

Greg Edds, Chairman
Jim Greene, Vice- Chairman
Mike Caskey
Judy Klusman
Craig Pierce



Aaron Church, County Manager
Sarah Pack, Clerk to the Board
John W. Dees, II, County Attorney

Rowan County Board of Commissioners

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MINUTES OF ANNUAL PLANNING RETREAT/WORK SESSION OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 6, 2023 – 10:00 AM

J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROOM

J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROWAN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Present: Greg Edds, Chairman
Jim Greene, Vice-Chairman
Mike Caskey, Member
Craig Pierce, Member (excused where noted)
Judy Klusman, Member

County Manager Aaron Church, Clerk to the Board Sarah Pack, and Finance Director Anna Bumgarner were also present. County Attorney Jay Dees was absent.

Call to Order

Chairman Edds convened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. Chaplain Michael Taylor provided the invocation. Chairman Edds led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Consider Approval of the Agenda

On motion of Klusman, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

Following the introduction of the facilitator, the Board reflected on its accomplishments in the prior year, heard a series of presentations, discussed key projects, and identified key priorities for the coming year.

This meeting summary, prepared by Facilitator Emily Wilson of FountainWorks, with minor edits by the Clerk to the Board, captures the key points of discussion during the retreat.

Prior Year Accomplishments

Before beginning presentations on County updates, Commissioners reflected on the major accomplishments in the County over the past year.

- Successful COVID-19 pandemic containment
- Election year (elected new Sheriff, judges)
- North Carolina (NC) leads the nation as a top place to do business, which has led to Economic Development Commission successes and overall growth of business in Rowan County
- Internal projects

- Agricultural Center
- Dog Adoption Center
- Health Department recognition
- Displaying county leadership
- Financial shape and stability of Rowan County

Tax Assessor Update

Next, Tax Assessor Wendell “Chip” Main discussed the ongoing revaluation and gave updates to the Commission.

Revaluation Updates

- The last countywide reappraisal was conducted four years ago with an effective date of January 1, 2019
- Volume of qualified sales since 2019
 - Residential: 16,706
 - Commercial: 1,137
- Average home value
 - 2019: \$189,000
 - 2020: \$200,000
 - 2021: \$232,000
 - 2023: \$281,000
- County-wide real property value increased 44.96%
 - This is an overall increase and varies by neighborhood, municipality, et cetera (etc.)
- Timeline
 - Notices mailed February-March
 - Board of Equalization and Review convenes to hear formal appeals beginning in April
 - Board of Equalization and Review adjourns in June
- Appeals
 - Residents can appeal through mail, in-person, and online process
 - Residents can use COMPER software as a tool to verify tax bill
- Real property value
 - 2022-2023: \$10.6 billion
 - 2023-2024: \$15.4 billion
 - 912 homes for \$208 million were completed in 2022 for 2023’s taxation
- Tax Base
 - Total tax base value
 - 2022-2023 \$14.6 billion
 - 2023-2024 \$19.3 billion
 - Preliminary tax base \$18.5 billion
 - 28.58% increase over last year

Commissioner Feedback

- Almost 81,000 parcels were evaluated; there will be some mistakes but trust the process; citizens should look closely at tax bills and use the tools at their disposal to verify bill before filing an appeal

Budget and Financial Update

County Manager Aaron Church provided an update on the budget and financial status of the County.

Budget Process Timeline (2023)

- February 3 – Budget to departments
- March 3 – All department requests entered
- March 20 – April 6 – Department meetings with Manager and Finance Department
- May 15 – Proposed Budget Delivered to Board
- June 5 – Public hearing on proposed budget
- June 19 – Board to adopt budget

General Information

- Total fund balance is \$89.6 million
- Unrestricted fund balance is \$40.9 million
- Audit is wrapping up in next months
- Net income is higher than the past due to influx in Federal and State COVID-19 pandemic economic support money, as well as reduction in spending due to concerns for COVID-19
- Sales tax is expected to at least slightly exceed projection

Inflation

- Many major companies across the United States are laying off employees
- If Rowan County followed the same trends as top companies with layoffs, 62 positions would need to be eliminated in the coming year

Sheriff's Office Updates

Sheriff of Rowan County, Travis Allen, presented Sheriff's Office updates, including his outlook on the community during his first seven weeks in office.

