

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION** May 6, 2013

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: James “Burkie” Jennings, Chairman
Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman
Ryan Mayberry
Judy M. Moose
W. Darrell Robertson

STAFF: Rick French, County Manager
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Monday, May 6, 2013 in the County Administration Building downstairs conference room, Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jennings called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN DISCUSSION

Commissioner Mayberry presented his thoughts and ideas for an economic development plan for Alexander County, which included the following:

- Create 10 committees representing each area in the county, or one large committee, to develop and present recommendations to a long-term Economic Development Committee that will set goals and create ideas that will be presented to the commissioners for implementation.
- Reorganize the Chamber of Commerce to include a new website, smart phone app, and a business mentoring program.
- Focus on agriculture, arts, development, education, government, leisure, manufacturing, medical, retail, and tourism.
 - Agriculture – local farm produce marketing campaign, self-guided farm tours, local produce and meat to restaurants.
 - Arts & Entertainment – form an Arts & Entertainment Committee, advertise events on County / Chamber sites and government channel.

- Development – more residential development in Bethlehem and Wittenburg, sewer to Stony Point and Highway 16 South as well as Bethlehem and Wittenburg, more water lines in Bethlehem and Wittenburg.
 - Education – another expansion of CVCC in 10 years, eventual stand-alone Alexander Community College.
 - Government – work with town, county, state, and federal representatives for more awareness of economic issues.
 - Leisure – online maps, smart phone apps, etc. to promote local activities, entertainment center for youth/canoe trips/indoor shooting range, encourage local shopping.
 - Manufacturing – work with existing industries, buy products made by local manufacturers, spec building at industrial site, expand water and sewer to industrial sites.
 - Medical – identify issues the county faces with loss of hospital and determine what can be done to encourage expansion of medical facilities.
 - Retail – beautification efforts such as landscaping requirements, demolition of old Dayton property and replace with winding sidewalk and stage for activities twice per month.
 - Tourism – create Alexander County scenic drive route, historical markers, and information kiosks, offer more free dump days, more info at visitor’s centers across the state.
- Utilize non-profit groups for life outreach programs for people abusing welfare and unemployment benefits as well as drug users.

Commissioner Robertson stated that abuse of welfare and unemployment was a national issue and not something that could be solved on a county level. He also felt that all downtown areas had the same problem of looking tired and rundown, which occurred once shopping malls became popular.

Commissioner Moose felt the ideas presented were good, noting that even if they all could not be accomplished it was good to acknowledge their need.

Vice-Chairman Yoder felt the Board should move forward on some of the ideas discussed but asked for more time to review the plan. He mentioned past efforts to provide a gas line for poultry houses.

Chairman Jennings advised that there was a display about Hiddenite and its emeralds in a visitor’s center at the VA / NC line placed there by the NC Travel and Tourism Department. He discussed the formation of an Executive Committee consisting of himself, Vice-Chairman Yoder, and County Manager Rick French as well as David Icenhour and Gary Herman from the Economic Development Department that would be meeting with a representative from NC Travel and Tourism to discuss ways to stimulate tourism in the county. He also promoted “RockyFest” scheduled for Saturday, May 25, 2013 at the Rocky Face Mountain Recreational Area, which had welcomed 14,000 visitors in the past year. Chairman Jennings also mentioned the \$2 million Golden Leaf grant to be awarded to Alexander County.

Commissioner Mayberry added that he was aware that some items had already been completed or were in the process but that these were a starting point to hopefully coordinate in the future.

Chairman Jennings added that the plan would be reviewed and taken under advisement.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 7:20 PM. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

James H. Jennings, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board