

IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BRIEFING MINUTES
APRIL 18, 2006

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met in Briefing Session on Tuesday, April 18, 2006, at 5:00 P.M., in the Iredell County Government Center (South Wing Conference Room), 200 South Center Street, Statesville, NC.

Present were:

Chairman Sara Haire Tice
Vice Chairman Godfrey Williams
Steve D. Johnson
Marvin Norman
Ken Robertson

Staff present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Deputy County Manager Susan Blumenstein, Assistant County Manager Tracy Jackson, Planning & Code Enforcement Director Lynn Niblock, Transportation Director Ben Garrison, Tax Administrator Bill Doolittle, GIS Manager Lee Anne Owens, Library Director Steve Messick, EMS Director Lee Darnell, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

CALL TO ORDER by Chairman Tice

RECOGNITION OF BOY SCOUT KYLE HAWKS: Chairman Tice recognized Boy Scout Kyle Hawks, a member of Troop 171, sponsored by Williamson Chapel Methodist Church in Mooresville, NC. Kyle's father, Robert, also attended the meeting.

CROSSROADS BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE UPDATE: David Swann, the CEO/Area Director of Crossroads, summarized recent changes made by the NC Department of Health & Human Services that will impact the local managing entity. The following summary was provided:

1. Utilization Management will be provided by Value Options: Swann said Crossroads had a "flawless" application to provide this service, but one vendor, Value Options, a for-profit organization, was selected for the entire state. (It was noted that this decision is contrary to the state's initial mental health platform -- this being that local government was the best source for coordination.)
2. Crossroads' Local Management Entity Funds will Suffer a 12.5% Reduction as of July 1: This loss is due to the utilization management change.
3. Crossroads Chosen as a Regional Screening/Triage/Referral Source: Crossroads has been approved to provide after-hours service as of July 1. (Added with Iredell, Yadkin and Surry counties were Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and McDowell counties. This service will be provided out of the Elkin office.
4. Governor Easley's Budget and the Budget for the Department of Health & Human Services will Withhold State Hospital Dollars: State hospitals are downsizing; however a new facility will be built and money will be directed towards its debt service. Mental health reform was supposed to transfer funds to the local communities for services; however, the money has not been sufficient enough to sustain the programs. Crossroads has tried to reduce its reliance on state hospitals, and an effort is being made to encourage legislators to provide the funding necessary to cover new services.

5. Grant Funds will Start a Mobile Crisis Management Service: A mobile team will be in place as of July 1 to assist individuals experiencing a crisis in Iredell, Surry and Yadkin counties. Team members will travel to the person's home, workplace, or nursing center.
6. Merger Investigation Subcommittee Established: Crossroads' board of directors will meet with the area authority boards of Catawba and Foothills (Alexander, McDowell, Burke & Caldwell Counties) to evaluate any benefits in merging the three entities.

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Swann said a cost savings could definitely be shown if an administrative "hub" existed. He said that when the Charter Hospital chain closed down, many private beds were lost. Swann said for hospitalizations, Crossroads mostly referred clients to Frye Regional, Broughton and Davis Community. He noted that Davis, however, did not accept any patients who were involuntary committed.

PRESENTATION OF OTHER AGENDA ITEMS: County department heads and staff then reviewed other items on the agenda. A summary of their statements may be found in the regular minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

REQUEST FROM THE COVENANT HOUSE OF STATESVILLE, A 501C-3 ORGANIZATION, FOR WASTE DISPOSAL EXEMPTIONS: (This request was initially discussed at the April 4, 2006 meeting.) County Manager Joel Mashburn read the following statement regarding suggested criteria to be used in the future when evaluating tipping fee waiver requests at the Solid Waste Department.

"After reviewing past actions of the county staff and actions by the board of commissioners concerning the waving of tipping fees for non-profit agencies, I feel there are justifiable reasons why each is permitted, and also reasons why others may also be justified as well.

