

**Special Called Meeting  
Northampton County  
November 17, 2015**

**Present:** Robert Carter, Fannie Greene, Chester Deloatch, Joseph Barrett, and Virginia Spruill

**Others Present:** Kimberly Turner, Leslie Edwards, Gary Brown, Michelle Nelson, Patrice Roesler (NCACC), and Neil Emory (NCACC)

**Greetings and Introductions:**

Chairwoman Greene called the 2015 Board Retreat to order, and welcomed everyone. She also introduced the facilitators for the day, Mrs. Patrice Roesler and Mr. Neil Emory from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

Mrs. Roesler gave an introduction of Mr. Emory and herself and explained how the retreat will be conducted. She asked the Board about the article she sent to them to review ahead of time called the "Eight Behaviors for Smarter Teams." She wanted to get their feedback and/or observations.

- Commissioner Carter felt that behavior #2 was very important which is to "Share All Relevant Information" and stated that this is key to the success of a Board.
- Commissioner Spruill said she was interested in behavior #4 "Explain Reasoning and Intent." She said sometimes they take a position but they fail to let the people around them know why they are doing something.
- Chairwoman Greene brought up behavior #8 "Discuss Undiscussable Issues". She mentioned that this issue was relevant at her leadership training, and stated that people tend not to deal with items that are unpleasant. She said we have to learn to discuss those items, and it makes things better when we do that.

***Commissioner Deloatch joined the meeting at this time.***

**Progress Review:**

Ms. Kimberly Turner, County Manager, discussed the Board's accomplishments of goals that were set during the 2010 and 2012 Retreats:

- Completed DSS Building Project
- Completed EMS substation in Milwaukee
- Completed Phase V Water System Project
- Budgeted Assistant Finance Officer and Assistant County Manager Positions
- Provided a cost of living increase for employees in 2012-2013 fiscal year
- Added additional deputies and EMS personnel to address the Board's goal of providing adequate police and emergency services countywide (ongoing process as budget permits)
- Increased all fees and permits
- Implemented a \$10 a month membership fee at the Wellness Center
- The Cultural and Wellness Center is open on Saturdays for ½ day

- The Personnel Policy has been updated with another update coming soon
- Increased fund balance by .61% between 2012 and 2013 and 7.51% between 2013 and 2014. Continuing to work towards goal of 25%. The Board surpassed their goal of increasing fund balance each year by ½%

Mrs. Roesler asked what the Board's reaction to these accomplishments were.

- Commissioner Spruill mentioned that some of the accomplishments were controversial and feels they were not received well by citizens (such as increasing fees and permits). She said these fees come with a service for the citizens; and services cost.
- Mr. Emory said that when the Board makes these investments, they have to monitor and make sure they get a return on those investments. There is a Board responsibility to make sure an investment pays off for the taxpayers. He said then the Commissioners can tell the citizens why they made that choice, and how it's made a difference.

There was a discussion concerning some of the other goals that were positive, as well as some that citizens were not happy with.

### **Strengthening the Northampton County Governing Team:**

#### ***Relationship between Chair and Board Members:***

Mr. Emory asked the Board how they elect their Chair for a term, and asked if there was a clear understanding about what the Board wants from their Chair.

- Commissioner Spruill said that the Board has never discussed who they want to speak for the County, it just happened. She stated that she is in agreement with however the fellow Board members want to handle it.
- Vice-Chairman Barrett stated that the Board would prefer the County Manager to handle certain issues, and some issues the Chair needs to address.
- Ms. Turner feels that this needs to be clearly defined (about what issues they want her as County Manager to speak to).
- Commissioner Deloatch is comfortable with the arrangement as it is now.
- Commissioner Carter feels that for day to day issues, the County Manager has more information and she can handle it. Then there are times where the Chair is able to speak for the Board.
- The Board consensus is that when issues come up, they will decide who will speak to it— day to day operations and personnel issues, the County Manager should handle; decisions that the Board has made, the Chair should handle; and they can represent themselves as individuals when asked questions from the media.

#### ***Relationship between Board and Manager:***

- Commissioner Carter asked Mr. Emory about the Chain of Command. Mr. Emory stated that the Board should give their Manager an opportunity to handle daily issues, and that they should let their Manager manage. He said following the Chain of Command is important to the whole team.

- Mrs. Roesler also brought up the idea of doing evaluations. Commissioner Carter mentioned that they do yearly evaluations for the County Manager. Mr. Emory noted that any feedback helps because the County Manager works at the pleasure of the Board. Mrs. Roesler stated that she would want to know before the end of the year if she's done something that the Board members didn't like, so they may want to extend that same courtesy to their County Manager.

***Relationship between Board and Staff:***

- There was a discussion concerning Board members going to Department Heads for information. Mr. Emory stated that Board members bringing information from a Department Head to a meeting without sharing with the Board is not a good idea.

***Relationship between Board and Other Agencies:***

- Mr. Emory noted that the Board should help the media get all the information that they need.
- He admonished the Board not to go into meetings with personal feelings towards another Board or Agency.

