

Minutes
Catawba County Board of Commissioners
Special Session, Monday, June 11, 2007, 8:45 a.m.

Board of Commissioners

Special Session – Retreat

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The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Monday, June 11, 2007 at 8:45 a.m., immediately following subcommittee meetings, in the 2nd Floor Meeting Room of the Government Center in Newton, North Carolina. The purpose of this Special Session was to conduct a retreat to discuss the County's IT strategic plan, the use of conditional zoning and a proposed regional transit plan.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Barbara G. Beatty and Commissioners Glenn E. Barger, Lynn M. Lail and Dan Hunsucker.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Planning Director Jacky Eubanks, Senior Planner Mary George, Social Services Director Bobby Boyd, Chief Information Officer Terry Bledsoe Catawba County Planning Board members Ray Von Caldwell, Anne Barrier, Scott Rhoney, Larry Drum, Al King, Stuart DeWitt and Ed Neil and County Clerk Barbara E. Morris. Also present were Attorney Thomas E. Terrell and Lisa Willardford of the Smith Moore Law Firm, John Tippet from WPCOG and Fred Fravel of KFH Group.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.
2. Terry Bledsoe, Chief Information Officer, presented a power point presentation outlining the County's technology strategic plan. The plan was designed by the Information and Technology Governance Committee which consisted of representatives from each department and provided input and direction in developing the plan. The plan addressed both short-term needs and long-term requirements for cost effective technological solution for the County. The plan was designed to link the County's needs and goals with information technology to provide improved government functions and enhanced customer service. Mr. Bledsoe summarized the strategic initiatives to improve efficiency and effectiveness as well as contributing to the safety and welfare of the public. The strategies set forth a technological direction for the County and provided a roadmap focused on solving common problems and enabling collaboration.

County Manager J. Thomas Lundy asked Mr. Bledsoe to discuss wireless and where it was going to be available. Mr. Bledsoe explained that the wireless referred to was the wireless inside the buildings which was in the budget for last year. As of last week, the Government Center had wireless capability. The Justice Center was scheduled to be on-line next with the telephone system/Voice Over IP and the Library would have it in July.

Mr. Bledsoe said the major feedback that they had received from the public regarding technology in Catawba County was on-line payments. The public indicated they disliked the current system because of the heavy surcharge for usage and were upset because they could not just use a credit card anywhere they wanted to use it. Mr. Bledsoe said they were looking at solutions for these problems. Mr. Lundy pointed that the County had no control over the fee charged by the credit card companies and it cannot be rolled into tax bills. He noted that the fees would be much smaller if debit cards were accepted. Mr. Bledsoe said the credit card companies were starting to come up with better plans and fees and options were being investigated and flexibility was an important aspect to which vendor would be utilized for on-line payments.

Chair Barnes asked Mr. Bledsoe to talk about redundancy and the ability of the County to operate if another Hurricane Hugo or other disaster occurred. He replied that it depended on the extent of the damage. He felt the worst threat would be a tornado hitting a county building. He indicated that there was a Storage Area Network (SAN) in the Government Center and one in Public Health. If one was lost due to disaster, provided the infrastructure stayed up, the other would be brought up within 15 to 20 minutes. He added that back up capability had improved and was more reliable.

Commissioner Barger asked about encouraging broadband coverage and cable. Mr. Bledsoe responded that recent legislation moved the control of the cable TV from the County to the State and the County had no negotiating power for negotiating contracts for cable TV – it was now with the Secretary of State. Commissioner Barger asked

how then could the County encourage the expansion of broadband capability within the County. Mr. Bledsoe said he thought it was how the County dealt with the vendors who were out there and noted the improved services that were coming from the cellular carriers. He noted it was important to investigate all options.

Commissioner Lail asked about the incapability of the City of Hickory and the County with their radios and if it would be addressed. Mr. Bledsoe responded that they were trying to look at technology which could convert the different frequencies to be compatible. Mr. Lundy pointed out the incapability was not Hickory but only Hickory Police.

