

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners budget retreat/reconvened meeting  
February 13, 2012, 507 West Covington Street, Laurinburg, NC*

**MINUTES  
Scotland County Board of Commissioners  
February 13, 2012 Budget Retreat/Reconvened Meeting  
507 West Covington Street, Laurinburg, NC**

At 9 a.m. Chairman Bob Davis reconvened the meeting for the purpose of a budget retreat. Commissioners in attendance: Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Joyce McDow and Commissioners John Alford, John Cooley, Carol McCall and Guy McCook. Commissioners not in attendance: Commissioner Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson, Finance Officer Charles Nichols and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman. Commissioner Davis opened the meeting with a prayer.

**EMS contract billing service**

Mr. Jason Crowell and Mr. Barry Britt gave a presentation on EMS Billing Services. Mr. Britt described the billing structure and how claims are processed. Mr. Crowell said the company could increase local EMS collections by more than \$127,000 with an annual rate for providing the service at 9.5 percent.

**AMR (American Medical Response) presentation**

Mr. Darrell Gibson and Mr. Brad Chase provided an overview of the company's EMS services. They discussed the benefits of contracting with an EMS service and ensured that if contracted, the incumbent workforce would be hired by AMR with full benefits and comparable salaries. If contracted by the County, they estimated there would be a 30 to 60-day transition process.

**Midyear financial report**

Finance Officer Charles Nichols said an RFP has been drafted for auditing services. Mr. Nichols said the Scotland County School Board is considering asking \$600,000 from the County for capital projects, which is in addition to the lottery capital funds.

Mr. Nichols distributed bank account totals as of January 31, revenue and expenditures budget projections as of January 31, 2012 mid-year sales tax analysis and seven-month property tax analysis. Mr. Nichols said the sales tax revenue is on line with the same time a year ago. He said the Wal-Mart opening in Bennettsville might affect overall sales tax figures.

Mr. Nichols said property tax collections are an area of concern because the percentage is lower than where it same time last year. Mr. Nichols said he would provide more tax collections information at the March meeting.

Commissioner McCook asked administration to look at departments that significantly spent more money this year than the same time last year and why that might be for a follow-up report at the March meeting.

*(A break was called. The meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m.)*

**Budget projections/recommendations**

County Manager Patterson said there is a new State formula for 911 fund balance on when revenues are received and spent. Mr. Patterson said once the 911 fund balance reaches a certain amount, no revenues

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are forthcoming until the current fund balance is spent, and it must be spent in areas of public safety. He said currently the 911 fund balance is \$344,000.

The County Manager and Commissioners discussed public safety needs, including Sheriff's vehicles, the Emergency Operations Center project, a new ambulance and defibrillators.

*The Board of Commissioners, by consensus, asked the Facilities and Capital Committee to provide guidance on how the funds might be expended and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.*

Mr. Patterson asked the Commissioners for guidance for the FY 2012-2013 budget. He asked the Commissioners to consider eliminating employee salary reduction/furlough in the next fiscal year.

Commissioner McCall suggested each Commissioner submit to staff five priority goals for the next fiscal budget.

Vice Chair McDow asked staff to study the AMR proposal for EMS to determine what savings it might represent for the County.

Mr. Patterson said he would present an EMS billing recommendation at the March meeting. Mr. Patterson said the AMR recommendation might take a little more time.

The Water Districts were discussed and whether to place them in separate accounts. Finance Officer Nichols said the LGC indicated it would cause additional work for finance staff. Mr. Patterson added there are about a dozen funds with numerous pots of money that must be tracked.

Chairman Davis suggested staff leave the Water Districts accounts as they are and break down cash flow for quarterly reports.

*The Board of Commissioners, by consensus, asked finance staff to compile a list of the broad funds and how the monies are used for review by the Commissioners.*

County Manager Patterson said with the recent fee increase the County is anticipating a significant positive cash flow for the year. Mr. Patterson said he would continue to monitor the fee structure and also study the development of a water authority.

Commissioner McCook suggested the County Manager look at what rate would be needed in order to be in compliance with LGC recommendations and adjust the rates accordingly. Commissioner McCook said he doesn't expect the rate structure to be resolved in six months but it should be a progressive process to achieve a good business plan.

**Emergency Operations Center building project**

County Manager Patterson reported currently \$1 million is available for the Emergency Operations Center building but construction would be an estimated \$2.7 million with the final build out estimated at \$3.5 million. Mr. Patterson said Scotland and Richmond counties are in talks to apply for a \$3.5 million grant for a 911 consolidation project. If successful, the funds would benefit the EOC and provide for 911 back up services between the two counties.

