

**IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WINTER PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2007**

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met for a Winter Planning Session on Friday, February 23, 2007, 8:00 a.m., at the Agricultural Resource Center (444 Bristol Drive, Statesville, NC).

Present were:

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

Staff present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Deputy County Manager Susan Blumenstein, Assistant County Manager Tracy Jackson, Acting Planning Director Steve Warren, Cooperative Extension Director Ken Vaughn, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

CALL TO ORDER by Chairman Norman.

REVIEW OF BUDGET INFORMATION: Deputy County Manager Blumenstein said the fund balance available at July 1 was estimated to be \$23,821,711 and this would be equal to 15% of the FY 08 expenditures. She said the tax department had estimated a 16% increase in real value revenues.

Blumenstein said the Iredell-Statesville school project reserve fund would have approximately \$2 million.

Commissioner Robertson said \$70 million would soon be needed for high schools. He said a general obligation bond would have to be “loaded” to pass, and he asked if a mechanism could be found to hold money aside to assist with a Certificates of Participation.

County Manager Mashburn said some counties used this method. He said a few years ago, the county built up its capital reserve, strictly for county facilities, but the money was directed towards the new Lakeshore Elementary. He added that in 2011, about \$10 million would be needed for a jail.

AIRPORT ACTIVITY REPORT: Statesville Planning Director David Currier, along with Statesville Finance Director Lisa Salmon, shared information about the airport. Currier said there many inquiries from companies needing hangar space, and a development master plan was being created. He said that when the plan was available, the city would approach the county for property acquisition assistance. Currier said the airport was a valuable asset bringing in \$166.6 million in taxes during 2006 compared to \$15.9 million in 1998. He said Statesville required corporate clients to have \$5 million in tax base and sign a 25-year lease.

Commissioner Tice asked if a connector road for Lowes was included in the master plan.

Currier said the plan’s focus would be on acquiring property and hangar space; however, Lowes could be placed “in the mix.”

Thomas Hazel, the fixed based operator, said the airport had transitioned from a recreational aviation center to corporate, with the last hangar being built 2000. He said the bulk of today’s traffic was from Lowes’ vendors, or from the NASCAR industry.

Salmon said Statesville had loaned funding to the airport for the recent runway extension project with the understanding the money would be repaid once grants were received. She said the balance of the loan (principal) was \$2,640,000.00, and the county’s reimbursement to the city was one-half of the loan’s payment each year. Salmon said in March of this year, the city’s loan would probably be paid off. She said the city, thus far, had invested \$2,467,579 in the project, but not all expenses had been included.

Commissioner Johnson said there wasn't any development space left, and he requested the other board members to remain receptive about acquiring more property. He added, however, it would have to be shown that any assistance would eventually pay for itself.

MINIMUM HOUSING CODE PRESENTATION: Inspections Director Lynn Niblock presented a proposed minimum housing code. He said the ordinance would give his office "more leverage to work with stick built as well as mobile homes."

Mashburn said employees would not be circulating through the county looking for violations, rather they would be investigating citizen complaints.

Commissioner Williams mentioned concerns about farmers having farm workers residing in mobile homes. He also mentioned concerns about "old home places" being used for storage and how the public might misconstrue this usage. He said it would appear that many of the older mobile homes might be taken to the landfill for disposal.

Mashburn said disposal of some of the more unsightly mobile homes was one reason why the ordinance was drafted. He said additional funding would be needed for enforcement, and these costs could be included when the code was presented for further action.

ACTION The staff will present the ordinance at a March board meeting for further review and/or adoption. (Enforcement costs will be included.)

COURT FACILITIES: Register of Deeds Brenda Bell, Clerk of Court Rena Turner, District Attorney Garry Frank, and Superior Court Judge Mark Klass attended this segment of the meeting.

Assistant County Manager Jackson presented a court facilities utilization study prepared in 2006 by Chris Page, an intern in the county manager's office. He said the study revealed that court space was becoming insufficient, and some areas were not efficiently used.

Chairman Norman asked about having night court, along with limiting the number of family or friends who could accompany someone in the courtrooms.

Turner said only those persons with a court case were allowed in the courtrooms. She said law enforcement officers did the traffic court scheduling, and more than 100 people might show up. She said E-citations would be used in the future, and this would help. In regards to night court, Turner said having adequate staffing was one reason why this option had not been used. She said employees were scheduled from 8 to 5, and there were only two cashiers.

Frank said night court for traffic offenses was "doable," but there would have to be coordination. He said the dockets for traffic, Superior and District court had high numbers of cases, and more weeks of court would help. Frank said the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) prepared the calendar, and one extra week of court was recently added.

Bell said many people complained about the Hall of Justice parking situation. She said people did not realize parking was available near the Board of Elections' Office.

Commissioner Robertson asked if adding another court location was possible.

Frank said it was easier to have civil cases in an alternate court facility, but criminal cases needed to be near the jail.

Commissioner Williams asked if another courtroom in Mooresville would help.

Turner said she would prefer having a centrally located place.

Commissioner Robertson asked if the problem centered on needing more court space or needing more judges.

Frank said both. He said four new assistant DAs were recently hired, but it would take at least a year to gauge their effectiveness with the court docket.

Robertson asked if cases were being dropped due to the space problem.

Frank said, periodically, victims might not pursue a case because it had been continued so many times, but this was just a small percentage. He said the courts right now needed to focus on correcting the perception that people were being treated like “cattle.” Mr. Frank said his employees were at capacity now, and any additions would create a need for more office space.

Robertson asked if the county should be building court space or jails.

Frank said a long-term plan was needed. He said the jail housed many transients.

Commissioner Tice asked why the Mooresville facility wasn’t being used for Superior Court.

Frank asked if driving to Mooresville was an efficient use of the officers’ time.

Turner said the Mooresville building was being used four days a week.

Mashburn said it was difficult to determine the root cause of the problems, and he asked, “What needs to happen to fully utilize the Mooresville facility?” Mashburn said incremental expansion at the Hall of Justice needed to be explored, along with looking at the population to determine the best site for a criminal court complex and jail.

Commissioner Johnson said the AOC determined the Superior Court docket. He said unless the AOC scheduled more court days, any added space would be useless.

Frank said one more week of Superior Court was recently added.

Turner said, “Our design is fine, but we need more space.”

ACTION: Chairman Norman suggested that a study committee be appointed to comprehensively review the matter and to make a recommendation. It was agreed the committee would include:

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| Commissioner Sara Haire Tice
Commissioner Steve Johnson
Clerk of Court Rena Turner
Superior Court Judge Mark Klass
Sheriff Phil Redmond
Chief District Court Judge Wayne Michael
District Attorney Garry Frank, or a representative from his office |
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LEGISLATIVE LUNCHEON

Guests attending were:

NC General Assembly Members Mitchell Setzer, Karen Ray, Julia Howard, and Dr. James Forrester, North Carolina Department of Transportation Board Member Bob Collier, Iredell-Statesville Schools Superintendent Dr. Terry Holliday, Mooresville Board of Education Chairman Karen Hart, Mooresville Schools Finance Director David Dutton, Mitchell Community College Board Member Dr. Ralph Bentley, Mitchell College President Dr. Doug Eason, Centralina Council of Governments Director Al Sharp, Iredell County Planning Board Members Eric Fields (Chairman), Franklin Rash, Jeff McNeely, Dr. Jackie Grigg, Kristi Pheufer, Thomas Stephens, Harry Tsumas, Jerry Santoni, Harold Pruitt, Anita Johnson & Alan Williams, Health Director Donna Campbell, Social Services Director Don Wall, and Mental Health Director David Swann.

Note: The following concerns were primarily addressed to the legislators.

Mitchell Community College Concerns Presented by Dr. Eason

1. One-third of the college's staff will soon retire. Please review the employment law requiring a six-month waiting period before retirees may return to work (pt. time, etc.) (Dr. Forrester said IRS laws affected pension plans, but he would look into the matter.)
2. Why doesn't the legislature fund summer school?
3. Why is there no funding for new programs until there is FTE, or a full year has lapsed since implementation?

Iredell-Statesville Schools' Concerns Presented by Dr. Holliday

1. House Bill 51 (planning time for teachers) will cost the system \$1 million. The system was told there would be no financial impact.
2. Mitchell College and the school system have a good relationship; however, each has a different school calendar.
3. The Accountability and Testing System in North Carolina is a "mess." There is a blank bill regarding this. Please assist in writing a "sensible" bill.
4. Public School Facilities:
 - a. Statewide School Bond – Iredell County has the eighth fastest growing system in the state. Please help to ensure that bond proceeds are not distributed using a low wealth formula. Many low wealth counties have money in the bank because they don't know what to do with it.
 - b. Local Option Sales Tax – This would annually provide an extra \$7 to \$8 million.
 - c. Extend the existing sales tax through 2021.
 - d. School Capital Leasing – This needs to be tax exempt.
 - e. Construction/DOT procedures – Please streamline
 - f. Sales Tax Exemption Refund – Please aid in this endeavor.

Concerns from the Mooresville Schools – Presented by David Dutton

1. Gratitude expressed for teacher salary increases. This will help with recruitment/retention.
2. Reiterated the need to have ADM funding – not low wealth.

Concerns from Social Services Director Don Wall

1. If the legislature mandates a program, please provide the funds. (He cited several examples as to how the state had impacted his department, e.g., having to assist in obtaining fishing licenses, offering assistance with animal spay & neutering programs, assisting clients with reproductive counseling.)
2. Medicaid Relief – The county's Medicaid budget is \$6.17 million and will increase to \$6.735 next year. Medicaid is 72% of the DSS budget.
3. Electing Counties Reduction in Cash Assistance – Iredell County chose to be an electing county in 1999 and has remained in this status; however, there has been a 31% reduction in cash reduction. This reduction has only impacted the few counties choosing electing status. Where is the money going?

Health Department Concerns Presented by Health Director Donna Campbell

1. The legislature mandated that in July 2008, a well water program would have to be implemented. In Iredell County this will require three new environmental health specialists and one clerical position. Start up costs will be \$108,000. Iredell County will be allowed to set up its own program, but liability coverage will not be provided by the Attorney General's Office.
2. Interpreter costs are exceeding \$135,000 a year; plus more and more patients are falling into the "no pay or low pay" demographics.
3. "Flat State Funding" - Funding was reviewed back to 1979, and with the exception of WIC or Bioterrorism funding, the revenues have been flat. Please support SB 249 (General Aid to Counties) to help fill this financial gap.
4. Please continue to fund incubator groups (Example: Southern Piedmont Partnership Incubator Funding)

Crossroads Mental Health Concerns Presented by CEO/Area Director David Swann

1. Expressed difficulty in hiring mental health professionals.
2. Mental health, like the health department, uses eligibility criteria to determine fees, but this is difficult with the "provider system of care."
3. Crossroads is now able to perform "first examinations," however, the waiver for this sunsets in July of 2007.
4. The state doesn't distribute funding based on population growth.

DOT Board Member Judge Bob Collier Makes Comments

1. I-40 will be resurfaced this summer.
2. Interchange construction at I-40 & I-77 will occur next year.
3. Brawley School Road widening is “moving along” and rights of way are being purchased. The costs, however, are exceeding the budget.
4. Highway 150 has been approved for a strategic highway corridor project. This will be the first road added to the corridor plan since adoption of the long-range plan.

Commissioner Robertson asked if the DOT board had given any consideration to revising the funding method.

Judge Collier said the legislature could address this question better. He acknowledged, however, the method wasn’t equitable, and it benefited eastern North Carolina.

**PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE
GROWTH STUDY REPORT
BY THE PLANNING STAFF AND PLANNING BOARD**

Joining Acting Planning Director Steve Warren to present this study were staff planners, William Allison, Elinor Hiltz and Ricky Hurley. (The planning board members attending the legislative luncheon also attended this segment.)

Acting Planning Director Steve Warren presented an overview of the study as follows:

Iredell County Planning Board Growth Study

Overview

Board of Commissioners requested the study of two high growth areas in July of 2006. Planning Board held three public input meetings (Aug. 30, Sept 13, and Sept. 20, 2006). Input from the public, Mooresville, Troutman, I-SS officials, NCDOT, other public officials & staff research all formed the basis of the "Research Materials Workbook." Planning Board studied materials, selected a report format, and drafted the report in Feb. 2006.

Findings of Fact
Residential Growth

Growth has outpaced infrastructure.
Growth on Brawley School Road has outpaced projections.
Lack of planning coordination between governments.
Current controls are inadequate.
Difficulties have not deterred growth.
Limited regulations have exacerbated the problem.

Findings of Fact
Traffic

County does not own or control any roadways.
A disconnect exists between what NCDOT provides and local transportation needs.
Residents, businesses, and schools contribute to traffic.
NCDOT has maximized traffic light timing.
Brawley School Road traffic will worsen before widening.
Perth Road traffic will worsen and widening has not been planned or scheduled.
Traffic impact studies are not conducted for schools.
Limited road outlet options on peninsulas.
NCDOT controls road systems and funding is limited & politically distributed.
Road improvement schedules change without timely notice.
Brawley School Road and Perth Road are identified on local transportation plans as high traffic & major collector roads.

Findings of Fact
Schools

Schools are overcrowded for multiple reasons.
School administration has addressed issue of busing, parking, & hours.
Land costs impair school location.
Poor communication & planning among schools, planners, and developers.
Opening back gate to Woodland Heights is not feasible; NCDOT mandates use of Brawley School Road.

Findings of Fact
Public Safety

Traffic congestion effects response times.
Call volume does not justify EMS unit on Brawley School Road.
Insufficient manpower for traffic control.
A temporary office for Sheriff exists at The Point.
Fire protection is inadequate (water availability, traffic, poor interconnectivity, and lack of infrastructure) on portions of Brawley School & Perth Roads.
Funding is inadequate for fire services.

Findings of Fact
Water & Sewer

County does not provide public water or sewer.
Currently no reliable way to measure ground water quantities.
Growth and demand on Brawley School Road has created a concern for water quality.
Municipalities are implementing a water supply grid, but town polices differ on service delivery.
Individual property owners may, or may not, be permitted to tap onto existing water supply.
County regulates septic systems.

Findings of Fact
Parks & Open Space

A demand and need exists for park(s) on Brawley School Road.
Stumpy Creek serves the Perth Road area.
No written policy for creation of parks in high growth areas.
No county policy to address open space requirements (watershed limits the amount of impervious area).
Over-development has negatively impacted the environment.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Create Perth Road small area plan.
- Special tax districts.
- NCDOT and I-SS added to Subdivision Review Committee.
- Adequate Public Facility Ordinance.
- Documentation for water availability and fire suppression.
- Urban service areas and jurisdictional boundaries.
- New subdivision ordinance provisions.
- Subdivision overlay district.
- Traffic impact analysis.
- Overlay zoning for environmentally sensitive areas.
- Roadway Protection overlay for Perth Road; Modify existing Brawley School Road RPO.
- Building permit caps on Brawley School Road.
- Add new zoning classifications.
- Prepare countywide growth management plan.
- Review, update & expand small area and countywide land use plans.
- Land transfer fee.
- Coordinate water & sewer service with municipalities.
- Place sheriff's substation at Lake Norman VFD.

Warren said everything listed in the conclusions and recommendations could be done, but they would have to be implemented carefully and legally. He said North Carolina was a Dillon ruled state and not home-ruled. Warren said that in regards to a building cap, there wasn't a North Carolina model to emulate. He said there wasn't any case law either. Warren said the Brawley School Road was unique in that there was only one-way-in and one-way-out.

Attorney Pope said the legislature had police power and certain tests or criteria would have to be met to implement a building cap. He said, “Your action will have to bear a relationship to a desired output, and to determine this, you need findings of fact. In order for an ordinance to stand up, you need facts. Then limited duration, and this could be tied to the road (improvements). The most difficult part is not making the cap arbitrary or capricious. It can’t be an absolute cap. Some governments might assign points. You would need to determine a value system.”

Commissioner Johnson and Steve Warren said they understood the cap couldn’t be tied to the road. Johnson mentioned concerns about public safety, and this being used to justify the cap.

Attorney Pope asked the cap’s duration, and he mentioned the possibility of placing another fire station in the area. He also mentioned that he didn’t have problems tying the cap to the road. Pope said someone from EMS or a fire station needed to come and testify, and Department of Transportation data would need to be supplied. Pope said other states had used a point system to eliminate the perception that a cap was capricious or arbitrary.

MOTION by Commissioner Johnson for the planning staff, with assistance from Attorney Bill Pope, and whomever the attorney desired to consult with, to determine the criteria to be used in limiting building permits on the Brawley peninsula and for there to be a report of the findings at the March 20 board meeting.

VOTING: Ayes - 5; Nays - 0.

Chairman Norman said a land transfer fee was included in the list of recommendations. He asked for more information on this option.

Planning Board Chairman Eric Fields said that as a part of the menu of options, there was a desire to include methods for improvement and methods for implementation. He said a land transfer fee could be tacked onto revenue stamps, and the Register of Deeds had confirmed this method. Fields said this option would not require legislative approval.

The board then reviewed the menu of options for growth management as follows:

√	Prepare a Small Area Plan for the Perth Road area
	Consider the application of special tax districts to produce additional revenue to fund improvements for services
√	Consider the inclusion of officials from NCDOT and both county school systems early in the review process of new subdivisions by adding them to the Subdivision Review Committee (school systems to participate only in an advisory capacity)
	Evaluate an Adequate Public Facility Ordinance (APFO) targeting areas of critical needs
	Require developers to provide documentation for water availability and fire suppression through the development review process
√	Evaluate urban service areas and jurisdictional boundaries in terms of release of jurisdiction procedures and policies; urban service and growth boundaries issues between county and municipalities
	Evaluate current subdivision ordinance for inclusion of new provisions:
√	• Interconnectivity requirements
√	• Turn lanes on roads where traffic improvements are needed
	• Open space requirements
	• Public water/sewer connection requirements
	• Fire and emergency service standards and requirements
√	• Time limitations on approved subdivisions
√	Consider a subdivision overlay district as a planning tool
√	Consider requiring submittal of traffic impact analysis from public and governmental developers (for 100 lots or over)
	Consider overlay zoning districts to protect environmentally sensitive areas
√	Consider roadway protection overlay district requirements for Perth Road; evaluate Brawley School Road for changes to existing overlay district
√	Evaluate implementation of building permit caps on Brawley School peninsula and Perth Road, understanding the ramifications (May not withstand legal challenge. Risky to apply to only select areas. Do not have a growth management plan.)
√	Consider addition of new zoning classifications, for example, R-30 and R-40 districts (not countywide)
√	Prepare a countywide growth management plan

√	Review, update, and expand small area plans and countywide land use plan
	Consider and evaluate land transfer fee with funds to be used for school systems in Iredell County
√	Consider coordination of water sewer service with existing municipalities
	Consider placing sheriff's substation inside the Lake Norman Volunteer Fire Department Building
Note: Items listed with a check mark (√) are the ones the commissioners chose (through consensus) to review more thoroughly.	

MOTION by Commissioner Robertson to direct the staff to present actionable items on the agreed upon options (designated by √) and for there not to be a specific timeframe for further review; however, the small area plan will be a priority.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

Monthly Activity Reports: Commissioner Johnson suggested that the departmental activity reports, submitted each month during the county manager's report, show the areas having building permit increases.

County Manager Mashburn said the "hot spots" could be flagged.

CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE: Assistant County Manager Jackson provided the following update on capital projects:

- Former DSS Building Renovations: In late March, the planning/inspections and fire marshal's office will move into the North Center building.
- Former Mooresville Health Building Renovations: EMS will occupy this building after a new bay is added to the back portion.
- New Eastside Drive DSS Building: The "gray areas," not completed in the initial construction, are on schedule for completion.
- New Jail: By year 2010-2011, approximately \$10,500,000 will be available in capital reserve for a new jail.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Norman adjourned the Friday segment of the Winter Planning Session at approximately 4:30 P.M.

WINTER PLANNING SESSION
Saturday, February 24, 2007
Agricultural Resource Center
444 Bristol Drive
Statesville, NC 28677
8:00 A.M.

All commissioners were in attendance.

Chairman Norman called the meeting to order.

PRESENTATION OF THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN: Gerald Wexelbaum, the Strategic Plan consultant, recommended the following suggestions for the implementation of the plan:

- ▲ The "group of five" needs to appoint a chairman.
- ▲ A coordinator needs to be appointed for the group, and this could be Asst. Co. Mgr. Tracy Jackson.

Wexelbaum then reviewed seven goals and obtained priority rankings from each board member. The goals were as follows:

Land Use/Environment: To balance the land use plans through collaborative efforts between Iredell County and the municipalities.

Economic Vitality: To achieve sustained, balanced, and diversified commercial, industrial, and residential growth consistent with a changing economic environment.

Transportation: To provide a transportation infrastructure to support the growth of Iredell County communities in an efficient and environmentally friendly manner.

Collaborative Government: To enhance cooperation among governmental entities to develop and maintain similar ordinances and policies, whenever possible.

Education/Culture/Recreation: To excel in providing diverse educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for all Iredell County residents.

Comprehensive Health Care – To enhance accessibility to comprehensive health care for a growing population and promotion of community wellness.

Public Safety: To provide effective public safety and enhance accessibility to emergency services for a growing population, with good cooperation among governmental entities.

Wexelbaum said a prioritized listing of the goals would be created and shared with the board.

County Manager Mashburn said the board would have to determine which goals needed to be implemented, and these decisions would impact future budgets.

Rescue Squad Funding: A discussion occurred about the funding formula for the rescue squads, and there was consensus to use the following method:

Calculate the average appropriated to the VFDs for the last three years times the four rescue squads to determine the total funds available. Calculate the total appropriated for each Rescue Squad for FY 06-07 increased by the 3-year cumulative increase in the CPI. Subtract the FY 06-07 appropriation adjusted by CPI from the total funds available to determine the amount of funds available for Capital Reserve. Allocate the total Capital Reserve between the four Rescue Squads based on call volume.

County Manager Mashburn said the FY 07-08 budget would utilize this method.

Commissioner Johnson said he would share the new formula with the squads.

FIRE CHIEF COUNCIL PRESENTATION: Andy Webster (Cool Springs VFD), Jeff Richardson (Mount Mourne VFD), Jamie Barrier (Shepherd VFD), Ken Journey (former member of the Fire Tax District Board), Jay Stewart (Trinity VFD), and Fire Tax District Board Members Jeff Tucker, Carroll Goodman, and Frank Phillips attended this segment of the meeting.

Richardson said a new funding plan had been developed and all VFD chiefs supported it. He said the Fire Tax District Board members also knew about the plan.

Webster mentioned the difficulty in recruiting new volunteers, and he said a recruitment program had been implemented. He estimated it would take \$50 million a year to replace the volunteers with paid personnel.

Journey discussed the State Insurance Office's rating system. He said a six rating was a goal for all departments, and the state rated each VFD on how well it would probably respond to a fire. Journey said additional funding was needed to achieve better ratings, and property owners would see a decrease in their homeowners' insurance costs if the ratings improved. He said water availability was where the departments achieved the most points, and areas with hydrants scored well. Mr. Journey said an interpretation of apparatus within 15 miles was needed, and the departments did not get much credit for neighboring apparatus. He said that if the water delivery problem were solved, all of the departments could achieve at least a 6 rating because they had the apparatus. Mr. Journey then reviewed the new funding plan as follows:

Funding Plan Recommendation

The first step is to adopt the funding formula that was developed by the fire marshal with some revisions. Review the formula after one year to see if it meets the expectations of the fire tax board and the fire departments. If any revisions need to be made, they should be done before the next fiscal year.

