

CHEROKEE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Pre-meeting Work Session

August 2, 2011

3:00 p.m.

Cherokee Hall

MINUTES

Chairman Ahrens began at 3:10 p.m., with all members of the Board present. He asked Robby Westbrook to go ahead with his presentation.

1. Training Session-**COOP/Continuity of Government Overview**
Robby Westbrook, Emergency Management Director/Cherokee Sheriff's Office

Robby began the presentation saying the purpose of Continuity of Operations Planning is to ensure continued performance of essential functions, reduce loss of life, minimize damage, ensure succession of key office leaders, reduce or mitigate disruptions of operations, protect essential assets, and achieve timely recovery and reconstitution. The next couple of slides showed pictures of other counties administration buildings on fire and then a slide came up of the Tuscaloosa, AL Emergency Operations Center that took a direct hit on April 27, 2011 when a line of tornados came through. There was also a picture of the Emergency Operations Center operating from a back-up location on the same day.

Robby continued saying that in preparing the Continuity of Operations Plan, they go into different departments and go through a check-off list of requirements from identifying essential functions to a reconstitution of services after a disaster. Next Robby said they had a "line of succession" from the Board of Commissioners to all seven municipalities mayors and councils, if any of these were involved in a disaster. He gave the four phases of Continuity of Operations Activation of which Phase I is Readiness and Preparedness, Phase II is Activation and Relocation, Phase III is Continuity Operations (full execution of essential operations at alternate operating facilities) and finally Phase IV, Reconstitution where operations at alternate facility are terminated and normal operations resume.

Robby turned the presentation over to Renee to have her give a status update on the Cherokee COOP. Renee said that all the agencies shown with green checks beside the name had their plans in place, this was 20 out of 24, with final four being Fleet, Property Management, GIS and Parks and Recreation.

These four were planned for 2012. Renee asked if there were any questions of her or Robby, and the Chairman asked what had been the biggest challenge in getting the agency plans in place.

Robby answered saying that all the facilities were challenging in that when it came to essential functions, they believe everything they do is essential, so it is a process to cull through it and find the information they are seeking. Another area that might be considered a challenge is backing up documents and storing them off-site, so they can be made available when needed. Robby said they use thumb drives. There was discussion then on snow and ice road removal and a debris management plan that Robby said would be presented to the board in September for approval.

Before beginning the next presentation, Chairman Ahrens said he had an announcement to make regarding the newly released plans for a new Northside-Cherokee Hospital. He said this had been announced at an invitation only luncheon and presentation by Northside Hospital and he was sure further details would be released to the public soon. Saying they are ready now to go to the State for the necessary approvals, he gave a few details of what they had seen at lunch.

2. Presentation of Increase to Building Permit Fees-last updated 1994 – Margaret Stallings

When Margaret began her presentation, she mentioned that this is an off-shoot of the work being done to bring together the Development Code; when they were attempting to unify all the fees into just one area in the Code, they had come across the building permit fees, which have not been updated since 1994. New Residential Construction was set at that time at \$42 per square foot for heated space and \$21 per square foot for unheated space; the table used for new Commercial Construction is from November/December 2002.

Margaret continued saying that the International Code Council publishes Building Valuation Data twice a year to assist building officials in calculating permit fees. She is asking that the current Ordinance be revised to automatically update values at least once a year; however as the ICC no longer publishes location factors and staff recommends applying a local factor to adjust the local construction costs to more closely match metro Atlanta costs, it is recommended to use the 2011 R.S. Means Square Foot Cost Data for the residential and commercial factors.

Margaret showed comparisons made between the existing permit fees, the proposed permit fees, with a full multiplier, proposed permit fees with a reduced multiplier, because of the current economic status, and Cities of Canton and Woodstock, as well as Cobb County. The comparison was based on a residential 2,000 square foot home with a 500 sq. ft. garage; and a commercial build of 10,000 sq. ft., retail strip center. Margaret stated that she was asking that a public hearing be advertised and set to take public comments from both the developer/builders and the public on this request.

There was a somewhat lengthy discussion mainly from Commissioner Johnston, who was concerned that we might be trying to raise the fees too much at this time; Commissioner Bosch reminded him that was the reason for the reduced multiplier being included in the comparisons for the proposed fees.

When the discussion was over, before going to the next topic, Chairman Ahrens said he wanted to let everyone know that the resolution for the referendum on Sunday retail sales of beer and wine would be on the next agenda for approval.

3. Discussion of Regular Agenda items

The Chairman said what he would like to do now, rather than going through the agenda, which is short, is just talk about two of the topics and then see how much time there is to talk about any other items.

He said first why don't we talk about the millage rate; Mr. Cooper began by saying as you know, we started this process in early July with a shortfall of slightly over \$5.4 million for the General Fund and \$435,000 for the Fire District.

The General Fund shortfall has been reduced to \$2.5 million; to achieve that reduction, we are using the sale of the old Admin Building, the Sheriff's Office has allowed us to increase the amount for the use of the Jail Fund to \$851,000, use of Pension Credit, there was some discussion on this one before Mr. Cooper continued.

Mr. Cooper said the savings from vacant positions, consolidation of agencies or departments, and the severance that will be offered are at \$832,000, there should be an increase in court fines/traffic citations, the building permit fee increases (if approved) could generate \$150,000 conservatively. With savings of \$100,000 for legal counsel and approximately \$200,000 in Workman's Comp, and another \$50,000 savings from the Health Department, considering their significant surplus, and during the budget process hopefully to find another \$272,596, even with the increase in fuel and electricity costs, we are able to reduce the shortfall in General Fund.

Mr. Cooper went on to explain how the shortfall in the Fire District Fund would be zeroed out with the use of reserves and the \$690,565 Severance Option. He then said that with these changes, the total county millage rate, before the school tax, was a total increase of 3.75% over the rollback.

Following this was a discussion by the board members that went on for some time regarding the increase in the millage rates and the messages they had received asking them not to raise the millage rates; whether the solution could be as effective if the millage rates were not raised as much, what services might be impacted. At the end of the discussion, the Chairman said let's go ahead and talk about the retirement plan.

Mr. Cooper said the plan remained substantially the same, except that the desire was to achieve a \$2 to \$1 cost in savings; he then went through the various platforms for the number of years and the medical insurance.

There was some discussion on exactly what to call this plan, with Angie Davis giving her opinion or interpretation of what has been talked about; also mentioned was that this is not a blanket plan, but specific to those positions where savings can be realized if they are not filled for a specified length of time, and the person holding it currently is eligible by years of service to opt in.

Chairman Ahrens asked if there had been a timeline established; Mr. Cooper said in order to realize some savings this year, he had stipulated September 15. After a few more minutes of discussion, Chairman Ahrens asked if there was anything of import that needed to be discussed on the agenda.

Mr. Cooper said yes, he wanted to talk about an item on the Consent Agenda, specifically No. 2 briefly, and he wanted to move that under his portion of the agenda as an amendment.

After this, the Chairman asked if there was anything else, hearing none, Vice Chair/Commissioner Hubbard made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 5:04 p.m. to discuss personnel issues, pending litigation and property acquisition. Commissioner Nelms seconded and the motion carried unanimously.
