

Special Meeting
Catawba County Board of Commissioners Retreat
October 10, 2011, 8:00 a.m.

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Monday, October 10, 2011 at 8:00 a.m. in the Executive Board Room of the Catawba Valley Medical Center at 810 Fairgrove Church Road, Hickory, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Lynn M. Lail and Commissioners Dan A. Hunsucker, Barbara G. Beatty and Randy Isenhower.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, Assistant County Manager Dewey Harris, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Chief Information Officer Terry Bledsoe, Economic Development President Scott Millar and Julie Pruett of the Economic Development Corporation, Library Director Karen Foss, Finance Director Rodney Miller and County Clerk Barbara Morris.

Also present for portions of the retreat were President of Catawba Valley Community College Garrett Hinshaw, President of the Chamber of Commerce Danny Hearn, Alan Jackson of Alan Jackson Associates and Hickory City Manager Mick Berry.

County Staff present to present subcommittee items were Sheriff's Office Business Manager Susan Branch, Human Resources Director Cynthia Eades and Finance Director Rodney Miller.

1. The Board's Finance and Personnel Subcommittee heard items listed on the Subcommittee Agenda and the Board's actions are reflected in the subcommittee minutes.
2. At 8:45 a.m., the Board moved to the retreat agenda and the first item on the agenda, Board of Commissioners Goal Setting.

President of the Economic Development Corporation Scott Millar led a discussion regarding economic development and goal setting. He stated the community wanted to know what was being done to attract businesses and create jobs. He said the public may not be aware of the strength of what had been accomplished over the past couple years and how that compared to other counties. In FY 2010-11, 800 jobs had been created with \$47,567,000 in investment. Mr. Millar identified the short term goals of job creation and tax base growth with a long term goal of economic prosperity through balance and diversity. Some of the strategies for these goals were attracting foreign companies which usually brought in other foreign interests; determine what sectors made the best sense for Catawba County and go after those businesses; make the most arguments for a company to locate here; identify Catawba County as a data center; seek emerging energy/energy alternative opportunities and target manufacturing which Mr. Millar stressed was not dead.

The question of what companies were looking for was raised and it was determined that the low cost of doing business was a strong argument to look to Catawba County. Another strategy was to use the proximity to Charlotte as a selling point – we were close enough to utilize the city but we were not Charlotte and could emphasize the benefits of our outside lifestyle.

Alan Jackson of Alan Jackson Associates then discussed the Hickory Branding effort and how all the communities in the county could join in on the use of the logo and the branding efforts.

Danny Hearn of the Chamber stressed the need to encourage entrepreneurial efforts such as with the Edison Project and to fight for small business in the County. CVCC President Garrett Hinshaw joined Mr. Hearn's sentiments and wanted to know who was accountable for this support and stressed that leadership in this effort to assist these small and new businesses needed to be identified.

Board members identified areas that needed to be addressed:

- A need to make it easier for companies to get up and started
- Lobby the legislature to be less restrictive for small businesses
- Assist when possible – ie. Having a building inspector on site at the Apple construction
- Many of the issues were not local government but state issues
- Need to make an environment to breed jobs

The Board then crafted its goals, with the assistance of the community leaders present. The proposed goals were as follows:

1. Support a coordinated effort to create jobs and property tax base by investing in infrastructure, the development of the County's quality of life, and educational opportunities. Participate with the private sector in determining a long-term vision.

Specific strategies include:

- a. Aggressive recruitment of most favored industries;
- b. Support of and participation in a multi-jurisdictional business park;
- c. Advocating for the widening and completion of Highway 16;
- d. Insuring that County regulations support orderly growth and business development;
- e. Supporting an environment for entrepreneurship, emphasizing the development of small business;
- f. Continued support of public education, Economic Development Corporation, Convention and Visitor Bureau, CVCC and the Chamber of Commerce.

2. Prepare a fiscal year 2012-13 budget which provides needed County services within available revenues, including no property tax increase, ensuring that the County addresses its short term needs while planning for long term growth and maintaining the Board of Commissioners' policy of two months of operating expenses.

Lunch was then served and the meeting resumed at 12:30 p.m.

The next item on the agenda was capital projects.

Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley and Animal Services Manager Jay Blatche presented the Catawba County Animal Shelter update. Between 7/1/10 and 6/30/11 the shelter received 7,063 animals with its average daily population at 163 (208% of capacity). Many safety issues exist in the current shelter design. The proposed new design would have kennel space for 205 animals with safety issues addressed. The proposed design is within the budgeted amount in the County's CIP (budgeted amount \$3.5 million – 45% to be paid by municipalities; \$600,000 on hand, remainder debt financing – County's portion approx \$1.7 million). Commissioner Hunsucker stated that they needed to proceed with the construction because the State would make us move forward due to their inspections. Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to proceed with the proposed shelter as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Assistant County Manager Dewey Harris, along with Library Director Karen Foss, Finance Director Rodney Miller, Planning and Development Director Jacky Eubanks and Purchasing Manager Debbie Anderson presented the Sherrills Ford Branch Library Project. The current library was too small to meet the needs of the Sherrills Ford community, had no meeting space and had only 16 parking spaces. After presenting the proposed design and discussions, Chair Barnes stated she was disappointed that a local architect was not selected but noted bids had been solicited from local firms. Vice-Chair Lail moved to authorized the County Manager to execute a letter of intent for acquisition of up to a 2.5 acre site located on the Connor property fronting Sherrills Ford Road and approve a contract with Jenkins Peer Architects for the design of the library. The motion carried unanimously.

County Manager J. Thomas Lundy presented the options for the Justice Center/Public Safety Expansion and the specifics of a two-story vs. three-story design were discussed. Commissioner Hunsucker stated he preferred the three-story design for the future when the cost of building would be more expensive; Chair Barnes was against the three-story design as she believed 25% shell space was sufficient and she could not justify the additional \$9 million for the 3rd floor; Commissioner Isenhower stated he agreed with Commissioner Hunsucker regarding the three-story design; Vice-Chair Lail agreed with Chair Barnes that 25% shell space was sufficient; and Commissioner Beatty stated she agreed with Chair Barnes and Vice-Chair Lail. Vice-Chair Lail made a motion to proceed with the two-story design. Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Lail and Commissioner Beatty voted in favor; Commissioners Isenhower and Hunsucker opposed. The motion carried.

Board members then updated the full Board on the Boards and Commissions on which they served.

Chair Barnes:

WPCOG Policy Board – WPCOG would be moving into its new building; The COG continued to assist those facing foreclosures with positive results.

Air Quality – EPA had backed off on ozone standards. There had been no violations this year and the County was in compliance with the PM2.5 standard since the scrubbers had been in operation at the Marshall Steam Plant. The battle to get the EPA to redesignate the County continued.

NACo – She had been named to the Board of Directors and was also Chair on the Subcommittee on Environmental Land Use and Air Quality.

CVCC Board of Trustees – doing a great job with the funds they had – the campus was very impressive – a connective road between campuses was to become a reality.

Barbara Beatty:

Hospital Board of Trustees: She asked Scott Eckelberry, VP of Operations, to update the Board on the hospital renovations.

Noted she was on the State Health Accreditation Board.

Randy Isenhower:

Mental Health Partners – upcoming merger was very smooth and everyone was very cooperative.

JCPC – the commissioner's position (as well as Public Health Director) has been removed from this Board which had become too large.

Lynn Lail:

Social Services Board – stressful times – large increase in food stamp needs as well as other needs.

Future Forward – Our congressional district has less businesses selling to the federal government than any other district in the state.

Dan Hunsucker:

Public Health – flu campaign doing well

Children's Advocacy – he was now off that Board

Agricultural Steering Committee – how important present use tax is.

Chair Barnes noted the upcoming meeting with the NCACC Advocacy Team scheduled for November 3rd. The agenda was to include the following issues:

- Economic Development
- Homestead Exclusion
- Lottery (distribution equity)
- Jails – justice reinvestment
- Bond Bill
- Electing Counties
- Child Care Subsidies
- Thanking the Association for their assistance in In Rem Foreclosure Fees
- Local Eco Complex bill

- Second Primary Elections
- Animal Control (Feral cats having to be held for 72 hours)

Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to adjourn at 2:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Katherine W. Barnes, Chair
Catawba County Board of Commissioners

Barbara E. Morris
County Clerk