

**MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
JANUARY 18, 2011**

The Board of Commissioners (“the Board”) of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in the Central Carolina Community Multipurpose Room, located in Pittsboro, North Carolina, at 2:00 PM on January 18, 2011.

Present: Chairman Brian Bock; Vice Chair Walter Petty;
Commissioner Pamela Stewart

Absent: Commissioners Mike Cross and Sally Kost

Staff Present: Charlie Horne, County Manager; Jep Rose, County Attorney; Renee Paschal, Assistant County Manager; Vicki McConnell, Finance Officer; Elizabeth Plata, Deputy Clerk to the Board; and Sandra B. Sublett, Clerk to the Board

Work Session

1. **Public Input Session**
2. **Liaisons/Appointments to Boards and Committees:** The Board will review Liaisons/Appointments to various Boards and Committees.
3. **Proposed fee increase for installation of meters:** The Board of Commissioners is discussing the possible increase in fees for installation of meters. We currently charge \$400. Our proposal is to increase to private sector standards which by our research is \$1,000.00
4. **Tax Administration Update:** Tina Stone will give the Board of Commissioners a status report on activities within the Tax Department. Of particular note, appeals on home values are very high when compared with prior years. Ms. Stone will brief the Board about those issues as well.
5. **Landfill:** Site selection discussion
6. **Closed Session** for the purpose of discussing the acquisition of property

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

Chairman Bock announced that Commissioner Kost was ill and unable to attend the meeting and that Commissioner Cross had a medical situation with his wife. He asked that everyone keep them in their thoughts and prayers.

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

He explained that this is the first Work Session at which a Public Input Session has been held and asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak.

There was no one present who wished to make public comments.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES LIAISONS/APPOINTMENTS

After a brief discussion, Chairman Bock deferred this item until the next Board of Commissioners' meeting when all Board members are present. He stated that the list, as presented, is accurate and the remaining board assignments will be determined at the next meeting.

PROPOSED FEE INCREASE FOR INSTALLATION OF METERS

David Hughes, Public Works Director, explained that the State of North Carolina mandates that all irrigation taps have separate meters. Prior to this, one water tap was used for both household and irrigation purposes. In order to comply with the mandate, Chatham County Utilities installs split taps for these existing water taps. Currently the split tap fee is \$400.00, based on a verbal quote from a contractor. It has been determined that the materials alone cost \$400.00 and labor is an additional \$600.00. The split tap fee needs to be \$1,000.00 to break even.

Chairman Bock asked if this was State mandated. Mr. Hughes replied, yes, that it was a fairly recent legislative change. He stated that there was merit to it; that in a drought, the irrigation water use can be controlled, the meter can be locked, and it doesn't shut off someone's water to their house.

Commissioner Petty asked if the contractor had been used to do any of the jobs and if it is an accurate cost. Mr. Hughes replied that it is an estimate that the contractor has given even though he has not yet been used on this particular project; that he has been used a lot for regular taps, breaks, etc.

Commissioner Petty asked if Mr. Hughes was comfortable with the stated figure to do the work. Mr. Hughes replied that he was comfortable with it.

Commissioner Petty moved, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, to approve the increase for installing a split tap fee from \$400.00 to \$1,000.00. The motion carried three (3) to zero (0).

TAX ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Tina Stone, Chatham County Tax Administrator, presented a PowerPoint entitled, "Chatham County Tax Administration Update". She reviewed appeals, the appeal process, revaluation, collection and exemption updates. Her PowerPoint is as follows:

INSERT POWERPOINT

Chairman Bock asked if most of the appeals cannot be acted upon at this point. Ms. Stone stated that was correct; that they will be reviewed and changes made as necessary, but most of what they have seen, people are appealing based on purchases in 2010 and they want it to be changed to the purchase price or they had a recent appraisal from refinancing or it was bought out of foreclosure; that foreclosure sales or short sales are not allowed to be in the sales files; and that there were a lot of foreclosures in 2009.

Chairman Bock asked if it was a State law. Ms. Stone confirmed that it was.

