

Minutes
Catawba County Board of Commissioners
Regular Session, Monday, November 5, 2007 7:00 p.m.

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The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, November 5, 2007 at 9:30 a.m. in the 1924 Courthouse, Robert E. Hibbitts Meeting Room, 30 North College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina.

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

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Deputy County Attorney Anne Marie Pease and County Clerk Barbara Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.
2. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. Chair Barnes offered the invocation.
4. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker made a motion to approve the minutes of the Retreat and Regular Meeting of October 15, 2007. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Recognition of Special Guests.
In addition to welcoming all present, Chair Barnes welcomed Sheriff Huffman and Louis Woods.
6. Public Comments for items not on the agenda. None
7. Presentations:
 - a. Commissioner Lynn Lail presented Fred Miller, Director of Cooperative Extension Service and Donna Mull, 4H Agent, with a proclamation declaring the week of November 16-22 as Farm-City Week to foster cooperation and an exchange of information between two essential segments of our society: farmers and city dwellers. The week includes a banquet, to be held on November 20, during which these beneficial relationships are highlighted, and programs designed to introduce people from both "worlds" to the lives and work of each other. Commissioner Lail commended Donna Mull for the work she does daily with the youth of the County.
 - b. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker presented Social Workers Regina Roberts, Bernie Boags, Desiree Benfield and Sybil Good and foster/adoptive parents Kerry and Joy Reeves with a proclamation declaring November as Adoption Awareness Month, to recognize the County's efforts to create better public awareness of children seeking permanent homes through adoption. Caring adults can make a positive difference in the lives of young people, siblings, children of different ethnicities and youth who have been harmed by abuse. Last year, more than 1420 foster children in North Carolina were adopted. 65 of those were children adopted out of the Catawba County foster care system. More than 700 foster children in North Carolina are currently legally available for adoption. Thirteen of those children are in Catawba County and more will continually be added to the list.
 - c. Commissioner Glenn Barger presented Chris Gibbs, Claremont Elementary, Wachovia Principal of the Year, and Dr. Tim Markley, Superintendent, Catawba County Schools, with a proclamation declaring November 11-17, 2007 as American Education Week and November 15, 2007 as "Walk in My Shoes Day" in Catawba County schools. This proclamation recognized public schools as the backbone of our democracy and praised education employees, including substitute teachers, custodians, teachers, bus drivers and librarians, for their tireless work to serve our children. The proclamation also encouraged business and civic leaders to shadow educators during American Education Week, in order to get a true picture of public education in action. Chair Barnes indicated she was trying to clear her calendar to participate in the "Walk in My Shoes Day".
 - d. Personnel Director Debbie Bradley came forward to introduce thirteen graduates of the County's Employee Mini Course which the Board was recognizing at this meeting. Employees voluntarily attend sessions during lunch hours to learn more about the services each County department provides. This year's graduates include: David Abbott, Technology; Deborah Black, Social Services; Joy Eckard, Public Health; Tona Heffinger, Social Services; Valerie Huffman, Social Services; Christine Hulley, Tax; Cee Lee, Personnel; Crystal Loggins, Social Services; Miriam Powell, Personnel; Paulette Sigmon, Personnel; Martia Vang, Personnel; Brenda Ward, Social Services and Rebecca Wilson, Social Services.
8. Appointments.
Commissioner Lynn Lail recommended the reappointment Ron Lindler for an 8th term to the Region E Development Corporation. This term will expire September 30, 2010. Chair Kitty Barnes recommended the appointment of David Eckard to an unexpired term to replace Aaron Turk as the Sheriff's designee on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, due to reassignments of Sheriff's investigators. This term will expire on June 30, 2009. Chair Barnes also recommended that she be appointed as the Board's delegate to the Charlotte Regional Partnership. These recommendations came in the form of a motion and the motion carried unanimously.

9. Consent Agenda:

County Manager J. Thomas Lundy presented the following four items on the consent agenda:

