

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

8:30 AM

Special Meeting - Future Planning Session

West Jefferson Town Hall

County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill
Vice Chair William Sands
Commissioner Larry Rhodes
Commissioner Paula Perry
Commissioner Larry Dix*

SPECIAL SESSION

I. 8:30 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the West Jefferson Town Hall

Vice Chairman William Sands called the Special Session to order at 8:36 a.m. at the West Jefferson Town Hall.

Board Members Present: Chairman Todd McNeill, Vice Chair William Sands, Commissioner Larry Dix, Commissioner Paula Perry, and Commissioner Larry Rhodes.

County Staff Present: Interim County Manager Adam Stumb, Finance Officer Sandra Long, Economic Development Director Cathy Barr, Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley, Parks & Recreation Director Kevin Anderson, and Clerk to the Board Ann Clark.

Others Present: Facilitator Phil Trew with High Country Council of Governments and West Jefferson Town Manager Brantley Price.

II. Purpose of Special Meeting

Facilitator Phil Trew stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss future planning for the next 10 to 20 years for Ashe County and to give a clear direction to County staff.

III. Desired Outcomes of Meeting

Phil Trew asked the Board to share their thoughts on the desired outcome of the planning meeting.

Commissioner Dix is interested in discussing what the commissioners need to be doing along the Highway 221 corridor; facility needs, economic development, and placing money aside to pay for these items. The desired outcome from the meeting today is making a decision on how to move forward and developing a Capital Improvement Plan.

Commissioner Rhodes would like to prioritize the two most important items to concentrate on.

Vice Chairman Sands would like to meet with the Planning Board to see what their thoughts are; School Board needs; and a new DSS building.

Commissioner Perry wants to consider a new building for the Health Department; impacts from the Highway 221 widening project; and a location for the Health Department.

IV. Discussion-Development/Land Use

Chairman McNeill arrived at 8:50 a.m.

Facilitator Phil Trew listed the County's current Code of Ordinances and opened discussion on whether the ordinances are adequate. After discussion, it was determined that the following ordinances need to be revisited: Junkyard Ordinance, Polluting Industries Ordinance, and Solid Waste Ordinance.

Key Points for Consideration:

1) Close direction should be given to the Planning Board on what needs to be considered in the ordinances.

- 2) Data needs to be gathered regarding development along Highway 221, possibly expanding water and sewer along Highway 221, and to gather information on what is needed along the highway such as perc tests and subdivision considerations.
- 3) What do we want Ashe County to look like?
- 4) Digital signs need to be addressed in the Sign Ordinance.
- 5) The Airport Advisory Board needs to research control of usage of drones around the airport.
- 6) Have the Planning Board research the Junkyard Ordinance, Polluting Industries Ordinance, Solid Waste Ordinance, and the Sign Ordinance.

V. Discussion-Solid Waste

Facilitator Phil Trew opened discussion on Solid Waste.

Environmental Services Director Scott Hurley told the Board that the County is moving in the right direction with working on adding a convenience center site on Highway 163 and improvements that are to be made to the Highway 16 Convenience Center site. He updated the Board on the cost of opening a new cell at the landfill and the cost of transferring solid waste. He explained that there is approximately six to seven years of use left at the current cell, but it will take three to four years for permitting and construction of a new cell. He will meet with engineers to discuss the feasibility of building a new cell and obtaining cost comparisons.

Commissioner Dix stated that he would like to hear from each department head to see what their future needs (three to five years) are.

VI. Discussion-New DSS Facility/Health Department

Facilitator Phil Trew opened discussion regarding a new DSS and Health Department facility.

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb told the Board about issues at the Health Department including the age of the building, space, and funding. A building committee was formed and several meetings have been held to lay out a timeframe and obtain information on what is needed. Site visits were made to Caldwell County and to Lincoln County. Plans are to visit one more site in the near future. Tax Administrator Chris Lambert prepared renderings depicting how a building would fit on the property. Plans are to meet with site engineers and prepare a Request for Quotation (RFQ) for site design. Discussions are being held regarding building separate buildings or combining the two departments. Thoughts are that the Register of Deeds Office, Building Inspections, and the Tax Office will move to the first floor of the Courthouse. Finance Officer Sandra Long explained cost allocations for DSS reimbursements. Interim Manager Adam Stumb stated that the next step will be the RFQ and to select a design firm. It was determined that the estimated cost of the building, the amount of funding that will be received from the government, and estimates of the cost allocation from DSS is needed for the commissioners to review.

