

# CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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## Pre-meeting Work Session

**JANUARY 18, 2011**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Cherokee Hall**

**MINUTES**

Chairman Ahrens began at 3:15 p.m. with a reading from "Essence of Leadership" by Mac Anderson, founder of Successories; the Chapter was called "Aim For the Heart" and Chairman Ahrens said while this was a repeat, the message was still prevalent.

1. Presentation by Irene Butcher and Mr. Kirby Pruett – Region 1 DBHDD (Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities) Planning Board Members – Cherokee County appointees

The Chairman asked Ms. Butcher and Mr. Pruitt to come up and begin their presentation. Mr. Pruitt introduced himself and Mrs. Butcher; he said that Irene Butcher would also give them some information shortly. He just wanted to introduce himself personally to the board, saying that he is retired from IBM and has a 32 year old mentally handicapped son, who lives with he and his wife. The son goes to the Cherokee County Training Center. He said that in his opinion, it was one of the best, if not the best in the State of Georgia. He was also very appreciative of being appointed to this board because of his experiences with his son.

Mr. Pruitt presented a map showing the re-districted regions for the State to explain how he and Mrs. Butcher moved from Region 3 to Region 1, as of July, 2010; he was hopeful that being in this new region was going to be much more beneficial for the participants in this region. Mr. Pruitt asked Mrs. Butcher to go ahead and give some of the statistics that the board should be aware of and then they would both take any questions.

Mrs. Butcher introduced herself and said that she too had a family member with developmental disabilities and other family members who had issues with mental health, as well as addictive diseases. Mrs. Butcher said she had retired from Broward County, Florida, as a Vice President of Community Development, with a very large focus of working with individuals with developmental disabilities; both children and adults. She had been privileged to serve on some government subcommittees, addressing that issue in the State of Florida.

Mrs. Butcher explained that normally there are 3 appointees from Cherokee County, however when the Region changed in July, 2010, Mary Migiliaro, who had been the 3<sup>rd</sup> appointee and the Chairman of the planning board for Region 3, had chosen to remove herself from the board, so a new appointee was now needed for the third spot. And it was possible, when the 2010 census was complete, that there would be additional appointments as they changed based on the population of the County. As both she and Mr. Pruitt both represented developmental disabilities, they would like to see someone who could represent addictive diseases or mental health. In the by-laws that were recently adopted after the change in Regions were the qualifications for an appointee to this board.

Mrs. Butcher said the purpose for this board was to provide and facilitate comprehensive planning in conformity with standards and procedures established by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health and Addictive Diseases.

Mrs. Butcher then gave some statistics saying that Georgia is one of the top ten fastest growing in aging population in the U.S.; and the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest growing population in developmental disabilities. With an estimate of 17,000 adults with developmental disabilities living with aging parents or caregivers, there will be a huge gap when the aging parents can no longer care for the developmentally disabled.

Mrs. Butcher suggested that the commissioners talk to their constituents and ask them what their needs are related to this board and determine by their answers what the future could hold. She said that they, she and Mr. Pruitt, need to know what their County needs, so that they can prioritize these by offering the services that are really needed. She also urged communication with the local legislative delegation on the needs expressed so that they would see that the funding for these conditions was not cut to the point the services provided were no longer available.

Commissioner Bosch asked about their meetings; Mr. Pruitt said that the next meeting would be held on February 10 at 2 p.m. at the Ball Ground library. Mrs. Butcher encouraged the commissioners to attend to see exactly what the board attempts to accomplish. Commissioner Hubbard asked about getting on their e-mail list.

Chairman Ahrens thanked them for coming and then said he had a couple of items to mention. He said they were not on the agenda, and then he asked Jeff Watkins and Geoff Morton about the DRI comments on the large project in Bartow on the west side of the lake. Jeff Watkins spoke but did not come to the microphone so it is difficult to distinguish exactly what was said.

Chairman Ahrens then said he wanted to mention that their annual planning session was this Thursday and Friday, saying that the start time was 2 p.m. on Thursday. He told Mrs. Davis there was really no reason for her to come; she said she would be available for a conference call or if she did need to come up.

## 2. Discussion of regular agenda items

The Chairman went to the discussion of agenda items, saying there was an Announcement on the agenda that was for special recognition from the board and Mr. Cooper extending their thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job that everyone did during the recent snow storm and resulting icy conditions.

Chairman Ahrens next asked Mr. Cooper if he wanted to go ahead with the budget presentation. Mr. Cooper came up and said he would like to start by thanking Janelle Funk and her team for assisting the departments with the preparation of the 2011 budget.

Mr. Cooper said that while he had provided an Executive Summary to the board, what he would do this afternoon was just present an overview of the proposed 2011 budget. From the Highlights page, he said the proposed 2011 budget total is \$180 million, which is a reduction of \$18 million or 9% from the final 2010 budget.

Cash reserves were used to balance the budget, and this zeros out the cash available, Mr. Cooper said. In order to avoid employee furloughs and other drastic measures, after learning there were \$3.4 million available in credit in the Defined Benefit Plan because of overpayment at more prosperous times, \$2 million of those credits would be used. Otherwise employees would have been required to take 15 to 20 furlough days during the year.

Commissioner Bosch asked Mr. Cooper, while he was on the subject, to explain how the credits came about because there was some confusion from folks and there was several formulas that were required to be adhered to. Mr. Cooper said the Defined Benefits group at ACCG or GebCorp were required to do an actuarial study to determine if the program was being adequately funded; they provide the County a minimum recommended funding level and also the maximum. Chairman Ahrens asked if the State had a required level and Mr. Cooper said yes, there were actually 3 levels.

Cherokee County had been paying the maximum since the program's inception and as a result, the \$3.4 million dollar credit was generated. Cherokee was 1 of 2 counties out of the 95 in the program to receive these credits.

Mr. Cooper went on to the next item on the 14 point Highlight page then with discussion on almost every remaining point; some more than others. The next 2 pages showed a graph of the Historical Millage Rates for both the Fire District and the General Fund from 1996 to 2010.

Next Mr. Cooper went to the page on Cash Position where he explained that the significant downturn in the economy resulting in a \$1 billion dollar downturn in property values and a decline in operating fund cash from 2007 through 2010 was directly responsible for the General Fund cash low-point where it declined from \$12.7 million in 2007 to \$1.8 million in November 2010. He stated there

would be no relief in 2011, where the General Fund cash available in November 2011 is projected to fall below \$1 million.

Preferably the General Fund cash balance should equal or exceed \$10 million in order to provide ample cash available to operate during a persistent decline in the economy and provide funding for emergencies such as weather related or natural disasters.

After going through several issues for consideration, Mr. Cooper apologized for the delay in getting the budget to the board. He also said that even though the public hearing had been advertised for tonight, he would ask that adoption of the budget be delayed until February 1. The reason for this request was again the delay in getting the budget to the board as well as posting the Summary on the web for the public. He would also ask that since the public hearing would be held tonight, that on February 1 the public be allowed to comment if they wished during the Public Comment portion of the agenda.

After some further discussion related to the budget, possibly changing the fiscal year from January 1 to October 1, and what the SPLOST figures might show for December, the Chairman thanked Mr. Cooper, Mrs. Funk and her staff.

Chairman Ahrens asked Mrs. Davis about the 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing on the repeal of the Section in the Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance. Mrs. Davis said that it should go pretty quickly tonight, it was fairly straight forward and would bring the Ordinance into line with the current State law on the subject.

Next the Chairman asked Commissioner Johnston on the Zoning Cases, since they are both in his Post, if they were pretty straight forward. Commissioner Johnston replied that yes, they were, although he was going to propose a condition be added to the first case.

Then the Chairman talked about the appointments under his portion and went on to Commissioner Johnston's request under his portion. Commissioner Johnston said the issue had been brought to his attention when the Historical Society was planning the Grand Opening for the space in the Historic Courthouse and they wanted to serve wine, they could not because the only County property where wine and alcohol is allowed is the Conference Center.

Commissioner Johnston said he wanted to discuss revising the Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance to allow the Historical Society, when they have special events, in the Museum space leased to them, to serve wine. He would ask that a public hearing be held at the next meeting on February 1 and since this would not be subject to the Zoning Procedures Act, there shouldn't be a problem with the length of time needed to post the ad. That way they could, if the requested revision was approved at that time, serve wine at their Grand Opening on February 4.

When a discussion began about the revision of the Ordinance for that space, Mrs. Davis was asked if this could be done. Mrs. Davis replied that of course, it could be done, however, whenever an exception is made it starts eroding the rule.

Mrs. Davis said she thought with the notice that would be given when this was discussed this evening and the advertisement of the public hearing, the request could be considered at the meeting on February 1, with no problem.

Chairman Ahrens asked Mr. Cooper next about the Consent Agenda. Mr. Cooper said the item on the Consent Agenda was pretty simple, and then went on to his portion of the agenda. He said that he believed there was a few employees who would retire by mid-year and for this reason, the policy should be amended to extend the period until July 1. Commissioner Hubbard told him that the date on the copy in the book showed June, Mr. Cooper said he meant to say for the period of June, but it really should say July 1 and he would change the resolution if it was approved.

Chairman Ahrens asked if anyone else had anything and hearing none, Commissioner Hubbard made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 4:48 p.m. to discuss personnel, pending litigation and property acquisition. Chairman Ahrens seconded and the vote was unanimous to adjourn.

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