

**MINUTES**

**Scotland County Board of Commissioners  
Planning Retreat, January 29, 2008**

**Scotland County Government Complex, 507 West Covington Street, Laurinburg NC**

At 12 p.m. Chairman J. D. Willis called the Planning Retreat to order. Commissioners in attendance: Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Betty Blue Gholston and Commissioners John Alford, Leon Butler, Guy McCook, Joyce McDow and Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman. Chairman Willis delivered the opening prayer.

**Item 1. Voluntary Agricultural Districts**

Mr. Brian Haglar, Vice Chair of the Soil and Water Conservation District, discussed a proposed ordinance to create voluntary agricultural districts, which would protect farmers from non-farm development on their land.

Mr. Haglar explained that through voluntary agricultural districts, developers would be made aware up-front that the area is part of an ongoing farming operation. Mr. Haglar cited the General Statute that allows counties to approve such an ordinance.

Mr. Haglar said farms of 10 acres or more may join for a \$50 fee and voluntarily withdraw at any time.

The Commissioners discussed whether 10 acres was large enough to qualify under the proposed ordinance. Chairman Willis said County Attorney Ed Johnston would review the draft and bring his recommendations to the Board.

**Item 2. Risk Management Program Overview**

Risk Manager Tiffany Flowers discussed her role, duties and plans in the new position. Ms. Flowers said she would be developing policies and procedures to be implemented within the County with the goal to cut down on claims and costs associated with claims.

Ms. Flowers said part of her job is to support the various departments in their safety and risk management programs, and she hopes to conduct a variety of training sessions to help departments comply with OSHA standards.

**Item 3. DSS Staffing Needs**

DSS director Joe Knott addressed staffing concerns and the high turnover rate that has occurred at the agency. Mr. Knott said staff generally leaves for better pay and the promise of a decreased workload. He said burnout is of concern, particularly among Child Protective Service workers.

Mr. Knott discussed the caseload size for foster care children and the number of foster homes currently available.

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Mr. Knott said he also has other concerns, which include long hours, space issues and security at the agency because the number of violent incidences has increased.

Commissioner Butler said he would like to see caseload activity in other counties and how it compares to the Scotland County DSS.

Commissioner McCook suggested that a foster parent support group be formed to help retain foster homes and help recruit new foster parents to the program.

**Item 4. Current and Future Infrastructure Projects**

County Engineer Jim Blackwell distributed bid tabulation forms for the Courthouse waterproofing project and the Courthouse roofing project. Mr. Blackwell said that in both cases the low bidder is not recommended due to a failure to acknowledge or to not include the proper paperwork. Mr. Blackwell added that he sought the advice of the School of Government in how he should proceed with the bid tabulation forms.

Mr. Blackwell recommended that a contract in the amount of \$71,400 be awarded to Strickland Waterproofing, the second lowest bidder, for the Courthouse waterproofing project.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner McPhatter to award the Courthouse waterproofing contract to Strickland Waterproofing in the amount of \$71,400. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Mr. Blackwell said there were bidding irregularities with the three lowest bidders for the Courthouse roofing project. Mr. Blackwell recommended that the fourth lowest bidder, AAR, be awarded the contract. Mr. Blackwell said at a bid of \$515,998, it is still substantially lower than what had been anticipated.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Vice Chair Gholston to award the Courthouse roofing project contract to AAR in the amount of \$515,998. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Mr. Blackwell asked the Commissioners to consider approval of a budget amendment for Public Buildings in the amount of \$75,725 through the remainder of the fiscal year. Mr. Blackwell discussed how the funds would be used to get Public Buildings through the fiscal year.

**Motion was made by Commissioner McPhatter and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to appropriate an additional \$75,725 to Public Buildings for the remainder of FY 2007-2008. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Commissioners Butler and Alford asked if the funds could come from any surplus monies from the Courthouse roof project. Chairman Willis suggested that that decision be left to the discretion of County Manager Patterson.

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Mr. Blackwell said he is working on a lease/purchase proposal on capital equipment replacement in County facilities that could result in a savings that would replace nearly 90 percent of the capital expenditure over a five-year period. Mr. Blackwell said he would present the proposal to the Board of Commissioners at a future meeting.

Mr. Blackwell also discussed developing a regular maintenance program for County vehicles. Mr. Blackwell said the automobile companies assured him they would honor the procedure under the vehicle warranty.

**Item 5. Centralized 911 Communications Update**

County Manager Patterson discussed the possibility of developing a central 911 call center where any request for emergency service would be dispatched from one central location. Mr. Patterson said currently one call might be bounced around to as many as four VSAPs although there has not yet been a catastrophic failure.

Mr. Patterson said the benefit would be that one communicator would receive all the available information and ensure that all other parties involved would receive it. Mr. Patterson discussed how a centralized 911 call center would be staffed.

He added that neither the City nor the County has a building appropriate for housing a centralized 911 center. Mr. Patterson said there would be no cost savings to a centralized 911 operation.

*The Board of Commissioners by consensus agreed that since the current system is working to not pursue a centralized 911 operation at this time.*

*The Commissioners took a break. The meeting resumed at 1:40 p.m.*

**Item 6. Capital Projects**

**DSS --** DSS Director Joe Knott said the agency is looking at 23,000 to 24,000-square-feet in facility space — with 14,000-square-feet currently available for renovation and a 10,000-square-foot extension. He said there is a need for one controlled entrance for security purposes and the electrical, heating, cooling and roof require attention.

Mr. Knott said he looked at the possibility of using part of the former K-Mart with 32,000-square-feet. He said an \$8,500 a month long-term lease would be required.

Mr. Knott said he also discussed an acquisition method with the State, which would be a 60/40 federal/County split for a new facility or a renovation depending on which would be the more cost-efficient.

Mr. Knott distributed a cubicle-style floor plan for the current building, but the plan left no room for storage, record rooms or central meeting space.

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County Engineer Blackwell said the land where the agency is located is limited as far as an expansion to about 10,000 to 15,000-square-feet.

County Manager Patterson said the 60/40 funding split proposal would be paid out over the life of the building and based on depreciation year-to-year.

Chairman Willis said it is important with any capital project to take into account the expected long-term growth. He suggested the Commissioners review the information and look at a direction they wish to take with the DSS needs and capital needs of all other departments.

**EOC** – EMS Director Roylin Hammond said since County offices moved from the Annex — the location for the Emergency Operations Center — to West Covington Street, the phone system capability was lost.

Mr. Hammond said a tremendous amount of technology goes into current EOCs. He said an ideal EOC situation would be a facility that is used regularly and also could be used as an EOC if an event occurs. Mr. Hammond said the facility would need a kitchen and bathrooms. He mentioned that the expansion of Scotland Place to house Cooperative Extension, Senior Programs, a Commissioners Chamber, which could double as an EOC, would be addressed by Parks and Recreation Director Shannon Newton and Cooperative Extension Director Cathy Graham.

**EMS** – Describing the electrical system at EMS as “an accident waiting to happen,” Mr. Hammond said the system at 911 is overloaded because it is supporting increased technology needs in a building with electrical wiring more than 40 years old.

He said originally, a four-person staff would stay overnight in the building. That number has grown to nine. Mr. Roylin asked for a driveway with concrete padding and a drain to replace the current driveway, eroded from the regular washing of vehicles. Mr. Hammond said there is little lighting outside the EMS building. He asked the Commissioners to consider correcting the lighting for security measures.

Mr. Hammond then distributed a proposal for an addition to Scotland Place, which addresses some needs through a 14,200-square-foot expansion. It would solve the EOC issue plus the needs for additional space by other departments, he said.

**Senior Center** – Parks and Recreation Director Shannon Newton said the number of senior participants is growing with more than 400 seniors using Scotland Place each month. Ms. Newton said a Scotland Place expansion could house additional classrooms and a fitness center. Ms. Newton said that the availability of grants for this project is very small.

County Manager Patterson said the Stadium Authority has about \$195,000 that could be used for the expansion to promote aging services.

**Cooperative Extension** – Extension Director Cathy Graham said there is a need for storage, office space and security for Cooperative Extension offices. She said some of the agency’s office space and storage was lost when Courthouse offices relocated to the Annex. She added that the conference room is

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not always available when needed and Cooperative Extension located in close proximity to Probation and Parole is not a comfortable environment.

Dr. Graham said she continues to research numerous funding sources, but grants for bricks and mortar are just not out there. Dr. Graham asked the Commissioners to let her know if there are any funding possibilities they might be aware of, and she would pursue them.

**Jail/Courthouse** – Chief Deputy Steve Smith said some Jail needs include painting, matting on the walkways, repairing areas that are leaking and removing keys from the custodial areas of the Jail by using a keyless touch screen system.

Chief Deputy Smith said the Office of the Sheriff would like to put in place a comprehensive method to secure the Courthouse, including rectifying the security for the Magistrates, who have no security in place at this time.

Chief Deputy Smith said the telecommunications center would have to be upgraded with equipment designed for Courthouse security monitoring.

**Document Storage** – County Manager Patterson discussed the need for scanning documents electronically, which would allow paper documents to be stored deeper. Electronic scanning would not make the County paperless, but it would eliminate the large amount of paper it must keep on hand, and the County could rely more on searchable, electronic records.

### **Item 7. Financial Summary**

County Manager Patterson provided a financial summary for the current fiscal year.

Chairman Willis commented that the County might take a more aggressive approach to collecting back taxes. Commissioner McPhatter questioned whether an aggressive approach was good since industries closing made it more difficult for property owners to keep up. Chairman Willis said that people who do not pay taxes shift the burden to those who do.

Mr. Patterson discussed Medicaid relief and the real savings expected in the coming fiscal year. Mr. Patterson said he does not yet know how much school funding would increase. He said if the Commissioners consider a cost of living raise in the next fiscal year, that would be about \$100,000 for every one percent increase.

Tax Administrator Mary Helen Norton said \$364,000 in taxes is still outstanding from 2004 to present.

Chairman Willis suggested that Ms. Norton and Mr. Patterson develop a proposal to address the collection of back taxes from 10 years ago to the present.

Ms. Norton said the Tax Office could look at the possibility of hiring an outside audit firm to ensure all business personal property is reported starting with industrial accounts.

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Chairman Willis asked Ms. Norton to query a few companies on an audit method and bring a proposal to the Commissioners for consideration.

**Item 8. Budget Calendar**

Mr. Patterson said the FY 2008-2009 budget calendar is in the agenda so the Commissioners could consider the direction they would like to take with the next fiscal budget.

**Item 9. Revaluation**

Ms. Norton said a consultant would be needed for an in-house revaluation because the Tax Office does not have sufficient staff to do a comprehensive study on sales.

Ms. Norton asked the Commissioners to consider hiring a data collector in order to help with revaluation and maintain a four-year revaluation cycle. Ms. Norton said she did not see any additional major expenditure beyond the additional position.

Mr. Patterson said \$108,000 has been budgeted each year toward revaluation, and there is about \$400,000 now in the account. Mr. Patterson said the fund should be more than enough to cover the revaluation needs, and this revaluation will be the first time it is not hired out to a consulting company.

*The Commissioners took a break. The meeting resumed at 3:45 p.m.*

**Item 10. Scotland Memorial Library: Proposed Transition to County Department**

Commissioner Joyce McDow, Chair of the Scotland Memorial Library Board, asked the Commissioners to consider approving the Library as a County department. She said Library employees would benefit most in areas of health care and retirement. She added that a Library transition would save the County an estimated \$12,000 since Library employees would become eligible for County employee benefits, which are not as costly.

Ms. McDow said the search for a new Library Director is more challenging because most applicants are seeking government benefits.

Vice Chair Gholston said she is not against the idea of the Library becoming a County department, but she is concerned about the capital needs of the Library.

Chairman Willis said that ultimately the Commissioners are responsible for the Library's capital needs. He said since the transition would represent a savings to the County, this would be a good time for the transition to occur.

Commissioner McDow added that a transition to a County department would not affect the Library's ability to seek and receive grants, although none are guaranteed.

Commissioner Guy McCook said he would like to review additional budget information. He asked County Engineer Jim Blackwell to assess the facility and its technology.

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Chairman Willis asked Commissioner McDow and County Manager Patterson to forward budget information to Commissioner McCook so the request could be revisited at the February meeting.

*The Commissioners by consensus agreed to support the concept of making the Library a County department pending a more formal agreement presented by the Library Board.*

**Item 11. BRAC Housing Fair**

County Manager Patterson said the date has not yet been set for a three-day BRAC Housing Fair in Atlanta in May. Mr. Patterson said City Manager Craig Honeycutt and Interim Chamber President Brenda Gilbert would accompany him to the event. Mr. Patterson said updated information on the County would be gathered as a resource to give to interested parties.

**Item 12. County Vehicle Policy**

County Manager Patterson said there have been minor changes in the verbiage to the Vehicle Use Policy since it was last reviewed by the Commissioners. He said the policy still does not address overnight assignment restriction to those who use County cars and live outside of the County.

Commissioner Alford suggested that the County Manager provide those affected employees a deadline for when the policy will become effective July 1, 2008.

County Manager Patterson said law enforcement, which has its own policy, would be an exception.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Butler and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to approve the Scotland County Vehicle Policy effective July 1, 2008. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

**Item 13. Industrial Incentive Policy**

County Manager Patterson said the industrial incentive policy included in the agenda is general policy and not related to any specific industry. He said it is weighted heavily on the number of jobs created. Mr. Patterson described the policy as “fairly aggressive” and is administered over a three to seven-year period. Mr. Patterson said the capital investment floor would be \$500,000 and 10 jobs created.

Mr. Patterson said the policy could be expanded to include commercial endeavors, which has not been done in the past.

The Commissioners discussed in general what is considered a new investment, especially if an industry purchases an existing building. There was discussion on what could be done incentive-wise for “mom and pop” businesses that might not reach the \$500,000 minimum investment.

Chairman Willis suggested that Mr. Patterson develop a policy geared toward “mom and pop” business investors. Chairman Willis asked the Commissioners to give Mr. Patterson direction as to what operations would be considered “mom and pop.”

**Item 14. Meeting Structure**

The Commissioners discussed the current meeting structure and whether it would be necessary to go to a two meeting schedule or a working meeting/regular meeting structure.

Commissioner Butler said two meetings would eliminate situations where Commissioners might feel rushed into making a decision. Commissioner McCook said some issues could be presented at one meeting and decided upon at the second meeting.

Chairman Willis said decisions on issues can always be tabled or delayed to another meeting pending further study. Chairman Willis said he felt a two-meeting structure was not necessary since Commissioners can exercise flexibility in when they meet in between the regular meetings.

**Item 15. Additional Commissioner Comments**

Vice Chair Gholston asked if the Chamber funding issue would be revisited. Vice Chair Gholston said she had additional questions that she did not have opportunity to ask previously. Chairman Willis said that the Commissioners voted and the issue is done.

Commissioner Butler said he has been questioned by contractors about the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and their concerns about curbs and gutters. Chairman Willis said the contractors should communicate with the City about the ETJ.

**Item 16. Closed Session**

**Motion was made by Commissioner McDow and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to go into Closed Session held 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 and Closed Session held in accordance with N.C. General Statute §143-318.11(a)(6) to consider qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointments, or conditions of initial employment of a present or prospective public officer or employee.**

**OPEN SESSION RESUMED**

**Motion was made by Commissioner McCook and duly seconded by Commissioner Butler to officially offer the County Manager position to Kevin Patterson at a salary of \$89,992, \$500 a month travel expenses and appropriate severance package effective January 1, 2008. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Chairman Willis said Springs is moving forward with the abandonment of its wastewater/sewer plant and has agreed to provide \$75,000 to the County to disburse among Springfield Community residents to offset the cost of installing septic systems.

**Motion was made by Commissioner McDow and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to approve the agreement between Springs and Scotland County pending review by the County**

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**Attorney and to authorize the Chairman to sign the contract. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

County Manager Patterson asked the Commissioners to allow him to hire an employee at a lead accountant level instead of in the position of Finance Officer.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner McPhatter authorizing the County Manager to hire a lead accountant for purposes of training the individual. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Commissioner McCook said the Commissioners might want to consider the quarter-cent sales tax option for referendum in the future. Commissioner McCook said the sales tax option would provide an additional 25 cents per \$100 expenditure, which would provide a good revenue stream for the County's capital needs.

Commissioner McCook said the County might consider hiring somebody for two or three years to promote the County on behalf of BRAC.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner McPhatter to adjourn. Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.**

ATTEST

Ann W. Kurtzman  
Clerk to the Board

J.D. Willis  
Chairman