- a. A request to amend a cost avoidance budget outcome of the Department of Social Services. Due to a recent increase of 24.91% in nursing home costs, the Adult Services area will significantly exceed the current outcome by ensuring senior and disabled citizens have an opportunity to remain in their own homes in lieu of nursing home placement. These services will now result in the avoidance of \$2,500,000 in Medicaid expenditures (\$2,367,000 federal and state and \$133,000 in county share), an increase from the \$1,750,000 noted in the original outcome. The new outcome should read: **To ensure senior and disabled citizens have the opportunity to remain in their own home during FY 2007-2008, Community Alternatives Program services will be provided in lieu of nursing home placement resulting in the avoidance of \$2,500,000 (increase of 35.95% from 06/07) of Medicaid expenditures (\$2,367,000 federal and state, \$133,000 county share).**
- b. A request to grant the County Tax Administrator the authority to allow individual extensions for listing of personal property, with no extensions to be granted beyond April 15, 2008. When businesses and corporations end their business year on December 31, it is difficult to complete listing abstracts by January 31. NC General Statute 105-307 allows the Board to grant individual extensions for listing of personal property upon written request and with good cause shown. Requests must be in writing and postmarked no later than January 31, 2008, and extensions will not extend beyond April 15, 2008.
- c. A request to approve two tax refund requests totaling \$313.07. Records have been checked and these refunds verified, so the Tax Collector recommends approval. Under N.C. General Statute 105-381, a taxpayer who has paid his or her taxes may request a refund in writing for an amount paid through error.
- d. A request to set a meeting schedule for 2008. Its first meeting in January would be scheduled for January 7, 2008, with accompanying subcommittee meetings scheduled for December 31, 2007 during the holiday week between Christmas and New Year. Scheduling a first meeting in January is traditionally difficult. The Board's first meeting date in March conflicts with the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., which some board members will attend. The August 18, 2008 meeting falls during Soldiers Reunion Week so it would not be feasible for the meeting to be held at the Board's usual meeting location, the 1924 Courthouse in Newton. The Board was asked to approve the following changes to the Board's meeting schedule for 2008: 1) cancellation of the January 7, 2008 meeting and accompanying subcommittee session; 2) cancellation of the March 3, 2008 meeting and accompanying subcommittee session; 3) moving of the August 18, 2008 meeting to a location other than the 1924 Courthouse; and 4) scheduling of the Board's annual breakfast meeting with the staff of the Cooperative Extension Service for Monday, December 1, 2008 at 8 a.m. The Board's calendar also includes budget hearings with departments during the entire working day on May 28, 2008 and a public hearing and wrap-up session beginning at 7 pm on Thursday, May 29, 2008 at the 1924 Courthouse, with budget adoption scheduled for the Board's meeting at 9:30 am on Monday, June 2, 2008. The resolution read as follows:

RESOLUTION NO. 2007 –

ADOPTING 2008 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING SCHEDULE

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-47 of the Catawba County Code, the regular meetings of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners shall be held as provided in a resolution adopted by the Board in a regularly scheduled meeting held not less than ten days prior to the first meeting to which the resolution is to apply. The Board will observe the holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by meeting on the Tuesday following such holiday.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Catawba County Board of Commissioners adopts the following Meeting Schedule for 2008:

- January 22 – Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.
- February 4 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
- February 18 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
- March 17 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
- April 7 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
- April 21 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
- May 5 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
- May 19 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.

May 28 – Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Budget Hearings with Departments
May 29 – Thursday, 7:00 p.m. – Budget Public Hearings and Wrap-Up
June 2 – Monday, 9:30 a.m. (Budget Adoption)
June 16 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
July 7 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
July 21 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
August 4 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
August 18 – Monday, 7:00 p.m. (change location due to Soldiers Reunion)
September 2 – Tuesday, 9:30 a.m.
September 15 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
October 6 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
October 20 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
November 3 – Monday, 9:30 a.m.
November 17 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.
December 1 – Monday, 8:00-9:00 annual breakfast w/CES – Regular Meeting 9:30 a.m.
December 15 – Monday, 7:00 p.m.

This the _____ day of November, 2007

Chair Barnes asked if any Commissioner wished to have any item broken out of the consent agenda. None were requested. Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Departmental Reports.

a. Sheriff's Office:

Sheriff L. David Huffman came forward to present a request for the Board to accept SOS grant funds in the amount of \$127,800 through the U.S. Department of Justice. This is a 50/50 match grant that will provide cameras in Newton & Hickory Public Schools, WiFi connection spots at these schools and Catawba County Schools for the Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement and equipment for remote monitoring at the Sheriff's Office and Mobile Command Unit.

Cooperation between school personnel and law enforcement is a critical component of maintaining a safe school environment for students and staff. The Sheriff's office would like to extend the effectiveness of the School Resource Officers (SROs) and increase school safety by providing secure internal and external video surveillance of the schools. An external monitoring station would be maintained in the Catawba County Sheriff's Office, Mobile Command Unit, and in the Emergency Operations Center. Wireless monitoring will be available to officers' Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) outside of the building on the school grounds. Not only will this provide a secure link to each school's video surveillance system but it will also provide a secure internet link for the Officers to upload reports from their patrol cars, thus increasing our presence and keep-check stops at the schools.

The Newton & Hickory Public Schools will fund the 50% match for camera equipment and installation in the schools. In fiscal year 2007/08, \$200,000 is committed in the General Capital Projects Fund to fund ongoing infrastructure upgrades, enhance building wireless capabilities, and reserve funds to develop a high-speed mobile wireless solution. Funds from this project will be used to cover 50% match of the WiFi equipment and installation. Funds would need to be appropriated to cover the Sheriff's Office remote monitoring equipment and installation. The Catawba County School System, which has security cameras in some schools, chose not to participate at this time, as its budget was adopted before County school officials were approached regarding the grant and the required matching funds. Should additional Secure Our Schools grant funds become available, the Catawba County School System will reconsider participation.

