

**IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**BRIEFING SESSION MINUTES**  
**JUNE 21, 2005**

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met in Briefing Session on Tuesday, June 21, 2005, 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, Finance Director Susan Blumenstein, Code Enforcement & Planning Director Lynn Niblock, Planning Supervisor Steve Warren, Subdivision Administrator William Allison, Chief Deputy Rick Dowdle, Social Services Director Don Wall, Chief Animal Control Officer Robb Tatham, Solid Waste Director David Lambert, Health Director Donna Campbell, Environmental Health Supervisor Kelly Sheeks, Allied Health Director Norma Rife, Emergency Management Director Tracy Jackson, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

**Call to Order** by Chairman Tice.

**Introduction of New Employees:** Assistant Finance Director Deb Alford and Richard McHargue, a new county planner, were introduced to the commissioners.

**Request from the Clerk of Court for a Discussion/Decision Regarding a Video Arraignment System Between the County Jail and the Mooresville Courthouse:** Clerk of Court Rena Turner and Chief Deputy Rick Dowdle explained the need for video arraignment equipment at the Iredell County Government Center-South (ICGC-S). Turner said the first year's cost would be \$60,000 along with the costs for the T1 telephone line costs. She said court was held on a regular basis in Mooresville, and the equipment would allow the judges to hear pleas, set bonds, and to conduct other proceedings using a video system with lines between the county jail and the ICGC-S. Turner said the Mooresville equipment would have a split screen to allow more participants (judge, witness, inmate and courtroom area).

County Manager Mashburn asked the complete costs for the system.

Chief Deputy Dowdle said the \$60,000 was inclusive. He said extra conduit and cabling was installed at the Mooresville facility when it was renovated. Dowdle said the system would save money because the sheriff's department would not have to transport inmates from the jail to the ICGC-South, plus a security risk would be eliminated.

The commissioners questioned where the funding could be found to pay for the system.

County Manager Mashburn said \$338,400 remained in federal equity funding, and this was the same fund that supplied the money for similar equipment at the Hall of Justice.

Chairman Tice asked if any grants might be available.

Emergency Management Director Tracy Jackson said Homeland Security funding was mostly being approved on a regional basis.

It was the consensus of the board to direct Mrs. Turner to seek a “firm” cost for the equipment. (Mrs. Turner said she would try to have the information available for the July 19 board meeting.)

Chief Dowdle said he would ask the Sheriff about the possible usage of the federal equity funds.

**Request from the Chief Animal Control Officer for an In-Range Pay Incentive for Employees Achieving the title of “Official Rabies Vaccinator”:** Chief Animal Control Officer Robb Tatham said the state offered a class for animal control officers interested in achieving the designation of “Official Rabies Vaccinator.” He said the public would benefit because animals adopted or reclaimed could be vaccinated prior to leaving the shelter. Tatham said in addition, the monthly rabies clinic could be conducted without a veterinarian.

Commissioner Robertson asked if the increase would be on top of the COLA and merit increase.

Tatham said yes.

Department heads in attendance then explained incentive programs available to their employees. Code Enforcement Director Lynn Niblock said his inspectors could take a state exam and achieve certifications that would entitle them to more pay. He said an inspector could actually be certified in all four levels of work (building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical) but starting from level one, it would take several years.

Chief Deputy Dowdle said incentive programs were helpful because they helped retain employees. He said law enforcement used an incentive program based upon the state’s point system for certifications or degrees (Associates, Bachelors and Masters).

Tatham was asked how many employees would be eligible, and he said the kennel and office staff -- five people. He said two people were already eligible.

It was the consensus of the board to delay action until additional information could be obtained. Specifically, what precedent would be established by approving the request. The board expressed a desire to maintain fairness and consistency while at the same time being mindful of the financial impact the incentives might have on the county.

**Request from the Health Department for Approval of a Budget Amendment for Two Environmental Health Specialist Positions and for Related Equipment:** Health Director Donna Campbell reported that in Statesville there was an eight to nine week septic tank permit backlog, and in Mooresville, the waiting period was between six to seven weeks. She said the Fast Track Program had not “taken off as fast” as once anticipated. Campbell said the state had conducted a manpower study and the results were shared with the board of health on June 9. Mrs. Campbell said the state’s personnel evaluation contained the following conclusions regarding the activities of the Iredell County’s Environmental Department.

- Iredell ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Top 5 NC Permit Producers in productivity.
- Iredell ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> out of nine contiguous counties in productivity.
- Iredell maintains high productivity despite the demands for septic systems of higher complexity than those issued in most Top 5 or contiguous counties.
- Iredell ranks a close 4<sup>th</sup> in statewide permit production.
- Iredell operates without a staff soils scientist and with a minimum of non-field staff.
- Iredell works with a majority of challenging sites compared to neighboring counties along with big permit producers, but the legal track record is excellent.

Mrs. Campbell also provided the following recommendations that were reviewed by the board of health on June 9.

- ▲ Hire two additional Environmental Health Specialists Positions for the onsite waste water program as recommended by the state.
- ▲ Obtain a salary study based on years of experience of the employees in the waste water program due to the statistical findings indicating that the Iredell County office was “highly productive.”
- ▲ Review/Adjust the fees to cover the costs for the two new positions and salary adjustments.
- ▲ Allow sufficient time for the staff to recommend hiring salaries and salary adjustments.

Campbell said the three employees hired last year would be fully certified soon, but additional manpower was needed. She said the initial cost for two environmental health specialists and equipment was \$141,640.00; however, the usage of two surplus vehicles would reduce the amount by \$28,000.

County Manager Mashburn said the additional costs would require a 30% fee increase.

Environmental Health Supervisor Sheeks said current permit fees were as follows:

Type I or II System	\$200.00
Type III System	\$330.00
Type IV-VI System	\$575.00

Commissioner Williams asked how Iredell’s fees compared with other counties.

Sheeks said they were comparable, but if there was an increase, Iredell’s might be higher. He added, however, that some counties might not be self-supporting or have a desire to cover the costs.

Chairman Tice said conversations with contractors and manufactured housing representatives revealed that they would favor an increase in permit costs if this would eliminate lengthy waiting periods.

Commissioner Johnson said that if the request for two additional employees were approved, and there wasn’t a dramatic increase in permits, he would expect the waiting period to go down. He said results would be expected.

**Other:** In discussing items pertaining to the ICGC-S, Commissioner Robertson asked about unused space. He said the Centralina Council of Governments was considering a relocation due to the high cost of Charlotte office space. Robertson suggested that County Manager Mashburn contact the Centralina officials to determine their interest in leasing space at the ICGC-S.

**Adjournment:** Chairman Tice adjourned the briefing session at 6:46 p.m.

Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

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Clerk to the Board