

MINUTES
LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2015

The Lincoln County Board of County Commissioners met April 7, 2015 at the Citizens Center, Commissioners Room, 115 West Main Street, Lincolnton, North Carolina, at 6:30 P.M.

Commissioners Present:

Carrol Mitchem, Chairman

Bill Beam, Vice Chair

Martin Oakes

Cecelia A. Martin

Alex E. Patton

Others Present:

Kelly G. Atkins, County Manager

Don Chamblee, Public Utilities Director

Amy S. Atkins, Clerk to the Board

Call to Order: Chairman Mitchem called the April 7, 2015 meeting of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners to order, which was recessed from April 6, 2015.

Chairman Mitchem started the meeting out by saying the goal of the meeting is to come up with a decision about what to do with regard to office space. He said it basically comes down to deciding between a new building or remodeling the old hospital facility.

Dr. Les Cloninger was in attendance and spoke as a Councilmember who lives in the City, but not on behalf of Lincolnton City Council. He asked the Board to try and stay in the downtown area of the City. He said he likes option 1, the new building inside the downtown area. He said if that is not a possibility, he believes Commissioner Oakes' plan is also good and will keep more offices downtown.

The Board came up with the following goals for the meeting:

Deciding what want/don't want

Approximate costs

Narrowing down the options

Understanding the impacts

Kelly Atkins, County Manager, did an informal poll of the Board to decide on how to move forward. From this, the Board narrowed the list down to:

- Disposal of Health Department property at Sigmon Street (5 in favor of)
- Retain Academy Street Building in current service (none in favor of) – It was listed as a goal to dispose of this property

- Medical Arts Building – further discussion needed
- Moving the Comm Center, which is currently in the Sheriff's Office (4 in favor of – as a lower priority)
- Renovating the Courthouse (5 in favor of at some level)
- Renovating the Citizens Center (5 in favor of at some level)
- More room for courts (5 in favor of)
- Renovating the Hospital (not a focus point by a majority)
- Centralizing county services (questionable)
- Increasing size of BOC room (5 in favor of)
- Build to suit on another property (4 in favor of)
- Option 1) As Proposed Originally \$15,030,000 - This provides for basic consolidation of County Services to Old Hospital. The Citizen Center would be available for probation, clerk and court services. (No Votes for)
- Option 2) As Proposed with some Reduction \$ 13,917,500 This is option 1, but keeping Cooperative Extension in the Citizen Center and Adult Probation at the Old Hospital. This option retains the old cafeteria as a gray space and makes it possibly available for leasing. We would also create a jury assembly area in the old EOC area of the Court house. (1 in favor of)
- Option 3) Judicial Move to Old Hospital \$20,337,500 This option relocates Judicial Services to the Old Hospital and retains the probation offices at the hospital as well. Other County services would be consolidated at the Courthouse and Citizens Center. (2 in favor of)
- Build to Suit Option – East of town for 67,000 to 100,000 square foot, new facility, no other facility improvements, \$19.7 million, 16 acres, lease option of 23 years, \$1.2 million per year, \$1 purchase at end (None in favor of)
- Build to Suit Option – property behind Citizens Center, no other facility improvements, \$13.5 million to \$17 million (3 in favor of)
- Option Zero – Commissioner Oakes detailed the plan for the Board \$6.55 million (further discussion needed)

The Board discussed the different options and the debt service schedule as to which option the Board could afford without a tax increase. The Board discussed the merits of building a new building versus remodeling the hospital facility, what the county could afford without a tax increase and the sale of the surplus county buildings once sold.

A MOTION by Commissioner Patton to move to the hospital, where it is the least cost for the most square footage to benefit for the longest term. (This motion does not include what offices will be moved) VOTE: 2 – 3 AYES: Patton, Oakes
NOES: Martin, Mitchem, Beam

After that motion was defeated, Chairman Mitchem said the Board was at the point of building a new building and that the decision needed to be made where to build it.

