

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
MARCH 2, 2016

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Joint Session with Caswell and Rockingham Counties in the lower lobby of the Government Center located in Danbury, North Carolina on Wednesday, March 2, 2016 at 6:30 pm with the following present:

Stokes County

Chairman J. Leon Inman
Vice Chairman James D. Booth
Commissioner Jimmy Walker
Commissioner Ernest Lankford
Commissioner Ronda Jones
County Manager Richard D. Morris
Clerk to the Board Darlene Bullins
Chief Animal Control Officer Kevin Webster
Planning Director/Interim Economic Dev. Director David Sudderth
Sheriff Michael Marshall

Caswell County

Vice Chairman N. Kent Williamson
Commissioner Nathaniel Hall
Commissioner Larry Hamlett
Commissioner Jeremiah Jefferies
Commissioner David Owen
Commissioner Kenneth D. Travis
Commissioner Bryan Miller
County Manager Bryan Miller
Sheriff Michael Welch
Clerk Paula Seamster

Rockingham County

Chairman T. Craig Travis
Vice Chairman Mark F. Richardson
Commissioner H. Keith Duncan
County Manager Lance L. Metzler
Interim County Attorney W. Eugene Russell
Sheriff Sam Page
Clerk to the Board Pamela M. McLain

Legislative Delegation

Senator Shirley Randleman – #30th Senate District

Representative Kyle Hall – #91st House District

(Dinner meal was provided before the joint session)

Chairman Inman called the Stokes County Board of Commissioners' meeting to order.

Vice Chairman Kent Williamson called the Caswell County Board of Commissioners' meeting to order.

Chairman Craig Travis called the Rockingham County Board of Commissioners' meeting to order.

Chairman Leon Inman welcomed those in attendance for the joint session and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Chairman Inman recognized special guests: Senator Shirley Randleman, 30th Senate District and NC House of Representative Kyle Hall, 91st House District.

Appreciation Presentation

Rockingham County Chairman Craig Travis presented Stokes and Caswell Counties, a framed letter signed by South Carolina Governor Nikki R. Haley in appreciation of the three counties joint effort to send approximately 3,000 cases of bottled water to South Carolina after the historic destructive flood.

The Boards discussed what can happen when counties join together.

Moment of Silence

Chairman Inman requested a moment of Silence for Commissioner Darrell Fry and his family from Randolph County who recently lost a grandson unexpectedly.

Discussion

Chairman Inman turned the meeting over to County Manager Rick Morris who would be

introducing the items for discussion.

County Manager Morris noted that he would be introducing each item for the Boards to discuss.

County Manager Morris commented:

- Would like to recommend for the next meeting to zero in on some specific topics that the three counties can start to collaborate on
- These joint meetings are good networking sessions

Animal Control Ordinance

Stokes County Manager Rick Morris introduced Chief Animal Control Officer Kevin Webster who had worked diligently on updating the County's Animal Control Ordinance and Exotic Animal Ordinance.

County Manager Morris commented:

- County's theme of both ordinances is to increase owner responsibility
- Sure this will be an interest to all the counties
- Have recently revamped the County's Animal Shelter
- Have received some positive comments on the recent updated Exotic Animal Control Ordinance
- Increased fees so that animals adopted from the shelter can be neuter/spayed before leaving the shelter

Chief Animal Control Officer Kevin Webster commented:

- Work with management and county attorney to make our ordinances work better for the county and the public
- Addressed dangerous dogs
- Have updated our adoption procedures
 - Had a great adoption rate last month – adopted out 65 animals
- Have revamped the entire operation at the shelter
- Updated the Exotic Animal Control Ordinance to protect the safety of the public
- Trying to educate the public regarding the new updated ordinances

County Manager Morris opened the meeting for comments.

Rockingham County Chairman Travis and Rockingham County Sheriff Sam Page spoke briefly regarding an incident that involved approximately 16 dogs that had to be held by Rockingham County until the case was settled in court which was very costly (case took almost a

year).

Rockingham County Chairman Travis noted that Rockingham County is currently working on an ordinance involving the long term holding of animals, possibly private placement.

Broadband Expansion

County Manager Rick Morris presented the following update regarding broadband expansion in Stokes County:

- Expressed appreciation to Senator Shirley Randleman for introducing Wilkes Communication to Stokes County
- Interim Economic Development Director David Sudderth found NC General Statute 158.349.6 which authorizes counties to allocate funding to provide grants for the expansion of high speed internet/broadband to unserved areas along with public/private partnerships
- Trying to duplicate the model being done in Wilkes County
- Stokes County currently has a Request for Proposals for the expansion of high speed internet/broadband to unserved areas
- Proposals due in on March 14th
- This will be a major game changer for economic development and education in Stokes County

Commissioner Walker noted that Stokes County has been working for several, several years regarding the expansion of high speed internet/broadband.

