

Surry County Board of Commissioners
Meeting of February 28, 2020
Board Retreat

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 8:15 a.m., February 28, 2020. The meeting was held at White Sulphur Springs, 230 White Sulphur Springs Road, Mount Airy, N.C., for the Board's annual planning retreat.

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

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

Chris Knopf, County Manager
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
Rhonda Nixon, Budget Director & Finance Officer
Jason Beasley, Finance Department
Don Mitchell, Facilities Management Director
Penny Harrison, Tax Administrator
Roger Bedsaul, Tax Department
Deanna Cochran, Tax Department
John Shelton, Emergency Services Director
Mark Willis, Opioid Response Director
Kristy Preston, DSS Director
Samantha Ange, Health & Nutrition Director
Johnny Easter, Development Services Director
Kim Bates, Planning Director
Dr. Kim Morrison, Mount Airy City Schools
Dr. Sandy George, Mount Airy City Schools
John Altmueller, Elkin City Schools
Frank Beals, Board Member, Elkin City Schools
Sheriff Steve Hiatt
Captain Larry Lowe, Sheriff's Office
Captain Scott Hudson, Sheriff's Office
Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager
Bill Powell, LT Consulting
Tony Chilton, Brite Engineering Consultants

Chairman Johnson called the February 28, 2020 Board Retreat to order. Commissioner Tucker delivered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Johnson requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Marion, seconded by Chairman Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the February 28, 2020 Board Retreat agenda.

Penny Harrison, Roger Bedsaul and Deanna Cochran from the Tax Department opened the Board Retreat.

Mr. Bedsaul discussed the upcoming 2021 property revaluation. He said the County could see a 5 percent increase in property values, which is a conservative estimate. He also said we've seen an increase in commercial values and farmland. He said Surry County does not have enough subdivisions and market rate housing; he also went into detail about the price per square foot of homes on the real estate market.

Chris Knopf, County Manager, Rhonda Nixon, Budget Director & Finance Officer, and Board members discussed how the lack of market rate housing is impacting businesses trying to attract new employees to Surry County.

Ms. Harrison discussed tax revenues. Staff discussed aircraft tax revenue from the Airport, and Mr. Knopf discussed the need for business and personal property values to increase approximately \$40 million each year to offset depreciation.

Ms. Cochran said the tax collection rate is better than last year.

Rhonda Nixon and Jason Beasley, from the Finance Department, were present for a Finance presentation. Ms. Nixon discussed fund balance details, public safety, the school's capital outlay fund and the Capital Improvement Fund.

The Gould Killian audit was discussed, and Ms. Nixon explained the need for the audit contract to be increased by \$30,000.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to amend the audit contract with Gould Killian for an increase of \$30,000.

The Board discussed in detail quarterly sales and use tax information.

Ms. Nixon covered the County debt plan. The Board discussed funding of and distribution of assets to fire departments and rescue squads.

John Shelton, Emergency Services Director, discussed the need for time-and-a-half overtime for paramedics. Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager, said staff surveyed adjacent counties, and they all pay time-and-a-half overtime. Mr. Shelton said that Surry County Emergency Services has been losing paramedics to hospital emergency rooms that pay higher salaries.

Mr. Shelton also discussed the need for having a four to six-minute response time and how Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs) will make this happen over time.

Mr. Shelton presented an item to the Board about having Cape Fear/Miller, a private paramedic service, provide convalescent non-emergency transfers, assisting with 6,000 to 7,000 trips. The addition of Cape Fear/Miller would reduce the workload for County staff, Mr. Shelton said. The contract with Cape Fear/Miller would be for one year. The Board asked if the use of Cape Fear/Miller would drop revenues, and Mr. Shelton said that it would affect the budget some but contracting with Cape Fear/Miller would help offset time-and-a-half overtime expenses and reduce the overwhelming workload for employees.

Commissioner Tucker and Chairman Johnson said they think Cape Fear/Miller needs to pay Surry County for use of our buildings.

Discussion about a QRV in Westfield, and a future QRV in Mountain Park, ensued.

The Board directed Mr. Knopf to investigate what Surry County pays rescue squads in rent for use of their space.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, the Board voted unanimously to fund time-and-a-half overtime,

for the remainder of fiscal year 2020 (March to end of June), for Emergency Services paramedics who work overtime.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to privatize convalescence transports, pending the issuance of an Ambulance Service Franchise to a private contractor.

Mark Willis, Opioid Response Director, and Kristy Preston, DSS Director, discussed transportation options for opioid patients with the Board.

Mr. Willis prefaced the conversation with an overview of his efforts over the last year in building an intervention system and how reaching out to churches for transports did not produce results. He and Commissioner Tucker commented that asking for the transport of 46 people three times a week for 23 weeks is a significant request.

