

Special Meeting
RETREAT
Monday, February 12, 2019
8:30am
Eastern 4H Environmental Education & Conference Center
100 N Clover Way
Tyrrell County, Columbia NC

This meeting was recorded. A copy of the recording is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019.

Present Chair Patti Kersey, Commissioners Greg Bonner, Ron Cummings, Don Faircloth, Bob Kirby, Ellis Lawrence and Larry McLaughlin.

Notes from the facilitator are incorporated in the minutes.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard, Finance Officer Cathy Smith and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings.

Board Chair Patti Kersey welcomed everyone in attendance.

State of the County

County Manager Kevin Howard provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding objectives identified in last year's retreat as well as short term and long term goals for the future. He also updated the Board on several capital projects. A copy of the presentation is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019. (Chowan County Year in Review).

Following a discussion on the PowerPoint the Board took a five minute recess.

Water Treatment Improvement Updates and Timeline

Greg Churchill of Rivers and Associates who is the County's Engineer provided the Board with the historical timeline of the Valhalla Water Treatment Backwash Solids Handling Project. He provided historical information on the SOC (Special Order by Consent. He also provided a comprehensive report on ongoing plans to address State directives regarding effluent disposal from the water treatment facility. Several routes for the disposal line were discussed as well actions required by the Board in the coming months. A copy of the PowerPoint detailing the project timeline is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019.

Human Resources – Employee Health Insurance Plan

Cathy Maxfield the County's insurance plan broker with Pierce Group Benefits provided the Board with a PowerPoint summary on various health plan options. Additionally she provided a snapshot of the County's claim ratio, status of the county health insurance plan as well as options that might be considered moving forward. Discussion and final decisions regarding this matter will be made once the county's renewal is received. A copy of the PowerPoint is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019.

At 11:50 the Board took a 30 minute recess for lunch. Following lunch the Board reconvened.

Planning Update

Planning Director Brandon Shoaf provided an update on the County subdivision and zoning ordinance highlighting the Planning Boards procedure for updates, modifications and process to ensure consistency with the newly revised land use plan. He reviewed and provided an overview of the current ordinances as well the processes by which enforcement is carried out. Also related to Planning were Board member comments regarding policy related to Solar and Wind Driven Energy Facilities. In addition the Board discussed Planning Board appointments and the importance of keeping all seats on the Board filled while having all areas of the County represented.

A copy of the PowerPoint is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019.

Renewable Energy Tax Structure

Tax Administrator Melissa Radke reviewed with the Board how tax assessments for Renewable Energy Facilities are developed. Commissioner Kirby then provided an informative overview of property tax policies related to such facilities as well as the inequities that exist in how these improvements are taxed under the N.C. Machinery Act. A copy of Commissioner Kirby's PowerPoint is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019. It was the consensus of the Board that these inequities should continue to be communicated to the County's Legislative Delegation and that the County should be diligent in insuring that the maximum tax value permitted under current law be assessed.

The Board took a five minute break after 5 minutes Chair Kersey called the meeting back to order.

Board Communications – Clerk to the Board, Susanne Stallings shared with the Board options regarding upgrading the sound quality at Board meetings. Alternative meeting locations as well as sound system improvements were noted. A copy of the PowerPoint is in the meeting file labeled February 12, 2019.

Commissioner's Roundtable Neil Emory facilitated a discussion to identify issues and challenges facing the County.

Board members provided additional topics of interest for the retreat agenda the Board members will briefly discuss these topics.

Broadband – It was the consensus of the Board that Broadband access for all county citizens was critical to protecting and strengthening the well-being of the community. In particular this service is vital to educational achievement on the part of students as well as the success of economic development efforts designed to retain and recruit business and industry to the County. The Board will take the following steps in support of this objective:

- Seek legislation, funding, and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and under-served areas and residents of the state.

- Reach out to other area counties to coordinate support of these efforts and to communicate this support to the local legislative delegation.
- Continue to pursue partnerships and grant funding designed to expand broadband access in the County.

Water and Sewer – Sewer capacity and access is critical to economic development efforts in the County/Town. Therefore, intergovernmental agreements must be developed to ensure that service is available for existing as well as new businesses and industries.

- Begin work with the Town to achieve the infrastructure capacity goals noted in the Joint Land Use Plan.
- Finalize and move forward with plans to address the disposal of effluent from the Water Treatment Plant.

Many County residents live in areas that currently have a fire rating of 10, which means they are not currently part of an existing insurance district. While fire coverage is provided these residents face higher homeowner insurance premiums while also paying fire tax. This is an issue that will require a comprehensive review of options that would allow all residents to be served by an insurance district. This is an undertaking that may require the assistance of a consultant to work with all parties involved to develop strategies to overcome this challenge.

- Receive proposals for a Fire Study that would identify strategies to insure that every citizen resides in a fire insurance district.

Tax fairness for all taxpayers is vitally important and must be a factor considered by the Board when making decisions related to service delivery.

Addressing school needs continues to be a priority and requires open communication with the Board of Education. In addition efforts must continue to address the need for additional revenue to address the long-term capital needs of the schools. (ex. High School)

- Support and promote efforts at the General Assembly to fund statewide capital needs.
- Continue efforts to have the State return its lottery funding formula to the original version.
- Work with school officials to verify future needs by examining past and future ADM trends.

Maintaining the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of Chowan County is important to each and every Board member. Mentioned during the retreat by individual members were several suggestions that might be discussed by the Board in the future:

- Architectural Stands for Commercial Development

STEM – Student achievement in these areas is vital to the future of our children and our community. Therefore, the County must be mindful of educational efforts to address these areas.

At 4:30pm Chair Kersey thanked Mr. Emory and the Board members for the retreat discussion, she then declared the meeting adjourned.

Patti F. Kersey, Chair

Susanne Stallings, Clerk