

MARCH 2014



Scotland County, NC

A newsletter for the Scotland County community

Truck fills quickly at shred event



Volunteers were on hand to assist people as they walked in or drove through with bags and boxes of paper for shredding March 22. Shred Day/Operation Medicine Drop was held in the parking lot of Walgreens, sponsors of the event. Each person was permitted to bring up to 100 pounds of paper for shredding. Participants also delivered their unwanted over-the-counter and prescription drugs at Operation Medicine Drop, which was held simultaneously with the shred event.

County budgets for quality of life

When the Commissioners gather for budget talks, 40 percent of the estimated \$37.5 million budget will already be accounted for.

"This is where the State tells us this is what you are going to budget of which, this is your percentage," explained County Manager Kevin Patterson. "The Commissioners have no control over 40 percent of the budget."

Patterson provided a budget breakdown for attendees at the State of the Community breakfast, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

\$20 million of the total budget comes from property taxes and \$5 million from sales tax revenues. Governmental and user fees account for about \$10 million.

Patterson provided information on where taxpayer dollars go. The largest portion at 47 percent goes to education. Law enforcement accounts for 17 percent and health and human services 13 percent.

In dollar amounts, that's just under \$13 million for education, which includes RCC and the early college program. Law enforcement receives \$4.4 million while health and human services is budgeted at a little more than \$11 million.

"A lot of people who either don't have kids or their kids no longer attend school ask why they would have to pay tax dollars for education," Patterson said. "As long as you live here, I would imagine that the people you would want living in the house next to you to be literate."

Patterson added, "You may not need any public education services directly in your home, but a community without a good public education system will collapse."

Speaking on the need for law enforcement, Patterson said, "I would love to live in Mayberry where we have the sheriff and Barney Fife and the drunks know where the jail key is so they could lock themselves up. Unfortunately, that's not the case."

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Workforce growth an economic indicator

Driving the workforce number up instead of focusing on unemployment is important. Economic Development Director Greg Icard said, "It's our desired goal to increase the workforce number. That would mean there are more jobs and more people working."

Unemployment was 12.6 percent in December 2013. "It's still very high but it's the lowest it's been since November 2008 (when the recession hit)."

In 1990, 16,707 were in the workforce compared to 13,195 at the end of 2012. It peaked in 1997 at 18,069. Icard described the closing of Abbott as a "watershed moment" when workforce numbers began to decline.

Still, since 2009, the County brought in \$133.5 million in new investment, most of it, \$100 million, from FCC for an expansion and a new facility. "Growing the tax base is as important as jobs," Icard said.

Speaking at the State of the Community breakfast, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, Icard said there is a trend among companies to make a very high investment and create very small number of jobs.

In 2013, Icard worked on 15 projects, some of which were local. Of the 15 projects, 11 were Department of Commerce referrals, three contacted the County directly because they were looking at the area for a particular reason and one came from North Carolina's Southeast.

The 15 projects accounted for \$686 million in new investment. "That's the investment we would have created if we landed all of those, along with 970 jobs," Icard said.

"It's very difficult to pinpoint one particular reason why a company locates where it locates," he added. "If we knew what those reasons were, we could use it to our advantage."

"Every single project is different and you could be eliminated by every single one for a different reason," Icard explained.

Icard said the economic outlook is brighter now that the country is moving away from the recession. Project investment increased from \$40 to \$50 million to more than \$100 million. Even with the high investment dollars, Icard said, "The problem is, it's 25 to 35 jobs."

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Legislators asked for local support

Commissioners discussed key issues with the State local delegation including a State requirement that local health departments be funded at the same level as they were in 2011.

Since 2011, the County was able to reduce Health Department funding by 17 percent yet still maintain services with the exception of maternity care. There are discussions to restore that service.

The State law means the County would have to add nearly \$1 million more to the FY 2015 budget, which could increase the tax rate by six cents.

"I don't see the Commissioners supporting that at all even if the State tells us that we need to," said Chairman Guy McCook. "This is really about doing the right thing for our community."

McCook added, "While we have an obligation to follow State mandates, the Commissioners were given the fiscal responsibility to look after the resources in our community. We need to do what is right for our citizens."

Senator Gene McLaurin and Representatives Garland Pierce and Ken Goodman assured the Commissioners they would do what they could to help.

Another issue discussed was the State proposal to shift the cost of secondary roads to the County, which would mean another tax increase of around 22 cents with 29 miles of road due to be resurfaced this year.

The Commissioners also asked the legislators to submit a local bill, which would allow the County to charge fees for sweepstakes businesses at the same level that the City currently charges.

McCook asked about the possibility of payment in lieu of taxes on State-owned property in the gamelands. "The State doesn't share any revenue for the 21,000 acres of property it owns that is located in our County."

McCook said perhaps the State would consider paying taxes on the acreage for a limited time or participate in a revenue sharing arrangement.

News of Note

Senior Games and Silver Arts registration continues

Registration for the 2014 Scotland County Senior Games and Silver Arts continues through April 17. All adults 50 or better are invited to participate in Senior Games and Silver Arts April 25-May 17. Registration is at Scotland Place Senior Center or Wagram Recreation Center. Registration fee is \$10 and includes activities, t-shirt and banquet. SilverArts celebrates the creative expression of seniors in North Carolina and is a major component of the traditional athletic competition of North Carolina Senior Games. SilverArts unites athletes and artists in a program that recognizes the similarities of both endeavors: discipline, dedication and pride in one's accomplishments. SilverArts provides a stage for the creative talents of the visual, heritage, literary and performing artists. Cheerleading is in the Silver Arts category also. The SilverArts program will take place May 13-15 at the Storytelling and Arts Center. For information contact Scotland Place Senior Center 277-2585 or Wagram Recreation Center 369-0686.

Collections contract works well for EMS

When EMS contracted with an outside agency to do collections, it enabled EMS to get new software and hardware for record keeping and collect \$663,000 since last July. Contracting with EMS MC also freed the person in EMS who used to do collections to do debt setoff and garnishments. In February, \$28,000 in debt setoff was collected. In the first six months of the year, an estimated \$38,000 in garnishments was collected. "Those were things that person would not have been able to do when she was doing all EMS billing," said EMS Director Roylin Hammond. "The contract with EMS MC has turned out to be very beneficial."

Contributions used to resurface soft tennis courts

Thanks to a \$15,000 contribution from the Scotland County Tennis Association (SCTA) and the more than \$12,000 in donations/pledges from soft court members and tennis supporters, the Tennis Center raised enough funds to completely resurface the soft courts in March. "Completion of the project will allow Scotland County to continue to provide the best public tennis facility in this region," said Tennis Center Coordinator Tom Sheller. "Thanks to everyone who contributed."

April 2014 proclaimed Public Health Month

The Board of Commissioners this week will proclaim April as Public Health Month. "This is very important to us as our goal is to increase our citizen's awareness of the need for public health and its effect on our quality of life," said Health Educator Kathie Cox. Planned activities include public service announcements throughout the month and recognition of public health staff for providing citizens services to enhance their quality of life.

Who will be crowned King of the Mountain?

The Chamber of Commerce Green Committee is gearing up for Spring Litter Sweep March 31 to April 5.

Participating teams are eligible to win a cash prize for collecting the most weight in litter. First place, King of the Mountain, is \$200, while second place is \$100. Various small prizes were available to the first 100 people who signed up to participate.

Teams or individuals working as part of a team can gather litter at any time between Monday, March 31, and Saturday, April 5. Bags of litter can be dropped off at any of the five recycling centers in the County no later than 3 p.m. Saturday, April 5.

Be sure to notify the onsite volunteer of the number of bags collected. Gloves, vests and bags were available for pick up at the Chamber of Commerce before the 2014 Spring Litter Sweep event began.



Photos from the 2013 Spring Litter Sweep.

SCATS receives three new vans



Photo by Roylin Hammond, EMS

SCATS (Scotland County Area Transit System) took delivery of three new 14-passenger lift-equipped vehicles. They replace two existing vans and provide a system expansion that includes a designated vehicle for the daily Fixed Red Line route.

"We were borrowing another used van from another county to provide the Red Line service," said EMS Director Roylin Hammond. "We will now have a designated vehicle just for the Red Line. When it reaches its useful life, we will be able to request funds from DOT to replace it."

The three new vans delivered by Champion Bus Sales in Charlotte were paid 90 percent with State funds and 10 percent with County funds. The County Commissioners will be asked to declare the two retired vehicles as surplus.

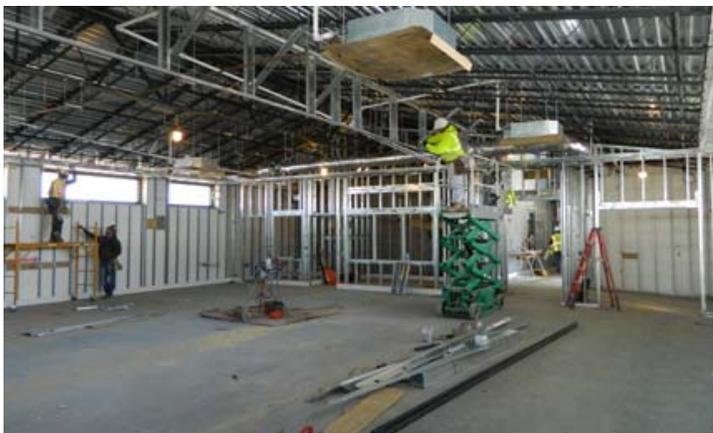


Photo by Roylin Hammond, EMS

911 call center still on schedule

Construction of the new EOC (Emergency Operations Center) and 911 Call Center continues on schedule.

Contractor Monteith Construction Company recently took delivery of the roofing panels that are expected to be in place before April 1.

The interior is also coming along on schedule, and interior sheetrock is expected to begin being hung in April.

The County and the City are deliberating an agreement that will define a funding ratio for staff at the facility.

"The public safety agencies that will benefit from the new technology the center will offer are looking forward to its completion and providing even better service to the taxpayers of Laurinburg and Scotland County," said EMS Director Roylin Hammond.

Severe weather preparedness encouraged by EMS Director

When it comes to severe weather awareness, EMS Director Roylin Hammond encourages everyone to have a plan.

"You need to decide where the safest room in your house is and where you would go if there is a threat of a tornado or severe, high winds," Hammond said.

"You need to think about severe thunderstorms and the 30/30 rule that says if you can't count to 30 between the time you see lightning and the time you hear thunder, you need to seek shelter."

30 minutes after you see the last lightning and hear thunder, Hammond advises that you continue to stay inside because you could still be struck by lightning even though the storm has passed.

Hammond recommends a household have in place an emergency response kit sufficient for 72 hours of survival.

"You need to have food, medication and water. If you have small children in your home you need to have diapers, food and things like that," said Hammond.

"You must prepare so that if you were in a situation where you couldn't get out of your home for 72 hours, you could still survive. You should think about all of that as far as being prepared for severe weather."

Budget benefits its citizens

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Patterson added, "If you feel perfectly safe at home or when you go shopping, I want to say, 'You're welcome' on behalf of the County Commissioners, the Sheriff, the City Council and the Chief of Police."

He explained, "Without a law enforcement presence, how long do you think it would be before you could not conduct your business in relative safety?"

Patterson asserted that Scotland County is a safe place for the vast majority of its people. "That's why the County spends \$4.4 million on public safety. If you don't feel safe, you will leave."

The County invests about \$1 million a year in the Health Department, which is significantly down from 2011 when it invested twice as much.

"The Health Department isn't just a place where someone goes to get an STD test," Patterson said. "You're not officially born until the Health Director says you are because they fill out all the vital records in the State. You also officially cannot be dead without the Health Director saying so."

Patterson said if you eat out or shop at the supermarket and you haven't gotten sick, or if your child goes to school or daycare without incident that's because the Health Department ensures communicable and transmitted diseases are reduced.

Patterson defended Social Services. "People say, 'I don't get welfare. I don't get food stamps. I have a job.'"

Medicaid brings \$76 million into Scotland County, and \$20 million of that goes into the hospital.

"The single largest cost in Medicaid are for our parents and our grandparents, those who worked their entire lives and who saved up and now might be in need of a specialized facility because they can't live at home safely," Patterson explained.

"They also don't have a \$3 million nest egg or a retirement that paid them \$10,000 a month. So they need help. Many people who live in assisted living facilities qualify for Medicaid."

Warnings and watches explained

There is a difference between watches and warnings for weather events.

A watch means conditions are favorable for a particular event to occur because the temperature, humidity, barometric pressure are right. If all of these things come together at the right time, there is a potential for that type of weather. That is a watch.

