

## Commissioners Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2008

The Randolph County Board of Commissioners met in special session at 8:30 a.m. at the RCC Foundation Conference Center for a Planning Retreat. Commissioners Holmes, Frye, Kemp, Lanier and Haywood were present, as well as County Manager Richard Wells; Finance Officer Will Massie; Associate County Attorney Aimee Scotton; Public Works Director David Townsend, III; Assistant to the Public Works Director Patty Willard; Planning Director Hal Johnson; Mike Walker, Environmental Health Supervisor; Alan Hart, USDA Rural Development; Bill Lester, Hobbs Upchurch & Associates Engineer; Cheryl Ivey, Clerk to the Board and Amanda Varner, Deputy Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Holmes called the meeting to order.

Finance Officer Will Massie gave an update on the current budget, saying that sales tax revenues are down compared to last year this time. Likewise, building permits, Register of Deeds fees and ambulance fees are down. With the current low interest rates, interest earnings are also down. Mr. Massie said that the Tax Department reports that there is no growth in property values; new construction is off due to the slow economy and more people are applying for tax exempt status for farms and forest lands. Also, taxes on personal property are barely keeping up with depreciation.

Mr. Massie said that legislation enacted by the General Assembly to gradually take away the County's Medicaid burden has proven to be a double-edged sword; the state is picking up the County's share, but it is also taking a bigger portion of sales tax revenue which used to come to the County.

Mr. Massie also warned that with the new Providence Grove High School opening in the fall that there will be increased operating expenses. The County Schools estimate that cost to be around \$700,000, or about 0.75 cent on the tax rate.

The Board discussed the June budget meeting schedule and decided to formally adopt the schedule at their March regular meeting.

Commissioner Frye updated the Board on water issues relating to the Piedmont Triad Regional Water Authority (PTRWA). He said that the Authority hopes to release bids by the end of March on the construction of both a water treatment plant and a water line that will run along US 311; the hope is that the water treatment plant will be built within two years. He also said that Greensboro and High Point would prefer to own the water treatment plant themselves rather than the plant being owned by the PTRWA, and they would rather pay for their part of the construction upfront instead of participating in a bond package with the other members of the PTRWA. One major issue that the County needs to decide is what the County will do with its 1.25 mgd. allotment of water from the lake.

David Townsend, III, Public Works Director, discussed the County's water plan, saying that the completion of the water line to the new Providence Grove High School is a great example of the County's commitment to its ultimate goal of a county-wide water system. He said that the next decision for the Commissioners will be the location of the next phase of construction and added that the most economically feasible would be a line connecting Asheboro to Franklinville and Ramseur along Hwy 64. Mr. Townsend said that unfortunately there are some fears and misconceptions around the county from rural homeowners who believe they will be forced to shut down their personal wells when a county water line is constructed in their area, which is not the County's intent at all. He added that, of course, the County would like to have as many people as possible on a system in order to keep costs down. But, the County would never force anyone to hook onto the county system; the County would prefer that citizens keep their private wells to water their gardens, etc. Commissioner Arnold Lanier said he believes that

some of the fears are resulting from reports out of Raleigh that the governor has proposed monitoring higher usage private wells utilized for business, industry and agriculture.

Mike Walker, Environmental Health Director with the Randolph County Health Department, said that Randolph County has a good ground water supply, with only a few isolated problems. Mr. Walker addressed another public misconception that the Health Department will condemn wells in order to require that citizens tap on to the new water lines when they're run; he said that most contaminated wells are due to bacteria, which can be neutralized via some sort of treatment.

Mr. Townsend gave a PowerPoint presentation, which included a list of goals of the water plan:

- Provide treated water to rural areas, reducing our reliance on groundwater sources
- Deliver water in a financially prudent manner, considering both taxpayers and customers
- Link water systems together to improve the operational efficiency of independent water systems
- Improve the fiscal stability of municipal water systems by allowing them to sell available water at a bulk rate
- Provide municipal water to all county schools

Mr. Townsend also listed major issues that the County would need to consider:

- When will specific lines be built?
- How will these lines be paid for?
- How will the County General Fund be repaid?
- Should municipalities pay for part of the cost of the major lines?
- Will the Growth Management Plan change?
- Should new subdivisions be required to connect to the water lines? At what point?
- Which municipalities will serve specific rural areas?

Mr. Townsend said that there are two options for the establishment of a county-wide water system: District option (see bullet list below) vs. Municipal option (Districts partner with municipalities to perform all operations, but municipalities set water rates and fees and bills customers/collects fees.)