**Enhancing Economic Development in Northampton County:**

- Mrs. Roesler noted that most of the Commissioners listed Economic Development on their surveys, and she felt that issue is key for the Board. She asked them to think about the things they can make happen as Commissioners. She also asked them which issues would levy improvement.
- Gary Brown, EDC Director, gave a presentation that showed the businesses that are currently in Northampton County, and some of their pertinent information.
- Mrs. Roesler handed out the 2015 NC County Snapshots that contained information concerning Northampton County which can assist the Board in making Economic Development decisions based on citizen population and demographic facts.
- Mrs. Roesler gave the Board an exercise, to write down ideas concerning Economic Development. She had them write these ideas on sticky pads to discuss when the meeting reconvened after lunch.

***Break for Lunch***

**Enhancing Economic Development in Northampton County (con't.):**

Mrs. Roesler continued the Economic Development discussion.

- Some of the issues that the Commissioners wrote down in their exercise are as follows:
  - Develop strategies to promote the available land in Northampton County
  - Expand existing business
  - Urgent care facility/health service after 5:00 pm
  - Improve clinic services for mental health in the County
  - Cheaper transportation for lower income citizens
  - Partner with the Board of Education; focus on dialoging (fellowshipping) with them

- Expand food/retail businesses
- Create a continued/viable workforce
- Expand partnerships with Community Colleges
- Seek to draw professional people back to the County
- Healthcare for population over the age of 60 (senior citizens)
- Mrs. Roesler asked the Board to think about having a one day seminar that will address issues in the community
- Mr. Emory stated that utilities (water and sewer) are very important to coming businesses; and that offering incentives are a good tool to recruit new businesses

### **Understanding Northampton County's Revenue Position:**

- Mrs. Roesler mentioned items noted on the Board's surveys:
  - Short and long term budget needs
  - New revenue
  - Lower taxes
  - Delinquent tax collections
  - Eliminate wasteful spending
  - School Board request
  - Water bills
  - Prioritize Capital Improvement
- Mrs. Roesler gave out some financial information and statistics on Northampton County that reflects Revenue by Source, and Expenditures by Function for 2013-14.
- Mr. Emory stated that before you ask taxpayers to pay anything new, you should make sure they are paying what they should be paying already.
- In order to maximize revenue, Mr. Emory noted that the County should do Farm Audits and In Rem Foreclosures to collect what is already due.
- Mr. Emory noted that there is help at the State level—The Department of Revenue— that can help assist the Board to develop strategies.
- Mrs. Roesler asked the Board on the issue of utilities, what are some of the things they could do.
  - Chairwoman Greene noted that they are already checking caps to make sure the County is not losing water.
- Mr. Emory said that the Board should set up a meeting with the engineers concerning the water system, and make a strategy with the Towns about how to look at the big picture.

### **Capital Improvement Planning for Facility Needs:**

- Improvements the Board wants to see in five to 10 years (as written on their surveys):
  - Short and long term debt awareness
  - Capital Improvement financing plan- when one debt comes off, it frees up money for something else to come on
  - Good sound system (especially for events or large meetings)
- Mrs. Roesler stated that instead of doing what you can do each year as the money is available, you should at least have a five year plan for where your Capital needs are likely to be, set priorities, then put money into it. The Bond agencies look at this type of issue, and that can affect the County's rating.

- Mr. Emory asked the Board to think about the financing terms (years the County will be paying a debt) and the life of the building or long-term equipment. He told them to think of the Commissioners coming behind them when thinking about planning capital needs.
- Ms. Turner brought up a discussion concerning the old DSS building. She said USDA is prepared to partner with the County on loans and possible grant money for this building. If they wait until the first of the year, interest rates may go up.
- It was a Board consensus for the County Manager to move forward on this project.
- Ms. Turner also reminded the Board about County visions from the Department Heads. They will refer back to them when they do the budget.

**Recap:**

- Mr. Emory asked for the Board's feedback on he and Mrs. Roesler's facilitating (this was the first time they've facilitated a retreat for any of the counties).
- Mrs. Roesler will send Ms. Turner the list of Economic Development ideas that the Board listed, and her Power Point presentation
- Mrs. Roesler asked for the Board's comments on how they can make the retreat better:
  - Commissioner Spruill stated that there is nothing they could do to make it better. She said it was great.
  - Vice-Chairman Barrett said that the dialogue has been great. The facilitators encouraged openness and free discussion.
  - Chairwoman Greene liked the informality of the retreat.
  - Commissioner Carter felt that they've done the best job of any facilitators that he's experienced. He is pleased with what they did.
  - Commissioner Deloatch enjoyed them, and he is satisfied.
  - Commissioner Carter asked if they know of any funds from Raleigh, to let the Board know.
  - Mrs. Roesler said to protect the \$617,000 that the County will be getting in 2016 (from sales tax redistribution).

---

Michelle Nelson, Clerk to the Board  
"s.m. 11-17-15"