The Johnston County Board of Commissioners on Monday:

- Continued to shape the proposed Unified Development Ordinance. Increasingly, Commissioners favor flexibility in the required buffer between new subdivisions and their farm neighbors. Commissioner April Stephens, for example, argued that the buffer between new homes and, say, a row crop farm could be less than the buffer between a subdivision and an abutting hog operation. It seems reasonable too that narrow buffers should be more heavily landscaped than wider ones. And Commissioners still like the idea of allowing a developer and neighboring farmer to negotiate the width of the required buffer.
- Took no action after a public hearing on a proposal for the County to pay for extending a water line to an industrial development in Benson. Vulcan Elements, a maker of rare earth magnets, says it needs greater water capacity for the plant it's building, and the proposed water line would expand the ability to serve other users in the industrial development. Commissioners told Benson leaders they needed to know more about Vulcan's water needs, including peak flow and demand. County staff propose to use an $800,000 state grant and $900,000 in County funds to pay for the water line.
- Approved a year-two funding agreement with Alliance Health, the company that has brought behavioral health urgent care to Johnston residents. The County dollars will pay for care not covered by health insurance, state grants or other sources. Alliance Health launched care virtually earlier this year; soon it will offer in-person care as well.
- Amended its agreement with Brightspeed, the company bringing high-speed internet to swaths of Johnston County. Previously, Commissioners had said the County would pay its share of the construction cost when Brightspeed completed its work. But the deadline to pay Brightspeed with federal COVID-relief dollars is Dec. 31, and the company says it won't be finished by then. Monday's amendment allows the County to reimburse Brightspeed for expenses already incurred on the broadband project.
- Renewed the County's memorandum of understanding with Isaiah 117 House, the nonprofit that built a home in Johnston to provide a transitional space for children entering foster care. An amendment to the MOU allows Isaiah 117 House to open its doors to children from outside the County. The original MOU limited the house to children from Johnston County, but usage over the past year has shown that the home has room for other kids.
- Presented a plaque of appreciation to Commissioner Mike Rose, who was attending his last meeting after losing his primary election in March. Rose served for two years. In brief remarks, he called his tenure a productive one for the Board of Commissioners. The County opened two schools — Swift Creek Elementary and Wilson's Mills High — and the Four Oaks Advanced Manufacturing Training Facility. Also, Commissioners established a countywide fire district to level the funding field for Johnston's rural fire departments, and they christened the County's first park.
- Applauded the Johnston County 4-H Shooting Sports Club for its success in the state tournament. A club senior team placed first in muzzleloader, while junior teams brought home second- and third-place trophies in recurve archery.

Individually, Dalton Massengill finished first in one event and second in another. J.R. Creech placed third and Landen Whitehurst fourth in hunter sporter recurve archery. Clayton Perkins was 10th in muzzleloader and 16th in compound.

- Added $26,000 to the contract with a software provider. The County is launching an online portal for various development permits and applications. The additional dollars will cover the cost of linking the portal to the County's online payment software.
- OK'd five budget revisions: the Health Department, $17,441 in state grant dollars; the Heritage Center, $3,500 in additional revenue; the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield, $12,808, a mix of miscellaneous revenue and fund balance, or savings, to cover some expenses; the Sheriff's Office, $5,108.61 in controlled-substance tax receipts and miscellaneous revenue; and Social Services, $22,683.33 in additional revenue.
- Took no action after a closed session on a matter protected by attorney-client privilege.

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