

Surry County Board of Commissioners
Meeting of February 22, 2019

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 8:30 a.m. on February 22, 2019. The meeting was held at Rosa Lee Manor, 385 Rosa Lee Lane, Pilot Mountain, North Carolina for their annual planning retreat.

Board members present for the meeting were Chairman Van Tucker, Vice-Chairman Larry Johnson, Commissioner Bill Goins, Commissioner Eddie Harris and Commissioner Mark Marion.

Others present for the meeting, at various times, were:

Chris Knopf, County Manager
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
Rhonda Nixon, Budget and Performance Director
Don Mitchell, Facilities Director
Sheriff Steve Hiatt
Chief Deputy Paul Barker, Sheriff's Office
Captain Scott Hudson, Sheriff's Office
Captain Larry Lowe, Sheriff's Office
Mark Willis, Opioid Response Director
John Shelton, Emergency Services Director
Penny Harrison, Tax Administrator
Deanna Cochran, Tax Department
Roger Bedsaul, Tax Department
Johnny Easter, Development Services Director
Tammy Johnson, Assistant to the County Manager
Darren Rhodes, North Carolina Department of Commerce
North Carolina House Representative Sarah Stevens
North Carolina House Representative Kyle Hall

Chairman Tucker called the meeting to order. Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

Chairman Tucker requested each board member to make some opening remarks about their expectations for the day long retreat.

Roger Bedsaul, Tax Department, discussed the scheduled 2021 revaluation. Mr. Bedsaul described the revaluation process and expects conservative growth in the 3%-4% range. Factors that will impact the revaluation will be the state of the economy in 2021 and the supply of housing. Mr. Bedsaul discussed a spreadsheet describing local housing market trends from 2012 thru 2018.

Penny Harrison, Tax Administrator, reviewed the foreclosure process for the Board. Ms. Harrison discussed property tax revenues and property tax values. Preliminary revenue estimates for real property, personal property, and motor vehicles were discussed, as well as values for personal property and public service.

Rhonda Nixon, Budget and Performance Director, reviewed the following for the Board: fund balance detail, quarterly sales

and use tax revenues, debt owed for the Flat Rock-Bannertown Water and Sewer District, and an economic analysis from FTN Financial.

The Board discussed three options for retiring the debt associated with the Flat Rock-Bannertown Water and Sewer District sooner than scheduled. It was the consensus of the Board for staff to develop a plan for retiring the debt sooner which could save between \$1.0M and \$1.5M in scheduled interest.

John Shelton, Emergency Services Director, discussed the need to expand Medic 7 from a peak time (i.e. 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.) unit to a 24-hour unit. Mr. Shelton stated that the demand for non-emergency (i.e. non-Advanced Life Support (ALS) transports and the lack of employee interest for the peak time positions (i.e. 12-hour shift versus the 24/72 shift) are the basis for the request.

The Board discussed the options for addressing non-emergency ALS transports such as hospital transfers, nursing home transports, dialysis transports, etc.: 1) allow the County's ALS EMS units to continue to transport, or 2) allow third-party Basic Life Support (BLS) services to serve these needs, which is currently not permitted if the calls originate in Surry County.

Mr. Shelton discussed the need to make a change to how the Dobson-based Quick Response Vehicle (QRV-1) is staffed. Currently it is staffed by the Assistant Supervisor, but these individuals are constantly pulled to work on ambulances because members of their shifts are out of work. This staffing change would require an additional four employees at a cost of \$160,000-\$190,000 for salary and benefits.

The Board discussed the number of County paramedics who work on Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center's AirCare helicopter. If these employees worked their entire schedule within EMS, instead of splitting time with the helicopter, EMS could potentially address the staff needs for QRV-1. The cost related to these employees is approximately \$200,000 which is offset by revenue. The Board requested information on the amount of revenue the County receives from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and the terms of their contract with Surry County.

Mr. Shelton discussed the policy that allows employees to work part-time jobs during their 72-hour time off following a 24-hour shift. Issues such as injuries to employees while working part-time elsewhere and employee fatigue were discussed. The Board requested more information on the policy.

Mr. Shelton discussed the future placement of a QRV unit at the Westfield Volunteer Fire Department. The Board discussed how the placement of this QRV would impact any mutual aid in Stokes County since the fire department is located adjacent to the county line.

Don Mitchell, Facilities Director, and John Shelton, Emergency Services Director, discussed the need for a County morgue. By Statute, the County is responsible for providing a morgue facility. Currently, the County uses the morgue at Northern Hospital which will only accommodate three bodies. EMS

uses a morgue disaster trailer to handle issues when the morgue at Northern Hospital is at capacity, which is often. A County morgue would be located at the Resource Center, in an area used by Facilities Maintenance. The entire project would cost approximately \$100,000; this includes renovation of the space and purchase of a morgue refrigeration unit.

