

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 31, 2017

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Special Called Meeting with the County's Legislative Delegation in the Third Floor Conference Room of the Ronald Wilson Reagan Memorial Building (Administration Building) located in Danbury, North Carolina on Friday, March 31, 2017 at 11:00 am with the following members present:

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

Commissioner Ronnie Mendenhall - absent

County Personnel in Attendance:
County Manager Rick Morris
Clerk to the Board Darlene Bullins

Legislative Delegation:
House of Representative Kyle Hall

Chairman Jimmy Walker called the Special Called Meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance.

Chairman Walker welcomed Representative Kyle Hall to today's meeting.

Chairman Walker confirmed with Clerk Darlene Bullins that Senator Shirley Randleman was in Raleigh and was unable to attend today's meeting.

Clerk Bullins noted that Senator Randleman had a meeting at 10:00 am and would also not be able to be participate in a conference call.

Chairman Walker noted that Commissioner Ronnie Mendenhall was unable to attend

today's meeting due to sickness in his family.

Chairman Walker noted that Commissioner Mendenhall, without objection, is excused from today's meeting.

INVOCATION

Chairman Walker asked Vice Chairman Lankford to deliver the invocation.

Vice Chairman Lankford delivered the invocation.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT-GOVERNING BODY-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Walker invited those in attendance to join the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT – GOVERNING BODY – APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Walker entertained a motion to approve or amend the March 31, 2017 Agenda.

Commissioner Booth moved to approve the March 31, 2017 Agenda as presented.

Vice Chairman Lankford seconded and the motion carried (4-0) with Commissioner Mendenhall absent.

Discussion

Chairman Walker noted the following were the top priority Legislative Goals for 2017-18:

- **Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties, and oppose efforts to divert to the state fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties to the state. Oppose efforts to erode existing county revenue streams and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction.**
- **Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under NC G.S. 115C-431(c) that allows local school boards to file suit against a county board of commissioners over county appropriations for education.**
- **Seek legislation to establish a new state-county partnership to address statewide public school capital challenges- including but not limited to maintenance, renovation, construction, and debt-through a dedicated, stable funding stream**

that is consistent from county to county and sufficient to meet the school facility needs to all 100 counties.

- **Support increased state funding for transportation construction and maintenance needs, and support legislation to ensure that the STI funding formula recognizes that one size does not fit all and that projects in both rural and urban areas are prioritized and funded.**
- **Support legislation and funding to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 with the exception of felony crimes.**

Chairman Walker opened the floor for discussion/questions/comments regarding the priority Legislative Goals for 2017-18.

Vice Chairman Lankford questioned Representative Hall if there was any specific reason for the following goal:

- **Support legislation and funding to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 with the exception of felony crimes**

Representative Hall responded:

- That is an Administrative Office of the Courts request because there is such a backlog in the court dockets all around the state
- North Carolina is one of three states that still has the age at 16
- I co-sponsored this bill
- It is currently in the House and will be heard sometime this upcoming month
- Should be passed pretty soon
- Do not think the Senate has any objections to the bill
- Have talked to both Judge Southern and Judge Puckett about the bill; both are supportive of the bill because of the county's backlog

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- Not sure it will help, since it just moves the case from one courtroom to another

Vice Chairman Lankford continued:

- Read where Governor Cooper is using some of the lottery funding to offer free community college tuition

Representative Hall responded:

- That was in Governor Cooper's budget
- His budget really just serves as his priorities for the next two years
- Does not mean anything to the General Assembly
- When the state budget is increased, it is based off of the inflation and population growth
- Inflation and population growth for this year is 3.85%
- His budget raises that to 5.85%

- He is spending about 35% more on his budget than what would be fiscally responsible
- I am definitely opposed to spending lottery for that
- The lottery was meant for school construction
- They just keep dipping into the lottery for “pet” projects
- Do not think this free community college tuition will go anywhere
- Senate wants to take lottery funds in their budget and spend it on merit principal pay
- That again is not very solvent and that is another “pet” project
- If we are to tackle the principal pay which has to be done this year, since the past two years have been dedicated to teachers; principals have not gotten a raise
- Our state average for principal pay is the 50th in the nation so we are the worst at principal pay
- I, along with the House Education Chairs, are opposed to using lottery funds for principal pay
- Lottery needs to be used for construction what it was meant to be used for
- If we are not going to use the lottery for construction, we need to get rid of it

