

Special Meeting
RETREAT
Thursday, March 19, 2015
Chowan County Public Safety Center
305 West Freemason St.
Edenton, NC
9:30am

Minutes

Present Chairman Jeff Smith Commissioners Keith Nixon, Alex Kehayes, Ellis Lawrence, John Mitchener, Emmett Winborne and Greg Bonner.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings.

Facilitators Lee Padrick and Charles Halsall with the Eastern Office for Rural Development were also present.

School Capital Needs Presentation

Edenton Chowan School Superintendent Rob Jackson stated he was there to provide the Board of Commissioners with a PowerPoint presentation on the Edenton-Chowan Schools Long Range Capital Outlay Needs. A copy of the PowerPoint is in the meeting file labeled March 19, 2015. He stated that while members of the Board of Education were present in the audience, this meeting was not advertised as a joint meeting, so Board of Education members would not be able to participate in the conversation. He stated that the following are capital needs:

John A. Holmes High School –

24 HVAC units that have exceeded their life expectancy by eight years with a total cost for replacement \$480,000. He noted that 14 of those units are over 24 years old.

Chowan Middle School-

15 units have exceeded their life expectancy the cost estimate for replacement of these units is \$300,000.

Commissioner Nixon stated that he has seen very few HVAC units listed as Tier I projects on the school's capital outlay requests. He stated that last fiscal year he pushed for replacement of the HVAC units at the high school during budget time. He asked if the school has a rotation plan in place for replacement of these units.

Mr. Jackson stated that he is working on developing a plan with the school system maintenance director. Mr. Jackson provided additional information on the following capital requests:

Building Control Systems Upgrades for a system wide wireless network that would connect all components at John A. Holmes High School, Chowan Middle School and White Oak Elementary School. He stated that an updated system would allow the schools to schedule and set different zones based on occupancy and would be more energy efficient.

Commissioner Winborne discussed possible use of the Northern Chowan Community Center by the Middle School.

Mr. Jackson stated that it would not be efficient to load buses to travel to the Community Center next door to the school each day.

Commissioner Lawrence discussed the energy study conducted by the school.

Commissioner Nixon stated that monies were spent for the renovation of the entrances at John A. Holmes High School in the current year capital expense monies. He stated he felt that heating and air and working showers are more of a health and safety priority than cosmetics.

Mr. Jackson noted that there have been plans in place to renovate or rebuild the gym at the high school and this may be the reason that it was not placed as a top priority.

Mr. Jackson reviewed the following capital requests

John A. Holmes High School – Boiler upgrade

Chowan Middle School – Boiler upgrade.

White Oak Elementary – Carpet and furniture replacement

DF Walker Elementary – Carpet replacement

Chowan Middle School – Furniture replacement, parking lot lighting, sink in nurse's office, covered walkway to art classroom, window and door replacement

John A. Holmes High School – gym bleachers, A/C in gym, renovate locker rooms, renovate bathrooms in commons and English building, replace flooring in EC Suite and Vocational Rooms, Parking Lot lighting

Maintenance Department – Enclosed trailer, maintenance vehicle and lighting for transportation department

Mr. Jackson stated that the lease for the Central Office would expire in August of 2015. He stated that rent annually for this space is \$41,328. He stated that in May of 2015 the schools are required to submit a request to renew or extend the lease. He stated that the space for the Central offices are inadequate as there are issues with confidentiality. He stated that he has shared his concern with the County Manager that he would like to identify County owned space to relocate the Central Office.

Mr. Howard stated that currently the only space identified by the County is at the former DF Walker School and it could be over 1 year before that space is renovated for offices.

The Board discussed other space that is County owned. Commissioner Winborne discussed space at the Ag Extension building but noted that space may not be available for another year because those offices will not be out until Edenton PD relocates from the Public Safety Center.

Mr. Jackson stated he liked the space at the Ag Building and at the Public Safety Center.

Mr. Jackson provided the Board with information on a study that began in 1999 on a renovation of John A. Holmes High school.

Commissioner Kehayes asked if the classroom layout requirements have changed much with the new technology that is used in classrooms.

Mr. Jackson stated it has changed some.

Commissioner Nixon asked if the auditorium is being used.

Mr. Jackson stated that they hoped to use that room more. He provided information on an approved NC State Charter Virtual School that has been approved. He noted that local monies previously going to the local schools would be used for this School.

Mr. Jackson noted that the list of capital projects he has presented to the Board of Commissioners totals \$2,506,440. He shared a slide that shows Chowan County's per pupil capital outlay average at \$36.98. He stated that Chowan County ranks last in the state wide average per pupil capital outlay local contributions.

Commissioner Nixon stated that Chowan County ranks high statewide for the current expense contribution for low wealth counties. He stated that Chowan ranks 20th. He asked if the Schools are willing to trade Capital monies for Current expense monies. He stated that this Board is committed to the School system and asked that those in attendance remember that the County also has debt for schools that it is still paying. He asked if the Superintendent could tell him where Chowan County ranks on debt.

Mr. Jackson stated his concerns over the school's use of its fund balance for current expense needs.

Commissioner Nixon asked if the school is asking the County to pick up the loss in state and federal monies. He stated he estimates the loss of monies to the school at \$10,000 per student. He stated he felt the County could not supplant that loss.

Mr. Jackson stated his priority was taking care of the children.

Commissioner Kehayes stated he recently attended the Institute of Emerging Issues and he stated one of the most important things for students is athletics. He stated that if the School system were to not contribute monies to the athletic program, how much more money could go to the classroom.