A MOTION by Commissioner Martin to build a new building downtown on county property already owned near the Citizens Center. VOTE: 1 – 4

AYES: Martin

NOES: Mitchem, Patton, Oakes, Beam

The Board discussed demolition of the old hospital and building a new facility there due to the fact that the parking lot and infrastructure are already there, along with the Medical Arts Building, which is a newer building.

A MOTION by Commissioner Patton to build a new building at the hospital site, 100,000 square feet, or whatever staff recommends to allow for future growth and to demolish the old hospital facility. Unanimously approved.

A MOTION by Commissioner Oakes to ask staff to examine renovating the Courthouse and come back with a plan with what can be done for around \$1.8 million. Unanimously approved.

A MOTION by Commissioner Oakes to ask staff to examine building the new building at the hospital campus, but on a different footprint than the old hospital to allow the offices currently housed there to remain until the new building is completed. Unanimously approved.

Chairman Mitchem said that no further discussion would be entertained from staff concerning the remodel of the hospital facility since the Board had voted to demolish the building and construct a new government office building.

The Board discussed cost estimates for the demolition of the hospital facility. They also discussed the different options including design build for the new building and asked staff to bring a proposal with the different options for a 100,000 square foot building with the price change for additional square footage as well. They asked for no more than 3 proposals to be presented to the Board, after being narrowed down by staff.

Home Health: Mr. Atkins said there was some miscommunication on the Home Health issue from last night's meeting and there needs to be a vote to either approve or deny the Board of Health's recommendation concerning the closure of Home Health.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Martin, the Board voted unanimously that the BOC supports the recommendation of the Board of Health to begin phasing down Home Health operations due to a critical staffing shortage, and furthermore moves to begin the process of looking into the possible sale of the agency, and to authorize the County Manager and Health

Director to engage the professional services of a consultant and outside legal counsel as needed for this process. The agency is to continue serving existing patients during this transition but is to discontinue accepting new patients by April 15, 2015 based on staffing availability.

Helping Hands: Mr. Atkins gave a follow up report from the Helping Hands request carried over from the previous meeting. He said Helping Hands is applying for a one million dollar grant and requesting the lease of a piece of property on the hospital site for a permanent site for Helping Hands Clinic. The clinic currently occupies 6,000 square feet in the Medical Arts Building.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Beam, the Board voted unanimously to allow Helping Hands to lease, exact location to be determined, Option A as presented preferred, but no more than 2 acres of property at the hospital site.

Mr. Atkins gave an update on an additional 9.9 acres at the old hospital property owned by Carolina Health Systems. The Authority has agreed to convey the additional property with the condition that the conveyance is subject to the same restrictive covenants as the hospital.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Beam, the Board voted unanimously to accept the conveyance as it is with the restrictions.

Mr. Atkins said he has been approached by different groups about alcohol consumption on the Courthouse property at the Hog Happening Event. He said it has been requested that the County prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages on the Courthouse lawn. After a discussion with Wesley Deaton, Mr. Deaton informed him that the Board would need to vote to prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages on the Courthouse property and post signs during the event.

A MOTION by Commissioner Patton to prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages on the Courthouse property and post signs during the event.

Sheriff Carpenter was in attendance and discussed with the Board the Hog Happening Event and the benefits and disadvantages of this action. He said old County Ordinances may address the consumption of alcohol on county owned property.

Commissioner Patton said that Wesley Deaton needs to look at existing County Ordinances to see if this is covered and if it is, we need to enforce the Ordinance. If not, he amended his motion to say that alcohol consumption would be prohibited on the Courthouse property, the center of Justice and where all war memorials are and that signs will be posted not allowing alcohol consumption on such property.

VOTE: 2 – 3 **AYES: Patton, Oakes**
NOES: Martin, Mitchem, Beam

Mr. Atkins informed the Board of the need for a budget work session to discuss water, sewer and landfill funds. He asked the Board to set this meeting for April 15, 2015 at 8:30 a.m.

Adjourn: **UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Martin, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Amy S. Atkins, Clerk
Board of Commissioners

Carrol Mitchem, Chairman
Board of Commissioners