Commissioner Petty asked Ms. Stone if she found that she had to adjust values based on interior valuations. She responded not a lot, but some. She stated that especially since the County is on four-year revaluations, they feel like their records are good; that people bring it to their attention; that if they appeal and submit an appraisal, they can correct the square footage based on that; however, they cannot use the sales to do so.

Chairman Bock asked about the option to revalue on a four-year cycle and if it could be done more frequently. Ms. Stone explained that it could be done, but was very expensive to do a revaluation in cost and time. She stated that as soon as the last revaluation was complete, they started on the next one; that she is unaware of any county that does a revaluation more often than four years.

Ms. Stone stated that she wanted to bring this issue to the Board's attention as they are getting a lot of questions from citizens, most not understanding that it is a legislative issue. She stated that they had created a brochure that is sent out with the appeal's form explaining the documentation that can be considered; that they do not discourage anyone from appealing as they catch errors that way; and that it can also be time-consuming and costly for the tax payer and for the office.

Chairman Bock asked if the Board of Commissioners appointed the Board of Equalization and Review (E&R). Ms. Stone explained that the E&R Board is full and cannot meet before the first Monday in April; that they have to have their first meeting before the first Monday in May; that there is a deadline on the appeal application to try to get most of them in the office in February so that they will know how to schedule the E&R Board; that the meetings are scheduled during the day and night to accommodate citizens that wish to appear before them; that the appeals have to be accepted until the E&R Board adjourns; that they have to be adjourned by the third Monday after their first meeting during a non-revaluation year unless they receive a huge amount of appeals to the board and they need more time; that they can meet after that date to hear appeals that have already been filed, but once they have adjourned, they cannot accept any more appeals for that year. She stated that any changes they make are not retroactive, they are for the current year forward.

Commissioner Stewart asked about exemptions. Ms. Stone explained the elderly and disabled exclusions.

Commissioner Stewart asked if the information was on the website. Ms. Stone stated that all of the brochures were on-line.

LANDFILL

Chairman Bock explained that the Board wants to discuss where they are in the process. He stated that he is aware that there is a lot of stress regarding this issue and they want to make sure that the citizens are as informed as possible.

Commissioner Petty stated that after several group meetings and hundreds of emails, letters, and conversations with citizens, he has arrived at the conclusion and would like to share it with those present. He stated that this decision involves and will affect every citizen in Chatham County; that everyone understands that we have a responsibility to deal with the trash; that they accept that responsibility, but no one seems to want to have a regional landfill which he understands; that the studies tell them that without a regional landfill, they can't afford to do the landfill; that the site selections have also presented several issues and problems; that the word is out that Randolph County is considering or is close to getting a regional landfill; that everyone they have talked with says that they are willing to pay more to have their trash dealt with rather than have the landfill; that it is yet to be seen whether that is true or not as that position could change; and that people are wanting to find other options and/or alternatives if they are out there. He asked, "Have they exercised all those options?" stating they need to take into consideration the Board is trying to bring in industry, to take into consideration that industry needs a way to dispose of their wares, and they do not want to do anything to jeopardize that. He stated that with all that in mind, we need to think about the "what ifs". What if we reduce the amount of trash that we have with a more aggressive recycling method? What if we take the same amount of energy that is being put in stopping this landfill and put it into finding other solutions? What if we implement some type of incentive that accomplishes a reduced trash amount? What if we start setting aside dollars to fund a more expensive method of handling trash? Those are the "what ifs". What if we don't? If we don't he stated, we will be right back here where we are today a few years from now.

Commissioner Petty moved that the Board stop seeking a site location at this time; that he would like to take the same amount of energy to research, not only the options, but the costs associated with other options for trash disposal; that he would like for that to be brought back to the citizens and presented so that the Board can be in a position to make a more well-informed decision in the near future about how we're going to deal with this.

