

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION February 23, 2005

ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: William L. Hammer, Chairman
W. Darrell Robertson, Vice-Chairman
Wesley E. Bolick
W. Norris Keever
Larry Yoder

STAFF: Hayden Bentley, Sheriff
Greg Cronk, Information Technology Director
Rick French, County Manager
Russell Greene, Fire Marshal
Jennifer Herman, Finance Director
David Icenhour, Economic Development Director
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board
John Tippet, WPCOG Planning Director / MPO Coordinator
Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development

MEDIA: Gary Herman, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Wednesday, February 23, 2005 in the Alexander County Agriculture Extension Learning Center, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hammer called the work session to order at 6:00 PM.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Keever made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the update to the communications system. He stated that he, along with Jennifer Herman, Finance Director, and Greg Cronk, Information Technology

Director, had met with the Finance Committee to discuss the equipment needs and the total cost of the project, which would be \$560,658.99 to be Phase II compliant for wireless 911. Mr. French stated that some of the costs could vary depending on the bids received and he noted that there was some grant funding that could be used for the project.

Jennifer Herman, Finance Director, pointed out that the figures presented was for equipment purchases only and did not include any annual maintenance costs. She pointed out that there was a \$98,000 COPS grant and a \$74,000 Homeland Security grant that could be used for the project. Ms. Herman also stated that there was \$69,900 available in wireless 911 funds that could also be used for the project according to the Wireless 911 Board Chairman. Ms. Herman also recommended a 20 cent increase in the 911 surcharge in order to increase revenue for the project. She suggested the Board approve the increase at one of the March Commissioners' Meeting so staff could move forward with mailing letters to the phone companies to give them time to update the fee by July 1, 2005.

Ms. Herman presented 3 scenarios for the financing of the project. She mentioned that the 20 cent increase as well as the \$25,000 deficit for the wireless 911 budget had been figured into each of the following financing scenarios. Ms. Herman pointed out that a 911 tower lease would be expiring in 2006 which would allow for an additional \$67,000 in revenue.

Scenario 1 included the use of \$172,000 in grant funding at the \$69,900 from the wireless 911 fund toward the purchase of the equipment and borrowing \$320,000 to finance the remaining equipment. The total needed from the General Fund over the next 5 years totaled \$73,440.

Scenario 2 included borrowing \$560,000 to finance the project and using grant funds to pay the first year debt service. Ms. Herman explained that the COPS grant would have to be spent within the first year; however, the Homeland Security grant funding could be split up over a couple years. The total needed from the General Fund over the next 5 years totaled \$68,064.

Scenario 3 included the use of the \$98,000 COPS grant toward the purchase of equipment, borrowing \$462,000 to finance the rest of the project, and using the Homeland Security grant towards the first year debt service. The total needed from the General Fund over the next 5 years totaled \$82,020.02. Ms. Herman pointed out that this scenario would spread the amount needed from the General Fund out more evenly over the 5-year period.

Russell Greene, Fire Marshal, informed Ms. Herman that Homeland Security grant funding could not be used for debt service, which basically eliminated Scenarios 2 and 3.

Greg Cronk, Information Technology Director, reviewed preliminary cost estimates for several pieces of equipment needed for the communications project, which were as follows:

1. **CML RescueSTAR 911 Switch** at a cost of \$138,774. Price includes Active Call Priority Queue Manager (\$3,200), 3 Sentinel enhanced ALI (\$5,760), and County

provided hardware (\$15,300). Reasons for updating are to become Phase II compliant and because the current 911 switch will not have support beyond 2007 and will not interface with the new telephone system or radio.

2. **Motorola Centracom Gold Console System** at a cost of \$115,662. Reasons for updating are that there are no spares obtainable for the current system, no support for the current radio beyond January 2006, and the current system does not support Graphical User Interface.
3. **OSSI Mapping Software** at a cost of \$40,300. Reasons for purchasing are to become Phase II compliant and OSSI CAD software must be purchased if OSSI mapping software is purchased.
4. **OSSI CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch)** at a cost of \$144,864. Price includes County provided hardware (\$24,500). Reasons for purchasing are because the county does not currently have a CAD system and the OSSI CAD will interface with existing Records Management System and Jail Management System.
5. **Dispatching Furniture** at a cost of \$35,811.78. Mr. Cronk explained that this furniture would be motorized and would have the ability to be preset for each dispatcher's personal features such as height. However, he noted that there were other, less expensive options for furniture.
6. **Computerized Medical Priority Card System** at a cost of \$29,500. Price includes OSSI CAD Interface. Reason for purchasing is to convert the flip cards currently used in the 911 office to a computerized version.
7. **Time Synchronization Equipment** at a cost of \$8,552.93. Reason for purchasing is to allow all equipment and software to be synchronized to the same time for efficiency.
8. **Remote 911 Switch Console** at a cost of \$14,000. Reason for purchasing is to allow answering for 911 calls outside of the courthouse building in the event the building must be evacuated. Unit can also be used as a training station.
9. **Voice Recorder** at a cost of \$27,694.28. Reasons for upgrading are that the current voice recorder will not work with the new switch and does not have GUI interface.
10. **Additional County Provided Equipment** at a cost of \$5,500. Price includes rack equipment and network switches.

Commissioner Robertson asked if maintenance costs were included in these prices. Mr. Cronk replied that the County already paid OSSI for maintenance on the Records Management System and Jail Management System; however, he noted that additional funding would be required for maintenance of other equipment.

Hayden Bentley, Sheriff, stated that everyone involved in this project had worked very hard. He stated that staff recommended the project as well as the Communications Study Committee. Mr. Bentley pointed out that the deadline to submit the COPS grant was May 31, 2005; therefore, he felt that staff should move forward on the project soon.

Mr. French requested the Board allow staff to move forward with securing bids for this project. He noted that staff would provide this information to the Board in March or April. The Board agreed for staff to move forward as requested.

Chairman Hammer thanked everyone involved in getting this project underway.

AIR QUALITY DISCUSSION

John Tippet, Planning Director / MPO Coordinator, began by discussing ozone in the Unifour (Alexander, Caldwell, Catawba, & Burke Counties) area. He explained that the 3-year ozone average for the Unifour area was in violation of the new federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, which resulted in a non-attainment status. However, he pointed out that joining the Early Action Compact (EAC) agreement deferred the penalties of a non-attainment status until 2007. Alexander County joined the EAC in December 2002.

Mr. Tippet informed the Board that the monitor readings showed the Unifour area as being below the federal standards for the past year. He stated that the area could reapply for attainment status but he did not recommend that action for several reasons. He stated that one bad summer for the region could make the ozone levels increase and he noted that several environmental groups had threatened lawsuits for reapplying counties that had joined the EAC. Mr. Tippet mentioned some positive factors on lowering the ozone that had taken place including the Clean Smoke Stack Act, lowered sulphur levels in fuels, and the new standards for diesel engines that would take effect in 2007.

Mr. Tippet also discussed particulate matter which he described as small particles of dust, soot, sawdust, etc. He explained that any particle measuring 2.5 milligrams, or one-thirtieth the diameter of a human hair, was considered harmful. This standard was recently changed from 10 milligrams to 2.5 milligrams. Mr. Tippet stated that there were only 2 particulate matter monitors in the state, one being in Catawba County and the other in Davidson County, and he noted that any monitor reading above 15 milligrams was in violation. He reported that the Catawba County reading for 2001-2003 was 15.5 milligrams which placed Catawba County in violation of the 2.5 pm.

Mr. Tippet stated that the Unifour chose to hire an attorney to assist in formulating a legal strategy of ways to possibly challenge the non-attainment status and the violation of the 2.5 pm since the violation was only slightly over the 15 milligram standard. The attorney developed a 70 page document that was mailed to the state requesting that only a portion of Catawba County be classified in violation instead of the entire county as suggested by the EPA. The state agreed to only classify the upper two-thirds of the county as non-attainment because the violation was so close to the standard. It was agreed that the designation would be held until the 2004

particulate matter reading was gathered. Mr. Tippet mentioned that the 2004 particulate matter reading was 15.2 which unfortunately did not bring Catawba County out of violation for the 3-year average.

Mr. Tippet informed the Board that the Unifour Air Quality Committee had authorized the attorney to file an appeal for the penalties of the violation, which would take effect April 5, 2005. He stated that the cost to file an appeal would be \$10,000-\$15,000. Commissioner Robertson asked if the Unifour counties would be asked to contribute more funding for the attorney due to the cost of the appeal. Mr. Tippet replied that more funding could be needed if the appeal was heard or more evidence was needed; however, he noted that it was too early to tell at this point.

The Board thanked Mr. Tippet for his update.

DRAFT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

David Icenhour, Economic Development Director, stated that the current Industrial Development Incentive (IDI) Grant Program was based on the increase in tax value of real property, machinery, and improvements above the base year prior to the investment and made no mention of job creation and wages. Mr. Icenhour informed the Board that he wished to link those 3 categories into the new IDI Grant Program, which would also make the program available for smaller industries in addition to the larger ones.

Mr. Icenhour stated that he had developed an IDI Grant Scoring System that would be included in the revised IDI Grant Program. The scoring system provided points for increase in tax value, jobs created, and wages paid. Mr. Icenhour explained that the scoring system would make the grants more competitive and would also encourage employment. He gave an example of a large industry with state-of-the-art equipment, which resulted in less of a need for employees. He stated that, with the revisions and the new scoring system, this large company would not necessarily receive the highest grant available because of the employment aspect.

