

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE  
ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
May 10, 2007 – 5:30 PM  
J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROOM, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

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Present: Arnold S. Chamberlain, Chairman  
Chad Mitchell, Vice-Chairman  
Jon Barber, Member  
Tina Hall, Member  
Jim Sides, Member

County Manager William Cowan, Clerk to the Board Carolyn Athey, County Attorney Jay Dees and Finance Director Leslie Heidrick were present.

Chairman Chamberlain convened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

Chairman Chamberlain provided the Invocation and also led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CONSIDER ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Chairman Chamberlain said he would like to add a discussion regarding a Resolution that was voted on during the May 7, 2007 Commission Meeting pertaining to surplus property. Chairman Chamberlain also asked that the Board hold a discussion regarding an offer from SBA for a land lease purchase.

Commissioner Sides moved, Commissioner Barber seconded and the vote to add both items to the agenda passed unanimously.

Chairman Chamberlain added the Resolution as agenda item #1a and the land lease purchase offer as item #1b.

**CONSIDER DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA**

There were no deletions from the agenda.

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Commissioner Sides moved, Commissioner Mitchell seconded and the vote for approval of the agenda passed unanimously.

## **1. DISCUSSION OF FAIRGROUNDS PROPERTY**

Chairman Chamberlain recognized James Meacham, new Executive Director of the Rowan County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Chairman Chamberlain then read from portions of a proposal the Board had received from the Rowan County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) for management of the Rowan County Fairgrounds.

Commissioner Hall, who serves as the Board's liaison to the TDA, said the TDA members supported the proposal and had voted unanimously to forward the proposal to the Commissioners for consideration.

Chairman Chamberlain read from the last sentence of the proposal regarding the Rowan County Fair and he pointed out that the TDA would not manage the fair but would manage and coordinate other events to be held at the fairgrounds.

Commissioner Barber said the proposal clearly stated that the TDA would not manage the Rowan County Fair. Commissioner Barber said at one point the Board had discussed a Request for Proposals (RFP) process for an agency to manage the fairgrounds property. Commissioner Barber asked if the Board planned to open the process up to a RFP. Chairman Chamberlain responded that he understood the Board had discussed an agency taking over the operations of the fair and the fairgrounds. Chairman Chamberlain felt that it made "real sense" to have the CVB to become the lead agency to manage the property. Chairman Chamberlain said he did not think the Board would find another agency with the expertise of the CVB willing to manage the fairgrounds property at no cost to the County.

Commissioner Sides expressed his displeasure with some of the events that had been held on the fairgrounds property in the past several years and also with the way some issues had been handled. Commissioner Sides described the proposal as "refreshing" with the promise of good communication and also with the fact that the TDA was not interested in monies to be generated from the events. Commissioner Sides said if the current fairgrounds property was sold, and the County was to continue to foster tourism, property would have to be identified for these types of events to take place. Commissioner Sides said that any funds received from events on the fairgrounds property should go into an enterprise fund. Commissioner Sides felt the Board should give the proposal serious consideration.

Chairman Chamberlain reiterated that he wanted the County to have a fair. Chairman Chamberlain said he also wanted events to be held that were conducive to tourism. Chairman Chamberlain said the Board realized that long-term leases were not an option for the property in question. Chairman Chamberlain said the proposal needed to be "fine-tuned" and he opened the floor for a motion to accept the proposal in theory.

Commissioner Barber said when the County began to actively market the property for other events, the TDA would be able to provide the County with economic impact studies. Commissioner Barber asked if the County would conduct an RFP for management of the fair and Chairman Chamberlain said yes.

Commissioner Mitchell expressed his appreciation for the proposal. Commissioner Mitchell said he wanted to provide the opportunity for others who might be interested in managing the property to submit a similar proposal. Commissioner Mitchell said there might be other groups willing to undertake the project.

Commissioner Hall said the County was fortunate to have the TDA step up to the task and not charge the County for managing the fairgrounds property. Commissioner Hall expressed a desire to see the TDA have a chance to manage the property and possibly “take it to the next level.” Commissioner Hall then made a motion for the County move forward with the proposal, realizing that it is a work in progress. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sides.

Commissioner Barber said he did not have any questions regarding the proposal but he agreed with Commissioner Mitchell that there could be other non-profits that could offer a similar proposal. Commissioner Barber suggested that the Board allow the RFP process to assist the County on the matter.

Chairman Chamberlain said he felt sure there were others that could offer a proposal but that he did not know of another local non-profit agency with the expertise of the CVB. Chairman Chamberlain discussed the fair operations and said he would not entertain a proposal from the current Fair Association under its existing management. Chairman Chamberlain said if the Jaycees could “rename” a group and charter itself with members that had not been involved “at the top” he would consider that group operating the fair.

Upon being put to a vote, the motion on the floor passed 4-1 with Commissioner Mitchell dissenting.

Commissioner Sides asked if those wishing to book events should contact Mr. Meacham. Chairman Chamberlain said until the details of the proposal had been finalized, individuals should continue to contact the County Manager’s Office. Chairman Chamberlain said at the appropriate time, the County would publicize the contact information for booking events through the CVB. Chairman Chamberlain estimated the timeframe for finalizing the proposal to be 30 days.

Chairman Chamberlain welcomed Mr. Meacham and said the Board looked forward to working with him. Mr. Meacham said he appreciated the opportunity to present the proposal and he said the TDA looked forward to providing the service to the community and to visitors. Mr. Meacham was optimistic that the solution would reflect the values of both the County and the TDA.

Chairman Chamberlain said he had known 2 members of the current management for the Fair Association for a long time. Chairman Chamberlain said he liked both members and that his decisions regarding the Fair Association had been based strictly on business and not about his personal likes and dislikes. Chairman Chamberlain referred to a handout that Commissioner Sides had distributed prior to the meeting and he said the document lists the principal officers for the Fair Association. Chairman Chamberlain said after the current contract expires on November 1, 2007, the relationship with the Fair Association would be severed.

**ADDITIONS:**

**1a. RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SALE OF SURPLUS PROPERTY BY PUBLIC AUCTION**

Chairman Chamberlain said the Board had voted during regular session on May 7, 2007 regarding the Resolution for the sale of surplus property by public auction. Chairman Chamberlain said the Resolution that had been presented had specifically listed Exhibits A, B and C as the property to be sold. Chairman Chamberlain said a handout (Exhibit D) had been presented at the meeting and the Resolution should have been updated to include Exhibit D.

Commissioner Sides moved, Commissioner Mitchell seconded and the vote to accept the corrected Resolution passed unanimously.

**1b. SBA LAND LEASE PURCHASE OFFER**

Chairman Chamberlain said SBA had offered the County a lump sum payment in the amount of \$108,675 in lieu of the current rental for the wireless communications structure located on Dan Road.

Finance Director Leslie Heidrick reviewed a handout, which provided an analysis of the current contract. Ms. Heidrick said the initial term of the lease was for 5 years from the "commencement date" and automatically renews for up to ten additional terms of five years each unless the Lessee notifies the Lessor of its intention not to renew prior to commencement of the succeeding renewal term. Ms. Heidrick said the County was into the second term and if all options were renewed, the lease would end December 15, 2055. Ms. Heidrick said the analysis boiled down to whether SBA would continue with the lease. Ms. Heidrick said if the County expected SBA to terminate the lease at the end of the current 5-year period, the County should accept the lump sum offer. Ms. Heidrick said she didn't think it was likely that SBA would terminate the lease.

Ms. Heidrick referred to page 2 of the handout and said the present value of the lease payments, if continued until 2055, was \$369,592.28.

Ms. Heidrick said if the County believed that SBA would renew the lease for at least 3 more renewal periods, it should not take the amount offered. Ms. Heidrick

said if the County believed it was likely that SBA would not renew the lease and the future value of the parcel of land (.23) acres was presumed to be minimal, it should seriously consider the offer.

Commissioner Sides said he felt the Board should evaluate the information and be willing to reply with an answer or a counter offer. Commissioner Sides said the property in question was of no value to the County and that the Board should reply to the offer.

Chairman Chamberlain suggested that the Board review the information and vote on the matter at a future meeting.

In response to a query from Chairman Chamberlain, Ms. Heidrick confirmed that the payments from SBA had increased by 15%.

By consensus the Board agreed with Chairman Chamberlain's suggestion.

## **2. PRESENTATION OF BOARD MEMBERS BUDGET PRIORITIES**

Chairman Chamberlain said he had specifically called the Special meeting for the purpose of allowing the Board members to present their budget priorities. Chairman Chamberlain explained that the discussion should have taken place on the last day of the Board's Planning Retreat and he accepted responsibility that the discussion did not occur. Chairman Chamberlain said the meeting today was to discuss the Capital Improvement Plan and for the members to present their priorities so the County Manager and the Board could discuss and debate the issues during budget work sessions. Chairman Chamberlain asked the Board to refrain from a "big budget discussion" until a later date. Chairman Chamberlain also asked that Board members allow him to recognize them for presentation of their priorities in order to avoid a lengthy meeting.

County Manager William Cowan and Finance Director Leslie Heidrick provided the Board with several handouts regarding proposed capital projects and associated debt, and the effective tax rate. Mr. Cowan and Ms. Heidrick reviewed the handouts and highlighted the capital improvement needs for the County.

At Chairman Chamberlain's request, the Board members presented their budget priorities as follows:

Commissioner Sides –

- Revenue neutral tax rate of \$ .5763 cents
- Building for Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Airport projects
- New DSS Employees
- Funding for Rowan-Salisbury Schools (comfortable with figure provided by County Manager)

Commissioner Hall –

- Interested in revenue neutral tax rate at \$.5763 cents
- \$1.5 million for new employees, which includes DSS, court and detention officers, internet/webmaster
- DSS building as a top priority
- Funding for Rowan-Salisbury Schools based on the information provided by the County Manager
- \$1.5 million increase for county employees which included a 2.5% cost of living adjustment, and a merit program to be determined by the Board and health insurance for employees
- Proposed using \$100,000 for classroom innovation projects available to teachers through grants; suggested capping grants at \$10,000 per grant

Commissioner Barber –

*Public Safety*

- Law Enforcement – detention officers/court deputies/patrol deputies
- Rescue Squad to add fulltime shift during peak times
- Telecommunications for additional staff

*Education*

- Fund RSS at state average formula with required yearly report on how well the Superintendent and Board of Education are reaching their adopted goals as part of future budget allocations
- Funding for technology

*County Administration*

- Merit program that is properly funded and tied to measurable performance program
- Full Cost of living adjustment
- Health insurance at no cost to employees (for at least one more year)
- Additional Codes Enforcement Staff
- Webmaster for Information Systems
- Some new DSS positions

Commissioner Mitchell –

- Review requested positions and heed County Manager's advice on what is needed
- Fund RSS at state average (would like to see an agreement that if Board provides funding at the state average, "fix on a number – 7 or 8 percent" and at the end of the year, if RSS has more than that amount then it goes back into an account for capital projects for the school system)
- DSS building
- Airport projects
- Tax rate of \$.58 cents

Chairman Chamberlain –

- Revenue neutral tax rate or \$.58 cents
- Education at per pupil state average;
- Additional officers for jail and courtrooms
- Fund peak time staff (3 positions) for Rescue Squad
- Telecommunications Staff
- Fire Departments
- DSS building
- New employees
- Employee merit program that is tied to measurable performance
- Cost of living adjustment for employees
- Insurance at no cost to employees
- Webmaster

Commissioner Sides commented that the package the County Manager had presented was within the guidelines of using the new revenue that was available for fiscal year 2007-08. Commissioner Sides said he didn't feel the Board should "dip into the Fund Balance."

### **3. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Sides moved to adjourn at 7:10 pm. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Athey  
Clerk to the Board