

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
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COUNTY OF STOKES)
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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA
TUESDAY JANUARY 24, 2023

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Recessed Senior Work Session (recessed from the January 17, 2023 Senior Work Session) in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administration Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Tuesday January 24, 2023 at 9:00 am with the following members present:

Chairman Rick Morris
Vice Chairman Brad Chandler
Commissioner Sonya Cox
Commissioner Ronnie Mendenhall (via phone)
Commissioner Keith Wood

County Personnel in Attendance:
County Manager Shannon Shaver
Assistant County Manager/Clerk to the Board Amber Brown

Chairman Morris called the recessed meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance.

Senior Work Sessions - Continuation

Public Works/Solid Waste

Chairman Morris turned the floor over to Public Works Director Stewart Easter for his presentation.

Public Works Director Easter presented the following information:

- Mission of the Department of Public Works is to provide the County employees, County residents, businesses, and visitors high quality, efficient, and responsive service with that service being maintenance, custodial service, solid waste/sewer, water, and our local park
 - As well as building customer service with our contractors, Stokes County residents, and fellow employees while working toward teamwork to better build our organization
- Functions of Public Works:

- Maintaining and upkeep of County facilities
 - Providing water and sewer to residents and businesses in Danbury and Germanton
- Solid Waste Services:
 - Operate eight (8) greenbox locations across the County along with the transfer station located in Germanton
- Department also provides County Administrative and Board of County Commissioners information regarding current and upcoming projects/plans for future growth while maintaining budget needs
- Budget thoughts:
 - Have a lot of budget thoughts with issues relating to aging equipment to flooring in certain buildings – can discuss more in detail
- Training:
 - Continue to research training options for employees
 - Currently, have one (1) employee enrolled in an electrical class at Forsyth Tech
 - Have flagger training scheduled for March 14th which is definitely needed when water leaks occur along the highway
- Turnover:
 - Have only had one (1) employee to resign which was about a month after I started
 - Have had two (2) employees to retire in 2022
 - Don't really have any major issues with turnover
- Believe Forsyth Tech Campus would greatly benefit Public Works with offering the trade classes
- Issues:
 - My biggest issue is the growing cost to maintain and service the facilities
 - Makes it hard to budget when prices continue to increase in the current economy
- Budget
 - Currently in good shape regarding the 2022-23 budget
 - Can discuss further if so desired by the Board
- Every facility that the County owns has aging equipment and ongoing building needs
- Goals:
 - Short term goals - try to get all these pieces together for the engineering firms, and acquiring land for the water projects
 - Long term goals – get all the capital projects completed and look down the road at other needed future projects
- Can start with any department – we have a lot of buildings that have aged along with a lot of aged equipment which is costing a lot to maintain – parts can't be obtained for a lot of the aging equipment
- Old Danbury School and Old Courthouse are just a few to mention – there are a lot more
- Currently doing an HVAC replacement in the Department of Social Services (DSS) in the upper level (lower level was replaced last winter) along with a new control system in order to save electrical costs
- Department of Social Services Building just had a new roof and should be in good shape going forward for the next twenty (20) years except for the boiler that was replaced in the 90s which seems to be in pretty good shape even though it is old
- The new Jail is in good shape, but the old part of the Jail still has old pneumatic controllers (old air compressors, old air handlers, etc.) along with aged plumbing

- It is getting harder and harder to get parts for the equipment in the old Jail – have had one part on order for a holding cell for over two (2) months
- At some point, need to look at upgrades – would love to put a building automation system in the old Jail (currently have in DSS, Administration Building, New Jail)
- Hope to include a new automation system with the renovations to the upcoming Government (courthouse) Center
- Government Center has the original equipment such as air handlers, a 1981 model boiler, a generator that can't be used due to the location – pulls fumes into the building when operating so it never has been used very much (manual operation) -- hope to also include this with the renovation project
- Communications is connected to a new generator
- Health Department is in pretty good – director wants to do some minor remodeling
- Currently have three (3) water projects:
 - Bringing the waterline from Germanton around Walnut Cove to Meadows – approximately \$18 million project
 - Have \$5 million to replace the waterlines in Danbury
 - Currently working with NC Department of Environmental Quality regarding the project (cost for new waterlines is approximately \$160 a foot-very expensive)
 - Water Project in Meadows that includes the placement of a water tank on Wall Loop Road
 - Took over six (6) months to purchase land for the placement of the water tank on Wall Loop Road
 - Working on two (2) pump stations that was needed for this project
 - Could be short in funding due to the high cost of equipment – may need to find additional funding)
- Administrative Building has a new roof
- Senior Services located in the old school building in Danbury has new flooring, but still has major issues
- Greenbox renovation projects at Pinnacle and Walnut Cove are underway
 - Projects are moving along – making good progress
- Hope to do some renovations at the Transfer Site once the greenbox renovation projects are completed
 - Want to concrete where the greenboxes are located, then pave from the highway to the scales down to the first box where you dispose of tires
 - The heavy trucks continually keep ruts in the current road
 - Working with NC Department of Transportation, could possibly get the complete project done under a hundred thousand
- New garbage truck has been ordered for Solid Water
 - It was budgeted for approximately \$300,000, before truck was ordered, the price increased approximately \$50,000
- Some prices are changing daily which makes planning very difficult
- Would love to do some paving at some of the other greenbox sites in the future
- Would be happy to answer any questions

Chairman Morris opened the floor for discussion/questions/comments.

