

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
)
COUNTY OF STOKES)
)

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA
FEBRUARY 2, 2008

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Board Retreat in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administrative Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Saturday, February 2, 2008 at 9:00 am with the following members present:

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

County Personnel in Attendance:
County Manager K. Bryan Steen
Clerk to the Board Darlene Bullins
Finance Director Julia Edwards

Chairman J. Leon Inman called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Smith 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.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT – GOVERNING BODY – APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Inman entertained a motion to approve or amend the February 2, 2008 agenda.

Vice Chairman Walker requested to add Economic Development to 2008-09 County

Budget Discussion – Item VI. The Board had no issues with adding Economic Development to the agenda.

Vice Chairman Walker moved to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Smith seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Opening Remarks

Chairman Inman expressed his appreciation to fellow board members for taking the time to work together to set goals, to work toward those goals, and to review those goals periodically.

Chairman Inman requested Board members to express items that each board member wished to discuss at today's meeting:

Vice Chairman Walker

- Education – Schools
- Stand alone community college
- Economic Development
- The top three issues are in no specific order
- Wireless internet connectivity
- Keep taxes as low as possible

Commissioner Lankford

- Keep property tax low – hold the line
- Public Education
- Improve employee morale
- Economic Development – long term investments

Commissioner Carroll

- Only agenda I have is the agenda approved for today's meeting

Commissioner Smith

- Public Education
- Providing the best services available
- Providing services that are cost effective

Chairman Inman

- Reiterated that all goals interact with each other
- Making all the pieces fit together

- The need to realistically develop an Economic Development plan that can attract Economic Development to the County – Stokes County is currently working with Economic Development Commission to make the plan a reality, the County is not just waiting for something to happen

Economic Development

The Board discussed the following issues pertaining to Economic Development (ED):

- The importance of Economic Development in Stokes County
- Stokes County continues to lead the state in the number of citizens who leave Stokes County to work in another county
- Creation of small businesses
- Laying the foundation for Economic Development in a cost effective way
- Working to build schools, looking at water and sewer projects, County Manager is currently working with towns and cities discussing infrastructure – all are related to Economic Development
- Need for a feasibility study when the new ED Director is hired
- Need to look at agriculture businesses, home businesses, and existing businesses
- Need to identify the economic needs and opportunities in this county and prioritize those needs and opportunities
- One of the most important issues is the County must have a plan
- The director's vacancy in the ED department – need for a full time position

Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Chairman Inman requested members to express their expectations and role of the EDC.

Commissioner Carroll

- First step is to perform a needs assessment –what does Stokes County need in terms of infrastructure – from there - “What should be our focus?”
- Also perform a needs assessment of what is realistic for Stokes County
- Identify what Stokes County has to offer
- The current EDC is set up as an “Advisory Board”
- The EDC should bring information that they feel the Board of Commissioners needs to hear – not just what the Board wants to hear

Commissioner Lankford

- Needs assessment for land planning – need to assess potential areas that have not been identified
- EDC serves as an Advisory Board to the Board of Commissioners which will feed information to the Board of Commissioners
- Help the Board of Commissioners to develop a strategic plan for the County and make it work with “teamwork”
- Appointed as an “Advisory Board” not as a separate board – to report to the Board of the Commissioners

Commissioner Smith

- Advisory Board to the Board of Commissioners
- Perform needs assessment of the County's assets
- Use the knowledge and experience of the members of the EDC

Vice Chairman Walker

- Needs assessment of the areas that have potential for Economic Development
- Identify the needs and opportunities and establish priorities
- Define what sets Stokes County apart from all the others
- EDC should be more than an Advisory Board, it such be exclusive of the Board of Commissioners – their job is to create and move Economic Development forward in Stokes County
- EDC should be able to communicate with the proper sources and try to do whatever it takes to get the job done
- EDC should not have restrictions – the EDC should not be made to feel that they serve the Board of Commissioners

Chairman Inman

- Reiterated the EDC is currently set up as “Advisory Board” – to advise the Board of Commissioners

The Board discussed the role and expectations of the EDC, the EDC being an Advisory Board, statutory boards, and the need to provide the EDC with what is expected from the Board of Commissioners.