Formula Revisions

Revisions are contingent upon a 1-cent increase in the current fire tax. These amounts reflect the real value of the effort of those departments that step-up and spend the time and effort to reduce fire insurance premiums for their communities.

VFD Rating	Fire Marshal Office Plan	Fire Chief Council Proposed Revisions
Split 6/9	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00
Class 7	\$20,000.00	\$35,000.00
Class 6	\$20,000.00	\$60,000.00
Class 5	\$30,000.00	\$85,000.00

- Increase the fire tax by 1 cent for a period of 3 years.
- This will provide funding for the rating performance increases as well as for funding for capital projects and water supply.
- If at the end of the 3 years, there has not been at least 2 departments that have successfully lowered their fire insurance rating class through a NCDOI ratings inspection, then the fire tax rate will be reduced by 1 cent.
- That for every department successfully lowering its fire district insurance rating from a 9 to a 9/6 split, for a split rating to a straight rating, or lowers their straight rating, the fire tax is increased by ¼ of 1 cent the following fiscal year. If four departments are successful in achieving a lower fire insurance rating in one year, the fire tax would increase 1 cent. This would make the increases “performance” based. These increases in the fire tax would be offset by the greater savings in fire insurance premiums the taxpayer would receive.

Tucker said a one-cent tax increase was denied last year, and the VFDs had been challenged to come up with a formula. He said the Fire Tax District Board supported the plan.

Webster said the VFDs understood they had to “put up or shut up” to obtain the tax increase.

County Manager Mashburn asked when the board desired to take action on the request.

Commissioner Williams asked when the tax value would be available.

Mashburn said a good estimate could be shared in April.

Commissioner Robertson asked which departments or districts were closest to achieving the rating in year one.

Webster said the information could be obtained.

Mashburn suggested for the request to be placed on an April agenda when the total tax rate could be shared.

Robertson asked, using a three-year timeframe, if a priority listing could be available in April.

ACTION Mashburn suggested for the request to be placed on the April 17 agenda. He said Assistant County Manager Tracy Jackson and Fire Marshal Lloyd Ramsey could provide the requested information at that time.

Goodman said the VFDs were doing their jobs, but personnel took much of the funding.

Phillips said the VFDs understood the fiscal issues, but they needed help. He said the county taxpayers would benefit from the plan.

NORTH IREDELL TRAINING GROUND DISCUSSION: Gene Powers, with the North Iredell Training Grounds Committee, said 14.14 acres were recently purchased, and there was a \$15,000 annual mortgage payment. He said the organization was in good financial condition now, but difficulties might occur with the second and third payments. Powers said the group had a plan for the property’s use, and negotiations were occurring with the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) and Mitchell Community College. He said the group included Harmony,

Central, Wilkes/Iredell, Union Grove, Sheffield Callahan and the County-line VFDs, and any group could join after paying a \$1,000 fee. Powers said a 300 by 600 driving course would be on the property and a drafting pit. He said the FOP wanted 1.5 acres, and if arrangements could be worked out, this group would pay for the driving pad grading. Powers said the training grounds group was not asking for money at this time.

ACTION Commissioners Johnson and Robertson agreed to meet with the FOP about the training grounds.

CIVIL AIR PATROL: Commissioner Johnson said the Civil Air Patrol assisted with search and rescue missions along with crime surveillance. He said the agency could drawdown matching funds if the annual appropriation could be increased.

MOTION by Commissioner Johnson to increase the Civil Air Patrol's appropriation to \$7,500 in the FY 07-08 budget.

VOTING: Ayes – 5; Nays – 0.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Norman adjourned the 2007 Winter Planning Session at 2:50 P.M. (Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 6, 2007 at 5 and 7 P.M., in the Iredell County Government Center, 200 South Center Street, Statesville, NC).

Approved: _____

Clerk to the Board