

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners Midyear Planning Retreat
12 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, 2006, Dulin Center, Lauchwood Drive, Laurinburg*

MINUTES

**Scotland County Board of Commissioners
2006 Midyear Planning Retreat, 12 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, 2006
Dulin Center, Lauchwood Drive, Laurinburg, NC**

Prior to the meeting, representatives from FirstCarolinaCare provided blood pressure and cholesterol checks for those who wished to participate.

At 12 p.m., Chairman J.D. Willis reconvened the meeting, which is the Midyear Planning Retreat. Commissioners in attendance: Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Betty Blue Gholston and Commissioners John Alford (*arrived at 2:25 p.m.*), Leon Butler, Charles “Scoofer” Jordan, Joyce McDow (*arrived at 12:30 p.m.*) and Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: County Manager John A. Crumpton, Finance Officer/Assistant County Manager Kevin Patterson, Personnel Administrator Susan Butler, Parks and Recreation Director Shannon Newton, County Attorney Edward Johnston and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman. Commissioner Jordan delivered the opening prayer.

Chairman Willis said Board of Elections Director Judy Riggins is back on the job, and Finance Technician Anne Tindall, who served as Interim Director, would return to her duties in Administration.

Chairman Willis encouraged the Commissioners to review information distributed regarding the Human Relations Commission, explaining that it might be discussed at a future meeting.

County Manager Crumpton thanked the FCC representatives, as they departed, for conducting the health screenings.

Health Care and Health Insurance

County Manager Crumpton said he is concerned at how medical costs for employees have been trending upward over the past few months. He said that as a result, the Commissioners should expect an increase in health care costs, although he does not yet know how much.

Mr. Crumpton said changing the habits of employees and the way they live is key to keeping health costs in check. He said the Health Department intends to take the lead on that by proposing a smoke-free environment soon.

(Commissioner McDow arrived at 12:30 p.m.)

Mr. Crumpton said in a reversal for Scotland County, the employees are driving the claims, not the dependents. He said Workers Comp incidents also have been trending upward.

He said with a safety policy now in place, Scotland County would be eligible for a

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discount from the NCACC pool.

Mr. Crumpton noted that 120 employees have yet to visit a doctor or get prescriptions of any kind. He said that is a concern because employees should be participating in preventive health measures by visiting a doctor for wellness check ups.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Chair Becca Hughes discussed the importance parks and recreation has on providing healthy opportunities for a community and attracting economic development.

Ms. Hughes introduced Mr. Tom King, senior planner for the NC Department of Commerce. Mr. King, via PowerPoint, discussed the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan, its purpose and objectives.

He said based on citizen input from public forums throughout the County, the following recreation requests identified included a public pool, indoor walking trail, indoor basketball courts and outdoor soccer fields.

He said proposals/recommendations through 2030 include development of mini-parks and larger community parks, creating joint use of school parks with the community, development of a public swimming pool, continuing programs and maintenance at Laurel Hill Community Center, creation of greenways, bikeways and sidewalk connections between developments, creating a YMCA, promoting agricultural tourism and developing picnic areas at major corridor entranceways to the County.

Commissioner Jordan suggested the Commissioners prioritize the projects it would like to pursue based on funds available.

Commissioner McPhatter asked why the lights and basketball courts were removed from Lincoln and Washington Parks, which leaves nothing for kids to do at either park. Parks and Recreation Director Shannon Newton said they were removed at the request of Laurinburg City Councilmember Rembert Deberry, who cited inappropriate activity.

Vice Chair Gholston said perhaps the police could patrol the two parks more regularly.

Chairman Willis suggested that before Board approval, Ms. Newton take the draft Master Plan to the community for review and comment.

10-Year Long Range Capital Improvement Plan

County Manager Crumpton said an estimated \$40,000 was spent this year to repair the air/heating unit at the Courthouse. He said before pricing a new unit, it should be determined whether to purchase one unit or several for different coverage areas within the facility. Mr. Crumpton said problems with leaks in the Courthouse roof continue.

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Chairman Willis suggested the County retain an architect/engineer locally, if possible, to review the roof and heat/air problems at the Courthouse and develop a plan to remedy them.

Commissioner Jordan suggested that County Engineer Jim Blackwell look at the entire Courthouse roof and make a recommendation.

County Manager Crumpton said the West Covington Street facility, recently vacated by Mental Health, might help alleviate a space shortage in the Courthouse. He said Adult Probation has expressed an interest in using the building. He said the Adult Probation lease, which is paid for by the State, does not expire until July 2007 and any move by Adult Probation prior to that would be at the expense of the County.

Chairman Willis suggested that if Adult Probation moved to West Covington Street and others who remain in the Courthouse move temporarily to the Probation offices, then the County expense might be avoided.

The County Manager discussed DSS space needs. He said some staff, according to State regulations, require a certain square footage, and privacy issues also are a concern. He said the design of the facility is not conducive to resolving these concerns, and some walls would have to be changed for compliance. He said the project would require a consultant, which would not be a desirable choice at this time.

Vice Chair Gholston suggested using mobile units as a possible solution.

The Board of Commissioners by consensus asked Commissioner Jordan to meet with Manis Home Builders to discuss the possibility of constructing a 3,000-square-foot ADA-compliant structure and report back to the Board in two weeks' time.

County Manager Crumpton said a new roof at Laurel Hill Community Center, new telephone system for the Courthouse and County Complex and the purchase of a Time Management System are among some other capital needs.

Mr. Crumpton asked about the purchase of vehicle replacements for the Sheriff's Department and a new ambulance for EMS. He explained that the older vehicles require more maintenance, which can be costly.

Commissioner McPhatter said some citizens have asked him why the Sheriff's vehicles are left idling during stops for food or at convenience stores.

County Manager Crumpton said that has been addressed with the Sheriff. Mr. Crumpton noted that the big fuel expense for the Sheriff's Department is transporting inmates to Raleigh or from county to county. He said with the changes in mental health, inmates must now be transported to Lumberton.

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Chairman Willis asked the County Manager to alert the Sheriff that the vehicles are left running during stops.

Chairman Willis said the Sheriff's Department has a vehicle replacement program, which is budgeted annually. Chairman Willis said the Courthouse space needs, air/heating and roof and DSS space needs should be considered priority projects.

EMS Director Roylin Hammond said EPA diesel requirements for medium-sized trucks in 2007 would increase the cost of an ambulance by \$5,000 to \$7,000. He said it would be more economical to purchase a 2006 model since EMS needs another ambulance.

County Manager Crumpton said there is no backup for the communications tower, and he is discussing with the City of Laurinburg the possibility of placing a repeater on their communications tower.

Finance Officer/Assistant County Manager Kevin Patterson said the Time Management System is like a countywide time clock, which would represent savings in about six months. He estimated a time savings of about three days in some departments where staff key in timesheets, which would free those employees to perform other tasks. He added that certain employees who are re-tasked to other responsibilities could bring in more State reimbursements.

The Board of Commissioners by consensus agreed that the purchase of a Time Management System should be placed on the priority list.

Chairman Willis said Mr. Crumpton and Mr. Patterson should use a portion of the unappropriated Fund Balance for some of these priorities.

Commissioner Jordan said he would like to consider what a two percent and a three percent cost of living allowance for employees would cost the County. Mr. Patterson said one percent is equivalent to \$100,000.

The Board of Commissioners by consensus agreed to consider employee raises for FY 2006-2007.

Motion was made by Commissioner Jordan and duly seconded by Commissioner Butler to authorize the purchase of a new ambulance and to prepare the purchase order once all the figures are available. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

At 2:15 p.m. Chairman Willis called for a five minute break.

(Commissioner McPhatter was excused at 2:20 p.m.)

(Commissioner Alford arrived at 2:25 p.m.)

The meeting resumed at 2:30 p.m.

Medicaid Relief

Chairman Willis asked the wishes of the Board with regard to surrendering the one percent local sales tax to the State in exchange for Medicaid relief.

County Manager Crumpton said the Article 39 one percent sales tax would be released to the State to offset assumption by the State of the entire cost of Medicaid. Mr. Crumpton said the State, in turn, would allow the counties to assess an additional one percent local option sales tax to replace the Article 39 sales tax, which would bring the total sales tax to eight percent.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Gholston and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to support the legislative concept. Vote For: Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Gholston and Commissioners Alford and McDow. Vote Against: Commissioners Butler and Jordan. Motion approved.

Commissioner Jordan said the action occurred too quickly, and he felt he didn't have all the information.

Mr. Patterson said if the County relinquished the Article 39 one percent sales tax and did not replace it with an additional one percent sales tax, the County still would have to hold harmless the municipalities and reimburse them.

Mr. Crumpton said the County would realize a savings with that scenario but not as much. At the same time, Mr. Crumpton said, the County would no longer have to fund any future Medicaid increases.

Commissioner Jordan said an eight percent sales tax in North Carolina versus six percent in South Carolina would hurt retailers locally.

County Manager Crumpton said a local sales tax option would shift the burden from the property owner to point of sale.

Chairman Willis said with the cost of funding the schools and Medicaid on the rise, the Commissioners would be looking at a five to six-cent tax rate increase each year versus passing it on to people who shop.

Commissioner Jordan asked if the sales tax was revocable.

County Manager Crumpton said it was, but that would mean municipalities within the County would have to be held harmless. He said there would be no legislation regarding Medicaid until the House convenes May 9.

Commissioner Jordan said now that the issue was made clearer, he felt more comfortable supporting it.

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Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner McDow to rescind the previous motion to support the legislative concept. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Vice Chair Gholston to support the legislative concept. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Budget Goals for FY 2006-2007 and Budget Calendar Presentation

County Manager Crumpton asked the Commissioners for budget priorities other than maintaining the tax rate and the consideration of COLAs.

Mr. Patterson discussed options for securing voting equipment and software. He said the County could make an outright purchase as opposed to securing a consultant. He said the drawback of an outright purchase would be uncertainty as to whether the State would make any future changes.

The Board of Commissioners by consensus agreed to contract out the service.

Landfill Discussion

County Manager Crumpton discussed a communication received from Mr. John D. Runkle, an attorney for Scotland County of Tomorrow. Mr. Runkle asked to meet with the County Manager and County Attorney regarding concerns by his client on locating a landfill in the community. He said Mr. Runkle also would like to meet with the Board of Commissioners.

The Board of Commissioners by consensus agreed that Mr. Runkle should talk first with the County Attorney and County Manager before meeting with the Commissioners.

The County Manager distributed a report from Dr. Greg Richardson regarding the possibility of the County developing its own MSW landfill. According to the report, the cost for permitting and constructing the initial cell of an MSW landfill would be approximately \$3.45 million including a 10 percent contingency. An additional \$2 million would be required for the property purchase, which could be borrowed as special obligation bonds with LGC approval.

Mr. Crumpton said the biggest drawback to a County owned and operated MSW landfill is market competition. He said it would take 500 tons a day just to break even, and there would have to be a long term commitment from surrounding counties.

Commissioner Alford said he was concerned about the amount of money a County-operated project would cost, especially if there was a problem, such as a leak, that would require corrective action.

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Chairman Willis described the project as “adding another headache to our plate” and said he would like to leave something like this to professionals in the business.

County Engineer Jim Blackwell said the permitting and construction would be the easy part, getting control of the waste stream, which holds the highest potential for profit, also holds the highest potential for risk.

County Manager Crumpton said privately-owned companies do operate in good faith and responsibly regarding the waste that goes into a landfill. Not doing so, said Mr. Crumpton, would put the business at risk.

Chairman Willis said governing boards who consider hosting a landfill do so because they hope to achieve particular needs for their county. He asked the Commissioners what needs they considered other than keeping the tax rate down.

Commissioner Alford said maintaining industry and keeping the tax rate down are both important. He said \$3.8 million in revenue coming from anywhere would be a miracle for Scotland County.

Commissioner Alford said Scotland County has the highest tax rate, the highest unemployment rate and has experienced a loss of industry. He said the County got there without a landfill. Commissioner Alford said areas like Charlotte and Raleigh are booming, and both have a landfill and nuclear plant.

Commissioner Jordan said he keeps hearing that industry will not come here if the County has a regional landfill. He asked the County Manager to get opinions from local industry executives as to whether a landfill would be a draw or a detractor.

County Manager Crumpton said potential industrial clients do ask the Area Chamber of Commerce about disposal options when considering Scotland County as a location. The County Manager said having a landfill nearby is a help.

The County Manager said increased traffic and occasional smells would be the drawbacks to a regional landfill.

Chairman Willis said the increased traffic would probably not be much different from the traffic going in and out of Campbell’s Soup Company in Maxton.

County Manager Crumpton said location plays a big part on the affect traffic and smells have on a community. He said Bertie County receives more complaints about its chicken and hog farms.

The County Manager said the Board of Commissioners must decide whether it is comfortable going forward not knowing the site location or whether it would prefer to know the site.

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Commissioner Alford said he would like to know the location.

Chairman Willis directed the County Manager to speak with Dr. Richardson about identifying three or four locations that might serve potential sites for companies like Waste Management and Republic.

Vice Chair Gholston said that if counties were relieved of the responsibility of paying their share of Medicaid, would Scotland County then be in such dire straits that it would need a landfill.

County Manager Crumpton said all counties are trying to find alternate sources of revenue instead of relying so much on property tax. He said that local funding for the schools is guaranteed to increase every year, and the County would have to raise taxes to satisfy the local funding requirement.

Commissioner Alford said that if the governing body accepts as the norm that its employees must work in hallways and closets and its buildings don't always receive needed maintenance, then the County is not desperate.

Chairman Willis asked the County Manager to bring Commissioner Alford up to date on the County's capital projects covered in the first few hours of the Planning Retreat.

Chairman Willis directed the County Manager to get the answers to questions that have been asked about regional landfills and to get that information out to the public.

The Board of Commissioners by consensus agreed to provide answers to the questions submitted by Mr. Bob Davis.

Commissioner Butler said since one penny on the sales tax generates \$2.5 million based on collections, why not take advantage of a local sales tax option rather than locate a landfill in the County.

County Manager Crumpton said if the State Legislature does not agree to the current Medicaid relief proposal, the County would have to get approval from the State to impose an additional local option sales tax.

County Engineer Blackwell brought up the subject of traffic and explained that most haulers want to avoid traffic by avoiding times when the greatest amount of drivers would be on the road.

Mr. Blackwell said that if a regional landfill does not locate in the community, Scotland County would need a 25-year solution to its solid waste plan. He said a regional landfill would bring a long-range solution to the County's solid waste plan.

Other Issues

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Vice Chair Gholston said when the Commissioners attend meetings they are appointed to, they should report back to the Board on those meetings every several months.

Commissioner Alford said that he learned from the Four County Community Action Board that Laurel Hill is overly qualified for block grants. Chairman Willis suggested that Commissioner Alford and Mr. Patterson meet with Four County Community Services to research the possibility of securing block grants for Laurel Hill.

Commissioner Butler said he is a board member for the Scotland Community Health Clinic, which will soon locate from Wagram to property near the Health Department. Commissioner Butler asked if the Commissioners would consider waiving the inspection fees for the Community Health Clinic.

Motion was made by Chairman Willis and duly seconded by Commissioner Jordan to waive the inspection fees for the Scotland Community Health Clinic. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Commissioner Jordan said he would like the Commissioners to develop a highway litter campaign that would be ongoing rather than something that occurs a few times a year.

Chairman Willis suggested that Commissioner Jordan meet with those citizens who are interested in developing the program and develop goals and objectives and how an appointment schedule would be structured.

Commissioner McDow asked about the status of the request by Ms. Jan Schmidt for support of a Children's Museum.

County Manager Crumpton said that request, as well as the request from BARTS for rent assistance, would be reviewed during the budget planning process.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner McDow to adjourn. Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann W. Kurtzman
Clerk to the Board

J.D. Willis
Chairman