Commissioner Bolick asked if other counties used this type of scoring system. Mr. Icenhour replied that many counties tied in job creation with the IDI Grant Programs; however, he noted that he had developed the scoring system specifically for Alexander County.

Mr. Icenhour briefly discussed the Level 4 Grant, which provided a 100% property tax grant for 6 years. He requested the Board allow him to add an additional year for each \$10 million invested over \$20 million for up to 8 years. Mr. Icenhour stated that many counties did this and he felt Alexander County should also. The Board agreed.

Commissioner Robertson suggested changing the scoring system outlay on paper into categories simply to make it easier to follow. Commissioner Robertson also suggested allowing a 40% property tax grant on year 5 of the Level 1 Grant instead of no grant. The Board agreed.

Mr. French stated that staff would place this item on the March Commissioners' Meeting agenda for official approval.

DRAFT AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE FOR THE CATAWBA-WATEREE HYDRO PROJECT

Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development, stated Duke Power was in negotiations to renew their license to operate the hydro dams within the Catawba-Wataree River Basin. Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that she served on the Foothills Advisory Group for the Catawba-Wataree River Basin Hydrorelicensing Project and she noted that her group, along with 3 other advisory groups and 2 state teams, were negotiating terms for a final agreement with Duke Power so that they may obtain a new license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Ms. Turnmire stated that the Agreement-in-Principle covered broad topics of water quality, water quantity, and protection with a focus on specific items such as normal operating ranges for lake levels, in-stream flows for recreation, aquatic habitat and water users, emergency protocols, public recreation, and species protection. She noted that once approved, the Agreement-in-Principle would be converted into a final agreement for all parties to sign.

As the Board reviewed Duke Power's proposal of an Agreement-in-Principle, Ms. Turnmire pointed out that the sections were separated by the different lakes or reservoirs and she noted that the proposed enhancements to the lakes and the river reach within Alexander County's jurisdiction were minimal. She also mentioned that there were several empty spaces due to the fact that the groups and Duke Power were still waiting on study results to determine the best options. However, Ms. Turnmire stated that one of the blank sections was concerning the proposed fees for water withdrawals.

Ms. Turnmire explained that FERC could approve a license term ranging from 30-50 years. She stated that Duke Power was proposing a 50-year license term.

Ms. Turnmire outlined several sections pertaining to Alexander County including:

Page 11 – Normal Operating Range for Lake Hickory and Lookout Shoals Lake

Page 16 – Instream Flows for Recreation for Oxford Dam

Page 31 – Public Information System

Page 32 – FERC Public Safety Plans

Page 39 – Oxford Dam Development / Public Fishing Area

Page 40 – Lookout Shoals Development / Canoe Portage

Page 46 – Shoreline Management & Recreation Planning Review

Ms. Turnmire pointed out several concerns within the sections pertaining to Alexander County. She stated that the only recreation areas included in the draft Agreement-in-Principle remained at Oxford Dam and Lookout Shoals and she noted that no improvements had been mentioned for Dusty Ridge Access or Wittenburg Access. She also felt that 20 years was entirely too long to wait for shoreline management and recreation planning activities to be conducted.

Commissioner Robertson asked who would operate the hydro dams if Duke Power was not relicensed. Ms. Turnmire stated that she did not know.

Ms. Turnmire mentioned that this was the first Agreement-in-Principle and she noted that she would keep the Board updated.

NOISE ORDINANCE REVIEW

Mr. French stated that he had recently met with a citizen, Larry Mecimore, regarding some loud music being played near his residence. Mr. French explained to the Board that Mr. Mecimore owned rental property and, due to loud music being played after 11:00 PM, his renters had moved out of his rental property.

Mr. French stated that this complaint had resulted in staff reviewing the current Alexander County Noise Ordinance, which was adopted in 1998. He stated that Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board, had gathered ordinances from Catawba, Iredell, Surry, and Wilkes Counties. He also noted that the Town of Taylorsville enforced its own noise ordinance instead of following the County ordinance.

Mr. French stated that the Catawba County Noise Ordinance was the most recent ordinance, adopted January 18, 2005. He pointed out several sections within the ordinance such as exceptions, the complaint procedure, noise permits, and deputy issued citations. Mr. French also pointed out that the Catawba County Noise Ordinance was more under the direction of the Sheriff. He suggested the Board allow staff to update the Alexander County Noise Ordinance, incorporating some of the sections found in the Catawba County Noise Ordinance, and to hold a public hearing on the updated ordinance in March 2005. The Board agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 8:22 PM. Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

William L. Hammer, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board