

MINUTES

**Scotland County Board of Commissioners
October 17, 2011 Strategic Planning Session
507 West Covington Street, Laurinburg, NC**

At 3 p.m. Chairman Bob Davis reconvened the meeting. Commissioners in attendance: Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Joyce McDow and Commissioners John Alford, Carol McCall and Guy McCook. Commissioners not in attendance: Commissioners John Cooley and Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson, Finance Officer Charles Nichols and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman. LRCOG Executive Director James Perry served as Facilitator.

I. Mr. James Perry: introduction and role of facilitator

Mr. Perry suggested the Commissioners develop a priority list of initiatives that would be the focus in the coming years. He asked each Commissioner present to discuss at least five items that would be a priority.

Once a list of a dozen strategic initiatives was developed, Mr. Perry asked the Commissioners to narrow the list down to the top four or five. After some discussion, the Commissioners combined some like initiatives and directed the County Manager to assume responsibility for carrying out some initiatives more administrative in nature.

The Commissioners agreed on the following:

Review current Vision and Mission Statements and update, if necessary.

1. Update the 1972 County Land Use Plan

This update would include sections on housing and water resources.

2. Centralized / Joint Purchasing and better sharing of resources between County Departments. This initiative also includes examining capital expenditure procedures.

3. Development of a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) that looks forward at least 5 years. This initiative includes an evaluation of current and future space needs.

4. Strategies for Job Growth

This initiative includes an examination of the current method of economic development, an economic profile and 'vision' for economic development.

5. Changing Demographics for Scotland County

This initiative includes demographic trends and the consequence of slow growth / no growth.

The Commissioners also directed the Manager to work directly on three (3) tasks during the coming months. These directives were:

- 1. To develop and send to all boards and commissions appointed by the Commissioners a memo instructing them to make an annual report to the Board.*
- 2. To give the Commissioners earlier monthly reports on activities taking place relative to the preparation of the budget.*

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- 3. To work on a more consistent evaluation process for regular county employees.*

The Commissioners agreed to schedule another Strategic Planning Session to study the Vision Statement and more clearly define the five initiatives. In the meantime, the initiatives list will be sent to the two absent Commissioners for comment and input.

II. Financial update and quarterly report

Finance Officer Charles Nichols provided a Fund Balance report as of June 30, 2010 and as of June 30, 2011. Mr. Nichols said the \$2.2 million in unassigned Fund Balance is 5.66 percent of total budget. Mr. Nichols predicted that with a lower FY 2011-2012 County budget and better than expected revenues the FY 2012 Fund Balance could be \$2.9 million or 8 percent of total budget. Mr. Nichols also presented quarterly information of bank accounts activity.

Chairman Davis then discussed recent conversations he had with School staff regarding capital monies. Chairman Davis said the Schools expected to receive \$400,000 in capital monies beyond the lottery monies. After the discussions, Chairman Davis said there was general understanding that there was a miscommunication.

Commissioner McCook asked Mr. Nichols for a report on sales tax revenues over the last several years.

(A break was called. The meeting resumed at 4:20 p.m.)

III. Discussion: tax cards and tax breakdown

Commissioner Alford said over the past years he has received calls from citizens confused about the school tax listing on the tax card. Commissioner Alford said it is not a school tax, rather it shows how much goes to the schools from the *ad valorem* tax. Commissioner Alford said the listing causes the community to look at the schools in a negative way.

Chairman Davis said that instead of elimination, perhaps the Commissioners would consider expanding the listing on the cards so taxpayers knew exactly where the tax dollars were going.

The Commissioners generally agreed that the tax card should either eliminate the school tax listing or expand on all information. Commissioner McCook said a better explanation provides citizens with a way to educate themselves about the taxes.

The Commissioners directed Tax Administrator Mary Helen Norton to research a cost difference in providing the community with a more explanatory tax card versus eliminating the information and to investigate what other counties are doing.

IV. Develop response to Nature Conservancy acreage purchase

Mr. Ryan Elting of the Sandhills Nature Conservancy Office said the agency works with willing land owners and partners like the NC Wildlife Commission and the military reservation to

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conserve land deemed as priorities — acreage that would benefit public access to hunting and recreation and military training.

Mr. Elting said in the past 12 years, the Nature Conservancy secured 1.3 percent of the total acreage of Scotland County for this purpose. He said the organization works with willing land owners who have a very low tax base to begin with.

Chairman Davis said although he appreciates what the Nature Conservancy does, he is concerned that 25 percent of land in Scotland County is now either in State or Federal hands and the County will no longer receive tax revenue from it.

Commissioner Alford suggested the County look into a partnership with the State so the County could receive revenue from land that is no longer taxable.

(Commissioner Alford left at 4:45 p.m.)

Chairman Davis suggested the County Manager write a letter to the State property office to see if there is any way the County might receive revenue once the land becomes tax-exempt. Chairman Davis also asked the County Manager to make inquiries with the NC Association of County Commissioners to see if there are enough counties experiencing the same to warrant a request for legislative action.

V. Closed Session

Motion was made by Vice Chair McDow and duly seconded by Commissioner McCook to go into Closed Session 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. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.

OPEN SESSION RESUMED

Motion was made by Commissioner McCook and duly seconded by Vice Chair McDow to adjourn. Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Ann W. Kurtzman
Clerk to the Board

Bob Davis
Chairman