

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 22, 2017**

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a joint meeting with the Caswell and Rockingham County Boards of County Commissioners at the Caswell County Senior Center located at 645 Fire Tower Road in Yanceyville, North Carolina at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, March 22, 2017 with the following present:

Stokes County Board of County Commissioners

Chairman Jimmy Walker
 Vice Chairman Ernest Lankford
 Commissioner James D. Booth
 Commissioner Ronda Jones
 Commissioner Ronnie Mendenhall

Stokes County Personnel

County Manager Richard D. Morris
 Clerk to the Board Darlene Bullins
 Sheriff Mike Marshall
 Chief Deputy Doug Lawson
 Economic Development Technical Analyst Tory Mabe

Caswell County Board of County Commissioners

Chairman Kenneth D. Travis
 Vice Chairman David Owen
 Commissioner Sterling Carter
 Commissioner Nathaniel Hall
 Commissioner Jeremiah Jefferies
 Commissioner Rick McVey

Caswell County Personnel

County Manager Bryan Miller
 Caswell County Library Director Rhonda Griffin
 Sheriff Michael Welch
 Clerk to the Board Paula Seamster

Rockingham County Board of County Commissioners

Chairman Mark Richardson
 Vice Chairman Kevin Berger
 Commissioner T. Craig Travis

Rockingham County Personnel
County Manager Lance Metzler
Sheriff Sam Page
Clerk to the Board Pamela McLain

Caswell County Chairman Kenneth Travis welcomed those in attendance to Caswell County.

INVOCATION

Caswell County Commissioner Nathaniel Hall delivered the invocation.

Meeting Call to Order

Caswell County Chairman Kenneth Travis called the Caswell County Board of County Commissioners to order.

Rockingham County Chairman Mark Richardson called the Rockingham County Board of County Commissioners to order.

Stokes County Chairman Jimmy Walker called the Stokes County Board of County Commissioners to order.

Library Expansion Project

Caswell County Library Director Rhonda Griffin provided those in attendance the following power point presentation regarding the Caswell County Library Expansion Project:

- Current library (Gunn Memorial Public Library) is 7,500 sq. ft. and every inch of the building is used
- Library is located in the center of Caswell County
- Meeting room will only hold 22 people
- Caswell County's library is ranked 99th out of 100 libraries when it comes to funding and program attendance ranked 11th per capita
- Caswell County is ranked 99th out of 100 counties with people with a bachelor's degree or higher
- Current library is at capacity with programs and services
 - Fiscal Year 2015-16:
 - Computer use – 12,774 usage
 - Circulation – 52,120 items
 - Door County – 76,884 patrons
- The library has to rent the civic center for the Summer Reading Programs

- No room to separate teens from children
- There is no quiet space in the library
- Library is one of the few places in Caswell County that provides free high-speed internet access
- The library is often a child's first exposure to books and technology
- Library is within walking distance from the only high school in Caswell County
- Within a three-mile radius of the Library, the unemployment rate is 19.7%; the poverty rate is 62%; household income of less than \$20,000 is 76%; and less than 38% high school graduates
- Caswell County does not have Boys & Girls Clubs, a mall, a movie theater, a bowling alley, a skating rink, or a YMCA
- Expansion project
 - Started in 2012/13 - Library received a State Library Planning Grant to find out what the library needed
 - February 2015 - Board of County Commissioners approved \$11,500 for an architect to create schematic designs
 - June 1, 2015 - Schematic designs were submitted to the Board of County Commissioners
 - June - September 2015 - Launched campaign to raise funding for expansion project
 - September 25, 2015 - Piedmont Electric Cooperative approved a 10 year, 0% interest loan for the library - provided seed money for the project
 - October 2016/January 2017 - Applied for funding from Golden LEAF Foundation
 - November 2016 - Applied to Danville Regional Foundation for additional funding for the proposed project
 - April 2017 - Golden LEAF will announce grant recipients
- Library provides free one-on-one assistance with resumes, job searchers, etc.
- Library also provides free basic computer and job skill classes
- Provided power point designs of the expansion area:
 - Teen area with clear walls
 - Storage area
 - Smaller quiet study/tutor rooms
 - Local history room doubled in size
 - Quiet reading area
 - Study rooms
 - Additional restrooms
 - Meeting room with retractable wall for multiple small meetings or one large meeting
 - Plenty of public computers near circulation desk
 - Children's area away from the teens
 - ADA compliant stacks
 - Circulation desk in center for clean line of sight
 - Energy efficient windows and lighting
- New project includes a sprinkler system for entire library

Caswell County Manager Miller noted that the County is very pleased with the proposed library expansion project.

