

CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

July 22, 2014 Worksession

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners reconvened their regular meeting of July 1, 2014 on this date, at the hour of 1:00 p.m., at the Shelby/Cleveland County Regional Airport.

PRESENT: Jason Falls, Chairman
Eddie Holbrook, Vice-Chairman
Susan Allen, Commissioner
Ronnie Hawkins, Commissioner
Johnny Hutchins, Commissioner
Jeff Richardson, County Manager
Kerri Melton, County Clerk
April Crotts, Deputy Clerk
Chris Green, Tax Administrator
Allison Mauney, Human Resources Director
Jessica Pickens, *The Shelby Star*
Other individual names on file in the Clerk's Office

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jason Falls called the meeting to order, led the audience in the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag of the United States of America and provided the invocation for the meeting.

FUTURE VISION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Susan Allen began by commending Kristin Fletcher and her team for what they have done with respect to Economic Development in Cleveland County. There have been several challenges the county has faced including reclassification of the county from Tier I to a Tier II. Cleveland County has always been very creative in recruiting industry and offering incentives. Commissioner Allen fears that other counties are now replicating Cleveland County's efforts and it is time to think about what we can do different.

Several Commissioners shared concern with the fact that the State of North Carolina Department of Commerce is in the midst of a reorganization which has led to setbacks on the State Incentive Program.

Commissioner Hawkins noted, although the county can't "change Raleigh", he expressed his concern with the leadership of the Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP). He is a strong supporter of CCEDP but believes that CCEDP being under the umbrella of the Chamber needs to be researched.

Vice-Chairman Holbrook, as a member of the Chamber Board, explained the Chamber bylaws are being reviewed to address some concerns with the reporting relationship within CCEDP. The revisions will be presented to the Board at a later date.

Commissioner Hawkins asked Commissioners to continue to look for a possible retail incentive package that could be offered to retail businesses looking to locate in Cleveland County.

Chairman Hawkins asked that any changes to the Chamber Bylaws regarding CCEDP be made prior to the hiring of the new Chamber President.

Commissioners asked Kristin Fletcher to present them with a short summary describing the difference in incentives between a Tier I and Tier II county.

PLAN FOR FUTURE INDUSTRIAL PARK LAND PURCHASE

Under the leadership of David Dear, Cleveland County purchased land for industrial recruitment. Much of this land has been successfully developed by companies who have located to Cleveland County. Commissioner Hawkins suggested the Board give direction to County Manager Richardson to look at where a large tract of land would be available for the County to purchase. Commissioner Hutchins suggested the County Manager look for a potential partner for the land purchase.

Consensus of the Board was to authorize the County Manager to identify parcels of land that may be available for future industrial development.

PROACTIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Commissioner Holbrook showed an example of a video produced by Carl White for the American Legion World Series. As Commissioners Economic Development Liaison, Commissioner Holbrook has been trying to look at other ways to add to the county's toolbox.

He suggested that Commissioners consider investing in marketing of Economic Development because not a lot of counties have done that. He made note of the importance since Cleveland County is becoming a travel and tourism hub. This product would be a tool that would not only tell outsiders about Cleveland County but also tell our community what great things are happening in Cleveland County.

Consensus of the Board was to have the County Manager and Commissioner Holbrook come back to the board with a recommendation for a marketing plan.

RETAIL TASK FORCE-COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR PARTNERSHIP

The purpose of the creation of the Retail Task Force is to address concerns with retail leakage and to assist existing retailers in Cleveland County. This group was also created to serve as a catalyst to work with municipalities in Cleveland County.

Commissioner Allen serves as Chair of the Retail Task Force. Ms. Allen will work with the team to identify goals and look for areas of concern. The task force will be visiting smaller communities in the region who have seen success.

Vice-Chairman Holbrook met with the managers of Cleveland Mall. The Mall suggested the area along the business corridor of Hwy 74 needs cleaning up. Commissioner Holbrook suggested the county look for partners, including the mall, to fix the problem. He suggested this be done in phased approach.

