

CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Pre-meeting Work Sessions MINUTES

MARCH 2 and 16, 2010
3:00 p.m.
Cherokee Hall

Chairman Ahrens said that he would dispense with the motivational reading today since there was so much to cover, with the 2 meetings combined. All members were present. Paul Dzikowski was in for Angie Davis. Chairman Ahrens said that he would like to comment about the postponed meeting of March 2; he said that it was strictly a judgment call and he had been through enough snow in other places to say better safe than sorry. Then he asked Margaret Stallings to come up.

1. Presentation of the changes to the Airport Area Master Plan-Margaret Stallings

Margaret began by saying that she would be brief and that the period between meetings had given her the opportunity to pass this version before both the Development Authority and the Airport Authority and receive their blessings. She then went over the purpose of the Plan which is to identify the airport area; define a coordinated strategy to maximize economic impact and address issues that are barriers to growth.

Margaret explained the information in the PowerPoint presentation and in the books she had passed out earlier; she said that the agenda request tonight was to have the board approve a public hearing to be advertised so that the Airport Master Plan could be approved as a minor amendment to the Comp Plan. After she finished the presentation, she asked for any questions or comments.

Chairman Ahrens stated that it was hoped that this Master Plan would help anyone who might still be questioning the expansion of the airport to understand the reasoning behind it. Commissioner Bosch asked if this Master Plan was an overview at this point? Margaret answered saying that this was a concept vision document to guide the various entities involved. Commissioner Bosch asked what is the next step. Margaret said that then after this was adopted, if there were any rezones in the area, regulations would have to be formalized and adopted as well. After further questioning by Commissioner Bosch, Jeff Watkins said that at the public hearing, they would have a timeline done of the steps necessary once the plan was adopted. Commissioner Good asked what were the objectives in having the public hearing and what is expected from the board. Mr. Watkins said that he was hoping to hear that the public had reviewed the document and if there were any major concerns about it, those would be voiced as well. He believes that everything is covered pretty well and does not expect to hear any major concerns.

2. Status of revisions to Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance-Angie Davis/Paul Dzikowski

Paul began by saying that there were 3 objectives in this amendment to the Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance; (1) to clarify and further define the unique status of the Conference Center an events facility conducive for private parties and community functions at which alcohol may be served; (2) also to provide flexibility to licensed establishments who are licensed to sell on the premises to allow them to have functions that would go outside the structure of the licensed establishment (a parking lot provision) for certain events; there are restrictions on where those can take place outside the structure; (3) finally, there is a provision to allow "Special Events" that would benefit non-profit organizations at County facilities including parks under limited circumstances such as Summer Concert Series, Outdoor performances, etc.

When discussion was opened, Commissioner Bosch said that she was not in favor of allowing alcoholic beverages in the parks facilities; she further said that the other issue she has is the licensed establishments where they might not have a private parking lot. She believes it should be restricted to those that have private parking lots. She said she is more open to allowing alcohol in the Community Rooms that are a part of the Fire Stations or multi-use centers in the County. After much discussion it was decided it was OK in the Community Rooms, limited to the type of use. (At the end of discussion, it was further determined that it would be best to name the Community Centers/Rooms where it was permitted.)

When discussion turned to parking lots, Chairman Ahrens asked Chief Waters for his input, he said that a private parking lot would be easier to control. Commissioner Bosch said she could support having it designated as in "private parking lots only". It was finally decided to amend the agenda to request that a public hearing be advertised and during the interim, go over the complete document, noting changes and keeping a communications dialogue open.

3. Discuss actions to date re sign ordinance enforcement-Chairman

The Chairman said that he had come in contact with a citizen who had been told he should remove a banner that he had hanging up for too long and he had no idea what to say to them in response because he was aware that amendments were in the works for part of the Sign Ordinance, but maybe there needed to be more amendments and clarifications.