Mr. Jackson stated that athletics are a small cost to the school and added that the removal of the athletic program would have a negative impact.

Commissioner Nixon asked what the Average Daily Membership for the school system was.

Mr. Jackson stated that it is 2,238.

Commissioner Nixon stated that the presentation that was provided at the school forums for capital needs indicated that the County has a much larger fund balance. He noted those monies include reserved and unreserved monies. He noted that the school's slide regarding the school fund balance only highlights its unreserved funds.

Mr. Howard stated that the County's fund balance is \$6,393,161. He stated that only \$4,686,745 is unreserved leaving a 29.49% fund balance. HE noted the Board has a policy to maintain a 25% fund balance.

Commissioner Nixon stated that the reserved fund balance includes donations, insurance proceeds etc.

Mr. Howard discussed the County's debt noting that all debt would be paid off in the year 2021. He stated that in 6 years \$212,000 will be reduced from the County's debt payments, in 7 years \$312,000 will come off and in 8 years \$1,009,000 will come off.

Mr. Jackson thanked the Board for listening to his presentation and stated he looked forward to the joint meeting of the two Boards in April.

Planning Retreat

County Commissioners Present: Jeff Smith, Chairman, Dr. Alex Kehayes, Vice Chairman, D. Keith Nixon, Greg Bonner, Dr. Ellis Lawrence, John Mitchener, Emmett Winborne

Additional roundtable members: Kevin Howard, County Manager

Facilitation Team (NC Rural Division): Lee Padrick, Chuck Halsall

Introduction

Mr. Padrick briefly outlined the proposed format for the 1 day Chowan County Planning Retreat.

AGENDA

I. Open Meeting

- Introduction
- Overview of retreat format, roles of participants and general ground

rules (Break)

II. Issue Identification and Discussion

- Commissioners will identify, discuss, and prioritize major issues for the upcoming fiscal year

Lunch

III. Brainstorming and Consensus Building

- Commissioners will participate in a facilitated discussion that will allow for development of major goals for the next year

(Break)

IV. Strategic Planning

- Commissioners will focus on clarifying goals and developing strategies to meet these goals

(Break)

V. Review and Wrap Up

- Commissioners will review and clarify results, discuss outcomes and determine what type of follow up is appropriate
- Meeting adjourns

After going over the agenda, the Commissioners were asked to state their expectations for the retreat. The expectations listed by the Commissioners were:

- Develop a long-range plan (5 year plan horizon)
- Reach consensus on major issues
- Adopt a “Do It Yourself” attitude
- Increase workforce preparedness
- Recognize the school system as a community attractor
- Identify goals and objectives

ISSUES

Commissioners were asked to list all the relevant issues to consider over the upcoming budget year. Each Commissioner was given 5 dots to place beside the most important issues. The scores are in bold.

- Emergency services **(3)**
- Social services
- Job creation **(4)**
- Recreation programming **(1)**
- Local jail versus regional jail
- Education for the County Commissioners (fiscal history) **(3)**
- Changes in state funding
- Cost-benefit of raising taxes
- Heritage preservation balanced with growth (and a welcoming attitude to new residents) **(4)**
- Water system issues **(3)**
- Education **(4)**
- Ways to save and consolidate infrastructure needs (school system included) **(3)**
- Funding for agricultural extension service **(2)**

- Regional partnerships **(1)**
- Water quality/waterborne recreation **(1)**

The top issues are:
 Job creation, education, fiscal history
 education, heritage preservation/growth
 balance, emergency services,
 consolidation of infrastructure, and water
 system issues.

Job Creation

Goal: Increase jobs and population

Objectives: Increase the population by 10 percent over the next 10 years
 Increase the total number of jobs in the County

Strategies:

- Develop/revise the local incentive program
- Support improvements to Hwy 17
- Make more concerted efforts toward job creation

Education

Goal: Develop a 10-year comprehensive plan to update and modernize school

facilities Objective: Estimate needed costs and develop a financing plan

Strategies:

- Study the impact of local teacher supplements
- Develop a capital outlay plan

Fiscal History Education

Goal: Educate the County Commissioners on decisions and/or reasons for past expenditures

Objective: Allow public insight into past spending decisions

Strategies:

- Develop a minimum 10-year history of previous years' fiscal practices
- Develop graphical displays of previous spending to better inform the public
- Partner with local news media outlets to better communicate with citizens

Heritage Preservation / Growth Balance

Goal: Preserve the local history, natural beauty, and resources

Objective: Continue to protect and improve natural recreational assets

Strategies:

- Establish a review process to consider potential impacts on historic and cultural resources caused by development projects
- Develop long-term cultural resource goals
- Work with the Board of Education to educate the younger generation about the importance of historic preservation

Emergency Services

Goal: Minimize County expenditures for emergency services

Objective: Decrease the amount of money spent without a reduction in the level of service

Strategies: Seek new partnerships for services
Look at the cost-benefit of privatization of emergency services
Consider alternative sources of emergency services revenues

After much discussion, the County Commissioners agreed that the consolidation of infrastructure and water system issues were presently being addressed, and that present efforts were sufficient.

After developing goals, objectives, and strategies for the identified issues, the County Commissioners reviewed their list of expectations.

- Began the develop a long-range plan (5 year plan horizon)
- Reached consensus on major issues
- Adopted a “Do It Yourself” attitude, noting that federal and state assistance is limited
- Increased workforce preparedness (through job creation efforts)
- Recognized the school system as a community attractor and dedicated to upgrading facilities
- Identified goals and objectives

Adjourn

Jeffery Smith, Chairman

Susanne Stallings, Clerk