

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF GUILFORD COUNTY
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING**

Greensboro, North Carolina
March 1, 2021

The Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Special Joint Meeting with mayors from Guilford County municipalities at 6:00PM via virtual communication.

PRESENT: Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston, presiding; Vice Chairman J. Carlvena Foster; Commissioners Kay Cashion, Justin Conrad, Mary Beth Murphy, Carly Cooke and Alan Perdue.

Town of Oak Ridge
Mayor Ann Schneider

Town of Pleasant Garden
Mayor Dean Maddox
Mayor Pro Tem Ron Surgeon

Town of Stokesdale
Mayor John Flynt

City of Greensboro
Mayor Nancy Vaughan

Town of Summerfield
Mayor BJ Barnes (in at 6:16PM)

ABSENT: Commissioners Carolyn Q. Coleman and James Upchurch.

ALSO PRESENT: County Manager Michael Halford; County Attorney Mark Payne; and Clerk to Board Robin Keller. Virtual participation was made available to members of the public and media.

I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 6:00PM. He shared that his goal was to conduct these joint meetings twice each year to ensure collaboration between the County and the municipalities.

Clerk to Board Robin Keller conducted a brief roll call of all municipal mayors present on the call.

II. INTRODUCTIONS / MAYORS' UPDATES ON JURISDICTION GOALS AND PROJECTS

Chairman Alston requested each mayor provide a brief introduction and share information about any projects or programs within their jurisdictions that could benefit from partnership with the County.

Mayor Ann Schneider, Town of Oak Ridge, offered an introduction and expressed her appreciation for the joint meeting. She shared her top priority for county government is to keep it small and keep taxes low. Schneider discussed an economic development project designed to provide guidance to businesses interested in investing in the town with a goal to improve walkability and encourage a historic village feel to their commercial core.

Schneider stated they are also researching ways to offer water and wastewater treatment options for interested businesses, and discussed their partnership with NC Department of Transportation (DOT) to redesign certain intersections and add beautification elements to the area. She noted these projects are part of the town's strategic plan developed by a resident-led committee and confirmed estimated costs for the projects, beyond base-line infrastructure, will exceed \$2 million over the next five (5) years.

Schneider provided an overview of open space and historic structure protection efforts designed to improve livability and protect property values in Oak Ridge. She shared the development of a 60-acre park at an estimated cost of \$1.9 million over the next three (3) years and discussed a program that would protect privately-owned open spaces and historic structures through voluntary easements supported by town-sponsored grants. Schneider stated Oak Ridge would appreciate financial and moral support, as well as partnership from the county for these projects, and encouraged municipal and county cooperation on beautification and infrastructure.

Mayor Dean Maddox, Town of Pleasant Garden, introduced himself and discussed the town's current economic development strategy based on recreation. He spoke to the utilization of certain grant funds to renovate three (3) recreational facilities and noted the various types of programs and activities offered by the town for children, adults and seniors. Maddox reviewed other recreational options available in the town and discussed their partnership with Guilford County on Hagan-Stone Park and Company Mill Preserve, which assists in promoting the town as a recreation destination for southeastern Guilford County, western Alamance County and eastern Randolph County.

Maddox noted this economic development strategy has been successful and resulted in increased property values, increased turnover in the real estate market and more foot traffic that benefits local businesses. He stated that, in spite of this strategy, the town still faces challenges related to economic development, and spoke to the need for water and sewer services. Maddox shared the town's collaboration with Southeast Regional Community Assistance Program and state representatives to assist in identifying additional revenue sources and to analyze how best to position themselves for enhanced development.

Mayor Maddox spoke to infrastructure upgrades within the town, and noted the town's proximity to highways, rail systems and the Greensboro-Randolph megasite make them a viable economic development partner within the region.

Mayor John Flynt, Town of Stokesdale, shared their work to expand the water system in the region over the past few years. He noted the town currently has 660 water customers with 700 new homes planned for development within the next three (3) years. Flynt spoke to the opportunities and challenges associated with the tremendous growth in this region, and spoke to the need to re-evaluate their current development ordinance. He discussed certain zoning issues and spoke to megasite development that could result in significant development. Flynt shared their search for a secondary water source from Kernersville and spoke to renegotiated water rates that not only benefited the town, but could result in partnership opportunities with Oak Ridge and the County.

Mayor BJ Barnes, Town of Summerfield, joined the meeting at 6:16PM.

Mayor Nancy Vaughn, City of Greensboro, thanked Chairman Alston and staff for coordinating the meeting. She introduced herself and discussed the recent completion of the city's ten-year affordable housing plan, and spoke to issues related to housing affordability and security throughout the County and state.

Vaughn shared the city will pass a new, more competitive economic incentive policy in March and discussed their involvement in the Greensboro-Randolph and airport megasites. She spoke to the importance of parks & recreation in the community and discussed the city's recently completed "Plan2Play" master plan and 2040 Strategic Plan. Vaughn spoke to their goal of being the greenest city in the Southeast, including hybrid busing, sustainability and streetscaping projects. She noted the Downtown Greenway will be completed next year and thanked the County for its partnership in COVID-19 relief and enforcement efforts. Vaughn expressed concerns related to public safety issues related to homicide and aggressive assault rates, and noted the Greensboro Police Department's partnership with community groups to enhance safety. She spoke to the need for additional funding and partnership to support public safety efforts.

Mayor Barnes shared Summerfield's recent work on their Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), and spoke to a recent partnership with Oak Ridge to purchase land for trails and parks. He spoke to the town's challenges related to water sources for fire protection, and noted they are building a new town hall and partnering with the County in renovation of a community center. Barnes spoke to their partnerships with Oak Ridge and Stokesdale and expressed their interest in participating in a variety of initiatives to ensure the success of the County and municipalities.

III. QUESTIONS

Chairman Alston opened the floor to share and COVID-related issues or to ask questions of County Commissioners and staff.

Mayor Barnes expressed his appreciation for the vaccination clinics and welcomed County Manager Michael Halford back to Guilford. He shared his willingness to reach out to his town's representing Commissioners Justin Conrad or Carly Cooke personally with any issues.

Mayor Schneider noted businesses are still suffering during the pandemic and shared that upon reopening, these businesses should assume responsibility for ensuring their staff and customers remain safe.

Mayor Pro Tem Ron Surgeon, Town of Pleasant Garden, shared his recent vaccination experience, thanked the County for developing a smooth process and encouraged everyone to receive the vaccine. He thanked the County for having the foresight to conduct this roundtable discussion and for keeping the lines of communication open.

Mayor Maddox spoke to the efficient, responsive vaccination site located at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Greensboro, and also spoke to the clear communication from Guilford County and the school system regarding COVID protocols.

Vice Chairman J. Carlvena Foster noted the High Point City Council's regular meeting scheduled for 5:30PM this evening prevented representatives from the city joining this meeting.

Chairman Alston expressed his hope that all municipalities would come together and act as one Guilford County in order to solve in issues, share ideas and work with County Commissioners to improve development and expand the tax base. He expressed his interest in having the smaller towns host a County Commissioners meeting and reiterated the need to work together and make decisions on behalf of the entire county.

Alston spoke to the COVID vaccination efforts and the upcoming FEMA site that will be located in Greensboro. He requested town officials encourage their citizens to receive the vaccine in order to return to some form of normalcy. Alston expressed his appreciation for the local mayors and opened the floor for Commissioners to make remarks at this time.

Commissioner Kay Cashion expressed her appreciation for the local mayors and noted many of the issues discussed this evening have been ongoing for years. She spoke to the importance of having this type of forum to receive input and noted she is ready to assist at any time.

Vice Chairman Foster thanked all the elected officials for their work and expressed appreciation for the information shared.

Commissioner Carly Cooke echoed Vice Chairman Foster and Commissioner Cashion's comments and expressed her interest in meeting in-person when restrictions have been lifted.

Commissioner Justin Conrad spoke to the ongoing water issues in the northwestern portion of the County and spoke to the \$140 million impact that housing developments in Stokesdale will have in Guilford County. He encouraged the Board to continue studying the water issues in this area as it is important to the County's long-term economic health and thanked all the mayors for participating.

Mayor Flynt noted the Town of Stokesdale was one of the few town's in the state with no municipal property tax, though residents pay significant amounts in county property and sales taxes. He requested the County consider a special appropriation until the town decides to levy a tax.

Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy expressed appreciation for the opportunity and thanked the mayors for their leadership. She shared her interest in continuing this forum in order to share information and collaborate, and expressed hope that other towns in District 4 would be able to participate during the next meeting.

Commissioner Alan Perdue echoed Board comments and expressed appreciation for all the municipal leaders.

County Manager Michael Halford offered closing remarks and expressed his appreciation for the work of the municipal leaders. He shared his interest in meeting with each of the towns over the next few months to observe the good work and share information.

County Attorney Mark Payne offered his services to the municipal leaders to discuss any issues.

IV. ADJOURN

Chairman Alston thanked all those participating on the call and reiterated we are one Guilford County. He encouraged everyone to remain safe and to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:54PM.

Melvin "Skip" Alston
Chairman

Robin B. Keller
Clerk to Board