Commissioner Barger made a motion to accept these grant funds. The motion carried unanimously. The following is the applicable supplemental appropriation:

Revenue

110-210050-620318

\$127,800

SOS Grant US DOJ	
110-210050-650800 Hickory Public Schools	\$ 45,500
110-210050-650700 Newton Schools	\$ 33,700
110-190900-695410 From General Capital Projects	\$ 31,900
110-190050-690100 Fund Balance Appropriation	\$ 16,700
<u>Appropriation:</u>	
110-210050-870150 Small Tools & Minor Equipment	\$231,600
110-210050-982000 DP Equipment	\$ 24,000
<u>Transfer</u>	
410-460100-982000-11202 Technology Infrastructure Upgrade	\$ 31,900
410-460100-995110-19940 To General Fund	\$ 31,900

b. David Weldon, Emergency Services Director, came forward to request approval for the appropriation of the existing fund balance in the amount of \$111,826.00 for Catawba Rescue Squad. The funds will be used for an addition to their existing base.

Historically, each squad had their own fund balance which was carried from year to year unless the squad made a request to appropriate it. The squad used the fund balance for major projects such as new buildings, building additions, truck replacement and other large ticket items. In 1999, rescue squad fund balances were merged into one rescue fund balance. Each of the rescues squad's fund balance, prior to 1999, would be set aside in each squad's name until they chose to appropriate it. In order to access fund balance now, a squad must submit a proposal that is voted on by the Rescue Association and agreed to by the County.

Most of the squads have spent funds that remained in their individual fund balances. However, Catawba Rescue has been saving their fund balance for an addition to their existing building. Even before the creation of the Emergency Services Plan, Catawba Rescue was sharing space with Catawba County Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The two agencies have operated out of the same facility since the inception of EMS. The additional bays will allow both agencies additional space for equipment and will allow EMS to move a spare ambulance that is being stored outdoor to a bay indoors. The Emergency Services Plan outcomes would support this addition since it is a facility utilized by EMS and Catawba Rescue.

The addition will consist of 6 bays. The building will be a pre-engineered metal building with pre-finished galvanized steel metal walls and a brick veneer front. The 6 bays will be outfitted with 12 x 14 steel roll-up doors. The building addition will add 2,580 sq ft, and cost \$113,000. The building is being constructed by Carolina Metal Building Technologies Inc. (CMBT Inc). A copy of a concept drawing and an invoice are included. The Catawba Rescue has started the construction and anticipates completion after January 1, 2008.

Vice-Chair Beatty made a motion to approve this appropriation. The motion carried unanimously. The following appropriation applies:

<u>Appropriation of Existing Fund Balance</u>		<u>Expense</u>	
240-260250-690100	\$111,826.00	240-866300-260250	\$111,826.00
Fund Balance		Catawba Rescue Capital	

11. **Other Items of Business.**
 Chair Barnes noted that the following day was Election Day and the Board had a referendum on the ballot regarding the ¼¢ sales and use tax and the five Board members felt very strongly about allowing the citizens the opportunity to choose between a sales tax and property tax. She noted the opposition that had been reported in the media and she found it interesting that the opposition was mounted by people from outside the County, namely they were located in Raleigh, and none of these people have ever had to stand for election nor had they had to build a budget and meet the services and school needs of a county. She called on the citizens to allow the tax and have all those who come into Catawba County participate in paying for the services they often take advantage of by voting for the referendum. All the Commissioners joined with the Chair in these beliefs. Chair Barnes said if the tax was passed, the Board would commit to not raising property taxes for the next three years.

12. **Attorneys' Report.**
 County Attorney Debra Bechtel updated the Board on the Winn Dixie bankruptcy case and due to this bankruptcy the County was unable to collect their personal property tax in excess of \$14,600. The average settlement of these taxes in other counties was about 50% of what was due, but Catawba County had been successful in settling for approximately 70%. She also reported on the status of the LifeSkills building – it was now completed but the initial contractor had walked out during construction and the bond company hired another company to finish the building. The bill had to be paid to the bond company. Negotiations had resulted in a payment of \$359,000 out of the \$440,000 left in building fund, giving the County in excess of \$80,000 after closing that project out.

13. **Manager's Report.**
 County Manager J. Thomas Lundy said he had the opportunity to speak with the NAACP at their monthly meeting about the sales tax and they were very positive about the tax and the issue of fairness. He then requested the Board go into closed session pursuant to General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney and 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body. He did not anticipate any public action. Commissioner Barger made a motion to move into closed session. The motion carried unanimously. The Board moved into closed session at 10:20.

14. The Board moved into open session at 11:35. Vice-Chair Beatty made a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Katherine W. Barnes, Chair
 Board of Commissioners

Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk