

PERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

OCTOBER 26, 2009
OTHERS PRESENT

Johnny Myrl Lunsford
Jimmy B. Clayton - ABSENT
Kyle W. Puryear
B. Ray Jeffers
Samuel R. Kennington

Heidi York, County Manager
C. Ronald Aycock, County Attorney
Brenda B. Reaves, Clerk to the Board

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Person, North Carolina, met in recessed session on Monday, October 26, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' meeting room in the Person County Office Building.

Chairman Lunsford called the meeting to order. Chairman Lunsford stated the subject of the special called meeting was economic development. Commissioner Clayton was absent.

County Manager, Heidi York noted this meeting was an opportunity to review economic development, discuss the future of economic development and to provide direction to the County Manager. Ms. York presented the Board with the following *Overview of Economic Development* slideshow:

Overview of Economic Development



What is Economic Development?

- Both a process and a set of desired outcomes
- Specific activities, programs, and tools aimed at attracting or creating private investment to expand a tax base
- Increasing: employment opportunities, wages, and personal incomes
- Long-term process involving community leaders and a variety of tools & strategies

Economic Development

- Driven by private business: starting, relocating, & expanding
- Investment in these businesses gives rise to commercial activities & services; residential growth; then retail, recreation, consumer services, tourism
- Helps balance the tax base- residential, commercial, industrial
- Residential- not sufficient revenue to pay for public services

Role of Local Government

- Develop a community that is attractive as a business destination
- Can do this through:
 - Offering financial incentives
 - Developing public-private partnerships
 - Having a productive labor market
 - Providing access to markets
 - Competitive tax rates
 - Streamlined & efficient government processes

Role of Local Government

- Have a good strategic plan for economic development that specifies which organizations are responsible for different actions and defines the role of local government in the process
- Define goals and vision for community

What Results Do We Want?

- New jobs and investment creating:
 - increased revenues for better public services
- Create and sustain a strong business environment
- Support existing industries
- Protect public investment
- Improve our community

Next Steps

- Determine key leadership
- Define the roles of partners
- Consider the role of Economic Development Director
- Consider the role of the Economic Development Commission
- Develop shared goal and vision

Ms. York noted the handouts available to the Board and to the public which included a summary of information, economic development director job description, a spreadsheet outlining the economic function in other counties, member lists for the Economic Development Commission and the Roxboro/Person County Development Board.

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Mr. Jim Stovall gave the Board an overview of economic development noting:

- the benefits of providing income and a tax base,
- 90% of all new jobs are now service related,
- must be global in thinking and planning,
- development in rural areas will be in communities that have prepared with economic infrastructure (water, waste water, fully serviced business parks, available building, telecommunications, recruiting funds),
- over 24,000 groups nationwide to recruit 1,500 projects per year while only 400 major projects will be available in 2009,
- total community development including livability, recreation, education, infrastructure,
- strategic planning involving community,
- need for a professional, experienced director in place prior to development of strategic plan,
- need for second economic development staff for administration, small business and retail duties,
- elected officials, managers of both City and County are economic development with leadership, willingness, vision, funding and unity in board action,
- Person County is years behind in funding – requiring millions to catch up,
- needs a recruitment fund with \$4-5 million

Common denominators for successful rural program according to Mr. Stovall are:

- Professional staff,
- A long range plan in place with a vision,
- Strong local government and community support, and
- Commitment

Mr. Stovall listed the important items that a company considers with selecting a site are:

- Schools in area with availability of skills,
- Piedmont Community College – job training,
- Existing Industry: 50-80% jobs created by existing industry,
- Incentives are required to be competitive,
- Access to markets (rail, airport, seaports, highway system),
- Partnering and networking:
 - RTRP
 - City and County of Durham
 - NC Commerce
 - Bio Tech Center
 - Bio Fuels Center
 - Local Government – County and City Officials
 - Economic Development Commission
 - Chamber of Commerce

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- Tourism
- Roxboro Development Group
- Merchant Association
- Business Development Center

Person County Strengths according to Mr. Stovall are:

- Geographical location
- Work ethic
- Less crime, pollution and lower costs than surrounding communities
- Dedicated rail
- Rural livability
- Excellent Schools and Piedmont Community College
- Airport – under-utilized and under-marketed
- Local Government
- Access to information – close to RTP, research universities
- Faith in EDC to make the deal

Person County Weaknesses according to Mr. Stovall are:

- Lack of adequate funding – need to dedicate \$1 million per year to catch up to be competitive
- Lack of a clear, long term plan
- Lack of a professional, experienced economic development director
- Lack of telecommunications – hopeful news forthcoming for 4 cell towers in the North end of the county, 1 of which dedicated at Hyco Lake
- Web site and Brochures need to be updated
- 501 North lane expansion
- Lack of extended water and sewer
- Do not have shovel ready, fully serviced parks
- Lack of shell building and flex space

Mr. Stovall gave the Board brief project updates that mentioned the following:

- Ag Bio Techs
- Cell Towers
- Wood Companies
- North American Aerodynamics
- Solar Park

Mr. Stovall summarized by stating the next steps should include hiring an economic development director, work on a plan, and start funding.

Mr. Stovall stated the NC Commerce and RTRP could assist in the search efforts for a director.

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Mr. Stovall spoke on the Roxboro/Person County Economic Development Study recommendations as having no authority, no staff, no funding, adding a layer that was not needed all the while the economic development commission, the Roxboro Development Group and the Chamber of Commerce were collaborating.

Mr. Stovall explained the role of the Economic Development Commission as one of a leadership committee, admitting regular meetings were not held however, he make sure the right people in front of the clients when needed. Mr. Stovall recommended keeping the economic development commission in place at least until a new director is in place.

Chairman Lunsford called for the Board to give direction to the County Manager. Commissioner Puryear recommended proceeding with the search for the economic development director as well as setting funds aside for a recruitment fund going into the next budget year. Commissioner Kennington questioned the relationship with the City of Roxboro as a partner in economic development, hiring a Small Business Recruiter, promoting Roxboro Development Group as a full time entity with hopes to pull from the 2007 Study to improve the overall program. Commissioner Jeffers agreed with Commissioner Puryear that an economic development director should be hired as soon as possible. Commissioner Puryear suggested reducing the membership of the Economic Development Commission. Commissioner Kennington recommended changing the name from a Commission to a Board.

It was the consensus of the Board to review the economic development director job description and send any changes to the County Manager and proceed with the search for the economic development director to be hired as a county department under the supervision of the County Manager.

Commissioner Kennington asked the Board members to review their Futures Committee list noting an Executive Committee meeting will be held on November 5, 2009 and a general meeting involving all committees will be held on November 9, 2009.

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Puryear, **seconded** by Commissioner Jeffers, and **carried** to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

Brenda B. Reaves
Clerk to the Board

Johnny Myrl Lunsford
Chairman

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