



Alleghany County Board of Commissioners

11-9-17 Minutes

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Called Meeting to hear from the Courts Officials on the needs and the proposed solutions on Thursday, November 9, 2017 at 3:30 pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

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

Chair Mark Evans explained the purpose of the meeting. He then opened with a moment of silence for the Duke family's loss. Next, he led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Larry Prince gave the invocation.

County Manager Mike James gave a brief presentation of the background, the courthouse usage, some concerns along with some of the solutions in the new plan. He then went over the floor plans and the payment options. He thoroughly explained how the current proposed courthouse option would affect the county property tax.

Judge Doughton gave a brief history of the courthouse and his concerns.

Susie Gambill, Clerk of Courts explained that there are four counties to have to schedule with and changing anything would be very difficult.

David Byrd said his biggest concern was safety and gave an example of why it was from a Judges view point.

Bill Brooks gave an example that really stood out to him about the safety concerns of the facility.

Sheriff Bryan Maines stated his main focus is security to the court officials and the citizens in the building.

Chair Evans asked Court officials if the proposed plans cover all their needs. They agreed it would. He then asked if they would be willing if the Board, with citizen feedback, put together maybe something lesser to see if it would cover their needs. He noted the Board had a lot of work to see what the County can afford. The court officials agreed they would come back together when needed.

Commissioner John Irwin agreed there were a safety issue in the lower courtroom and thanked the judges for being here and giving their first-hand accounts.

Commissioner Larry Prince asked about the backlog of the facility and if the new additions would help with that problem.

Commissioner Bobby Irwin noted this presentation has come from almost two years of research and observations. He said yes, it is an expensive project, but felt it would be a plus for the County. He thanked County Manager, Mike James for the very clarifying presentation.

Commissioner Smith thanked everyone for working so hard to get this information to the Board. He said he liked the idea of having 90 days for them to think about it and get citizen feedback.

County Manager Mike James explained the opportunity for feedback in all the different ways. He went over the website form and explained citizens would have 90 days to give their feedback before the commissioners would discuss the courthouse again.

Chair Evans noted the Board would be having a retreat to discuss long term strategic planning and capital spending needs to help develop a plan and strategy to be able to take care of all the needs.

Commissioner John Irwin made a motion to allow a public comments section. Commissioner Bobby Irwin seconded. Vote 5:0

Steve Roten suggested using the commissioners room like had been done in the past when the courthouse had been renovated, at least to alleviate the safety concerns until something can be done.

Harry Jones commented on the necessity for public bathrooms in the down town.

Linda Chekeno noted after the presentation she really sees the need in the lower courtroom. She asked if the addition would expediate the judicial system in the County and what the impact would be for not making decision.

Vickie Parlier asked about the feasibility to expand the courthouse back towards Alleghany Street to help preserve the historic look of the courthouse.

Michelle Loufman noted she has worked in the courthouse and understands the need in the courthouse. She stated she was still concerned about the money as a tax payer and asked if there wasn't a middle ground for the project.

George Peebles gave some options for safety concerns at the courthouse and asked the board to consider some of the ideas to help alleviate the safety concerns.

Tom Thorn noted parking has been an issue for a long time, and asked what will be done to help alleviate the parking during court. He also noted there were two properties available

Doug Blevins said he appreciated the time the Board will be taking to gather feedback and think about the effects it will have on the County. He went on to say that the citizens would be the ones paying for this not the criminals and he felt the Board should look at a sales tax to help offset the citizens cost.

Chair Evans noted that a sales tax increase would take a referendum and the Board has been challenged to get is passed in the past and asked the citizens to help support it and agreed it was the fairest tax. He went on to thank all the court officials for coming and all the county citizens for being present.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Lauren Linker  
Clerk to the Board

Mark Evans  
Chair