

**CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**January 24, 2005**

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners ***reconvened their recessed regular session of January 18, 2005 on this date, at the hour of 4:00 p.m.***, in the Commission Chamber of the Cleveland County Administrative Offices for the purpose of conducting a planning session.

**PRESENT:** Ronald J. Hawkins, Chairman  
Jerry L. Self, Vice-Chairman  
Mary S. Accor, Commissioner  
Johnny Hutchins, Commissioner  
Willie B. McIntosh, Commissioner  
David C. Dear, County Manager  
Wanda Crotts, CMC, County Clerk  
Eddie Bailes, Human Resources Director  
Chris Crepps, Finance Director  
Alex Caban, Cleveland Headline News (*left at 5:20*

*p.m.*)

Joy Scott, The Star (*entered at 5:40 p.m.*)  
Robert Williams, Citizens for Good Government (*left*

*at 6:45 p.m.*)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Hawkins called the meeting to order and announced the meeting would be moved to the adjoining Commission Conference Room.

**AGENDA ADOPTION**

**ACTION:** Johnny Hutchins made the motion, seconded by Jerry Self, and adopted by a unanimous vote of the Board, to ***adopt the agenda as presented by the County Clerk.***

**DUKE POWER**

Chairman Hawkins advised that Duke Power has requested one Commissioner attend their Community Appreciation dinner on March 3, 2005 at the Speedway in Charlotte. He requested Commissioners check their calendars and let him know if they would like to attend.

### **HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Denese Stallings, Health Director, shared the following comments with Commissioners regarding public health in Cleveland County. She said, "I began to think about what it might take to have the ideal, healthy community. People often have the misconception that health is just medicine. But I think that we are all beginning to realize that health arises from the way people live, such as healthy lifestyles. The kind of work that creates a healthy community also creates a positive environment for economic development. A healthier community is a community that can be sold to companies that might want to locate in the community." Mrs. Stallings said the Health Department has developed many collaborative partnerships to work on health issues in our county. She said, "I think that one of the greatest issues that is facing our county right now is the need to reduce the obesity trend. Two critical interventions that can change this trend are citizens eating healthier and increasing their physical activity." She said Health Department staff has formed a task force to look at ways to educate and identify interventions to address this problem. She said, "We are the number one county in the State

with the highest rate of congestive heart failure. We also rank higher than the State average in other heart diseases and diabetes.”

In order to address these issues she said environmental changes will need to be made, such as creating more access to recreation. She said, “This is where working with our Planning Department and elected officials need to come into play and form good partnerships and make policy changes.”

Mrs. Stallings said, “I attended a workshop about counties that had gone totally tobacco-free in their schools. I brought back the information and asked for a meeting with Dr. Gene Moore. He then took this information to the School Board. Next year, 2006, our school system will be totally tobacco-free. This is a big step, but other steps are needed, such as replacing items in vending machines in the schools with ones that are healthy.”

Mrs. Stallings said the Board of Health and the Health Department staff are also working closely with restaurants and educating them about going smoke-free.

She said the mission of the Health Department is “To assure, enhance, and protect the health of Cleveland County citizens through education and prevention.” “We have quality health care”, she said, “but I feel there is a problem of access to health care right now for the indigent in this area.” She advised the Health Department and other community partners have developed a draft plan to address this need; however, more resources are needed before this can be implemented.

She added that “we are also seeing our culture change” in Cleveland County with more diversity and “a lot of this population is coming to the Health Department Emergency Department” to receive care. She said, “We are having to both provide access to care to these individuals and legally meet all of the requirements, which are very costly.” She said the county is also “seeing an increase in the demand for Health Department service with indigent who are not eligible for Medicaid and have no insurance.”

Mrs. Stallings said, “Certain things that we do are mandated. We are required to be ready to respond. I think that 9/11 has affected us in such a way that we have had to invest more time and more money in our county employees being prepared.” She said, “One of the things that we have recently done for our county employees is to implement the Employee Health and Wellness Program which has been well received.” She also thanked Commissioners for “realizing that our staff was needing additional space.” She said we have three units moving into the renovated annex this next year.”

