

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
March 2, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC*

MINUTES
Scotland County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting, March 2, 2009
Scotland County Complex, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg NC

At 7 p.m. Chairman J. D. Willis called the regular meeting to order. Commissioners in attendance: Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Betty Blue Gholston and Commissioners John Alford, Bob Davis, Guy McCook and Clarence McPhatter. Commissioners not in attendance: Commissioner Joyce McDow. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson, County Attorney Ed Johnston and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman. Commissioner Davis delivered the opening prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Forum

Mr. Jay Todd on behalf of the United Way Campaign referred to the February 2 request where Commissioners were asked to fund the United Way through the Community Assistance Grants (CAG). Mr. Todd asked the Commissioners to disburse in whole or in part the CAG to make up for the 30 percent United Way Campaign shortfall, due largely to local industry closures. Mr. Todd said the funds would help more than half of the non-profits in the community that the United Way represents. Mr. Todd said members of the community last year received assistance from the agencies 20,233 times. Mr. Todd asked the Commissioners to consider the United Way for Community Assistance Grants before the March 31 Campaign deadline.

Chairman Willis said each Commissioner received the written request from United Way and will do what they would normally do with such requests. Chairman Willis added that the request would otherwise be taken up during the budget work sessions.

Item 1. Public Hearings: Planning and Zoning

Planning and Zoning Chairman Henry McLeod introduced the following applications:

Rezoning Application Number 451-09 – Jaxson-Morgan, LLC, – Request to rezone 6.0 acres of an approximately 35.0 acre tract in accordance with Scotland County Zoning Ordinance Article IV from (RA) Residential Agriculture to I2 (Heavy Industrial) with a Conditional Use for mining operations. The property is located on Sneads Grove Road and better known as Scotland County Tax Map Number 326 Block 01 Parcel 1009.

Mr. McLeod said the application was tabled last month until an access issue could be resolved. Mr. McLeod said an existing road provides access to neighboring properties.

Mr. McLeod said the Planning and Zoning Board recommends the change and conditional use permit be approved.

Chairman Willis called the Public Hearing and asked if anyone wished to speak for or against the application. No one came forward, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Vice Chair Gholston to approve Rezoning Application Number 451-09 to rezone 6.0 acres of an approximately 35.0 acre tract in accordance with Scotland County Zoning Ordinance Article IV from (RA) Residential Agriculture to I2 (Heavy Industrial) with a Conditional Use for mining operations. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Rezoning Application Number 456-09 – John Hoover – Request to rezone 7.80 acres in accordance with the Scotland County Zoning Ordinance, Article IV from I1 (Light Industrial) to I2 (Heavy Industrial) with a Conditional Use for a combat training headquarters. The property is located at 16701 Jump Road and is better described as Scotland County Tax Map Number 262, Block 01, Parcel Number 004. Forster Textile Mills owns the property.

Mr. McLeod said the Planning and Zoning Board recommends the change and conditional use permit be approved.

Chairman Willis called the Public Hearing and asked if anyone wished to speak for or against the application. No one came forward, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Vice Chair Gholston to approve Rezoning Application Number 456-09 to rezone 7.80 acres in accordance with the Scotland County Zoning Ordinance, Article IV from I1 (Light Industrial) to I2 (Heavy Industrial) with a Conditional Use for a combat training headquarters. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Item 2. Update: Mental Health System and Local Management Entity

Ms. Sharen Prevatte, Area Director, SRMH/DD/SAS, provided statistical data as part of the 2nd quarter report for FY 2008-2009. The report focused on the number of consumers residing in Scotland County who were screened for appointments with providers by the triage staff. Data also was broken down by sex, race and age and the number of admissions and the number of discharges.

Ms. Prevatte informed the Commissioners of scheduled input sessions, stakeholder meetings and other upcoming SRMH/DD/SAS events.

Ms. Prevatte described plans to establish a walk-in clinic in Scotland County where a consumer with a mental health need could walk-in, receive an evaluation and a contact to the next service. Ms. Prevatte said it is hoped the service will be established through a grant.

Ms. Prevatte discussed recent fiscal year cuts — an initial 3.5 to 4 percent cut in funding followed by a more recent 3 percent cut in funding. Ms. Prevatte said the cuts reduced operations, not services.

Item 3. Updates: 2008 CDBG Scattered Housing Program and Single Family Rehabilitation Program

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
March 2, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC*

LRCOG Housing Administrator Adrian Lowery asked the Commissioners to approve the Administrative Guidelines and Policies Resolution and the Recipient's Plan to Further Fair Housing as it applies to the 2008 Scattered Housing Program.

Motion was made by Commissioner McPhatter and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to approve the 2008 CDBG Administrative Guidelines and Policies Resolution and the Recipient's Plan to Further Fair Housing. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Mr. Lowery said with the approval, the County can now request release of funds, which would take about four to six weeks.

Mr. Lowery said Scotland County along with 23 other counties received a grant of just under \$400,000 to help rehabilitate moderately deteriorated stick-built homes. Mr. Lowery said occupancy requirements apply to who might receive assistance from the grant. He explained that at least one person living in the home must be disabled or elderly.

Mr. Lowery said an ad will run in the paper seeking applications. He added that people who previously applied and do not live in a mobile home will receive an income application in the mail.

Vice Chair Gholston asked if it was possible to employ Scotland County contractors. Mr. Lowery said in order to receive federal funds, procurement guidelines must be followed. Mr. Lowery said his goal is to at least ensure that Scotland County contractors are informed and involved in the procurement process.

Item 4. Consent Agenda:

- a) **Approval of minutes of the Board of Commissioners February 2, 2009 regular meeting and February 10, 2009 mid-year planning retreat.**
- b) **Approve Tax Department request to release funds in the amount of \$157.50 and in the amount of \$2,683.58 and to make refunds in the amount of \$292.54 and in the amount of \$819.65.**
- c) **Accept WestPoint Home Treatment Plant Evaluations as presented to the Commissioners by the Wooten Company at the February 10, 2009 Mid-year Planning Retreat.**
- d) **Budget Amendments:**
 - 1) **Library: Approve appropriation of \$183,277.82 for Capital Reserve Receipt and Expenditures for the purchase of previously approved capital items, and authorize the Finance Officer to make the necessary arrangements to expend the money.**

Motion was made by Vice Chair Gholston and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to approve the Consent Agenda. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Item 5. J.D. Willis: Update on school finances

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
March 2, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC*

Chairman J.D. Willis gave a PowerPoint presentation on funding and finances of the Scotland County Schools. Mr. Willis said the presentation is a way to explain the tax bill to citizens and why the County is limited when it comes to school funding.

Mr. Willis said the figures provided in the presentation is public information from the State Department of Public Information and from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

Mr. Willis said it is not his intent to address the “school floor” or the low wealth funding formula. He explained that the Board of Commissioners needs help as it continues to take steps to reduce the tax rate.

He credited Medicaid relief and County departments reducing their budgets to the bone with the success in lowering the tax rate thus far.

Chairman Willis read the goals for students achievement set in the Scotland County School’s 2005-2010 Strategic Plan, which he described as aggressive. Mr. Willis said he did not recall these percentages being addressed at last week’s State of the Schools event.

Chairman Willis said percentages for honors students actually show improvement and are much higher than the end-of-grade test scores for non-honors students. He added that the community should be more concerned with the academic performance of the non-honors students because if they don’t perform, they are the ones who will increase the jail population and turn to social services and public health for assistance.

In the Average Daily Membership (ADM) at the schools Mr. Willis said the schools lose more than 200 students from month one to month nine, which means the student population is decreasing while the County spends more money each year. Mr. Willis added that compared to other schools our size, the Scotland County taxpayer spends more dollars per child than other counties do. If other counties can operate a school system with \$6 million to \$7 million in local support, Mr. Willis said, Scotland County Schools should be able to run on \$9 million to \$9.5 million in local support.

Mr. Willis noted that the salary of the Scotland County School Superintendent is the 6th highest in the State and County taxpayers pay the most for the Superintendent’s local supplement among the benchmark counties and that the supplement for the Scotland County Superintendent is the 5th highest in the State.

Referring to the 2007-2008 per pupil expenditure ranking, Chairman Willis said Scotland County Schools receive 21 percent more in State funds compared to its other benchmark counties and it receives more from County taxpayers than the other benchmark counties.

Mr. Willis commented that citizens always ask the County to lower the tax rate. He said that would be difficult since the County only controls \$48,000 of the property tax by the time it has funded all the mandated programs.

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
March 2, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC*

Displaying a bar chart showing the Scotland County tax rate versus the share of taxes for Scotland County Schools, Chairman Willis said the County tax share is going down while the School share is increasing.