A warning means all those things have happened and that particular type of event is occurring.

EMS Director Roylin Hammond said, "It may not be occurring exactly where you are, but it's occurring somewhere, and you need to take shelter or be prepared to deal with the consequences of that particular event."

A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for that tornado. A tornado warning means a tornado is on the ground somewhere, it has been sighted and you need to take immediate action.

"Listening to all the media to know what's going on is extremely important," Hammond explained.

New fence installed at landfill

A new fence installed at the landfill replaces one from the early 1990s.

The new fence runs 1,550 feet along Old Maxton Road from the entrance gate at the scalehouse to the exit gate at the transfer station. Its life expectancy is between 20 and 30 years.

Public Works Supervisor Bryant Higgins said replacing the fence was necessary because it had deteriorated.

Fences, gates, berms and dikes provide security to the landfill. A local contractor installed the fence in 500-foot increments over a period of six weeks between weather events.

Cost of the fence installation was \$15,550, which was money left over from the purchase of a dozier, which had been previously budgeted.

"I purchased a used dozier and still had money left out of the budget to do the fence," Higgins explained.

Higgins said there is several hundred feet of fence around the office and another 2,000 feet around the C and D landfill that will be coated with zinc and painted in order to prolong its life.



The fence at the landfill before installation (top) and after (below). Photos by Bobby Horne, Public Works.

Business operations invest more capital but creates fewer jobs

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Icard added that enticing industry to an area takes time. The FCC expansion was the culmination of two years' worth of work. Icard credited the development of the Small Business Incubation Center (SBIC), which was built in a little more than a year, and its surrounding acreage as a factor in the decision by FCC to expand locally.

"The SBIC made that property available for development and, because it was available for development, we were able to keep FCC from going elsewhere. The infrastructure needs were handled."

Icard also credited partnerships among the County, City of Laurinburg and the State for making the FCC project a reality. Additionally, CCL Label, the largest label maker in the world, is located in the SBIC in 8,000-square-feet of incubator space.

"The County happened to be building something CCL Label needed, and it worked out very well," Icard said. "We were in the right place at the right time with a lot of work and effort put into it behind the scenes."

Icard added there is potential CCL Label at some point might want a larger building. "We will have the opportunity to support them in construction of a new building for purchase or lease."

Our condolences to ...

Tammy Kellogg, DSS, on the March 24 passing of her brother, Stevie Locklear.

Post Scripts

Welcome to those employees hired since January 16: **Roy Gilmore**, Elections; **Lorianne Knight**, EMS; **Miles Mack**, Jail; **Christopher Locklear** and **Matthew Lowery**, Public Buildings; and **Jessica Duke**, DSS.

the Birthday list for April

2 Randall Gibson (EMS); **4** Daniel McClellan (Jail); **6** Shekesha McPhatter (DSS) and Judge Lipford (Sheriff); **9** Berta Adams (Jail); **12** Michael Alford (Parks and Recreation) and Tiffany Elliott (DSS); **13** Danilo Dirico (EMS); **14** William Edge (Sheriff) and Kisse Phy (EMS); **16** Erica Hall (Health), Tammy Cole (DSS) and Alan Stewart (Parks and Recreation); **18** April Snead (DSS); **20** Sandra McNeil (DSS); **21** Patricia Campbell (Public Buildings), Michael Woods (Sheriff) and Dave Jenkins (Health); **22** Madeline Peele (DSS) and Annie Van Hoy (Library); **23** Roger Alford (Sheriff); **24** Marty Pate (Tax); **25** Sandra Miller (Jail); **26** Christy Lowry (EMS); **27** Tina Clark (Health); **28** Sandra McCrimmon (Transportation) and Sharon English (Cooperative Extension); **29** Debra Sandlin (EMS) and Roy Gilmore (Elections).

Bad weather doesn't stop Transportation

When County offices are closed, Transportation is still on the job.

"Holidays don't have anything to do with bad weather but typically it is when County employees don't work," said EMS Director Roylin Hammond.

"People on dialysis still need services. The dialysis center works with Transportation around holidays. When there is severe weather and it is forecast, dialysis tries to do the same thing."

"When a snowstorm was predicted for Wednesday and Thursday, we doubled up dialysis patients Monday and Tuesday so they wouldn't miss their dialysis," Hammond said.