She listed other areas receiving attention as: additional space that “we are building at the landfill for solid waste”; continue to work on vaccinating more animals, as one or two rabies cases in the wildlife population are seen each month.

Mrs. Stallings handed out a copy of the North Carolina Local Health Directors Association 2005-2006 Legislative Agenda and requested Commissioners support. She reviewed the goals as follows:

1. Seek funding for local public health infrastructure, including accreditation and technology issues.
2. Seek legislation authorizing counties to set fees for local Environmental Health programs, including restaurant inspections.
3. Seek funds for uncompensated care.
4. Seek legislation for State funding for interpreter and bi-lingual staff in health departments to improve access to Latinos.
5. Seek funding for Family Planning, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Healthy Carolinians.
6. Support cigarette tax increase to \$.75 per pack.
7. Support reunification of State Divisions of Public Health and Division of Environmental Health.
8. Support legislation to clarify rule making authority of local boards of health.
9. Support restoration of Medicaid eligibility criteria for pregnant teens by discounting parental income.
10. Support legislation to implement the Federal recreational water rules.
11. Support legislation that mandates physical education as part of the curriculum for kindergarten-eight grades.
12. Support legislation to increase school health nurse to one nurse to 750 students with state funding.
13. Support additional ADAP funding.
14. Support voluntary Needle Exchange Program.

15. Oppose privatization of onsite wastewater permitting process due to liability issues.

Mrs. Stallings emphasized that two items she most would encourage Commissioners to support are the “cigarette tax increase” and “supporting school health nursing.”

She said, “I want to continue to lead and address needs in our community . . . and I appreciate all that you do to help us and I will continue to strive to provide as many resources as I can to the citizens of our county in a quality manner.”

### **SOCIAL SERVICES**

John Wasson, Social Services Director, thanked Commissioners for the recent building improvements.

Mr. Wasson reviewed mental health reform, discussing a recent case referred to Social Services by Judge Dina Foster, after Pathways failed to find a suitable placement for the child. He discussed the different aspects of this case, stating it could have cost the county an estimated \$100,000 annually in non-reimbursable funds. He said he feels some areas of mental health reform are good, but not all areas have improved. He said there are currently 145 children in foster care in Cleveland County in 22 group homes, and that Social Services is one of the “biggest consumers of mental health services in the county.” He stated the “complaint line” has not been a successful tool for Social Services to use and feels if similar cases such as the one referred by

Judge Foster arise again that Pathways should be held accountable to locate a placement.

Mr. Wasson discussed staff vacancies stating that vacancies are “not about money.” He said one of his “pet peeves” is that Social Services is “over supervised” and “over monitoring” which he feels prohibits the staff from being allowed to do their jobs. An example of this “over supervision” was evidenced when he reviewed a written report listing the various governing agencies (*copy found on Pages \_\_\_\_\_ of Minute Book 28*).

Commissioner McIntosh commended Mr. Wasson for the diversity of the Social Services workforce.

There was discussion regarding child support collections being switched from being administered through the Clerk of Court to Social Services and fact that funding will not be reallocated. He said the Clerk of Court staff do not have some of the tools to retrieve monies that Social Services has, such as intercepting wages.

**CONSENSUS:** It was the unanimous consensus of the Board, to instruct the County Manager to request the State to redirect the funding for child support collections from the Clerk of Court to Social Services.

### **FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

Chris Crepps, Finance Director, distributed the annual audit to Commissioners and reviewed each section. Mr. Crepps advised that

governmental accounting is moving toward more of a corporate and international accounting format and standards.

He discussed “fund balance” noting that the Local Government Commission mandates are 8% fund balance, but Cleveland County has 20%. There was discussion regarding cash flow variances and the advantages and disadvantage of extending discounts for paying taxes. There was discussion regarding the need for monitoring non-profit organizations, requiring audits and annual reports as financial assurance, and the possibility of establishing a policy requiring such reports. There was discussion regarding grants and incentives for non-profits and attempting to refer non-profits to resources who could assist them with grant writing.

