

At a Mini Retreat of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held at the Boykins Volunteer Fire Department, Boykins, VA on June 5, 2007 at 7:00 PM

SUPERVISORS PRESENT

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman (Drewryville)
Walter L. Young, Jr., Vice-Chairman (Franklin)
Carl J. Faison (Boykins-Branchville)
Anita T. Felts (Jerusalem)
Ronald M. West (Berlin-Ivor)
Moses Wyche (Capron)

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

Walter D. Brown, III (Newsoms)

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator
James A. Randolph, Assistant County Administrator
Robert L. Barnett, Director of Community Development
Sandi P. Plyler, Data Processing Manager
Julien W. Johnson, Jr., Public Utilities Director
Hart Council, Public Works Director
John Robert Harrup, Commissioner of the Revenue
Susan H. Wright, Administrative Secretary

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Supervisor Faison gave the invocation.

Mr. Michael Johnson, County Administrator, welcomed everyone. He stated that we had our first mini retreat in February 2005. At that mini retreat, we identified the following 8 key areas/issues:

- Need for New School Construction
- Need to Manage Future Growth & Development
- Need to Implement Land Use Value Taxation
- Control the Cost of Solid Waste Collection
- Plan and Prepare for Economic Development
- Development of Infrastructure
- Organizational Issues (Pay & Classification, Staffing Needs, Space Needs)
- Technology Issues (E-government)

Mr. Johnson advised that regarding new school construction, we had provided mobile units at Southampton High School and funding for a new Hunterdale Elementary School as requested by the School Board. We had not provided funding for a new Capron Elementary School. He noted that enrollment at Southampton High School was above capacity, but they were handling the overage with mobile units. However, enrollment projections were increasing, and a permanent solution may be needed. In regards to managing future growth and development, we adopted a temporary ordinance on 2/28/05 limiting the number of lot divisions in agricultural zoning districts, and adopted a permanent ordinance on 12/19/05 creating rural residential standards. A cash proffer study was completed and ordinance adopted on 6/26/06. The Comprehensive Plan (Update) was completed and adopted in March 2007. Revisions to the Subdivision Ordinance, updates to the Capital Improvement Plan, and a Parks and Recreation Master Plan were underway. Regarding land use value taxation, an ordinance implementing it was adopted on June 27, 2005. Approximately 1,850 parcels qualified and enrolled and reduced the assessment by \$268,000,000. It provided tax equity which better aligned the cost of service with the burden of taxation. It also functioned as an incentive to preserve rural agricultural land. In regards to solid waste collection, all our sites were now attended and our daily per capita generation rate had been reduced from almost 6 lbs. to 3.13 lbs.

Mr. Johnson shared the following progress regarding economic development:

- Narricot Expansion (130 jobs, \$6.5 million invested)
- Deerfield Expansion (167 new jobs)
- Southampton Terminal (40 jobs, \$3.4 million)
- Feridies Expansion (\$3 million investment)

- Petitioned and joined Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance
- Borrowed \$11 million for new site acquisition and development
- Agreement pending to purchase site

Mr. Johnson shared the following limited progress in regards to infrastructure development:

- Courtland Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Master Plan
(The Courtland WWTP was the hub for future growth and development and would need to be expanded, as it was approaching capacity.)
 - February 2007 – engaged Timmons Group to proceed with VPDES permit negotiation, PER and preliminary design for new WWTP, topographic survey of site (floodplain identified)
- Refinancing of 1994 Revenue Note would free up \$130K over next 3 years and reduce overall cost of borrowing by more than \$500K over the life of the loan
- Biggest challenge – financing all of the necessary improvements

Regarding organizational issues, Mr. Johnson advised that the pay and classification plan had been adopted and funded. An evaluation of staffing levels had been completed but we remained woefully understaffed. A space needs analysis had not been done. In regards to technology issues (E-government), limited progress had been made. Assessment information was now accessible online, and our website and GIS was enhanced and improved. Most “true” e-government functions were still not available, including viewing inspection reports online, online licensing and permits, making a online payment, and online bid solicitation.

Mr. Johnson divided everyone into 3 groups and asked them to reflect upon the aforementioned key areas/issues and the progress that had been made and had not been made, and assign each area/issue with a letter grade of A-F. He asked them to also think about where we needed to go from here.

The group results are as follows:

	Group 1	Group2	Group 3
New School Construction	B	B	B
Growth Management	B+	C	A
Land Use Taxation	A	B	C
Solid Waste Collection	A+	A-	A
Economic Development	B+ for effort, C for achievement	B+	A
Infrastructure	B	C	C
Organizational Issues	A	C	C
E-Government	B	D	D

Brief explanations of the grades assigned and group comments are as follows:

New School Construction – The groups were overall satisfied with the progress, but recognized that Capron Elementary School would need attention in the near future. Supervisor West commented that regarding increasing enrollment projections at Southampton High School, he remembered seeing a chart and statistics that enrollment would reach a peak and then take a turn downward. Thus, the mobile units should suffice for the temporary peak in enrollment. He stated that he we needed to hold the School Board to a higher standard of figures.

Growth Management – Groups 1 and 3 were overall satisfied with the progress. Group 1 noted that we needed to revisit the Cash Proffer Policy. Group 2 was somewhat satisfied with the progress that had been made but thought there was still work to do. Even with the ordinances that had been passed, road stripping was still occurring. Also, we were encouraging growth around the towns, but water/sewer infrastructure was not available to support it. The Capital Improvement Plan and the Cash Proffer Policy needed to be revisited.

Land Use Taxation – Groups 1 and 2 were overall satisfied with the progress. Group 3 was somewhat satisfied. Group 3 advised that land use taxation reduced the assessment by \$268,000,000, and that figure was only going to increase in the future. They thought there needed to be a cap. The program also needed to be reviewed regularly to ensure it was meeting the goals and objectives.

Solid Waste Collection – Each group was overall very satisfied with the progress. Group 2 mentioned possibly having the sites outside of Boykins and Ivor open 6 days per week. Group 2 was also bothered by the fact that we were paying to dispose of metal when there was a gentlemen in the metal business willing to collect metal from us and pay us for it.

Economic Development – The groups were overall satisfied but thought there was still a lot of work to do. Group 1 commented that we were on the right track but actual results were not as good as hoped for. Group 2 remarked that perhaps we should take money from the Turner Tract and put it in other property – the Ports were the next wave. Group 3 stated that we needed to foster more small business development. We also needed to put a greater emphasis in linking land and agriculture to economic development.

Infrastructure – Group 1 recognized that a new Courtland WWTP was needed and financing was an issue. Groups 2 thought that this was the most important issue facing us. There were problems with the WWTP in Courtland and problems in Newsoms and Boykins. You could not put homes around the towns due to a lack of infrastructure. Group 3 advised that we needed partner with the private sector and bring in private dollars, as we did not have the borrowing power to keep borrowing. We needed to look at accepting non-cash proffers such as wastewater treatment plants. There was no plan to bring utilities to the new Route 460 interchange at Route 616.

Organizational Issues – Group 1 thought we were on the right track, as the pay and classification plan had been completed and funded, but recognized that there was no room or money for additional staff that was needed. Group 2 thought that the pay and classification plan was a good starting point, but we needed to be even more competitive. Also, there was nothing in the pay and classification plan to reward employees based on merit. We were woefully understaffed. A full time grants writer was needed. No current employee had the time to actively seek grants. Space was needed. Perhaps some of the tenants in the building needed to vacate. This was a big issue. Group 3 agreed that additional staff was needed and space was needed in which to put them.

E-Government – Group 1 thought that good progress had been made, as we had updated the AS400 and it now had a Windows server. The equipment was in place, so when E-Government became a priority, we would be ready. Group 2 advised that they assigned a grade of D because we had just not made E-Government a priority and had not provided adequate funding. He recognized that Sandi Plyler, Information Technology Manager, worked very hard and it was because of her that we had what we had in place. Group 3 shared the thoughts of Group 2.

Where do we need to go next? All 3 groups agreed that the following should be set as current priorities (in order):

- Space
- Employees
- Infrastructure
- Trash disposal
- Linking agriculture to economic development

All 3 groups recognized that the State of the County was good. We had done the most we could with the least. We had given to the schools and industrial park, and it was now time to get our house in order.

Supervisor West mentioned that perhaps we needed to look at having an in-house assessor. With this past assessment, housing was under-assessed and land was over-assessed.

Chairman Jones stated that we touched on and did something about each of the priorities we set in February 2005 and that was something to be proud of. We were trying to continue to move forward. We had a great staff.

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Mr. Johnson stated that it was important to establish a vision.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk