

JANUARY 30, 2013

MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
NORTH CAROLINA
MECKLENBURG COUNTY

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Special Session at the Foundation For The Carolinas, located at 220 North Tryon Street, Charlotte, N.C. on Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 11:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Chairman Patricia Cotham and Commissioners Karen Bentley, Dumont Clarke, George Dunlap, Trevor Fuller, Bill James, Vilma Leake, Kim Ratliff and Matthew Ridenhour
County Manager Harry L. Jones, Sr.
County Attorney Marvin Bethune
Clerk to the Board Janice S. Paige

Absent: None

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

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cotham.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners' Strategic Planning Conference for 2013 and to go into Closed Session for Personnel Matter.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bentley, seconded by Commissioner Fuller and carried 8-0 with Commissioners Bentley, Clarke, Cotham, Fuller, James, Leake, Ratliff, and Ridenhour voting yes, to go into Closed Session for the following purpose: Personnel Matter.

The Board went into Closed Session at 11:17 a.m. and came back into Open Session at 12:40 p.m.

Commissioner Dunlap was present when the Board came back into Open Session. He entered the meeting during Closed Session.

The Board recessed for lunch and reconvened at 1:15 p.m.

Chairman Cotham called upon County Manager Jones to make opening remarks.

Prior to the County Manager's opening remarks, Michael Marsicano, President and CEO of the Foundation for the Carolinas, welcomed the Board to the Foundation Building.

County Manager Jones gave opening remarks, which included an overview of the goals and expectations for the Conference.

Budget/Management Director Hyong Yi outlined the agenda for the meeting. He then called upon Dr. Carl Stenberg of the School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill to address the Council/Manager Form of Government.

Dr. Stenberg covered the following in his presentation:

- Essentials of the Commission-Manager Plan
- Hypothetical Cases in Commissioner Relations with the County Manager
- Best Practices: Common Expectations
- High Performing Habits

Comments

Commissioner James asked at what point did consideration need to be given to whether or not one's current form of government was still the most appropriate. *Dr. Stenberg said it varied. He said sometimes size played a role and sometimes politics.*

Commissioner James said if there was going to be a discussion regarding the Council/Manager form of government, then other forms should be addressed as well.

Commissioner James said he would like to know the counties in N.C. that didn't have the Council/Manager form of government.

Dr. Stenberg said regardless of the form of government in large jurisdictions, professional management was needed to get things done.

Commissioner James addressed his difficulty in being able to communicate with all of his constituents in the manner he'd like without a budget and no ability to interact with them, other than at a Board meeting or via email. Commissioner James said one issue with respect to improving Commission performance had to do with improving communication with constituents. Commissioner James said this should be discussed as well, if there was going to be a discussion about other forms of government.

Commissioner Leake also addressed the importance of being able to communicate with constituents and how communication needs varied amongst commissioners.

Dr. Stenberg said communication was important and challenging in large jurisdictions given the social media and technology that's available. He said local governments were getting better at pushing information out and were working hard on ways to pull citizens' feedback in.

This concluded the presentation. The above is not inclusive of every comment but is a summary.

Chairman Cotham thanked Dr. Stenberg for his report.

Working Effectively Discussion

Cyndee Patterson, President of The Lee Institute and counterpart Libby Cable facilitated a discussion between the Board and staff on effective working relationships.

Ms. Patterson addressed the interviews that were conducted by members of her staff with Board members and staff prior to the conference.

Ms. Patterson then had the Board and the Executive Staff, which consisted of the County Manager, General Managers, Associate General Manager, the Budget/Management Director, and Finance Director, to pair up into groups of two and interview each other.

The results of the interviews were then shared. It served as a type of icebreaker.

The Board then participated in a core values exercise and subsequently shared that information with the group.

The Board and the executive staff then participated in an exercise to derive at working agreements from the perspective of Board to Board working relationships, Board to Staff, and Staff to Board.

The results of the exercise are noted below. These results were done by an informal showing of hands by the Board and the Executive staff. The things listed were things the Board and the Executive staff agreed were important in order to have good working relationships.