4. Tree Preservation and Replacement Ordinance - Reasonableness - Chairman-deleted

5. Discuss Retirement Plan - Death Benefits and 401(a)

Chairman Ahrens asked Mr. Cooper to briefly explain what was being asked of the board today. Mr. Cooper said he was asking for an amendment to the Defined Benefits Plan regarding Death Benefits to make it an annuity in order to help the spouse of an employee, who although they may be eligible to retire, continues working and dies, at present, their spouse would not receive the full benefit; if they retire when they are eligible and die, the spouse receives the full benefit. Mr. Cooper said the other issue is the 401(a), there were employees who chose not to participate in the defined benefit plan and elected to continue in the 401(a).

There are 11 employees who have inquired about participating in the Defined Benefit Plan, your choices are to simply require all employees in the 401(a) plan to participate in the DB Plan, make it mandatory or the more complex issue is how you buy back time, since they did not participate originally, do you use the 401 monies transferring those into the DB Plan; he will have to determine how it is done and what the ultimate cost could be to the County.

Commissioner Bosch asked about the other retirement issue; Mr. Cooper said that the other issue was to change from 75 to 70 points which is an enhancement. He said he would propose that the employee pay the cost, so there is no impact to the tax payers. The more complex issue here is providing an incentive to those who qualify for retirement, who would like to retire, that means you have to keep their position vacant, eliminate the position in order to make the plan whole, but you are not increasing the cost of the plan to the entire population. Mr. Cooper said that he wanted to have time to review the documents once received from Gebcorp. Chairman Ahrens asked then what does the board need to take care of at the meeting. Mr. Cooper said that the only issue he is comfortable with would be the amendment to the DB regarding death benefits and the Chairman said it would have to be an amendment to the agenda. Mr. Cooper said that Gebcorp had been working on these issues for over a year now and he had made it clear that he wanted them done by the end of the first quarter, as well as the actuary done by then.

6. February, 2010 Financial Report

Mr. Cooper said during his report that he was only concentrating on the cash balance until the audit is complete, to keep things simple. There were few comments or questions otherwise.

7. Discussion of Regular Agenda items

Chairman Ahrens asked about the public hearings on the agenda; Vicki Taylor Lee came up and explained the first one is regarding a denial by the Zoning Board of Appeals for a reduction of a setback. The second one is about Hunt Road/Priest Road connector, in the configuration of the horizontal alignment, there is a bit of a land swap, some of the RTH on the east and some of the school property on the west, there is an overlap. What is being attempted is get everything on the east side of the road to RTH for that project and everything on the west side should be consistently R-40.

When discussion turned to the GDOT application request for public hearing, the County Clerk noted that Dr. McMorris had notified her that it should have been a third public hearing rather than a request for one, and it had already been advertised as such; the Chairman said that the agenda would be amended to move it to the third public hearing of the night.

Next the Chairman asked Commissioner Johnston about the zoning case and Commissioner Johnston said he was prepared to move forward on it. Chairman Ahrens then said that under his section, the only item he wanted to mention here was the last one and that he wants to delete it.

In going over the Consent Agenda when Mr. Cooper got to the Chairman's reimbursement, the Chairman commented that this would be his last one.

Commissioner Johnston asked what would pay for item 2, Mr. Cooper answered SPLOST funds. Commissioner Bosch asked about item 6, regarding the condition of the traffic signals, Mr. Morton said that they had all either been recently replaced or were in good condition.

After completing the Consent Agenda review, Mr. Cooper briefly went over his portion of the agenda. On item 13, EMA Director Robby Westbrook came up to explain what would be purchased with the grant funds and how it would be used. On item 15, Commissioner Johnston said he had been contacted by one of the losing bidders and wanted to discuss how the winning bid was arrived at, several minutes were spent determining the outcome.

The Chairman asked Mr. Dzikowski to discuss the item under the County Attorney. After Mr. Dzikowski had explained the charges against Mr. Wu, Commissioner Good asked if Mr. Wu had received proper notification; Mr. Dzikowski said that the defendant had been properly notified, that his attorney, Benson Chambers was present, and that Mr. Wu was out of the country.

There being no further business, Commissioner Hubbard made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session, to discuss personnel issues, pending litigation and property acquisition at 5:29 p.m.; Commissioner Bosch seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
