

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
MAY 03, 2004

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 11:00 AM on May 03, 2004.

Present: Chairman Tommy Emerson; Vice Chair Carl Outz; Commissioners Margaret Pollard, Bob Atwater, and Bunkey Morgan; County Manager, Charlie Horne; County Attorney, Robert L. Gunn; Assistant County Manager, Renee Dickson; Finance Officer, Vicki McConnell; and Clerk to the Board, Sandra B. Sublett

The Chairman called the Work Session to order at 11:20 AM.

Work Session

1. **Budget**
2. **NCRCAP**

NORTH CAROLINA RURAL COMMUNITIES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Nina Baccanari, Community Resource Coordinator, discussed the Safe Housing Initiative Fee Waiver Program. She stated that since 1999, Chatham County has been a project partner in this initiative; that NCRCAP would like to request the County’s continued support and ask that the Commissioners officially re-authorize the fee waiver program that waives all County fees for permits and inspections associated with this project.

She stated that the North Carolina Rural Communities Assistance Project (NCRCAP) is a statewide non-profit organization that addresses the issues of poverty, public health, and environmental justice; that their staff works with rural communities dealing with environmental health risks by providing outreach, education, and technical assistance; that in Chatham County, they work with individual, low-income households that need assistance in improving their living conditions; that through their Safe Housing Initiative program, they work to eliminate the health and safety hazards posed by substandard housing; and that they assist local households by helping them to gain access to federal low-interest loans and grants and by providing direct grants through our Safe Housing Initiative program; that since 1998, they have assisted almost thirty households by constructing bathroom additions, installing septic systems and wells, and performing other housing repairs; that this project is a community-supported initiative; that to administer the program, they rely on established partnerships with many agencies, such as the American Water Works Association Outreach Committee, Central Carolina Community College, Joint Orange Chatham Community Action, USDA Rural Development, and Chatham County Government; that they also have partnerships with local contractors and suppliers who offer their services and materials at a discounted rate; that in addition, they have hosted a successful

fundraiser at the General Store Café and have received statewide coverage through WUNC radio to promote public awareness and private donations; that these partnerships and fundraising activities are vital to effectively assist those families living without indoor plumbing or who currently have inadequate water or wastewater facilities; that working with individual households is not a service that they provide statewide, but one that they do provide to Chatham County residents since their central office is located in Pittsboro; that under the previous fee waiver arrangement, Environmental Health and Building Permit and Inspection waivers were granted to households enrolled into our Safe Housing Initiative program; that these households have very low-income levels, no more than 50% of the County's medium household income; that typically the households enrolled into their program have incomes less than 30% of the medium; that this would mean less than \$21,400 for a four-person family; that families that qualify for fee waivers are those that cannot afford to pay the fees without sacrificing other life necessities; that continuation of the fee waiver program is critical to the work of NCRCAP in Chatham County for two reasons:

- 1) USDA Rural Development will not pay for up-front fees through their loan and grants program. So, households that are unable to pay a \$120 fee for a septic or well permit will miss the opportunity to receive a low-interest loan for up to \$20,000 or a grant for up to \$7,500; and
- 2) Chatham County does not provide any direct funding for the free services that NCRCAP provides to County residents.

She stated that for these reasons, they rely on fee waivers to help us meet grant-matching requirements; that currently, NCRCAP is administrating an \$84,000 grant from the USDA Housing Preservation Grant program that requires 20% of the total project cost to come from local matches; that in this program year, they are assisting five very low-income households in Chatham County; that three of these households will be receiving bathroom additions since they are currently living with indoor facilities; that due to the variety of needed home repairs, not all households will be assisted by Housing Preservation Grant funds, and not all households need fee waivers from every department; that basically, County fee waivers make up a crucial portion of the matching requirement; that if fee waivers are not available to the poorest of the County's residents, then they will not be able to continue to apply for and administer housing rehabilitation grants in Chatham County; that since establishing the fee waiver program in 1999, Chatham County has provided fee waivers to twelve households for a total value of \$2,060; that in return for this investment, NCRCAP has helped these households obtain approximately \$27,000 in loans and \$94,500 in grants and in-kind services; that they are asking the Board of Commissioners to approve the continuation of the fee waivers by re-authorizing this program to include Environmental Health, Building, and Planning permits associated with NCRCAP's Safe Housing Initiative project; that they would also like for the Board to authorize the director's of the Building and Planning Departments to work with NCRCAP to develop a fee waiver form like the one currently in use in the Environmental Health Department; that as things stand now, some departments waive the fees while other departments provide reimbursements; and that they would like to simplify procedures and use a standard fee waiver form.

Ms. Baccanari thanked the Board for their time stating that it is their hope that the County will continue to grant fee waivers so that the poorest of the County's residents will continue to benefit from the services NCRCAP is able to provide.

After considerable discussion, Commissioner Pollard moved, seconded by Commissioner Atwater, to approve the continuation of the fee waivers by re-authorizing the program to include Environmental Health, Building and Planning permits associated with NCRCAP's Safe Housing Initiative project.

