



**MOORE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2023**

The Moore County Board of Commissioners convened for a Special Meeting beginning at 9:00am, Thursday, February 9, 2023, at the Moore County Senior Enrichment Center, 8040 US HWY 15, West End, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting, duly advertised, was for a work session to consider goals for recently established task forces.

Commissioners Present:

Chairman Nick Picerno, Vice Chairman Frank Quis, Jim Von Canon, John Ritter (arrived 9:08am), Kurt Cook

Chairman Picerno called the meeting to order. County Manager Wayne Vest offered the invocation and Commissioner Cook led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Picerno welcomed everyone and provided opening remarks regarding goal setting for the Board's task forces, asking each member to consider and share what he wanted to accomplish in each area:

Budget Task Force

Chairman Picerno shared that his goal for the Budget Task Force would be to cut taxes if possible, and to minimize expenses while maximizing production. Commissioner Cook noted the importance of having everyone together submitting proposals, trimming where they could and allocating accordingly. He noted the budget would ebb and flow and so 10% for emergencies should always be calculated in. Commissioner Quis discussed that he had been on the budget team for several years and the County was blessed to have a good, competent staff. He discussed that they had budgeted conservatively and would continue to do so. Commissioner Von Canon stated his agreement with Chairman Picerno and said if something was needed, get it and get the best deal for it and if it was not needed, give the money back to the citizens, as they needed it now more than ever. Commissioner Ritter said he could not agree more in terms of being good stewards.

Economic Task Force

Commissioner Von Canon said he was looking to the future for bringing in jobs. He discussed that the County had done well the last hundred years being a tourist area, retirement community, etc. and he said they should be smart about what they attracted and make sure it fit into the environment and culture of Moore

County. He said he wanted to bring good jobs for the County's citizens. Commissioner Ritter stated his agreement with Commissioner Von Canon regarding the types of industry they might attract. He said Moore County was a special place and he wanted to maintain that character. He noted that the community college was key to training young citizens for the jobs that would need to be filled in the county. Commissioner Von Canon highlighted the importance of the nursing program. Commissioner Quis discussed the importance of citizen input and also the positive impact of broadband in northern Moore County. Commissioner Cook discussed the importance of the College.

Land Use Plan/Unified Development Ordinance Task Force

Commissioner Ritter commented regarding the size of the County's southern municipalities, noting they were small but completely adequate (in terms of available services/amenities). He said the County's population density was not extreme or overextended and he suggested the towns keep that in mind, and he also commented regarding maintaining the rural nature of other areas. Commissioner Von Canon said they needed to remember farmland as it may be needed. He said the Unified Development Ordinance needed to be strong and they also needed to start thinking about affordable housing as people would need it to work in Moore County. He said the municipalities should be encouraged to welcome some of the new developments and he commented regarding traffic. He said the County needed a strong Land Use Plan and to think about why people moved to Moore County. He expressed his distaste for developments that included all similar-looking houses. Commissioner Quis discussed being smart and considering the appeal of Moore County. He said the municipalities would need to think about different ways to grow and some had suggested growing up (taller buildings). He noted that the North Carolina Department of Transportation had held a meeting in Moore County earlier in the week and he said that Moore County was in a different realm of funding because of its metropolitan qualities. He said also small towns, northern Moore, etc. should be consulted on how they wanted to grow, and they may not have the planning resources that the southern end of the County had. He said the County had a great opportunity before it and already had a lot of data, and he encouraged growing wisely and maintaining character. Commissioner Cook discussed traffic concerns, particularly along Hwy 15/501 and new businesses opening in already congested areas. He said he would like to see a map of where the development could *not* go because of watershed, soil, etc. and then to look closely at where development *could* go. Chairman Picerno said it was vital to understand they were working as a team. He noted the question of how to maintain rural integrity but also marry that with property rights. He said there would be a lot of different opinions and strong opinions and it would not be an easy job and he encouraged everyone to remember what the country's founding fathers fought for to get them where they were at.