County Manager Bryan Steen noted the following regarding an EDC which he had previously worked with:

- The EDC was made up of business individuals who all had certain capabilities such as banking, marketing, etc. who could network and facilitate relationships that attracted new businesses
- All decisions regarding Economic Development were the final authority of the Board of Commissioners for policies and expenditures related to Economic Development
- The EDC would work with the Economic Development Director to not only attract new businesses, but help existing businesses expand
- The Commissioner that was appointed by the Board of Commissioners to serve on the EDC was automatically appointed to serve as the Chairman of the EDC – the Chairman was the liaison between both boards
- The members of the EDC bring knowledge to the table

Manager Steen suggested a possible mission statement between the Stokes EDC and Board of Commissioners. Manager Steen submitted a legal review regarding Economic Development Commission from County Attorney Edward Powell.

Chairman Inman requested the Board review the legal review submitted by County Attorney Powell for future discussion.

Vice Chairman Walker stated that he thinks the County needs a plan to move forward with Economic Development and the possibility of adding additional members to the Commission.

The Board discussed the possibility of a joint meeting with the EDC at the next EDC monthly meeting. The Board would discuss a possible joint meeting at their next regular meeting.

EDC Member Sam Hill noted the need for the EDC to have a clear understanding of their powers and duties so that they can get on with business.

Chairman Inman concluded the Board was all in agreement that Economic Development was a top priority of this Board.

Review of County's Current Financial Status

Finance Director Julia Edwards presented a detailed financial report as of 01-31-2008.

Finance Director Edwards discussed the following:

- Revenues and Expenditures
- Ad Valoren Taxes – approximately 90.93% collected
- EMS Fees – approximately 80.50% collected
- Investments – approximately 77.29% collected
- Expenditures – 49.01% spent – on target
- Contingency Accounts
- Total available cash = \$16,473,210.39
- Fund Balance – currently stands in good status

Finance Director Julia Edwards noted revenues were on target with expenditures holding the line.

County Manager Steen noted that the County had implemented procedures to conserve energy.

Review of Second Quarter Revenues/Expenditures

County Manager Bryan Steen discussed the following regarding the second quarterly review of revenues and expenditures:

- Sales tax – approximately 41% for the year
- Sheriff and Jail revenues on target
- Investments are on target
- EMS revenue could possibly go over budget by \$500,000
- Health and DSS revenues are two months behind due to state reimbursement
- King Clinic revenue under budget due to the fluctuation of providers and the opening of the new pediatric clinic (private practice) in King that accepts Medicaid (Interim Health Department Director Braswell has been notified of the issue)
- Home Health – revenue under budget due to competing with private providers and the vacant Public Health Nurse position
- Quarterly review resulted in reverting back the following to the General Fund:
 - Elections = \$50,239
 - Information Technology = \$20,897
 - Cooperative Extension = \$29,000
 - Stokes Reynolds Hospital - \$106,110
 - Contingency balance remains at \$127,587
 - Personnel Contingency balance remains at \$114,593
 - Approximately \$450,000 that can be reverted back to fund balance if not needed before June 30, 2008
- Investments in North Carolina Capital Management Trust is currently yielding 4.32% with loans for possible capital needs at 2.93% and 2.75%

Vice Chairman Walker suggested looking into selling the older cars for smaller compact cars that are more fuel efficient with possibly building this into the upcoming budget.

Upcoming 2008-09 County Budget – Discussion

County Manager Bryan Steen discussed the following special projects:

- Parking Lot – Government Center
- Parking Lot – Danbury Library
- Parking Lot – Walnut Cove EMS Station
- Roof – Government Center
- Roof – Communications Building
- Roof (Ice Guards)– Booth Mountain Building
- New EMS Station – Pinnacle area
- Potential of completing the third floor of the Administrative Building

- Smaller projects
 - Space for District Attorney
 - Courtroom “C”
 - Animal Control –additional space

The Board discussed the special projects presented by Manager Steen and the need for a new EMS facility for the two units based in the Pinnacle area.

Chairman Inman suggested the Manager prioritize the special projects with cost estimates for the upcoming budget year and for future budgets.

Manager Steen requested if the Board had any special projects that needed to be added to the list.

Vice Chairman Walker noted the need to add the following to special projects:

- Assessment of the pavement at the Greenbox sites
- Increasing the availability of high speed Internet connectivity in the county
- Market job classification salary study

Commissioners Lankford and Carroll both noted that the new salary pay plan needs to be in place at least a year before implementing a market job classification salary study.