Commissioner Petty stated that they may come full-circle and be right back where they are today, but they have some time. They have a contract in place to deal with the trash; that he is sure there are people in this business and they wouldn't have any trouble renewing the contract; that it is an issue of cost; that our citizens have told us that they are willing to pay more; that the Board should hold them at their word; that if it costs more, they will just have to do it; that if it becomes an issue, then they can revert back to where they are today; that he would like to see the Board put it on hold for the time being until they can exercise some of their other options, do a little more research on those options, give Randolph County some time to see if they are going to get their deal put together, and then they will be in a better position to make a more well-informed decision about which way they want to go.

Commissioner Petty summarized his motion by stating that he would like to see the Board put a stop to the site selection until the Board can reach a point where it is confident they have exercised all of their options for trash disposal along with the costs associated with those options.

Chairman Bock restated the motion to stop the site selection process. Commissioner Petty agreed.

Chairman Bock called for a second to the motion. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. The Chairman called the question. The motion carried three (3) to zero (0).

Commissioner Stewart reinforced Commissioner Petty's statement saying that she didn't think that anyone from whom she had received information stated that a landfill was needed. She stated that one of the first things everyone says is that the County does not need a regional landfill; that most people feel that they need to be responsible for their own waste; that she feels that it is important that they should not take for granted that someone else wants it in their backyard if the County does not want it in theirs; that she thinks they need to do the responsible thing; that there are some very serious environment impacts with the landfill; that she thinks the right thing to do is to start looking at alternatives to see what is out there; that they were looking at one thing and one thing only; that they know there are other options but they are out of their price range, they are new and untried. She stated that they need to take this time and let those things get developed and less expensive as they owe it to everyone in the County to look at those and determine the possibilities. She stated that the County is already transporting its garbage elsewhere but she feels, given the economic climate they are in at this time, they cannot afford to build a regional landfill. She said they supported the motion that we do back up, that everyone has put out all of the energy to fight it so hopefully everyone can turn their energies into finding an alternative that works for everyone in the County.

Chairman Bock praised the efforts of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee stating they had done a great job. He stated that there were a lot of "conspiracy theories" out there but sitting on the Board, he can say that there are none; that the Committee was tasked to come up with options which they have done. He said that their conclusions regarding no viable alternatives to a landfill right now are accurate. He pointed out that he attended the Solid Waste Advisory Committee Meeting which had wall-to-wall people; that he thinks the Board has an opportunity because there is so much interest in solid waste, that the biggest mistake they could make is everyone that is concerned about the landfill is to have a big sigh of relief and go home. That will not work. As has been pointed out to him recently, Chairman Bock stated that staff is thin and he is guessing that's not going to change anytime soon. Staff cannot be in the research and development area with their day-to-day operations. He asked that the Solid Waste Advisory Committee refocus their energy on some of the other alternatives; however, they will not be able to do it alone. They are volunteers as is everyone else. He asked that everyone keep the focus that they have shown over the last few months and hopefully come up with some other solutions. He again thanked the Solid Waste Advisory Committee and stated that a lot of the emails they received were good in the sense they provided alternatives and places to do some more research; that this is one area in which

he has changed his mind stating that he was supportive of a landfill a year ago and that he can still see the need for them, but at this time, they have time to take the opportunity and lead the way on some of the other alternatives.

Commissioner Petty also thanked Dan LaMontagne for all of his work and that of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee. He stated that it was a tough challenge; that they were doing exactly what they were expected to do; and that there was no reflection on that whatsoever. He stated that they just want to make sure that they consider other options. He challenged all citizens to give input and provide options in order to make sure that the Board is not in the same position in the future.

Jonathan Binanay, 1669 Buckner Clark Road, Pittsboro, NC, thanked the Board and on behalf of "Preserve Chatham County", they will continue the fight in finding alternatives. He stated that they would partner with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to help venture capitalists and other positive initiatives to deal with County trash.

Chairman Bock stated that was a good idea. Don't just think of alternatives. Come up with how it's going to be paid for.

The Chairman called the question. The motion carried three (3) to zero (0).

CLOSED SESSION

Due to the absence of two Commissioners, the Chairman stated that the Closed Session would be deferred until a later date.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Bock adjourned the meeting at 2:49 PM.

Brian Bock, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sandra B. Sublett, CMC, NCCCC, Clerk to the Board
Chatham County Board of Commissioners