

CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

May 18, 2006

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners reconvened their recessed session of May 16, 2006 on this date, at the hour of 7:00 p.m., at the Belwood Town Hall, to meet with the Belwood Town Council for a roundtable discussion. This meeting was part of a goal set by Commissioners during their work session held in January 2006. There was no set agenda, allowing Council members the opportunity to discuss whatever issues they felt were important to their municipality.

PRESENT: Ronald J. Hawkins, Chairman
Jerry L. Self, Vice-Chairman
Mary S. Accor, Commissioner
Johnny Hutchins, Commissioner
David C. Dear, County Manager
Eddie Bailes, Assistant County Manager
Wanda Crotts, CMC, County Clerk
Ben Privett, Mayor
Emily Willis Sisk, Council Member
Debbie Hoyle, Council Member
Tommy Spurling, Council Member
Lorene Richards, Town Clerk
Phillip Lail, Town Maintenance Director

ABSENT: Willie B. McIntosh, Commissioner
Dean Crawford, Town Council Member

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ronald J. Hawkins reconvened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Privett reconvened the Belwood Town Council meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Medicaid

Chairman Hawkins reviewed the increase in Medicaid costs for the county stating the Commissioners had just returned today from Raleigh, where they met with the Legislative delegation to stress to them the importance of Medicaid relief. He noted a number of bills that will come before the Legislature during short session. One bill reads that one cent of sales tax would be given back to the State of North Carolina to pay for Medicaid. The Legislature will then give us the option of increasing the current sales tax rate by one cent. This scenario would get the county completely out of the Medicaid business and may be able to reduce the property tax rate by as much as ten cents.

The other option would be to cap Medicaid spending for counties at the current rate. Counties would still be required to pay for Medicaid, but the costs would never be higher than they are at this time. Savings from Medicaid Part D Prescription Drug Program will make up the difference.

Chairman Hawkins urged everyone to contact their legislators to push them on this important matter.

Veteran's Memorial Project

Mayor Privett explained the project, stating the memorial would honor veterans from the "Belwood School District." He said a grant request has been made to CAGO to help with funding.

Belwood Day

This annual celebration will be held May 20th and is "similar to a class reunion" but has expanded over the years to more of a "community" day.

Belwood Museum

Council members invited Commissioner to visit the Museum, which holds artifacts, such as antique tractors and farming equipment, donated by area citizens.

Belwood Tractor Pull

An annual event held each September.

Tax Rate

Council members noted that it is "hard to do anything new without grants" since Belwood has no tax. Since most grants require matching funds, it has been difficult for grants to be obtained.

Economic Development

Councilman Spurling stated that gas prices have hit Belwood residents hard, as many citizens travel outside the county to work and shop. Mayor Privett advised a new business, Palace Motor Company, recently opened, and there had been some interest from a restaurant, but "that fell through when they found out there was no sewer available." Council members advised they felt citizens would be receptive to industry "if it blended in with the rural community." They advised they recently updated their zoning/land use plan through 2015.

Chairman Hawkins suggested they have Stuart Gilbert, Chamber President, visit so he can learn about the community and know which clients he should "steer their way, such as agri-tourism."

Councilwoman Sisk stated there is a lot of interest in a reservoir, but not sewer.

Public Safety

Mayor Privett said they would be interested in a satellite Sheriff's station and that he had spoken with the Sheriff regarding having deputies patrol the Belwood area "several times per week", which has been accomplished.

There was discussion regarding the extensive "road miles" covered by the rescue personnel. There is a paramedic base station located in Belwood. Commissioners stated the possibility of a new, more centrally located paramedic station has been discussed as a future goal, with an objective of further reducing response times.

Mayor Privett advised the Town Council has requested a slight rate increase in the rent of the current EMS base station to cover the increased utilities.

County Association of Governmental Officials (CAGO)

Commissioner Hutchins reported that CAGO and the Cleveland County Veterans Council are coordinating the acquisition of a van to serve veterans, helping to transport them to the VA hospital and will be scheduled through the local VA office.

General Discussion

- David Dear, County Manager, reviewed the proposed county budget for fiscal year 2006-2007.
- He emphasized the importance of economic development and the retention of current industries, such as PPG.
- Hospital upgrades – Kings Mountain and Shelby.
- Communication towers construction progress (800-mhz).
- Improvements and future plans for the Cleveland County Museum.
- Discussed the Fire Suppression planes that fly out of Hickory to serve the Belwood area. Vice-Chairman Self noted that the aircraft mechanic for the Fire Suppression plan is a Belwood native, Roger Elliott.
- Time-Warner cable franchise and the new BellSouth services. Mr. Dear noted that local governments will not receive franchise fees from BellSouth, as they will “bypass” the franchise requirement.
- Belwood/Lawndale Road – Council member stated this road is in poor condition, needs widening and is unsafe for large vehicles, especially school buses. They advised they have pursued this with NCDOT. Vice-Chairman Self, who serves on the Rural Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee (Lake Norman RPO), stated “the money is not out there” as the State “raids that fund annually.”
- Council members suggested Commissioners open their regular meetings with Cleveland County Scouts leading the Pledge.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, Johnny Hutchins made the motion, seconded by Jerry Self, and unanimously adopted by the Board (*at 8:05 p.m.*) to adjourn.

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

*Wanda Crotts, CMC, Clerk
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*