Mr. Willis said when the tax base was strong and there was support for the community from industry, the share of the tax rate was not an issue. Chairman Willis added all that has changed, the country is in a recession and taxpayers cannot afford to fund projects that they could fund 10 to 15 years ago.

Chairman Willis said all information comes from the County Schools. He encouraged citizens who had questions or concerns to contact the local School Board members directly.

In FY 2008-2009, Mr. Willis said Scotland County Schools received \$113,000 for charter schools, but there were no charter schools to fund since they all closed.

He said taxpayers paid Scotland County Schools a 10 percent salary increase for locally funded certified teachers and a four percent salary increase for locally funded non-certified personnel. The increases were based on State projections, and the State finally agreed to a three percent across-the-board salary increase for the schools. Mr. Willis asked why the estimated \$150,000 to \$155,000 Scotland County Schools did not spend on salary increases should not be returned to the County.

Referring back to the local funding for the ADM, Mr. Willis said any change in the student population does not affect the initial calculation, which caused the County to pay an estimated \$179,000 more for ADM based on the calculation.

Commissioner Alford said if you give the Schools taxpayer dollars based on projections why keep it if the calculations turn out to be less than projections.

Chairman Willis suggested that the County Commissioners and the School Board could probably come together to close that gap.

Item 6. Proposal: Closing of Pinewood Park and By-Pass Park

Parks and Recreation Director Shannon Newton said the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board recommended that input be received on closing Pinewood and By-Pass parks. Ms. Newton said sports programs are now being consolidated to Presbyterian Park and the Morgan Recreation Complex.

The playground equipment is out of date at Pinewood Park and would need replacing if kept open.

By-Pass Park is on land owned by the City of Laurinburg. Ms. Newton said it used to be a hub of activity until 2007, but now it is only used for practice, and the fields are being maintained at a practice level.

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
March 2, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC*

Ms. Newton referred to a public comment schedule, which would allow for community input and a recommendation presented to the Commissioners in July. Ms. Newton asked the Board to approve the public input schedule, the intent of which would be to bring a recommendation regarding the closing of By-Pass and Pinewood Parks to the governing body in July.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Gholston and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to approve the public input process with a recommendation coming before the Board in July. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Item 7. Update from the County Manager

County Manager Patterson said the County, City of Laurinburg, Town of Maxton and Laurinburg Maxton Airport contracted with Marlowe Group to investigate potential funding opportunities for the Airport and for potential grant opportunities from the stimulus package and appropriation bills.

For the County purposes Mr. Patterson listed the following as possible recipients for funding: the emergency operations center; expansion at Scotland Place Senior Center, energy efficiency renovations for County facilities and single family residences and potential study grants for the WestPoint treatment facility.

Mr. Patterson added that the Marlowe Group will work to get a time when a County delegation could travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with legislators and key people who control grants the County would apply for.

Mr. Patterson said getting the environmental assessment caused the delay in activity at the Wagram Recreation Center. The assessment has been received and the next phase is selection of a company to design the building.

NCACC will be hold district meetings from April 1 to 16. County Assembly Day will be April 29, 2009.

County Manager Patterson said a bid of \$1,000 was received from a church for a piece of land the County owns at Caledonia and Roosevelt. Tax value is \$2,590. The property, about 1/8 of an acre, was acquired in 1982 and is unimproved. The County has no plans to use the property. If the Board accepts the offer, the County would hold the offer for at least 30 days in case of an upset bid.

Motion was made by Commissioner McPhatter and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to approve the sale of the land for \$1,000. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Communication from Pasquotank County was received indicating its requests for a change in well regulations that would allow for greater decision making authority at the local level. Mr. Patterson said he forwarded the request to the Board of Health.

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
March 2, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC*

A marriage amendment resolution also was received along with a request that the Board support a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and woman.

Other Information/Comments from the Chairman and Commissioners

Vice Chair Gholston said Commissioner McCook agreed to replace her on the Transportation Advisory Committee.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner Davis to appoint Mr. Guy McCook as the Commissioner-representative on the Transportation Advisory Committee. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Item 8. Closed Session

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner Davis to go into Closed Session in accordance with N.C. General Statute §143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of business in the area served by this body. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

OPEN SESSION RESUMED

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner McCook to adjourn. Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Ann W. Kurtzman
Clerk to the Board

J.D. Willis
Chairman