

Draft

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION October 17, 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: Fred Alexander, NRCS District Conservationist
Russell Greene, Emergency Services Director
Rick French, County Manager
Gary Hoyle, Library Director
Tonya Mitchell, Soil & Water District Technician/Education Coordinator
Lenny Rogers, Cooperative Extension Director
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board
Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development

MEDIA: Gary Herman, The Taylorsville Times

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Monday, October 17, 2005 in the Catawba Valley Community College / Alexander Center Multipurpose Room, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hammer called the work session to order at 7:00 PM.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

CATAWBA-WATEREE HYDRO RELICENSING PROJECT

Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development, gave an update on the Catawba-Wateree Hydro Relicensing Project. She explained that since January 2003, 6 teams had been studying and negotiating an agreement for the relicensing application with Duke Power. Two teams are

statewide groups while the remaining 4 are advisory groups divided by geography throughout the basin. Ms. Turnmire stated that Alexander County was included in the Foothills Advisory Group, of which she was a member.

Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that the stakeholders were to sign the relicensing agreement or “agreement in principle (AIP)” in November 2005; however she noted that due to lack of information from study reports and outstanding issues, Duke Power would circulate the AIP in February 2006. She also stated that the license application was due to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioner (FERC) by August 1, 2006.

Ms. Turnmire pointed out that the latest AIP revision (version 6) was 135 pages and consisted of issues such as normal operating ranges, instream flows for recreation and aquatic habitat, low inflow protocol, maintenance and emergency protocol, water user needs, public information systems, cultural resources, public recreation, species protection, shoreline management, and water quality enhancements. She also mentioned that the AIP included detailed information for each reservoir and river reach in the basin and she noted that resource committees were negotiating each section of the AIP.

Ms. Turnmire outlined several sections within the AIP including:

- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 2 – Normal Operating Ranges
- Section 3 – Instream Flows for Recreation
- Section 4 – Instream Flows for Aquatic Habitat
- Section 5 – Actions to Support Water User Needs
- Section 6 – Low Inflow Protocol
- Section 7 – Hydro Project Maintenance and Emergency Protocol
- Section 8 – Public Information System
- Section 9 – Cultural Resources Management
- Section 10 – Public Recreation Plan
- Section 11 – Species Protection Plan
- Section 12 – Shoreline Management Plan
- Section 13 – Water Quality Enhancements
- Section 14 – Other Resource Enhancements
- Section 15 – Gaging and Compliance Monitoring
- Section 16 – Miscellaneous Agreements

Ms. Turnmire discussed the Oxford Development as it related to Section 8 – Public Information System. She stated that in June 2005, Duke Power staff evaluated all of the signage and audible warning devices at each hydro. At that time, Duke Power staff stated that the system in place at Oxford was adequate. Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that the siren was not audible outside of the maintenance area and she noted that warning lights were not operational. She stated that she and Catawba County staff were opposed to this section. She also noted that Catawba County staff requested Spanish language warning sign but universal signage was chosen.

Ms. Turnmire also discussed in details Section 5 – Actions to Support Water User Needs, which addressed the proposed water withdrawal fee. She stated that a water supply team was leading this section of the AIP and would receive a legal summary of Duke Power’s rights to charge fees. Ms. Turnmire noted that, when using Duke Power’s formula for fee calculation, local government withdrawal fees could exceed \$400,000 per year. Ms. Turnmire stated that several stakeholders wished to see this issue removed from the relicensing process since FERC allowed fee collection at any time.

Ms. Turnmire mentioned that she would keep the Board informed as the advisory groups negotiated the final sections.

LAND USE ISSUES

Sylvia Turnmire, Director of Planning & Development, addressed the Board regarding several land use issues including the drafting of a Unified Development Ordinance, planning legislation from the 2005 General Assembly Session, and outstanding issues with the comprehensive plan.

Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that she had been drafting a Unified Development Ordinance that would combine the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Watershed Ordinance, and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance into one document. She noted that she hoped to have this project completed by the end of the fiscal year to begin review with the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Ms. Turnmire stated that several bills had been passed in the 2005 Session requiring cities and counties to amend their local ordinances. She pointed out that the revisions would become effective January 1, 2006; therefore, she will begin the process of text amendments in November. Ms. Turnmire explained that the bill which was passed did not authorize counties to allow petitions so the protest petition section must be removed from the County’s Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Turnmire stated that the County’s current comprehensive plan, adopted in 1993, was very outdated using census data from the 1990s. Ms. Turnmire informed the Board that she wished to pursue a grant from Z. Smith Reynolds to support the drafting of a new comprehensive plan and to provide funding for meeting supplies, advertising, and production of the final product. She mentioned that the new grant cycle with Z. Smith Reynolds began in February 2006.

Ms. Turnmire also stated that the benefits of adopting a new comprehensive plan included additional credits in the “point system” of CDBG grants for housing and economic development, an improved foundation for case related planning and zoning decisions, and an updated analysis of current land use conditions and future land use designations.

SOIL & WATER DISCUSSION

Chairman Hammer discussed the state’s decision to not fund its half of the Soil & Water District Technician / Education Coordinator position for fiscal year 2005-2006. He stated that he had

asked representatives from the Soil & Water Office and Cooperative Extension to be present during the meeting to discuss this position.