NC School Net

Caswell County Library Rhonda Griffin presented the following information about NC School Net:

- Caswell County has minimal internet connection
- Caswell County is currently working with Technical Assistance Director Glenn Knox, NC Office of Information Technology Services, Central Region, Broadband Office, to improve internet connectivity in Caswell County
- Very excited about this possible opportunity

Glenn Knox, Technical Assistance Director – NC Broadband Office, provided the following information about NC School Net:

- Would like to let everyone know that I actually live in Stokes County
- Spoke about how the FCC publishes data on how much broadband is across North Carolina and how that information is incorrect
 - 2016 FCC Data states (data is incorrect)
 - Stokes County has only 5% without broadband
 - Rockingham County has only 4% without broadband
 - Caswell County has only 55% without broadband
- School Net was started across the state because of the need for students to have internet
- NC School Net is a program to connect students in rural areas to high speed internet
- FCC pulled the UHF licenses in 2010 which created White Space
- White Space is any unused spectrum between earlier analog TV stations
- White Space provides a broadband up to 30 km
- There is no charge to use the White Space
- Working with Caswell County and the Caswell County Library to test this equipment
- This proposed program, called “Caswell County Library Net” will allow patrons to check out the equipment from the library free of charge which will allow them to have internet services
- Library receives Federal E-Rate reimbursement which is a program that allows schools to receive a discount for internet services
- Caswell County Commissioners has appropriated \$15,000 to the school to purchase test equipment

Update on Stokes County Tourism App

Stokes County Economic Development Technical Analyst Tory Mabe presented the following power point presentation regarding the Hanging Rock Stokes County Travel/ Tourism Smartphone App:

- App cost approximately \$5,500 per year
- Overview
 - Cost effective way of advertising Stokes County to locals & visitors
 - What the App Includes:
 - Things To Do
 - Places to Eat
 - Places to Shop
 - Places to Stay
 - Event Calendar
 - MORE Section: Includes links to Video Tour, County Government & Tourism Websites, Local Weather, Town of Danbury, City of King, Town of Walnut Cove Town Websites
 - A way to contact us or a specific business directly
 - Turn by Turn Directions to local businesses at the tap of a button
- Hanging Rock – Stokes County, NC App Launch: September 2015
 - Since launch date over 2,000 downloads
 - Downloads include those who have kept our app on their devices
 - Analytics help to track all downloads
 - Allows us know where people are using the app
 - How long they are staying in the app
 - What sections they are visiting most
 - Highest Downloads occur when people travel
 - Those finding and downloading keep the app on their phone to stay connected to Stokes
- Why go Digital?
 - Smartphone App is a more effective marketing tool than website alone
 - Can instantly reach people via Push Notifications
 - Provides the most up-to-date information
 - 85% of mobile users use travel apps in their destination
 - 43% of businesses on Yelp have inaccurate information
 - 98% of in-destination navigation is accessed in apps
 - Smartphone users search for Apps before websites
 - Digital Stokes County Visitor Guide
 - Same format as print
 - Available for interactive viewing
 - Clickable links to business sites
 - Businesses
 - Analytics Provided
 - Available In App and Online