Chairman Inman mentioned the joint grant application that was submitted from Stokes and Rockingham Counties several years ago.

Senator Randleman commented:

- First learned from a citizen about the lack of internet in Stokes County
- Talked to Wilkes Communication that got things moving in Stokes County
- Wilkes Communication is willing to make investments in the rural areas to expand broadband in North Carolina
- Broadband expansion will improve property values and will be a tremendous tool for those students who have no internet availability

Potential Water Line Project – Portion of HWY #311

County Manager Rick Morris presented the following information regarding a potential waterline project regarding a portion of HWY #311 in Stokes and Rockingham Counties:

- Could be a joint project with Rockingham County
- Infrastructure in Stokes County is a challenge
- Would like to know if Rockingham would be interested in looking into a joint project on HWY #311 (approximately 4 miles)
- Wieland Copper, county's largest private employer, is located on the proposed route
- A new medical facility/community center is being constructed also along the route
- Could be more business opportunities if water was available
- Gas and water are located along the route
- Feel that corridor has great economic development potential
- Provided a map detailing the route

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- Have heard that there is plenty of water available for this area
- Town of Walnut Cove has had issues with water
- Could be an advantage for both Stokes and Rockingham Counties

Rockingham County Chairman Travis commented:

- Would be glad to discuss the possibility
- Would be glad to set up a meeting with the necessary players to see where it could go
- Will definitely make that meeting happen

Rockingham County Commissioner Keith Duncan commented:

- Could be in the Madison water line
- Capacity could be an issue
- Would probably cost approximately \$3.5 million to make that happen

Economic Development

County Manager Rick Morris introduced Interim Economic Development Director/Planning Director David Sudderth.

County Manager Rick Morris commented:

- Open to any ideas to improve economic development
- Hope to be able to join forces to increase economic development in all three counties

Interim Economic Development Director /Planning Director David Sudderth commented:

- Working with the broadband project that will open up infrastructure for Stokes County; this is huge for Stokes County
- The proposed water project for Stokes and Rockingham Counties could provide future employment for both counties
- Working with Dollar General representatives to bring stores to Stokes County
- Tourism is big for Stokes County

- Have approximately 500,000 visitors to Hanging Rock State Park each year
- People come and go
- Need to have something for people to spend money and generate sales tax dollars
- Visitors are coming from the Raleigh and Charlotte areas
- County has developed an app that a visitor can download to find out what is available in Stokes County to do and see, where to eat, and where to play
 - Have been doing brochures that were basically out of date once they were printed
 - New app has lots of information
 - Found out that 85% of the people are using smartphones
 - Apps are the way for the future to get information out there
 - Targeting the youth market, military base, colleges, etc.
 - Tracking data to be able to show that the app is worth the investment
- Have branded the county using Hanging Rock
- Want to make it so that people will want to come back
- We want people to know that Stokes County has more than just mountains and a river
- Would be happy to work with anyone

Rockingham County Commissioner Mark Richardson proposed to work together to possibly create a crescent trail through Yadkin, Surry, Stokes, and Rockingham Counties, where state parks and wineries are all located.

Chairman Inman commented:

- Discussed the Economic Development's four prong approach:
 - Retain Business
 - Create New Business
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Tourism
 - Love to partner with both Rockingham and Caswell Counties
- One thing that Stokes County is not proud of - leads the State in the percentage of residents who work outside of Stokes County
- Feel it extremely important to collaborate and work together with all the things changing in Raleigh such as Commerce
- Have a new Art Market/Visitor Centers Project that will be completed within the next year
- Need to collaborate to let them know what is available in the adjoining counties

Rockingham County Chairman Travis suggested scheduling a meeting to start getting some of this ideas in the works.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Believe the folks in Raleigh over the past few years are viewing the regional approach much more favorable

Vice Chairman Booth commented:

- Discussed the partnership of Soil and Water in all three counties – working together with the #319 Grant
- Mentioned the Sauratown Trails in Stokes County for hiking, horseback riding, walking
- Spoke briefly about the recent addition to Hanging Rock State Park – Vade Mecum/Moores Springs property

County Manager Rick Morris commented:

- Discussed the recent decision by the Board of Commissioners to ban alcohol on the Dan River to improve tourism
- Local businesses support the County's decision
- There were numerous issues involving drinking on the river
- Senator Randleman will be introducing a bill this year to ban alcohol on the Dan Rive in Stokes County (authority will be given to the Board of County Commissioners)

Sheriff Mike Marshall spoke briefly about the issues involving drinking.