Don Mitchell, Facilities Director, discussed costs for the demolition and abatement of the former Agriculture Building on Main Street in Dobson. These costs are in the \$200K to \$300K range and will need to be budgeted in the FY19-20 budget. In addition to these costs, the Board will need to consider hiring an engineer to design and manage the construction of a parking lot to be located on this site to accommodate the Historic Courthouse and the Judicial Center. Proposals for engineering services were received from The Lane Group and Moore and Associates. Mr. Mitchell will update all the estimates and include the project in his department's FY19-20 budget proposal.

Don Mitchell, Facilities Director, and Chris Knopf, County Manager, discussed the Parks and Recreation office project at Fisher River Park that has been discussed for over a decade. Plans were reviewed for a modular office, parking lot, and septic system. It was the consensus of the Board not to move forward with the project.

Johnny Easter, Development Services Director, discussed a proposal to simplify the issuance of inspection permits and the fees charged by his department for their services. Mr. Easter discussed the number of permits required for residential projects and compared it to surrounding jurisdictions. Mr. Easter also advised that some of the recommended fees in the new fee structure are shown as recommended increases.

The Board was interested in simplifying the permitting process but felt that the current fee structure was higher than surrounding counties and that fee increases would not be warranted. The Board requested to see a fee schedule comparison with surrounding counties. Mr. Easter will adjust his proposal accordingly and submit the recommended changes as part of his department's FY19-20 budget proposal.

The Board recessed for lunch.

North Carolina House Representatives Sarah Stevens and Kyle Hall briefly discussed public school calendars, public school district boundaries, and other legislative items.

Sheriff Steve Hiatt and staff discussed the projected increase to the County in housing inmates out-of-county. The jail population continues to rise, and the availability of space outside Surry County is sometimes difficult to find. \$700K is included in the current year's budget for this purpose, and the Sheriff estimates that number to rise to \$976K in FY19-20.

The Sheriff and staff discussed the rising costs associated with food and provisions for inmates. \$270K is budgeted in the

current year and the Sheriff estimates that number to rise to \$350K for FY19-20.

The Sheriff and Board discussed the Corrisoft software utilization with the expansion of the Pre-Trial Release Program.

Darren Rhodes, North Carolina Department of Commerce, led the Board through a goal setting exercise. The Board last participated in a similar process at the 2015 retreat. A report of the results will be forwarded to the County Manager in the coming weeks.

Mark Willis, Opioid Response Director, discussed initiatives he has identified to address gaps in the County's ability to respond to the opioid/drug epidemic. Mr. Willis referred to drug intervention and treatment in the jail and emergency rooms and the limited space in the jail for intervention activities. He also advised that a grant has become available for the creation of local drug courts. Specifics of the proposal were as follows: hire a Peer Support Specialist to work in local hospital emergency rooms, hire a two-person Post-Overdose Response Team (i.e. nurse and paramedic) to follow-up with individuals identified by EMS and law enforcement, hire an Adult Drug Court Manager if a drug court program is instituted in Surry County, and hire a grant writer to assist Mr. Willis with securing funds for future activities. These recommendations would have a cost of approximately \$275,000.

After discussion with the Board, Mr. Willis advised that his top priorities would be the hiring of a Peer Support Specialist and Post-Overdose Response Team at a cost of \$175,000.

Chris Knopf, County Manager, discussed a request from Ed Woltz to extend the due diligence period by four weeks for the purchase of the Gentry Road properties.

Commissioner Goins motioned to allow Wayne Farms a four-week extension, beginning February 22, 2019, for continued due diligence on their purchase of the Gentry Road properties, allowing the County Attorney to amend the purchase agreement with these terms if necessary. Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. All present were in favor and the motion carried.

Chairman Tucker advised of a request from the Chief District Court Judge, Superior Court Judge, and Clerk of Court to place a digital sign in the Judicial Center lobby that directs foot traffic in the building to the proper locations. The County Manager will ask the Facilities Director to follow up with these individuals on the request.

Chairman Tucker and Commissioner Marion advised the Board of a recent meeting with animal advocates where it was requested that the County create an Animal Control Ad Hoc Committee. Chief Deputy Paul Barker requested a meeting to discuss in greater detail with Chairman Tucker and Commissioner Marion. The Board requested that Chief Deputy Barker schedule a meeting within 2-3 weeks.

Upon motion of Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner ~~Jehnsen~~ Marion the Board voted unanimously to go into closed session.

There was no additional business to come before the Board.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting ended at 5:50 p.m.

Tammy Johnson
Clerk to the Board

Sandy Snow,
Deputy Clerk to the Board