- Push Notifications
 - Help To Engage the Users with our area
 - Keeps Users up-to-date on local events
 - User Can Call, Visit a Website, Email, or Save an Event
 - Gives instant push of a button access to venue or host
 - Can track to see how many people open notification
 - Can track which button options were selected
 - Catchy notification title encourages opens
 - When users open notifications more likely to stay in the app and use other features
 - Instantly know how many receive notification
- Analytics
 - App Analytics are visible in real time.
 - 2016 Analytics show that we had 1,223 new users download the app
 - Leading to over 7,000 different sessions or use of the app
 - By using analytics we can set goals
 - Visible feedback shows how advertising methods are working
 - Many demographics and user or device specific information provided
 - Showing new devices, active devices, number of sessions, length of session, average time a user spent in the app on their device
 - Also shows us that the most use comes in summer months when visitation to Stokes County's main features Hanging Rock State Park and the Dan River occur
- Benefits of Hanging Rock App
 - Hanging Rock State Park attendance is up 11%
 - No longer mail as many visitor information packets
 - Most visited link on HangingRock.com is the link to download app www.hangingrock.com/downloadapp
 - Via survey information visitors to Stokes County had downloaded the app prior to planning their visit
 - Assists visitors in finding places to eat, shop, stay inside the county, not just in Danbury where Hanging Rock and Dan River are located
 - Someone visiting may want Mexican, they can easily find it in the app
 - Can navigate the winding roads to the location with Turn By Turn Directions
- Methods of Advertising
 - WXII – Channel 12 – local television
 - Billboards
 - Hanging Rock Stokes County App
 - Website
- Stokes County, NC – there is an App for That

Stokes County Manager Rick Morris noted that the App is also targeting military bases in North Carolina and that it is also on the WXII (local television station) website which markets targeted areas.

Prepared Meals Tax

Caswell County Manager Bryan Miller presented the following information regarding a Prepared Meals Tax:

- Caswell County has had a local senator to prepare legislation for a Prepared Meals Tax
- Since the legislation has been prepared, there has been a number of questions come up about the Prepared Meals Tax
- The current language in the legislation is not what Caswell County wanted
- The County originally planned to use the tax revenue for tourism
- Open the floor for any discussion on the Prepared Meals Tax

Rockingham County Manager Metzler responded:

- Only five (5) local governments have the Prepared Meals Tax now
- Once passed by legislation, it takes a local referendum to get it enacted (voted by the citizens)

Rockingham County Chairman Richardson responded:

- Believe it would be like “beating a dead horse”

Rockingham County Commissioner C. Travis responded:

- Do not see it passing

Caswell County Vice Chairman Owen responded:

- Caswell County is struggling and the county is looking for ways to bring in new revenue that would be directed strictly for tourism

Major Budget Considerations

Caswell County Manager Miller opened the floor for discussion regarding Major Budget Considerations.

Stokes County Manager Rick Morris responded:

- Senator Shirley Randleman is researching an issue regarding class sizes for K-3 grades which will impact funding
 - If there is a K-3 reduction mandate this year, Stokes County would need an additional 24 teachers and 12 classrooms
- Senator Randleman has stated that the funding has already been provided to the counties for this class size reduction

Rockingham County Manager Metzler responded:

- Been instructed by the Board of County Commissioners that there would be no tax increase
- All departments were asked to cut their budgets by 2% for Fiscal Year 2017-18
- Manager is also recommending a 2% budget reduction for schools and Rockingham Community College for Fiscal Year 2017-18
- Salary study was done last year with employees receiving considerable increases
- All departments were asked to cut budgets last year and this year

Caswell County Manager Miller responded:

- Major items of concern:
 - Library expansion project
 - Salary study has just been implemented
 - Expecting a health insurance premium increase; have not had an insurance premium increase in the past five (5) years
 - Investing in technology and a recycling program

Update on Food Stamp Fraud/Code Enforcement

Rockingham County Commissioner C. Travis provided the following information regarding their Food Stamp Fraud Program:

- Current program is working great
- Just added another deputy due to the increase in the fraud caseload
- County has set up an anonymous website that triggers investigations
- There is also a Crime Stopper Hotline where anyone can report someone who that think are committing fraud
- The County has gotten back approximately \$700,000 during the one and a half years the program has been operating
- The County last month also started a committee to eliminate assistance fraud which will put together a package for Raleigh and Washington for additional funding for the program – possible cost of using deputies
- The County has a population of over 90,000 and approximately \$1.6 million is spent on food stamps each month in Rockingham County

Publication of Legal Notices

Rockingham County Vice Chairman Berger noted that proposed Senate Bill 343 and House Bill 432 would allow legal notices to be published on the county's website (legal notices, including estates, foreclosures, etc.)

Vice Chairman Berger continued:

- North Carolina Association of County Commissioners supports these bills and urges the counties to also support the bills

Integrated Health Program

Rockingham County Manager Metzler presented the following information regarding the Integrated Health Program:

- Developed this program by working with the Sheriff, Health Department, EMS, and Department of Social Services
- County currently has eight (8) ambulances that have what we call “frequent flyers” who repeatedly call 911
- County has combined two (2) paramedics with a social worker, a deputy, and a behavioral health counselor for each vehicle
- The County has purchased (2) equipped Dodge Journeys to respond to “frequent flyer calls”
- The County has received a \$1.5 million Kate B Reynolds Grant for the program
- State is watching this prototype
- Program should be fully operational by July 1, 2017

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Caswell County Manager Miller noted that Caswell County has passed a proclamation for National Child Abuse Prevention Month – April 2017.

Rockingham County Manager Metzler noted Rockingham County has also passed a proclamation for National Child Abuse Prevention Month – April 2017.

Stokes County Manager Rick Morris noted that Stokes County has the proclamation on their next Agenda.

County Assembly Day – May 10, 2017

Caswell County Manager Miller noted that May 10, 2017 is County Assembly Day in Raleigh.

Rockingham County Manager Metzler noted that this is a good time for Commissioners and the Sheriffs to get together with state legislators and discuss what is really needed in their County.

General Updates

Caswell County Manager Miller opened the floor for general updates from each County.

Caswell County Manager Miller commented:

- Near completion of a Personnel Policy Rewrite
- Board of Commissioners has allocated monies to undergo a Wellness Campaign which will be called “My Wellness, My Way”
 - County employees who participate in the Wellness Campaign will receive a Wellness Passport where they can record activities to win prizes and awards
 - County is also looking at creating an exercise facility in a vacant county building
- Piedmont Community College will host the 2017 Women of Distinction Award on Thursday, March 23, 2017
 - County employee Denise Wilkins was nominated for the health category
- County is in the process of getting a Parks and Recreation Master Plan – County has contracted with GreenPlay
 - On April 3rd, there will be a presentation along with a grant application for a PARTF Grant
- Caswell County Assembly Day is April 13th where the County provides general information about services in Caswell County
 - Caswell County Manager Miller invited officials and staff from Rockingham and Stokes County to attend
 - Runs from 12:00 noon to 6:00 pm on the Square
 - Last year, the Board of County Commissioners provided books to school age children who attended
- County will be hosting a Departmental Leader Retreat on April 26th at Caswell Pines where team building processes are performed
 - Manager Miller invited anyone who wish to attend from Rockingham and Caswell Counties
- A Fire District Tax in being considered by the Board of County Commissioners with a Public Hearing scheduled for May 1st
- Thanked everyone for attending the joint meeting in Caswell County

Caswell County Chairman K. Travis thanked everyone for attending.

Rockingham County Chairman Richardson commented:

- Thanked Caswell County for hosting the joint meeting
- Recognized Stokes County Commissioner Ronda Jones and Caswell County Commissioner Nate Hall for serving on the Piedmont Triad Regional Council and for Commissioner Hall serving as Chairman this year
- Rural counties need to stick together since the NC Association of County Commissioners is 50/50 urban/rural
- Rockingham County EMS has some real needs
- Would like to say that these meetings are good and would like to continue the cooperative working relationship with Caswell and Stokes Counties

Stokes County Chairman Walker commented:

- Pleasure to come to Caswell County
- Expressed appreciation for the kind hospitality
- Impressed that Caswell County has not had a health insurance premium increase during the past five (5) years
- Stokes County is trying to do something to help the current opioid crisis that is not only in Stokes County, but across the State and Nation
 - Possibly looking at another level of DARE
- Economic Development is very important to all three counties and citizens want more jobs in their county

Stokes County Commissioner Jones noted that transportation is another topic with economic development that needs to be looked at.

Stokes County Chairman Walker agreed with Commissioner Jones that transportation is a real need in Stokes County.

Stokes County Chairman Walker expressed appreciation to Caswell County Chairman K. Travis and Rockingham County Chairman Richardson for starting these joint meetings.

Next Joint Meeting

Rockingham County Metzler stated that the next meeting would be in Rockingham County and that he would be working with the other county managers to schedule a date after the budget process is over.

Adjournment

Each respective Chairman adjourned the joint meeting.

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

Vice Chairman Lankford moved to adjourn the joint meeting. Commissioner Booth seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Darlene M. Bullins
Clerk to the Board

March 22, 2017

Jimmy Walker
Chairman