

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 7, 2002, 5:00PM
PLANNING RETREAT
CAPE FEAR VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM

PRESENT: Chairman Breeden Blackwell
Vice Chairman Tal Baggett (arrived late)
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Kenneth S. Edge
Commissioner John Henley
Commissioner Billy R. King
Commissioner J. Lee Warren, Jr.
James Martin, County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager
Cliff Spiller, Asst. County Manager
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager/Finance Officer
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Howard Abner, Budget Department
Rhonda Raynor, Deputy Clerk
Marsha Fogle, Clerk to the Board
Ron Aycock, President, NCACC

The Board hosted a dinner meeting at 5:00PM for members of the Cumberland County Legislative Delegation. During dinner, Chairman Blackwell and James Martin, County Manager, discussed the effect of the Governor's decision to withhold local government reimbursements. Chairman Blackwell noted that Governor Easley's action amounts to \$2.1 million, 2 cents on the property tax rate. He said that county departments are currently operating at the 1997 funding levels. He pointed that the county laid off 100 employees and eliminated 150 vacant positions. He said that because of budget restraints the county no longer has a capital expenditure budget. The action by the Governor could cause the county to make additional cuts, lay off more people, fund balance will decrease, may have to delay the opening of our new detention facility, and we may not be able to meet state regulatory requirements. The County cannot sustain the loss of these funds, and there is little chance that the County will raise property taxes this year, as our rate is already the 7th highest in the state. Chairman Blackwell asked the delegation, Senator Rand, Bill Hurley, Marvin Lucas, Mia Morris and Alex Warner, to urge the Governor to call a special session of the Legislature and pass legislation enabling counties to levy a sales tax to help offset the deficit caused by the Governor's actions.

Members of the Legislative Delegation noted the State is in tough financial straits this year, but next year will be much worse. So, the problem will get worse before it gets better. As far as calling a Special Session, Marvin Lucas said unless the feelings of the legislators change, it would be a waste of time.

Chairman Blackwell noted the County is in a crisis situation and he asked the Delegation to do what it can to assist us.

The Board of Commissioners opened their planning retreat.

The Board issued the following directives to staff as far as the FY03 budget is concerned:

1. Departments should submit a fiscal year 03 budget that reflects the same amount that was approved for FY02.
2. A freeze on positions is effective as of 2/8/02. Management has authority to look at critical positions and approve or disapprove. The Department Head may appeal to the Personnel Committee if the Manager does not approve.

Commissioner Edge suggested that the Manager talk to the department heads to explain our action and how the Governor's action will affect Cumberland County.

The Board reviewed the goals they talked about at the last meeting and prioritized them as follows:

- 1. Employee Benefits**

- a. Birthday off with one year of county service
- b. Percentage of or flat amount across the board for employees
- c. Ask local merchants to sponsor “county employee” discount day
- d. Ask CFVHS & surgical practices to consider offering special rates to reduce out of pocket costs for county employees
- e. Increase wages of county employees

2. Economic Development

- a. Appropriate participation in Fayetteville Futures efforts
- b. Establish water/sewer districts (two at a time if appropriate)
- c. Begin thinking about an industrial corridor on I-95 North

3. Budget, Service Delivery and Intergovernmental Relations

- a. Anticipate impact of the 2004 revaluation and the ½ cent sales tax
- b. Identify land and determine affordability of purchase for new animal control facility
- c. Ending duplication – End duplication of services between the city/county
- d. Performance Audits – Explore the idea of performance audits for each department. Could improve efficiency/save money
- e. Place citizen survey on web site
- f. Convention & Visitors Bureau – appoint Liaison commissioner (Breedon Blackwell is serving as the liaison)
- g. Quarterly meetings with Mayors (first meeting was held January 30)
- h. Continuance of Community Meetings – Being scheduled
- i. Funding Formula for Public Schools – The two finance committees are meeting
- j. Compromise on voting member of PWC (may not happen because of issues associated with asking the General Assembly to change the charter)
- k. Human Relations Department (partnering with the City of Fayetteville)
- l. Continue positive relationship among Board members
- m. Be mindful about shrinking student body population

The County will continue to look for ways to extend the life of the county’s landfill.

Commissioner Baggett and Warren left at 7:35PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:35PM

Clerk to the Board