Commissioner Morgan asked to be excused from voting on matter.

The motion carried three (3) to one (1) with Commissioner Outz opposing.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

Keith Megginson, Chatham County Planning Director, explained that the 2004 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) has officially been awarded by the Division of Community Assistance (DCA) to Chatham County; that the County has been through the proper procurement process; and that Hobbs, Upchurch & Associates is to be awarded the administrative contract for the project.

Commissioner Morgan moved, seconded by Commissioner Pollard, to reaffirm the previous selection of Hobbs, Upchurch & Associates to administer the block grant for the upcoming year. The motion carried five (5) to zero (0).

Commissioner Outz asked to see the qualifications for houses selected for rehabilitation.

Flood Insurance:

The Planning Director stated that in addressing the conditions stated in the funding approval, the Board has to certify that the project is not in a floodplain or certify that the applicant has flood insurance. He stated that one of the homes appears to be located on property that is located in the floodplain; that it is Virginia Foxx at 1212 North Sixth Street, Siler City, NC; that it has not been determined whether the home is actually in the floodplain or just a portion of the property; that it would take a surveyor or engineer to make the determination and certify the same; that typically, they recommend not providing housing rehabilitation to a home in the floodplain and recommend selecting another home; and that the County may take on the expense of surveying for a flood determination of this home.

After considerable discussion and by consensus, the Board agreed that the Planning Director has the authority to move on the flood insurance issue as he deems appropriate without spending any County money.

COMPACT COMMUNITIES ORDINANCE PEER REVIEW

The Planning Director stated that there are at least two ways for the Compact Communities Ordinance Peer Review request to be written up; that how they are written up determines how they are handled once they are received and how long the process takes; that a request for qualifications can be put out and do it such as to pre-qualified firms to do the work and then make a selection from those firms or to do a request for proposals and not do pre-qualification separately.

Commissioner Atwater asked to see a list of several firms for the review process.

After further discussion, Commissioner Morgan moved, seconded by Commissioner Outz, to give staff flexibility to proceed with the qualifications of pre-qualified companies and return to the Board of Commissioners with their recommendation of either one or three firms.

The County Manager stated, that as he understands the motion, the Board would want firms to respond for the following parameters, staff would reserve the option of recommending one or more firms qualified.

Commissioner Pollard encouraged the staff to give as many as three recommendations when possible.

The County Manager stated that if three firms were always selected, they could be rotated and staff would review and make recommendation(s) based on certain criteria.

The Chairman called for a vote. The motion carried five (5) to zero (0).

PITTSBORO WATER LINE

The Planning Director stated that there had been County citizen requests concerning whether they could hook on to the Buck Mountain water line; that he did not know if the Board had an interest in this or if they were willing to let the Town of Pittsboro make the decision regarding hookups.

The Board agreed that the County should never be an impediment to someone getting water regardless of who is furnishing it.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Planning Director stated that in the County's subdivision regulations, the County can ask for an Environmental Impact Assessment; that under State law, anytime there are two acres an assessment can be requested; that an issue has come up regarding the process involved; that typically, the developer hires a consulting firm that looks at the land to see if there are any endangered species, plants, animals, etc.; that they turn in a report to the Planning Department which the Planning Board reviews; that development proceeds through the process; that the attorney for the Buck Mountain issue says that the County should have run it through the State Environmental Clearing House process; that the State doesn't issue any permits for stream crossings of creeks, etc. unless and until the public hearing is held and citizen input is completed; that then they proceed with their review process of issuing permits; that the law does not require the County to submit it to the State Environment Clearing House to stop all permitting processes; and that they referenced it as a document to help identify significant environmental impacts that may exist in development.

Assistant County Manager, Renee Dickson, explained that General Statute 143-64.31 does not allow the County to ask for pricing information from the firms that would be bidding as part of the RFP process; that General Statute 143-64.32 allows the County to exempt itself from that first statute. She asked that the Board approve a motion exempting the County from that statute in order to get pricing information.

Commissioner Pollard moved, seconded by Commissioner Morgan, to except the County from General Statute 143-64.31 for the request for proposals for the peer reviews of the Newland project. The motion carried five (5) to zero (0).

BUDGET:

By consensus, the Board set Monday, May 10, 2004, 3:00 PM on which to hold a work session on the budget.

Commissioner Morgan moved, seconded by Commissioner Atwater, to use their work session and public hearing scheduled for May 17, 2004 as the only session during which to receive public comments on the 2004-2005 proposed budget. The motion carried five (5) to zero (0).

Ms. Dickson stated she had been asked by United Way Director, Jody Minor, to have a special work session to discuss nonprofit funding. She asked that a time be scheduled for non-profits, including the Sheriffs Office.

By consensus, the Board agreed to begin their work session on May 17, 2004 at 2:00 PM to accommodate the nonprofit requests.

The Board asked that the meeting be held in the Agricultural Building Auditorium, if possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Outz moved, seconded by Commissioner Pollard, that there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried five (5) to zero (0), and the meeting was adjourned at 12:52 PM.

Thomas J. Emerson, Chairman

ATTEST:

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