



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Friday, January 14, 2022

9:00 AM

Agriculture & Conference Center

Board of Commissioners Retreat

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Howard called the meeting order.

Present: 3 - Commissioner Mike Dasher, Commissioner Diana Hales and Chair Karen Howard

BOARD PRIORITIES

21-4157

TJ COG Aging Study Results

County Manager Dan LaMontagne gave a summary of the topic.

The County thought that Dennis Streets' retirement would be a good time to look into bringing the Council on Aging in house as a County Department. This was requested by the Council on Aging Board. Mr. Streets believed this transition would be an asset to the county.

Lee Worsley, Executive Director of Triangle J Council of Governments, gave a presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Worsley was very complimentary of the relationship between the County and the Council on Aging. He could not find a better working relationship anywhere. This was not a hostile takeover but a collaborative effort between the two entities.

After the presentation, Mr. LaMontagne asked the Board of Commissioners for direction.

The current board of directors could become an advisory "friends" board. They already had a well-established process for appointment to that board. The board of directors would like to stay a 501c-3 friends group so it would not be the same kind of advisory committee for other departments. It would be the fundraising arm.

The Board of Commissioners gave unanimous consent for staff to move forward with the transition.

Commissioner Hales suggested the partial implementation of the transition and the Board of Commissioners agreed.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

21-4158

Biennial Survey Results

Attachments: [2021 Chatham County Biennial Survey presentation](#)

*Public Information Officer, Kara Lusk Dudley gave a presentation to the Board.
(Presentation attached)*

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if there was any separation between online article and paper article. Ms. Dudley said it was all inclusive.

Commissioner Dasher said some distinctions in the answers may not be represented. For example, a development concern could be more than just control, it could be types of housing or other developmental concern. Chair Howard would like to learn from departments on how the Board could support improvements. Chair Howard would like to talk about timelines and how they benefited the developer but hurt the individual working in the department.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores was interested in seeing how the community sought information either with paper or online sources. Newsletters getting mailed to each household. Mr. LaMontagne said staff could get more granular.

Commissioner Dasher asked if departments had comment survey cards or a link at bottom of their emails that states "Tell us how we are doing?"

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if all departments had a survey. Mr. LaMontagne said many did and it was part of their performance plans. How could staff work smarter and more efficiently?

Mr. LaMontagne and the staff appreciated the Board of Commissioners' support.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

[21-4159](#)

HR Presentation Pay/Benefits

Attachments: [BOC Retreat 2022 Pay & Benefits](#)

Carolyn Miller gave a presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if anyone resigned due to the vaccine and testing requirements. Ms. Miller said a handful.

Commissioner Hales asked if the Sheriff required vaccination and testing. Ms. Miller said no, but they did participate in the incentive program for vaccination.

Commissioner Dasher asked if there were any further benefits enhancements. Ms. Miller said Human Resources was always looking at that. Commissioner Dasher asked if there was any education reimbursement discussed. Ms. Miller said it was a large expense. Commissioner Hales said it could work for some of the trade jobs.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if there were any internships. Ms. Miller said the school of government often asked if the County needed interns. Mr. Streets had a lot of interns with the Council on Aging.

Chair Howard asked if the County could tap in earlier and younger people through job shadowing experiences.

Commissioner Hales asked if the County participated in job fairs. Ms. Miller said yes. Commissioner Hales asked if excitement was generating. Ms. Miller said yes!

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if there was one person that focused on recruitment. Ms. Miller said that was not her only job function.

Commissioner Dasher suggested a quick video for promoting jobs in the County.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

21-4160

Current Year Accomplishments

Attachments: [mid year accomplishments](#)

Mr. LaMontagne gave a presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Dasher was curious about the Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center insurance requirements for events. Ms. Miller said this was highly recommended by the County's liability provider. Mr. LaMontagne said staff looked at the Wicker Center to see how the County compared.

Commissioner Hales asked how river access parking had been going at the Haw River.

Mr. Thompson said QR codes on signs at South Bynum River Access helped people with parking. Staff and BOC have not heard any complaints, even through the summer, which was a big success.

Commissioner Hales asked about parents in Wake County had wanted a book removed that addressed gender issues for a library. She asked if Chatham had experienced any issues like that here. Ms. Miller said this did not happen in Chatham County.

Mr. LaMontagne said progress had been made for solar panel installation on the Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center. Commissioner Dasher asked if the panels would be owned or leased. Mr. LaMontagne confirmed the panels would be purchased.

Mr. LaMontagne thanked staff and the Board of Commissioners.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

21-4161

Expected Conditions Affecting Next Year's Budget

Budget Director Darrell Butts gave a presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Hales asked if it would be difficult to get an ambulance at the new Emergency Management base when it opened due to supply chain challenges. Mr. Butts had not heard it would be difficult but would look into it.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

21-4162

Commissioner Discussion of Goals and Priorities

Dan LaMontagne invited the Board of Commissioners to discuss their priorities and

goals.

Commissioner Hales said developers were buying up land. Farmland preservation was not something to start looking at ten years from now, because there would be no land left to conserve.

