

**Minutes  
Catawba County Board of Commissioners  
Special Session  
Monday, August 15, 4:30 P.M.**

**City Councils**

Special Meeting with Claremont and Catawba Councils

40 08/15/05

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Monday, August 15, 2005, at 4:30 p.m. in the First Baptist Church, 4791 Depot Street, Claremont. The purpose of the special meeting was a joint meeting with the City Councils of Claremont and Catawba.

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

Absent: None

A quorum was present.

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

1. Mayor Glenn Morrison welcomed everyone and thanked the First Baptist Church for allowing the use of their facility for the meeting. Chair Barnes said the Board was delighted to have the opportunity to share this meeting with the City of Claremont and the Town of Catawba. She introduced Reverend Dennis Richards, Pastor at First Baptist Church in Claremont. Reverend Richards said he was very glad to make their facilities available to councils and commissioners. Chair Barnes then asked Reverend Richards to open the meeting with a prayer.

At 4:38 p.m. Chair Barnes called the Catawba County Board of Commissioners meeting to order and asked Mayor Jones to speak. Mayor Jones thanked Claremont for hosting the meeting and called the Town of Catawba Council meeting to order. Mayor Morrison then thanked the Board and called the City of Claremont Council meeting to order.

Chair Barnes then introduced the agenda prepared by the County and asked the Town Manager of Catawba, Anthony Starr and Jacky Eubanks, Catawba County Planning Director, to present the Lyle Creek Greenway Concept.

- a. Mr. Starr stated that Catawba County is blessed with an abundance of wonderful natural resources – i.e the Catawba River, the mountains – and these resources should be protected but also managed well and utilized for economic development and improve the quality of life of the County’s citizens. He said a couple of years ago the concept of a greenway along Lyle Creek was introduced through the Small Area Planning process and asked Jacky Eubanks to give the presentation on this concept.

Jacky said that greenways, like golf courses, have an economic value to the community. Greenways contribute to the quality of life. He then asked a trivia question – how many people who live on a golf course actually play golf – and noted it was only 25% - so 75% of the people living on a golf course don’t play golf and are living on actually what is just a greenway.

Jacky said the economic value and quality of life that is attained by greenways is gaining momentum all the time. The small area plan specifically stated that a greenway system should be looked at. He said that the County was undertaking a Parks Assets Recreation Management Plan and this was to look at the things that had been accomplished over the last 3-5 years and to build upon those amenities and assets and try to establish some activities and partnerships with sister towns and cities in order to arrive at a greenway system rather than just individual greenways.

What has happened simultaneously with the Parks Assets Recreation Plan is the Duke Power Relicensing process which is a once in fifty year opportunity. Duke Power has indicated through their recreation study

needs analysis that a connecting system with a ½ mile trail should be established along Lyle Creek connecting the Town of Catawba with Hunsucker Park down to the edge of Lake Norman. Jacky said this is a very positive thing that is about to be recommended and will be at considerable cost to Duke Power.

The idea of a regional system from Cline Creek, down through Lyle Creek, around Rock Barn and Claremont and connect with Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and the east and westbound visitor center on I40 – could be used to tell the story of Catawba County and capitalize on the number of people who stop at the visitor center – making it a destination, not just a pass-through. The idea is to have a greenway which connects the visitor center with the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge, down to Murray's Mill.

Jacky said there is economic value in this concept as well as recreational value and all adding up to a better quality of life. He said the presentation was to introduce the idea and consider the towns partnering with the County to develop the greenway.

Chair Barnes then opened the floor for questions and also asked that Jacky address the issues of rights of way and land acquisition. Anthony Starr said the section coming down from Lake Norman, back up to Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and onto the rest area surprisingly only has a few property owners and Duke Power owns most of the property so from a standpoint of attaining easements or property outright as fee simple, is not as difficult as some other projects. Jacky said that educating the property owners of the value of the greenway and the community was instrumental in this working and Mr. Starr said there are studies that indicate that property owners who own property along a greenway or park, generally experience a 2-4% increase in their property value because it is viewed as an amenity by the market.

Jacky said that Duke Power to date has budgeted approximately \$400,000 –\$ 500,000 for the establishment of a greenway. He then pointed out on the map that there would be one private property owner in the ½ mile trail by Duke Power.

Commissioner Beatty said they needed some direction as to what was needed to proceed. Mr. Starr said at this point all they were after was to introduce the topic and action by the County would come at a later date. He said as he understood it, Duke Power was committed to the ½ mile trail, picnic tables, installation of an access road and boat parking. He said what would require action by the governing bodies involved at some point is when they move forward with the rest of the project through land acquisition and any grant applications. There were several questions regarding the width of the right of way (not yet determined), if the trail would be paved (yes) and would it cross I40 (go underneath). Mr. Eubanks said public forums were scheduled to discuss the concept and the reactions of the property owners involved would be sought.

