

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION** January 14, 2019

**ALEXANDER COUNTY
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

PRESENT: Dr. Jeff Peal, Chairman
Ronnie Reese, Vice-Chairman
Ryan Mayberry
Marty Pennell
Larry Yoder

STAFF: Doug Fox, Tax Assessor
Rick French, County Manager
Gary Herman, PIO
David Icenhour, Economic Development Director
Guy Kerley, Tax Administrator
Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Monday, January 14, 2019 in the Administration Building downstairs conference room in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chairman Reese gave the invocation and Chairman Peal led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Rick French, County Manager, requested the addition of subsection (3) Attorney / Client Privilege to the purpose of Closed Session.

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2019 PLAN OF ACTION

David Icenhour, Economic Development Director, presented the 2019 Plan of Action as follows:

New Commercial Recruitment

- Identify suitable retail and commercial sites.
- Update 2016 market analysis.
- Contact potential businesses.
- Promote sites via EDC website, NC Commerce, Charlotte Business Alliance, etc.
- Locate a minimum of three new commercial businesses in the county.
- Promote local and state retail incentives if available.
- Targets include sports equipment, clothing, entertainment, dining, electronics, and hardware.
- A Business Development Manager position, whose primary duties are related to commercial development, has been hired.

Existing Retail Support

- Support Taylorsville and Bethlehem Business Associations.
- Conduct community vision forum with Taylorsville Business Association and assist Bethlehem Business Association with an action plan to follow the community plan.
- Investigate formation of other community business associations.
- Explore and assist with adoption of a historic preservation ordinance.
- Explore development of incentive programs to encourage renovations and improvements to existing buildings.
- Focus will be job creation and sales tax generation.

Industrial Recruitment

- Complete architect selection / bidding for new shell building as well as develop and implement a marketing plan.
- Develop plan for non-rail shell building / possible virtual building.
- Coordinate with NCDOT on new Industrial Park access road.
- Initiate process for new Industrial Park Master Plan.
- Coordinate with EnergyUnited on Borealis water line upgrade.
- Continue working with Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, NC Economic Development Partnership, EnergyUnited, Duke Energy, etc.
- Recruit two new industrial employers.
- Targets include plastics, metal fabrication, and rail-supported industries.

Existing Industry Support

- Conduct monthly industry visits with local, regional, and state officials.
- Monitor and successfully close out the Craftmaster Building Reuse grant.
- Borealis Compounds EDI, NCDOT rail, NCRR rail, One NC, and CDBG grants.
- Administer Paragon Films and Schneider Mills IDI grants.
- Administer and monitor Jonathan Wesley Revolving Loan Fund.
- Sponsor a National Manufacturing Week event.
- Identify and successfully apply for industry grants as needed.

Workforce Development

- Support workforce development initiatives such as apprenticeships.
- Enhance partnerships with CVCC to initiate new training programs and ACHS CTE.
- Develop and promote “work local” initiative.
- Conduct “work local” summit with local employees.

Quality of Life

- Complete broadband pilot project.
- Continue various event promotions on VisitAlexanderNC.com, Charlotte Film Commission, Film NC, Visit NC, Sports NC, etc.
- Continue working with the Hiddenite Center & Visitor’s Center.
- Explore greenway funding and development.
- Assist with planning for RockyFest and other local events.
- Support expansion of Dusty Ridge Park.
- Coordinate with Foothills Conservancy on land preservation projects.
- Support Courthouse Park development and promotion.

Economic Development Public Information

- Continue focus on social media.
- Increase promotion of “work local” Facebook page (formerly AC Jobs).
- Release and promote new Economic Development video.
- Release new county map.
- Develop and public monthly or bi-monthly EDC e-newsletter.
- Publish 2018 year in review.
- Prepare news releases for local, regional, state, and national distribution.

Mr. Icenhour also added that EnergyUnited was interested in the construction of a new substation in the Industrial Park that would benefit current and future tenants.

Commissioner Yoder, who attended the NCACC Legislative Goals Conference last week, mentioned that the #1 NCACC goal was to seek legislation and funding to expand broadband capability throughout the state. He stated that other issues discussed were greenways, film industry opportunities, and the possibility of changing the county tier program.

After questions from Commissioner Pennell related to business/industry involvement with schools and graduates contributing to the workforce, Dr. Jennifer Hefner, Alexander County Schools Superintendent, advised that a Career Day was held each year and several industries set up booths during Friday night football games. In addition, 8th graders participate in stem tours of local businesses and discussions have been held regarding apprenticeship programs. Ms. Hefner also provided information obtained in August 2018 showing that 49% of ACHS graduates planned to attend a two-year community college, 29% to a 4-year university, 3% to the military, and 18% to the workforce.

Commissioner Mayberry hoped to see more efforts to assist in the growth of small businesses throughout the county in the form of mentorships, expanding employee bases, making products available to new markets, business incubator space, etc.

TAX COLLECTIONS UPDATE

Guy Kerley, Tax Administrator, provided property tax collection data from 2016 to 2019 (projected) broken down into real property, business personal, personal property, public utilities, and motor vehicles that included the following:

- 2016 actual as of June 30th - \$19,744,632 at 96.51% collection rate
- 2017 actual as of June 30th - \$19,980,803 at 96.71% collection rate
- 2018 projected (total supplied based on November 30th figures) - \$20,218,031 at 96.60% collection rate
- 2019 projected - \$20,474,609 at 96.60% collection rate

He pointed out that collections increased by approximately \$250,000 each year which equals a 1.2% to 1.3% growth rate and did not factor in amounts refunded to industries by way of tax incentives (most recent are Borealis Compounds at 95% for 6 years, Schneider Mills at 95% for 4 years, and Paragon Films at 95% for 5 years). In addition, a lot of property is taxed at reduced rates due to farmland and elderly/disabled exemptions.

The next revaluation is scheduled for 2023.

2018-2019 BUDGET UPDATE

Rick French, County Manager, gave an update on the 2018-2019 budget that included the below information:

- The Fund Balance currently totals \$3,446,559; however, \$1.5 million of that amount is appropriated for the Industrial Park shell building. This project will require an additional \$750,000 in the 2019-2020 budget.
- YTD departmental revenues and sales tax revenue compared to the last 3 years.
- Revenues for the first 6 months of the budget total \$22,723,048 compared to \$21,716,393 last year, \$22,164,331 two years ago, and \$23,433,496 three years ago.
- Expenditures for the first 6 months total \$19,224,381 compared to \$18,095,306 last year, \$17,514,396 two years ago, and \$17,758,812 three years ago.

Commissioner Pennell asked when the internet sales tax revenue would be received by counties. Mr. French replied that additional legislation needed approval by the General Assembly before the tax was implemented, which he expected to occur very soon.

PROJECTS UPDATE

Rick French, County Manager, reviewed the following projects:

- The Alexander County Services Center (Community One Bank) will be substantially completed on February 15th. Plans are to begin moving departments into the building in early March beginning with Cooperative Extension and Soil & Water, followed by Old Wittenburg offices (Planning, Inspections, Environmental Health, and Recreation), and lastly Tax Office and Register of Deeds. Mr. French mentioned the possibility of financing the Services Center Project (originally paid cash but have 18 months to finance).
- West Consultants is working on plans for the Stony Point Elementary School CDBG-I Sewer Project that will be bid later in the year.
- Duke Energy is offering longer term leases (40 years) for both Dusty Ridge Park and Wittenburg Access that will result in eligibility for PARTF grants. Staff hopes to first submit a grant application for Wittenburg Access to create trails, a fishing pier, swimming area, and picnic shelters.
- Staff is interested in adjusting tap fees in hopes of gaining more water customers once the Water System Extension Project is completed.

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3 & 6) ATTORNEY / CLIENT PRIVILEGE & PERSONNEL

Vice-Chairman Reese made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:48 PM to exercise the attorney / client privilege and to discuss personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3 & 6). Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Mayberry made a motion to adjourn at 9:02 PM. Commissioner Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Jeffrey P. Peal, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board