Commissioner Dasher would like to see a map of Chatham with already conserved land, county parks, Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC), Tim Sweeny's property, proposed greenways so the County did not say "We need to conserve land" but could say "we need twenty-seven tracts here, and five here". Chair Howard agreed. Land was not going to get cheaper or easier to come by. Commissioner Dasher said conservation could offset the option for developers. Chair Howard said the County could see where there was not enough conservation and green space. This would help the poorer communities. Commissioner Hales said the TLC study of possible land to conserve was only looked at from the watershed perspective.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores would like a more balanced approach. He would like to make sure one district is not used to benefit another district. Chair Howard said District five was diverse, with some tied to agriculture and some residents that wanted growth. There could be some common ground, so they were not at odds with each other. Mr. LaMontagne said he was hearing the Board wanted staff to come up with a map. Commissioner Hales said yes. Mr. LaMontagne said a new planner who was passionate about conservation could probably help do this. Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if raw land that was available could be shown. Mr. LaMontagne said it was really hard to pinpoint that information. He said the Board needed to remember the development rules the Board had already had in place. Land was already conserving with the density requirements. Commissioner Dasher said Chatham's land use plan had already dictated some of this. Preserving farms was different than identifying conservation corridors. Chair Howard asked what could be done in the preservation space to mitigate and offset development. Commissioner Hales said it would need to be proactive versus reactive. Mr. Thompson said Brandon Dawson with the Planning department worked in D.C. on conservation and he had already convened a meeting of departments that could take a look at conservation.

Commissioner Hales asked if there could be an amount designated in the budget for farmland preservation. She asked if people could donate land. Stephanie Watkins Cruz land could be allocated ahead of time for affordable housing development that was not previously owned by the County. Ms. Watkins Cruz said it was a complex issue, but staff were looking into this with Article 46 revenue and having conversations with community partners about future development and mitigation of costs.

Commissioner Hales said if there was a parcel in Pittsboro, could the County buy it for affordable housing. Mr. LaMontagne said yes. Mr. Butts said the staff was very close to meeting budget requirements and already at six months for Article 46 revenue. The County would end up with more funds than predicted due to how great the sales tax was trending. Mr. Thompson said it maybe could be considered as part of the competitive project process to look at requirements for open space and social determinants of health.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if future plans for transportation, like Highway 421 were being thought about. Mr. Thompson said a transition to the interstate would make things limited. Mr. LaMontagne said it was currently residential on that corridor and people would have to come to the Board of Commissioners to request a rezoning.

Commissioner Hales asked how the County could contribute to infrastructure improvements with the Town of Pittsboro. Mr. LaMontagne gave the following examples of how the County contributed to infrastructure improvements. He said the County contributed seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars to Siler City for upgrades to their waste water treatment plant. The County also upgraded booster stations to get one million gallons of water to Siler City from Sanford through the Chatham County system. The staff had worked with the Town of Pittsboro and Sanford to get water from Sanford to Pittsboro and the county megasite. Mr. LaMontagne said a meeting within the next couple of weeks will happen to discuss expansion of a water plant to supply the water to Pittsboro. This meeting would include the county manager, county attorney, Pittsboro, Fuquay Varina, Holly Springs, and Sanford and thirty-four million dollars of the state budget would be allotted for pipeline work from Sanford to the county megasite and to Pittsboro. Mr. LaMontagne felt like the County had done a lot and had been a good partner, but he would be happy to hear more about what more the Board would like to see. Commissioner Dasher was pretty weary of contributing more to the Town. As far as Pittsboro goes, the water and wastewater issues were not a shock.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if public and private partnerships for wastewater were options. He gave the example of a development that wanted to have a wastewater plant and whether the County could contribute in some way. Mr. LaMontagne said there could always be agreements, but would be tricky and on a case by case basis. Chair Howard said the conversations were always ongoing between the county manager and the town managers. Mr. LaMontagne said the view had been that what was good for the towns was good for the county. Commissioner Hales asked if there was any grant writing that the County could assist the towns with. Mr. LaMontagne said this would have to be hired and contracted out grant writing. Even for a county project, there was not capacity right now.

Chair Howard asked for a minority business assessment update. Mr. LaMontagne said there had been a meeting recently. Courtney Cooper Lewter said staff had begun to reach out to community partners. The hope was to be done with the report by June.

Commissioner Dasher asked questions about the early childhood education progress. Mr. Thompson said the Partnership for Children had plans to do a comprehensive early childhood assessment with grant funds from the Chatham Education Foundation. This was a tentative project for ARPA funds.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked how the county tax rate could be reduced. Chair Howard said there was a more sophisticated county resident that had a high expectation of services available and that costs money. She was cautious to increase the tax rate but was even more cautious about cutting taxes. Her goal was to be responsible but know that those tax dollars help those who need them the most. Mr. Butts said it was possible that based on projections, all budget requests could be met without raising taxes.

Mr. LaMontagne said he heard the Board did not want a tax increase. The Board agreed. Vice Chair Gomez Flores was interested in a tax decrease. Mr. Butts said it was a very high-level overview. Mr. LaMontagne said staff could keep coming back prior to presenting the recommended budget with additional details of how things were coming together.

Commissioner Hales asked if staff were still looking at electric vehicles. Mr. LaMontagne said yes.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if a position was not filled, could a position that is more pressing be filled. Mr. Butts some savings had been taken from lapsed salaries and paid out comp time or to onboard a position that was not supposed to come on later in the schedule. Ms. Miller said a position was looked at whether it was the most effective or efficient way to structure the department and sometimes moved things around. There was flexibility to adapt and respond to current situations.

Lisa West explained why revaluation every four years was important.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

CLOSED SESSION

21-4156

Vote on a request to go into Closed Session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body.

A motion was made by Chair Dasher, seconded by Vice Chair Hales, to go into Closed Session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Commissioner Dasher, Commissioner Hales, Gomez Flores, and Chair Howard

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Mike Dasher, seconded by Franklin Gomez Flores, that the meeting was adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Commissioner Dasher, Commissioner Hales, Gomez Flores, and Chair Howard