

The Allegheny County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Monday, October 28, 2013, at 10:00am at the Blue Ridge Business Development Center/Wilkes Community College, 115 Atwood Street, Sparta, North Carolina. The purpose of this meeting is to have an educational session about services available from Wilkes Community College.

Present: Chair Larry Cox, Vice-Chair Tom Smith, Commissioner Larry Davis, Commissioner Karen Leys, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans.

Chair Cox called the meeting to order at 10:00am.

Dr. Gordon Burns, Wilkes Community College (WCC) President, provided an overview of WCC, their mission and economic impacts.

Chris Robinson, Associate Vice President of Ashe Campus & Allegheny Center, explained the equipment investment at the Allegheny campus. He talked about WCC's degrees/programs offered at the Allegheny campus. He further talked about working with the schools, enrollment data for Allegheny and the relationship the College has with Allegheny County Schools.

County Manager Don Adams, Chris Robinson, Jayne Phipps-Boger and Dr. Burns talked about enrollment for the Allegheny campus since 2008 for the curriculum classes and continuing education classes.

Dr. Jeff Cox, Superintendent, explained the NC IRIS grant and working with WCC for high school students.

Bobby Irwin, Chris Robinson and Dr. Cox talked about testing scores, math being a big roadblock, and starting a new system that looks at multiple measures for students.

Dr. Burns talked about the continuing education challenges.

Dan Little, Small Business Center Director, provided WCC's Small Business Center purpose and mission. He explained the services that they offer to businesses and potential businesses including free seminars.

County Manager Don Adams, Benita Hampton, Commissioner Leys and Jayne Phipps-Boger talked about places the seminars are advertised, the possibility of putting a sign on Main Street and the possibility of WCC coming to Commissioners' meetings to advertise upcoming seminars.

Dan Little reiterated the need for people to be referred to him or Clark Hunter when starting a business.

Commissioner Leys and Town Manager Bryan Edwards talked about the Town's process of people getting business licenses.

The County Manager provided an example of his personal recent experience in starting a business and some of the responsibility is with the small business owner.

Chris Robinson and Dan Little talked about having seminars for a group of people if there are enough interest. Dan Little provided a recent example of a seminar in Ashe County.

Mike Pierce, Chair of the WCC Workforce Development Services, talked about being a member of the workforce development team. He explained each of the services that they offer to assist people back in the workforce.

Duane Davis and Mike Pierce talked about providing a service of when people's certifications run out and are in need of recertifying. Benita Hampton provided a recent example of forklift training.

Mike Pierce continued explaining the services they offer including the LEAN program.

Mike Pierce, Commissioner Leys and County Manager Don Adams talked about how to get the word out to companies, it takes commitment from the company and the need to build relationships with the businesses.

Mike Pierce reviewed the customized training provided in Allegheny County since 2011/12.

County Manager Don Adams, Benita Hampton and Chris Robinson talked about putting people together from different businesses for a class, some of the trainings are free and other types of classes where there are fees associated.

Commissioner Leys talked about business development and jobs creation. She asked are we doing enough and how do we do this. She talked about the need for the workforce development group to sit down and talk about how to create jobs here.

Jayne Phipps-Boger explained that WCC has changed their focus some and provided an example of agriculture-based classes.

Bobby Irwin talked about the county has to create the environment for jobs then WCC will provide the training.

Dr. Burns said that WCC can't create jobs. He explained the need to work on upcoming students and the existing workforce.

Commissioner Leys, Jayne Phipps-Boger and Chris Robinson talked about certificate programs, the student population isn't there and WCC will offer the services but they can't find the students.

Dr. Cox talked about the market has changed due to the economy.

County Manager Don Adams asked the Commissioners to remember his chart about economic development and creating the environment internally and externally. He explained the internal and external environments. He said the main thing is having the company willing to create the jobs. He stated that his request is to sit down with the Board of Commissioners to look at his economic development chart and review the Commissioners' focus on the County's resources because the County may need to look at what we are doing trying to create the environment. He said that the Board of Commissioners has to decide where the priority is and look at where the resources are going.

Dr. Cox talked about the new higher standard with the common core curriculum and preparing all of the students for whatever they want to do after high school.

Chris Robinson talked about promotion, recruitment and retention for businesses. He talked about existing companies will create the most jobs and the importance of industry visits.

The County Manager talked about refocusing on the outreach efforts.

Commissioner Leys and Dr. Burns talked about the strategic planning process and where to start. Dr. Burns stated that WCC will be glad to participate and do what they can to help create the environment.

County Manager Don Adams and Clark Hunter talked about people wanting us to come up with the next great idea then the opportunity needs to be there, how we identify the opportunity, recent example of a business mentor, and mentorships' values.

Chris Robinson talked about the need to support the small business owner and entrepreneurs.

Jayne Phipps-Boger provided examples of a recent NC Real class at the High School where they learned about networking to provide services here.

Chair Cox thanked everyone for coming. He stated that this is the beginning rather than the ending of these conversations.

Being no further business, Commissioner Leys made a motion to adjourn at 12:17pm. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Larry Cox
Chairman