

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BOARD RETREAT
Thursday, April 03, 2014
8:30 A.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time, at Southeastern Community College, Room T-122, 4564 Chadbourn Highway, Whiteville, North Carolina, for the purpose of holding a Board Retreat facilitated by Chris May, Cape Fear Council of Governments.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

P. Edwin Russ, **Chairman**
Trent Burroughs, **Vice Chairman**
Amon E. McKenzie
James E. Prevatte
Giles E. Byrd
Charles T. McDowell

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

Ricky Bullard

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

William S. Clark, **County Manager**
Mike Stephens, **County Attorney**
June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**
Bobbie Faircloth, **Finance Director**

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:

Danny Fowler, **Pub. Utilities Director**

BOARD RETREAT OPENED:

At 8:37 A.M., Chairman P. Edwin Russ opened the April 03, 2014 Board Retreat. He welcomed everyone that was present and stated that Commissioner Bullard called and stated that he would be unable to attend.

Chris May, Facilitator, provided the following Columbus County Strategic Plan Update from the 2013 Board Retreat.

ORDER #	TOPIC	VOTES
1	Continue to expand all infrastructure, water and natural gas. (Comb. #'s 1,2,3 as #1)	8
4	Schools (Public and SECC) funding (Granting flexibility to use where they feel needed). Encourage all school systems to follow long-range planning. (Combine #4 and #5 as #4)	7
6	Economic Development - Jobs (combine #6, #15, #16 as #6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Park - New Land? • Area for ECU dental-med-bio • Attract Chain Restaurant, work with chamber • Encourage re-establishment of rail for economic development 	8
7	Central County Fuel Station for county and schools	5
9	Study feasibility of building a county maintenance garage (schools?)	0
10	Beaver Program continued with landowner holding tags - co-ordinate with adjacent counties	5
11	Employee retention	0
12	More fuel efficient cost-effective vehicles and conversion of fleet to natural gas (alt. Fuel)	6
13	Promote awareness of Rx abuse due to over prescribing	0
14	Promote wellness program center and wellness events	4
17	Crime reduction	2

18	Develop a plan to improve roads in private developments. Establish step-by-step process and start it.	1
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Top Six 2013

1. Infrastructure
2. Economic Development
3. Schools
4. Fuel Efficient Vehicles
5. County Fuel Station
6. Beavers

REVIEW of LAST YEARS' GOALS - Chris May:

Chris May, Facilitator, stated I would like to encourage all the Board members that can to attend the Cape Fear Council of Governments Annual Banquet and Meeting on Thursday, March 25, 2014. Mr. May opened the floor for discussion of the top six (6) priorities for 2013, and started with the following topics asking what had been done during the last year.

1. **Infrastructure (water-sewer):**

- A. Hallsboro Water Project;
- B. Water District I and Water District II Interconnection;
- C. Combining all the five (5) water districts.

Natural Gas for Residential and Economic Development:

- A. Expanded in the last year or so from the Industrial Park down Highway 130, then hogged over and went through town and hooked up to the hospital as well as our prison in Brunswick;
- B. Detention Center.

2. **Economic Development:**

- A. We got job expansions at National Spinning, Whiteville Fabrics, MaxPro got up and running;
- B. We have a one hundred twenty-five (125) job expansion that is underway at Kory Manufacturing which is part of Ply-Gem Industries in Fair Bluff;
- C. The total number of jobs will total approximately one hundred, seventy-five (175);
- D. We have worked hard to re-establish rail service.

3. **School Funding:**

4. **Beaver Control:**

5. **Combined Water Districts:** extra tax to support water tax going away - tax to be phased out over next two (2) years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES - Gary Lanier:

Gary Lanier stated the following:

North Carolina Southeast:

1. We all know that the regional partnerships, effective June 30, 2014, are no longer funded by the State of North Carolina;
2. North Carolina Southeast, over the last three or four (3 or 4) years, has seen their funding cut from \$800,00 to \$600,000, to \$500,000 this most recent year, and now will be cut to zero;
3. North Carolina Southeast is our regional economic development partnership organization, and it is now transformed over to a 501 (c) 3, and is non-profit, public partnership;
4. They saw the writing on the wall a couple of years ago, and started going out and started seeking industrial sponsorships, big banks, large law firms; and that will provide some private side funding;
5. They have asked the counties in our region, which is now fourteen (14) to share equally in a contribution amount to help fund their operations which is basically \$20,000 a year;

6. I have included that \$20,000 in my budget, and that is to fund Columbus County's portion of supporting North Carolina Southeast;
7. We will get more leads from the North Carolina Southeast than the Department of Commerce; **and**
8. Each county that has made a contribution will have a representative on the board, and it will be up to the Commissioners who they want to serve on that board.