**Tax collection methods**

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Tax Administrator Mary Helen Norton explained the tax liens advertisement process, the schedule for such a process and how the State limits adjustment for penalties and fees. Ms. Norton said change of ownership and address information is not always received in a timely fashion.

Commissioner McCook suggested the Tax Office might reach out to attorneys for more cooperative participation. Mr. Patterson said there might be an adjustment in the software where it could search for properties with no addresses.

Chairman Davis asked Mr. Patterson to explore a software correction. Commissioner McCook said he would ask the Bar Association for assistance.

Ms. Norton provided a tax bill update, which references whether to leave a line for school tax or remove it. Ms. Norton said if Commissioners would like additional information on the tax bill greater than two lines, then the County would have to increase the size of the bill and the full presort rate would apply.

The Commissioners discussed whether to remove school tax line from the tax bill all together or to change the wording since “school tax” was misleading.

The Commissioners asked that the topic of delinquent tax collections be discussed at the March meeting. Commissioner McCook said he would like an age receivables summary and a summary on Zacchaeus foreclosure activities.

Ms. Norton discussed the new website for tax collections and explained how it would provide more information and allow payers to print receipts, view bills and change addresses. The site will be launched in the near future, and the appearance complements that of the Scotland County website.

***(A break was called. The meeting resumed at 12:35 p.m.)***

**Strategic Initiatives update**

County Land Use Plan: Chairman Davis said the original land use plan was located and Mr. Jim Mason, Laurinburg City Council Member Drew Williamson and Mr. Marcus Norton will assist with an initial land use study before he enlists the assistance from a larger group.

Commissioner John Alford asked that the City become a part of the process to help identify appropriate locations for housing developments, which are a critical need in the County.

Centralized/Joint Purchasing: Mr. Patterson and Mr. Nichols met with Department Heads to determine areas that could best benefit from consolidated purchasing. The motor pool was identified as one of the areas. Mr. Nichols said the largest vendors that work with the County either offer the State rate or discount on purchases. Mr. Patterson said IT purchases now will be made through Purchasing instead of through IT.

Capital Improvements Plan: Commissioner McCook met with Mr. Nichols, County Engineer Jim Blackwell and Public Buildings Supervisor Mike McGirt to review department needs as well as wants. Commissioner McCook said funding will be the biggest challenge. Commissioner McCook said he will recommend that capital needs not funded last year be funded this year. He said it would take about \$300,000 to accomplish that. Commissioner McCook said funding should be designated or set aside each year for capital. He will have more information in the next few months.

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Strategies for Job Growth: Vice Chair McDow said she will be assisted by Commissioners McCall and Alford. The three met with Mr. Patterson and Economic Developer Greg Icard. Current economic development methods will be examined. The group discussed local assets and deterrents and possible incentives for small businesses.

Demographic Trends: Mr. Patterson said he and LRCOG Executive Director James Perry are still looking for a student intern who would take on this project.

Maximize Public Information: Commissioner McCall is investigating how departments get information to the media so the process could be streamlined. Commissioner McCall said she contacted *The Laurinburg Exchange* regarding publishing a monthly article on County activities. WLNC Live on Main will focus on County business the morning after the regular Board of Commissioners meeting.

**Customer Service projects**

County Manager Patterson said DSS and Health staff is looking for ways to improve switchboard while Inspections and Zoning are looking at a single counter process.

**Funding request for lights at exits 183 and 184**

Chairman Davis said he asked County Attorney Ed Johnston to look into the legal aspects of funding the lighting project on exits 183 and 184 off US 74.

County Manager Patterson said the Commissioners are asked to consider annual funding of utilities after construction, which would be an estimated \$14,000 for both exits, or to participate in a cost share with the City. Mr. Patterson said the City intends to enhance lighting on Main Street from KFC on Atkinson Street to the Harris Teeter shopping area.

Laurinburg City Mayor Tommy Parker said lighting the exits is a form of economic development because it protects jobs on that corridor and is an ideal half-way stop for motorists on the way to the coast. Mayor Parker asked the Commissioners to make a commitment in principle and, when economics improve and legal aspects are investigated, the County could help the City with some of the cost.

Mayor Parker said the City Manager wants to ensure that the \$454,000 includes the engineering component. If not, the project would not be doable for the City.

Commissioner Alford said he would support the project when funds become available in the future.

Chairman Davis said if the City agrees to contract with the County on tax collections, that revenue could be used toward the lighting project.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded by Commissioner Cooley to adjourn.**  
**Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.**

Ann W. Kurtzman  
Clerk to the Board

Bob Davis  
Chairman