Commissioner Cox commented:

- Questioned Director Easter his thoughts on the Old Courthouse and the needed renovations according to the recent facility study completed a few years ago

Director Easter responded:

- Old courthouse is a huge operating expensive to the County
- According to the facilities study done in 2020:
 - To replace the roof would be approximately \$173,000
 - Plumbing is in bad condition
 - HVAC System is over twenty-five years old – needs to be replaced
 - Has some drainage issues along with electrical issues
- Pretty much everything according to Perry Peterson’s facility study is worn out
- Would love to move Soil and Water to a different location, then if the School System ever moves out, possibly turn the building over to the Historical Society

Commissioner Cox continued:

- Know they have air conditioning issues – either had to be hot or really cold when I was on the Board of Education (had issues when we had Board of Education meetings)

Director Easter noted that part of the floor had to be removed during a recent water leak – couldn’t get to the leak through the crawl space – too narrow.

Vice Chairman Chandler questioned if the building was ADA compliance.

Commissioner Cox responded:

- When I served on the Board of Education and there was someone needing or wanting to attend that needed to be in a wheelchair, the meeting would have to be moved to a suitable location
- It hinders who can run for the Board of Education due to the facility – people with back issues have problems climbing those steps – no elevator

Commissioner Wood commented:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that the water lines for the upcoming projects will be bid out
- Prices in that particular market are about to explode – suggest you bid as quickly as possible
- Confirmed with Director Easter the projects have to be completed by 2026 and are moving along good

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that he currently has approximately 25 full time and 30 part time employees
- Questioned Director Easter regarding his staffing

Director Easter responded:

- Currently have a supervisor for custodians, supervisor for Solid Waste (over all Solid Waste along with the Greenbox sites), and supervisor for Public Buildings (over maintenance and park)
- Have some excellent employees in my department

Commissioner Mendenhall commented:

- Director Easter has a lot of projects on his plate right now along with his daily operations
- Questioned Director Easter if he looked ahead ten (10) years from now, what would be one or two of the biggest things at the governmental center complex that is going to be needed to be done

Director Easter responded:

- As far as the governmental center complex, it would probably be the constant upkeep of the facilities with equipment/facilities getting older
- Think there will have to be some major decisions made within the next five (5) years whether to keep pouring money into some of the older buildings
- As far as Solid Waste, the question would be where to take our solid waste if Forsyth County ever told us we could no longer bring waste to their facility
- With only (2) two wells in Danbury for the water system, if you lose the good well, could be a serious issue
- Can really grow with the Treatment Plant – currently only at 30% capacity

Chairman Morris commented:

- Discussed the current water projects in detail with Director Easter where the water lines will be run
- Confirmed with Director Easter the need to be able to run water (once water gets to Meadow with the current project that is underway) from Meadows to Danbury – currently do not have funding to run water from Meadows to Danbury

Director Easter commented:

- Have been asked by several people about sewer in Germanton, might be something the County might want to explore – would benefit Germanton a lot

Commissioner Cox commented that she had been questioned about sewer in Pinnacle, too.

Chairman Morris continued:

- Questioned Director Easter about the water project for the Danbury Water System

Director Easter responded:

- The water project should help our leaks with the Danbury Water System a lot
- Right now, when we have a leak in Danbury, it usually splits a 20-foot section of pipe that currently is about \$18 a foot with two couplings that are needed at \$350 a piece plus labor - estimate for a repair is anywhere from \$1,800 to \$2,000
- Paperwork for the project has just been completed and sent to the State for approval
- The project has a 2026 deadline

- Currently, there is one water line coming into the Governmental Complex which means when there is any issue in just one building, the water to the entire complex has to be shut off
- When the Government Center renovation is done, the line will have to be split so we are going to put cutoff valves everywhere we can to eliminate all the buildings being shut down if there is an issue in just one particular building
- The main pipe will be the only thing being replaced – not piping to individual homes/businesses
- The current pipe is only rated at 150 psi, the new pipe will be rated at 250 psi which will help with the leaks

Commissioner Cox commented:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that those on the Danbury Water System are billed by the County for water (system consist of two (2) wells and a water tank) (starts at the hospital and ends at the wastewater treatment plant below Sheppard Mill Road)
- Confirmed with Director Easter there is an availability fee if someone does not wish to be connected to the system, but that most people where the line runs are connected to the system

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that the recent car accident involving damages to a County fire hydrant was filed with the car owners' insurance company

Chairman Morris commented:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that he had no issues with the County placing trackers on the vehicles in his departments
- Noted he feels this would help with our insurance

County Manager Shannon Shaver noted that there were only three (3) vehicles in the Department of Social Services' fleet that have not had trackers installed, those are being worked on now.

Chairman Morris continued:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that there are no immediate needs regarding roofs on County facilities – major roof is the Old Courthouse which is over 50 years old which could come up withing the next couple of years with the next roof being the Government Center in 2028 per the Perry Peterson's facility study
- Confirmed with Director Easter that renovations to the Walnut Cove and Pinnacle Greenbox sites will enable citizens to drive through instead of having to enter and exit the same entrance
- Advised Director Easter to inform administrative staff what is needed to be put in Capital Reserve each year for emergencies for the Board to consider during budget time

Director Easter commented:

- Understand you can't do what is needed all at once, have to look at what is needed the most each year

Chairman Morris continued:

- There may be a possibility that if the Old Courthouse is ever vacated, it could be used by the Arts Council and Historical Society with opportunities to obtain grant funding for renovations

County Manager Shaver commented:

- Related a message from Dr. Brad Rice, Superintendent, regarding the need to remove old benches that were stored in their meeting room
- Dr. Rice stated that if the benches were moved, it would allow space for additional seating for their meetings

Chairman Morris responded:

- Noted that this had been looked at during his time as county manager and seems there was some concerns at the time regarding the historical value
- Requested Manager Shaver to look into the request and advise the Board whether the benches could be sold or moved to another location

Commissioner Mendenhall commented:

- Recall this was brought to the County while he was superintendent and there were some concerns at that time regarding the historical significance, so the issue was dropped at that point
- Believe it is worth researching again, it would be very beneficial to the Board of Education to have additional seating

Chairman Morris, with full consensus of the Board, directed staff to look into the possibility of removing the benches that are being stored in the upper level of the Old Courthouse.

Chairman Morris continued:

- Confirmed with Director Easter that even though his budgets show only 40% remaining here in January, he hopes to make it to the end of the fiscal year
- Questioned Director Easter's thoughts on the old Danbury School Building

Director Easter responded:

- Roof has been replaced
- The HVAC System is the original equipment – needs to be replaced
- It is an old building that needs repairs
- In time, in my opinion, I would replace the entire building

Director Easter commented:

- Would like to throw out an idea to the Board for thought
- Currently, the Water/Sewer Authority has approximately 18 acres on Highway #311
- It was purchased a while ago with the thought of possibly having a water plant

- There might be an opportunity for the County to purchase approximately 50 acres that joins this property
- This would give the County another river access and a potential place for a water plant down the road
- If we had a water plant in that location, we wouldn't have to buy from Winston, could sell water to Madison area and Stokes County residents – just a thought

Chairman Morris expressed appreciation to Director Easter for his participation in the Senior Work Sessions.

Chairman Morris recessed the Senior Work Session for a ten (10) minute break.

Chairman Morris called the Senior Work Session back to order.

Cooperative Extension

Chairman Morris turned the floor over to Dr. Emily Cope, County Extension Director for her presentation.

Dr. Emily Cope presented the following information regarding Cooperative Extension: (provided the Board with a handout)

- Thanked the Board for the opportunity to discuss items regarding Cooperative Extension
- Have been with Cooperative Extension for about three (3) years
- Briefly discussed what Cooperative Extension is:
 - As a whole, the mission of North Carolina Cooperative Extension is to provide research-based knowledge to all North Carolinians that will help them transform science into everyday solutions that better their lives and grow our state
 - The mission of North Carolina Cooperative Extension is to deliver educational programs that are research-based that will advance agriculture, our environment, human/health well-being, as well as youth in communities with the hopes of creating prosperity in North Carolina
 - Our programs that we delivered are grounded in objective science and backed by research which is ultimately what we are doing
 - Provided the Board with a handout that details return on investment regarding Cooperative Extension Programs at the state level that has been created
 - Do not have return on investment from the local level, but can tell you through school enrichment, through online and in-person programming this year, our agents delivered well over 200 programs at the local level
 - Through virtual opportunities, our borders are not restricted at the local level
 - Our County has had global presence with delivering education which is a great opportunity
- With Cooperative Extension, there are two (2) land-grant institutions in North Carolina – North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University along with NC Cooperative Extension which is a strategic partnership to solve problems at the local level
- We all have different goals/initiatives

- A&T is our 1890 institution in the State that has the drive for them to reach our minority communities, our underrepresented communities – do have an NC A&T Agent located in the Danbury office, but not all counties have a NC A&T Agent
- All of our other agents are staffed and employed by NC State
- Staffing:
 - Three (3) agents that focuses on agriculture and natural resources
 - Livestock and forage crops agent
 - Agricultural and natural resources agent (A&T employee)
 - Commercial and row crops agent (serves Stokes and Forsyth Counties)
 - One (1) agent that focuses on family and consumer sciences
 - One (1) agent that focuses on 4H youth development – life skill development
 - Administrative Assistant
 - Cooperative Extension Director
 - Have a total staff of seven (7) employees with six (6) permanently housed in Danbury
- Being an agricultural community, we intertwine agricultural education with our youth programs
- Professional Development
 - Our universities have some very specific professional development opportunities that are required:
 - In-service training for each agent’s content area/programs
 - Continuing education is available throughout the year for the agent’s choosing
 - Annual state conference in either Raleigh or Greensboro – mandatory attendance
 - Each agent has their own association which has quarterly/annual meetings for personal development
 - Our agents are doing a lot of professional development during the year to help them stay proficient and stay relevant with what they are doing and how they are delivering their content
 - NC State is really big on program development, delivery, and evaluation; they provide us with a lot of training in that regard
 - Also have training at the local level such customer service training – working on a grant writing training in the upcoming months
 - We try to have local training sessions to enhance our programs, how can we deliver our programs better, where can we improve, etc. – to increase our efficiency
- Partnership with Forsyth Technical Community College
 - Have been a really super partner to have
 - Just had our second agritourism conference
 - Was well attended (42 attendees)
 - Several great speakers who delivered beneficial programs
 - Partnering with Forsyth Tech to offer an eight (8) week agritourism short course which will allow participants to bring in their vision for a business they want to develop in Stokes County
 - Participants will have a full business plan written by the end of the course

- Will be a start to finish partnership
 - Very excited about this new program
 - Doing summer programs at Forsyth Tech
 - There are so many possibilities working with Forsyth Tech
 - Have a great working relationship with the staff
 - Both organizations have a vision for a community kitchen in the near future
 - Constantly discuss how we can work with our partnership
- Cooperative Extension Goals
 - The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences just released our new strategic plan “Growing our Future” (2023-2030) (The Extension’s plan is forthcoming)
 - The following are the goals that are specifically for Extension
 - Transform the Extension Delivery Model – evolve extension programming to align with future trends and community needs – amplify our scale, our impact, and effectiveness of extension
 - A statewide marketing plan will be launched to maximize the awareness and participation in extension programs
 - We are a free to low-cost education for our communities
 - Our local goal is to increase our awareness, our visibility, and presence in the community – reach as many people as possible
 - Want to fit into the county’s model to improve the lives of our citizens in Stokes County – how do we do that together
 - We continue our partnerships with organizations in Stokes County along with adding new partners when possible
 - Diversification and cross-disciplinary program, huge initiative for Cooperative Extension programming
 - We are bringing horticulture science into the school system
 - Looking at other Cooperative Extension Services across the nation to see what they are doing, how they are delivering programs different to be more attractive, what programs are working, etc. in order to better enrich people’s lives
 - Looking at social media to reach people
 - Want to enhance our agricultural systems, our youth development, and family and consumer services here in the County through knowledge dissemination
 - Each agent does have individual goals which include increasing our awareness, increasing our presence in the community, and how do we do that
- Top three (3) things that keep the director up at night
 - Financial programming resources - our largest limitation
 - Receive phenomenal support from the County and state level, but very limited in state funding
 - State funding will only support salaries, travel, and postage
 - We evaluate programs delivered to our citizens, how we can do this at no cost or how can we do this at a cost to the consumer that will be relatively low
 - Try not to charge for the programs if at all possible
 - Look for grants or sponsors

- The most we have charged is about \$20-\$25 per program
 - 4H attracts the most funding/sponsors – largest funded program
 - Remaining relevant is another thing that we struggle with to make sure we are delivering content that our users will need
 - The end users are changing and the way our end users receive information is also changing
 - A lot of our users absorb information/content via social media
 - Challenges are making sure we stay in front of people through social media
 - Have spoken to social media experts but for us we just don't have the human capacity to do it
 - Social media is evolving and changing all the time
 - We are a forward-facing organization and want to maintain forward facing and relevant with our users
 - Generating impact
 - Want to make sure, through our evaluations, what is the impact from our program
 - Want to make sure the information given transforms into better herd management, increases tomato production, etc.
- Also asked the agents what were their top three (3) things that keep them up at night
 - Commercial and Row Crop Agent:
 - Lack of support for row crop producers who try to make the transition from tobacco or a traditional row crop into a higher profit margin and lack of recognition
 - Agricultural -Livestock and Forage Crops Agent:
 - How to reach new audiences that would benefit from our services
 - 4H Development Agent:
 - Lack of facilities/space for programming
 - Food insecurity in our communities
- Goes back to investing in our agents – maximizing their development, maximize our impact to our communities, strengthen our skills be it through resources or skill attainment for the agents themselves
- What can I do as the director to make sure I am staying relevant and efficient to better support them – their success is my success – they are the boots on the ground, and I am just here to help align their vision and mission to what they see is a need in our communities
- Spoke briefly about upcoming programs
- Have a Cattle and Bee Keeping Association that meet monthly
- Happy to answer any questions

Chairman Morris opened the floor for discussion/questions/comments.

Chairman Morris commented:

- Fantastic presentation
- Being dealing with Cooperative Extension since 2004

- This briefing you just presented kind of demonstrates how the office is in the strongest position it has ever been in, in my opinion
- We have had periods when there were acting directors, shared directors, part time directors, etc.
- Having you and your current staff, feel really good about your department

Commissioner Mendenhall commented:

- Good presentation
- Know you are doing some really good things throughout the County
- Hear a lot of good, positive feedback regarding your department
- Questioned if there might be additional staff/public programming in the future or are you satisfied where your department is at now

Dr. Cope responded:

- I think at present, our staff for the size of our County, is able to meet the needs of our citizens
- I think what we will be limited with, is not our human capacity, but our resources being physical and financial mostly
- Feel our agents do a lot of cross-county agent programming – sharing the load
- For growth, can't envision our human capacity increasing
- Feel our agents are capable of handling future changes
- Want to keep up the good work being done by the department

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- In talking about financial resources from the County, can you give me an example of an existing program or a program you are not able to do because of lack of funding

Dr. Cope responded:

- Currently, partnering with Pine Hall Elementary School for an after-school program
- We don't have the dollars to do some of the things that we would like to do nor does the school
- Often need special supplies for a demonstration that funding is not available in our County budget

Vice Chairman Chandler continued:

- Confirmed with Dr. Cope that it would be helpful if each agent had a specific amount of funding to use for program supplies each year

Dr. Cope responded:

- Having available funding allows the agent to look at new programs during the year
- Believe there is better buy-in with our programs if we have needed supplies – such as samples for everyone in a healthy eating demonstration especially for our seniors

Vice Chairman Chandler continued:

- Believe this new concept of farm to the table is going to grow rapidly in Stokes County -- possibly farm to table restaurants
- Willing to support local funding for supplies needed for demonstrations
- Believe you are really motivated and personally do not want to be the one that causes you to hit a brick wall -want to encourage new programs, not just doing what is mandatory
- Have a strong sense of history – anyway you can partner with our Historical Society to provide from historical information, say the 1930s to present

Dr. Cope responded:

- To be honest, I have not thought about that
- There are some County offices across the State that have done some really good displays of agricultural artifacts along with heritage agricultural displays
- We have discussed within our department, about having a place to showcase past artifacts
- We are open to having that conversation with the Historical Society and see what we can do to help support that initiative – would love to be involved

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Would love to see talks started regarding such an initiative

Chairman Morris commented:

- Currently serve on the Cooperative Extension Advisory Board for several years
- I would be willing to allow another commissioner to serve in that capacity since we have at least two (2) commissioners who have farm animals, bees, etc. – feel they would be more qualified for the appointment

Dr. Cope responded:

- I inherited the current Advisory Board that has lost member/gain members, etc.
- In the process of rebuilding that Board
- Believe it is time to allow another commissioner who has have agricultural interest to serve on the board
- Agents have their own advisory councils that are subject matter
- We need to be challenged
- Scheduled to visit other counties' Advisory Board meetings to see how they run and to see what makes their Board really efficient and effective
- Welcome any commissioner to join our county-based board as well as the individual agent's advisory board

Commissioner Wood commented:

- Great presentation
- Attended a bee keeping class a couple of years ago at the Forsyth Tech Campus that was awesome, planning on signing up for the upcoming bee keeping class

Commissioner Cox commented:

- Don't have any specific questions

- Know you are going a great job
- My daughter utilizes your different resources -- has the grow boxes outside her classroom
- Believe you have a lot of resources to offer teachers
- Suggested looking into the test kitchens at the Arts Council
- Keep up the work -- doing a great job
- Great presentation
- Have no concerns with the department -- want to support what you are doing

Dr. Cope responded:

- Appreciate all the kind words
- This is really a testament to the work being done by our agents -- they are the backbone of our organization
- Have a couple of quick questions:
 - Would like to know if there are any other initiatives that the Board feels Cooperative Extension could help support -- welcome input from the Board
 - We want to try to meet the needs of our citizens
 - Where can our skills align with what you want at the local level

Vice Chairman Chandler responded:

- Feel that when the farm to the table concept starts to materialize, think that will provide Cooperative Extension a lot of opportunity to provide support and grow that industry

Commissioner Cox responded:

- Suggested using the current Cooperative Extension Facebook page to solicit what is needed, how can we improve, etc.
- Also send out a mass emails to teachers offering the department's services
- Like what you are saying -- tailor what you are doing to the needs of the communities instead of just rolling out something that is a pre-packaged demonstration
- Commend you for thinking about the needs of the communities

Chairman Morris commented:

- Really like the agritourism partnership you have with Forsyth Tech
- Feel it will be a real big component of our Economic Development in the future
- Suggest working closely with Interim Economic Development Director Eddy McGee this next year as he figures out how we should continue with Economic Development in Stokes County
- Believe you will play a key role in how some of that works out
- Confirmed with Dr. Cope that the hope for the upcoming agritourism short class will be people who are in the project development phase, or their current operation is less than five (5) years old -- could be someone who is struggling trying to get their product out on the market
- Confirmed with Dr. Cope that the department has worked with the Golden Leaf Foundation but not necessarily met the eligibility requirements yet -- had a Golden Leaf Scholar Intern about two years ago

Dr. Cope responded:

- NC Adventures Grant – have applied for two (2) grants
 - One grant was received to purchase equipment such as the mobile poultry processing unit – highest rented piece of equipment – high in demand along with equipment that lays plastic down on the ground, meat grinder, livestock scales, etc.
 - Waiting on the outcome of the second grant
- Have secured other small grants

Chairman Morris continued:

- County currently has an internet program launched to connect a lot of the unserved folks throughout the County
- Know your office and NC State is involved with internet
- Need to make sure you are integrated into our committee that is overseeing that expansion project

Dr. Cope responded:

- This is where I would want to reach out to my colleagues who have a lot of knowledge at the university level regarding Broadband expansion
- One of our leaders for Broadband accessibility is the Randolph County Cooperative Extension Director
- Know there have been opportunities putting some Broadband agents throughout the State – digital literacy agents
- Would be happy to help or make any connections, if possible

Commissioner Wood commented:

- Would be happy to take Chairman Morris' appointment to the Advisory Board

Dr. Cope expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to speak to the Board.

Chairman Morris expressed the Board's appreciation to Dr. Cope for her presentation.

Chairman Morris recessed the Senior Work Session for a five (5) minute break.

Chairman Morris called recessed Senior Work Session back to order.

Purchasing

Chairman Morris turned the floor over to Purchasing/Project Manager Glenda Pruitt for her presentation.

Purchasing/Project Manager Glenda Pruitt provided the following information:

- Provided a brief summary of the main job responsibilities:
 - Purchase all the supplies/equipment for all the County departments (from paper clips to vehicles and everything in between)
 - Dispose of all the surplus property that can range from various items such as computers to vehicles

- Help departments obtain quotes
- Do all the Request for Proposals, Request for Quotes, along with all the bids following all NC General Statutes and other any requirement especially pertaining to grants
- File all insurance claims (auto, liability, etc.)
- Bid and/or renew the County's auto, liability, and worker's compensation insurances each year
- Help with some of the administrative duties at the County garage
- Do not see any big items needed for my department for the upcoming budget but will probably need to upgrade my desk computer next year -- current computer was purchased in 2018
- Have a laptop that allows me to go and work outside the office -- can work from home but can be challenging at times due to internet connection on the northern side of the County
- Training
 - Do a lot of training through the Institute of Government -- lack one class which has been postponed several times due to COVID for my NC Association of General Purchasing Certification
 - Attend the annual conference which is very helpful -- great networking along with great classes
 - Use the NC School of Government's website -very knowledgeable tool
- Goals
 - Would like to surplus a lot of equipment/vehicles that the County no longer uses
 - Been very successful using NC Gov for selling surplus property
- Know that County Manager Shaver provided an update regarding the upcoming bank renovations for Elections Department and the Government Center (courthouse) renovation project
- Have a meeting with Architect Perry Peterson on January 30th regarding the bank renovation project for Elections along with the Judges regarding the courthouse renovation project
- Currently have a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an architect for the upcoming animal shelter project -- closes on January 26th along with a meeting with the animal shelter building committee on February 8th
- Hope to have something regarding an architect for the animal shelter project to Board at the February 13th meeting
- Would like to request some guidance from the Board regarding the demolition of the old prison facility
 - Funding is in the current budget, having been working on a Request for Proposal -- working with Public Works Director Easter
 - There are fourteen (14) buildings, (1) wastewater treatment plant, and one (1) residential structure that need to be removed
 - There are various items over there that has been stored for numerous years:
 - Files, surplus equipment, RiverStreet equipment
 - Would like guidance as how to proceed
 - Would take a bit of time to inventory and remove the items possibly to the old garage if not surplus
- Would be happy to answer any questions

Chairman Morris opened the floor for discussion/questions/comments.

Chairman Morris started the discussion:

- Personally, not interested in doing any demolition right now
- Have asked for a strategic plan for that area for several years, but still do not have one
- Believe we need to know what we want to do with the property before we start any major demolition
- Possibly someone else might be willing to pay for the demolition
- Would like to explore all options
- Know that RiverStreet has invested a significant amount of money to improve the building that they currently occupy– very solid building

Purchasing Manager Pruitt commented:

- Have some issues with the current condition of the building that has a grease pit – someone could get hurt – concerned about the liability of someone getting hurt

Chairman Morris responded:

- Suggested possibly getting RiverStreet to sign an agreement stating the County is not liable for damages occurred on the property

Commissioner Wood commented:

- Questioned if there was any possibility that the local fire departments could use the buildings for training exercises

Purchasing Manager Pruitt responded:

- Will be glad to discuss the possibility of allowing the local fire departments use the buildings for training exercises with Fire Marshal Scott Aaron

Commissioner Cox confirmed with Purchasing Manager Pruitt that there is an entrance through NCDOT property but secured fencing from the Dodgetown entrance.

Chairman Morris continued:

- Believe the building currently occupied by RiverStreet could possibly be used for County purposes once RiverStreet vacates the property
- Need to determine what is needed for the new animal shelter

County Manager Shaver noted that staff would not know what is needed for demolition until an architect is hired for the new animal shelter project.