- Districts own water lines
- Districts contract with municipal partner to buy water through bulk purchases
- Districts set water rates and fees
- Districts read residential meters
- Districts bill customers and collect fees
- Districts pay cities for bulk water purchases
- Districts contract operation and maintenance

Mr. Townsend recommended the District option because the district would retain control over lines and rates as the customer base expands. The Districts would also maintain a separate identity from municipal customers. He said that there are many issues to be resolved with partnering municipalities via interlocal agreements.

Mr. Townsend asked the Board to consider approving an engineering design contract with Hobbs Upchurch & Associates for the Hwy 64 East infrastructure improvements. The Board decided to add this to the March 10 meeting agenda for consideration.

Hal Johnson spoke about the water plan's effect on the County's Growth Management Plan. He said that the Growth Management Plan identifies growth areas (Primary & Secondary) of Randolph County where a higher density of various types of development is anticipated and can best be supported over a 15-20 year period. These growth areas would include existing and proposed infrastructure and public facilities to support growth. The most unique quality of the Randolph County Growth Management Plan is the identification and designation of Rural Growth Areas within the county. These areas include watersheds, wetlands, flood plains, active farmlands, large areas of undeveloped land with rural residences scattered on large tracts and similar land resources. Low density development and layout of major residential subdivisions in the Rural Growth Area is designed to be sensitive to groundwater recharge and the possibility that placement of public water/sewer lines within the area would be limited. Designation as a Rural Growth Area, in some instances, came at the request and petition of area residents who wanted to insure that their community remain low density and maintain a rural character. New subdivision density has been set by the Board of Commissioners at one residence per three acres with a length to width ratio of one to four. The provision of centralized water (and sewer) is a major determinant in the density and location of new development in rural areas. The provision of such services without a Growth Management Plan reflecting the unique nature of a Rural Growth Area would contribute to sprawl. This pattern of growth (large lots or tracts) would tend to drive up costs of providing water services to a widely scattered population.

Mr. Johnson said that the best way to allow continued major subdivision development in rural growth areas while still maintaining the low density/rural character of the communities served by water is by open space/cluster subdivisions; they would also allow the most cost effective provision of water. Open space subdivisions would not allow development of a density more than one residence per three acres, but would require 50% open space while allowing a reduction in lot size and width. The Board of Commissioners might consider requiring all new major residential subdivisions developed after installation of water lines, and within one mile of the lines, to hook to the public water system. This would be required during the rezoning process. Open Space/Cluster Subdivisions would be encouraged in the Rural Growth Areas.

Mr. Johnson said that water line extensions into rural areas would provide more opportunity for rural industry and commerce. The characteristics of rural industry and commerce are evolving continuously and many rural businesses and industry can be carried on in rural and residential areas without causing unacceptable disturbance or substantial adverse effects through the use of special conditions applied to the rezoning. Individual rezoning decisions would depend on the scale of the development and the nature of the site and its location. The Growth Management Plan recognizes that it is not always appropriate to separate industry and commerce from rural communities for whom they are a source of employment, economic development and services. In rural areas, rezoning requests for developments necessary to sustain the rural economy should be weighed with the need to protect the countryside through the use of site specific conditional zoning. Mr. Johnson told the Board that he could present proposed amendments to the Growth Management Plan by May or June.

Next, Mr. Johnson spoke about the establishment of a Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, which would identify and designate historic landmarks in the county. These landmarks would include buildings, structures, site or objects considered to have historical, architectural or cultural value. The Commission would be appointed by the County Commissioners and would have the following duties: establish criteria for designation, make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners and issue certificates of appropriateness to property owners of landmarks. The benefits of such a Commission are recognition of the history or heritage of the landmark, tax exemptions for property owners (of the landmarks) and grant opportunities. County Manager Richard Wells said that the first landmark for a newly established Commission to designate will be the historic Courthouse. Once it is designated, the County can apply for grants in order to help with the cost of restoration.

The Board directed Mr. Johnson to make a formal presentation on the establishment of a Historic Landmark Preservation Commission at their April or May regular meeting.

County Manager Richard Wells updated the Board on the strategy for promoting the ¼-cent sales tax referendum. He is speaking to as many civic and local government groups as possible.

Mr. Wells also updated the Board on the NC Pottery Center. He said that the NC Dept. of Cultural Resources has expressed the desire to take over the funding for operation of the Pottery Center, with the understanding that the County will take care of the maintenance of the building and grounds. Mr. Wells said that he will continue to meet with State representatives and Pottery Center staff to continue a successful negotiation of this plan.

There being no further business, the Board adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

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J. Harold Holmes

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Darrell L. Frye

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Phil Kemp

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Stan Haywood

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Arnold Lanier

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Cheryl A. Ivey, Clerk to the Board