### **TAX ASSESSOR**

Chris Green, Tax Assessor, reviewed a report regarding the “special board of Equalization and Review” (*copy found on Pages \_\_\_\_\_ of Minute Book 28*). There was discussion regarding the advantages and possible disadvantages of making the Board of Equalization and Review (*E & R*) an appointed board rather than the Commissioners themselves serving as the Board of E & R. It was discussed that this board would conduct business similar to the Board of Adjustment. Concern was expressed that board members may not “do their homework” on the cases.



**CONSENSUS:** It was the determination of the Chairman that ***“if anyone want to bring this up again they need to do so in order to move toward an official agenda item” otherwise the Board of E & R will operate as it has in the past.***

Mr. Green explained the new format for vehicle tax notices, stating new stringent regulations of the post office and the bank regarding size has mandated the change. The new format offers an opportunity to provide more information to the taxpayer, while addressing privacy issues, which the State is beginning to address. While this method will increase the cost of billing, it will also allow for a “lock box” collection method to be used which will offset the cost by not having to hire additional staff.

There were questions regarding minimum amounts for which bills will be mailed.

**CONSENSUS:** It was the unanimous consensus of the Board to ***request that Mr. Green research the “minimum amount for which a check will be issued, for both refunding and statements.”***

With the pending retirement of the County Tax Collector, there was discussion regarding the possibility of consolidating the Tax Collection and Tax Assessor departments. It was noted that the functions of the two departments compliment the other and statewide 73 counties have consolidated and 27 counties still operate two separate departments. Combining the departments would be a coordination of efforts of a common goal, reduce the chance of

mis-communication, provide for better accountability, provide for cross-training of employees who could be support during peak times, as peak times are opposite for the departments and would provide more flexibility in managing the work load.

**CONSENSUS:** To discuss the possible consolidation further during the budget process and to discuss other departments that could possibly be combined, such as building inspection and environmental health.

### **BUDGET PROCESS**

David Dear reviewed the budget process, noting he will be meeting with the department heads on Monday to distribute the budget work papers. He requested Commissioners advise as to how they want to proceed with the budget, noting that in recent years they have gone into the communities for public hearings.

**CONSENSUS:** It was the unanimous consensus of the Board to ***(1) make the proposed budget available at the three county libraries and the County Clerk's office; (2) place it on the County Webpage; (3) and place an ad in the newspaper and media similar to last year which includes when and where the public hearing will be on the budget; and, (4) not to hold public hearings throughout the county as in the past due to lack of participation from citizens.***

Mr. Dear reviewed that initially a 2.5% COLA is included in the budget. A 7% increase is projected for insurance; however, the Wellness Clinic and

pharmacy program have helped to offset these costs. Commissioner McIntosh requested physical therapy benefits be considered as an addition to the current insurance coverage.

Mr. Dear noted that 2006 a “cafeteria plan” will be available to entities our size which would allow employees to “tailor insurance coverage to better suit their needs.”

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Eddie Bailes, Human Resources Director, reviewed a handout explaining the Consumer Price Index (*CPI*), which is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a “market basket of consumer goods and services.” He said, “The Chained CPI-U employs a formula in order to utilize expenditure data in adjacent time periods in order to reflect the effect of any substitution that consumers may cross item categories in response to changes in relative prices. The new measure is designed to be a closer approximation to a cost-of-living index than the present measures.” He said the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported on January 19, 2005: CPI-U for 2004 = 3.3%; and, the C-CPI-U for 2004 = 2.9%.” He said the last pay study for Cleveland County was completed in 1999 and recommended bringing salaries up to grade would have cost and estimated \$1.4 million to implement, so it was decided to bring the salaries up over a period of time. However, when the State started withholding monies, the budget was “hit hard.”

There was discussion regarding “workforce diversity” and the county’s attempt to have the county workforce reflect the overall makeup of the entire county (*copy of current report found on Page \_\_\_\_\_ of Minute Book 28*).

There was discussion regarding steps being taken to assure diversity trends continue to improve.

### **COUNTY MANAGER’S GOALS FOR 2005**

Mr. Dear reviewed his following list of goals:

(1) *Social Services expansion*: This expansion addressed the overcrowded situation by expanding to the unfinished third floor. The county had been cited by the State for overcrowding and confidentiality issues with clients.

(2) *EMS Base Stations - Stoney Point Road and Kings Mountain*: Developing bid process, estimated \$300,000.

(3) *Health Department expansion*: This expansion to the Crawford Street facility should address growth for the next 6-10 years at 20% of the cost of new construction.

(4) *Reduce the number of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPS) in Cleveland County*: Discussed response times and cost; interlocal agreements with Gaston County, Shelby and Kings Mountain.

(5) *Public Safety Communications Network*: Goal is to complete the proposed four towers and have them operating by 2008.

(6) *Courthouse Security Upgrades*: Security cameras and Access Cards, system installation to be completed in 2005.

(7) Video Arraignment System - Courthouse and Detention Centers: Will cut expense and address security issues in transporting prisoners to court. To begin installation in February.

(8) Parking Expansion for Administrative Building: An estimated 70 spaces will be installed once demolition of houses on Campbell Street has been completed within next few months.

(9) Court Square Renovations - Building and Grounds: Possible "nature trail."

(10) Industrial Development Property - Western Cleveland County: Discussed sewer connections throughout county.

(11) Resolve office space issue in Law Enforcement Center: Working on this for more than a year and several departments are moving to different buildings.

(12) Establish regular meeting schedules for County Board Chair, Manager - Mayors and City Managers; County; and, County Board Chair, Manager - School Board Chair and superintendent. County-City Managers work group - meet on quarterly basis.

(13) Finish R. L. Alexander Conference Suite: Lettering is now installed, room has been painted and the portrait is hung. Other furnishings are in the planning stages.

(14) Finish Congressman McHenry's Cleveland County office: Will be moving into part of the old Economic Development office space in March.

(15) Consolidate county tax offices: Explore this option.

(16) Develop balanced budget without tax increase.

### **COUNTY COMMISSIONER ELECTION ALTERNATIVE**

Vice-Chairman Self brought up for discussion alternative methods of electing commissioners, in

addition to the possibility of non-partisan elections. Commissioner McIntosh and Vice-Chairman Self were

the only two Commissioners who expressed interest in pursuing another method.

### **VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PLAN**

Vice-Chairman Self suggested Commissioners consider some type of recognition for volunteers, such

as a cookout at the fairground.

### **COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

Vice-Chairman Self recommended an internet based calendar where different entities and agencies

could enter data which could be used as a planning tool for scheduling meetings and events. It was noted

that the Cleveland County Chamber has a program that can accomplish this and it was requested that

Mr. Dear contact them to inquire about development of such a community calendar.

### **AIRPORT ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Vice-Chairman Self discussed the airport overlay district which is on the February 1, 2005 agenda.

There was discussion regarding the economic benefits this district will offer.

### **COUNTYWIDE WATER-SEWER PLAN**

Vice-Chairman Self presented the question, "Do we need to start looking at the development of a

water authority?" He said "logically would be given to the Sanitary District."

**CONSENSUS: To place on agenda for discussion at a future County-City managers meeting to explore possibilities.**

### **UNDER FUNDING OF AGENCIES**

Vice-Chairman Self discussed "underfunding" of agencies, such as the libraries. Mr. Dear advised he

recently received a request to meet with library administration to explore the possibility of the library

becoming a county department.

There was discussion regarding "extra growth" revenue as a possibility for unfunded agencies; when

you start, where do you stop; anything "extra" should be given back to "the people"; have to consider tax

money for services; "issue specific driven" as taxpayers benefit from services. Decided to "take under

consideration at budget" in keeping with no tax increase.

### **CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER**

Discussion that if codes are to be enforced, then Commissioners are "looking at the need for a Code

Enforcement Officer." It was noted that currently there is "minimal enforcement of zoning."

**RECESS TO RECONVENE AT TIME AND PLACE CERTAIN**

**ACTION:** Johnny Hutchins made the motion, seconded by Willie McIntosh, and unanimously adopted by the Board, to ***recess this meeting*** (at 9:00 p.m.) ***to reconvene at the time and place certain of***

***Wednesday, January 24, 2005 at 4:00 p.m. in the Commission Chamber.***

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*Ronald J. Hawkins, Chairman  
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*

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*Wanda Crotts, CMC  
Cleveland County Clerk*