Manager Morris noted that this has been done in Polk County who has had great success with the ban – actually increased tourism.

Proposed Merger – CenterPoint Human Services and Cardinal Innovations Healthcare

Stokes County Chairman Leon Inman and Rockingham County Commissioner Keith Duncan spoke about the proposed merger.

Chairman Inman commented:

- Provided a brief update regarding what is going on in Raleigh regarding mental health
- Merger between CenterPoint Human Services and Cardinal Innovations Healthcare has still not been approved by NCHHS Secretary Brajer
- There is a proposal for six regions with a lot of things in transition

Senator Randleman commented:

- Secretary Brajer is finalizing his comprehensive mental health plan that will be released shortly
- Feel the merger involving CenterPoint and Cardinal is a top priority right now

Commissioner Keith Duncan commented:

- Praised Chairman Inman for a great job working on behalf of all the counties in NC with the Mental Health Task Force
- Provided a brief history of how this merger began and where it currently is – waiting on Secretary Brajer’s approval
- Met with Secretary Brajer and was very impressed with his knowledge and ideas
- One of the top priorities is trying to eliminate the long waits incurred by Sheriff’s Deputies in the ER – waiting for evaluation and placement if needed
- New crisis facility is being built in Winston Salem (16 beds)
- Some type of mental health almost touches everyone in some form or fashion – teen suicide is a very big problem in North Carolina
- Feel that CenterPoint is going in the right direction with the Cardinal merger
- Would like to see Guilford come into the Cardinal Network which would be a big help for Rockingham

Senator Shirley Randleman commented:

- Decisions should be announced very soon
- Not sure bigger is better, but will just have to wait and see
- One thing concerning the General Assembly is the large Fund Balances created by the MCO; currently holds more than the State of North Carolina holds in reserve
- Question if the consumers are really being served?
- With the excess funding, MCOs are going to start doing some capital projects
- Feel they need to come into rural areas and build facilities

Commissioner Duncan commented:

- Spoke about the top floor in one of the local hospital that is not being used; discussions have been regarding the floor being used for mental health

Senator Randleman responded:

- Urged Rockingham County officials to look into the possibility of using the empty floor at their hospital for mental health service
- Would begin discussions with the MCO and Secretary Brajer
- Talk is centering around using the excessive funds for capital improvements

Sheriff Page commented:

- Spoke about the long hours Deputies spend in ERs waiting for an assessment for a patient
- Like the sound of using the vacant hospital floor for possible mental health facilities

Senator Randleman commented:

- That excessive money needs to be used to provide mental health services, not in some Fund Balance
- State is pulling back money each year

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Confirmed with Chairman Inman that CenterPoint is not one of the MCOs with a large Fund Balance

Senator Randleman responded:

- One MCO had approximately \$100 million in reserve

Sheriff Mike Marshall and Sheriff Sam Page spoke briefly about the Crisis Intervention Training and the benefits that deputies are receiving through CenterPoint.

Senator Randleman commented:

- When I went to the General Assembly in 2009, folks sitting in jails was one of my great concern
- Started working in 2009 and worked four years with a group to draft a bill that would get people who commit crimes who were found incapable of standing trial out of the jail into a treatment facility; this legislation was passed in 2013
- Those people who commit crimes who can't stand trial are now housed in state hospitals which is a big help to counties

Closing Remarks

Representative Kyle Hall commented:

- Was appointed by the Executive Committees in Rockingham and Stokes County to replace Bryan Holloway
- Already hitting the ground running
- Honor to be in Raleigh and serving the people of Rockingham and Stokes Counties
- Have been appointed as Vice Chairman of the Commerce and Job Development Committee, Education Appropriations, Full Appropriations, Public Utilities and Insurance
- Ready to get some things done

Chairman Inman questioned Senator Randleman what did she feel would be the big issues facing the State Budget this year and the status of state revenues.

Senator Randleman responded:

- Will not be doing anything controversial
- Feel there will be a surplus in state revenues this year, not sure how much
- Believe it will be an efficiently run session
- Going to do the people's business and go home
- Trying to get back on track with the educational lottery capital money, stays on everyone's mind

Chairman Inman opened the floor for closing comments.

Rockingham County Chairman Travis expressed appreciation to Stokes County for hosting the joint meeting.

Caswell County Vice Chairman Williamson noted the next joint meeting would be in Caswell County.

Chairman Inman expressed appreciation to those in attendance at tonight's joint meeting.

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 Booth seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Caswell and Rockingham Counties adjourned their meetings.

Darlene M. Bullins
Clerk to the Board

J. Leon Inman
Chairman