Vice Chairman Lankford continued:

- Last Democratic governor started this process by taking lottery funding and using the funding for just general education purposes
- Believe we are getting about 15%
- Should be getting 50% of 40% from the lottery funding
- If it continues to be used for other things, there will be none for construction

Representative Hall responded:

- Lottery has huge overhead costs – administrative, advertising, etc.
- Requesting an increase for advertising this year

Vice Chairman Lankford continued:

- Most of the population growth is urban growth, rural growth is dropping
- Believe consideration should be given to rural counties in the budget

Representative Hall responded:

- In this upcoming budget, you will see priority for rural areas
- The rural legislators are the ones running the show –about 80%

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Confirmed with Representative Hall that the increase in the budget this year will be 3.5%
- Governor Cooper did not raise taxes in his budget, but increased spending which came from the “rainy day fund”
- Reiterated the loss revenue that counties are experiencing with lottery funding allocations
- This County built schools depending on lottery proceeds to help pay for school construction
- With lottery funding cut, the County must make up the difference

- Would appreciate any help with getting the lottery percentage increased for the counties
- Confirmed with Representative Hall that the sales tax distribution has been reintroduced which would increase sales tax revenue for the County

Representative Hall responded:

- Was reintroduced in the Senate, but sent straight to the Rules Committee where most bills are set to die

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Believe the sales tax distribution failed last year by one vote

Representative Hall responded:

- Believe that was the way the lottery vote went too

Representative Hall noted the following priority Legislative goal:

- Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under NC G.S. 115C-431 © that allows local school boards to file suit against a county board of commissioners over county appropriations for education

Representative Hall commented:

- Know that Stokes County Commissioners and the Board of Education hold joint budget work sessions each year
- Would like to know if there is any issue in Stokes, know it was an issue in Union County which has been addressed
- Have not heard any concerns in Rockingham County

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- It is always a guessing game
- Both Boards in Stokes work together

Chairman Walker commented:

- Do not believe Stokes County has ever been sued by the Board of Education
- Understand a previous Stokes County superintendent sued another County after he left Stokes County

Commissioner Jones commented:

- When the lottery passed, there were two members missing
- To me, it was just a bate & switch
- Understand the allocation has drastically been cut
- It goes back to the unfunded mandates
- The culture in Raleigh needs to be where the counties do not have to pick up the slack from the trickled down effect from the state
- If it is not right in Raleigh, why are the counties having to pay the price
- Would like to see the lottery funding original allocation come back to the counties
- Hard to trust people when they say they are going to do this, then they do totally opposite – it is just not right

- Read that 19% of the budget was going to consequences for drug abuse
- I would like to see some more of the budget not go to the consequences, but to for preventive drug abuse
- We are in a crisis state – it is not just Stokes County – it is nationwide
- Need to think long term and get this opioid epidemic fixed
- Impacts foster care – total yesterday for foster children in Stokes County was 120 – believed to be the highest ever
- Need to get this straighten out
- Is there anything that can be done to make it stricter for drug pushers?
- Is there some legislation that can be done to make a better matrix or criteria for drug treatment that works?
- From my research, most of the treatment is not working

Representative Hall responded:

- Know there is a bill that could possibly help this which was presented by Dr. Greg Murphy from Greenville
- Sheriff Association and Police Chiefs Association have backed it – all law enforcement groups back the bill
- It is being heard in the health committee
- It is out there and don't think anyone has any real issues with the bill
- Was fighting House Bill #2 which would have affected Stokes County – veterans and first responders' property tax would be waived
- It sounds good on paper
- Sounds good from Raleigh because Raleigh does not pay the property taxes anyway
- Bill passed this week in a different form – included some hold harmless coming in the budget to pay for it

Commissioner Jones continued:

- Still do not know about the classroom sizes in the schools
- This could be another unfunded mandate unless something is done

Representative Hall responded:

- Everyone will be in deep, deep trouble if House Bill #13 does not pass or the Senate does not do something in their budget to pay for it
- Senate drafted a survey that went to all the school systems and the school systems only had one weekend to figure out this survey (received it on Friday morning and had to be back in Raleigh by Monday afternoon)
- Data collected was flawed because the questions were flawed
- No offense to Senator Randleman, but when you dig deep into those questions, you can find out things
- The number that Senator Randleman reported that was being funded did not include special teachers for art, music, and physical education
- That is off the table, the school systems are spending the money they are given on the teachers that are needed
- If House Bill #13 is not passed and the House/Senate does not come up with funding to pay for special teachers, everyone is going to be in trouble

- You will have to pay for the mandated class sizes – which means more classrooms, more teachers and it is not coming from Raleigh

Chairman Walker commented:

- That would mean that some of the special teachers would have to be eliminated

Representative Hall responded:

- The estimate for Stokes would be giving 20 pink slips by the end of this school year

Commissioner Jones responded:

- These special teachers give students a creative outlet (music, art, physical education)
- This help keeps kids stay off of drugs
- This County does not have the recreation and facilities to keep kids busy
- If these pink slips come, our drug situation will definitely not get any better
- What are the chances that this will come back to bite us?

Representative Hall commented:

- Right now – about 50/50
- This is not going to be solved by the end of the school year
- Need for House Bill #13 to pass
- Cutting classroom sizes sounds great, but people do not realize how that is funded
- House wanted a delay and the Senate wanted to push forward with it

Commissioner Jones continued

- School vouchers – there has now been private schools that are being caught for embezzlement
- There is not enough accountability
- Private and charter schools take money away from public schools
- With this money not being used properly, what is the Legislature going to do about it?
- Can't agree with school vouchers, especially when there is not accountability – spending taxpayers dollars
- Something has to be done

Representative Hall commented:

- Agree with what you are saying, Commissioner Jones
- Don't believe that taxpayer funds should go to a private organization unless there is very strict oversight
- Believe in school choice, but public schools should not be put on the back burner to fund private schools
- Public schools are being held behind
- Senator Randleman & I fought against a bill that would allow every single dollar to follow a child to a charter school such as transportation funds, nutrition funds, money raised by PTA, etc.
- Right now charter schools are only given ADM funding for that student
- Feel another bill will be come back again wanting more funding for private and charter schools

- Let me reiterate that Senator Randleman and I are both not against school choice

Commissioner Jones continued:

- I am also not against school choice
- Went to fifteen schools before I got out of high school
- Some were good, some were terrible, - nothing was standardized
- Even if you go to a terrible school, you can get the best education possible if you just apply yourself
- I did not like where my kids were going to school, I made a choice and moved to Stokes County
- People have that choice – they can move
- When you are taking tax dollars and depleting one part to give to something else whether it is prochoice or not, there is something wrong with this
- It is like another unfunded mandate
- ADM is going down, but these schools still have to operate
- Think some thought should have went into the school voucher program
- Public school teachers are dictated to what will be taught in their classrooms from Raleigh
- Believe some serious thought must be put into some of these major decisions
- Beside private and charter schools, there are also home schools that has no accountability
- When I went to school and you went to private school, your parents paid for it, not the government

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- ADM has been going private and charter school for years

Chairman Walker commented:

- Agree, the lottery funding is so dysfunctional, they need to scrap it and start over
- Why do you continue to call it an Education Lottery when 85% of the funding is going for other things?
- Only 15% is being spent for what it was intended to be used for
- Why is the deception in the lottery not fixable?
- How can this continue down its current path?
- Are they going to continue until they get all the funding?

Representative Hall responded:

- Believe there will come a point when none of the lottery funding will go to school construction
- Last year, lottery went to help pay off student loans (Loan Forgiveness)
- If the individual received a teaching degree and went to specific areas and taught for ten years, student loans were forgiven
- I voted for the budget because overall the budget was good
- I disagreed with the Loan Forgiveness Program
- Thought it was more important to bring the Teaching Fellows Program back

- There is a bill in the House and one in the Senate regarding the Teaching Fellows Program – looks like it might pass, but there is one caveat, which I agree with, which is the teaching position will have to be math or science
- Co-sponsored the House bill

Chairman Walker commented:

- Would like to tie this with the unfunded mandates which takes money from the local level and improves the financial picture on the state level
- The state is making their budget better by taking funds from the local level – just had another unfunded mandate on our past Agenda
- Is no fix for this?

Representative Hall responded:

- You really can't see what the state is spending on by looking at the state budget
- I am Agricultural Budget Chair
- My responsibilities are to oversee Agriculture, Environmental Quality, Cultural Resources, State Parks, and Animal Control
- It is amazing to see how much waste there is in state government because people have these little "pet" projects - millions of dollars were spent on a pier that still received funding from the state
- Money is spent on frivolous things
- There are problems with the short-term legislature
- North Carolina is the only state in the top ten in population that still has short-term legislature
- We do not take time to thoroughly go through the state budget – don't have the time because we are a part-time legislature
- We do not have the time, the staff, or the resources in the General Assembly to go through budget thoroughly like it should be done

Representative Hall requested an update on the County's Animal Control situation.

Chairman Walker responded:

- Attended the meeting with Dr. Norris from the Department of Agricultural – Animal Control, Raleigh (Sheriff Marshal and Manager Morris also met with Dr. Norris)
- She looked at the county facilities, staffing, issues, etc.
- Her department will be developing a plan of action for animal services for the County to consider
- State is working with us

County Manager Morris commented:

- Will be providing the County with a plan of action hopefully within the next two weeks for the county to review and consider

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- Going back to the lottery, the statute approving the lottery needs to be looked at regarding the amount of funding that was allocated to the counties and how much currently is being allocated to the counties for school construction

Representative Hall commented:

- At the end of the day, you are given a budget and you must vote up or down, there is no debate, no amendments, you just vote
- You normally vote up because as a whole, the budget is good
- The last budget was a good budget, it gave teachers a 5% increase and cut taxes

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- Would like some information regarding how much control does the state have and how much control does the county have when it comes to regulations for an animal control facility

Chairman Walker commented:

- Would like to go back to House Bill #13
- Presented information at the NCACC Legislative Goals Conference to reinstate the waiver regarding classroom sizes
- Understood it would be considered
- Thought House Bill #13 would take care of the problem
- Had no idea that our Senator would have issues with the funding that has been allocated to the schools
- The school system had no knowledge of funding that was allocated for smaller class sizes being used in other places
- The school system did acknowledge that some funding can be used for teachers' salaries
- If I understood correctly, with your research, you found that the number of teaching positions that was allocated did not include special teachers for music, art, and physical education
- Based on your investigation, what effect do you think, if any, would this have on Senator Randleman's position?
- Do you know where Senator Randleman currently stands on this issue?

Representative Hall responded:

- When we are in Raleigh, Shirley and I are on two different schedules and seldom see each other unless we make an appointment to meet
- Since January, I have seen her only one time in Raleigh to meet with a constituent
- Have not spoken to Shirley about this issue
- The issue is that DPI has not always been amendable to the General Assembly, especially in the past six years when a new majority came in
- DPI, during the past two years, has been given our school systems different guidance from what the General Assembly had intended
- Shirley may be thinking that the school systems have been funded for a specific number of K-3 teachers, but DPI has still been giving them guidance that they are supposed to use part of that to fund the special teachers
- That may or may not have been the General Assembly's intent
- Senate may have thought it was
- I don't think it was
- I don't think former Representative Holloway thought it was either

- The money is coming for a specific number of positions with part of that being spent for special teachers – art, music, and physical education
- If House Bill 13 fails, there will be another unfunded mandate to the county
- The school system will want those teachers

Chairman Walker commented:

- It is not fair to the school system, it is not fair to kids, and not fair to the county
- Not sure if our state Senator is not part of the problem

Representative Hall responded:

- Would not be pointing the blame at Senator Randleman
- I have not heard directly from her
- Shirley is basing her information off of the survey that the Senate crafted
- I believe the survey was crafted so that it would come back the way it did
- I do believe the information that Shirley received was flawed data from a flawed survey
- I do not think that Shirley had anything to do with the survey that went out

Chairman Walker responded:

- I am sometimes too quick to point the blame on someone
- Understand that data can be flawed
- Bottom line – what is going to happen?

Representative Hall responded:

- Want to reiterate that I am not throwing Shirley under the bus
- Feel Shirley has received flawed data
- Believe either House Bill #13 will pass or there will be a special fund for special teachers (years ago funding were given specifically for special teachers such as art, music, physical education)
- Would suggest that the Board speak to Shirley about the issue
- Dr. Rice would tell you basically the same information I have
- Believe the Board is fortunate to have a commissioner who has served as superintendent; he will know how the school budget operates

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Heard Dr. Rice stated at a meeting that combination classes would have to utilized if House Bill #13 fails
- Think Dr. Rice realizes that the County does not have the \$1.2 million to fix the problem
- Hope House Bill #13 passes
- Confirmed with Representative Hall that even if House Bill #13 passes, the school system would still have to ask for funding for one teacher

Chairman Walker responded:

- One is better than 21 new teachers

Commissioner Jones commented:

- Combination classes are not the answer
- Having taught before, teachers can only be so effective
- When class size grows, the kids are the ones that will lose out
- This has to be looked at

Representative Hall responded:

- Would not be a bad idea to have Senator Randleman and Dr. Rice meet with the Board of County Commissioners to discuss the issue
- Would be happy to attend

Chairman Walker directed the Clerk to look into a possible meeting with Senator

Randleman, the Board and Dr. Rice.

Chairman Walker commented:

- House Bill #2 will not impact Stokes County so much, but it has caught the attention of a lot of our citizens
- Have received more calls and contacts over House Bill #2 than anything else since I have been a commissioner
- It is a social issue
- Has definitely put North Carolina on the map

Chairman Walker opened the floor for discussion regarding the following priority

Legislative Goal:

- Support increased state funding for transportation construction and maintenance needs, and support legislation to ensure that the STI funding formula recognizes that one size does not fit all and that projects in both rural and urban areas are prioritized and funded.

Chairman Walker requested Representative Hall to give the Board his take on the above priority Legislative Goal (giving roads back to the county to maintain)

Representative Hall responded:

- This is an urban issue
- This is not really a rural issue
- Want to focus the funding on going to where the population growth is
- As I was explaining to Chairman Walker earlier, these goals tend to be more urban centered

Chairman Walker commented:

- For the first time, the trend seems to be that more people are living in the urban areas than the rural areas

Chairman Walker opened the floor for discussion regarding the following priority

Legislative Goal:

- Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties, and oppose efforts to divert to the state fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties to the state. Oppose efforts to erode existing county revenue streams and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction.

Chairman Walker questioned Representative Hall regarding revenue sources.

Representative Hall responded:

- Only legislation that I know that would help Stokes County would be some type of new revenue – sales tax distribution (greater amount)
- Not sure anything would happen this year
- Believe there will be some form of tax reform

Legislative Issues Impacting Stokes County

Chairman Walker noted that some items impacting Stokes County have already been discussed.

Chairman Walker opened the floor discussion.

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- I have reviewed the bills that have been submitted
- Questioned Representative Hall if there were any bills that might affect Stokes County?
- Understand the lottery will continue to impact the County
- Questioned Representative Hall if there was anything the County could do regarding House Bill #13

Representative Hall responded:

- Can't think of any right at this moment other than House Bill #13
- Would definitely talk to Senator Randleman about the impact if House Bill #13 fails

Representative Hall commented:

- Spoke briefly about a bill regarding electronics being placed in landfills which would not impact Stokes County since there is no landfill in the county
- Would like to have an update on where the County is with Wilkes Communication

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Appreciate the \$250,000 funding received from the State for expansion of broadband

County Manager Morris provided Representative Hall an update regarding the expansion of

Broadband:

- This is the first time Wilkes Communication has overlaid a county that they were not already in
- They have run into a few surprises – currently waiting for a 60-day turnaround from AT&T
- Equipment hubs are already in place in Walnut Cove and King
- Backbone is done except for a small area in Walnut Cove
- Hope it can be up and running by the first of June
- Building in Danbury is completed
- Will expand based on demand – will go up to \$12 million if the demand is there
- County has allocated \$1.8 million over a three-year period
- Still need any grant funding available
- County will need \$25 million more to go all over the County which would take several years

Representative Hall responded:

- My number one priority is Broadband

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Would like to thank Representative Hall for what he has done so far for Stokes County

Chairman Walker commented:

- Economic Development is an ongoing challenge for Stokes County
- Seems we need to be in a catch up mode when it comes to Economic Development
- Questioned Representative Hall what did he see on the horizon for counties like Stokes (Tier 2 County)?
- Our citizens want jobs
- You hear this when you campaign
- Is the State doing anything to help counties like Stokes with Economic Development?

Representative Hall responded:

- On paper, Stokes is a Tier 2 County, but Stokes is not a Tier 2 County
- We are trying to redefine the Tier System
- There is no reason why Stokes and Rockingham Counties are both Tier 2 Counties
- Being a Tier 2 County puts Stokes at a disadvantage when applying for funding
- Bill has been filed in the Senate yesterday that will re-evaluate the Tier System
- Another thing that is going to be looked into is the public-private partnership that the Commerce Department has

- The Public Private Partnership is supposed to recruit jobs to North Carolina; they are stagnant or at some point have actually gone down as far as their recruitment numbers
- Looking at reevaluating the public private partnership which is a huge monster to tackle
- That will be an ongoing thing
- Don't see it being passed in the long session, may have to be done in the interim and then picked up during the short session
- As a citizen, I have been thinking about the County should be doing about Economic Development
- I know that we don't have a full Economic Development Team
- We have an interim director who also has a full time job
- Not sure if a full Economic Development Team could be implemented - costs
- Wonder if the County and municipalities could join together to fund an Economic Development Partnership
- Stokes has the tourism, not sure a factory is coming to Stokes County due to transportation (roads, airport)
- Think we could expand with Tourism
- Would like something similar to Surry County
- Feel we are at a disadvantage having one person doing two jobs
- Need to think about possibly some buy-in from the municipalities
- Just wanted to put those thoughts out there

Vice Chairman Lankford responded:

- We had a full time director
- There has not been any difference since we went to a shared director
- Has actually been better
- Did not get anything from the full time position
- Have received some from the shared director
- Surry and Stokes aren't alike – they are two different animals
- Surry has more interstate – we only have 6 miles
- We do have a park in Stokes, but it generates state revenue
- Don't bring in a lot for the County – brings in some sales tax revenue
- For most of the 650,000 that visit the park, it is a one-day trip
- If they stay overnight, they camp in the park or in another county
- According to Commerce, we are supposed to be getting major revenue from tourism
- We are not getting major revenue for tourism
- Have looked at the summertime sales tax and the wintertime sales tax and there is no difference
- Lot of people come to float the river, the only people making revenue is those renting tubes; sales tax are not being charged on renting tubes
- We are getting a few people who buy beer, drinks, candy and maybe a little gas

Chairman Walker asked Vice Chairman Lankford if we could shift to the future instead of looking at the past.

Vice Chairman Lankford continued:

- That is the future
- We don't have any plans building something for tourism

Chairman Walker responded:

- Would you like to put something on a plan

Vice Chairman Lankford responded:

- No, because that is not reality

Chairman Walker responded:

- There is an old saying "glass half full, glass half empty"

Vice Chairman Lankford responded:

- I am a glass half full but that is reality

Chairman Walker commented:

- Questioned Representative Hall what he could do for the County?

Representative Hall responded:

- The reason I brought it up was because nearby counties have an economic team
- We have one person doing two jobs, so he must be only doing half in one job
- I don't see what it would hurt to have one person going around the state and country trying to recruit something to Stokes County

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- Representative Hall mentioned one thing that I agree with and that is the public private partnerships that the state is paying millions of dollars for
- What are we getting out of it?

Representative Hall responded:

- North Carolina is the second in the nation in job creation
- I think we all know that we are not going to get that big manufacturing business
- Believe a director could recruit small businesses to Stokes County
- My point, as a private citizen, in bringing it up is that I want to see Stokes County bring in someone as our "cheerleader"
- It hurts me to have to explain where Stokes County is when I go to Raleigh
- I am proud to be from Stokes County
- I do not want to live nowhere else
- We have no lodging for people to stay overnight
- We have no one going out to try to recruit businesses to Stokes County
- These are my comments as a private citizen

- I am doing what I can in Raleigh to help - broadband funding
- I want to go to Raleigh and hear someone say that I know exactly where Stokes County is and that I spent my vacation there
- At some point, I want to see someone going out to be that “cheerleader”
- If we all worked together, everyone will benefit

Chairman Walker continued his comments:

- Questioned if any of the unfunded mandates could be reversed

Representative Hall responded:

- Trying to do all I can
- Do not want to see any mandates put on the county
- Have other representatives who think the same way

Chairman Walker continued:

- Expressed concerns about the opioid epidemic in Stokes County
- Questioned if the state is doing anything that could help Stokes County with this opioid epidemic

Representative Hall responded:

- House Bill 243 – STOP Act has already passed the Health Committee and is now in Appropriations Committee
- Senate Bill 175 is the Senate version, currently in the Health Committee
- Will send the bill summary to Manager Morris for the Board’s review
- This should be one avenue to help fight the opioid epidemic

Chairman Walker continued:

- My next item is recreation
- We started contracting with the “Y” about 20 some years ago
- We allocate approximately \$118,000 each fiscal year
- We had a recreation center near the hospital that I understand very few people used
- We have a lot of recreational needs
- When you go to Pine Hall, their top item is more recreation
- I have five areas in the county that have contacted me wanting more recreation
- In the 20+ years that we have had the “Y”, we have received no grants
- Counties and towns all around us – getting grants
- Town of Walnut Cove has probably got two or three grants for recreation
- With this arrangement, don’t know if we are in a position to get grants
- Can we get grants, with our recreation being contracted out to another source, if so, how do we go about that?
- Understand those are some of the easiest grants to get

Representative Hall responded:

- Not sure what the answer would be
- Might want to reach out to Golden LEAF

County Manager Morris responded:

- County has received PARTF Grants in the past
- Even looked at one for the Petree Property
- The problem is that the County does not have a Comprehensive Master Recreation Plan
- Without the plan, they are almost impossible to get
- A Comprehensive Master Recreation Plan costs about \$50,000

Chairman Walker continued:

- We did a recreation plan for Moratock that costs about \$20,000 that never developed into anything
- Getting hit more and more about recreation when I go out and talk to people
- People are tying it in with the drug problem
- People are saying the kids do not have enough to do
- Would appreciate any help
- Believe there should be more funding allocated to recreation
- It all adds together with economic development, they look at an area for good schools, parks, etc. when deciding whether to come to Stokes County or not
- Another item on my list is farmers
- Former Commissioner Willis Overby made the statement recently that we have more farmers in Stokes County today than we ever had
- Part of that might be because of the tax deferment
- With you being Agriculture Chairman and Stokes having a heavy farming history, what is available from the state?
- Commissioner Mendenhall recently stated that one of the most popular classes in our schools today is agriculture

Representative Hall responded:

- One thing that the state is looking at is a bill that I sponsored, it would not only help farmers, but would help every small business
- Before tax reform, they were able to deduct the first \$50,000 of income to invest back into their own business
- We got rid of that because if you were registered in the state of North Carolina as an LLC, you were classified as a small business
- One that was listed was Chrysler and I don't think anyone would consider Chrysler as a small business
- My bill states if you own a business or a farm and you don't exceed a million dollars in gross income a year, you qualify for the first \$50,000 deduction
- That would apply to every business and farmer in Stokes County except for a few such as Wieland Copper

Chairman Walker opened the floor for any further discussion.

Representative Hall questioned if there was any update on Vade Mecum?

County Manager Morris responded:

- Know they are working on the hotel
- Think they are still in the long-term process
- Had an open house recently, think about 1,000 toured the facility
- Will get you an update
- Wanted to see what the \$2 million bond funding was being used for

Commissioner Booth commented:

- Already have a plan, but the state said they needed another plan
- Had funding to put a bridge in so the campsites could be utilized
- Now they are taking that money and doing another plan instead of putting the bridge in according to the park superintendent
- If they had funding to put the bridge in, the campsites could be utilized

Vice Chairman Lankford commented:

- Little confused about the statement made by former Commissioner Overby
- According to the last numbers I saw, we have lost farms

Chairman Walker commented:

- Would have to ask him about that

Vice Chairman Lankford stated he would ask former Commissioner Overby about it.

Chairman Walker expressed appreciation to Representative Hall for taking time to meet with the Board.

Representative Hall stated he enjoyed meeting with the Board and not to hesitate to give him a call.

Adjournment

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

Vice Chairman Lankford moved to adjourn the Special Called Meeting. Commissioner Booth seconded and the motion carried (4-0) with Commissioner Mendenhall absent.

Darlene M. Bullins
Clerk to the Board

Jimmy Walker
Chairman