Gift of Land:

1. Every site selector that I have talked to stated that the gift of land is a given;
2. It would be wise for us to go ahead and purchase the land and pay for it over a period of time;
3. The site that I have in mind involves nineteen (19) acres and is owned by the Committee of 100; **and**
4. The timber needs to be eliminated so when a site selection person is looking, all they see is clear land.

Water Rates:

1. I attended a breakout session on utilities at the Site Selectors Guild 2014 Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado;
2. It was stated that for site selectors to consider your county, the reasonable cost per 1,000 gallons of water needs to be \$3.25 - \$3.75 per 1,000 gallons, and the reasonable cost for sewer needs to be \$2.75 - \$3.50 per 1,000 gallons, for large industrial users;
3. As you know, our cost for water does not fall into the stated range and the Whiteville's cost for sewer does not fall into the stated range; **and**
4. If your water and sewer rates do not fall into the recommended price range, a site selector will not consider your county to be looked at.

Industrial Zones:

1. North Carolina is competing with other states that has a 0% tax rate;
2. Columbus County is competing with other counties in the state that has the lowest tax rate;
3. My idea is, now that the tier system does not help me anymore, is to develop industrial zones;
4. An average computed tax rate zone that would be designated in Tabor City Industrial Park, Southeast Regional Industrial Park, and we need to pick an industrial site in Delco;
5. If we would offer a tax that is competitive with the county in North Carolina that has the lowest tax rate, a company would look at Columbus County; **and**
6. I would like for you to consider a tax structure that is competitive with the surrounding counties.

NEW GOALS for BOARD (PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE):

Mr. May stated the following list would be the items that would be voted on at the end of this session for the top five (5) priorities.

1. Reduce Crime Control Rx abuse - target funds to the Columbus County Sheriff's Department.
2. County promotion of:
 - Fitness events;
 - Fitness trails;
 - Active life styles; **and**
 - Incentive dollars to County employees.
3. Continue to improve infrastructure.
4. Economic Development:
 - Enterprise Zones:
 - Job Creation
 - Incentives:
 - Health incentives.
5. School Funding tied to Commissioners' priorities.
6. 1/4 Cents Sales Tax earmarked for school new construction
7. Encourage school boards to present long-term Capital Improvements Plan.
8. Continue successful Beaver Program;
9. Encourage use of more fuel efficient vehicles that still meet safety and utility requirements.
10. Adopt minimum housing standards with code enforcement - goal is to improve appearance.
11. Establish County garage facility to do vehicle maintenance/repair and fueling.

780

12. Implement second phase of Pay Study to include retention plan.
13. County move to more green - less paper policy for large packets - consider tablets for Board of Commissioners.
14. Live feed Board of Commissioners Meetings.
15. Time Cards - Accountability (Chris to survey surrounding counties to see what they do).

TALLY of VOTES:

<u>Item #</u>	<u>VOTES</u>
1	6
2	4
3	5
4	5
5 (6 & 7)	6
8	1
9	1
10	2
11	0
12	5
13	To be done in house
14	To be done in house
15	To be done in house

TOP SIX (6) PRIORITIES 2014:

PRIORITY #	# ON LIST	DETAILS	VOTE
1	1	Reduce Crime Control Rx Abuse - Target Funds to Sheriff's Department	6
2	5	School Funding tied to Commissioners' Priorities	6
3	3	Continue to improve infrastructure	5
4	4	Economic Development	5
5	12	Implement second phase of Pay Study to include retention plan	5
6	2	County promotion of fitness	4

BOARD RETREAT CLOSED:

At 11:33 A.M., Chairman Russ stated the Board Retreat was closed.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

P. EDWIN RUSS, Chairman