



The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Board Retreat to discuss capital needs and address strategic planning, on Tuesday, November 15, 2017 at 9:00 am in the Conference room at Blue Ridge Energies, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: Chair Mark Evans, Commissioner Bobby Irwin, Commissioner Tom Smith, Commissioner John Irwin, Commissioner Larry Prince, County Manager, Mike James, County Finance Officer, Karen Evans and Clerk to the Board Lauren Linker.

Chair Mark Evans opened the meeting at 9:00 am.

Commissioner Larry Prince gave the invocation.

County Manager, Mike James gave some updates from the clerk of courts office. The Board agreed something needs to be done to have an interim fix to the bottom courtroom.

County Manager, Mike James went over some current projects with the maintenance department and some issues at the transfer station.

The Board discussed adding personnel in a management position to have more hands-on management. Then they discussed options for the recyclable of the county.

Commissioner John Irwin went over some issues with the maintenance department.

The Board then discussed the duties of the volunteer fire departments and the impacts of the October storm.

Commissioner John Irwin went over the struggles that the fire departments have with funding, expenses and membership.

County Manager, Mike James noted according to the North Carolina general statute the county has no obligation to support the fire departments.

The Board discusses the options for helping alleviate the departments stress: fire tax, general fund money or sales tax.

The Board then moved on to discuss phase one renovations at Sparta Elementary School as they begin and the possibilities of phase two.

Chair Mark Evans called a recess for lunch at 12 noon.

Chair Mark Evans called the meeting back at 1:05 pm.

County Manager, Mike James noted that the County Attorney, Donna Shumate had looked over the nuisance ordinance and made a few changes.

The Board discussed the "safety and nuisance ordinance." The specifics of land, the enforcement, and what the pros and cons would be for the ordinance.

Chair Mark Evans stated he would like to start with another route.

Commissioner John Irwin agreed, said he felt it needed to be a softer approach.

Commissioner Bobby Irwin said it was for the safety and felt it was to help protect the citizens.

Commissioner Tom Smith said he felt it was an overreach for the government.

Commissioner Bobby Irwin noted they only needed three votes.

Chair Mark Evans said he wasn't willing to go to an ordinance until something else has been tried.

The Board agreed to let County Manager, Mike James and co work on a proposed letter for voluntary land clean up.

Chair Mark Evans spoke about the audit suggestion for and IT department in the county government.

Karen Evans that \$38,000 was spent last year on technology issues.

The Board discussed the need for IT personnel.

The Board then discussed some economic development challenges.

County Manager, Mike James gave updates on a few projects.

Commissioner Tom Smith asked about the status of the New River access and the Bull Head property.

Chair Mark Evans suggested some budget reduction ideas.

Commissioner Larry Prince noted help felt there needed to be an incentive to help reduce budget cost for employees.

The Board then looked at the County debt load and discussed options for the ¼ cent sales tax. They discussed using the tax money to help pay the fire departments.

Commissioner Tom Smith suggested a citizen's academy to help with public relations and flow of information.

Chair Mark Evans asked the Board if they would be interested in a strategic planning session prior to the budget retreat. The Board agreed.

Commissioner John Irwin made a motion to adjourn the retreat. Commissioner Larry Prince seconded. Vote 5:0

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Linker  
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Mark Evans  
Chair