

CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 21, 2005

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners ***reconvened their recessed regular session of February 15, 2005 on this date***, at the hour of 2:00 p.m., in the Commission Chamber of the Cleveland County Administrative Offices, for the purpose of meeting with Congressman Patrick McHenry, at his request.

PRESENT: Jerry L. Self, Vice-Chairman
Mary S. Accor, Commissioner
Johnny Hutchins, Commissioner
Willie B. McIntosh, Commissioner
David C. Dear, County Manager
Robert Yelton, County Attorney
Wanda Crotts, CMC, County Clerk
Eddie Bailes, Human Resources Director
Denese Stallings, Health Director
Alex Caban, Cleveland Headline News
Joy Scott, The Star
Patrick McHenry, Congressman
Jon Causey, Legislative Director for Congressman

McHenry

Britt Keeter,

ABSENT: Ronald J. Hawkins, Chairman

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Self called the meeting to order.

MOVE TO CONFERENCE ROOM

ACTION: Mary Accor made the motion, seconded by Johnny Hutchins, and unanimously adopted by the Board, to ***move the meeting to the Commission Conference Room.***

AGENDA ADOPTION

ACTION: Johnny Hutchins made the motion, seconded by Willie McIntosh, and unanimously adopted by the Board, to ***adopt the agenda as prepared by the County Clerk.***

CONGRESSMAN PATRICK McHENRY

Congressman McHenry discussed the benefits of his office placement in Washington and advised he has been assigned to serve on three committees: Government Reform, Budget, and Financial Services. He stated he is most excited about being able to “connect with the district” advising he will have three district offices, one of which will be in the Charles F. Harry Administrative building. He said he will be home every weekend and available, therefore he will be more aware of what issues are facing the district. He introduced his staff members, John Causey and Britt Keeter.

The Congressman advised he requested today’s meeting in order to hear Commission concerns and goals for the county and how he may be of assistance.

Commissioner Mary Accor stated her main issues of concern are Medicaid reform; law enforcement grants (COPS); education and school funding, such as mandates and under

funding with programs like the “No Child Left Behind” program. The Congressman agreed these are areas of “major concern” and that there is “no simple answer, but this issue needs to be addressed.”

Commissioner Willie McIntosh stated his areas of concern are the 800 MHZ communications system being mandated by the State, noting this mandate brings with it a price tag of more than \$9 million for Cleveland County. He stressed safety, for both the public and that of the responding emergency personnel as being the critical issue in having a system such as this in place, as it will allow responding personnel to communicate with each other. He stated that any resources to facilitate this project would be appreciated. Another area of concern is “cultural affairs”, stating there needs to be more assistance to help people from other countries in situations such as getting in touch with their families in times of emergency, such as funerals.

Commissioner Johnny Hutchins reiterated concerns already expressed regarding the increasing cost of under funding, specifically Medicaid; concerns regarding drugs and crime, such as repeated offenders and the court systems; the crime rate; and, the growing concern over illegal immigrants. He said, “If mandates are passed down from the federal government, they should give the money to fund them.”

Congressman McHenry stated he is “following Cass Ballinger’s lead” in pursuing tighten border control regarding immigrants; agreed that one of the biggest issues facing counties is the “meth labs” and the affect this drug problem is having on communities, both to people and the cost of clean up. He advised this Thursday he will meet with area Sheriffs to see what needs to be done, stating the cost of clean up is “extreme.”

Vice-Chairman Jerry Self advised he feels Cleveland County should consider joining the Appalachian Regional Council, stated it would help with economic development. He requested the Congressman assist however possible in “speeding up” the 74-Bypass, which will also help with economic development; as well as exploring the possibility of designating 74-Bypass as a future Interstate, stating this would be a significant economic benefit to Cleveland County and the entire southern district. He noted this issue is “timing critical.”

Congressman McHenry advised he felt “Tim (*Moore*) and Debbie (*Clary*) have done a great job with acquiring State funds” for the Bypass project, but stated he would help on a federal level. He requested Commissioners alert him when the timing is appropriate to pursue Interstate designation.

He stated he would do what he could to help on the federal level with the Medicaid issues, noting North Carolina is one of only two states that require State funding of Medicaid.

Vice-Chairman Self stated the Cleveland County Sanitary District is working toward a reservoir which he feels this would also be a good boost for the county economically. Since the Sanitary District is a separate entity, any assistance the Congressman could provide in supporting that project would be helpful.

He reiterated previous comments regarding help with the communications system and education, asking “do we even need a federal education department?”

Congressman McHenry felt no, stating that “block grants are the way to go.”

Denese Stallings, Health Director, requested Congressman McHenry help to protect block grant funding, as these funds are used for educational programs sponsored by the Health Department. She also emphasized how Medicaid funding cuts have affected services, noting the services are mandated, but with funding reductions, the increased burden is placed on local taxpayers.

Mrs. Stallings also discussed the Carolina Access program, saying there is no “dis-incentive” to use the emergency room as a primary provider, and requested assistance on a federal level with rerouting these non-emergency care Medicaid clients.

She also talked about the increased cost of cleaning up “meth labs” adding the Health Department staff helps with the clean up and “need to be educated” in this field.

Commissioner McIntosh stated help is also needed with “thinking outside the box” in promoting agriculture and agriculture related industries. John Causey advised he has contacts with various federal agencies and individuals may contact him with questions as to what assistance is available.

Commissioner McIntosh asked what “expectations” did the Congressman have of Commissioners. The Congressman stated that “keeping lines of communication open”; let him “hear what he needs to hear”; using him as a “resource”; and, call on him to make personal contact when recruiting businesses and prospective economic development clients.

David Dear, County Manager, listed economic development and federal earmarked funds for developing infrastructure to serve industry as his focus of concern.

Congressman McHenry again reiterated his desire to serve as a resource; for Commissioners to be familiar with his staff and to call anytime they can be of assistance.

CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION

Greg Traywick, Extension Director, provided brief overview of Extension's organizational structure, mission, and philosophy. Mr. Traywick also provided rationale for the "Strategic Dialogue", with specific reference to the relevance and responsiveness of Cooperative Extension to local issues and needs and quality of life concerns. He indicated that a subsequent meeting with County Manager David Dear and Southwest Extension Director Dr. Deborah Crandall would be conducted at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 23, 2005. He distributed copies of an e-mail sent to commissioners earlier. This e-mail listed five (5) key questions that would serve as an outline for discussion. Mr. Traywick led the Commissioners in dialogue around these five questions, outlined below:

Question 1: *What do you consider to be the most important issues facing Cleveland County?*

County commissioners identified the following list:

Establishing and maintaining a stable tax basis

Securing funding and support for economic development

Developing a comprehensive land use plan (one-stop shop for permits, minimum housing, nuisance ordinances, etc.)

Litter control and community appearance

Zoning ordinance

Education (rewarding school literacy, work force preparation, continuing education)

Crime

Question 2: Do you see roles for NC Cooperative Extension to meet these challenges? If so, what?

Commissioners provided the following suggestions:

Establishing and maintaining a stable tax basis:

- q Develop and deliver educational programs that keep agriculture thriving
- q Help landowners identify, evaluate, and adopt economically viable alternative agricultural enterprises.
- q Assist citizens with entrepreneurial pursuits and small business development.
- q Identify and help to attract industries that support agriculture by serving as consumers of agricultural goods and services (e.g. the Case Farms milling operation might purchase locally-grown grains; some enterprise might be established to add value to and market poultry and other animals waste to retail consumers).
- q Collaborate with producers and producers organizations to investigate the feasibility of creating a regional farmers market tailored to locally-grown commodities (may collaborate with Cleveland County Farm Bureau and Cleveland County Fair in this venture).

Developing a comprehensive land use plan/zoning issues:

Provide input into Land Use Plan currently under development by local leaders and Centralina Council of Governments to address farmland preservation, waste management, beautification, and zoning and nuisance issues.

Litter control and community appearance:

Increase community awareness about the impacts of litter and appearance of our landscape via news columns, mass media, newsletters, public forums, 4-H Club projects and activities, ECA issues programs, etc.

Collaborate with commissioners, solid waste management, and community organizations to develop strategies aimed at reducing and preventing roadside litter and addressing county beautification.

Education:

Promote character development and life skills education among youth via 4-H.

Serve as a conduit for quality continuing education for adults in areas relevant to their individual needs (e.g. training for lawn care professionals).

Inform and educate the general public about the information and services you provide and the importance those services to Cleveland County.

Question 3: *If you do not see a major role for Extension for these issues, what do you see as the top 3-5 issues Extension should address in the community?*

Question 4: *What measurements would you want to see to validate Extension impacts or demonstrate that change is occurring?*

! Meaningful success stories and numbers.

Question 5: How can Extension be of greater value to you and the local community?

Let us and the public know about the resources you provide and the educational opportunities you have to offer, e.g.:

- develop a brochure that informs the public about your staff and the educational programs they deliver;
- plan and conduct a farm day/farm tour for county commissioners to educate them about the diversity of and issues facing local agriculture;
- correspond more regularly with county commissioners about program direction and upcoming educational opportunities.

COMMISSIONERS CALENDAR REVIEW

CHAMBER 20/20: Training session on Thursday noon at Cleveland Regional Medical Center.

LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST: Monday, 7:30 a.m. at North Lake Country Club.

REGIONAL BREAKFAST WITH CONGRESSMAN McHENRY:
Sponsored by North Carolina Association of County Commissioners,
March 29 at 7:45 a.m. - Hickory.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time (3:45 p.m.),

Commissioner McIntosh made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Accor, and unanimously adopted by

the Board, to adjourn the meeting.

Jerry L. Self, Vice-Chairman

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Wanda Crotts, CMC, Clerk

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