Mr. Willis and Ms. Preston discussed with the Board several transportation options. The Board directed Mr. Willis and Ms. Preston to come back to them with more research on two options, which include: Hiring part-time employees to transport patients five days a week and paying mileage reimbursement to volunteers who transport the patients. The part-time employees would transport foster children and adult wards to appointments, as well.

Samantha Ange, Health Director, Don Mitchell, Facilities Director, and Tony Chilton, Brite Engineering Consultants, discussed the Health Department renovation project. Ms. Ange provided the Board handouts of a floorplan with recommended building improvements.

Mr. Mitchell discussed how some in-house improvements have been made, including reconnecting duct work. Ms. Ange discussed the need for heating and air conditioning repairs and potential timelines for the project. Mr. Chilton's recommendations were also discussed. Mr. Mitchell discussed roof improvement possibilities and how contractors can fix problem spots, which is cheaper than replacing the whole roof. Mr. Mitchell said he would account for that in his building budget.

Ms. Ange discussed the phases of the project, if it were to be phased, and Mr. Chilton discussed how a phased project would need to be bid out. All combined phases of the project would total \$1,163,750. The phases would cover cosmetic, clerical, nurses and classroom needs.

Ms. Ange shared how she has enough funding in the Health Department fund balance to pay for the entire renovation. She, the Board and Mr. Knopf discussed budget details, project phases and the best way to approach the project. The Board took no action on the renovation project.

Johnny Easter, Development Services Director, and Kim Bates, Planning Director, presented proposed planning and zoning fee schedule changes, building inspection fee revisions and Zoning Ordinance text amendments.

Mr. Bates discussed eliminating the wireless communication tower fee and including it in the special use fees for \$275. He also discussed removing the \$10 fee for the Zoning Consistency Letter, increasing the fee to \$275 for zoning text amendments, increasing the fee to \$275 for Board of Adjustment variance requests or appeals and eliminating fees for small printed documents.

Mr. Bates also said he's working on a large submittal of text amendments, which include changing conditional use permits to special use permits. He and Mr. Easter also discussed General Statute activity with permit fees, their names and pricing. Mr. Bates additionally discussed the Kirkmans' possible rewritten development proposal that was recently brought to the Board at a regular meeting.

Mr. Easter discussed the blanket commercial building permit fee being changed to 8 cents per square foot. He said there is a need for this rate because some applicants are building a simple storage building with no utilities and the former fee of \$2,400 was excessive. He also discussed a footing and foundation permit fee, which he proposed to cost 20 percent of the blanket commercial building permit fee.

Upon motion of Commissioner Marion, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to approve changing the blanket commercial building permit fee to 8 cents per square foot and adding the footing and foundation permit fee to cost 20 percent of the blanket commercial building permit fee.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve eliminating the wireless communications tower fee and including it in the special use fees for \$275, removing the \$10 zoning consistency letter fee, increasing the zoning text amendment fee to \$275, increasing the fee to \$275 for a Board of Adjustment Variance Request or Appeal and eliminating fees for small printed documents.

The Board discussed getting more publicity for the litter campaign. Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager, discussed what he is doing to market the litter campaign.

Dr. Kim Morrison and Dr. Sandy George of Mount Airy City Schools and Bill Powell of LT Consulting presented a request to approve \$348,000 for emergency HVAC funding at Mount Airy High School. Mr. Powell went into detail about the geothermal loop.

Dr. Morrison said Mount Airy City Schools has around \$50,000 left over from another project that could be dedicated to the HVAC project.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to fund the emergency HVAC request and for staff to work out the details on where the funding comes from.

John Altmueller and Frank Beals of Elkin City Schools and Mr. Powell discussed the Elkin schools gym project. Mr. Powell said that, if needed, the auxiliary gym could be constructed in a second phase.

Details of the locker rooms were discussed.

The Board said they would like to see if the State will issue any school grants during the Long Session to help with funding. Mr. Altmueller said ground won't be broken until the spring of 2021.

Chairman Johnson told Mr. Altmueller to move forward with project design as if Elkin City Schools was completing the entire project.

Sheriff Steve Hiatt, Capt. Larry Lowe and Capt. Scott Hudson discussed Sheriff's Office requests.

Capt. Lowe discussed the need for replacing Motorola radio consoles due to the Viper system changing in 2025. He said 95 walkie talkies and 95 mobiles would need to be replaced. The walkie talkies cost \$4,250 each and the mobiles cost \$3,900 each. The cost to replace the equipment would be \$193,060 a year until 2025, assuming every console is replaced through purchases. After discussion, the Sheriff's Office said they would do more research to see if a lower cost solution is possible.

Capt. Hudson discussed personnel expansion options, to include adding an Overdose Death Investigator and hybrid School Resource Officer. He also discussed the need for more detention officers.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to fund two more detention officers.

Capt. Hudson discussed adding 401k separation allowance for detention officers. After looking at comparisons to other counties and discussion, the Board decided to table the item until a later date.

Upon motion of Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:51 p.m.

Nathan Walls
Clerk to the Board