Law Enforcement/Veterans Task Force

Commissioner Cook expressed his support for the Sheriff's endeavors and all local law enforcement, which he said was paramount, as well as veterans. He noted that law enforcement did not have a lot of support groups and said he thought doing programs throughout the county, having functions, and having fundraisers to bring in experts would pay dividends. Commissioner Von Canon discussed that Moore County was fortunate to not have all the violent crime experienced in other places but noted that law enforcement saw something new every day and the County needed to ensure they had the equipment they needed. He said he

wanted people to be able to do their daily business without living in fear. He noted drugs recently confiscated in the area in an arrest yielded enough fentanyl to kill 2.75 million people. He then discussed veterans and shared that 22-24 veterans were committing suicide daily and they needed to have help. He said he was hearing a lot of good things about the County's Veterans staff, and he shared also that he was hearing from a lot of willing volunteers. Commissioner Quis discussed that the County had supported the Sheriff's Office financially, including with a recently revised pay plan, and should continue to properly fund that department. He said he appreciated the Sheriff and everyone in his department and there were not many places in Moore County he would not feel safe. He discussed that law enforcement and military had stressors not experienced by civilians and it was important to support organizations that helped them. He noted the impact of opioids also, including on crime, and said people needed to be reached before they became drug addicts. Commissioner Ritter said he was really thankful to have two distinguished veterans (Commissioners Cook and Von Canon) serving on the Board. He said this was a huge plus for the County and now more than ever he was realizing and appreciating the impact the military had on the community. He said Moore County truly was a military community and it was very important to have this task force so they could identify concerns and needs. He thanked the Sheriff also and said Moore County had very professional law enforcement officers and he certainly wanted to support them and give them what they needed in training and funding. Chairman Picerno asked his fellow commissioners if anyone supported defunding the police and all said no.

Legislative Task Force

Commissioner Ritter shared that he was pleased with the tier system resolution approved by the Board at its recent regular meeting. He said while Moore was considered a rich county, there were areas that were more similar to neighboring counties, and they needed to remember to not leave out those more rural and poorer areas. He said those areas did not need as much but did want the County to be aware of their needs and he encouraged citizens of northern Moore to reach out and let the County know when there was a need. He said they tried to be self-sufficient, sometimes to their detriment. Commissioner Cook discussed ensuring the disbursement of funds was also received in the north and west areas of the County. He said he was elected by everyone and was there to represent everyone within the borders of Moore County. Commissioner Quis discussed that the legislature had done a good job in attracting businesses (north of Moore County), and they would impact the County. He agreed that the tier system was not fair and should be eliminated or at least changed such that the poorer areas would be treated the same as other similar areas of the State. Commissioner Von Canon said there were some great newly elected representatives, and he was happy Rep. Ben Moss had helped move the tier system bill forward. He also noted a companion bill by him and Sen. McInnis for protection of infrastructure and requiring utilities to be proactive rather than reactive in that regard. He expressed his support for a recent parents' bill of rights bill and said he would also encourage one that would prevent children under 18 years old from attending drag shows. He said the Board should listen to the people and ask the legislators to help with whatever the citizens brought up. He said the legislators were proactive and were meeting a lot of resistance so anytime someone could support them, they should. Chairman Picerno noted another bill being drafted by Rep. Neal Jackson that would basically create a sub-tier system within a county.

Opioid Task Force

Commissioner Quis said the Opioid Task Force was off to a good start and had met a couple weeks before. He said the process had been going on for months and the settlements would have millions of dollars flowing into North Carolina. He said the task force was well on its way and would soon be asking for funding proposals from stakeholders, and they needed to be looked at holistically. Commissioner Ritter said he was pleased to serve on the task force, and it was crucial to the community. Commissioner Von Canon said he would like the County to be proactive and work on prevention. He said they needed to get into the school system, and he recalled there previously being dynamic speakers that dissuaded children from drug usage. He said that was needed again and kids needed to be educated early on that this was a bad path to go down. Commissioner Cook commented that opioids were not going away and noted the importance of support for law enforcement. He said there was not much help on the borders, and education and law enforcement were key. Chairman Picerno said he was glad the task force had jumped out quickly and was treating everyone fairly.

Solid Waste Task Force

Commissioner Von Canon discussed how much went into handling people's trash after they threw it away and he noted issues such as methane being produced at the landfill. He discussed that the Solid Waste Task Force had recently met and visited the sites and how helpful it was and how impressed he was by the staff, especially considering all the regulations with which they had to comply. Commissioner Ritter said it was encouraging to know that so much thought went into these issues from staff and management, and it seemed to be a task that was only going to grow. Commissioner Cook complimented Property Management Director Gene Boles and staff. Commissioner Quis discussed costs, which he said would only increase and noted a new landfill would have to be built in the not so distant future. He said they were making plans for the future; it was just one of the more costly services the County provided.

Water/Sewer Task Force

Commissioner Cook discussed that those involved in the water/sewer issues had a solid grasp and he noted the importance of data in planning. He said the water and sewer plan would be a basic blueprint that communities were built from, and every dime would be well spent. Commissioner Quis said there was not enough water and the County needed to work with the towns, etc. to establish long-term contracts. He said they also needed to consider building a reservoir or take advantage of what already existed. He said he was an advocate for extending sewer where it made sense. He said he thought the traffic situation could be helped if development was encouraged in existing towns. He noted that this did get into the philosophy of property rights. Commissioner Von Canon noted the importance of preparing for the future and preparing for growth. Commissioner Ritter said it was imperative that the County find water resources. He said the Board's last work session was eye-opening to him about how complex it was to draw that water. He said he was encouraged by the opportunities the County had.

Chairman Picerno summarized that the purpose of this exercise was for the commissioners to expose their hearts to the community and indicate how they would govern. He said they would set some goals, timelines,

and action plans, and noted the task forces were not decision-makers but rather information gatherers, and the full Board of Commissioners would make decisions. Commissioner Quis suggested giving meeting observers an opportunity to speak and Chairman Picerno and the other commissioners agreed to do this following a break.

Chairman Picerno called for a ten-minute break.

Upon reconvening, Chairman Picerno opened the floor to meeting attendees for comments.

Ms. Jane Hogeman (Pinehurst Village Council member) encouraged the Board in its strategic planning to factor in the character of the County's individual towns.

Ms. Natalie Hawkins (Executive Director for Partners in Progress) expressed appreciation for the Board's investment of time and effort into the process and said Partners in Progress was available to support the Board. Chairman Picerno asked Ms. Hawkins if she could share with the commissioners a sheet that Commissioner Quis had from a study that had been conducted and she said yes. Commissioner Quis encouraged sharing of any data she had available.

Dr. Tim Locklair (Superintendent for Moore County Schools) thanked the commissioners, on behalf of the Board of Education, for their support and collaboration. He said the task forces connected with the public school system in many ways, and noted they would have representatives to collaborate on the education/prevention piece with the Opioid Task Force.

Mr. John Webster discussed concerns he had regarding water/sewer, growth, and accurate data. He said growth was greater and could destroy the rural area or increase already high density. Chairman Picerno noted that growth was all over Moore County and Commissioner Quis said the County would work with each municipality. Public Works Director Randy Gould noted the purpose of numbers provided was to project future water supply needs.

Mr. John Misiaszek commented regarding legislative goals, including sales tax exemption for the Schools, and reducing the time it took to obtain the refund. He shared also that he did not support marijuana legalization nor online betting, and he suggested considering mandatory recycling.

There were no further speakers.

Goal setting

Budget Task Force -- County Manager Wayne Vest commented regarding the budget. Chairman Picerno said it was important to him to know if the tax base would have grown anyway, if a revaluation were not completed. Mr. Vest said in the past few years there had been about \$3M in tax base growth. Chairman Picerno asked about the collection rate thus far and Tax Administrator Gary Briggs said it was between 97% and 98%. Chairman Picerno asked if 99% would be achieved as in other years and Mr. Briggs said yes. Mr. Vest noted the helpfulness of the 2% discount period in collections. Chairman Picerno agreed this was a good incentive. Chairman Picerno said for the FY24 budget his goal was to have no additional tax burden and, if possible, to actually lower it. Commissioner Von Canon agreed and said citizens relied on them to make smart decisions. Chairman Picerno said the rate had been cut last year and asked if there was still a small surplus this year and Mr. Vest said yes. Chairman Picerno inquired with Mr. Briggs about a decline in vehicle tax collections and Mr. Briggs indicated he was not concerned about it. Chairman Picerno commented on legislative needs regarding sales tax, particularly for the schools to be exempt and asked County Attorney Misty Leland to also draft a resolution regarding the discrepancy in waiting two years for

the refund. Commissioner Quis reviewed that in the previous year the County had reevaluated its pay scales and asked how the County was currently staffed. Mr. Vest said they were staffed at about 92%-93% and had been able to improve the pool of applicants. Commissioner Quis asked about Environmental Health and Interim Health Director Matt Garner said the applicant pool was now a whole lot deeper and they were already qualified instead of waiting to be certified. Commissioner Picerno said staff may want to build in the budget possible increases from 2% up to 5%. He said they got employees caught up and could not let them now get behind. Commissioner Von Canon commented regarding changes to the state employees' health insurance plan as discussed by State Treasurer Dale Folwell in a meeting earlier in the week. Chairman Picerno reviewed comments also made by Mr. Folwell regarding the retirement system and noted the County was now having to pay in double digits instead of single digits, and he suggested a letter from Mr. Vest or staff may be in order to address that issue. There was further discussion regarding the retirement costs, including the increases that had to be covered by Moore County Schools for their employees. Chairman Picerno said a letter should be put on the next agenda. Chairman Picerno asked Public Works Director Randy Gould if he anticipated any rate increases and he said he did. He asked what percentage and Mr. Gould said 4% was proposed, and 3% for the wastewater plant. He said a rate study was done every year with a consultant. Mr. Vest commented additionally on the costs for solid waste, etc. In summary, Chairman Picerno reiterated the Budget Task Force's goal to maintain or reduce the tax rate and all commissioners agreed.

Economic Task Force – Mr. Vest offered comments regarding upcoming projects, economic development incentives, etc. Commissioner Quis shared that he and Commissioner Von Canon had talked a lot about economic development. Chairman Picerno asked about their goals. Commissioner Von Canon said he would like to bring in opportunities that would culturally blend in and he noted the horse business as an option. Commissioner Quis commented regarding Commissioner Von Canon's perceptiveness, noting he had pointed out how important the retirement community was to Moore County's economy. Goals discussed for the Economic Task Force were getting a gameplan together for where development should occur, a timeline, and determining what Partners in Progress was working on and where.

Land Use Plan/Unified Development Ordinance Task Force – Mr. Vest noted one good goal would be to reconcile the differences in the County's Land Use Plan and Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Planning Director Debra Ensminger discussed text amendments to the UDO regarding major subdivisions. She had maps available for the Board to review and Commissioner Quis asked her to please circulate smaller versions of them to each commissioner as they had very important decisions to make. He said there were areas they might want to encourage more subdivisions and said he hoped they would be deliberative and patient. Commissioner Von Canon discussed the East Moore Water District lines and their importance to the homes they served. He concurred that the UDO probably needed to be tweaked in a few places and he expressed his preference for homes to be built on individual lots versus cul-de-sacs. Commissioner Quis suggested the Board also look at conservation subdivisions. Ms. Ensminger discussed that before the Land Use Plan could be updated, staff had to know how the Board wanted to grow. Mr. Vest said another consideration was whether the Board still wanted to put subdivisions through the quasi-judicial process or have them seek approval at another level. Chairman Picerno noted that it was unfair to change the rules on everyone in the third quarter. He discussed the qualifications of the Subdivision Review Board members and

indicated the process did not need to be micromanaged, such as it was with the quasi-judicial process. Commissioner Ritter said one important component while making revisions was public input. Chairman Picerno said they should not rush the process but should correct inconsistencies as quickly as they could since it was currently like they were operating under two sets of rules. Commissioner Quis noted that the steering committee (of about 25 people) that put forth the 2013 Land Use Plan had done a really good job. Chairman Picerno stated a goal to fix inconsistencies as soon as possible. He said he, too, would lean toward the steering committee process for the Land Use Plan, but have a smaller group. Commissioner Quis agreed that 25-30 people made it difficult. He also emphasized that the commissioners were not land use planners and there were professionals who could guide them. He said there were smart people who had done this before for other cities and counties. He said in terms of short-term fixes, he was open to suggestions. Chairman Picerno reminded everyone that the task force was not to make decisions, but to bring information to the Board.

Chairman Picerno called for a lunch break at 12:05pm. The Board reconvened following lunch at 12:40pm.

Law Enforcement/Veterans Task Force – Mr. Vest shared additional information that had been received regarding veterans' resources since the Board's previous work session and noted conversation had also been held with the Sheriff regarding his needs. Commissioner Von Canon shared names of individuals who were available to assist the task force and said he was going to try to get a meeting together in the next week or so. He said locally there needed to be more providers and more rooms than there were available at the hospital (24). He noted that law enforcement and its capabilities had grown, and old cases were being solved. Commissioner Cook shared information about a new employee at FirstHealth Moore Regional who would be helpful. Commissioner Von Canon discussed a case with a juvenile that had been living in the emergency room for six months because there was no other place. Commissioner Cook commented regarding the problems caused by a discrepancy in the age that the federal and state governments considered an individual to be a child. Chairman Picerno said maybe they could get a resolution or letter together because if they did not know there was a problem, they could not fix it. It was determined a goal for the task force would be to determine what local resources were needed. Sheriff Ronnie Fields briefly discussed his department's requirements with regard to the transport of those needing mental healthcare.

Legislative Task Force – Mr. Vest commented regarding resolutions recently adopted by the Board. Chairman Picerno asked what kind of follow-up could be done to ensure a response to the Board's requests. He said they needed a two-way street. Commissioner Von Canon suggested that when there was a really good legislative request, it should be copied to all 100 NC counties as there was strength in numbers. Chairman Picerno asked Clerk Laura Williams if this was possible and she indicated it would be no problem to share with the 100 county clerks to distribute to their respective boards, and the commissioners had directed this action previously for specific resolutions.

Opioid Task Force – Mr. Vest discussed that staff may want to bring an agenda item forward for the Board to waive the procurement requirements with regard to the opioid settlement funds RFP. County Attorney Kristy Leland expanded on that information, offering that the bidding requirements really did not apply in this situation. Mr. Vest discussed that five focus areas for funding had been identified by a recent survey of

stakeholders and Commissioner Quis reviewed that those five areas were treatment, early intervention, recovery support, collaborative strategic planning, and recovery housing support. He said funding amounts had not been decided and the RFP would be finalized soon. Mr. Vest noted that as part of their goal setting the commissioners should consider how much funding to allocate, whether it be a finite amount annually, a larger amount on the front end, level each year, etc. Commissioner Quis commented regarding the amount of funding that had been received so far. Mr. Vest noted also a decision needed to be made on if the focus would be on the survey results, or other areas as well. Commissioner Von Canon said it would be interesting to know organizations' current budgets and to be assured funds were going for treatment and not overhead expenses. Commissioner Quis discussed that accountability would be part of the process on an annual basis. Chairman Picerno asked that before the RFP was sent out that the full Board have an opportunity to review it and comment. Commissioner Quis said their goal would be to move expeditiously.

Solid Waste Task Force – Chairman Picerno commented regarding the impact of producing less waste. Mr. Vest and Property Management Director Gene Boles reviewed information from the Solid Waste Task Force's site visits the previous week. Mr. Vest shared that bids had been received on the Turning Leaf Way project and noted that there had been a lot of discussion regarding recycling. Chairman Picerno said he was surprised to hear recycling was costing the County. After brief discussion regarding glass recycling, it was stated a goal should be to educate the municipalities to police their glass collections a little better. Commissioner Von Canon complimented the Solid Waste staff and said the jobs they did helped with the beautification of Moore County. Chairman Picerno noted staff should get on the Board's agenda as quickly as they could with suggested recycling modifications. Chairman Picerno said the main goal would be to reinforce the County's plan and ensure good communication. Mr. Vest discussed a potential new collection site and the importance of ensuring those using the sites were Moore County citizens. He offered additional details regarding construction and demolition and also leaf and limb debris. Commissioner Von Canon discussed the conditions staff weathered to work at the sites – cold, hot, rain, etc., and noted many were retirees. He encouraged making sure signs were very obvious that the sites were not for commercial waste, etc. Chairman Picerno concurred regarding the importance of the signage. Chairman Picerno restated goals to contact the municipalities regarding glass, and to get the recycling budget amendments to the Board.

Water/Sewer Task Force – Public Works Director Randy Gould provided background information and updates regarding contracts. Discussion followed regarding potential partnership with Robbins and upcoming site visits with Town of Robbins officials. Mr. Vest discussed American Rescue Plan funding and installation of sewer pipe when Highway 211 was being widened. Chairman Picerno commented regarding possibly inviting a NCDOT representative to the next task force meeting and mentioned he could get in touch with Reuben Blakely. Mr. Gould further discussed upsizing lines, options for funding, etc.

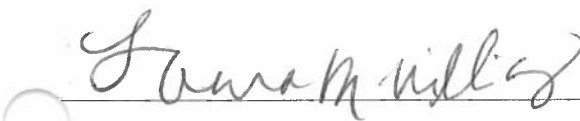
Closing Comments

Commissioner Cook thanked everyone for coming and said the information was sometimes dry, but was 100% necessary. Commissioner Quis discussed that there were lots of moving parts and each one affected today and the future. He said they should do the right thing today to be ready for tomorrow. Commissioner Von Canon thanked everyone for coming and thanked staff. Commissioner Ritter discussed that the work

sessions and task forces had already been proven effective and he expressed thanks for the leadership in that regard. Commissioner Ritter shared a recent press release by the Moore County Schools regarding many awards earned by their students at the recent statewide Junior Beta Club Convention, and he particularly noted the accolades earned by Westmoore Elementary. Chairman Picerno thanked staff and his fellow commissioners. He asked the Board to consider another work session to be held on March 16, 2023, regarding homelessness and said he would invite Cliff Brown with Team Workz to fill the Board in on what was going on. A citizen present offered a comment regarding the difficulty of male children over 12 years old having to be separated from their mothers in a shelter environment. The Board agreed to this meeting to be held at 9:00am on March 16 as proposed by Chairman Picerno.

There being no further business, upon motion made by Commissioner Von Canon, seconded by Commissioner Ritter, the Board voted 5-0 to adjourn the February 9, 2023, Special Meeting of the Moore County Board of Commissioners at 1:59pm.

 Chairman

 Clerk

