN COMMANDMENTS" a quotation, "So let it be written, so let it be done". This being the definitive statement from the Pharaoh after proclaiming that every representation of the name and likeness of Moses be stricken from all of the history of the Egyptian people, forever, as though Moses never existed. We all know the story. Moses was born the son of a Hebrew slave.

The time allotment of 30 minutes expired. All written comments that were received by the Clerk were provided to the Board and are maintained in the County's records.

Presentation of Oral Comments The Chairman opened the floor for public comments and after a thorough explanation of the rules of the public comment period, the following comments were received:

Lee Byam: Good evening Commissioner Wooten, Commissioner Godwin, Commissioner Lee, and Commissioner Kivett. Good evening. My name is Lee Byam. (Chairman Wooten advised Ms. Byam that Commissioner Parker was attending the meeting virtually.) Commissioner Parker, I am so sorry you are not here in person with us, but good evening. My name is Lee Byam and I am the President of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It is our mission to ensure the political, social, and economic equality rights of all people, and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. In 2017 we wrote a letter requesting the relocation of the confederate statue which is located in front of the Sampson County Courthouse. Recently the statue was removed. We stand by our original request to relocate. Do the right thing, remove the base and relocate the statue. Advance justice. Beautify the area with something that represents peace and justice for all people, and for future generations and citizens of Sampson County. Do the right thing. Don't table this issue another three years. Our hearts are heavy with the burdens of injustice from around the county and around the country. Do the right thing, relocate the statue. Recently in 2020 we awarded 10 students in Sampson County scholarships to continue their education. We would be extremely disappointed for future generations and leaders in Sampson County to be burdened with the reminder of an unresolved issue of an unjust problem. (The two-minute time allotment expired) Do the right thing. Remove the statue. Thank you.

Larry Sutton: Good evening and thanks for allowing this time for us to speak. My name is Larry Sutton and tonight I am speaking on the statue issue. Let's make no mistake about it, the cause of confederacy was to succeed from the Union, preserve slavery, and to destroy the United States, our government. It was on the 50th anniversary of our state succeeding from the Union on May 10, 1911, that our then County Commissioners voting 2-1 in support of the Confederate Daughter's proposal; they had asked to have a statue placed in downtown Clinton. The vote was 2-1. And on May 10, 1916 the courthouse grounds received the statue as a tribute to the county's soldiers who had fought to preserve slavery and destroy the U.S. government, in a cause "though lost, still just, and died for me and you." Now those words are the inscription on the base of the statue that's glorifying the lost cause. This statue for the last 104 years has remained on the grounds at the hall of justice in downtown Clinton. As a symbol of racism, white supremacy, hatred and division. I know there are people who argue. (The two-minute time allotment expired) Thank you for your time. That was a very quick two minutes.

Darue Bryant: My name is Darue Bryant, here to address the issue considering the statue. There's a scripture that comes to mind; "To whom much is given, much is required." You've been elected as officials to make tough decisions and tough calls. We're in a situation right now where a decision has to be made. Some decisions are based on moral obligations, others it's just a straight-out responsibility. So right now with this situation with the statue it's two choices here: there's one choice where you have the community - a portion of the community - that says we want to see justice, we want to see change, we want to see reformation. In order to start that process they're requesting that the statue be moved. There are others that see it on the opposite end of the spectrum. They want to see the statue remain because they feel like its heritage. That confederate past. So there's a choice that has to be made. But one thing I understand about the confederate past. It's very damaging when I think about it. Because of the fact that there are men who were slaves, black men, men of color who were slaves. Their women were raped, their children were taken from them and sold. They were given no respect at all. So whenever I see a monument, a statue that represents that past. That is the constant reminder. So for someone to make a decision to say let's keep that statue. Then really, they don't have the right intentions for community. You have a choice today to make a change and think about the community. It should not be a political decision, nor should it be a decision based on whatever your base or your constituents are saying should be done but you should make a decision today (Mr. Bryant's time expired and he was notified by the Clerk). So with that, coming to a close, we know what that belief is. If you are standing on the principles and right belief, make the right choice. Let's not make a choice that says we believe in that confederate past, we believe in bigotry, we believe in racism, and we believe in. (The two-minute time allotment expired)

Marcus Becton: Good evening Commissioners. We thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to be here on this afternoon. My name is Reverend Marcus Becton and I am Mayor Pro-Tem for the City of Clinton and it is an honor to be here this afternoon under these circumstances. I am also Senior Pastor of Way of the Cross Church Ministries of Turkey, North Carolina, right here in the county. I understand your position, being a city councilman, being appointed since 1996, I have served on the city council, I understand that when there are important issues that need to be addressed, so we certainly thank you again for allowing us to be here. Real quickly, I have been a proponent of having this statue removed and after other events that have taken place that have caused it be removed, it is my intent to just kindly ask of you guys that the remaining portion of that statue - the base part - be removed as well. I think that you removed it for safety purposes and I feel that we have been fortunate enough not to be Fayetteville, not to be Raleigh, not to be Wilmington, or Raleigh-Durham, or any of those areas that have experienced the stuff that they have experienced. I think that Sampson County is better than and Clinton as well. So, I believe that for that same reason for safety purposes, and for the betterment and for

the healing of all of us, I think it is real important that that be removed and placed in a more feasible place, such as a museum, or as some have said, such as the cemetery. But I just implore you guys on this evening that you would consider that. I have talked to business owners from downtown and I have talked to people who have sent letters, who have even expressed, I think a couple have made phone calls to some of you guys pertaining to their support of wanting to have that down. (The two-minute time allotment expired) And I think that is the end of my time. Thank you all so much for allowing us that. We appreciate it.

Luther Moore: Good evening. I am Luther Moore, a retired high school guidance counselor and the first Vice President of the Sampson County Branch of the NAACP. I remember growing up in Clinton in the fifties and sixties when there were separate water fountains and bathrooms for blacks and whites. I remember vividly the white only signs on the bathroom doors of the courthouse. These were visible signs of discrimination and a knee of the neck of African Americans. I've witnessed time and again that people of color experience discrimination. I am glad to say that little by little overt signs of discrimination have diminished. However, there exists one symbols in downtown Clinton that opens old wounds. Every time that I enter or pass by the south side of the courthouse stories of cruel and inhumane treatment of my ancestors during slavery time are fresh in my mind. The statue of a confederate soldier and the pedestal it sits on are the culprits of such anguish on my heart and in my mind. Most of you in this room probably don't know the wording that's inscribed on the pedestal that sits below the statue. For your information, here it is. "In honor of the confederate soldiers of Sampson County, who bore the flag of a nation's trust, and failed in a cause, though lost, still just. And died for me and you." Let's be honest, the confederate soldiers did not die for people of color. They certainly didn't die for my ancestors who were slaves (The two-minute time allotment expired). Therefore, the confederate statue that is stored someplace now should be stored in the Sampson County History Museum, not returned to the courthouse. We recognize that this is historical so let's put the statue in a historical setting. Thank you for your time and let's do the right thing.

Steve Lamb: Good evening county commissioners and the people. I'd like to say my part. I live in Sampson County. My family came from Sampson County. During the time we were raised in schools and all, we were taught what we were supposed to do by the history and all and this is part of our history of keeping things together. Not only that, if everybody will look after their own stuff. Everybody will look after their own things. We're supposed to, by the bible, not to do stuff to damage anybody or anybody, or any person. And I'm here to represent Clinton, the people of Sampson County too, that we would like to see the statue back where it was. Thank you.

