

November 9, 2004, MB#49

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Catawba County Board of Commissioners
Special Session, November 9, 2004, 8:00 a.m.

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Catawba County Board of Commissioners
Fall Planning Retreat
Tuesday, November 9, 2004, 8:00 a.m.
Hickory Metro Higher Education Center, Room 112
Highway 70 SE, Hickory, North Carolina

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Tuesday, November 9, 2004, 8:00 a.m. at Hickory Metro Higher Education Center, Room 1122, located at 2760 Highway 70 SE, Hickory, North Carolina. The purpose of the special meeting was for the Fall Planning Retreat to discuss proposed goals, receive information of the Most Favored Industries, update on FERC Relicensing and the proposed Stormwater/Erosion Control Ordinance and other issues that may need to be addressed. Included in this meeting was a subcommittee agenda which had previously been scheduled from November 8, 2004 and the minutes thereof are recorded separately.

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

A quorum was present.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Joellen J. Daley, County Attorney Robert Oren Eades, Attorney Debra Bechtel and County Clerk Barbara E. Morris.

1. Chair Barnes welcomed everyone and introduced and thanked Karen P. Summey, Business Programs and Conference Manager of the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center.
2. Chair Barnes called the subcommittee meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. The minutes of this subcommittee meeting are a separate document and on file in the County Manager's office. This subcommittee meeting was completed at approximately 9:15 a.m.
3. The Invocation was offered by Commissioner Hunsucker.

4. Goals:

Chair Barnes stated that the Commissioners had come up with 61 individual goals for the upcoming year and these goals had been discussed and refined to result in the following three goals for the next fiscal year.

Board of Commissioners Goals for 2004-05

Maintain and enhance relationships with elected officials at the State and Federal levels, to aid in appointments to State Boards and obtain funding for projects/services in Catawba County.

Begin implementation of the FORESIGHT recommendations to sustain and expand Catawba County's long-term economic growth. Partner with the public and private sectors in the four areas of jobs and the economy; environment; education; leadership and political action, within available resources.

Establish long-range plans and specific ordinances to manage growth in Catawba County over the next decade, including public outreach, review and adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance.

5. FORESIGHT discussions by Commissioners:

a. Environmental:

1. FERC Update:

Mary George, Senior Planner with the County Planning Department, narrated a power point presentation which outlined the relicensing process plan required by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Duke Power's current license (issued in 1958) is due to expire in 2008.

Duke Power approved and is conducting 32 separate studies related to hydro operations, wildlife and botanical, aquatics, water quality, cultural, shoreline management and recreation and land identification.

Duke Power established four Regional Advisory Groups and two State Relicensing Teams and Commissioner Barbara Beatty and Mary George were appointed to the NC Metro and Foothills Advisory Groups with Jacky Eubanks as alternate. These advisory groups are responsible for sharing with constituents and other advisory groups, balancing the interests within the region, participating in the development of the Agreement in Principle (AIP) and signing off on the Final Agreement which is submitted to FERC.

Catawba County's interests for relicensing focus on improved water quality through sound policy and ordinances for shoreline development, positive affect on tourism, economic development, quality of life and fisheries and effort to not cause visible sedimentation and algal blooms which negatively affect visual aesthetics and impact fish habitats. County's interests also include public access and recreation opportunities on the lakes to benefit both lake and non-lake users and promote economic development and tourism.

Duke Power is currently in the second stage of the relicensing process which is scheduled to be completed in August 2006 and consists of reviewing the study plan results, identification of interests and development of the Agreement in Principle and the Final Agreement. The third stage will be completed between September 2006 and 2008 and will include the filing of the license application with the FERC, environmental impact studies and the issuing of a new license for 30-50 years.

Chair Barnes stated that there would be further environmental discussions later in the day as it related to PM2.5.

b. Jobs and the Economy:

Scott Millar, President of Catawba County Economic Development Corporation presented a strategy summary of the Counties efforts in economic development and job creation based on the Foresight Report.

Scott stated that under the Jobs and Economy Implementation Schedule of the Foresight Report, the strategy set forth was to identify faster growing, better paying industries and to provide financial assistance to businesses and entrepreneurs, through private and public entities, to bring them to this area. The schedule assigned this task to EDC, Venture Capital Group and in 2004 the task was to identify "Most Favored Businesses".

Under Job Creation, the EDC Board, local governments and WPCOG were to develop incentives to attract new businesses and in 2004 WPCOG was to complete a target analysis.

It was determined that targets for Catawba County should be no less than the best of the best and so named "Most Favored Industries" (MFI). These industries would pay above the county wage, be predicted to have positive employment growth in the future and were projected to have increasing revenues.

The target analysis resulted in identifying 14 manufacturing sector industries and 10 service sector industries which pay workers above the average County weekly wage and expected to grow nationally over the next ten years.

Four of the industries that have recently relocated to or expanded in Catawba County fit into the identified manufacturing sector (G&G, Poppelmann, ZF and Getrag) and the Shurtape expansion fits into the identified service sector industries.

A preliminary draft of a "Most Favored Business" comprehensive program which includes recommendations for grants, expedited permitting and other program is expected in January 2005. With the results of the target analysis that identified these Most Favored Businesses, the guesswork has been taken out of the incentives and has been replaced by science.

Two strategies from the Foresight Initiatives have been identified as the current focus regarding Most Favored Businesses. The first is to define and close the "gaps" – for example, education/training of existing workforce for potential growth industries and job creation through an enhanced infrastructure and transportation network. WPCOG's Gap Study will enable CVCC, HMHEC, WPCOG and the school systems to address these gaps. County staff is working on the plans to address the goal of an enhanced infrastructure and transportation network.