Commissioner Mendenhall commented:

- My personal feeling is to get started with some of the demolition
- Have been in every single building at least three (3) or four (4) times
- Have been in the building currently occupied by RiverStreet
- That area is an eye sore to the community – need to clean up the area

- Don't need that old prison camp – have been told by residents in the area that there are still issues with people hanging out on the property at nighttime and during the winter months
- We don't need to back off demolition of the area – can start in stages – don't have to do it all at one time
- We have that nice facility built by Friends of Stokes Shelter on the property along with the Early College and Forsyth Tech Trade Center being about 100 yards down the road
- My personal feeling is to proceed with starting some demolition in that area

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- The only thing that concerns me about the property right now would be County liability
- Worry about people on the property possibly getting hurt
- Need to develop a plan regarding what needs to be done on the property regarding the new proposed animal shelter
- Would be willing to work with RiverStreet if we need to move them to another location
- Just want to make sure we do what is necessary regarding possible liability to the County

Chairman Morris commented:

- One reason RiverStreet is at the location is because there wasn't anywhere else around to stage their operation

Purchasing Manager Pruitt commented:

- My personal opinion would be even if the new animal shelter is located on the property, there would be enough space left for RiverStreet to have some type of temporary storage units on the property – just have concerns regarding the building they currently occupy

Chairman Morris suggested Board members take a walk through the property and building.

Vice Chairman Chandler continued:

- My personal opinion is that I am tired of looking at old, out of date, almost unsafe County facilities

Commissioner Cox agreed that the area is an eye sore in the community.

Commissioner Wood commented:

- Would definitely like the option explored with allowing local fire departments to use the property for training exercises, would be cheaper for the County than demolition by an outside contractor
- Have building samples been done to determine if asbestos is in the buildings
- Believe we need a plan for the area

Purchasing Manager Pruitt commented:

- One of the requirements for the RFQ is to help with site selection for the new animal shelter
- Just wanted to see what the Board's thoughts were regarding the property

Commissioner Cox commented:

- Agree with Commissioner Wood regarding possibly letting the fire departments use the property for training exercises
- Believe the area is a prime location for potential economic development and growth – possible business park
- Believe it would be more appealing if the area was cleaned up
- Could talk to Director Eddy McGee to see what his thoughts are regarding the area
- Want to be sure and try to help RiverStreet with a staging location for this next expansion project

Commissioner Wood questioned if the demolition project had been bid out.

Purchasing Manager Pruitt commented:

- The project had been bid out - \$140,000 for the complete demolition which was not budgeted at that time
- The County budgeted the \$200,000 this year
- The Board had adopted this demolition plan back in 2020
- Will talk to Director McGee regarding the area
- We can wait until we get information regarding the site selection for the new animal shelter
- The \$200,000 currently budgeted for the project can be encumbered into the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget or put back into the general balance

Chairman Morris commented:

- Only a few months from starting on the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget
- Would suggest not doing anything right now and have further discussion during the budget work sessions – do not know what other issues will be in the upcoming budget
- Would like for those who have not visited the area, to please take some time to survey the area
- Agree, we need to see what is needed for the new animal shelter

Vice Chairman Chandler commented:

- Believe we need to do whatever kind of preliminary work is needed to give us the background we need to make the right decision
- That way when we start with the budget process, we have the information needed to develop a plan and proceed
- Don't think we need to continue to drag this issue on – need to get started
- Reiterated that he is tired of looking at old buildings

Commissioner Mendenhall commented:

- Agree with Vice Chairman Chandler
- Need to get with Director McGee to see what his ideas are regarding economic development in that area
- Tired of driving by that area and seeing that eye sore in Stokes County
- We are wanting to progress, move forward, and bring businesses/people to Stokes County

- We need to move forward

Commissioner Cox noted that there have been previous discussions regarding a possible business park for that area.

Chairman Morris noted that the property is probably the most valuable piece of commercial property that the County owns.

Commissioner Wood confirmed with Purchasing Manager Pruitt that the area is approximately 9.6 acres.

Vice Chairman Chandler questioned Purchasing Manager Pruitt about the impound lot. Purchasing Manager Pruitt responded:

- There is a lot of old stuff in the impound lot
- Sheriff Department does impound vehicles, but during the past year, most people have gotten their items back within a timely manner
- Just sold an old vehicle that had been here since 2017
- My understanding from the Sheriff's Department is that once it goes to trial/court and everything to that nature, we offer it back to the person who owns the property
- A lot of people choose not to pay the impound fees which can be very costly
- Then the County proceeds to obtain the necessary paperwork needed to sell the vehicle
- Can be directly transferred by a judge to the County
- Most that we deal with is stolen vehicles or drug related
- Sheriff Department is very helpful when dealing with the impoundment of vehicles
- County garage tows the impounded vehicle(s) to the impound lot
- If the vehicle is too large for our wrecker, we contract an outside company to tow the vehicle to the county impound lot
- Impound lot is secured with fencing

Vice Chairman Chandler requested County Manager Shaver to provide the Board with the account status for the Sheriff's federal/state forfeiture fund.

Chairman Morris requested Purchasing Manager Pruitt to email the Board the total number of vehicles by department (owned or leased) in the County fleet.