Today's Challenges

- Extra Duty at all-time highs
- Three School Resource Officers (SROs) needed now
- Second largest recreational lake and no operations
- Parks
- Contracted coverage for small municipalities
- Court House Security
- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) and Child Abuse at all-time highs
- Patrol operations/manpower
- Narcotics and gang investigations

Growth Plan

- Twenty-five positions over the next three to four years
- Eleven positions needed are immediately (seven funded by County)
 - Two child abuse and child offense detectives
 - Four patrol deputies (one per squad)
 - One Civil Deputy
 - One Bailiff
 - Three SROs

Following the Sheriff's presentation, Commissioners asked several follow-up questions, including:

- What programs are available for preventative interventions for at-risk youth?
 - New officers complete Crisis Awareness training.
 - The Office does very little in that area due to staffing challenges
 - The Office is exploring different grants and programs.
 - Currently working on getting local faith leader messages on County jail iPad devices
- How are criminal-related staffing positions?
 - Should be full soon; the Sheriff's Office has been able to recruit very well.
- Are there any school partnerships or youth programs for those interested in becoming officers?
 - The Sheriff's Office is looking at funding to re-launch the Explorer program.

Chairman Edds called for a recess at 11:52 a.m. The Board reconvened at 12:03 p.m.

Planning and Building Inspections Updates

Assistant County Manager and Chief Information Officer Randy Cress reviewed updates on the Planning and Building Inspections technology, including the permitting process.

General Updates

- Online Portal for Development and Permitting
 - Permit applications are available online for building inspections
 - 2022 Numbers
 - In-person permit applications: 4,821
 - Online permit applications: 6,133
 - Environmental health and zoning permits are in testing
 - Credit card submissions for one-time and recurring payments
- Electronic Plan Review
 - Project in progress with Tyler Energov and BlueBeam for ePlan Review
 - All plans ultimately be available in a digital format across departments
- In-Progress Items
 - Tyler Payments – Consistent platform across many departments
 - In-person cash, checks, and credit cards
 - Online credit card payments
 - Scanning of paper records in Environmental Health

- Digital plan reviews for Planning, Inspections, Fire Division, Environmental Health, and Erosion Control
- Environmental Health and Fire Division in for permits

Long-Term Planning

Planning Director Ed Muire reviewed the County's current land use plans (LUP) and discussed how to handle the need for another.

Land Use Plans

- Western LUP
- Eastern LUP
- Interstate-85 South Corridor
- Long Ferry Road Corridor

Erosion Control Program

- 49 active sites = 703.47 acres
- 39 permitted sites = 708 acres
- 8 pending sites = 275.55 acres
- 1,687 acres county-wide

Cost Comparison of Peer Land Use Plans

- Cabarrus: \$115,000-165,000
- Davie: \$90,000
- Iredell \$210,000
- Stanly: \$75,000

Options for Rowan County

- Long Range Planner
- Request for proposals (RFP) for consulting services

Staff recommendation: Repurposing staff salary to fund request for proposals/request for qualifications.

New Transit Building

Pete Bogle, Principal and Owner of The Bogle Firm Architecture, presented updates on the potential options for a new Rowan County Transit building.

Options for Transit Building

- Agriculture Building West
 - Existing: Agriculture Building West – New Finishes Only
 - \$54,000-\$73,000
 - Option 1: Agriculture Building West – Selective Demolition
 - \$121,000-\$184,000
 - Option 2: Agriculture Building West – Full Demolition
 - \$308,000-327,000
- Agriculture Building East

- Existing: Agriculture Building East – New Finishes Only
 - \$70,000-\$97,000
- Option 1: Agriculture Building East – Selective Demolition
 - \$148,000-\$209,000
- Option 2: Agriculture Building East – Full Demolition
 - \$500,000-\$527,000
- Donley House
 - Option 5: New building on Donley House lot
 - \$711,000-\$818,000

Following Mr. Bogle’s presentation, Commissioners asked several follow-up questions, including:

- If the office is moved and upfit is minimal, how quickly will employees have to move?
 - Mr. Church said employees need a new space sooner or later
- Only the Donley House option includes cost of new parking lot development
- Options are being examined for federal and alternative funds

Commissioner Pierce was excused from the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

Chairman Edds called for a recess at 1:03 p.m. The Board reconvened at 1:25 p.m.