VII. Discussion-Economic Development

Facilitator Phil Trew opened discussion regarding Economic Development.

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb told the Board that issues to consider include the Ray Taylor property.

Economic Development Director Cathy Barr listed three phases to develop an industrial

site: 1) site acquisition which has been budgeted, 2) site planning and design in which funds will be needed in 2021, and 3) site development.

Adam Stumb stated that the County is currently in the due-diligence phase. Ashe County Job Development will purchase the property if the due-diligence phase is approved. The next step will be to review the site assessment, hopefully by the end of November, and to have the property rezoned from agricultural usage to industrial usage.

Chairman McNeill stated that he would like to see a more visible relationship with the Town of Jefferson and coordination with all towns. Manager Stumb stated that it would be good to restart meetings between the county, towns, and Cathy Barr to discuss economic development issues.

The Board discussed recreational infrastructure including river access, agritourism, a YMCA, and the Virginia Creeper Trail. Also discussed was the allocation of occupancy tax funds.

VIII. Discussion-Middle School

Facilitator Phil Trew opened conversation regarding the Middle School.

Interim County Manager Adam Stumb stated that the County has first right-of-refusal on the old Middle School property. The property could be used by the Parks and Recreation Department. Some of the building will need to be demolished, but there are useful components within the building. The County needs to get thoughts from Chris Robinson on whether Wilkes Community College (WCC) would have use for some of the classrooms. Consideration needs to be given to operation and maintenance costs of the building.

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Anderson told the Board that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan needs to be updated in order for the County to be eligible for grants. Phil Trew added that the property could possibly be used as a funding match from the County as required by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant.

The Board agreed that the old Middle School property needs to be used by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Next steps include:

- 1) Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- 2) Determine the Board of Education's offer on the property.
- 3) Talk with Chris Robinson regarding WCC using some of the facility.
- 4) Determine a cost for the project.
- 5) Receive public input on the project.

IX. Commissioners' Additional Priorities

Facilitator Phil Trew opened discussion regarding additional priorities that need to be considered.

Agricultural Facility
Funding for New Health Department
Thomasville Building
Capital Improvement Plan for Existing County Real Estate

Commissioner Sands stated that only two counties in North Carolina have a contracted

ambulance service (Ashe and Watauga). We need to consider the feasibility of the County providing ambulance services when it is time for the contract to expire in 2024. Commissioner Dix wants to see a list of the services Ashe Medics provides.

Commissioner Rhodes left the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Chairman McNeill stated that he has received a lot of comments from the public in favor of the County installing a splash pad. Town Manager Brantley Price stated that a good location would be on the playground next to the Library. Interim County Manager Adam Stumb stated that this could be included in a PARTF grant application.

Vice Chairman Sands left the meeting at 11:42 a.m.

Another issue the Board needs to consider is the age of the building that the Animal Shelter is located in.

X. Conclusion/Next Steps

The next steps will be to work on the following priorities:

Planning Board to review the Junkyard Ordinance, the Solid Waste Ordinance, the Polluting Industries Ordinance, the Sign Ordinance, the Airport Height Ordinance, and impacts that the widening project on Highway 221 will have on Ashe County.

Environmental Services: Meet with engineers on a new landfill cell; obtain cost comparisons on disposal of solid waste.

DSS/Health Department Building: Begin taking requests for quotations on new building and select design firm.

Economic Development: Meet with towns to discuss economic development issues; meet with large employers to determine their future needs.

Parks & Recreation: Update the Parks & Recreation Master Plan; determine the cost of the old middle school; and discuss with Chris Robinson the possibility of WCC utilizing classrooms at the old middle school.

Capital Improvement Plan: Inventory of existing county buildings; and meet with department heads to determine their future (three to five years) needs.

XI. Adjournment

Commissioner Perry made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 noon.

Commissioner Dix seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

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