

**IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WINTER PLANNING SESSION MINUTES  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2003**

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met for a Winter Planning Session on Friday, February 14, 2003, 8:00 a.m., at the Agricultural Resource Center, 444 Bristol Drive, Statesville, NC.

Present were:

Chairman Steve D. Johnson  
Vice Chairman Godfrey Williams  
Doug Madison  
Marvin Norman  
Sara Haire Tice

Staff present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Finance Director Susan Blumenstein, Support Services Director Jim Vernon, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

Media in attendance during some segments of the session were:

Michelle Harrison, Statesville *Record & Landmark*  
Michael Roessler, Mooresville *Tribune*  
Kathryn Wellin, Charlotte *Observer/Iredell Neighbors*  
Emily Nantz, Adelphia News  
Cara Froedge, Statesville *Record & Landmark*

**CALL TO ORDER** by Chairman Johnson.

**REVENUE PROJECTIONS:** Finance Director Blumenstein gave an optimistic projection for the county's year-end revenues as of June 30, 2003. She said all of the county departments, with the exception of legal, would probably be under budget. Blumenstein estimated the June 30<sup>th</sup> fund balance would be around \$11,469,648, or 10.5% of the FY 02-03 budget.

Financial spreadsheets were shared with the commissioners, and there were concerns expressed about EMS reimbursements, especially since the fees were increased this year. Blumenstein said on-line billing was occurring with both Medicare and Medicaid, and the staff would be monitoring the payment procedures in the next few weeks.

**UPDATE ON 2003 REVALUATION:** Appraisal Supervisor Jim Deaton distributed information regarding the revaluation. He said 65,000 parcels were reviewed in 1999 compared to over 79,000 for this year. Deaton said most of the parcel owners would see an overall increased value ranging from 5 to 60%. He said some parcels would see a decrease, and this was primarily due to buildings and land being removed. He noted that most owners of large vacant land areas would see an increase and the same would occur with parcels where land or buildings had been added. Deaton said some might see an increase of more than 200%.

Mr. Deaton said the total percentage increase by townships for the county was 24.69%, and this was determined by the following townships' percentage of increase.

New Hope	39.54%
Union Grove	39.59%
Eagle Mills	44.69%
Sharpesburg	37.91%
Olin	31.90%
Turnersburg	34.50%
Concord	22.45%
Bethany	24.57%
Cool Springs	32.84%

Shiloh	24.92%
Statesville Inside	16.73%
Statesville Outside	20.92%
Chambersburg	20.86%
Fallstown	33.39%
Barringer	30.11%
Davidson	24.98%
Coddle Creek	22.21%

Deaton said many taxpayers requested that their property values be increased.

**IREDELL-STATESVILLE (I-S) SCHOOL SYSTEM'S 2003-2004 BUDGET UPDATE:** I-S Board of Education Chairman David Cash, I-S Superintendent Terry Holliday, I-S Finance Officer Terry Haas, and Dr. Julia Williams (I-S Facilitator for the Facilities Task Force) attended the meeting to discuss school needs.

Dr. Holliday requested in current expense that the funding level be restored to five percent, plus growth, over the FY 02-03 appropriation. In facility needs, he encouraged the commissioners to proceed with the Certificates of Participation issuance (\$24 million) for the following three projects:

- Renovations/additions at Harmony Elementary
- Renovations/additions at Scotts Elementary
- New K-5 school in the Brawley School Road area

Also, he said the Facilities Task Force would soon reconvene, and he encouraged the commissioners to fund any additional projects identified by this group.

Holliday said the system would experience a 20 to 30% increase in hospitalization costs during the coming year, along with retirement increases.

Dr. Cash said the system was trying to increase the teacher supplement. He said a four-year plan was being used to raise it to eight percent. (It is currently at six and a quarter percent.)

Dr. Williams said the task force findings would be available by June of this year. She said a new school for the southern sector was presently being designed. Williams said the core design would be for 800 students; however, the bids would specify 600 with an alternate for 200 more.

**MOORESVILLE GRADED SCHOOL SYSTEM'S 2003-2004 BUDGET UPDATE:** Mooresville Board of Education Chairman Frank Fields, Superintendent Bruce Boyles, Assistant Superintendent Barry Shepherd, and Finance Officer David Dutton attended the meeting on behalf of the Mooresville schools.

Dr. Boyles said the Woods School project would be finished once a sidewalk had been completed. He also said:

- the dropout rate was down two percent
- last year all of the schools in the system met expected growth predictions
- 80% of the schools were classified as “schools of distinction”
- the teacher turnover rate was declining
- the ten-year building program remained the same
- redistricting would probably occur in the future due to overcrowding
- increases in hospitalization and retirement costs were expected next year
- sufficient teacher supplements would be necessary for the “No Child Left Behind” mandate
- the system had contributed renovation funds to the Iredell-Statesville Bus Garage project (shared facility between the two systems)

Dr. Boyles said that for FY 03-04 current expense, the system anticipated an increase within five percent of the current per pupil budget, plus growth. In capital outlay, Dr. Boyles said the system would be planning projects for mobile classrooms, student safety improvements, debt service, technology, and long-range capital needs.

**MITCHELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S 2003-2004 BUDGET UPDATE:**

Presenting the college's budgetary information were Mitchell Board of Trustees Chairman Joe Troutman, Trustee Wally Riddle, Gary Johnson (Director of Facilities), and Dick Lefevre (Vice President of Finance & Administration). (Note: Commissioners Godfrey Williams and Marvin Norman also serve on the Mitchell Board. Dr. Doug Eason, Mitchell's President, could not attend the meeting to illness.)

Lefevre said the Mooresville campus addition and the renovations to the Montgomery building (main campus) were nearing completion. He said the college "badly needed" extra parking, and the Rotary Auditorium was in need of renovations. Pertaining to the operating budget, he said the college had been advised to reserve six percent.

Gary Johnson said the college expected bond money through year 2007.

County Manager Mashburn requested that a bond cash flow schedule be included in the college's FY 03-04 budget request.

A handout from the college indicated that for 2002, the enrollment count was 16,386 students, and that from 1997 to 2002, the full-time equivalent enrollment had increased by 32.28%.

**Presentation by  
Dr. Stephen Lilley, Department Extension Leader in Sociology  
from NC State University**

Approximately 50 local and state officials joined the commissioners, staff, and media for a luncheon where Dr. Stephen Lilley gave a presentation focusing on county growth issues. Some highlights from the presentation were:

- the county was becoming more urban.
- the county was having a rapid increase in the number of Hispanics and Asians.
- the county from 1970 to 1990, experienced a 95.2% increase in the number of people age 65 and over.
- the county's economy was changing from manufacturing to service industries.

**PRESENTATION FROM RICHARD TREXLER REGARDING THE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS (VFDs):** Attending the meeting in reference to the VFD study were: Richard Trexler and Rick Hall, Consultants with Emergency Services Education & Consulting Group (ESECG), and Fire Tax District Board Members Carroll Goodman, Frank Phillips, and Billy Trivette. Also in attendance were Fire Marshal Chuck Gallyon and Andy Webster, President of the Firefighter's Association of Iredell County.

On November 6, 2001, the board of commissioners agreed to allow ESECG to conduct a \$6,200 (plus \$700 for expenses) study on the fire departments' facilities, apparatus, and equipment. Consultant Trexler summarized his findings, some of which are as follows:

- A comprehensive Customer Centered Strategic Plan is needed.
- A strong recruiting program for daytime volunteers is needed.
- A study needs to occur to provide ways to correct the poor communication reception in some areas of the county.
- A copy of the county's emergency plan needs to be distributed to all of the VFDs.
- An upgrade to the county's communication's system is recommended to improve the North Carolina Response Rating Survey ratings.

Trexler said there were three departments not meeting the minimum level of manpower, and he said another three were just at the minimum.

Trivette said the fire tax board needed to know from the board of commissioners what level of fire protection to provide the citizens. He said many people had the misconception that the firefighters were paid.

Webster voiced concerns about volunteer recruitment. He said that as the senior firefighters aged out, there would probably be manpower shortages at some of the departments. Webster said that unless young people “got firefighting in their blood at an early age” that many of them preferred to use their spare time in second jobs to help support their families.

Gallyon said the state was requiring “more and more paperwork” making it difficult for the departments.

Trexler said many chiefs in the county were working a minimum of 20 volunteer hours a week. He stressed the importance of having adequate fire department manpower. Mr. Trexler said there was a “good response time at night, but in some departments it wasn’t good during the day.” He said that as the population increased, the problem would get worse.

Commissioner Williams asked Finance Officer Blumenstein what one penny on the fire tax would yield, and she said \$487,000, or a little less than a half-a-million dollars.

**EMERGENCY SERVICES REPORT:** Tracy Jackson (Director of Emergency Services), Sidney Weisner (Animal Control Supervisor), David Martin (Director of Communications), Lee Darnell (Director of Emergency Medical Services), and Chuck Gallyon (Fire Marshal), listed the following needs for their departments.

- Animal Control: additional personnel; more kennel space; updated software/hardware
- Communications: additional personnel; improved communication system; training and certification programs for telecommunicators
- Emergency Mgt: better training and appropriate equipment for responders; better preparation for realistic threats and hazards; improved communication/coordination between all of the emergency management participants/agencies
- EMS: additional facilities/vehicles/personnel/training/equipment; better focus on employee recruitment, development, and retention
- Fire Marshal: additional personnel/facility space; access to information technology that can be shared with responders

Weisner voiced concerns over new and larger breeds of animals being brought into the county.

Darnell said it took a “dynamic training system” to keep the paramedics up-to-date. He said over 85% of the ambulances had over 100,000 miles on them. Mr. Darnell said there were nine vehicles in the fleet, with six primarily being used, and the other three remaining for back-up. He noted that some of the bays were too small for the newer vehicles.

Gallyon said 75% of the vehicles in his department had over 100,000 miles. He said there had been an increased demand for plans review and inspections.

Martin said the call volume in communications had increased by 225% since 1999. He said efforts were being made to improve the E-911 system in an effort to recognize the location of cellular phone calls. Martin said there were four telecommunicators on each shift, but at times, the staff was down to three people. He noted that all of the employees were nationally certified, and they “did a super job.”

County Manager Mashburn said the fire departments always lost points in the “ratings” due to the number of dispatchers at the communications department.

**LAND REGULATIONS/ENVIRONMENT UPDATE:** Lynn Niblock, the Director of Planning and Code Enforcement, along with Ron Smith, the Planning Supervisor, joined the commissioners for this segment of the meeting.

Smith said many subdivisions were being developed, but they were smaller than what was seen in the past. He said approximately four acres per day were being developed, and this didn’t include the municipal areas. Smith said the planning office was seeing a decrease in rezoning cases; however, there were more conditional use requests.

Pertaining to demographics, Smith said the county was growing at a faster rate than the State as a whole. He said the fastest growing townships, by residents between 1990 and 2000, were Davidson and Coddle Creek.

Smith reviewed the balanced growth initiatives that were recently implemented and the ones currently being studied. He said the Highway 70 Corridor Study was scheduled for presentation to the planning board in March of this year, and after its completion, the staff would work on the small area plan for south Iredell. Smith mentioned the impact that the new Lowe’s complex would have in the southern end. He said there could be the potential for 3,000 new households, 6,750 new residents, and a traffic increase of up to 30,000 average daily trips.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS:** Support Services Director Jim Vernon shared information pertaining to the following eight projects.

1. **New library:** Cost estimate of \$6.6 million with construction to begin in June of 2003 and completion anticipated for September/October of 2004.
2. **Usage of Existing library:** Renovation costs anticipated between \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 to house the tax/GIS/mapping/revaluation offices and possibly the elections offices.
3. **Iredell County Government Center – South:** Project is on schedule with anticipated completion date in July of 2003. The North Carolina State Property Office is reviewing plans to consolidate all of its area offices in the building.
4. **New Social Services Building:** Cost estimate of \$5.5 million. The county already has the land at Eastside Drive for the new structure.
5. **Facility Services:** The staff desires to rent 5,500 sq. ft. of space on Meeting Street to replace storage space/building that will be demolished for the new library. The county is also storing surplus items at: the bookmobile building, Twin Oaks, Loray garage, and the animal shelter. In the future, the staff would like to construct a 7,500 to 10,000 sq. ft. metal building (shell) for facility services at the Eastside Drive property.
6. **Iredell County Government Center/Annex:** With the future placement of some of government center occupants in the Water Street library building, when vacant, the current plans are to enhance or provide more space for the Human Resources department and the support services/switchboard areas. To relieve crowded parking conditions, the Annex II building (revaluation/fire marshal offices) and the recreation bldg. will be demolished.
7. **Jail Expansion:** Lease documents are being reviewed by the Department of Corrections for the usage of the former prison site on Hwy. 21 as a satellite jail.
8. **EMS Base/South Iredell:** A request has been made for an updated sub-station to replace the former Lowrance Hospital station, along with an additional satellite station in the Brawley/Williamson Road area. Cost estimate for the two EMS bases is \$900,000.

**MOTION** by Commissioner Johnson to allow the county to rent space on Meeting Street from Robert Boggs at \$1,500 per month (5,500 sq. ft.) and for the funds to be derived from contingency for the remainder of this year.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

**Timeline for Capital Projects:** Commissioner Johnson asked the staff to prepare a financial timeline on when the capital projects could begin.

**MOTION** by Commissioner Madison at 5:15 p.m., to adjourn the Friday, February 14, 2003 segment of the Winter Planning Session.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

**Continuation of the Winter Planning Session  
Saturday, February 15, 2003  
8:00 A.M.  
Agricultural Resource Center  
444 Bristol Drive, Statesville, NC**

Present were:

Chairman Steve D. Johnson  
Vice Chairman Godfrey Williams  
Doug Madison  
Marvin Norman  
Sara Haire Tice

Staff present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Finance Director Susan Blumenstein, Support Services Director Jim Vernon, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

Media present: Michelle Harrison, *Statesville Record & Landmark*  
Michael Roessler, *Mooresville Tribune*  
Kathryn Wellin, *Charlotte Observer/Iredell Neighbors*

**UPDATE ON IREDELL COUNTY AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM (ICATS):**

Transportation Director Ben Garrison said that in July of 2002, Iredell County became the lead agency for transportation services. He said everything had been contracted out with the exception of administration. Garrison cited numerous problems with the current transport provider (Laidlaw Transit). Specifically, he said the provider was not reporting operating statistics, and it was not invoicing the user agencies in a timely manner. Garrison said social services had not been invoiced this entire year. Other problems he mentioned were trip denials, late pickups/no shows, poor staffing, and poor vehicle maintenance. Mr. Garrison said that due to the poor performance of the provider, he could not recommend for the contract to be renewed. In addition to the need for a better provider, Garrison mentioned the following needs:

- more fixed routes (early a.m. and later p.m. for work related needs)
- specialty routes (personal and work related)
- extended coverage hours
- Saturday and Sunday service
- improved coordination with other providers for out-of-county medical/other trips
- improved route efficiency overall

Garrison said “regionalization” of transportation services would probably be encouraged by the State in the future. He said that if the county assumed all aspects of the service, an operations manager would be needed for the dispatching, and the salary funds could be obtained from the State.

Mashburn said that if the county totally assumed the transportation services, the program could be operated as an enterprise, similar to solid waste.

Garrison said the present contract cost was \$1.25 per mile, but he felt the county could offer the service at \$1.20 per mile.

**MOTION** by Commissioner Tice to direct the staff to notify the transportation provider (Laidlaw Transit) that the present contract would terminate as of July 1 and Iredell County would operate the transportation program in-house in the future.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

**ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT UPDATE:** Elections Supervisor Becky Galliher said several precincts in the county had over 2,000 voters. She said money was being budgeted to split some of the precincts; however, the county was under a “hard freeze” until the redistricting case was resolved. Galliher said that by law, she could “temporarily” split only four precincts, but she planned to budget for eight.

She said the following eight precincts were the ones needing additional polling sites.

	<u># of voters</u>
Davidson 1	6,075
Davidson 2	4,888
Coddle Creek 4	4,322
Coddle Creek 3	4,235
Shiloh	4,234
Fallstown	4,138
Coddle Creek 2	4,070
Chambersburg	3,862

**MOTION** by Chairman Johnson to instruct the staff to insure that adequate funds were in the FY 2003-04 budget to divide the eight precincts with the understanding that only four might be allowable by law.

**AMENDMENT TO THE MOTION:** Commissioner Williams suggested that a specific number not be used and to simply say the staff was instructed to divide as many precincts as the money and the law would provide.

Johnson accepted the amendment.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

**PERSONNEL:** County Manager Mashburn shared statistical information pertaining to the number of employees in the county compared to other counties. He also shared a county budget comparison prepared by Cleveland County on the health department, sheriff’s department, and the social services department.

**Health Sanitarians and the Planning/Inspections Offices:** Mr. Mashburn said that in many areas of the State, the environmental health employees were located near the inspections/planning offices and employees. He said that in the future, an effort would be made to house these employees/services in the same building, or area, for a “one-stop shopping arrangement.”

Chairman Johnson asked about “streamlining” the inspections permitting process. He said some individuals had complained about how time-consuming the process was when compared to other counties.

Mashburn said new software was being studied to improve efficiency.

**PARKS CAPITAL RESERVE FUND:** Blumenstein said investment earnings of \$10,058 were added to the parks reserve fund in January and this left a \$794,420

balance. She said the Stumpy Creek Park Project still owed the fund \$80,910, and this payment could not occur until the board agreed to appropriate funds to the reserve fund.

Commissioner Madison said he felt the parks reserve fund should be maintained and funded. He said this way, the county would be ready if any other groups or sections of the county approached the board for a park.

Chairman Johnson said he was also in favor of appropriating any leftover recreation funds to the parks reserve fund.

**NEW LIBRARY UPDATE:** Architect Earle Gaulden (Craig Gaulden Davis), Library Director Steve Messick, Library Secretary/Bookkeeper Libby Stewart, and Library Assistant Zelma Flowers were present for a discussion regarding the new library.

Gaulden shared updated drawings for the exterior and interior of the building. He said the lower level of the structure could be used for future expansion. He also said the city officials had agreed to a variance due to Statesville's strict landscaping ordinance.

Commissioner Madison suggested that rather than leaving the lower level unfinished, that it be poured in concrete at the time of construction. He said it would be less expensive this way.

Gaulden said \$30,000 could be listed in the bid as an alternate for the concrete on the lower level.

(There was no opposition voiced from any of the board members about Gaulden's bid alternate for the lower level.)

Commissioner Williams asked if the building would be large enough to accommodate the genealogy/historical properties offices.

Mashburn said yes. He said the genealogy volunteers had asked about protection for their historical files, and he said fire-proof cabinets could be obtained. Mashburn said the genealogy workers currently housed their files in a vault, but it was not fire proof.

Mr. Gaulden then presented two color schemes for the interior carpet. Both color schemes (carpet swatches) were green in color, and the board members selected a woven variety costing \$26 a square yard.

The board members were also given two color choices for the roof -- a green one and a bronze one. The green was chosen.

**NEW DSS BUILDING:** County Manager Mashburn said \$359,000 was available in the capital reserve fund, and it could be used for the new social services building's design work.

**MOTION** by Commissioner Madison to allow the staff to proceed in seeking design proposals for the new social services building.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

**ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER:** Chairman Johnson requested the staff to review the possibility of adding more personnel at the communications center.

**UPCOMING BUDGET:** Commissioner Williams said he hoped the fund balance could be increased in the new year's budget -- up to 11%.

Chairman Johnson asked how much more in revenue the county would have this year if the tax rate remained at 47¢.

Mashburn said 20%.

Blumenstein said about \$9.9 million.

**RAIL SERVICE FROM CHARLOTTE TO MOORESVILLE:**

Commissioner Norman mentioned the proposed commuter rail extension from Charlotte to Mooresville. He said information on the project would be helpful.

Commissioner Tice said the Mooresville town office could provide information about the project. She said it was her understanding the rail extension would cost \$4 million a mile and the federal government would pay 80%.

Chairman Johnson said the county paid for a study in the past. He said that if the project were successful, there would be residential expansion, and the county would be left with the infrastructure costs.

Commissioner Williams said he felt the \$4 million should be used to improve the highway system.

Commissioner Madison said he felt that growth, annexation, and rail should be discussed with the Mooresville officials. (A joint meeting with the Mooresville officials was then discussed, but nothing was scheduled or arranged.)

Chairman Johnson said the staff could obtain the rail information from Mooresville, and share it with the board members.

**WATER SUPPLY:** Commissioner Madison suggested the establishment of a board to study the water resources in the county in terms of efficiency and long-range planning. Madison said the advisory board could coordinate with the providers to insure that there was efficiency in the usage of the water supply.

Mashburn said he understood the water board would not have any authority, it would be advisory, and it would basically work with the water suppliers. He said the staff would determine if anything was already established in this region.

Commissioner Williams then spoke and proposed the following:

- a. That a strategic appraisal of the practical availability of well water in the various settings of Iredell County be conducted.
- b. That a GIS-based supply and demand inventory of groundwater resources be conducted over the next 12-18 months in the county.
- c. That the inventory provide a foundation for water resource management and answer the following four questions.
  1. What are the overall groundwater resources of Iredell County, and how reliable and accessible are the resources?
  2. How does the availability of groundwater resources vary across the different environments of Iredell County?
  3. How does the current and expected demand for ground water in Iredell vary across the county?
  4. In what areas of the county are ground water resources unlikely to supply an adequate quantity of water to meet current or future demand?

Mr. Williams said Carolina Land & Lakes could provide the inventory at a cost of approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000. He mentioned that adjacent counties might also be interested and share in the cost. Williams said he was concerned about the groundwater

for various reasons, but one being that the county's economy depended greatly on agriculture. He said the inventory should include the municipalities.

**ADJOURNMENT:** **MOTION** by Chairman Johnson to adjourn the 2003 Winter Planning Session at 12:10 p.m.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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Clerk to the Board