Commissioner’s Topics

During a working lunch, the Commissioners took the opportunity to update each other on the topics and issues they are addressing across the County. The following topics were discussed:

Mike Caskey

- Veteran’s Court
- Emergency Medical Services Station land
- South Rowan Elementary School
 - Start setting aside money so when the time comes, a fund has been started

Jim Greene

- Early intervention is needed to improve reading levels; work needs to be done with pre-kindergarten age children across the County

Judy Klusman

- Diversion Center is underway
 - Commissioners Klusman and Caskey have been asked to be on the selection board for the Center’s provider
- April 1st the guaranteed Medicaid will be stopping; 345,000 from North Carolina will drop from the rolls immediately; unsure how many are in Rowan County

Greg Edds

- Rowan-Cabarrus Community College would like to expand their Commercial Driver’s License training class and have started conversations on acquiring land for the track

Economic Development Commission

Scott Shelton, Vice-President of the Rowan County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC) presented an update on economic development, focusing on providing high-performance, high-quality service delivery.

General Updates

- RCEDC reaffirmed its focus areas of increasing prosperity, reducing poverty, and improving quality of life

2022 Key Accomplishments

- Strategy 1: Targeted Economic Growth
 - Approximately 2,900 new jobs
 - \$605 million in capital investments across the County
 - Average wage of \$18.31 per hour
- Strategy 2: Talent Attraction & Development
 - Launched the new Talent Attraction website
 - Managed and promoted the Work in Rowan job portal
 - Supported the Rowan Education Collaborative to align education with business
 - Participated in the first-ever Career Signing Day with Rowan-Salisbury School System (RSSS)
- Strategy 3: Brand Identity & Storytelling
 - Macy's Incorporated project received recognition across the state nation
 - Multi-channel marketing campaign
 - Grew our online social media presence
- Strategy 4: High-Performance Service Delivery
 - Forward Rowan campaign success (152% of goal)
 - RCEDC staffers assumed leadership roles with the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance
 - RCEDC President was named to Charlotte Business Journal's Power 100 list
- Growth Challenges
 - Planned infrastructure improvements for future growth, including water, sewer, schools, and roads
 - Housing availability and affordability
 - Business-friendly in planning, permitting, and incentive
 - Place-making and branding – reinforce a positive image of the community and be deliberate in building the community reputation on authenticity. Quality of life.

Following Mr. Shelton's presentation, Commissioners asked several follow-up questions, including:

- Are there resources available for felons who try to find work?
 - The RCEDC hasn't dedicated resources to that but have heard success stories from corporate partners
- There have been conversations about a Manufacturer's Institute with RCCC

Priorities for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Before adjourning, the Board was asked to reflect on the presentations they heard and identify two top priorities for the coming fiscal year: one which they had been thinking about prior to the retreat and another that they are interested to learn more about. The following items were identified:

Existing Priorities

- √ Crisis Center
- √ Childcare
- √ Workforce in County
- √ Tax rates
- √ Crime
- √ Financial stability
- √ Education (kindergarten through college+)
- √ Future planning

Interested to Learn More

- √ County to plan for itself so Charlotte doesn't do it
- √ Commercial Driver's License track to train new drivers
- √ Shift focus from economic development to quality of life/people
- √ Focus on positives
- √ Economic Development Commission's work and progress for the County

Adjournment

At 2:41 p.m. on motion of Greene, seconded by Edds, the Board voted 4-0 to adjourn.

This meeting summary, prepared by Facilitator Emily Wilson, with minor edits by the Clerk to the Board, are hereby submitted as the minutes of the Planning Retreat/Work Session.

Sarah Pack, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board