Mr. Bledsoe advised all present that the entire strategic plan was available on the County's website under Technology.

3. Attorney Tom Terrell and his assistant Lisa Willardford joined the meeting as well as Catawba County Planning Board members Ray Von Caldwell, Anne Barrier, Scott Rhoney, Larry Drum, Al King, Stuart DeWitt and Ed Neill. Planning Director Jacky Eubanks and Senior Planner Mary George also joined the meeting. Planning Director Jacky Eubanks thanked the Planning Board members for attending and taking the opportunity to educate all present of the dynamics of conditional zoning. Attorney Terrell then came forward to deliver his presentation on the use of conditional zoning. He expressed his fondness for his experience with Catawba County. He addressed the conditions that applied: use, transportation, dimensional, landscaping and buffering, environmental and miscellaneous (ie. Lighting, signage, combination of parcels, building mass, scale and height, building orientation, exterior building materials, outdoor storage and hours of operation). He referenced actual site plans of development using this type of conditional zoning in counties which have this type zoning in place and how it was applied and utilized in difficult situations and also supplied examples of Mecklenburg's rezoning requests which were reviewed to see how the process had worked. He compared overlay districts to conditional zoning and when and where these zoning tools would be used.

Lunch was served and the Board, staff and Planning Board members continued their discussions regarding the application of this type of zoning during lunch.

4. John Tippet, Transportation Planner for the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and Fred Fravel, Vice President of KFH Group presented the proposed Regional Transit Plan. Social Services Director Bobby Boyd also joined the meeting at this time for this presentation. A regional transportation implementation study had been ongoing in the Western Piedmont region encompassing Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. Hickory, Newton and Conover were the municipalities who joined in the study and committed to financial input but Lenoir and Morganton did not opt to join in at this time. This study followed a feasibility study done in 2004 which recommended a transit authority structure be developed to administer public transportation in the region. Three alternatives for this structure were presented: lead agency; private, non-profit and transit authority. The strength and weaknesses of each of these alternatives were discussed. It was determined by the study that a transit authority arrangement would be the most logical structure to support a regional system because there is equitable ownership from all member jurisdictions; there is a possibility of raising local revenue; the board of an authority is concerned only with transit and the director is an employee of the board and the authority is a public entity concerned with public needs. The Board discussed the make up the proposed Board and the number of members and the breakdown on how those members were distributed among the municipalities and counties involved. The State allows 11 members but 7 are recommended by the study. There are 7 direct participants – 4 counties and 3 municipalities. Some other counties are not happy with that because Catawba County would essentially have 4 votes. Different solutions were proposed but it was determined that the Board should not go above the 11. The consensus was to keep it at 7 and if you paid you are in. The other option was for each county to get two votes and the municipalities to have one. It was recommended that local transportation advisory boards continue. While a draft resolution was included in the documentation provided, a vote was not asked for at this time. It was agreed that the true costs of the system had to be determined prior to taking any action.

5. Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley updated the Board on the situation with St. Stephens Pool. The pool has been operated by Hickory for 10 to 15 years. When problem arose with the pool, it was discovered that the property had never actually been transferred from the County to Hickory even though Board action directed that action. Since the pool was constructed by the County with grant funds specifically for recreational purposes, it has to be used for recreational purposes. Since the grant is in the County's name, the property cannot be transferred to Hickory. The possibility of a conversion appears to be the best option. The County would close the pool and be designated obsolete and sell the property and the profits from that sale would be used for recreational purposes. It was determined that Clyde Campbell School did not want the property. The tax value of the land is approximately

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\$250,000. No action was required on this date and was for information only at this time. The title is being researched at this time.

6. Chair Barnes update the Board on actions in Raleigh regarding the Medicaid relief efforts but no certain outcome was determined.

7. Adjournment. Chair Barnes adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Katherine W. Barnes, Chair
Catawba County Board of Commissioners

Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk