

Cherokee County Board of Commissioners
7th Annual Planning Review
Lake Lanier

January 17, 2013

MINUTES

The Chairman began at 2:01 p.m. by discussing a drawing on the flip chart of a type of bio he did of himself in February 2006. He requested the Board to do a similar bio of themselves, a sort of self-evaluation. He said that maybe they would discuss these at a future Work Session.

Achievements

He then went over some of the 'Good Things' that happened in 2012, among them being the Northside Hospital relocation, giving kudos to Brandon Beach for helping make that happen through the \$4M contribution by GDOT for the project.

Commissioner Gunnin asked for details on the Opportunity Zones. The reply was that it was an incentive program to get businesses to come to Cherokee County. A business was given \$3,500 per employee over two employees for five years to help offset state taxes such as payroll taxes and unemployment taxes.

Commissioner Poole asked how much of the \$90M Park Bond funds were left. The reply was \$30M to \$35M. Commissioner Johnston added that Patriot Park and East Park completion would cost approximately \$15 million of the remaining funds.

Mr. Cooper commented that the Fire Training Facility would be a positive thing for the County by helping us to achieve a 4 ISO rating. Commissioner Johnston asked when the facility was projected to open. Mr. Cooper replied

that it could be in the fall or early next year. Mr. Cooper said that a 4 ISO rating could be a significant savings to tax payers. He said he thought the savings were around \$45 per \$100,000 value of property.

Commissioner Gunnin added that other areas helping the ISO rating were being done such as more training and better record keeping for volunteers.

The Chairman brought up the discussion of consolidating certain fire services with the City of Canton. Commissioner Gunnin added that Station 3 needed to be replaced, and Station 9 could be taken down, so the County would have personnel available. Discussion ensued about Canton having to raise the millage rate to build and operate stations on their own.

Budget Realization

The Chairman moved on to the topic of budget realization, upside/downside. Risks discussed included tenants, Workers Comp and Health Benefits and the risks involved in the auto sales tax. Commissioner Nelms expressed concern over that becoming an unfunded or underfunded mandate.

Economic Development

Misti Martin arrived and discussion moved to Economic Development. She said one challenge they are facing is space. Commissioner Nelms asked Ms. Martin what specifically the Board could do to help. Basically it was funding that was needed. Ideas discussed were a budget increase of maybe \$50,000 and another professional staff member. Ms. Martin said that part of the funding needed was to assist in evaluating properties in order to make a top five site list. Commissioner Johnston asked what size a typical site should be to make the top five and she replied 100 to 124 acres.

Commissioner Poole asked Ms. Martin what kind of businesses have been requesting information. She replied that it was a mix including Health Care, manufacturing, tech/data centers.

Chairman Ahrens mentioned that there were no resources available for recruiting and marketing, that basically two people were running it.

Ms. Martin mentioned that the County working with the cities to help identify the top five sites would be helpful.

Commissioner Johnston discussed a deal closing fund and waiving property taxes until a new business had tenants as possible business incentives.

The Chairman asked Ms. Martin about contributions from the cities for projects and Ms. Martin said that currently the cities are helping with the GIS section of their website in the approximate amount of \$11,000 a year total from all cities.

Ms. Martin brought up a relocation cost fund for a business if there is potential economic impact worthy of the incentive.

Discussion turned to the possibility of remodeling the outside of the Jones Building to make it more marketable and using some of the space there for an innovation center, similar to the incubator plans.

The Chairman then brought up a topic not on the agenda, which was to inform the two new Commissioners that they needed to attend rezoning meetings because the cases were heard by the Board at a future meeting and it would give them insight.

The meeting came to a close at 5:00 p.m.

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8:13 a.m.

MINUTES

Property Tax Rates – Georgia and Metro

- Cherokee Ranked #53
 - Most above Cherokee have LOST
 - Projected 10th if had LOST
- Question on mind: What are our expectations with regard to services and taxes?
- Know we have a hole (1-time credits)
 - Very difficult to not raise rates above revenue neutral
 - Tax spend per capita
- Rockdale and DeKalb have HOST
- One-times (like to do something for employees but have hole to fill)

Ambulance Services (Should we privatize)

- County-wide service
- Private company: issues and service levels (6 assign but rarely number kept in county)
- Day trucks – option to handle peak demand

Engines

- Plan to purchase with option to finance if saves money
- Emergency vs. non-emergency
- Forsyth County subsidizes EMS over \$1M

Jones Building

- Restore façade (currently stucco)
- Strikes: no dedicated parking, façade, condition
- Parking adjacent to Historic Courthouse
- Challenge with downtown parking

Lifelong Communities

- Chairman – Walk through what has been done
 - Today close to 40,000 55+
 - No one is near ready
 - Aging Services of ARC
 - Housing and transportation
 - Healthy Lifestyles
 - Services
 - Cherokee Profile
 - All information on ARC website
 - Very little mobility in Cherokee
 - What role do “we”, including municipalities, have in providing transportation (if any)?
 - Attendees at Lifelong Communities initiative meeting
 - Leadership issue at County at time and we put on hold. Have good leadership now and opportunity to move forward
- Two distinct paths
 1. Wealthy – would like a good taxi service
 2. Low-income – (single person) needs low/no-cost transportation
 - Assisted Living (not seeing a lot of these facilities in Cherokee)

- Two facilities coming to Cherokee (Hwy. 92 and Eagle Drive)
- How do we make it work (housing) – where and how?
 - Sixes (Vince's project)
- Housing: 55+ → Destination
 - Where? (We need meeting, housing, etc.)

➤ Locations

- Something closer than Woodmont
- Two coming are perfect spots (Hwy 92 and Eagle Drive)
- Political acceptable and attractive to those who need (change land-use plan to accommodate)
 - Can't be too restrictive to developers
 - A balance needed
- Get Nathan involved
- Ask Jeff or Margaret to incorporate/welcomes (small lots/hotel/assisted living – separate or together)

Ethics Ordinance

- Two years ago had an extensive discussion referring the ethics ordinance
- Cobb, Barrow, Henry, ACCG model draft
 - Legislation needs updating
 - Fines (more than simple censure or reprimand)
 - Local legislation
 - Limits on BOC influence on hiring (no lobbying, etc.)
 - Disclosure of interest to BOE
 - Should we add appointments by BOC to Boards, Committees, Authorities (reference to Cobb ordinance)
 - "Interests"
 - Remote interest (non-profit)
 - Bankers serving on Board appointed by BOC?
 - Discussion of interest if a lending officer who benefits via a customer loan/arrangement
 - Political Activity (not to get employees involved)

- BOC involvement in Employee hiring/discipline:
 - O.k. to say “someone should be considered” but no lobbying and don’t lobby discipline (can raise performance issues)
 - Review what we have for employees pertaining to Board appointments

Strategic Plan

- Looking at entire County as a business
- Shareholders are citizens
- Bottom Line – managing the budget
- Vision = Future – Cherokee is County of Choice
- Values = Ethics
- Objectives =
 - Rebalancing the top digest
 - Public safety standards
 - Judicial productivity (cost, timing, and outcome)
 - Recreational
- Strategies
(Note: Out of time – no discussion)