

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Monday, May 1, 2017

9:00 A.M. Worksession

MINUTES

Place: Commissioners' Chambers, second floor, Durham County Government
Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC

Present: Chair Wendy Jacobs, Vice Chair James Hill and Commissioners Heidi Carter,
Brenda Howerton, and Ellen Reckhow

Presider: Chair Wendy Jacobs

Citizen Comments

The Board of County Commissioners provided a 30-minute comment period to allow Durham County citizens an opportunity to speak. Citizens were requested to refrain from addressing issues related to personnel matters.

James G. Chavis, Jr. read aloud an email he sent the Board regarding the Board's focus on the Durham Orange Light-Rail Transit project and the lack of attention the bus service was receiving as a result. He requested a copy of the transit plan agreement that would be sent to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as well a copy of the minutes for the Regular Session held on April 24, 2017.

Chair Jacobs stated that staff would provide him with the documents he requested.

Elizabeth Barber, Executive Director of Threshold Clubhouse, spoke on the services offered by Threshold to those with severe and persistent mental health illnesses, the organization's goals, who they served, and statistics which indicated that Threshold's programs led to positive outcomes. She asked that the Board keep in mind Threshold's need for financial support.

Chair Jacobs asked whether Threshold Clubhouse had applied through the non-profit funding to the County. Ms. Barber answered in the affirmative.

Ali Swiller, Associate Director of Threshold Clubhouse, described Threshold's transitional employment program.

Commissioner Reckhow inquired as to whether Threshold was still receiving support from Alliance Behavioral Healthcare. Ms. Swiller confirmed that they were, but it was a little less than normal and the process was more stringent. Commissioner Howerton asked how much was being cut from the budget. Ms. Swiller stated that they were at risk to lose almost \$50,000 the next fiscal year under United Way. Commissioner Howerton wondered how Threshold informed the

community that they existed. Ms. Swiller stated that they promoted in educational forums, public forums, and were attempting to communicate with the County more as well. Commissioner Howerton suggested showing up more in the community in order to increase visibility.

John “Giovanni” Tarantino, performed a musical satire for the Board.

Directive:

- **Provide James Chavis, Jr. with a copy of the transit plan agreement that would be sent to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as well a copy of the minutes for the Regular Session held on April 24, 2017.**

Discussion Items:

17-0133 Charter School Update

The County Commissioners received an annual update from the Durham Charter School Collaborative--updates since the spring of 2012. The collaborative had since strengthened and, as one of its goals, kept the Commissioners and the community well informed about the demographics, services, progress and performance of Durham charters.

Durham charter schools represented approximately 18% of publicly funded K-12 students in Durham, a percentage which was expected to continue to climb to approximately 20% in the 2017-2018 school year.

The following members of the Durham Charter School Collaborative presented a PowerPoint to the Board: John Heffernan, Director for Central Park School for Children; Lisa Gordon-Stella, former Board member at Maureen Joy Charter School and current attorney for charters; Pamela Blizzard, Managing Director for Research Triangle High School; Mark Bailey, Principal at Maureen Joy Charter School; Jennifer Lucas, Managing Director for Voyager Academy; Jason Jowers, Global Scholars Academy; Brian Crawford, Managing Director for Carter Community Charter School; and LaManda Pryor, Principal at Carter Community Charter School.

Commissioner Carter noted that while a few charter schools had some diversity, many still did not serve student demographics that were representative of the Durham Public Schools (DPS) system. She stated that a collaborative plan that eventually allowed them to serve the children who were more challenging and expensive to educate to the same level and degree as DPS would be an accomplishment. Commissioner Carter suggested removing the sibling link from middle school lotteries in order to increase diversity. She also suggested that the Collaborative provide data for special needs students by acuity level.

Commissioner Howerton wondered if they were collaborating with DPS on their new initiative for student suspensions. Ms. Gordon-Stella stated that there was no collaboration.

Commissioner Reckhow recommended that the Collaborative members watch the film *Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope*. She felt that the sharing of innovative information in a constructive manner with DPS, as well as with each other, would greatly benefit all involved as well as the students. Commissioner Reckhow believed that it was important to collaborate in order to allow everyone to capitalize on and benefit from good ideas.

Chair Jacobs advocated for transparency and hoped that collaboration would become a goal for the Collaborative and DPS.

Commissioner Reckhow proposed a Memorandum of Agreement between the Durham Charter School Collaborative, the Board of Education, and the Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Carter believed that the initiative should be taken on by the Board of Education, not the Board of County Commissioners. She also suggested a nonpartisan, nonpolitical facilitator. Commissioner Howerton concurred with Commissioner Carter's point about the Commissioners not facilitating the collaboration between DPS and the Collaborative.

County Manager Davis requested clarification on which collaboration model the Board preferred to use. Chair Jacobs suggested that Manager Davis discuss the matter at another time with Ms. Gordon-Stella, DPS Superintendent Bert L'Homme, Board of Education Chair Mike Lee, and herself. Commissioner Reckhow hoped that they would not spend years deliberating on how to collaborate. Manager Davis concurred on not wanting to spend too much time figuring out minute details; he suggested having a facilitated joint meeting between the Board of Education, the Durham Charter School Collaborative, and the Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Crawford reminded the Board that each member of the Collaborative answered to a separate charter school board in charge of their respective school, he hoped they would also be given a space at the table.

Discussion was had regarding how a joint meeting would be held, who would participate, and how it would be facilitated. Commissioner Reckhow recommended using a professional facilitator and making it clear that the purpose of the meeting would be to discuss how to share information (between the boards/schools as well as with the public) to better educate students.

Directive:

- **County Manager Davis to discuss a joint meeting with Ms. Gordon-Stella, DPS Superintendent Bert L'Homme, Board of Education Chair Mike Lee, and Chair Jacobs.**

17-0201 Update from County Human Resources on Public Safety Compensation Study

The Board was requested to receive an update and recommendations from the Human Resources Department regarding the Public Safety Compensation Study conducted during the current fiscal year. The study was approved by the Board of County Commissioners as a part of the FY17 budget as a way to examine and to address public safety salary issues in high turnover positions within the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the Sheriff's Office. The high turnover areas included paramedics and detention officer positions.

Commissioner Reckhow wondered why the City's information was included. Anthony Noel, Human Resources Manager, stated that the Sheriff's Office lost employees to other jurisdictions, smaller counties, and the police department; staff wanted to include all relevant data to make better policy decisions.

Commissioner Reckhow requested that staff assess how the County law enforcement benefits compared to other Sheriff's Offices as well as the turnover rate in the Durham Sheriff's Office.

Commissioner Carter asked whether a sign-on bonus was a recommendation. Jodi Miller, General Manager of Community and Public Safety, clarified that there were longevity bonuses at three (3) and five (5) years—statistics showed that if an officer made it to five (5) years at their current place of employment, they tended to stay much longer.

Chair Jacobs inquired as to what the timeline and process was for becoming employed in one of the given positions. Ms. Miller stated that the training/academy period was six (6) months for EMS and six (6) weeks for detention officers. Chair Jacobs asked how much was being invested, in terms of time and resources, on training new hires for EMS, detention officers, and law enforcement officers.

Commissioner Carter questioned whether there was a difference between having fewer detention officers that were paid more or having more detention officers that were paid at the level they were currently being paid. Ms. Miller stated that the study only focused on compensation, it did not delve into workplace conditions or workload assessments.

Manager Davis stated that all recommended adjustments would be made and they would be integrated into the following year's budget; \$800,000 was allotted for this purpose in FY16-17, thus no other adjustments were needed.

Directive:

- **Staff to assess how the County law enforcement benefits compared to other Sheriff's Offices as well as the turnover rate in the Durham Sheriff's Office.**

17-0152 Discussion - Rules of Procedures (Remote Participation)

The Board was requested to continue discussion on amendments to the Board's Rules of Procedure, specifically remote participation at Board meetings.

Commissioner Reckhow hoped that the circumstances (specifically c.) in rule one (1) could be expanded to include family events—such as weddings or family reunions—rather than just family emergencies. She added that if the policy was overused, the Board could revise it. Commissioner Reckhow believed that Commissioners should be allowed to vote while participating remotely.

Commissioner Howerton questioned which types of meetings remote participation would be allowed for. Commissioner Reckhow clarified that it did not include closed sessions. Commissioner Howerton was concerned with the public's ability to hear or understand what was being said by the person participating remotely. County Clerk Michelle Parker-Evans and Manager Davis confirmed that staff was taking remote participation needs into consideration during the planning of the technology upgrades in the Commissioners' Chambers.

County Attorney Lowell Siler noted the possible problems with allowing remote participants to vote due to the lack of case law regarding the topic.

Chair Jacobs stated that rule one (1), part c. could be reworded to read “family obligation or emergency” to satisfy Commissioner Reckhow’s request. She stated that remote participation voting would be symbolic only, it would not be the deciding vote. Chair Jacobs stated that it was important to ensure the technology worked before implementing remote participation.

Discussion was had about limiting the number of times a person could use remote participation and about limiting the number of remote participants per meeting. Chair Jacobs requested that the first rule include language that Commissioners were to give as much advance notice as possible.

Directives:

- **Rule one (1) to include language that Commissioners were to give as much advance notice as possible of needing to participate remotely.**
- **Rule one (1), part c. to be reworded to read “family obligation or emergency.”**

17-0220 Commissioner Comments

The Board was requested to allow each Commissioner three minutes to report on conferences or make comments regarding issues that may be of interest or concern to the Board.

Gayle Harris, General Manager of Public Health and Community Well-Being, discussed an email that asked the Board to contact their delegation to support funding for communicable disease services.

Commissioner Howerton updated the Board on the 110th North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Annual Conference (which would be held August 10-12, 2017 in Durham County) and how the Board could help; she suggested contacting businesses in order to invite them to be sponsors for the conference. Chair Jacobs requested information on who had been contacted, who had already pledged, how much each pledged, and information on the event and sponsorship levels. Commissioner Howerton and General Manager Deborah Craig-Ray stated that they would send packets of information to the Board. Commissioner Howerton added that businesses that were not able to donate money had the option of offering employees as volunteers.

Commissioner Reckhow was interested in an assessment into how approved legislative bills fiscally impacted Durham County.

Chair Jacobs was proud of the Art of Cool Festival and glad that the Commissioners attended events. She confirmed with Manager Davis that his work plan would be discussed on May 8th and that he would send the previous year’s work plan to the Board. She reminded everyone of the Racial Equity Training on May 10th in the Health and Human Services Building, 414 E Main Street. She announced that the Durham Lions Club 100th anniversary celebration would take place on Wednesday, May 10th at 6:30pm.

Vice Chair Hill thanked Chair Jacobs and Commissioner Reckhow for their work on the Durham-Orange Light-Rail Transit project.

Chair Jacobs added that discussions needed to be initiated with Research Triangle Park about the special tax district and their participation with the Durham-Wake Commuter Rail. Manager Davis stated that Elizabeth H. (Liz) Rooks, interim CEO for the Research Triangle Park, was scheduled to attend the Worksession on Monday, June 5th.

Commissioner Carter announced that May was Bike Month in Durham; events that were scheduled to occur were listed online at bikedurham.org.

Closed Session

The Board was requested to adjourn to closed session pursuant to G.S. 143.318.11 (a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged.

Commissioner Reckhow moved, seconded by Vice Chair Hill, to adjourn to Closed Session.

The motion carried unanimously.

Reconvene from Closed Session

Chair Jacobs announced that the Board met in Closed Session and direction was given to staff.

Adjournment

Commissioner Howerton moved, seconded by Commissioner Reckhow, that the meeting be adjourned.

The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Tania De Los Santos
Administrative Assistant