Purchasing Manager Pruitt responded:

- Most all our departmental vehicles are leased except Department of Social Services who only has three (3) leased vehicles
- The reason we no longer lease vehicles for Social Services is due to the State will not reimburse a lease program – better reimbursement to purchase the vehicles
- There are a few other owned vehicles in the Sheriff's Department and Public Works (cleaning staff)
- Have recently reduce the fleet – 250 to around 140 – vehicles were not being utilized or needed in particular departments

Vehicle Maintenance

Chairman Morris turned the floor over to Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor Danny Triplett for his presentation.

Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor Danny Triplett presented the following information: (provided the Board with a detailed handout)

- County maintenance to the fleet is more than just tires, oil changes, brakes, etc.
- A lot of our leased fleet has exceeded their factory warranty so now we are getting into repairing
- Also take care of county owned trailers and utvs
- Maintain a parts inventory in order to get a vehicle repaired and back on the highway as quickly as possible
- We do appointment scheduling that works out well with only two staff members
- Do equipment installation for the Sheriff's Department – radios, cages, blue lights, etc.
- We are not set up for garage trucks but do work on ambulances
- Operate the wrecker 24/7 for breakdowns and impoundments for the Sheriff's Department
- Current wrecker cannot tow the ambulances – farm out those services
- If the County ever chose to want to tow the ambulances, it would take a larger wrecker that would require staff to obtain commercial driver's license
- Budget considerations:
 - Installed a large 30,000-pound lift about two (2) years ago to accommodate the ambulances
 - Have another 14,000-pound lift that accommodates the cars
 - Would like to look at installing a second large lift
 - Have occasions that I have an ambulance on the large lift and waiting for parts, I can't do the needed services on the rest of the fleet until that lift is freed up
 - Actually, had to farm out a routine service last week because of that particular issue – needed to get the ambulance back on the road
 - Would also like to look at the possibility of a brake lathe, this would allow the County to turn the brake rotors – we have to just replace the rotors now instead of turning them – being able to turn the rotors would pay for the lathe
 - Have an old lathe that needs some repairs, but even if you repair it, it will not facilitate the large new rotors
- Majority of the fleet is Ford and GM - have the factory scan tools for diagnosing these brands
- May be looking at getting some Dodge chassis for EMS – would need to look at diagnostic tools for Dodges
- Currently have software (AllData) that can be utilized to look up repair procedures for newer vehicles – technology is constantly changing
- Have not had any factory training since 2009 – no training available locally
- Took a welding class at Forsyth Tech Center in Meadows but currently doesn't offer any night automotive classes
- Certified to do state vehicle inspections
- Things that keep me up at night

- An ambulance that I can't figure out what is wrong
- Have currently used \$3,079.75 of the budgeted \$7,000 for part time staffing this current fiscal year
- Takes one person about a week to outfit a new patrol car

Chairman Morris opened the floor for discussion/questions/comments.

Vice Chairman Chandler confirmed with Supervisor Triplett that there are two (2) full time staff members – a working supervisor and a mechanic that can work on diesel.

Commissioner Mendenhall and Commissioner Cox had no questions, but both noted a good report.

Commissioner Wood confirmed with Supervisor Triplett that the County currently uses NAPA for purchasing inventory parts that is on the state contract – uses local vendor if necessary, purchase tires from Goodyear that is also on state contract.

Chairman Morris confirmed with Supervisor Triplett there were no issues currently with the staffing regarding on call.

Chairman Morris questioned the condition of the wrecker.

Supervisor Triplett responded:

- Would not want to go too far out of the County
- Has 205,000 miles on it
- Looking into the possibility of leasing a wrecker

Vice Chairman Chandler confirmed with County Manager Shaver that to her knowledge, the County did not have a rotation wrecker policy regarding the use of outside vendors for wrecker services and a lot of time, it is the choice of the individual.

Supervisor Triplett noted that he thinks when the Sheriff's Department needs a wrecker when they come up on a wreck or breakdown, they probably use the service closest to the scene, believe the highway patrol has a rotation wrecker policy.

Chairman Morris noted that the County should look at a rotation wrecker policy.

Vice Chairman Chandler continued:

- Most cities, highway patrol, and a lot of other counties have a rotation wrecker policy in order to not show favoritism – especially for out of towners who would not know who the wrecker services are in the County
- Briefly explained how the rotation wrecker policy works which can be a revenue for the County – County can charge a fee to put a vendor who meets the requirements on the rotation wrecker policy
- County is responsible to make sure the vendors are following the requirements

Purchasing Manager Pruitt:

- Can look into whether any County department uses any type of rotation wrecker policy along with other rotation wrecker policies and bring information back to the Board

Chairman Morris suggested Supervisor Triplett put items mentioned in today's discussion in the upcoming budget for consideration (heavy duty lift, lathe, scan tool).

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Morris entertained a motion to recess the Recessed Senior Work Session until Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 10:00 am.

Vice Chairman Chandler moved to recess the Recessed Senior Work Session until Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 10:00 am. Commissioner Wood seconded and the motion passed unanimously.



Amber Brown
Clerk to the Board



Rick Morris
Chairman