"Back in the early 1990s, when the commissioners were considering the options for charging for disposal at the landfill, it was felt that whatever option selected should not only provide revenue to operate the landfill, but would encourage disposal at designated sites instead of encouraging illegal dump sites. It was felt that people would not be as likely to illegally dump if there was no financial gain. Therefore, it was decided to have an availability fee that would cover the cost of normal household waste so that residents would not be charged when they delivered their waste to a convenience center. For the most part, this has been a successful approach. Illegal dumping has been held down, and by making the transaction easier, there has been less reason for residents to avoid delivering their waste to the transfer stations.

"Along the line, however, it was recognized that some of our charitable organizations were providing a direct and valuable benefit to the citizens of Iredell County, but were in reality being hit with fees that were detrimental to the organization. A prime example of this was donations made to the Salvation Army. In looking at the waste brought in by the Salvation Army, it was determined that most of the waste brought in was items that would have been covered under the availability fee if it had been brought in by an individual citizen. Furthermore, the Salvation Army actually helped in our recycling efforts since they would go through the donations and pull out any item that could be reused or resold. I can recall that Ron Weatherman and I discussed this and felt that the tipping fee had literally already been paid, and it was not fair to charge it again. Rightly or wrongly, that is the principle that has been applied to other charitable organizations such as the Fifth Street Ministries. This practice was ratified in 2004 when the board of commissioners granted such a waiver to the Mooresville Christian Mission on its donations.

"There have been concerns expressed by some that if we are not careful, we will open the flood gates and every non-profit in the county will expect waiver of fees. Since there are over 100 non-profits in the county, the revenue loss would be sizeable. I personally don't feel that concern to be founded in fact. To begin with, not all non-profits, including schools, bring

waste classified as "household waste." Just because a child eats at school instead of at home does not make the lunchroom waste become household waste any more than restaurant waste becomes household waste because a person eats out instead of fixing their meals at home. In order for waste to be classified as "household waste," it must be waste generated by the occupants of a home carrying out normal daily living activities.

"Why do we waive tipping fees for certain waste for the NC Department of Transportation and all tipping fees for Iredell County departments? As to the NCDOT, we exempt only the waste they bring in from the roadside clean-ups. This is waste that has been picked up by volunteers who agree to pick up waste from along side the road, bag it up, and leave it for DOT to pick it up and bring it in. Who should we charge? The volunteer that takes their Saturday morning to do more than their part to keep Iredell clean, or should we charge the DOT for transporting the waste to the landfill? The greater good is being served by having the waste disposed of properly rather than on the roadside.

"If we look at the amount of fees waived from April '05 to March '06, the Solid Waste Enterprise fund contributed a little over \$39,000 for the benefit of the community. That is not even one percent of its budget. If we are going to operate the landfill like a business, even a business would contribute that much, or more, back to the community.

"With all the above being said, what is my recommendation concerning the request from Covenant House? My recommendation is that we use the same rationale as we have with other charitable organizations. If the items brought in are items that were donated to the charity, and would have been classified as household waste if brought in by an individual, then I say the fee should be waived. If the items brought in are waste resulting from the normal operations of operating a group home, then the fee should be paid. I also feel this same rationale should be applied to all charitable organizations as long as the waste is separated and easily identifiable.

"As far as charging county departments, I don't feel you can justify a waiver based on the above rationale; however, I do feel there is a way to make it a fair and simple transaction. Instead of charging each department when the waste is delivered, the solid waste department should record all transactions and submit a quarterly or annual billing to the finance department. The finance department could then credit the charges against the Cost Allocation Plan which recovers admin costs provided to the Solid Waste Disposal Enterprise Fund.

"Will the above cover every conceivable waiver request? It is doubtful, but it will provide some semblance of a standard guideline that could help to decide when future requests are made."

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Commissioner Williams concurred with the manager's suggestion, but he (Williams) emphasized that fairness and consistency needed to be applied in evaluating the waiver requests.

(The board requested for the manager to briefly review his recommendation at the 7:00 p.m. meeting in order for a formal decision to be made regarding tipping fee waivers.)

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Tice adjourned the briefing at 6:20 p.m.

Approval: _____

Clerk to the Board