Working Agreements-Board to Board requests in order to have good working relationships

- More face to face communication
- Protect confidentiality
- Strive to avoid surprises
- Communicate respectfully at all times
- Respect the process for conducting meetings
- Let others speak if you've already spoken
- Be prepared for meetings
- Strive for efficient meetings and an efficient meeting process, so that time can be spent on the most important topics
- Assume positive intentions
- Exercise open communication
- Practice mutual respect
- Listen and respect the position of other people
- Listen for understanding, don't reload

Working Agreements-Staff to Board requests in order to have good working relationships

- Talk to staff in advance of meeting if there were questions
- Talk to staff before responding to media
- Acknowledge the expertise of staff
- Give the County Manager a chance to analyze and fix something
- Protect confidentiality
- Come to meetings prepared
- Read all communications sent by staff
- Assume positive and good intentions
- Demonstrate support for a common goal
- Be respectful and have professional communication

Working Agreements-Board to Staff requests in order to have good working relationships

- More face to face communication
- Minimal surprises
- Share information with Board members at the same time
- Keep the Board informed and updated
- Accept accountability
- County Manager should do an FYI to the Board for critical issues, even though there may not be any details to share; but at least the Board would be aware, if they heard something
- The FYI could be by phone or email
- Communicate with the media and let the media know that you don't have complete information regarding a particular matter, but would get back to them when more information was known
- Remember communication was a 2-way street
- Make the Board look good

The Board recessed for a break at 4:12 p.m. and reconvened at 4:21 p.m.

JANUARY 30, 2013

Chairman Cotham and Commissioner Ridenhour were absent when the Board reconvened and until noted in the minutes.

When the Board reconvened, Ms. Patterson facilitated narrowing the list of working agreements down to those that the Board and the Executive staff felt were a high priority, the top five, hopefully.

Chairman Cotham and Commissioner Ridenhour returned as this narrowing process began.

Working Agreements-Staff to Board and Board to Staff requests in order to have good working relationships (*Note: The items in red were things listed by the Board and staff in some instances.*)

- **More face to face communication (3 votes)**
- Protect confidentiality (4 votes)
- **Minimal surprises (7 votes)**
- **Communicate respectfully at all times (5)**
- **Communicate with the media and let them know you don't have complete information regarding a particular matter, but would get back to them when more information was known (9)**
- **Communication was a 2-way street (3)**
- Be prepared for meetings (12)
- Assume positive intentions (5)
- **Accept accountability (4)**
- **Make the Board look good**
- Talk to staff in advance of meeting if there were questions (8)
- Acknowledge the expertise of staff (1)
- Give the County Manager a chance to analyze and fix something (10)
- Read all communications sent by staff (2)
- Demonstrate support for a common goal (4)

The following received the most votes and based on those votes, the things most needed for good working relationships from a Staff to Board perspective. *Note: These were informal votes. Motions were not made. These matters were voted on by the Board and the executive staff.*

1. Be prepared for meetings (12)
2. Give the County Manager a chance to analyze and fix something (10)
3. Communicate with the media and let them know you don't have complete information regarding a particular matter, but would get back to them when more information was known (It was noted that this was applicable to both the Board and staff.) (9)
4. Talk to staff in advance of meeting if there were questions (8)
5. Minimal surprises (7 votes)
6. Communicate respectfully at all times (5)
7. Assume positive intentions (5)

The Board then voted on its Board to Board requests in order to have a good working relationship

Working Agreements-Board to Board

- Be prepared for meetings (7)
- Strive to avoid surprises (5)
- Assume positive intentions (1)
- Protect confidentiality (4)
- Let others speak if you've already spoken (2)
- Listen and respect the position of other people

JANUARY 30, 2013

- Respect the process for conducting meetings (1)
- Strive for efficient meetings and an efficient meeting process, so that time can be spent on the most important topics (7)
- Exercise open communication (1)
- Practice mutual respect
- Listen for understanding, don't reload
- Communication was a 2-way street(1)
- More face to face communication (3)

