

SEPTEMBER 14, 2010

MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
NORTH CAROLINA

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Budget/Public Policy Session in Conference Center Room 267 of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East Fourth Street at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 14, 2010.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Present:** Chairman Jennifer Roberts and Commissioners Harold Cogdell, Jr., Neil Cooksey, George Dunlap, Vilma Leake, and Daniel Murrey  
County Manager Harry L. Jones, Sr.  
Clerk to the Board Janice S. Paige

**Absent:** Commissioners Karen Bentley, Dumont Clarke, and Bill James

---

***Commissioner Leake was absent when the meeting was called to order and until noted in the minutes.***

***The meeting was called to order by Chairman Roberts, after which the matters below were addressed.***

**(2) PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS PIPELINE EXPANSION PLAN**

Marty Viser, Adam Long, and David Trusty with Piedmont Natural Gas addressed Piedmont Natural Gas' Pipeline Expansion Plan. It was noted that the pipeline would route through Mecklenburg County and Cabarrus County.

***Commissioner Leake entered the meeting.***

Comments

Commissioner Cooksey asked once the route is determined, how would Piedmont Natural Gas obtain easements from the landowners. *The response was that Piedmont Natural Gas would negotiate with the landowners for rights-of-way.*

Commissioner Cooksey asked about the size of the easements. *The response was that it varied but for a single pipeline, 50 feet was the normal practice.*

Commissioner Cooksey asked would the County be involved if Piedmont Natural Gas had to obtain some easements through eminent domain. *The response was no.*

Commissioner Dunlap asked about safety measures, in light of recent pipeline explosions. *The response was that Piedmont Natural Gas' highest priority was safety for residents, its employees, the community, and the integrity of their system.*

Chairman Roberts asked would the pipeline expansion go through any of the towns in Mecklenburg County and if so, has there been communication with those towns. *The response was yes and the towns were Davidson and Huntersville.*

Chairman Roberts thanked Piedmont Natural Gas officials for addressing this matter with the Board.

**(1) FY10 EMPLOYEE CLIMATE SURVEY RESULTS**

Strategic Planning Director Leslie Johnson addressed the FY10 Employee Climate Survey Results. The following was covered:

- Background
- Methodology
- Motivation & Satisfaction
- Economic Impact
- Employee Comments
- Relevant Research
- Communication, Human Resources & Technology
- Scorecard Results
- Conclusions

***A copy of the report is on file with the Clerk to the Board.***

Comments

Commissioner Murrey asked were the top 10 sentiments noted in the presentation in rank order. *The response was yes and no. They were bundled together, but pay was the most dominant, followed by the reduction in force (RIF) process and then lack of communication.*

Commissioner Cogdell asked about the RIF process which was addressed.

Commissioner Cooksey asked if the County had programs that try to maximize the potential of employees to progress through the organization and into leadership roles; and if so, did the survey ask about those programs. *The response was yes to both.*

County Manager Jones addressed leadership programs that exist.

County Manager Jones addressed the issue of no merit pay increase for the last two years.

County Manager Jones said his goal for next year was to get merit pay reinstated.

County Manager Jones addressed his desire to have an Employee Appreciation Day in October.

County Manager Jones said he was considering having the event at the Whitewater Center. He said it would cost about \$50,000 - \$60,000 to put on the event, with the principle cost being transportation. County Manager Jones said a few corporate contributions had been received.

County Manager Jones said he would like to have the unanimous support of the Board with respect to holding the event.

No objection was expressed with respect to holding an Employee Appreciation Day event.

Commissioner Cooksey encouraged staff to not “discount” the value of giving employees a perception or a reality that they won’t always be doing the job they’re currently doing, that there’s potential for development and advancement in the organization.

**SEPTEMBER 14, 2010**

Commissioner Cooksey asked County Manager Jones to notify and include the Board in on the Employee Appreciation Day event and other employee recognition events that occur.

Commissioner Cogdell asked could staff benchmark the data shared against the private sector and others in the public sector, especially in light of the current economic times, which was addressed. *It was noted that Mecklenburg County was one of the few government agencies that track data on an annual basis. It was also noted that there was no uniform methodology of collecting this data.*

Commissioner Leake asked about the level of employees surveyed. *The response was that every employee was surveyed.*

Commissioner Leake asked what department had the highest absenteeism rate. *The response was that was not a part of the survey questions.*

Commissioner Murrey asked was there any analysis by departments. *It was noted that more specific details were available on-line.*

Commissioner Murrey asked if staff followed up with departments to see if there's been any change where the survey results indicate concern and was any of the data used in performance reviews of supervisors and managers. *Director Johnson and General Manager John McGillicuddy addressed how the survey data was used.*

Commissioner Dunlap said he wished staff would track policy changes to the point that they could be incorporated in the survey once those policies have been implemented. He noted as an example, the change that was made with respect to employee charitable campaign giving. He said it would be good to gage how employees felt about the new process.

Commissioner Dunlap said his question to staff was what was learned from the survey relative to the responses to things that happened with the budget and the RIF, etc.

Commissioner Dunlap said what should have been learned was that we "dwelled too much" on what was going to happen. Commissioner Dunlap said when people are told there's going to be a RIF, anxiety "builds" because of the unknown. He said that unknown may not be known until six months later.

Commissioner Dunlap asked was anything learned from that to the point that maybe it's better to say in June someone will be rifted and that it would be effective July 1. Commissioner Dunlap said he didn't know how humane that would be but that there was a lot of survey responses associated with the RIF process. Commissioner Dunlap said the question was how do you make it "more humane," "more palatable," such that there's not "this anxiety and stress."

County Manager Jones said what he learned from the last budget process was that "candor" creates stress.

***Commissioner Cooksey left the meeting and was absent for the remainder of the meeting.***

Commissioner Dunlap asked County Manager Jones if he would inform employees in advance during next year's budget process if circumstances were unfortunately the same. *County Manager Jones said it was all about "timing" and that as soon as he knows what he believes to be the environment, he would share that information with employees.*

Commissioner Leake asked about the evaluation of staff by departments where there have been major problems and where the monitoring of programs has not taken place. She asked who's being held accountable. Further, what needs to be done to correct these types of problems and does this tie into the survey with respect to accountability.

**SEPTEMBER 14, 2010**

County Manager Jones asked Commissioner Leake was she referring to an evaluation of an employee or was she referring to the monitoring of a program or service.

Commissioner Leake said she was referring to the staff and evaluating employees responsible for programs.

County Manager Jones said culturally in the organization it's impressed upon supervisors who are conducting performance reviews that they do it in a way that is consistent with the data and that they treat each employee in a similar manner in the course of conducting the evaluation.

County Manager Jones said from time to time a higher level supervisor, when information is brought to his/her attention, will have to get involved in the process and correct any problems that they might see in any review that might be done; but he does not think that is the case normally. *County Manager Jones said normally supervisors do a good job with following the protocol in terms of conducting reviews.*

Commissioner Leake referenced the problem with the Giving Tree Program and recent problem in Area Mental Health. She asked where was the correction in this process, so that it won't happen again.

County Manager Jones said in situations such as that, County Human Resources would get involved and provide guidance to departments around getting any special investigations that might have to occur.

County Manager Jones said if there are special investigations that occur and personnel actions are warranted, then personnel action is taken. He said in the situations cited, personnel action was taken.

Commissioner Leake said her concern was could this have been avoided.

General Manager John McGillicuddy said with respect to the Giving Tree Program, the issue there was compliance with internal controls. He said if the County had been managing internal controls, it would have been uncovered.

General Manager McGillicuddy said if an employee was doing something such as the misappropriation of funds, that person would be terminated. He said that would not be a review issue. He said if the internal controls indicate that someone has poor performance, then that would be considered as a part of their review and they would be instructed to improve their performance and do a performance improvement plan. He said if someone can't perform their job then they can't work for Mecklenburg County.

Commissioner Cogdell asked about the timeframe for conducting the survey. *The response was April 19 – May 10, 2010.*

Commissioner Cogdell said that timeframe was almost at the "peek" of uncertainty in County government.

Commissioner Cogdell asked when was the last time the County engaged in a reduction in force, prior to the last two years. *County Manager Jones said he couldn't recall.*

Commissioner Cogdell said he asked the question to help put it in perspective that the County still has 61% of its employees that would recommend Mecklenburg County government as a good place to work. He said if you put this in context with when the survey was done, it's not as "dire" as it may look at first glance.

**SEPTEMBER 14, 2010**

Chairman Roberts asked the County Manager to notify and include Commissioners when employee recognition events take place as asked by Commissioner Cooksey earlier in the meeting. Chairman Roberts spoke of how valuable Mecklenburg County employees were.

This concluded the discussion. No action was taken or required.

*Note: The above is not inclusive of every comment but is a summary.*

---

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Dunlap and carried 5-0 with Commissioners Cogdell, Dunlap, Leake, Murrey, and Roberts voting yes, that there being no further business to come before the Board that the meeting be adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

---

Janice S. Paige, Clerk

---

Jennifer Roberts, Chairman