Commissioner Smith noted that a market job classification salary study be done before too long.

Manager Steen noted possibly looking at a study in March/April in 2009 with implementation in the 2009-10 budget.

Chairman Inman noted the importance of keeping our salaries as competitive as possible, but that must be balanced with all the other county needs.

Vice Chairman Walker agreed with Chairman Inman's thoughts regarding keeping salaries as competitive as possible, but balancing the county needs.

Commissioner Carroll noted the need to possibly adjust the salary schedule across the board by at least 1%.

Commissioner Lankford noted the need to seriously consider funding a market study in March/April 2009 with implementation in the 2009-10 budget.

The Board discussed Commissioner Carroll's suggestion of adjusting the salary schedule across the board by at least 1%.

County Manager Steen requested guidance from the Board regarding the tax rate for upcoming fiscal year 2008-09.

Vice Chairman Walker

- Keep tax rate the same for this budget year

Commissioner Smith

- Ready to build a school – not ready to put a number on the tax rate

Commissioner Lankford

- Keep tax rate low

Commissioner Carroll

- Need to start setting aside as much as possible for schools, the more in bank, the less there is borrow – can't build schools without a tax increase

Chairman Inman

- Uncertain at this time with the need to have an analysis from the financial advisor

The Board discussed the Hold Harmless Funding, 2009 Revaluation, growth in real assessed value, financing options for schools, debt service, need to review the Board of Education's priority list for capital projects, and the need to hire a financial advisor.

The Board discussed cost estimates for completion of third floor.

Chairman Inman directed Manager Steen to return cost estimates for the third floor completion of the Administrative Building at the next meeting.

Commissioner Lankford noted the need to explore every possible grant available.

Vice Chairman Walker noted the need to continue to explore regionalism with utilities and possibly talk with Pilot Mountain-Surry County regarding water.

Vice Chairman Walker also noted the need to develop a suggestion system where employees could suggest cost savings ideas, which would save the county funding. Employees could possibly receive some of the savings.

Review of 2007 Goals

County Manager Bryan Steen discussed the following 2007 Goals with the Board:

- User Friendlier Department
 - Have not had any serious complaints
- Recreation
 - Survey recently completed by YMCA
- Legal
 - More economical for contracting with attorney versus a full time attorney
 - Board agreed the county attorney should only attend Board meetings when needed
- County Manager
 - Hired a manager in April 2007
- Economic Development
 - Economic Development currently in transition
 - New Public Works Director brings valuable knowledge regarding water systems
 - Vice Chairman Walker noted the need to have the final feasibility study from Golder and Associates, the need to secure grants that are available for infrastructure, and the need to continue to investigate regionalism for utilities
- Stokes Reynolds Hospital
 - Continues to decrease losses

- CBOC
 - Commissioner Lankford noted that the CBOC Project is still ongoing
- Health Services Alliance
 - Vice Chairman Walker noted the Alliance continues to have a presence in the County seeking various ways to make health services in Stokes County better
- Mental Health
 - Interviews with candidates for the Mental Health Coordinator will start next week
- EMS
 - Presented information from EMS Director regarding EMS stations in Fire Departments, evaluation of current EMS stations, convalescent calls in Stokes County, history of EMS collections and evaluation of vehicle needs
- Tourism
 - EDC related activity
 - Need for a motel/conference center in the area
- District Plan for Electing Commissioners and School Board Members
 - Should hear back by April 1st from the committee
- Schools
 - Previous meeting with a Board of Education
 - Need for a financial advisor
- Compensatory Time/Holiday Time/Vacation Time Payoff
 - Advised department heads to closely monitor comp. time and reduce the current employees' balances
- Community College
 - Need for a timeline on the Environmental Study and Feasibility Study
 - Request from Director Ann Watts-FTC for a possible Task Force – discussion to continue at the next regular meeting
 - Vice Chairman Walker noted the need to keep the process moving to have a stand alone campus
 - Commissioner Smith noted the need to see documentation that supports a community college that will provide a two year degree transfer program and a two degree program – not a community college just for selective one semester programs

Chairman Inman expressed his appreciation to Board members for their time.

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. Vice Chairman Walker seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Darlene M. Bullins
Clerk to the Board

J. Leon Inman
Chairman