

Cherokee County Board of Commissioners  
Eighth Annual Planning Review  
Barnsley Gardens, Adairsville, GA

Thursday, January 16 and Friday, January 17, 2014

## 2014 MINUTES

### Thursday, January 16, 2014

Chairman Ahrens called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. All members of the Board were present with the exception of Brian Poole. Also present were County Manager, Jerry Cooper, County Clerk, Christy Black and members of the Tribune and Ledger News.

Chairman Ahrens stated that Commissioner Poole had advised the Board of business obligations and was unable to attend this afternoon, but that he could possibly make it tomorrow. The Chairman stated that the Board would not be going into Executive Session.

Mr. Cooper mentioned the new website that was launched last week, particularly noting the County's Dashboard page which compares Cherokee County's performance to other Metro Counties as well as demonstrating departmental accomplishments over previous years.

#### Section 1: Purpose – Theme – Expectation

The Chairman explained that the purpose was to share thoughts and ideas in open discussion. He added that although a timeline was given on each topic, the timeline was flexible. He touched on the theme which is 'Superior Quality of Life...' and asked the Commissioners their ideas on building competitive advantages and discussion ensued.

#### Section 2: Review 2013 – Outlook 2014

- 2.1 Achievements / Shortfalls 2013
- 2.2 Priorities 2014

Discussion included the 'shortfall' that a new operator was not in place at Ball Ground Recycling. Mr. Cooper added that the sale of the Jones Building would have been great to build reserves but it was not devastating that it didn't sell. The topic of the Wellness Plan was discussed, including the fact that the County had not renewed with CHN due to incorrect stats and lack of positive results. Mr. Cooper stated that they were looking at a new approach to wellness with a Wellness Coordinator/Coach which would cost less than CHN.

#### Section 3: Fiscal Integrity

- 3.1 Scope - definition
- 3.2 Budget Realization
  - o Risks

- Upside Opportunities
- 3.3 Impact going forward
  - ‘One time revenues’ in 2013, and 2014
  - Long Term Financial Plan
  - Parks 5-Year Capital – last retreat discussion

Discussion included managing reserves, contingency plans and one-time revenues such as the pension credit used in the past. The Chairman noted that the County still has a pension credit. Commissioner Nelms commented that he was proud the County was recovering well thanks to the efforts of staff and County leadership. He added that he would like to see citizens get a return on the Parks Bond investment. Discussion ensued about the status of Patriot’s Park and East Park projects now that the Aquatic Center was completed. Commissioner Gunnin said there was a need for Senior Softball league practice areas. Several options were discussed among the Board such as using property the County owns that could be used for practice with a little work. One park mentioned was the currently named Veteran’s Park that could be considered for a ‘mow it and play it’ practice field because it is flat. Commissioner Johnston pointed out there is limited access to the site until a road can be built. Chairman stated that we have drawn approximately \$65M of the Parks Bond, leaving about \$35M. Draw options were discussed such as to see where we are, then accelerate Patriots Park and evaluate the pros and cons of opening up Birch Park and/or Veteran’s Park at an earlier point for practice quality fields with the goal to keep the bond rate under .75.

The Chairman stated that the County is in a better position to look forward now. He added that they are looking into getting an update on the residential and commercial tax digest.

Section 4: BOC Initiatives

- 4.1 Economic Development
- 4.2 Ethics Ordinance Update
- 4.3 Lifelong Communities ( ARC Model )
- 4.4 Historic Preservation Ordinance
- 4.5 Fire / EMS future needs

Discussion ensued about the possibility of Cherokee Office of Economic Development moving their offices into the Jones Building and/or using it as an economic development incentives center. Discussion turned to impact fees and the County’s desire to waive those fees for commercial projects. Commissioner Johnston said the County wants to grant the waiver, but they have to ask. Extraordinary Economic Benefits was discussed and Commissioner Johnston stated that the term was not well-defined so that may be something the County could look at using on a case by case basis. Discussion ensued on the property tax ranking document by Commissioner Johnston that are included as part of the minutes.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance was discussed and a decision was made to move forward. Commissioner Nelms commented that if the Board were going to adopt, he would like to see it sooner rather than later before the County loses anymore historic value. The next step would be to work with Jeff Watkins to have a draft prepared and to call for a Public Hearing date on the February 18<sup>th</sup> agenda.

The Chairman stated that they had made good progress and this would be a good stopping point for the evening.

**The meeting for Thursday was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.**

## **Friday, January 17, 2014**

The meeting was called to order at 8:20 a.m. All members of the Board were present with the exception of Brian Poole. Also present were County Manager, Jerry Cooper, County Clerk, Christy Black and members of the Tribune and Ledger News.

Discussion picked up from yesterday with the topic of the Economic Development Business Plan. Incentive Business Accelerator ideas were discussed. The need for technology-based businesses was discussed as well as different options for the use of the Jones Building. The Chairman stated that the Jones Building would be a topic of common interest to discuss with City of Canton when they arrived at the meeting today. The Board discussed Lifelong Communities and the expectation of an increase in the senior population in Cherokee County and what type of housing they would need. Commissioner Johnston brought up the fact that a lot of the seniors are going to require assistance with finding a place to meet their needs on a limited income.

### Section 5: County Strategic Plan

#### 5.1 ARC Model - Review

#### 5.2 “Draft Discussion ” – Vision, Objectives, Strategies

### Section 6: Invitation to Canton Mayor & City Council

#### 6.1 Discuss topics of common interest

Mayor Gene Hobgood and all Council Members except one from the City of Canton arrived to discuss topics of common interest. The Chairman recapped portions of the meeting up to the Lifelong Communities Discussion. Mayor Hobgood commented on the topic of the Jones Building, stating that he’d like to see a portion of it used for retail.

Chairman Ahrens then asked the group what they would like to talk about. Mayor Hobgood said that he’d like to discuss the Economic Development proposal from last year. He said that they had some new Council Members and wanted to go over the proposal where each City was being asked to contribute a certain amount to the Cherokee Office of Community Development and the County would match it. The Chairman stated that the County did pay their ‘match’ of \$60,000 so that they could hire a new person. He said the new position along with some discretionary funds for advertising would allow them to be proactive in seeking opportunities in Cherokee County rather than being tied down just dealing with requests as they are now. Chairman Ahrens referred to the County’s U.S.P.’s (Unique Selling Points) to point out that it does not delineate but includes all areas that make the County attractive to new comers. Acting City Manager, Glen Cummings spoke about the

possibility of the City of Canton looking at the proposal again for a line item in the next budget, or even amending this year's budget for a pro-rated amount.

Mayor Hobgood brought up the subject of fire protection. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of fire consolidation in areas where the City and the County would have a station close together such as Station 9 in North Canton. Another area mentioned was the East Side of Canton at Hwy. 140. While some council members agreed with the concept of coming to an agreement with the County and others had reservations, it was generally agreed on by the City and the County that if an agreement was made, one or the other should operate the station and the other pay a percentage for their portion rather than operate the station jointly. Commissioner Johnston stated that it didn't really matter if the City or the County operated the station and the other contributed a fair amount for their portion, but that it just didn't make sense to have fire stations within a half mile of each other. Commissioner Gunnin pointed out that the County has the manpower to meet certain standards for ISO and that a consolidated station would improve the City's ISO ranking. A council member suggested looking at the most urgent situation first, which was Station 9 that serves Great Sky and Laurel Canyon that needs to be replaced. Mr. Cooper and Mr. Cummings were tasked with coming up with a detailed plan that would work and would most likely be funded and built by both the City and the County.

Mayor Hobgood brought up the subject of the County's Parks and Recreation taking over the scheduling of their fields for league play with the City continuing to maintain the parks. Mayor Hobgood also inquired about the City contracting with the County for inspections related to the new hospital. He said otherwise they would have to hire a firm.

Mayor Hobgood and the others thanked the Commissioners for inviting them to the meeting and the Chairman and Commissioners thanked them as well for attending.

**The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:35 a.m.**