Betty Hart: I didn't expect to be able to speak and so my thoughts are not well organized. But I did want to talk about how the Clinton monument is misrepresented

in the press as most monuments are. It was initiated in 1909 by the Ashford-Sillers Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. I read the minutes of the meetings concerning its development and we continued work on it. There aren't any signs of racism or white supremacy or anything negative. It was only meant to be a monument to the confederate soldiers, many of whom did not come home and whose graves were unknown. So most confederate monuments are gravestones. There were 22 services men from Sampson County listed in the paper. Their names were Strickland, Allen, Weeks, Daughtry, King, Grissom, Carroll, House, Pope, Smith. And I have always wondered why a group of widows would be interested in supporting a group of widows and orphans would be interested in supporting white supremacy or saying anything about it. White supremacy has never been very good to me, so I would not think that a bunch of women would be interested in that. So it's really a substitute gravestone. It should be respected. We should not only love the ancestors through politics. The lost cause was independence for the South and I'm surprised that people who object to the monuments can appreciate that desire for freedom. People in Seattle and Portland are wanting to be free of the federal government and that's what the South wanted to do. So it really is, the lost cause is independence (The two-minute time allotment expired).

Johnnie McGee: I was raised here in Sampson County. My father was raised here. And I've spent 35 plus years as a volunteer firefighter and EMT, and 23 years with the National Guard and Army Reserve, with an 11 month tour to Iraq. My reason for being here is, the history that I love from growing up. I've had a great, great, great grandfather that fought for the North in the Civil War and one that fought for the South. And his name was Andrew Jackson McGee. We have a picture of his headstone and he lived right where some of my uncles used to live at in Turkey. It's kind of grown up now and I've been trying to keep it up. I've been an active member of the Southern Confederate Veterans when it was here in Clinton. Mr. Claude Hunter Moore, history professor, I went to school with his children and would periodically go around with him. Going to historic places. I always admired the statue that was there for the Confederate Veterans. But recently I see that the Confederacy has come under attack and I can probably understand where African Americans are coming from because I will be 66 in two months. I know where these people have come from and it's bad. I'm glad that they have gotten to where they are at now. Everybody. Because there is only one race and that's the human race. Pulling rescue calls, fire calls (The two-minute time allotment expired). Is that one minute? I apologize. President Abraham Lincoln made his historic speech on the Gettysburg Address (Mr. McGee was reminded that his time had expired). I would like to see everything come to peace because life is too short to have to have all the troubles and problems this country has right now.

Marty McGee: My name is Marty McGee and I was just up here to voice my opinion on all this mess that's going on. I don't believe in all of it. Look like there would be a

better way that we could take care of this stuff. Everybody get along. I know there's processes that you got to go through with the law to take down statues and do all this kind of stuff. They ought to have somebody on video tearing these statues down because if you erase history you're never going to learn about history. And that's for everybody and I don't think it's right. And my girlfriend, her father was a big historian, Claude Moore, and he donated all his museum and everything to the Sampson County Museum up here. And she's on the Board of Directors and everything for the museum and over the statue and all that stuff. They had promised to take it down as soon as they could and then somebody still tears it down. And I know there had to be video of somebody doing it and somebody needs to be prosecuted for doing it. Because if people keep doing this stuff and letting them get by with it, they just going to keep doing it. No matter who it is. It doesn't matter who it is. They need to be taken care of. Just like kids you know, if you let kids do stuff and get away with it they going to keep right on doing it. It doesn't matter who it is but somebody needs to be held accountable for it. That's all I've got to say.

There were no remaining members of the public present to make public comments. This concluded the public comment portion of the meeting.

Recess to Reconvene

Upon a motion made by Vice Chairperson Lee and seconded by Commissioner Godwin, the Board voted unanimously to recess to reconvene on August 20, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. (Such votes confirmed by Clerk's roll call.) The meeting will be conducted virtually, via Zoom and broadcast on the County's YouTube page.

/signature on file

Clark H. Wooten, Chairman

/signature on file

Susan J. Holder, Clerk to the Board