Tonya Mitchell, Soil & Water District Technician / Education Coordinator, presented a Soil & Water Conservation District Education Program Year-In-Review which included her job responsibilities. Ms. Mitchell briefly reviewed her job responsibilities and discussed the importance of her duties. Bill Chapman, Soil & Water Conservation District Board Chairman, was also present to discuss Ms. Mitchell's position.

The Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program was discussed. Ms. Mitchell informed the Board of her administrative duties in the Soil & Water Office in addition to her duties as the Technician / Education Coordinator. She also stated that she was performing many of the duties of the Cost Share position which was currently vacant and she noted that Fred Alexander, NRCS District Conservationist, had been a great help to her while juggling the two positions.

Ms. Mitchell explained that this funding cut would severely impact the Cost Share Program which would cause many farmers to suffer financially.

Commissioner Yoder mentioned the Environmental Field Days and asked Ms. Mitchell if she felt the 5th grade teachers would take over the responsibilities of making sure this event still occurred if not organized through the Soil & Water Office. Ms. Mitchell replied that this event required a tremendous amount of coordination; therefore, she did not feel that the teachers would be willing to organize the event themselves.

Commissioner Bolick asked if the Cooperative Extension Office could work with the Soil & Water staff in some areas. Lenny Rogers, Cooperative Extension Director, responded that the Cooperative Extension Office provided entirely separate services to the public than the Soil & Water Office such environmental and composting classes. However, Mr. Rogers noted that this was a very important position for the agriculture industry in Alexander County. He pointed out that Alexander County was third in apple production and second in chicken production in the state and produced \$95 million in agriculture each year.

Commissioner Kever stated that there was no question that Ms. Mitchell position was important; however, he pointed out that this was one more thing the state was dumping on the County's backs. He also stated that the state had taken approximately \$2 million from North Carolina counties within 2 years.

Mr. Chapman stated that the goal of the Soil & Water Office was to provide best management practices and technical assistance to the farmers. He also stated that more money had been brought into the county because of Ms. Mitchell's position than had been spent.

The Board thanked Ms. Mitchell for the information.

LIBRARY BOARD REQUEST

Gary Hoyle, Library Director, presented opening day collection costs for the Bethlehem Branch Library which included a total of \$120,000. Mr. Hoyle explained that the cost included \$65,000 for print and audiovisual materials, \$15,000 for technology needs, and \$40,000 for furniture and shelving. He also noted that a fully stocked collection for the branch library would cost approximately \$192,000. However, he felt that an initial \$65,000 (or 34%) would be enough to have an opening day collection of print and audiovisual materials.

Mr. Hoyle discussed the Library Board's request for the Board to increase the seed funding from \$30,000 to \$50,000. Commissioner Yoder asked if the Friends of the Library were committed to raising \$20,000 in return for the increase by the Board. The members present stated that the Friends of the Library did not want to make a commitment until the Board did.

Commissioner Bolick was concerned with purchasing new furniture for the branch library. He felt that it would be wasteful to purchase new furniture when it was uncertain as to whether a branch library in Bethlehem would be successful. Ms. Hoyle felt that the wrong atmosphere would be presented with mixed-matched furniture, which he felt could be detrimental to the success of the branch library. Commissioner Bolick stated that nice, used furniture could be purchased and he asked Mr. Hoyle to investigate that before a definite decision was made.

Several members of the Board expressed their concerns with spending large amounts money when considering the uncertainty of the success of the library due to location and lack of interest from citizens. The individuals representing the library stated that there was no way to determine how many citizens would use the branch library until the doors were opened.

After discussion, the Board agreed that the seed money would remain at \$30,000 for the time being and additional funding would be reviewed during the next budget preparation. It was also agreed that the Friends of the Library would attempt to raise \$20,000. Commissioner Yoder suggested advertising the fundraising efforts to make the public more aware.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rick French, County Manager, discussed the following issues during Other Business:

- A. The Cooperative Extension Office is on schedule to relocate to the Foothills Mental Health building this week. There are still a few details that need to be worked out.
- B. The bid opening for the N.C. Highway 127 water project is scheduled for Tuesday, October 18, 2005 at 2:00 PM at the County Administration Office. The bids will be included on the October 24, 2005 agenda.
- C. On Tuesday, October 25, 2005, there will be a reception honoring Susie Barkley. This reception will be held from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the CVCC / Alexander Center. Alexander County is co-sponsoring this reception.

- D. The Finance Committee will be meeting on Wednesday, October 19, 2005 at 6:00 PM to review the 2004-2005 budget and some other business.
- E. Commissioner Robertson, Commissioner Keever, Building Inspections Supervisor Doug Kerley, and Mr. French will be meeting with the building contractors on Thursday, October 20, 2005. The meeting will be at 6:00 PM at the Senior Center.
- F. The DSS / ESC Open House is scheduled for Thursday, October 20, 2005 from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The dedication ceremony is scheduled for 2:00 PM.
- G. The second Clean Alexander Day (free service day) at the convenience sites and the landfill will be held on Saturday, October 22, 2005 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This is for residential service only.
- H. The Grand Opening of the new auditorium is scheduled for Sunday, October 23, 2005 at 3:00 PM.

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 5, & 6) TO PREVENT DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, CONTRACTUAL, & PERSONNEL

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 9:25 PM to prevent the disclosure of confidential information and to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1, 5, & 6). Commissioner Bolick seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Bolick made a motion to adjourn at 10:30 PM. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

William L. Hammer, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board