



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, January 15, 2020

9:00 AM

Agriculture and Conference Center

BOC Retreat

CALL TO ORDER

Present: 5 - Chair Karen Howard, Vice Chair Diana Hales, Commissioner Jim Crawford, Commissioner Mike Dasher and Commissioner Andy Wilkie

BOARD PRIORITIES

Budget Director Lisa West announced that she had some follow up information that she added to the commissioners' binders. She also announced that the Board would need to call an emergency meeting if they needed to have a third day of the retreat because the 48 hour notice requirement has passed.

[20-3367](#)

Biennial Survey Results

Attachments: [2019 Biennial Phone Survey](#)

Public Information Officer Kara Lusk Dudley reviewed the Biennial Survey Results. (Presentation attached)

Chair Howard asked if the surveyers know the race of the person they are calling. Ms. Lusk Dudley stated it is learned after the fact when we call the resident. The respondents have to self-identify. Commissioner Crawford thinks a second survey is justified for the Hispanic and Latino community because their data is missing from this survey. Policy Analyst Stephanie Watkins-Cruz stated staff may be able to work on this through the Census work.

Vice Chair Hales requested the ages of the respondents. Ms. Lusk Dudley said she will follow up on that.

The Board agreed the "welcomes citizen feedback" question could be rephrased.

Commissioner Dasher asked if there is a way to map the answers. Ms. Lusk Dudley will ask the research firm.

Commissioner Dasher asked if the citizens called are given the option to say no experience. Ms. Lusk Dudley said yes. Residents can respond with "it doesn't apply to me".

Commissioner Wilkie would like to see questions in the survey about the Sheriff's Office. County Manager Dan LaMontagne said that kind of survey would need to be initiated by the Sheriff, as he is an elected official.

[20-3368](#)

Current Year Accomplishments

Attachments: [9--FY 2020 Mid-Year Accomplishments FINAL](#)

County Manager Dan LaMontagne reviewed the mid-year accomplishments. (Presentation attached)

Commissioner Dasher would like to see a presentation after the first year of Chatham Promise is complete.

Commissioner Dasher asked if staff is anticipating any news on possible partnerships on broadband. Mr. LaMontagne stated staff is still working on that. Part of that will relate to the County radio project.

Commissioner Dasher asked if there is a way to make the public aware that there is an effort to move broadband forward. Mr. LaMontagne said it is tough to publicize what is going on when the County is in contract negotiations. He will talk to MIS Director Darlene Yudell to see if there is any way to get the word out.

Vice Chair Hales stated she attended the Public Utilities Commission Public Hearing and she was pleased with the praise given to Watershed Protection Director Rachael Thorn.

Commissioner Crawford suggested the Board have an event at the NW Park after the broadband project is complete. Mr. LaMontagne said staff can look into that.

[20-3369](#)

HR Presentation Pay/Benefits

Attachments: [Pay and Benefits Update 2020 PDF](#)

Human Resources, Risk Management and Conference Center Director Carolyn Miller gave a presentation to the Board. (Presentation attached).

Ms. Miller stated 55% of the employees live in Chatham County with the next largest percentage living in the City of Sanford and Lee County.

Vice Chair Hales asked if staff has done a pay study on higher ranking deputies. She asked if the County is losing employees in whom the County has made significant investment. Ms. Miller stated there is very little turnover at that level and Chatham County is competitive at that level.

Commissioner Wilkie inquired about the program that paid for BLET while the student worked for the county. Ms. Miller said the County has one employee who has successfully gone through that program.

Chair Howard asked if "turnover" means someone who stays in the profession and leaves. Ms. Miller stated it is the act of leaving, including retirement.

Chair Hales suggested a presentation to the NC Association of County Commissioners on the County's tobacco free petty leave incentive program.

Commissioner Crawford thanked the staff for the collaboration with the Martin-Bertie-Washington Leadership Academy. Chair Howard stated this is an

example of how we change the narrative about what good government is.

Commissioner Dasher asked about living wage and paid leave. Ms. Miller stated the County is starting to have discussions about paid leave. Most other jurisdictions are doing parental paid leave. Living wage in this area is \$12 an hour. The County's lowest paid full time employee makes a little over \$13 an hour. The only positions in the County making minimum wage are students at library who shelve books, all others make more. Ms. Miller has talked to Parks and Recreation about adult supervisors for camps making more. Collection center employees make about \$9 an hour but they are contracted. To require them to receive a living wage the Board would have to require it of every employer in the county, so the Board can't stipulate that. Mr. LaMontagne said staff has discussed bringing it in house but it is a very high cost. They are not looking to bring the Board anything this year about bringing this in-house. It would be an increased fee and regular increases in fee.

[20-3370](#)

Affordable Housing Update

Attachments: [BOCAffordableHousing2020FINAL](#)
[Key Housing Terms 1.15.2020pdf](#)

Policy Analyst Stephanie Watkins-Cruz gave a presentation to the Board.
(Presentation attached)

Commissioner Crawford asked what types of units staff is seeing in the market rate affordable housing unit category. Ms. Watkins-Cruz stated mobile homes and single family housing.

LUNCH

[20-3371](#)

EDC Update

Attachments: [1-14-2020 BOC Retreat - Presentation Only](#)

Chatham Economic Development Corporation President Alyssa Byrd gave a presentation to the Board. (Presentation attached)

[20-3372](#)

Expected Conditions Affecting Next Year's Budget

Budget Analyst Darrell Butts gave a presentation to the Board. (Presentation attached)

Commissioner Crawford asked if the County would we have to lay-off watershed protection employees off if revenue went down. Mr. Butts stated the department is not expected to pay for itself but revenues do offset expense.

Commissioner Dasher asked about the teacher supplement and the discussion around the gap. Is the \$800,000 for FY21 for the gap? Mr. Butts stated no, that is to continue the supplement. This year there will be a gap, plus or minus \$800,000. Chatham County Schools will absorb some of it, the rest County staff will discuss how to share the burden. Neither the County nor Chatham County Schools should have to take the full burden.

Staff asked for direction from the Board about a tax increase. The Board agreed by

consensus that staff should not recommend a tax increase for FY21. Mr. LaMontagne noted if there is a crisis, staff can come back to the Board for additional guidance.

20-3373

Commissioner Discussion of Goals and Priorities

Attachments: [FY 2019-2020 Goals](#)

The Board discussed not raising the property tax rate in the FY 21 budget.

The Board discussed its goals and priorities. The Board agreed to keep the Comprehensive Plan Goals.

Chair Howard asked how does the Board incorporate, as commissioners, the members' interests or values into these goals. How do they get input into the strategies?

Commissioner Crawford stated that as a Board they can designate sub-committees of the Board to formulate strategy work with staff. For example, the UDO could have a BOC subcommittee.

Clerk to the Board Lindsay Ray reminded the Board that BOC sub-committees are open meetings.

Vice Chair Hales thinks the County needs to establish a farmland preservation fund. The fund should have dollars, like the County did with affordable housing. The fund should have a purpose. Farmland preservation could be several things. One is a conservation land trust willing to work with farmers to put land in perpetual conservation agreement. If a forever farmer wants out may they may need county money to perpetually preserve that land. She wants staff to establish a fund, say \$200,000, providing an accessible way to put that land in conservation.

Vice Chair Hales said a growing county needs land first and that will change land use. It will take land out of farming and put it in another purpose. She wants development of a fund so if there is an opportunity for county participation with a land conservancy we can look at it. She asked if the present use value rollback can be a source of revenue into that fund. She believes the County may have lost an opportunity for a large parcel on the edge of Pittsboro for the Triangle Land Conservancy.

Commissioner Crawford said the County has an Agriculture Advisory Board that exists that is interested. That board knows the lay of the land so before he would ask staff to go out and do the work he would suggest the Board of Commissioners ask the advisory board to look into it.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to ask the Agriculture Advisory Board to give a report on the role a farmland preservation fund would play.

Ms. Watkins-Cruz said the Board may want to evaluate policy in place now. What are all the different ways we support what is wanted, policy, regulations, etc. to determine what a fund would be used for?

Vice Chair Hales said Susannah Goldston is now their staff liaison. On the other hand a staff person and farmers have different levels of experience and expertise. The Agriculture Advisory Board sent the County Manager something on farmland preservation through the former chair, Tandy Jones. Mr. LaMontagne said staff has

already done some research on this issue.

Commissioner Dasher said he is wary of starting with funding in the absence of policy. Chair Howard said the reason the Board is moving on affordable housing is because the County has an employee in place to guide and explain. Commissioner Crawford said there are also people at the state to do this help as consultants. Commissioner Howard said the County needs to do the preliminary ground work. If the Agriculture Advisory Board comes back and says they need a consultant then that would be a strategy. They can research other examples and come up with options.

Vice Chair Hales made a friendly amendment to the motion to direct staff to facilitate the process of the Agriculture Advisory Board researching a farmland preservation fund.