- b. Scott Millar, President of the Economic Development Corporation, came forward to present the concept of multi-jurisdictional or business park opportunities. Prior to this presentation, he addressed the Delta Jet Service questions and said people should seek prices from Delta.com and Chair Barnes asked that he elaborate on the subject. He said they had met earlier in the day with the operators of the Delta commuter service to Atlanta. He said there were a lot of questions and issues among the business community regarding their willingness to participate in keeping this airline operational out of Hickory. Mr. Millar said economic development in this area needs local service but if it is not economically feasible, they would not keep it going. He said people should be encouraged to look at the Delta.com website and compare – he said he was surprised at the difference between Expedia, Orbitz, etc. and Delta.com. Scott then moved onto his presentation. He said this community must work together to achieve economic development. He said for quite some time there had been an effort to explore opportunities to develop products and to get companies into the county, not to compete with what the county already has, but to provide opportunities for things not already here. The goal is to make investments for companies easier – there is a need to assess what is needed to be competitive and to make sure it will work for the next project out there. He said it was important when thinking about small area plans that there are opportunities for industry and it was extremely important to plan for the growth that will come and how the county wants that growth to proceed – and if it has the best potential for the county. Scott added that multi-jurisdictional opportunities were addressed in the FORESIGHT Report.

Mr. Millar explained that there are several things to answer before undertaking this type of park – it should not compete with business already in the county; there isn't the opportunity for a mega site; how do you get employees there; what type of park should be looked at – mixed use or targeted; does it need to be opened

up to any local government to buy in if they are interested and also answer the question whether the private section will have the opportunity to buy in.

Mr. Millar pointed out the business park in Lincoln County on HWY 321 as an example of this concept. He gave the example of a park in Davidson/Huntersville/Cornelius which is multi-jurisdictional with the return from the park based on the investment each jurisdiction put into the park.

Future Forward, Duke Power, Electricities, CBDG programs, Amendment One and The Golden Leaf all have some sort of funding that may be able to be tapped into for the development of a park. Mr. Millar said all the costs of development for the park needs to be determined – acquisition of the land of sufficient size, water and sewer and other infrastructure, clearing and grading – and all these need to be looked at when thinking of developing a park. Significant monies would be needed to achieve this.

Mr. Millar said the next step are to be decided by the Boards – how to proceed, if they proceed and if it is decided to proceed, how to best go about it, who should be involved and what professional assistance is needed. He said there are a lot of questions to be answered and all he was doing was planting a seed regarding this type of project and urged the Board and Councils to think about this opportunity.

Commissioner Lail asked what would be a good model to look at – one that was complete or semi-complete. Scott said he thought the best model right now would be the one in Cornelius/Huntersville – a 250 acre industrial park – with already 70 acres taken by a big plastics project. He said he has seen some of the legal documents for that park and their structure is very similar to what he has been talking about as far as return based on percentage of investment. He further stated that legislation was approved last year which would allow jurisdictions to work together in this manner – up until now that was for a period up to 40 years but he said that is suppose to be extended to 99 years.

Chair Barnes pointed out that this concept had been presented at the meeting with Conover, Newton and Maiden and a meeting is scheduled in September with Hickory, Longview and Brookford and that would complete the introduction of this concept. Chair Barnes said that perhaps at that time they could discuss getting a task force together. Scott said he had not yet had any negative feedback on the concept. Chair Barnes said competition had to be looked at in surrounding counties. She said she would also be interested in looking at the success of such parks that are already in these counties and why is Lincolnton's park successful where others aren't. Another issue brought up was the environmental factors such as air quality and Scott said that this had to be considered.

- b. Scott Millar then presented an update on the Poppelmann and Shurtape projects. He had discussions with Shurtape and they have 25-30 employees out there at that facility and they are working at shipping product. Scott said they are also working on cleaning up their vacant facility for possible sale and they are looking forward to the next development opportunity.

Scott said there were less concrete developments to date on the Poppelman project. He pointed out Germans move more cautiously and decisions are made a slower rate. The development of the rail line which was a requirement for the project has proceeded and the approval is almost there. He said the bids for grading have gone out and the bids for construction (piece by piece) have also gone out.

Scott was asked what projects had recently lost and why. Scott said some were lost due to the environmental factors and others were just different competitive factors. He did point out that the County had won quite a few – he said it is not all one way.

Scott said he characterized what was happening in Catawba County as a silent recovery. In the past two years 750 jobs had been created in each of the two years – expansions are small but numerous. This may not be exhibited in the investment figures but it is growth (i.e. 200 additional jobs for McCreary Modern).

Chair Barnes said they appreciated Scott's efforts.

Chair Barnes opened the meeting for any other business. The County was thanked for their help in getting water lines for certain residents of Claremont after their wells went dry and Claremont is proud of their own efforts to assist these citizens. The Town of Catawba has established a Downtown Merchants Committee and for the first time in

history

there is going to be a town parade – the first Saturday in November- a Little Miss Catawba Pageant and all of this was a result of the Downtown Merchants Committee. Also, there is a breakfast walk scheduled for the same day of the Murray's Mill Festival (Sept 24/25).

Chair Barnes said they were getting closer to the completion of the small area plans and next month there would be a public hearing on the Startown Area and there will be one more completed. She said the UDO is proceeding and a draft was forthcoming.

It was noted that the NC League of Municipalities would be here in October for their conference and attendance was encouraged.

The meeting recessed at 5:47 p.m. and dinner followed.

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Katherine W. Barnes, Chair  
Board of Commissioners

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Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk