

IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Winter Planning Session Minutes

Friday, February 24, 2006

Iredell County Public Library

201 North Tradd 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, Support Services Director Jim Vernon, Cooperative Extension Services Director Ken Vaughn, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

Media present: Kathryn Thier with the *Iredell Neighbors/Charlotte Observer*, Lee Ann Sherrill, with the *Iredell Citizen*, Daniel Goldberg with the *Statesville Record & Landmark*, and Louann Laubsher with the *Lake Norman Times*.

Call to Order: Chairman Tice called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M.

Financial Update: Deputy County Manager Susan Blumenstein discussed the factors contributing to the economic situation. She said the one cent sales tax, percentage wise, wasn't increasing as it had in past years. (Last year there was a 14% increase compared to this year's 8%.) Blumenstein said there wasn't much growth in the other sales taxes either.

Blumenstein estimated the fund balance, at June 30, 2006, would be at 14.25%. She predicted that \$4.3 million would be available for services after Medicaid and school appropriations were removed. Blumenstein said on Medicaid; however, all bills were paid at the state level, and the county never actually knew what the exact costs would be.

Economic Review: Terry Orell, Interim Director for the Greater Statesville Development Corporation, and Mooresville-South Iredell Economic Developer Melanie O'Connell Underwood joined the commissioners for this segment of the meeting.

Some of Orell's remarks are as follows:

- Sweden's furniture industry is looking at the southern United States for prospective sites. One Swedish company recently visited VA and NC.
- Economically, 2006 will be similar to 2005.
- Having available buildings is important in recruiting industry.
- More jobs are occurring in retail -- less in manufacturing.
- There is a probability that "back office" services might start in the county. (These are telecommunications, information systems, accounting offices, etc.)

Some of Underwood's comments were:

- The Angelou Economics Study recommends more regional partnerships.
- Statesville's Airport is an asset; however, a road between Mooresville and Statesville needs to be built. (All governmental entities between the two should provide money for the road project.)
- Mooresville needs a college that offers degrees higher than an Associates Degree.
- Mooresville has limited industrial space.
- Iredell County's Economic Development Incentive Policy needs to be revised (average wage and company investment requirements need to be reviewed).

Commissioner Williams said existing industries needed to be advised of the aid programs available to them.

Underwood said the Angelou Study had recommendations for existing industries.

County Manager Mashburn said the economic development offices planned to hire an individual to work specifically with existing companies.

Agriculture Update: Cooperative Extension Services Director Ken Vaughn said the amount of property in farms was decreasing, and most operations were becoming smaller. He said Iredell County continued to be the leading dairy county in the state.

Project Review/Capital Projects: Support Services Director Jim Vernon provided a spreadsheet revealing current and future capital projects. He said the new social services building would be occupied in late March, and the next project would be the conversion of the former social services building into fire marshal, and planning/code enforcement offices. He estimated this cost to be \$925,000.

Vernon then discussed the following projects:

- 2005-06 EMS additions at Meeting Street (training room enlargement, additional dorms, and enlarging the garage or bay doors)
- 2006-07 Facility Services (Location: Twin Oaks Road – 7,500 sq. ft. for storage/warehouse)
- 2006-07 Relocate Mooresville EMS base to former Health Department location (add garage or bay building)
- 2005-06 Relocate Crossroads Behavioral Healthcare to the Iredell County Government Center South (2nd floor)
- 2007-08 HVAC renovation at the Iredell County Government Center-South (eliminate boiler/chiller & replace with zone units)
- 2010-2011 New jail facility & New EOC at Eastside Drive

County Manager Mashburn said the Eastside Drive property was not a definite location for the new jail, but it was a site that could be evaluated. He said capital reserve needed to be increased from \$1.5 to \$2 million for the jail project.

It was mentioned that the construction plans for the new jail needed to include the possibility for vertical expansion.

In regards to the present jail facility, there was consensus to add another pod.

Vernon mentioned several planned in-house projects, assuming state law did not change the cost limit. He said an eight-inch sewer line was installed at the fairgrounds to serve the midway concessions, and the lift station would eventually be eliminated. He said new bathrooms would be built in the upper section of the fairgrounds.

Growth/Population Forecasting: Planning and Code Enforcement Director Lynn Niblock, Planning Supervisor Steve Warren, County Planners Richard McHargue, and Matthew Todd then shared demographic information.

Todd provided township populations and estimated the county would have 220,825 people in 2029. He shared projected enrollments for the two school systems, and he noted that single family building permits continued to increase, while mobile home permits were declining.

School Growth: Iredell-Statesville School representatives attending this segment of the meeting were Board of Education Chairman Dr. David Cash, Superintendent Dr. Terry Holliday, and Finance Director Kay Fulp. Joining the group from the Mooresville Graded School District were Board of Education Chairman Karen Hart, Superintendent Dr. Bruce Boyles, and Finance Director David Dutton. In addition, Mitchell Community College Board of Trustees Chairman Dr. Ralph Bentley, Trustee Wally Riddle, President Dr. Doug Eason, and Director of Facility Services Gary Johnson also attended.

Dr. Holliday said charter students needed to be included in school enrollment counts, and he said building permits were a key component in trying to project school growth or facility needs.

Dr. Boyles said the OR-ED Study did not include new subdivisions in the projected student enrollment counts. He said the number of students in the Mooresville system had doubled in the past 16 years. Boyles said many Town of Mooresville decisions affected the school system, and then, the school representatives had to seek relief from the county.

Commissioner Johnson said there was a need to retain the School Facilities Task Force, and the group should meet every six months or so. He requested the superintendents to provide periodic updates to the commissioners on facility needs.

The school superintendents, and college officials, were also asked to provide a listing of items (e.g., state approval process, rules, regulations) that might be eliminated in an effort to reduce construction costs.

Dr. Boyles said he didn't think there would be a "yield of considerable dollars," but the list might help.

Dr. Holliday said the state approval process was bureaucratic, and this level could probably be eliminated.

Commissioner Robertson asked the school officials if there were any other savings or money that might be converted for capital spending.

Dr. Cash said Iredell-Statesville was "pretty lean already."

Hart said current expense was used to educate the children, and the Mooresville System was about as "lean" as it could be.

Commissioner Robertson asked about the salary for the Baldrige lead teachers.

Dr. Holliday said there was no county funding in Baldrige. He said the program was in response to the "No Child Left Behind" mandate.

Dr. Cash said the Baldrige Program was new, and time was needed for the teachers to become accustomed to it.

Commissioner Williams asked how much Iredell County would receive from the state lottery.

Dr. Holliday said out of \$200 million, Iredell's share would be \$1.5 million. He mentioned, however, that Governor Easley had issued more mandates regarding capital. Holliday said the General Assembly was discussing a statewide education bond that would be distributed on a low wealth basis.

Dr. Eason said the community college would need additional classrooms in the near future.

Commissioner Williams mentioned that by 2008, child day care workers would need to hold an Associates Degree.

Dr. Eason added that day care center directors would need at least an Associates Degree by this fall. He said at the present time, over 100 students were enrolled in this type of degree program; however, many people didn't see the value of having an Associates Degree for such a low-paying job. In regards to construction costs, Dr. Eason said everything had to be approved in the state construction office.

Dr. Cash mentioned the three local healthcare facilities, and he said everyone needed to concentrate on ways to encourage some of Iredell's best students to remain in the county to live and work.

Dr. Boyles said much of the educational funding that should be coming to Iredell County was being directed towards low wealth counties. He asked the commissioners to seek relief from the county's General Assembly members about changing the distribution method.

Commissioner Johnson mentioned a past conversation with Mitchell Community College officials about discretionary money for real estate. He said it was the intention of the board of commissioners to retain the money in the general fund until the college had a need.

Dr. Bentley said Mitchell was landlocked, and when property became available, the college officials wanted the opportunity to move fast.

Commissioner Johnson mentioned the following three items regarding the Iredell-Statesville Schools.

1. Concerning the erosion problems at Harmony Elementary, adjacent property owners have spent their own money to correct the situation, and they will probably try to recoup their losses through the courts.
2. Concerning the Baldrige Program, the school officials were asked to be sensitive to the employees who were "at the end of their rope."
3. Concerning school funding, Johnson said, "If the Governor cuts your budget, we (board of commissioners) regularly send you more dollars."

Commissioner Williams mentioned the Certificates of Participation (COPs) totaling nearly \$50 million that were recently approved by the commissioners. He said the COPs issuance hadn't received much publicity, but the funds would be available for the schools.

In regards to Baldrige, Dr. Cash said, "A business can only be as good as the people who run it. Change is always painful. Most of the resistance is at the high school level. Teacher morale has improved due to the increased supplements. We will continue to monitor the morale, but each system is forced to show standards of improvement. You're either improving or declining. We have teacher mentors for the ones who ask. We are trying these programs, and hopefully, more teachers will want to try them. Many school systems are recruiting our principals who have been through the Baldrige Program."

Commissioner Norman asked that a representative(s) from the Mooresville Schools and Mitchell College be added to the School Facilities Task Force.

LEGISLATIVE LUNCHEON

North Carolina General Assembly Members in attendance were Senators Fletcher Hartsell and Dr. Jim Forestor, along with Representatives Julia Howard and Karen Ray.

Representative Howard said Medicaid was a major issue, and North Carolina was the only state in the nation that required counties to pay a fixed percentage of the state's costs. She said Medicaid was a "nemesis" for everyone, and the county's General Assembly representatives would continue to seek relief.

Representative Ray said Iredell County was fortunate to have seven advocates who had the county's best interests in mind.

Several topics were then discussed. Highlights are as follows:

Economic Incentive Program: The representatives were asked for assistance in changing the tier program.

Low Wealth Distribution Method for Educational Funding: The representatives were asked for assistance in changing the formula for educational funding, e.g., lottery, and any statewide bonds. (Change the formula by using number of students.)

Illegal Aliens & Impact of Unfunded Programs: Representative Howard said many agencies could not ask a person about their “whereabouts.” Howard mentioned legislation she had sponsored that had “died” in an appropriations committee.

High Cost of Prisons: The county jail is holding prisoners belonging to the state. It costs \$70 a day to house an incarcerated individual, and the state only reimburses \$40 a day.

Schools: The commissioners shared concerns about the state supplanting education funds for lottery funds.

Dr. Holliday said he thought bipartisan support could be found to encourage state officials to fund only current programs, or to not fund any new programs proposed by the Governor.

Loss of Sales Tax Refunds: The General Assembly members said legislation had been drafted to correct this problem.

Monetary Reversions: Dr. Eason asked for assistance in altering the method used for monetary reversions. Eason said he was working on his third reversion for this budget year. He said that if the state had to have the reversions, the colleges should be allowed to prepare them all at one time -- not spread them out through the entire year.

Salary Increases for College Staff: Dr. Eason also asked the representatives to look into salary increases for the college employees, similar to what had occurred for other schools. He said “parity” was needed.

Representative Ray said that when legislation was drafted concerning the issues, county officials would be notified. She said an effort would be made to recoup money for the Cattle Expo and Children’s Museum.

Human Resources

Medical Insurance Costs: Mark Browder with Mark III Brokerage, said the county’s health insurance claims continued to be high. He said five vendors on March 9 would provide proposals for the county’s coverage.

Human Resources Director Carolyn Harris said several “chronic claims” had been submitted in the past few months, and they had placed a heavy burden on the program, even with a stop loss. She said several options would be reviewed in the next few weeks. Harris said the county had 846 budgeted positions on the insurance plan, plus some retirees.

Mashburn said the county needed to start looking at the employees’ lifestyle habits.

Commissioner Norman said that before the county placed the costs on the employees, all options needed consideration. He mentioned the use of a wellness program.

Harris said the county was in the group benefits program with the county commissioners’ association. She said the association had chosen CIGNA Healthcare to provide claims administration.

Chairman Tice asked the current stop loss, and Browder said it was \$100,000.

Browder said that if the benefits did not change, the county could expect a 20% cost increase.

Commissioner Robertson asked how much money was in a 20% increase.

He was told it was a million dollars.

Harris said the county had 44 retirees on the plan.

Mashburn said the county currently had 250 employees, age 50 and over, who would probably choose to remain on the plan until they were 65. He said they would expect to have the coverage, but for the new hires, there was no requirement stipulating the county had to provide them with retiree coverage.

Pay Comparison Study: Human Resources Director Carolyn Harris said in the past, a private consultant had been hired to provide position and pay studies. She said now; however, that Administrative Officer Cynthia Eades could provide the studies that would insure that county salaries were in line with the job market. Harris said Eades was a graduate of Wake Forest University, and she also held a Masters Degree from UNC-Chapel Hill. Mrs. Harris said Eades had work experience in several county and municipal human resource departments.

Eades said the largest department that was evaluated this year was the sheriff's department, and five positions were recommended for changes; however, 68 employees were affected. She said across all of the occupational groupings, 77 positions were studied. Eades then reviewed a chart (as follows) about pay increases that were recommended to become effective July 1, 2006.

RECOMMENDATIONS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2006				
Occupational Group	Department	Position Changes By Department	# Employees Involved	Department Cost
<i>Trades/Crafts</i>				
	Support Services	2	2	\$ 3,732.52
	Solid Waste	6	7	\$13,307.80
<i>Para-Professional</i>				
	Elections	1	1	\$2,237.09
	Recreation	3	3	\$5,099.91
<i>Technical</i>				
	Tax Admin.	5	5	\$14,192.11
<i>Public Safety</i>				
	Sheriff	5	68	\$140,258.87
<i>Emergency Services</i>				
	Animal Control	3	4	\$6,885.62
<i>Professional</i>				
	Finance	1	1	\$2,958.65
	Human Resources	2	2	\$5,716.38
	Library	1	1	\$3,932.85
TOTAL				\$198,321.80
Across all occupational groupings, 77 positions were studied, involving 304 employees. Recommendations for changes were made for 29 positions, involving 94 employees.				

Eades said a four-year study cycle had been devised, and she would review occupational groupings instead of particular departments. She said it was best to use this method, because if an office support specialist position was studied in the sheriff's department, the same position might need to be studied in social services. Eades said horizontal equity needed to be maintained with each department. A chart showing the four-year cycle is as follows:

Four Year Cycle on Pay Comparisons	
Year 1 <i>(Studied during 2005-06. Any changes to be effective 07/01/06)</i>	Trades & Crafts Positions (72 positions) Para-Professional Positions (93 positions) <i>165 total number positions</i>
Year 2 <i>(To be studied during 2006-07. Any changes to be effective 07/01/07)</i>	Administrative Support Positions (151 positions) Technical Positions (66 positions) <i>217 total number positions</i>
Year 3 <i>(To be Studied during 2007-08. Any changes to be effective 07/01/08)</i>	Public Safety Positions (171 positions) Emergency Services Positions (80 positions) <i>251 total number positions</i>
Year 4 <i>(To be Studied during 2008-09. Any changes to be effective 07/01/09)</i>	Professional Positions (169 positions) <i>169 total number positions</i>

Eades said approximately 200 positions would be studied each year. She said Year 3 would have a little more, but horizontal equity was needed in the public safety positions. Eades said that in addition to the market survey, the employees were asked to update their job descriptions. She said if a job description didn't exist, one was created. Eades said consultation occurred with the department head who was asked about any internal or vertical equity concerns.

Incentives: This was on the agenda; however, the county manager said a plan had not been developed for an employee incentive program. He said the staff was still trying to create a plan.

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Recreation Update/Future Park Planning: Recreation Director Robert Woody shared a North Iredell Park master plan. He said in March of 2006, a budget for the proposed park would be developed using assistance from the consultant (Site Solutions). Woody said every "inch" of property would be used.

Support Services Director Jim Vernon said the northern park would require less infrastructure, due to the topography, than the southern park.

Commissioner Williams asked if the other two quadrants (east and west) were showing any interest in a future park.

Woody said the west Iredell residents were searching for property, and the members of the Recreation Advisory Board were the community contacts. Mr. Woody said a park fund was established in 1992, and any surplus in the recreation budget at year's end was appropriated to the fund. He said later, due to state funding cuts, the surplus began going into the county's general fund. Woody asked about re-implementing the previous budgetary method.

Commissioner Johnson suggested that \$25,000 be placed in the park fund, plus any recreation budget surplus at year's end.

County Manager Mashburn suggested \$40,000 due to having four quadrants (easier split of \$10,000 to each sector).

Commissioner Robertson suggested, and the other board members agreed, to budget the \$40,000 to the park fund as a minimum, with an agreement that the commissioners would look at the overall needs of the county at budget time.

Health and Human Services: Health Director Donna Campbell said that on February 23, 2006, the Board of Health met and approved a 2006-07 budget that had a 0.86% decrease from 2005-06. She said that since 9-11, the role of the health department had changed, and much collaboration had been occurring with the county's emergency management department, especially in regards to emergency shelters and pandemics. Mrs. Campbell said much emphasis would be placed on educating the public about disaster and health situations, and federal funds would assist.

Crossroads Behavioral Health: Crossroads Director David Swann commented on the Crisis Center, and he noted there were only six in North Carolina. He said the center provided 24-hour service, and its purpose was to decrease state hospital admissions. Swann said the Crisis Center provider had been notified that compliance was expected in (1) reducing hospital admissions (2) reducing transports out of the county and (3) evaluating involuntary patients rapidly when possible. He said a meeting would be held on March 3, 2006, regarding the provider's confirmation or intent to meet the three criteria. Swann said a telemedicine line would be installed whereby commitments could occur via webcan. He said the technology was a little slow; however, it could occur at \$600 "per set." Swann said a "dedicated T line" was needed.

Swann then mentioned the following seven items that Crossroads and the provider network had no control over when evaluating/treating involuntary "respondents." He said the items impacted the amount of time needed for the process. The items were:

1. No control over how long it takes law enforcement to get the patient to the Crisis Center.
2. No control over how long it takes for lab tests required by a receiving hospital to be completed at a local hospital.
3. No control over how long it takes for medical stabilization for a patient with an acute or chronic illness.
4. No control to force hospitals to admit when hospitalization is necessary.
5. No control over the type and condition of patients who present.
6. No control over the bed capacity and availability at Broughton State Hospital.
7. No control over the number of denials required by Broughton Hospital prior to admitting the patient.

Mr. Swann then presented two graphs with one depicting the number of admissions to state facilities from July-January 2005-06, and the other showing the time spent by the law enforcement officers at the Crisis Center from October-January for 2005-06. Swann said the graphs showed a decrease both in admissions to state hospitals and the amount of transport time for the deputies.

Social Services: Social Services Director Don Wall said the Medicaid budget was about 79% of the DSS budget. He said that in the past five years (2000-01 to 2004-05) the county's actual expenditures had increased by 49.6%. He continued by saying the expense for Medicaid would only increase due to (1) continuance of the shifting of costs to the county level (2) "baby boomers" accessing the program (3) increased health care costs (4) state insurance for 0-5 aged low-income children being switched to Medicaid (5) more Hispanic children being born in the county, and (6) poverty income guidelines increasing which made more people eligible.

He said only one Medicaid worker provided assistance in Mooresville, and this was inadequate to meet the overall need. Mr. Wall offered the following options regarding the Mooresville DSS presence.

1. Completely close the office and let citizens apply for services by travel to Statesville, by mail, or by telephone.
2. Continue current limited service.
3. Provide full service satellite office.

Mr. Wall noted several federal cuts that would impact the child support program, along with significant cuts from the state in child day care funding.

Adjournment: At approximately 4:15 p.m., Chairman Tice recessed the meeting for a tour of the new social services building located on Eastside Drive, in Statesville. (The retreat will resume on Saturday, February 25, 2006.)

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Saturday, February 25, 2006

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, Support Services Director Jim Vernon, Cooperative Extension Services Director Ken Vaughn, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

Media present: Kathryn Thier with the *Iredell Neighbors/Charlotte Observer*, Lee Ann Sherrill, with the *Iredell Citizen*, Daniel Goldberg with the *Statesville Record & Landmark*, and Louann Laubsher with the *Lake Norman Times*.

Call to Order: Chairman Tice called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Emergency Services: Emergency Services Director Tracy Jackson said most emergency service offices were experiencing an increase in the demand for services; however, there was a slight decline in Animal Control.

David Martin, the Communications Director, said two new telecommunicator positions would be requested in next year's budget, and there were plans to add two more console workstations. (This will make six stations.) Martin said in revenues, there had been a decrease in land-line phones, but an increase in wireless. He said the simulcast project was slated for completion soon, and a new tower would be needed in Statesville. He said there was a 99-year lease for the WFMX tower; however, with new station ownership, future plans were unknown. Martin said he felt the county should own its own tower somewhere in the Statesville area. He said a 300-foot tower would probably cost \$125,000 assuming the county already owned the land.

Commissioner Norman asked if Crescent Electric's tower would meet the county's needs.

Martin said he would review the suggestion.

EMS Director Lee Darnell said that in the next five years, the county might partner with the volunteer fire departments in the usage of ambulances. He said a quick response vehicle was at the Lake Norman VFD, and another one would soon be based at the Trinity VFD. Pertaining to NuCare, Darnell said he continued to monitor the private ambulance service. He said NuCare's service was improving, and the new manager was trying, but there continued to be some areas needing improvement. Darnell said the EMS revenues had increased, and this was due to outsourcing.

Fire Marshal Lloyd Ramsey said his office provided all of the services rendered by the inspectors in the inspections department with the exception of residential. He noted that most counties charged fees for construction and operational permits; however, Iredell County had eliminated the charges about two years ago. He said the fire marshals devoted much of their time to new construction. It was mentioned that the fire marshal's office would move into the former social services building when renovations were finished, along with the code enforcement, planning and zoning departments.

Emergency Management Director Tracy Jackson said a full-time emergency management coordinator would be requested in next year's budget.

Animal Control: Jackson said dog and cat adoptions had increased in 2005. Joining Jackson and Animal Control Director Robb Tatham to discuss a proposed south Iredell adoption shelter were Margaret Lane and Sandy Mills.

Proposed South Iredell Adoption Center: Mills said a private group called "Friends of Animals" proposed to raise \$2.5 million to build a shelter (8,000-10,000 sq. ft.) in south Iredell. She said the facility would be leased to the county, and it was estimated the operating expenses would be \$150,000 a year. Mills said the proposal would have the county paying the operating expenses (staffing, supplies, and utilities).

Lane estimated the current county cost for the officers to drive back and forth to Mooresville to be around \$35,000 a year.

Commissioner Norman asked when the group would be ready with a facility.

Mills said the capital campaign would take two years.

Lane said the group "was looking at coming up with all of the capital funds for the facility."

Commissioner Norman asked the staff to determine the transportation costs (travel from Statesville to Mooresville and return).

Tatham said the costs would be provided.

Landfill Future Operations: Solid Waste Director David Lambert said the average county citizen produced more waste (2,995 lbs) a year, than North Carolina's estimated average (2,540 lbs.). He said in addition, the average person in the county recycled less than the average North Carolinian. Lambert predicted that in 10-to-12 years, the county would not have available landfill space. He said planning needed to start now, especially since it took five years to obtain a landfill permit.

Lambert said waste baling began in Iredell County 12 years ago, but few counties now used the method. He said Municipal Engineering did a compaction test revealing that 995 lbs. of "baled" waste could be packed in a cubic yard compared to 1,247 lbs. of "loose fill." Lambert gave the pros and cons of the two disposal methods, and he recommended changing to "loose fill." Additional recommendations were as follows:

- Convert existing (baler) floor into a combination transfer station and recycling floor
- Utilize baler for only recycling
- Send waste directly to landfill
- Eliminate three balers
- Eliminate 3 baler positions (place one at West Iredell Transfer Station)

Lambert noted the need for future transfer stations in other sections of the county. He said the "highest concentration" of recycling was occurring in the Central School community. He mentioned the need for a recycling program in Mooresville.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the revenue stream (\$26 household fee) would bring in enough to purchase more land.

Blumenstein said money could be borrowed from retained earnings.

Mashburn said the staff wanted to request proposals from engineering firms about modifying the baler floor.

Commissioner Norman requested the county manager to write a letter to the Mooresville Town Manager requesting that Mooresville start a recycling program.

Code Enforcement, Planning & Zoning: Lynn Niblock, the Director for this department, along with Planning Supervisor Steve Warren and Planners Richard McHargue and Matthew Todd said they would refine the demographic or population figures presented at the Friday session. They briefly reviewed several programs initiated in the past few years and reported that most nuisance complaints centered around junked vehicles, stormwater, noise, or dilapidated housing structures. Niblock stated a structure had to be in poor condition before his office could take any corrective measures.

Chairman Tice asked if stricter rules could be imposed.

Niblock said if the board desired, the ordinances could be revised. He said the health department would have to inspect any sites that might be health hazards. Niblock said law enforcement officers had problems writing noise ordinance citations because they actually had to hear or witness the violations. Mr. Niblock also addressed the problem of enforcing ordinances in the extra-territorial zoning jurisdictions.

Dilapidated Housing Ordinance: A discussion then occurred about dilapidated housing structures. Niblock said that what might be useful in the Brawley School Road area might not be desired by the residents in north Iredell. He said many “old home places” or buildings might have a use in the northern area of the county.

Mashburn asked the commissioners if a draft nuisance ordinance was needed. There was consensus from the board that something should be drafted.

USA: In regards to the Urban Services Area boundary (USA), Niblock said Troutman had rescinded its annexation petition. He said a charrette would be held in March about the mixed-use development planned for I-77/Exit 45.

Commissioner Johnson requested the staff to convey to the Statesville officials that the county was ready to complete the USA once Troutman’s issues had been resolved. (Niblock said he would talk to the Statesville Planning Director.)

Duke Relicensing: Warren said a Duke Relicensing meeting was scheduled March 1 & 2 in Charlotte, and an overview of the agreement in principle would be given. Commissioner Robertson said he would attend the funding segment of the meeting.

Signage: Commissioner Norman mentioned the need for signage to inform the public about the location of the Statesville Airport.

Mashburn said the county could erect the signage.

Illegal tire/debris dumping: The board members discussed the problem of tire and trash dumping in some areas of the county.

Niblock said a solid waste officer enforced the regulations pertaining to trash and tire dumping.

Mashburn said there might be more solutions to the problem.

Stormwater Ordinance: Commissioner Robertson asked about future plans for the stormwater ordinance.

Niblock said verbiage was inserted into the subdivision ordinance to address curb and gutter, which addressed velocity and quantity of water. He said grading permits were placed in the zoning ordinance to address runoff from individual lots. Niblock said the grading (permits) solution could be evaluated, and this was because a person could either see or not see silt running into the road. He said a professional engineer would be needed; however, if more language to address velocity was needed.

Warren added that to have a more aggressive stormwater program, additional staffing would be needed.

Commissioner Johnson asked the costs.

He was told it depended on what type of ordinance was written, and a “bare bones ordinance” might take another person (Grade 64) with a vehicle, and the cost would be approximately \$68,000. Niblock said a more complex ordinance would require an engineer, and the annual salary range used by municipalities for this position was \$56,305 to \$92,000.

Mashburn said an ordinance to address the velocity issue would have to be drafted along with an administrative mechanism for enforcement. He said the document would then be shared with the board members.

Niblock said the more guidance the staff could obtain from the commissioners, the easier it would be to draft the ordinance.

Chairman Tice asked if the landscape ordinance revisions were helping.

Niblock said it was too early to evaluate. He said initially, however, the landscaping rules appeared to be helping.

There was board consensus for the staff to draft a more stringent stormwater ordinance.

LUNCHEON WITH PLANNING BOARD

Joining the commissioners and staff for lunch were Planning Board Chairman Eric Fields, and Planning Board members, Harry Tsumas, Tom Stephens, Jerry Santoni, Harold Pruitt, and Alan Williams.

Tsumas said the county was becoming urbanized. He said the developers would build where they were told, and even this group didn’t want the county to become too urban. He requested that in the future, the commissioners look at “quality” developers. Tsumas said (1) future ordinances needed to be clear or easily understood (2) the USA was an excellent concept, and (3) the county had infrastructure needs. He stressed the importance of seeking input from all stakeholders when decisions were being made, and he referred to the water tank ordinance. Tsumas raised concerns about residential agricultural zoning, and he said this type of zoning was basically, “no zoning.”

Santoni said stormwater was a problem, and solutions needed to be found before “neighbor wars” started. He said that in finding solutions to some of the county’s problems, everyone needed to “start thinking out of the box.” Santoni requested that adjacent county ordinances be reviewed in an effort to find “protective” methods to handle growth.

Warren said Lincoln County tried to enact an adequate public facilities ordinance, but it was voted down. He said many people would be unhappy with some of the newer growth control measures.

Fields said clear communication between the planning board and the commissioners was needed. He said it was important to have priorities, and it was also important to know what the “hot button issues” were.

Chairman Tice agreed with the need for project prioritization.

Commissioner Johnson said the commissioners did not want to appear “indifferent” to any issues or projects facing the planning board members, and he encouraged them to share concerns.

Commissioner Williams asked the planning board members to share information on what was needed to plan for the future, especially in regards to the expected population growth. He asked what would be expected of the farmers. Williams said the

planning board members needed to say if any “tools” were needed from the commissioners to address the issues.

Fields said there seemed to be much “catch up” work occurring in regards to the growth that had already occurred. He said it was important to provide direction for the future, and it was just as important to have a “thick skin” to implement the direction or vision.

Mashburn asked if there was a “unified vision” on where the county needed to be in 20 years.

Fields said the vision fell upon the commissioners, with input from the planning board and staff.

Commissioner Johnson said small area plans needed to be continued.

Voting Centers for One Stop Voting: Board of Elections Chairman Alan Carpenter, and Elections Board Member Jim Dobson, along with Elections Director Becky Galliher presented proposals for a one-stop voting center at the Union Grove Fire Department and the Mooresville Town Office. They said the centers would be ready for the November general election at a cost of \$14,224 in Union Grove and \$16,516 in Mooresville.

Connect CTY: John Schmidt said his company, Connect CTY, could provide a real time communication system to alert county citizens about accidents, health concerns, and/or disasters. He said no hardware, software, or additional phone lines were needed, and about 393,000 calls could be placed in one minute. He said the difference between this system and Reverse 911 was the speed. Schmidt said Reverse 911 was about 25 years old, and only 16 calls could be placed at a time. He said the Connect CTY cost would be \$171,000 annually per line.

Mashburn said Mr. Schmidt had been invited to the retreat to inform the board members about the system’s availability and cost. He said that if the county wanted to pursue the technology, the municipalities would be asked to share in the cost.

Goals

County Manager Mashburn mentioned the Visions Project or the Strategic Planning Process that occurred in the late 1980s. He asked the board members if they felt a similar project, or a comprehensive approach for future planning, was again needed.

It was the consensus of the board members to allow the manager to proceed with the strategic planning process. Mashburn said he understood it would be up to him to draft a blueprint for the plan that would be broad in scope initially, with later components to be narrowed down.

Commissioner Robertson said caution was needed “on how far down the road the board chose to look and the chosen projects.” Robertson said answers to the following three questions needed to be included in the plan.

1. What level of population growth does the local government think it can manage?
2. Where do we put industry?
3. How do we retain agricultural interests in the county?

Tracy Jackson asked for emergency service needs to be included in the plan.

Commissioner Norman mentioned the groups or programs already in place. He mentioned the School Facilities Task Force, the Angelou Study for the Mooresville area, the Farmland Preservation Board/Program, and the study being conducted by the City Statesville. He said the pieces were already in place for a plan. Norman said the emergency services component just needed to be added.

Commissioner Johnson said a comprehensive vision was needed. He said to a large degree, regional planning needed to be resisted. Johnson said if not, Iredell's citizens would be paying the debt for Charlotte. In regards to water and sewer, Mr. Johnson said he wasn't as concerned about sewer as he was about future water needs. Johnson cautioned about giving in to special interest groups when creating a future plan, especially in regards to light rail.

Chairman Tice said a visionary plan could be used as a road map. She mentioned that bipartisan participation helped in the past strategic plan, and anything created in the future would also need this type of assistance. Tice said at least one commissioner served on each of the plan's subcommittees.

Capital Project Plan

Commissioner Johnson said the capital project plan listed a new jail facility in FY 2010-2011. Johnson mentioned concerns about the project being so far out in the future.

Mashburn said the jail project could be done in phases.

Blumenstein said planning would start in 2008-09. She said revaluation would help bring additional revenue for the project.

Commissioner Williams said the tax base affected the fire departments. He said it was becoming difficult for some VFDs to provide service due to the shortage of volunteers. He said as far as future planning, the county needed to think about how fire service would be provided, and the service might need to be different from one area of the county to the other.

Adjournment: At approximately 3:00 P.M., Chairman Tice adjourned the 2006 Winter Planning Session. (Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 14, 2006, at 5:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M., in the Iredell County Government Center, 200 South Center Street, Statesville, NC.

Approved: _____

Clerk to the Board