Ms. Watkins-Cruz stated that even though expertise is different, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee members will speak up about what will work and what won't and that is a benefit. Vice Chair Hales said it doesn't fall just to staff. Mr. LaMontagne stated the Agriculture Advisory Board members have farming, not policy expertise. Ms. Watkins-Cruz said it took several years to get the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to where they are education wise, so its been a slow growth process. Chair Howard said the advisory board will change over time.

Vice Chair Hales added a friendly amendment to the motion to direct staff to facilitate a process of

A motion was made by Commissioner Crawford, seconded by Commissioner Wilkie, to direct staff to facilitate a process of asking the Agriculture Advisory Board to research and report on the role a farmland preservation fund would play. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Commissioner Dasher, Vice Chair Hales, Commissioner Crawford, Chair Howard and Commissioner Wilkie

A motion was made by Commissioner Crawford, seconded by Chair Howard, to leave the current Commissioner Goals unchanged for FY21. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Commissioner Dasher, Vice Chair Hales, Commissioner Crawford, Chair Howard and Commissioner Wilkie

Vice Chair Hales asked for an update on SolSmart. Mr. LaMontagne stated the County did not get a response to the RFP. Staff is looking at revising the RFP to make it more enticing. Vice Chair Hales asked if the Board can get a follow up report in a couple of months. Mr. LaMontagne said yes.

Vice Chair Hales asked if the County is planning on any kind of air quality monitoring before the Duke Energy STAR plant is up and running. Mr. LaMontagne stated right now he doesn't know what good preliminary sampling will do given that they have a permit from state to emit what they are going to emit. It is an industrial site and they don't have to agree to let the County on site. It will be very difficult to pinpoint the location.

Chair Howard said there is a perception that the county doesn't care about residents in Moncure. Mr. LaMontagne said the allowance and permit is not in the purview of the county. The permit will be issued and will allow a certain amount of pollutants. Chair Howard asked if the County could get an expert opinion because the industry can't be trusted to police themselves.

Commissioner Crawford suggested pulling back and looking at what the Board can reasonably be expected to do in that area. The County is doing good things in that area.

Vice Chair Hales asked if there was a way to hire an expert not connected to the NC Department of Environmental Quality. She asked if the County had a responsibility. Chair Howard stated she thinks the Board does have a responsibility to see what the County can do.

Commissioner Dasher said the County could conduct air monitoring in other areas of the County that would be just as bad. Mr. LaMontagne asked that even if the County conducts air monitoring and each industry is doing what they are supposed to do according to their permit, what is the County supposed to then do.

Commissioner Dasher asked questions about the fuel economy of the County fleet. He would love to see the average fuel economy of the current fleet and maybe have the Climate Change Advisory Committee look into it. The County Manager will follow up.

Vice Chair Hales said Fran DiGiano is stepping down as director of Clean Jordan Lake. She said the County should have a stake in the cleanup. Maybe the community engagement micro grants could help them. Mr. LaMontagne stated the County does have a stake in the cleanup. The County provides the trash containers for the cleanup and the transportation of the trash. This is not a small amount. The County also advertises for Clean Jordan Lake because it is a good County purpose.

Chair Howard asked how the coal ash funds are being used to help the Moncure community. Moncure Fire Chief Robert Shi is looking at a firefighter training building built out of shipping containers in the Moncure community. Mr. LaMontagne stated the County has already given a lot to the Moncure Fire Department. The County is committed to continue the ground water monitoring but he believes a better use of the fund would be for the southeast park in Moncure. Commissioner Dasher asked how much money is left in the fund. Staff said \$4.9 million. Commissioner Dasher asked how long the County will monitor. Mr. LaMontagne said the County will have to look at that in the future and decide if it wants to continue it. Staff will get more information about the fire project but he has talked to Chief Shi about the project in great detail. There are a lot of ongoing costs related to the project.

Commissioner Dasher said he would like a built in acceleration of the nonprofit grant funding level, particularly around early childhood development. Chair Howard wants to know what deficit he is seeing in that area. Commissioner Dasher would like the Board to make it a goal to annually increase the money to nonprofits.

Vice Chair Hales said the Climate Change Advisory Committee is talking about trees. The committee wants to keep as many trees as possible and many trees are being cut because they become pellets to burn. She asked if the County wants to consider a Forrest Stewardship program. Once timber gets older it doesn't sequester as much carbon. The Climate Change Advisory Committee is all about carbon sequestering. She asked if when the County looks at farmland preservation should we include forestry too. Can the County have a strategy for woodland preservation? Mr. LaMontagne said the Agriculture Advisory Board can look into that as well.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Dasher, seconded by Commissioner Crawford, that this meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Commissioner Dasher, Vice Chair Hales, Commissioner Crawford, Chair Howard and Commissioner Wilkie