

GUILFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION
1st Floor Blue Room, Old County Courthouse
301 W. Market Street, Greensboro NC
March 19, 2018
2:00PM

Present: Chairman Alan Branson, Commissioners Jeff Phillips, Hank Henning, J. Carlvena Foster, Carolyn Q. Colman (arrived at 2:29 p.m.), Alan Perdue, Melvin “Skip” Alston, Katie “Kay” Cashion.

Absent: Vice Chairman Justin Conrad.

Also Present: County Manager Marty Lawing, County Attorney Mark Payne, Clerk to the Board Robin Keller, Deputy County Manager Clarence Grier, Deputy County Clerk Scott Baillargeon, Guilford County Communications Manager Worley Smith, members of the community, and members of the media.

I. WELCOME/INTRODUCTION

Chairman Branson called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

A. AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Executive Director Ellen Whitlock of Senior Resources AARP She shared several efforts that AARP has implemented to create social environments for Livable Communities. She asked the Commissioners to endorse the implementation of the planning process and emphasized that the signing of a resolution does not commit funds to the project. She spoke to several domains already selected in the County to target for perspective sites for revitalization.

Kathy Sevia noted that she lives in the College Hill area and is working to increase livability among the area. She noted food insecurity, as a leading growth-inhibitor among the community, paired with traffic patterns and the development of land use areas. She spoke to the previous work implemented by AARP and discussed how resources are being used. She also spoke to the creation of attractive livable communities for seniors. She spoke at length about mobilizing coalitions throughout the community and emphasized her commitment to the project.

Mark Hensley spoke to the beauty, progressiveness, and many areas of that meet the definition of a livable community. He noted that he wanted to have this area listed on the AARP livable communities. He shared a class project among High Point University (HPU) students that focused on creating livable communities.

Commissioner Cashion inquired about the next steps to begin an assessment.

County Manager Marty Lawing spoke to the letter that the Commissioners would need to sign to begin services.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER KAY CASHION AND
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ALAN PERDUE TO PROCEED WITH
A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR CREATING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES.
MOTION CARRIED 8-0**

Commissioner Foster thanked Ms. Whitlock for her work to create livable communities throughout the County.

**B. CONTRACT WITH SOUTHEASTERN WORKFORCE STRATEGIES,
LLC FOR FOSTER CARE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

Chairman Branson introduced the item and invited Heather Skenes to the floor.

Skenes introduced the panel discussed reunification efforts to foster children.

Sharon Barlow spoke to the number of children entering care in relation to those exiting care. She spoke to the adoption numbers in 2016-17. She noted that these numbers were considerably lower than expected and emphasized the need to utilize Southeastern Workforce in reuniting families. She provided a breakout of the budget for foster care.

Southeastern Workforce Allen Foster provided a history of the corporations to assist foster kids. He shared the ongoing efforts to increase the overall efficacy of DSS. He supplied data collected from organizations to enhance permanency and well-being for foster kids. He noted the collaborative work completed with Cone Health, and shared his encouragement for the work. He discussed the Family First Prevention Act.

Project Manager Sarah Green provided goals and initiatives of the program. She discussed the hybrid/collective impact model.

Brenda Jackson spoke to the foster care system overall and provided information regarding the reunification of families. She discussed the expenditures allotted to foster care and the burdens of those expenditures place on the system overall. She shared several examples throughout the nation where the agencies created care for foster kids. She emphasized the ways to better outcomes for the kids. She spoke to the many facets that target kids aging out of foster care.

Judge Fletcher spoke on behalf of the judges that are currently in the DSS rotation.

Judge Fletcher encouraged the Commissioners to bring Southeastern Workforce onboard to assist DSS increase reunification among Guilford County citizens.

Commissioner Foster asked about the types of barriers and factors that prevent reunification. She noted, too, the major strides to impact the community, parents that have had issues, and the numbers of parents that have attended parental courses to keep the children in the home. She addressed the need for a change in mindset of parents who wish to complete the courses. She asked for ways that would target the system toward the creation of programs that work.

Thompson stated that they were looking at several opportunities to better the system and empower social workers to assist in reunification. She clarified that the parent is responsible for doing the hard work. But, she emphasized that the goal of DSS and Southwestern Workforce is to ensure that barriers are not being created by the system which has prevented the child from going home.

Commissioner Foster stated her support to prevent system-generated barriers.

Commissioner Perdue asked that a comparative study be completed to assure a well-vetted system is put in place. He asked for clear rubrics to evaluate efficacy across the County.

Skenes spoke to the data and emphasized the amount of work that is projected for a concise assessment.

Allen Foster noted that to fully understand the situation in Guilford County required a robust qualitative and quantitative assessment of the system.

Ms. Jackson spoke to her experience in Cumberland County; however, emphasized that every county possessed its differences.

Commissioner Alston spoke of the need for a full assessment to identify the problems areas that impede the reunification of families.

Skenes noted the multifaceted question and shared that an answer required a multifaceted look at the dimension of the issues. She emphasized the need to take a systemic and wholistic approach to address the many issues inherent in the DSS system.

Commissioner Cashion asked how many counties in North Carolina had Southeastern Workforce provided assessments. She spoke to the disconcerting numbers and what was being done to ensure reunification.

Allen Foster spoke to the counties in North Carolina, but none in South Carolina.

Ms. Jackson elaborated on the details of aging out foster care. She noted that there were many programs to assess kids in their future. She stated that many times children do not receive the skills necessary to function in society. She assured the Board that their goal is to identify the needs of the child to ensure that the child receives the necessary skills to become a successful adult.

Commissioner Phillips thanked Thompson for her persistence on the issue. He noted the need to appropriate funds. He spoke to the housing issuances, the many complex challenges facing the County, and expressed concern for how the dollars would be allocated. He shared his concern with the “less than 50%” quote emphasized throughout the presentation and sought clarification as to what was meant by the statement.

Thompson elaborated the “less than 50%” quote and explained that the 50% from reunification is a comparative assessment between the federal and state data with Guilford County. She shared that wholistic assessment is needed but noted that it would be difficult to correct every wrong throughout the system. She noted several situations where the parent gave up on the system, rather than the system ensuring reunification.

Allen Foster spoke to the collective process to assure that all facets are addressed to ensure efficacy throughout the system.

Ms. Jackson spoke to the early results of the study that they have received across the state so far.

Commissioner Phillips stated that he will support this but noted that his expectations are going to be high.

Ms. Jackson stated that typically a reclassification of titles to avoid hiring new staff.

Commissioner Alston expressed concern concerning the shifting of titles and how that might become problematic.

Chairman Branson shared a story about foster care. He expressed concern for not doing something to combat the system. He stated that he would be supporting the contract.

Lawing stated that the Board can act on this contract today.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER MELVIN “SKIP” ALSTON AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JEFF PHILLIPS TO ADOPT CONTRACT IN SUBSTANTIAL FORM
MOTION CARRIED – 8-0**

C. STRATEGIC PLAN/FOCUS AREAS FOR FY2018-2019

County Manager Marty Lawing the County initiatives for FY 19. He asked the Board if there were any questions. He spoke about maintaining healthy people. He addressed the opioid crisis. Lawing reviewed the draft organizational goals and focus areas.

Commissioner Coleman asked about what was being done to address regarding food deserts.

Lawing stated that he and staff would provide more information regarding the impacts of food deserts in the upcoming weeks and months. He noted that the County would be seeking 100% funding from capital expansion for the Juvenile Justice Center, and that they had not received any dollar amount at this time.

Commissioner Alston questioned the upcoming programs that sought a cure for violence in the community.

Discussion ensued among the Board regarding violence in the community and locating positive drivers to quell violence overall. The Board also discussed the school's facility and construction project.

Commissioner Foster asked if the school budget could reflect to include operating as well as capital funding to be noted as a priority for schools.

Commissioner Perdue questioned replacements of communication equipment for EMS.

Lawing reviewed the feasibility of the North West regional water study. He noted that the study is wrapping up and noted that they staff would be begin the next phase of the project

Chairman Branson shared his vision regarding infrastructure and projected a potentially large economic development as cities absorb County services.

Commissioner Perdue noted economic development and quality of life measures.

Lawing emphasized four Healthy People Initiatives that focused on reducing crime, ending food insecurity, strengthening infrastructure, provide broad-band access, and education regarding operational funding.

Chairman Branson shared his visit to Washington, D.C. Last week and noted a discussion concerning the upcoming Broadband accessibility implementation. He emphasized the positive number of projects set to arrive in Guilford County.

D. RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENTS

Clerk to the Board Robin Keller spoke to several policy changes in the boards and commissions policy. She provided an overview of the changes throughout the process. Keller elaborated how the changes would impact appointments and reappointments to eliminate excessive term number from occurring.

Chairman Branson asked why Commissioners cannot serve on the boards as voting members.

Keller stated that best practice among other counties dictates that Commissioners do not serve on the boards to avoid redundancy of duties.

Commissioner Coleman requested Keller go page-by-page to address each item in turn.

Discussion ensued among the Board concerning the multiple changes in the policy.

Chairman Branson emphasized the need to move through each item with haste.

Keller provided additional background concerning the changes among the policy. She addressed the process of serving only two terms per board.

Commissioner Coleman asked about 2.3 and 2.5 and the positions. She asked for clarity regarding the exceptions concerning the 2/3 majority vote. She spoke to the process of voting.

Commissioner Cashion asked about the reasoning behind the change in voting.

Commissioner Purdue suggested adding the term “permanent” to Item 2.6.

Commissioner Coleman stated that the term contained ambiguity.

Commissioner Alston refuted the motion to add the language. He recommended supplanting “ad hoc” with another term as he suggests it takes away from the citizens’ board.

Keller stated that Item 2.7 keeps; 2.8 attendance more structure for attendance; Touching back with the chair behind the advisory boards. She recommended adding more structure to advisory boards in 3.2. She emphasized keeping an open discourse with the chair of boards. Keller shared several incidents during her tenure where medical issues arose regarding appointments.

Chairman Branson noted the appointments on the Board on the Equalization and Review and timeliness to appoint applicants to that board before too long.

Discussion ensued among the Board concerning appointments.

Keller provided more information regarding the application status of accepted applications. She spoke to Item 8.4. Keller reviewed the opened meetings law, and Item 9.4 that mandates that a written report to the Board in a formal mechanism.

II. ADJOURNMENT

By unanimous consent the Board adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Chairman

Clerk