

AUGUST 2015



Scotland County, NC

A newsletter for the Scotland County community

Approved funding agreement alternative to “school floor”

The Commissioners and Board of Education put the 50-year-old school funding law on the backburner in favor of an agreement that would fund the schools through FY 2018.

The Memorandum of Agreement for Funding Scotland County Schools was approved by both boards.

The County, according to a June 26, 2014, mediated agreement will appropriate \$10,826,612 in local current expense and \$300,000 in capital expenditures in FY 2016.

The recently approved Memorandum of Agreement reduces the local current expense by 2.25 percent over the next two fiscal years with \$10,583,013 in FY 2017 and \$10,344,895 in FY 2018. School capital will remain at \$300,000 for both fiscal years.

The agreement is the result of 13 months of negotiations conducted by a six-person Liaison Committee. The three members appointed to represent the County were Commissioners Bob Davis, Whit Gibson and Carol McCall.

The three members appointed to represent the Board of Education were School Board members Pat Gates, Reverend Darrel Gibson and Jamie Sutherland.

Included in the document is the agreement by the School Board not to invoke the school funding law or “school floor” to get more money than already agreed upon. The Commissioners agree not to approach State legislators concerning the “school floor” through March of 2017. [see Commissioners, page 2](#)

Legislators advocate for rural counties, seek bipartisan support

The divide between rural counties and metropolitan areas hasn't diminished over the years. Guest speakers Senator Tom McInnis and Representatives Ken Goodman and Garland Pierce discussed that and other issues at the August 21 Legislative Breakfast hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

Goodman said he has been able to work with leaders on the Republican side. “The philosophy is simple. If a Republican introduces a good bill, I'm going to support it. If our party (Democrats) introduces a bad bill, I'm not going to support it.”

He added, “To me it's very important that the center governs, and I think that's what we've been able to do.”

Goodman praised the passage of a bipartisan gas tax bill. Goodman said the lower gasoline prices reduced the gas tax to the point where State roads could not be funded. “Everybody

NCDOT installs temporary fix at five-points intersection

A four-way stop was installed as planned at the US 15-501 and Old Wire Road (five points) intersection after NCDOT officials met with elected leaders and law enforcement to explain why this was the best interim alternative.



Vehicles navigate the all-way traffic stop that was installed August 19 at the intersection of US 15-501 and Old Wire Road.

When the Board of Commissioners learned of the scheduled August 19 installation, it adopted a resolution of opposition citing concerns that vehicles traveling at high speeds cresting the hill from the north would not have time to stop.

Chairman Guy McCook said a concern is when there is a string of a dozen cars stopped going south and the last car would be right under the top of the hill.

“Somebody doing 70 miles an hour coming down that hill will have trouble stopping before they get to that car, when where they would need to stop would be significantly back up the road.”

NCDOT District Engineer Rob Stone said initially he was not in favor of the four-way stop plan, but after seeing how similar solutions worked in other localities around the State, he agreed it would be the best short-term solution.

“We're not going to do anything that we don't think will improve safety there. The safety of the traveling public is our number one priority.”

[see Four-way, page 4](#)

hates the tax on gas, but you have to pay for roads in some way.”

The new gas tax will decrease to 34 cents a gallon through 2016. In January 2017, the formula for the gas tax will be calculated with a base tax of 34 cents per gallon. The previous version of the law calculated the tax based on the wholesale price of crude oil. The gas tax decreased when gas prices decreased under the old formula. The new law allows room for a higher tax rate.

On economic incentives, a problem the State has not yet solved, Goodman said, “The Commerce Department needs a set of reliable, consistent incentives so North Carolina can compete in bringing industry to the State.” Goodman said to date the State has lost major prospects to South Carolina and Georgia.

Goodman supports the expansion of Medicaid because it will

[see Local, page 3](#)

Elected officials go to Raleigh to support redistribution bill

Commissioners Whit Gibson and Carol McCall and County Manager Kevin Patterson joined more than 100 elected officials and managers from across the State who gathered in Raleigh August 12 to advocate for sales tax redistribution legislation and the restoration of historic tax credits.

"Historic tax credits can be beneficial, especially for commercial redevelopment of historic properties, particularly in downtown areas where you have old buildings that are not competing with Walmart or strip shopping centers," said Patterson. "Historic tax credits improve the financial models for renovating those historic properties for a business use."

The other event, which brought Patterson and the Commissioners to Raleigh, was to support House Bill 117 for reallocating sales tax.

"Right now the vast majority of taxes throughout the State are sent back to the counties based on a point of sale collection," Patterson said.

"House Bill 117 would change it from a point of sale to a 50/50 mix of point of sale, which means the county where the transaction happened would get 50 percent of the sales taxes and half of the sale taxes in the State would go back to the County where the people live."

The rural counties are in favor of reallocating sales taxes in a 50/50 split. "We have a lot of people who leave here and go to Fayetteville, Raleigh, Charlotte or Wilmington to shop," Patterson said.

"With a point of sale distribution where it is now, when people from Scotland County shop elsewhere, those sales tax dollars go there. If it goes to a 50/50 split, it's shared in between the larger areas as well as the rural areas where the people live."

Patterson said the State predicts Scotland County would see a \$500,000 increase in its sales tax revenues. Patterson is hopeful that there might be legislation that would benefit counties with the provision of increased sales tax revenue.

"The 50/50 bill has the best chance of anything out there right now. It's already passed the Senate. It passed the House back in June. The bigger question is what the Governor is going to do."

Patterson said Governor Pat McCrory in the past has indicated he would veto any sales tax redistribution legislation. However, the 50/50 bill is far less onerous than previous tax redistribution legislation where larger counties would have lost sales tax revenue.

Patterson said counties that would lose heavily are the tourist areas that have small populations annually and high seasonal populations. "They could lose more. That's the argument the State is looking at right now."

Senator Tom McInnis and Representatives Garland Pierce and Ken Goodman have actively supported legislation that would bring greater sales tax revenues to rural counties.

Our condolences to ...

the family of **Tommy Hatcher**, EMS retiree, who passed away August 17; **Lt. Amy Locklear**, Sheriff, on the August 8 passing of her father, Charles Locklear.

Public health grateful for interns

Text and photo by Kathie Cox, Health



Three high school students took time from summer break to provide support to staff at the Health Department, the agency where their parents work.

Jarrett Locklear, Purnell Swett High School, son of Selena Locklear; Mason Roberts, Scotland High School, daughter of Maria Roberts; and Luke Hall, Marlboro County High School, son of Erica Hall; stamped brochures, put together health guides for clients, designed a summer safety exhibit and helped with the retirement party of Miriam Bounds.

While Luke and Jarrett each donated about 24 hours of their time, Mason donated closer to 40 hours and, along with her mom, designed and put up the summer bulletin board.

Commissioners, School Board approve funding agreement

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The Liaison Committee will meet again on a regular basis starting in January 2016 to discuss an agreement for school funding that would extend beyond FY 2018.

"The new funding agreement is a beginning rather than a finished accomplishment," said McCall. "A new framework for funding the schools was established, and it was built on the great effort of the Liaison Committee."

She added, "Communication and trust will continue to guide our joint effort to fund the schools and provide excellent educational opportunities for all our children. It was a privilege to have been a part of that and to have contributed to the funding agreement."

Gibson agreed. "Serving on the Liaison Committee was a challenge, but satisfying, in that six people were able to share ideas, facts, possibilities and ramifications."

"The most satisfying to me was the realization that we all had similar goals, recognized similar obstacles, accepted the presence of different priorities and accepted compromise in coming to a temporary but significant agreement for the next two years," Gibson added. "The next step is continuing to build trust and expand avenues of communication so that each step forward is less difficult and more productive."

Davis said he hopes to get to the point of funding the schools at a sustainable level. "I'm not against education, but dollars don't educate anybody. You have to want to learn."

Chairman Guy McCook said, "We're excited about the long term implications with the school system that provides funding for the schools and does it within our means as a community."

Availability fees FAQs answered

County Manager Kevin Patterson responded to several of the most frequently asked questions about availability fees since they became effective July 1.

Q. I live in the County and pay a hauler. Is this a double tax?

A. You pay the hauler for the convenience of taking your trash from the house and bringing it to the County. This fee is for the County to cover the cost of taking care of final disposal of your garbage.

Q. Why do municipal residents pay \$55 and I pay \$85 because I live in the County?

A. The availability of the convenience sites are more practical for somebody who lives in the County than in the city. We're waiving fees for the average household garbage up to 10 bags a week at the convenience sites. That's a greater savings for someone who uses the convenience sites than someone who lives inside of the city.

Q. You're asking me to pay for a service I don't receive because I live in the County. Why should I pay for it?

A. The County is required to develop a system that can take care of all the garbage generated in the County. It doesn't matter specifically how much is generated, the County has to be able to dispose of it. The fee comes back in to the only practical way that we could find to actually pay for the total garbage that we throw away.

Q. I got an availability fee bill for a piece of land I own and there's nothing on that property. What should I do?

A. Alert the Tax Department. We realize there will be some errors. We want to correct them as quickly as possible.

Q. This came as a surprise to me. Why didn't you tell us about it before we saw it on our tax cards?

A. We've been working with the media, newspaper, radio and talking about this in the public for over two years, trying to get the word out before it ever happened.

Illegal dumping rocks the boat

Solid Waste Enforcement Officer, J.R. Horne has seen lots of stuff illegally dumped on the side of the road from the mundane to the bizarre. In July, he saw the biggest item — a boat.

Using the registration numbers, Horne located the last person who was in possession of the boat, a New Jersey resident

"It's hard to prosecute illegal dumping when it's out of state." But Horne did receive a response to his letter. The person in New Jersey had sold the boat for parts.

"They're in the process of trying to get documentation on who possessed it last. It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack," said Horne. "The person from New Jersey paid to have the boat towed to the landfill. She didn't dump the boat but she took on the responsibility to clean it up. You don't find many people like that."

"They sold it to someone else and they did not get their names off all the documents in this particular case," Horne explained. "There are about three parties involved in this case and it's been going on for two months now."

Horne discovery of the boat was in response to a call that a boat had been dumped on the edge of the woods on the South Carolina/North Carolina line. The boat is made of fiberglass and wood, so it will be crushed and put in the C&D landfill.



Local legislators united in support of rural counties

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support rural hospitals. "It would create jobs in the State and ensure that 500,000 people would be eligible for health insurance, those who would get medical care anyway. They'll go to the emergency room and we're going to pay for it. Medicaid expansion would be a lot more efficient."

Pierce discussed funding issues that affect public education. "I will make every attempt to make sure there are funds available for teacher assistants." The proposed elimination of funds for student driver education is another concern for Pierce. "It's so important and will affect Scotland County if it's not funded."

Pierce said he supports the 50/50 sales tax redistribution legislation. "That money would make a difference in Scotland County."

The redistribution of sales tax, which would be distributed based on 50 percent point of sale and 50 percent per capita, could mean an additional \$500,000 in revenue for the County.

McInnis said he, too, is advocating for sales tax redistribution since rural counties would benefit from additional revenue.

Chairman Guy McCook, who attended the event, agreed. "Our sales tax dollars are leaving here every day to support other communities. That's not the way it should be happening."

Pierce said legislators from metropolitan areas empathize and understand what is going on in rural counties but they don't want to hurt themselves politically. Pierce said there will come a time when the legislators in metropolitan areas will need support from rural counties. "I think we can come to an understanding."

McInnis said of Pierce and Goodman, "We are of different parties but we are of like minds when it comes to our business."

McInnis suggested other possible sources of revenue for counties. "There is more than \$1 billion worth of real estate that the State owns and is not using." McInnis said the State should sell the real estate and put it back in the hands of people who will pay property taxes.

In response to a question regarding the exploration of natural gas in Scotland County, McInnis said, "Oil is at an all-time low, and it costs about \$50 a barrel to get it out of the ground. If we drill a well in North Carolina using the fracking method and a horizontal approach, it would cost three times as much as it would cost in West Texas (where fracking is already established). It is not economically or commercially feasible to drill for oil or gas in North Carolina at this time."

Goodman advised attendees not to write legislators who do not represent Scotland County. "They won't read a letter from someone out of their district. Write your legislator."

In closing, the three lawmakers returned to the subject of disparity between rural counties and large metropolitan counties. "The difficulty is there are more people living in the metro areas like Wake and Mecklenburg. The percentage of people living in rural North Carolina is declining, and it's not going to change," Goodman said. "The State has a moral obligation to serve all the citizens as far as providing the same services and the same opportunities."

"We've got to make sure our rural communities don't evaporate under the sun," McInnis said.

the September birthday list

1 Felisa Lockey (DSS) and Charles Clark (EMS); 2 Roger Russell (Public Buildings); 5 Felicia McCall (Health); 6 Kristin Scott (EMS); 8 Debra Kersey (Health) and Laura Gardner (DSS); 10 Jeannie Freeman and Umeko Terry (DSS) and William McClellan (Transportation); 11 Deborah Rogers (Health) and Kimberly Villanueva (DSS); 12 Tina Whitfield (Jail); 13 Roger Dial (Public Buildings); 14 Carlotta Rivers (Health); 15 Denise Dunn (Library); 16 Nancy Hughes (Tax); 18 Susan Butler (Administration) and L. Page Pratt (Register of Deeds); 19 Whit Gibson (Commissioner), Dwight Bryant (Parks and Recreation) and Sharon McIntyre (E-911 Center); 20 Leon Gyles (Library), Heather Wyke (Health) and Twanna McCrimmon (DSS); 22 Christina Dowd (Sheriff); 25 Alisa Freeman (Health), Falana Jackson (DSS), Andrew Walker (EMS) and Rhonda Patterson (E-911 Center); 26 Joshua Byrd (EMS); 29 Ralph Kersey (Sheriff); 30 David Shankle (Sheriff).

Cooperative Extension's work with GrowingChange featured

Scotland County Cooperative Extension and GrowingChange.org were featured in *Solutions for North Carolina*, a publication of the Cooperative Extension Program at North Carolina A&T University.

The article on how teens use agriculture to repurpose prisons and their lives, highlights the experiences of two 18-year-olds, Cody Oxendine and Terrence Smith, who flipped their lives from a path of violence, drugs and gangs to one in pursuit of farming, gardening and agribusiness as a means to success.



Sharon English, Cooperative Extension, and Noran Sanford, GrowingChange.org, at the Wagram Correctional Center.

The two achieved this with guidance and assistance from GrowingChange.org, licensed mental health therapist Noran Sanford and Scotland County Cooperative Extension.

One GrowingChange initiative is to flip the vacant Scotland County Correctional Center in Wagram into an agribusiness enterprise and a juvenile rehabilitation site.

Like Oxendine and Smith, at risk youth between the ages of 14 and 17, produce and deliver fresh food to needy families, speak to church groups, design and build compost bins and immerse themselves in entrepreneurship. The article along with videos is available online at www.ag.ncat.edu/solutions2015/.

It's time to gather a team and collect trash. Litter Sweep is September 14 to 19. Pick up vests, gloves and trash bags at the Chamber of Commerce, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. First place King of the Mountain collects the most trash and a \$200 prize. Second place winner collects \$100.

Four-way stop installed at five points intersection

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Stone indicated that rumble strips would be installed well in advance of the intersection, which will slow traffic. The rumble strips will be spaced closer together as vehicles approach the intersection. "We want to get the attention of the driver before they get to the intersection."

Although the Commissioners in attendance agreed it is not the best solution, McCook said it is something the Board could live with for a short time. "NCDOT has done a significant amount of work putting together a viable solution for that intersection. While a four-way stop is not a longterm solution, it's a little better than what we have today."

McCook added, "We want to find the best possible solution for making this a safer place. We're going to use the expertise of the NCDOT to try and get to the best solution."

An estimated 5,000 vehicles travel north and south and 2,500 travel along Old Wire Road daily. Because US 15-501 is a straight shot from Aberdeen to Laurinburg, drivers tend to travel beyond the 55 mile per hour speed limit. Stone described five points as "the Bermuda Triangle of intersections" because of the low traffic volume versus the amount of accidents.

"The four-way stop is temporary and will be replaced with a traffic circle in two years," Stone said.

The roundabout, which is considered the optimum longterm solution, would be on a raised intersection in order to double the sight distance. At a \$1 million price tag, it is within the budget of what NCDOT has available to spend. Stone said, "Once you take that left turn out, a roundabout is a lot safer option."

In response to calls for NCDOT to grade the hill, Stone said, "If it was just the grade, if all the accidents were just on the one side, we would address the grade. It does not address all the crash problems. There are accidents coming from the other side."

McCook said, "While the four-way stop is probably not the first choice of anybody, I think NCDOT has done its homework. If NCDOT thinks it's safer based on the studies they've done, I have trouble arguing with that."

McCook added, "I'm not an engineer. All I have is anecdotal evidence of driving up and down that road. If we can get the attention of drivers in the southbound lane. If we can do that, it may work."

Meanwhile, NCDOT is currently working on designs for a roundabout. The design and permitting process would be followed by construction, which would take anywhere from six to nine months. That would put completion of a roundabout to between 18 months and two years.

Post Scripts

The following individuals joined Scotland County departments between June 16 and July 15, 2015: **April Harley**, Health; **Christopher Strickland**, **Dana Bethea** and **Mitchell Woods**, Jail; **April Sessoms** and **Christa Marciano**, DSS; **Jami Smith**, part-time with EMS; and **William McClellan** part-time with Transportation.