It was noted that the following received the most votes and determined to be the things most needed for a good working relationship from a Board to Board perspective. *Note: These were informal votes. Motions were not made.*

1. Be prepared for meetings (7)
2. Strive for efficient meetings and an efficient meeting process so that time can be spent on the most important topics (7)
3. Strive to avoid surprises (5)
4. Protect confidentiality (4)
5. More face to face communication (3)

The Board and the Executive staff then voted again on its Board to Staff requests in order to have a good working relationship

Working Agreements-Board to Staff

- Protect confidentiality
- Minimal surprises (11)
- More face to face communication (8)
- Communication was a 2-way street (2)
- Communicate with the media and let them know you don't have complete information regarding a particular matter, but would get back to them when more information was known (It was noted that this was applicable to both the Board and staff.) (5)
- Be respectful and have professional communication (5)
- Accept accountability (9)
- Be timely, professional and dependable (5)
- Share information with Board members at same time (8)
- Keep the Board informed and updated (9)
- County Manager should do an FYI to the Board for critical issues, even though there may not be any details to share; but at least the Board would be aware, if they heard something (6)

The following received the most votes and determined to be the things most needed for a good working relationship from a Board to Staff perspective. *Note: These were informal votes. Motions were not made.*

1. Minimal surprises (11)
2. Keep the Board informed and updated (9)
3. Accept accountability (9)
4. More face to face communication (8)
5. Share information with Board members at same time (8)
6. County Manager should do an FYI to the Board for critical issues, even though there may not be any details to share; but at least the Board would be aware, if they hear something (6)
7. Communicate with the media and let them know you don't have complete information regarding a particular matter, but would get back to them when more information was known (It was noted that this was applicable to both the Board and staff.) (5)

8. Be respectful and have professional communication (5)
9. Be timely, professional and dependable (5)

This concluded the exercise.

Ms. Patterson said her counterpart Libby Cable would work with the Board at tomorrow's session to go over the results and to hopefully get these results into some ground rules for the Board that everyone could live with.

Ms. Patterson asked that Board members give thought to the items listed and to consider taking ownership for one of them and to champion that item over the next two days of the conference. She said the Board would be asked to indicate their selection on tomorrow.

Ms. Patterson thanked the Board for participating in today's exercises. She said she hoped the Board found it to be helpful.

This concluded the discussion.

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

Closing Remarks

County Manager noted the following matters before recess:

- 1) Attorney Dan Bishop spent the day at MeckLink Behavioral Health with Mercer. Per Mercer, he reported that at this point, there was a "high probability that MeckLink would be ready to go live by March 1," even though the review was still on-going.

County Manager Jones reminded the Board that had the County not received a favorable response from Mercer today, MeckLink would have been assigned to another entity for management.

- 2) County Manager Jones informed the Board as a matter of information only that per Deputy County Attorney Tyrone Wade, there had been a double homicide in the western part of the County. County Manager Jones said all of the details weren't known at this time, but three children were in the home, in addition to a parent who was in a wheelchair. County Manager Jones said this family was in the Department of Social Services System back in 2010 and that the case had been closed. He said staff would work on getting the details and would inform the Board of what, if any, involvement the County would have.

Deputy County Attorney Wade said the Charlotte Observer had already posted the occurrence. He informed the Board that any information received from the County's Department of Social Services Youth and Family Services division would be confidential information.

Commissioner Leake asked was it possible to have the County department directors to come to tomorrow's opening session, so the Board would know who they were. *County Manager Jones asked that he be allowed to have that introduction done at a different meeting, in light of the conference agenda that had already been developed.* There was no objection.

Motion was made by Commissioner Fuller, seconded by Commissioner Leake and unanimously carried with Commissioners Bentley, Clarke, Cotham, Dunlap, Fuller, James, Leake, Ratliff, and Ridenhour voting yes, that there being no further business to come before the Board, that the meeting be recessed at 5:01 p.m. until 8:00 a.m., January 31, 2013.

JANUARY 30, 2013

Janice S. Paige, Clerk

Patricia "Pat" Cotham, Chairman