

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BOARD RETREAT
Tuesday, May 10, 2016
4:00 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time at Southeastern Community College, T-Building, Room 120, 4564 Chadbourn Highway, Whiteville, North Carolina, for the purpose of holding the Columbus County Board of Commissioners 2016 Retreat

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Giles E. Byrd, **Chairman**
 Charles T. McDowell, **Vice Chairman**
 Amon E. McKenzie (Arrived at 4:19 P.M.)
 James E. Prevatte
 P. Edwin Russ
 Trent Burroughs
 Ricky Bullard

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Neil Emory, NCACC Outreach Associate
 Patrice Roesler, NCACC Deputy Director

BOARD RETREAT CALLED to ORDER:

Chairman Giles E. Byrd called the May 10, 2016 Columbus County Board of Commissioners Board Retreat to order.

Agenda Item #1: WELCOME and OPENING COMMENTS:

Chairman Byrd welcomed everyone in attendance, and extended thanks to Neil Emory and Patrice Roesler for facilitating the meeting.

Agenda Item #2: GETTING ACQUAINTED:

Patrice Roesler stated the following:

1. I am the Deputy Director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners;
2. The association wanted us to get more involved with the counties;
3. Neil Emory and I have been facilitating Board Retreats for several years;
4. We have a different system of facilitating that will be very beneficial;
5. Mr. Emory has a thirty (30) year career in government, and could be very helpful with certain situations;
6. We may offer some opinions at times if that is agreeable with you; **and**
7. I would like for every attendee to introduce themselves and a short synopsis of their experience.

Neil Emory stated the following:

1. I look forward to working with you;
2. I have thirty (30) years of experience as a County Manager; **and**
3. We try to help counties when we can.

Every attendee stated a short synopsis of their experience.

Agenda Item #3: SUMMARY of 2015 RETREAT:

Ms. Roesler requested that William S. Clark, County Manager, state the top five (5) priorities from the 2015 Board Retreat. Mr. Clark stated the following:

1. Increase jobs and economic development:
 - Columbus Jobs Foundation (formerly Committee of 100) was revitalized;
 - The railroad was a large part of this, and could be a benchmark;

- International Paper did a large expansion which will retain jobs, and they are our biggest taxpayer;
- We are focusing on existing industries;
- We have a toy manufacturer, and an IT center to locate here; **and**
- We are looking at another industrial park in the eastern end of the county;
- 2. School Cost (Building and Infrastructure);
- 3. Expand water, natural gas and sewer;
 - We have really expanded our water system throughout the County;
 - We have eliminated the special tax;
 - We have finished the Interconnect Project between Districts I and II;
 - We finished the Hallsboro Project;
 - We are doing some projects in the south side of Whiteville;
 - We have 5,500 water customers now;
 - We have expanded natural gas in the County, through Piedmont Natural Gas;
 - We do have some sewer in the County through Grand Strand;
- 4. Second phase of salary implementation with some tweaking:
 - The Salary Study we did about three (3) years ago was broken down into four (4) phases;
 - We have completed Phase 1 and 2, and 3 and 4 are going to present a challenge to us;
 - Phase 3 and Phase 4 will cost \$1.4 million;
 - We have done a lot to improve our salary scale; **and**
- 5. County Wellness Program and Recreation Improvements:
 - We have finished the Fitness Trail;
 - We have taken on Old Dock Community Center;
 - We have implemented our County Wellness Program for our employees several years ago, and that continues.

REMAINING BIG CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED:

Through discussion, the following big challenges were identified:

1. Internet connectivity;
2. Natural Gas expansion; **and**
3. Sewer capacity.

Agenda Item #4: WORKING TOGETHER as a BOARD:

Neil Emory stated the following:

1. I have thirty (30) years experience as a County Manager, and any power that develops is through the majority of the Board;
2. It is very important to be a team and to work as a team;
3. One (1) new member on the Board can make a lot of difference;
4. It is vital to be able to agree to disagree and remain friendly;
5. You are the face of the County and you reflect the County;
6. Every County has a reputation;
7. It is important to have a workable relationship with the staff, the school system, the Department of Commerce, the state and recruiters;
8. There is a critical need to keep the Board members informed at all times to eliminate surprises at the last minute;
9. The concept of building trust in the public is very important; **and**
10. Following the chain of command plays a critical role.

Agenda Item #5: DINNER:

At 5:55 P.M., Commissioner Amon E. McKenzie delivered the invocation, and dinner was served.

Agenda Item #6: COLUMBUS COUNTY SNAPSHOTS and STRATEGIC APPROACHES to ISSUES of INTEREST:

Ms. Roesler stated that issues of interest were stated, and she would like to have teams to discuss the issue of choice by listing the answer to the following seven (7) questions on the worksheet, as follows:

1. What do you want to see happen?
2. What can you influence or offer?

3. What obstacles or hidden issues stand in the way?
4. Who are the major players and what are their interests and perspectives?
5. Who are key partners to help you champion this idea?
6. What assets do you have in Columbus County that you can build upon? **and**
7. If this requires funding, where do you find the funding?

TOPICS DISCUSSED by GROUPS:

The following topics were discussed by the groups by answering the above listed questions on their idea:

1. Economic Development;
2. Schools - consolidation and renovation;
3. Expansion of water and sewer and natural gas;
4. Internet availability; **and**
5. Wellness and recreation.

Agenda Item #7 and #8: AGREEMENT ON KEY GOALS and STRATEGIES and HOLDING EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE:

After lengthy and in-depth discussion relative to the issues of interest, Ms. Roesler stated the following:

1. It is very important to keep good working relationships with all the entities involved in the process;
2. Keeping the public informed and educated about the advantages of improvement; **and**
3. It is critical that everyone that is involved in the process be accountable for the part they need to contribute.

Agenda Item #9: BUDGET IMPLICATIONS and TIME LINE:

William S. Clark, County Manager, stated the following:

1. Board of Elections included a new building in their budget;
2. We are dealing with the cost of renovating the Historic Courthouse; **and**
3. We are facing the direction of the school systems in their suggested consolidation and new schools.

Agenda Item #10: NEXT STEPS and ADJOURN:

Ms. Roesler stated for each Board member to give thought to the suggested ideas discussed and presented tonight, and to decide the best direction that could be taken for improvement.

At 8:55 P.M., the Board Retreat was adjourned.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to the Board

GILES E. BYRD, Chairman