

**IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES FOR THE JOINT MEETING WITH BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2002**

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met with the Board of Social Services on Tuesday, October 8, 2002, 7:00 p.m., at the Social Services Building located at 349 North Center Street, Statesville, NC.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Sara Haire Tice  
Tommy E. Bowles  
Steve D. Johnson

Absent: Vice Chairman Karen B. Ray  
R. Godfrey Williams (absent due to a scheduling conflict -- Fire Tax Board meeting)

Social Services Board Members Present:  
Chairman Mac Lackey  
Bobbie Edmisten  
Hazel Harrington  
William Jones  
William Summers

Staff: County Manager Joel Mashburn  
Social Services Director Don Wall  
Finance Director Susan Blumenstein  
Social Work Program Administrator Lisa York  
Income Maintenance Administrator Lynn Deal  
Clerk to the Board Jean Moore

Media: Michelle Harrison, *Statesville Record & Landmark*  
Jim Wrinn, *Charlotte Observer/Iredell Neighbors*

Social Services Director Don Wall took the attendees on a tour of the three-story social services building that once served as a hospital. He mentioned that approximately 100 employees worked at the site. Wall said that due to the structure being too small, some employees were housed at the health building on Highway 21, and others were in leased space on Walnut Street.

Lackey said the North Center Street building was out of State compliance in many areas. He said the noncompliance could result in fines, and he, along with the other social services board members, and staff, wanted a new building to be listed as the county's next capital project. Mr. Lackey asked, "Is there anything we can do to jump start the process?"

Mr. Wall said two feasibility and space needs studies had been completed in the past. He said the last study only addressed expansion at the North Center Street site. Wall said all of the employees needed to be under one roof and approximately 56,000 sq. ft. was needed.

Mashburn said the North Center site was landlocked. He said the last proposal looked at constructing a stand-alone building adjacent to the main structure, but it was determined this would not eliminate the need for the other two sites. Mashburn said it wouldn't put all of the employees under the same roof.

Lackey said he felt a multi-level building was needed with sufficient parking.

Chairman Tice said the commissioners, at one time, evaluated a lease arrangement versus the construction of a new facility.

Blumenstein said it was revealed, when the lease arrangement was being studied, that new construction would result in a lower net cost than leasing. She said 53% of the interest would be reimbursed by the federal government for the construction costs. Blumenstein said that to maximize the federal reimbursements, the county needed to have all of the project's components done in a specific timeline.

Jones said he had been on the social services board for one year, and his concerns centered around liability issues. He said the county would have the current building as an asset, if a new facility were built.

Commissioner Johnson said he recalled the county would recover the cost of a new building in 30 years. He stressed concerns, however, about the State's past budgetary problems and the impact this has had on the county. He also questioned the State's budgetary health in the future.

Lackey asked about the county's Eastside Drive property and the Bristol Road site. He asked which site the commissioners preferred for social services.

Commissioner Johnson said the board had looked at the Bristol Drive property, in terms of a social services building, but this was before the county acquired the Eastside Drive property.

Commissioner Bowles asked the social services board members if they had any problems with the Eastside Drive site.

Lackey said no. He said it was a beautiful site.

Mashburn said the county needed to have a usage plan devised for the social services building, if a new facility were built. He said that at one time, the feasibility of housing the Crossroads Behavioral Healthcare employees at the site was discussed; however, mental health programs were now being reorganized by the State. Mashburn said Crossroads might not need as much space in the future.

Commissioner Bowles asked how imperative it was to have all the employees under one roof.

Wall said that at present, with three different sites, it was difficult to administer the programs and staff. He said there were three different file rooms now, and two of them could be eliminated with a new facility. He also said there wouldn't be a need for as many file clerks -- labor could be consolidated.

Lackey said the clients were traveling to the North Center site not realizing the program they needed was at another location. He said it was frustrating for the clients.

Commissioner Johnson asked how much money was needed for a new building.

Mashburn said \$5.6 million to \$6 million plus. Mr. Mashburn said he thought the building would need to be at least two levels.

Harrington said it was less expensive to build multi-level.

Lackey asked where the social services department was on the list of capital priorities.

Tice said the social services project was next -- after the library.

Mashburn said that in a pay-as-you-go arrangement, the county would need to accumulate about \$2 - \$2.5 million a year. He said the library project was about paid off, with the exception of some funding for this year.

Blumenstein said she would run some cost figures for a new building. In terms of financing, she said more school bonds would be issued next summer, and the county would get a better interest rate if a loan was pursued at that time.

Commissioner Johnson said, "Let's assume we place \$2 million in a capital reserve fund and use a portion to service the debt. Are you (Mashburn) satisfied there are no other capital projects looming out there?"

Mashburn said he was uncertain about the jail situation. He said that if the former prison site worked out, to house some of the inmates, another jail expansion might be forestalled.

Commissioner Johnson said he would like to continue to place money in the capital reserve fund.

Blumenstein said the county's annual debt service would be lowered once the health building was paid off. She said that only one more payment of \$453,000 was owed.

Chairman Tice mentioned that interest rates were at an all-time low.

Commissioner Bowles asked about using the current social services building, when vacant, for jail purposes.

Mashburn said research would need to be done on all of the county's needs.

Summers, Harrington, Edmisten, and Jones stressed the need for a new facility. They said, "The sooner, the better."

Jones said the economy had been bad, and the social services workload had increased.

Commissioner Johnson asked the staff to pinpoint:

- (1) the square footage needed
- (2) the approximate cost
- (3) a financial recovery plan
- (4) a concept for the usage of the present social services building on N. Center St.

Commissioner Bowles said two new commissioners would soon join the board, and it would probably be a good idea to mention the space needs to them during their orientation.

Social Services Chairman Lackey thanked everyone for attending, and he adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

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

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Clerk to the Board