The Commissioners goals discussions regarding jobs and the economy included optimism that the passage of Amendment 1 would be helpful and partnering was important and the regional approach should be encouraged. It was agreed that a pro-business atmosphere needed to be cultivated and the County could improve on this and the past perception of not being pro-business needed to be changed. The problems that were identified were the absence of coordinating efforts with municipalities and the inconsistent interpretations of both local and state ordinances. It was acknowledged that much progress has been made in the area jobs and the economy but there was work to be done and the focus should be on good customer service. Several suggestions for tools for improvement were to meet with the Sarasota staff to discuss their processes and successes and to develop a package to be distributed to local churches (typically have been expanding recently and had trouble with plans and permit approval) regarding building requirements. It was further suggested that planning and permit requirements be disseminated in press releases and on the County website. An audit of approximately six to eight randomly selected building permits was proposed to compile an unbiased summary of the process time, the quality of communications and other common issues with the building process in the County.

Specific goals set forth by the Commissioners in the Jobs and Economy area were to support the most favored industries, job creation through enhanced infrastructure, assist existing businesses, address environmental issues and focus on closing the gap in the education and training of the existing workforce and the skills needs of potential growth industries.

c. Leadership and Political Action.

Chair Barnes stated that in the past year the communication at State and Federal levels had improved with the help of the lobbyists. Commissioner Barger inquired if figures had been compiled regarding the amount of monies that had come to the County that could

be directly tied to the lobbyists' efforts. Chair Barnes replied that that had not been determined at the Federal level but there had been increased monies from the State through these efforts.

Commissioner Beatty complimented Assistant County Manager Joellen Daley for her efforts in this area and Commissioner Lail joined in that praise. Commissioner Lail cautioned the Board to take a long-term view of the effectiveness of the lobbyists and pointed out that they had only utilized the State lobbyist for 2 years and the Federal lobbyist for one year. Chair Barnes also cautioned that the effectiveness of these lobbyists should not only be measured in dollars but in other areas such as the result achieved in the air quality issues. Commissioner Barger said he believed the utilization of lobbyists was a wise decision but some citizens only use the dollar measure and the more dollars we can credit to their efforts, the more the public will accept the expense of employing lobbyists. Commissioner Hunsucker suggested once a dollar amount was determined that could be attributed to the lobbyists' efforts, that publishing it in a newspaper article would be beneficial. Chair Barnes questioned this type of publicity might open the door for negative feedback but the Board should have this information and then determine the application of such figures. Commissioner Barger said he thought it was important that citizens know that the County is seeking out funds other than those generated by taxes.

In response to Chair Barnes inquiry as to the status of communications with State Legislators, both Commissioners Hunsucker and Lail stated they believed that when two commissioners together met with a representative, the meetings were more productive and beneficial. Chair Barnes suggested a goal of meeting with the current representatives for lunch in the next couple weeks. She further suggested that all the commissioners should try to meet with Mark Hollo and asked that Joellen Daley contact Mr. Hollo and invite him to a Board of Commissioners meeting. The priority goals of the commissioners set forth in this discussion were to identify people to be appointed to State Boards and participate actively in Leadership Catawba.

d. Education: (after a break for lunch)

The discussion on Education began with the Commissioners acknowledging that in the past, because of the County's manufacturing background, value had not been placed on education. Generations were able to find jobs and support their families without completing high school or going onto college. Now that these jobs are not as plentiful, the focus needs to be on changing this perception and stress the value of education in this county's changing economy. This goal is connected to the jobs and economy goal of closing the gap in training and education for potential employers in the county. Goals were set to meet with school boards after the installation of new members to come up with effective and cost efficient ways to attempt to close the gap in the training/educational skills of students and the needs of the potential employers in Catawba County; ensure the right people attend and are included in the upcoming Forum on Education; hire more ESL and math teachers as part of the No Child Left Behind program and increase teachers supplements.

e. Environmental:

1. Stormwater/Erosion Control Ordinance –

Barry Edwards, Director of Planning and Engineering and Toni Norton, Utilities and Engineering Water Resource Engineer, presented the draft Catawba County Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program ordinance for approval and requested that the staff be directed to apply for State approval of the draft ordinance and further apply for matching

program startup funds from the NC Department of Environment and Natural resources, Division of Land Resources, Land Quality Section.

The commissioners had many questions regarding the fee structure and asked that this be reworked and clarified and the revised fee structure and requirements are set forth in the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 15, 2004.

2. Air Quality – PM2.5

Chair Barnes discussed the recent 2500 page document regarding PM2.5. The County has been active in air quality issues and has been very successful in their Ozone efforts. PM2.5 has been a difficult issue in that it is not known how it is created, though we do know that some of it is created naturally. While the County is actively addressing the high readings, it is getting no direction on how to improve them. A new monitor has been set up but its readings are about the same as those taken at the original site. A speciated monitor *might* give more definitive readings but this monitor costs approximately \$45,000. It has been determined that damp weather, like what we have been experiencing, causes PM2.5 to stay in the atmosphere. The County has made a request to the EPA to have a non-classifiable designation and continues to focus on a reduction of PM2.5.

6. Adoption of Board of Commissioners Goals for 2004-05

Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to adopt the three goals. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Adjournment. Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to adjourn the Fall Planning Retreat. The motion carried unanimously.

Katherine W. Barnes
Chair, Board of Commissioners

Barbara E. Morris
County Clerk