

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners regular meeting
September 1, 2009, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg*

**MINUTES
Scotland County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting, September 1, 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, Joyce McDow and Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson, County Attorney Ed Johnston and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman. Commissioner Alford delivered the opening prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Forum

Village of Pinehurst Mayor George Lane said he hopes Pinehurst would be able to do business with the Board of Commissioners and the people in Pinehurst are looking forward to working with Scotland County.

Item 1. Update: Community Development Block Grant and Single Family Rehabilitation Program

An update on the Community Development Block Grant and Single Family Rehabilitation programs was presented by LRCOG Housing Coordinator Adrian Lowery.

Mr. Lowery said the County now has access to CDBG funds to do the “hammer and nails” portion of the program. Mr. Lowery discussed how replacement housing would be economical and efficient. He expects the project to be underway in the first quarter of next year.

Mr. Lowery said applications continue to be accepted for the Single Family Rehabilitation program. Mr. Lowery expects a final applicant list to be presented to the Commissioners for approval at the Board’s October meeting.

Mr. Lowery explained the difference between CDBG for severe housing needs and SRF, which repairs but does not replace homes. He explained that federal guidelines do not allow for home replacement or rehabilitation on mobile homes. He discussed the difference in median income requirements between the two programs as well as deed requirements.

Mr. Lowery said applicants can reapply to the programs if they are denied because situations do change. Applicants denied previously are notified and asked to resend applications.

Commissioner McCook said he felt applicants should be notified if they are denied. Mr. Lowery said he could add telephone contact information to the application so applicants could check their status after a selection has been made.

Item 2. Report: Outlook for Scotland County Industry

The following report was made by Economic Developer Greg Icard:

Employers in the County are cautiously optimistic. Economists at the State level anticipate minor growth (around one percent) in the 4th quarter of this year with positive growth continuing into next year. Unemployment numbers will likely remain higher as it is a lagging indicator. Unemployment in Scotland County will probably remain higher than normal through this year and the beginning of next year.

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Companies in the County indicate they have some restriction in hiring and growth since November. Many though, expect to see signs of recovery in the economy. Most are fundamentally sound and are positioned well and anticipate growth.

Activity continues for new potential industries to locate here. Mr. Icard responded to several requests for information from site selection consultants, NC Southeast Partnership and the Department of Commerce. NC Southeast Partnership is a reliable source for leads and is integral to the mission as the County looks to recruit additional companies to the area.

The County is well positioned for growth due to US 74 becoming Interstate 74, its proximity to Wilmington ports and to Interstates 95, 40 and 20. The County's proximity to Ft. Bragg will play a significant role in potential growth when FORSCOM moves from Ft. McPherson to Ft. Bragg. Mr. Icard will pursue additional military related companies in efforts to highlight what the County offers.

The County is working on a Strategic Plan for Energy Consumption as required by the State so it can apply for grants to help update and reduce energy use in County buildings. Mr. Jim Blackwell and Mr. Mike McGirt (Public Buildings) assisted with data collection.

On August 13, Charles Nichols (Deputy Finance Officer) and Mr. Icard attended a workshop hosted by the NC Rural Economic Development Center and NC Rural Communities Assistant Project (NRCAP). The workshop was in reference to Rural Water and Wastewater Projects and dealing with the engineers.

Item 3. Consent Agenda:

- a) **Approval of minutes of the Board of Commissioners August 3, 2009 regular meeting.**
- b) **Approve Tax Department request make refunds in the amount of \$153.40 and in the amount of \$3,610.96.**
- c) **Approve EMS request to declare as surplus a FEMA Travel Trailer VIN: 4YDT28R2X5G913127.**
- d) **Approve EMS request to declare as surplus a 2000 Dodge 14-passenger van SN: 2B6LB31Z4YK179325.**
- e) **Approve 2010 Board of Commissioners meeting schedule as follows: January 4, February 1, March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7, July 6 (Tuesday), August 2, September 7 (Tuesday), October 4, November 1, December 6.**
- f) **Approve request by Health Department for bad debt write offs/adjustments/denials.**
- g) **Approve request by Health Department to increase the food and lodging planning and review fee to a maximum of \$250.**
- h) **Budget Amendments:**
 - 1) **Health: Approve receipt of additional funds in the amount of \$16,720 and authorize the Finance Officer to make the necessary arrangements to receive and expend the money. No County dollars.**
 - 2) **Health: Approve receipt of additional funds in the amount of \$1,966 and authorize the Finance Officer to make the necessary arrangements to receive and expend the money. No County dollars.**
 - 3) **Health: Approve receipt of additional funds in the amount of \$6,047 and authorize the Finance Officer to make the necessary arrangements to receive and expend the money. No County dollars.**
 - 4) **DSS: Approve additional funding in the amount of \$15,730 and authorize the Finance Officer to make the necessary arrangements to receive and expend the money. No County dollars involved.**

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- 5) **Economic Development:** Approve receipt of additional funding in the amount of \$75,000 for the Revolving Loan Fund plan and authorize the Finance Officer to make the necessary arrangements to receive the money. No County dollars involved.
- 6) **Water District II:** Approve revenue increase in the amount of \$716 to adjust estimated bond payment to actuals.

Motion was made by Commissioner McDow and **duly seconded** by Commissioner Alford to approve the Consent Agenda.

Discussion: The Commissioners asked for more specific information about the bad debt write off requested by the Health Department.

Health Director Ron Sapp explained that the agency is unlikely to get the bad debt back. The agency bills on a sliding scale for set services based on the individual's ability to pay. Mr. Sapp said the agency asks to write off debt incurred by people who have no ability to pay.

Commissioner McCook said the FY 2008-2009 bad debt write off request does not total \$8,800. Mr. Sapp said he would verify the total for the bad debt write off.

Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Item 4. Appointments to Boards and Committees

Motion was made by Commissioner McDow and **duly seconded** by Commissioner Davis to appoint Mr. Harley Norris to an unexpired term on the Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation.

Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Item 5. Update from the County Manager

County Manager Patterson said settlement for the refinancing of the 98 and 99 school bonds is expected September 14. The refinancing will save the County an estimated \$330,000 over the remaining life of the bonds.

NCDOT in fiscal year 2014 will replace the bridge at 501 and Juniper Creek and the bridge at 401 over Gum Swamp just before Academy Road. There will be an open comment period until November 20.

Commissioner McCook said the bridges represent two primary corridors in and out of the County. He questioned whether the replacement of both bridges in the same year would be wise since detours would have to be negotiated at both ends of the County. Mr. Patterson agreed that the projects would have a dramatic impact on daily business and life.

Mr. Patterson said with the passage of the State budget the \$18 a day for inmate care for convicted misdemeanants was permanently eliminated as was the \$36,000 a year space rental for intensive probation. Mr. Patterson said the County will adapt to the \$100,000 loss and the outcome could have been worse with other revenue eliminations the State discussed. Mr. Patterson said he is still concerned about the budget next year with regard to additional State cuts.

Mr. Patterson summarized a number of staffing requests he recommends the Commissioners consider approving. Mr. Patterson said all positions requested are currently budgeted.

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DSS: Of the four vacancies, the agency asks that two positions -- Food and Nutrition and Work First be filled.

Health: The agency requests that three vacancies be filled. A processing assistant position and a breastfeeding counselor (a 50 percent time at salary plus fringe) are budgeted as is an LPN position. The Health Department asks that the LPN be reclassified to an RN. Mr. Patterson said the LPN, if reclassified, is budgeted for this year as a result of lapsed salaries. He said in the future, the reclassified position would represent no more than a \$7,000 increase annually.

Public Buildings: The department has three full-time and one part-time vacancy. Mr. Patterson said he recommends recruiting for one full-time vacancy now. Mr. Patterson noted that filling the second full-time vacancy would be recommended some time before spring.

Library: Mr. Patterson said the Library wishes to recruit a children's librarian. This would be a revenue neutral position since two part-time Library positions were eliminated.

Parks and Recreation: Mr. Patterson recommended that 11 part-time positions for field and gym supervisors for fall sports leagues be filled.

Sheriff: The Jail is down three jailers. The positions must be maintained as per a State requirement.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Vice Chair Gholston to fill the positions currently in the budget. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

County Manager Patterson asked the Commissioners for clarification regarding the hiring freeze policy. Mr. Patterson said he understands EMTs, paramedics, law enforcement and child protective service positions are exempt from the hiring freeze. Mr. Patterson said that civilian and non-licensed positions in the Jail, law enforcement and EMS were not exempt unless the positions were approved by the Commissioners. Mr. Patterson said it also was his understanding that internal hiring was frozen. Mr. Patterson asked if departments could recruit internally with approval from the County Manager.

Chairman Willis said he saw no reason why positions within departments cannot be moved or shifted as long as it is within the budget and the County Manager approves the internal change.

Mr. Patterson said any additional staffing requests, if applicable, would be brought before the Commissioners in January.

Mr. Patterson said the Moody's and Standard & Poor's rating for the County increased from A to A+.

Mr. Patterson said the County owns a parcel of land on Highland Road across from Stewartville Enterprises, which is about to have timber logged. The company clearing the trees offered to do the same on the County land. Timber there is estimated at between \$2,000 and \$2,500.

Motion was made by Vice Chair Gholston and duly seconded by Commissioner McPhatter to approve the clearing of trees on the Highland Road parcel. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

Information/Comments from the Chairman and Commissioners

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Commissioner McCook said a regional study on tournaments will be conducted and funded by the Tourism Development Authority. Results of the study will assist Parks and Recreation with the development of a game plan where it might be competitive in attracting future tournament events.

Commissioner McPhatter said the Laurel Fest Committee asked him to make an appeal to the Commissioners for funding through the Community Assistance Grants. Mr. McPhatter said the funds would assist in keeping the event going.

Commissioner McDow said she and Commissioner Davis took a five-hour ethics course while attending the NCACC conference. She reminded the Commissioners of the ethics requirements.

Commissioner Davis said the Laurel Fest Committee asked him for a Community Assistance Grant when he attended one of the event meetings. Commissioner Davis said he declined because his opinion about the Community Assistance Grants funds for Commissioners is known.

Motion was made by Commissioner McPhatter and duly seconded by Commissioner Davis to adjourn. Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Ann W. Kurtzman
Clerk to the Board

J.D. Willis
Chairman