

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION, APRIL 16, 2001

The Board of Commissioners (“the Board”) of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in the Henry H. Dunlap, Jr. Building Classroom, located in Pittsboro, North Carolina, at 4:00 PM on April 16, 2001.

Present: Chairman Gary Phillips; Vice Chair, Margaret Pollard; Commissioners Bob Atwater, and Carl Outz, County Manager, Charlie Horne; Assistant County Manager, Paul Spruill; Finance Officer, Vicki McConnell; and Clerk to the Board, Sandra B. Lee

Absent: Commissioner Rick Givens

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 4:03 PM.

Work Session Agenda:

- I. Economic Development Corporation**
 Feedback on Economic Development section of Land Use and Conservation Development Plan – Tony Tucker, Chatham County Economic Director
- II. Environmental Health Status Report**
 Holly Coleman, Environmental Health Supervisor
- III. Update on Teacher Supplement**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Tony Tucker, Chatham County Economic Development Director, reviewed the General Environmental Study of the Chatham County Industrial Park, including the project description, physical evaluation, and biological evaluation. He stated that currently, there are no sensitive species identified as occupying any of the areas of the proposed project; that should any sensitive species be located within the area in the future, mitigation measures will be implemented if warranted; and that the study concurs with the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment that there are no environmental or physical features that would limit the development of the proposed land use.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STATUS REPORT

Holly Coleman, Environmental Health Supervisor, gave an overview of the responsibilities of the employees in the Environmental Health Department. She stated that program responsibilities include septic system site evaluations, contract authorizations, repairs, re-inspections (for alterations to property), and final inspections; that well inspections include new, investigative, and foster homes; that food and lodging inspections include 253 establishments for restaurants, school cafeterias, meat markets, nursing homes, hospitals, day cares, institutions (group homes/residential), swimming pools, school buildings, summer camps, motels, bed and breakfasts, and tattoo parlors; that of the 253 establishments, they are mandated to conduct 770 inspections; that since January 1, 2001, there have been 270 new applications for site evaluations, 293 existing septic system evaluations (real estate, property changes, additions), 147 appointments scheduled, 186 appointments pending, 205 site evaluations completed, 114 construction authorizations, and 124 new septic system final inspections/approvals; that present client wait-time for appointments is six to eight weeks; that she considers two weeks acceptable; that one Environmental Health

Specialist can average one and a half site evaluations per day with other responsibilities; that a major deficiency is that there is no Operation Maintenance Program in place; that the State could withdraw the County's authorization to approve systems requiring operators and maintenance; that over one-third of the systems installed in Chatham require operators; and that it would limit options available to homeowners.

Ms. Coleman further stated that their department has a "user unfriendly" reputation; that they have regulatory responsibilities; that mistakes are most likely to occur when staff is overworked and rushed; and that they are attempting to maintain responsibilities of a growing population with staffing that is less than it was in the year 1999 when there were eight Environmental Health Specialists on staff.

She stated that a Licensed Soil Scientist (LSS) would greatly benefit their program in that they would conduct soil evaluations for subdivisions of five lots or greater and provide second opinions on borderline sites; that clients are currently referred to private LSS for preliminary subdivision evaluations; that to continue without a filled position (either an LSS or an EHS) perpetuates their inability to fulfill their responsibilities to Chatham County citizens; that projected growth and development in Chatham County translates to increased demand for soil evaluations/improvement permits which will cause the workload to continue to increase; that immediate action to remedy the inadequate staffing would enable the division to recruit staff that would be eligible for Centralized Training mandated by the State and scheduled in July before an EHS can be authorized to conduct regulatory services; that existing staff average 15-22.5 hours of overtime per week to provide onsite program services at an average cost of \$1,600 per week; and that overtime costs for March through June are estimated to be \$25,600.

She asked the Board to consider increasing the salary for the Soil Scientist position to compete with local market or to rescind previous Board action that converted the Environmental Health Specialist position to a Soil Scientist position.

Soil Scientist / Environmental Health Specialist Positions:

By consensus, the Board agreed to accept the staff recommendation to increase the salary for the Soil Scientist position to compete with the local market and to reinstate funding for the Environmental Health Specialist position with funding and time-line details to be worked out in a joint meeting of the Interim Health Director, Environmental Health Supervisor, and the County Manager and be returned to the Board at their May 7, 2001 work session.

TEACHER SUPPLEMENT UPDATE

Vicki McConnell, Finance Officer, gave an update on the meeting between the Finance Officers for the Chatham County Schools and Chatham County Administration. She reviewed specifics of additional funding requested to pay teacher supplements not included in the County's original appropriation and stated that the difference in figures was due in part to the inclusion of non classroom teachers, new hires, and mistakes made in original budget calculations for classroom teachers, principals and assistants in the schools' figures.

Commissioner Atwater moved, seconded by Commissioner Pollard, to fund the teacher supplements to the actual level and same rate intended in the FY 2000-2001 budget, including missing employees, up to a total cost of \$69,000. The motion carried four (4) to zero (0).

CONCERNS

Bob Gunn, County Attorney, informed the Board of a pending timber lawsuit, involving the County

and several other counties, and stated that the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners has agreed to become the clearinghouse for the lawsuit.

RECESS

Commissioner Pollard moved to recess the meeting. Commissioner Atwater seconded the motion, and the meeting was recessed at 6:41 PM. The motion carried four (4) to zero (0).

Gary Phillips, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sandra B. Lee, Clerk to the Board
Chatham County Board of Commissioners