

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)

COUNTY OF STOKES)

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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA
JANUARY 6, 2007

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a scheduled Board Retreat session in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administrative Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Saturday, January 6, 2007 at 9:00 am with the following members present:

Chairman Leon Inman
Vice-Chairman Jimmy Walker
Commissioner Ron Carroll
Commissioner Ernest Lankford
Commissioner Stanley Smith

County Personnel in Attendance:
Clerk to the Board/Interim County Manager Darlene Bullins
Finance Director Julia Edwards

Chairman Leon Inman called the meeting to order.

Chairman Inman delivered the invocation.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT-GOVERNING BODY-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Inman opened the meeting by inviting the citizens in attendance to join the Board with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Inman welcomed those in attendance to the Board Retreat.

Chairman Inman requested each Board member to briefly express what they hoped to gain from today's Board Retreat:

Commissioner Carroll: Express ideas, see where we are, and where we want to go – set a road map

Commissioner Lankford: Establish a vision statement – for 2 years, 4 years – vision to include the total county – establish goals and objectives

Vice Chairman Walker: Agree with a vision – planning for today and the future

Commissioner Smith: Setting down in this type of planning meeting and openly discussing county issues to develop a long range plan and a vision for the County

Review of County's Financial Status

Interim County Manager Darlene Bullins presented a copy of the letter received from the NC Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Controller which stated that the Stokes County Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2006 had been accepted by the Secretary of the Local Government Commission and that no corrective action plan is necessary and resolution of this audit is closed with respect to programs of financial assistance administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Interim Manager Bullins also presented a copy of the letter from the NC Department of State Treasurer which reports as of June 30, 2006, the amount of available fund balance was \$3,496,416 or 8.74% of total expenditures which has increased from 7.90% reported for the fiscal year June 30, 2005. Statewide average fund balance available for comparably sized counties is 27.62% (fund balance as of 06-30-04). The State Treasurer does request that the County submit a letter to indicate the County's plans to continue to increase the fund balance.
January 6, 2007

The County requested the Interim Manager to request a list of comparably sized counties that Stokes County is compared to and what type of plan LGC is expecting from the County. The Board discussed the County's fund balance.

Interim Manager Bullins presented a Tax Administration Collection status of Friday, January 5th representing collection to date = \$14,305,086.87

Finance Director Julia Edwards briefly discussed the following reports:

- 2005-06 final budget compared to 2006-07 budget
- Financial Report for Oct. Nov. and December 2006 detailing current expenditures and revenues
- Tax Levy
- NC Association of County Commissioners 2006-07 Tax Rate Survey
- Comparison of Legal services for Fiscal years 2003-04; 2004-05; 2005-06; and 2006-07
- County's desire to consult with a financial advisor to create a committee to possibly include the School Superintendent, School Finance Director, County Manager, County Finance Director and financial advisor to develop a plan for school construction and capital needs for the County and how the County will pay for these items
- Inventory Tax which sunsets 2011-12
- Debt Schedule as of June 30, 2005
- Debt Schedule of December 31, 2006
- Public School Building Capital Fund – Current Fiscal Year 2006-07
- Public School Building Capital – Fiscal Year 2006-07 – ADM and Lottery Fund
- Public School Building Capital Fund – Special Summary – ADM Fund
- Estimated Lottery Distribution
- County's rating remains the same A1 with Moodys and A with Standard Poore

Review of First Quarter Revenue and Expenditure Review / Review of 2006 Budget Retreat

Interim Manager Bullins briefly reviewed the First Quarter Revenue and Expenditure review conducted by Mr. Dennis Thompson, Consultant on October 24, 2006. Mr. Thompson's opinion revealed that there were no significant budget errors and projects that the County will end the fiscal year "in the black" barring negative events that cannot be foreseen. Projections do expect growth in the fund balance.

Interim Manager Bullins also included for the Board the minutes of the 2006 Budget Retreat-February 25, 2006; Special Session for Economic Development-March 20, 2006; and Special Session for Mental Health Issues-March 22, 2006

Interim Manager Bullins requested if the Board desired to have Mr. Dennis Thompson or internal staff to conduct the Second Quarter Review. The Board directed internal staff to conduct the Second Quarter Review.

OPEN DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

REVIEW OF COUNTY DEPARTMENTS

User Friendly Departments

The Board discussed the County having user-friendly departments. The Board unanimously agreed that Stokes County will provide user friendly departments for all citizens of Stokes County starting with the Board of Commissioners.

The Board directed the Interim County Manager to express to each Department Head the following:

- Expectation that all county employees would treat citizens with dignity and respect
- Professionalism throughout the entire department starting with department heads
- Listen and try to help solve the citizens' complaint/problem if possible
- Explain rules and regulations tactfully to the citizens with respect and courtesy

The Board discussed possibly speaking directly to department heads at a later time.

The Board discussed the current procedure for citizens to express complaints

regarding county departments.

Interim County Manager Bullins explained that citizens' complaints are handled by the County Manager's office directing complaints to either department heads or county commissioners as appropriate.

Commissioner Carroll volunteered to help develop a county formal grievance policy which departments will have available to present to citizens who have complaints.

Recreation

Commissioner Walker requested to look at the recreation needs that are not being currently addressed around the County. Commissioner Walker noted the current arrangement with the YMCA, looking at possibly continuing certain programs, but the need for a department within the county for recreation and parks. A department that will be responsible to strengthen recreation, create more recreation opportunities for citizens, and possibly seek grant opportunities for parks.

Commissioner Walker also noted the need for recreation centers around the county for the youth.

The Board discussed the current recreation programs being operated by the YMCA, the current contract, and the volunteers who support the recreation programs provided the youth in the county. The Board requested additional information regarding the programs being operated by the YMCA.

Review of legal needs

Commissioner Lankford requested information regarding the current arrangement for legal services for the County noting the need to compare the financial expenditures of having a staff attorney or continuing to contract the services.

Finance Director Julia Edwards presented documentation regarding the expenditures for fiscal year 2003/04; fiscal year 2004/05; fiscal year 2005/06; and partial fiscal year 2006-07. Finance Director Edwards noted that all DSS services were being provided by outside legal representation, not the county attorney.

The Board discussed the current contract with the county attorney.

The Board agreed further discussion would be needed at budget time.

REVIEW OF COUNTY FACILITIES

Utilization of County owned property

Commissioner Smith expressed the need to look at all county owned property especially property not being utilized.

Commissioner Smith noted the to need to explore the old prison camp site for possible use as a satellite community college, a county department, or even renting the facility.

The Board discussed evaluating all county property and facilities, performing a current needs assessment, and preparing a future needs assessment emphasizing what could be housed in the vacant facilities. The Board also discussed the need for all commissioners to tour facilities before determining the true assessment of each facility.

The Board also noted the need to determine space needs for county departments before

determining a true needs assessment of facilities.

County Manager's Vacant Position

The Board discussed the current vacant county manager's position.

Interim County Manager Bullins noted the following regarding the vacant position:

- Deadline January 31, 2007
- Contacted all applications received before the re-advertisement to determine interest in the position
- 12 applications interested in the position to date
- Advertised Stokes News, Winston Salem Journal (Top Jobs), Greensboro Daily News (Career Builder), Raleigh Times, NCACC, NACO, County Lines, County Manager's server, and county website

Economic Development

Utilities including water/sewer and infrastructure

Commissioner Carroll noted the need to create infrastructure to recruit businesses to Stokes County, bottom line-"it takes money to make money".

The Board discussed the need to evaluate and determine the reasonable places that are going to be appropriate for business growth, and what is needed to add to those areas to make them more attractive.

The Board discussed possibly looking at the #311 corridor, Pinnacle area, and #65 Germanton/Walnut Cove area.

Commissioner Walker noted the need to include the Water and Sewer Authority. Commissioner Walker also noted the need to evaluate the possibility of regional utilities systems for the future.

The Board discussed the role of the Water and Sewer Authority, its membership, non-profit status, and its connection with the county.

Chairman Inman noted the recent allocation of county funding for the countywide feasibility study currently being performed. Chairman Inman noted the feasibility study should provide valuable information regarding future needs of the County and that the feasibility study could possibly help secure available grants.

Commissioner Carroll noted that infrastructure does not only include water and sewer, it includes parks/recreation, libraries, schools, arts, healthcare, roads, etc.

Commissioner Walker expressed the need for a needs assessment relating to adequate parks, libraries, schools, arts, healthcare, etc. in Stokes County.

The Board discussed the importance to become independent- not depending on neighboring counties for water, waste disposal, etc. and the possibility of water intake from the Dan River.

The Board requested information regarding the Water and Sewer Authority and any available information from the feasibility study.

Landfill off #311 – Joint venture with Waste Management

Commissioner Smith requested information regarding a proposed MSW and C&D landfill on Duke Power property discussed several years ago. Commissioner Smith noted the \$1 million dollars incurred by Stokes County with waste disposal last year.

The Board requested any available information regarding the issue.

The Board also discussed reviewing all solid waste issues within the county, current January 6, 2007

and future needs looking at all possibility detailing the amount of waste disposed of by Stokes County annually.

HEALTH CARE ISSUES

Reopening of the King Clinic

The Board discussed the following issues relating to the reopening of the King Clinic:

- Need for a Clinic in the King area
- History of the King Clinic
- Staffing issues at the Health Department
- High priority issue to reopen
- King Clinic budget for fiscal year 2006-07
- Need for Clinic to be self supportive
- Clinic should be operative with not taking anything away from the rest of the county
- DSS also staffed offices at the same location certain days of the week

The Board unanimously agreed that the reopening of the King Clinic was an immediate need. The Board directed the Interim County Manager to request information from the Health Director regarding the status of the King Clinic.

Stokes Reynolds Memorial Hospital

Commissioner Walker requested the Board look at all options pertaining to providing the best medical facilities and services for the entire county and the cost factors involved in providing medical services for the county.

The Board discussed the following regarding Stokes Reynolds Memorial Hospital:

- Medical services for the northern side of the county
- A possible committee to evaluate the medical needs of the county
- Daily use of the hospital facility
- Need for the hospital facility
- Health Services Alliance's main objective to evaluate all medical needs in the County
- Look for ways to improve medical services for the county if possible
- Look for ways to work together to bring the best medical services to the County

Commissioner Carroll noted that the citizens of Stokes County had voted twice that Stokes County would operate a hospital to the point of saying that the County would subsidize with tax money (approximately up to a 10-cent tax rate according to the original bond referendum).

Health Services Alliance

The Board discussed the need for Health Services Alliance to look at the delivery of health services in Stokes County.

Veterans Services in Stokes County

Commissioner Lankford noted the need for a Veteran's clinic in Stokes County. Veterans Services will be opening 10 more clinics in the future in North Carolina and the need to be prepared to lobby for a clinic in Stokes County. Health Services Alliance is currently investigating the possibility of locating a Veterans' clinic in Stokes County.

Mental Health Issues

Commissioner Carroll expressed concerns regarding whether Stokes County residents are receiving the best mental health services that are available.

The Board discussed the following regarding mental health services:

- Current mental health services available
- Tele-medicine currently being provided by Daymark
- The need to evaluate mental health services in the County

- Other issues to consider besides First Opinion Waiver
- Funding being allocated versus services being provided
- Need to express concerns to State Legislators regarding the recent mental health reform

The Board agreed the immediate need to evaluate the current delivery of mental health services in Stokes County.

Staff Personnel Classification and Salary Study

Commissioner Carroll requested to discuss Item H on the agenda – Staff Personnel Classification and Salary Study. Commissioner Carroll noted the need for a true structured salary schedule for county personnel in order to be fair and consistent to all employees. A true salary schedule, which would also eliminate department heads from having to come before the Board of Commissioners requesting a specific salary. A structured salary schedule would pinpoint a clear starting salary depending on education and experience, set rules and guidelines for all departments, be fair and consistent for all county employees, and most of all provide a schedule that all employees can understand.

Chairman Inman noted that this type of schedule removes the subjectivity and places the salary in an objective category.

The Board discussed the need to develop a structured salary as a top priority. Commissioner Carroll and Commissioner Lankford volunteered to head up a committee to develop a structured salary schedule. Commissioner Carroll noted that this type of structured schedule would not replace the need for a classification study in the future, this type of schedule does not dictate where a specific job falls on the salary classification grade. The suggested structured salary schedule would also review all current employees' salaries.

The Board also discussed the possibility of the need for a true salary classification study which reviews job grades, job descriptions, surrounding counties' salaries, like size counties' salaries, job relationships, and what grade a specific job should be placed on.

EMS – Location of Units in Fire Departments and EMS Billing Collections

Commissioner Smith expressed the possibility of EMS stations being located in Fire Departments.

The Board discussed the following regarding the EMS Stations:

- \$50,000 in contingency for a new EMS Station
- Locating EMS Stations in Fire Departments
- Two units being housed in same location in Pinnacle
- Current response time for units
- The need to offer the best EMS Service available for the citizens of the County
- Lawsonville EMS currently located in the Lawsonville Vol. Fire Department
- Available land on Chestnut Grove that could be used for a possible EMS station
- Convalescent calls in the Stokes County
- Meeting the needs of the citizens of Stokes County

The Board noted the need to evaluate the current EMS locations within the County.

The Board also discussed the following regarding the current EMS Billing Collection:

- Current county EMS Collection procedures
- Unpaid invoices being turned over to the Tax Department for collections
- Issue of unpaid invoices that are turned over to the Tax Department and becoming a tax
- Other options of collecting overdue EMS invoices

The Board directed Interim County Manager to seek a legal opinion from the County Attorney regarding discontinuing the current method of transferring overdue EMS invoices to the Tax Department and to look at the current EMS Collection Procedure.

Finance Director Julia Edwards noted the County has the capability to attach the unpaid EMS invoices to the citizens' NC State Tax Refund. The Board discussed the possibility of further investigating this option.

Tourism – Motel and Conference Center in or near Danbury

Commissioner Smith noted the need for a motel/conference center in or near Danbury.

The Board discussed the following regarding tourism:

- Great places to visit in the County, but no where to stay overnight
- Need to investigate/survey whether there is a need for such a facility
- To advance tourism, the county must have facilities for people to stay
- Current status of the Stokes County Tourism Council
- The need for tourism to produce revenue for the County
- Area tourism sites in Stokes County

Interim County Manager Darlene Bullins updated the Board regarding the Regional Tourism Initiative meeting that was tentatively scheduled in Stokes County. The meeting was originally scheduled for 40 to 50 individuals, the meeting had grown to possibly having approximately 80 to 100 individuals over the Christmas holidays. The facility (King Recreation Acres) could not accommodate that number of individuals. The County could not locate a facility that was available for the specific date that was already scheduled, the County would consider hosting another meeting later in the year.

The Board requested any available information from the Interim County Manager regarding the Regional Tourism Initiative.

Historical Preservation

Commissioner Walker noted the valuable historical buildings in Stokes County and the asset of the Stokes County Historical Society in helping to preserve the historical buildings within the County.

Commissioner Walker noted the need to try to help preserve Sheppard's Mill located in Danbury, the possibility of adopting an ordinance to help preserve historical buildings, and the need to take steps to start preserving historical buildings before they are gone.

The Board discussed the value of the historical buildings, sites, etc relating to tourism. The Board requested the Interim County Manager to provide the Board with an update from the Economic Development Director regarding any proposed projects dealing with motels/facilities, etc within the County.

Continuation of Board Retreat

The Board unanimously agreed to set another date at the January 8th meeting to complete the January 6th agenda that was not discussed at today's Board Retreat.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Inman entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Lankford moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was

unanimous.

Darlene M. Bullins
Clerk to the Board

J. Leon Inman
Chairman