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS RATE DISCUSSION

Currently, all Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD) in Cleveland County are at a \$0.05 tax rate. County Manager Jeff Richardson will be calling a meeting in the fall to engage VFD chiefs to discuss how the 2016 revaluation may affect the fire departments. Cleveland County is working to restore a comfortable fund balance in the VFD fund. Commissioner Hutchins discussed the challenge of many VFD in regards to paid employees. Chairman Falls asked about filing fire call claims on homeowners insurance.

Staff was directed to research whether or not a VFD with paid staff could file a claim for fire calls on residents homeowners insurance.

VETERAN'S SERVICES PROGRAM UPDATE

Commissioners Hutchins and Hawkins attended the NACo conference in New Orleans where they took part in a session about Veteran's Service Programs. They learned that 49% of Veteran's do not receive the services they deserve. Educating Veteran's on benefits they are entitled to not only provides a service to them, but it also brings additional sales tax revenues to the county.

With the impending retirement of Veteran's Service Officer Carol McCraw, Commissioners asked that her replacement have compassion and understanding for Veteran's and her replacement work hard to get Cleveland County Veteran's all the benefits they deserve.

Chairman Falls mentioned the possibility of putting information about our Veteran's Service Office in the tax bills and also the possibility of someone from the Veteran's Council helping with marketing.

PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION FOR COUNTY STAFF

During the NACo Conference, Commissioners also attended a session led by Todd McGee with NCACC, which looked at ways for staff to communicate with the press and citizens.

Commissioners directed staff to look at the possibility of Todd McGee coming to Cleveland County to present this program to county employees.

EVENT USE OF COURTSQUARE

Since the opening of the Scruggs Center, the county has seen an increase in requests for use of the Courtsquare. Some of the requests include the use of large reception tents on the property.

Commissioners directed Community Services Director Kerri Melton to develop guidelines for Courtsquare use and bring them before the Board of Commissioners for approval.

PAID TIME OFF/PERSONAL LEAVE INCREASE

Commissioner Hutchins asked Commissioners to consider giving county employees their birthdays off as part of their personal leave plan.

Commissioner Hawkins suggested that staff consider developing a tuition reimbursement plan for those who want to better themselves. Employees would need to take classes on their own time.

County Manager Richardson reminded Commissioners that staff is working to develop some pay plan options. This information will be presented to Commissioners in late fall/early winter. Human Resources Director Allison Mauney told Commissioners it was her intention to foster a culture of learning and high performance.

HEALTH PLAN ADMINISTRATION

Commissioner Hutchins asked Commissioners to consider the possibility of bidding out the Health Plan Administration for the County. He spoke with a company who provides Health Plan administration and they recommended taking the exact health package and having other companies look at every benefit.

County Manager Richardson agreed with Commissioner Hutchins that it is a good idea for every Department to look at vendors on a regular basis to determine the county is making best decisions in the spending of tax dollars. He agreed that the plan should be looked at, but felt as though, at this time, bidding would not be feasible as it would require a significant amount of work. With the management of the new Wellness Program, the Diabetes Program and the development of pay plan options, staff does not have capacity to take on a project of this size.

Commissioners gave staff direction to provide, by late fall, an understanding of what it would take to bid the Health Plan Administration and how long it would take to do it.

UPDATE OF COMMISSIONERS FY 2014/2015 GOALS

Commissioner Hawkins reminded fellow Commissioners that the County has a new Manager, Finance Director and Clerk to the Board. He asked that while staff is addressing their goals, staff needs an opportunity to put their positions in place and suggested that unless Commissioners have major additions, keep the Strategic Plan as is until a later date.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, Ronnie Hawkins made the motion, seconded by Susan Allen, and unanimously adopted by the Board, *to adjourn*.

*Jason Falls, Chairman
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*

*Kerri Melton, County Clerk
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*