

**DURHAM BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
AND  
PERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JOINT MEETING  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Monday, February 8, 2010

4:00 pm

**MINUTES**

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

Present: Durham Board of County Commission Committee Members—Chairman Michael D. Page, Vice-Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow, Commissioners Becky M. Heron and Brenda Howerton, and Joe Bowser

Person County Board of Commissioners—Chairman Johnny M. Lunsford, Vice Chair Jimmy B. Clayton, Commissioners B. Ray Jeffers, Samuel R. Kennington, and Kyle Puryear

Staff: Durham County—County Manager Michael M. Ruffin, Deputy County Managers Carolyn Titus and Wendell Davis. County Attorney Lowell Siler, Assistant County Managers Deborah Craig-Ray and Drew Cummings, Assistant to the County Manager Laura Jensen, and Clerk to the Board Michelle Parker-Evans

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

Presiders: Durham County Commission Chairman Michael D. Page and Person County Chair Johnny Lunsford

**Call to Order/Welcome**

Commission Chairman Michael D. Page called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the Monday, February 8, 2010 Joint meeting of Durham and Person County Commissioners. He asked all commissioners to introduce themselves.

### **Economic Development Discussion**

Heidi York, Person County Manager, began by stating that the item was put on the agenda without a proposed discussion but just to say that Person County has been looking for ways to enhance economic development in the southern end of Person County that abuts Durham County and thought this might be a good place to discuss some partnership opportunities with Durham County.

Chairman Page recognized House of Representatives member Winkie Wilkins in the audience.

Vice Chair Reckhow stated that it would be helpful to look at background information, whether there would be revenue sharing, and whether similar partnerships exist.

Commissioner Heron recalled previous discussions about a partnership, but the idea was never pursued.

Vice Chair Jimmy Clayton spoke about surrounding counties that had formed partnerships. He mentioned the vacant railroad line that runs from Durham to Roxboro along with an airport in Roxboro. He felt that a partnership would be viable for both Durham and Person Counties. The infrastructure between the two counties is in place.

Chairman Page asked if there were any companies that have expressed an interest in coming to the area. Chairman Lunsford responded that right now, this was a vision that the Person County Board has. Person County would like to know if the interest is there from Durham County. Once that is determined, the two counties can get together to see what direction would be most advantageous to move in or have an agreement so once the economy regains momentum, there will already be a plan in place. He added that water has been extended to Timberlake.

County Manager Ruffin clarified that what the other counties who formed partnerships did was to approve a State law that allow them to jointly work together. The taxes paid were shared among participating units. Durham does not have legal authority at this time.

County Manager York suggested if there is interest, that a committee be set up with the economic development teams to look into the matter and report back to the Boards.

Commissioner Bower inquired about the Person County Chamber of Commerce involvement. Ms. York responded that the Chamber functions differently than in Durham. Person County handles economic development as a part of County government. She added that certainly the Chamber would be a partner in any discussions.

Vice Chair Clayton stated that part of the thought comes from an invitation from the Durham Chamber of Commerce to open the door and see what could take place. He reiterated that it is pretty much a vision at this point.

Commissioner Puryear added that Person County is in the process of remapping its economic development plan. The county will be hiring an Economic Development Manager. A strategic plan is being developed which should be completed in March or April. He felt this would be the best place to see if there is interest in working together and move forward from that point.

Commissioner Howerton posed the question of what would be the advantages of a joint partnership and why does Person County not want to move ahead on its own. Commissioner Jeffers responded that by looking at the growth experiences of Raleigh, this partnership would benefit Durham County and Person County.

Commissioner Bowser inquired about the water and sewer lines. The lines run from Timberlake to the ABC store on Hwy 501.

Commissioner Bowser stated that the railroad has an economic development department that may be willing to build a partnership. He added that he liked the idea of a partnership.

Chairman Page commented that he was open to any kind of opportunities. He asked if the citizens of Person County were open to industry and growth. Commissioner Jeffers replied that many of the citizens of Person County commute to Raleigh every day for work.

Vice Chair Clayton emphasized the difference between growth and planned growth. Citizens say they treasure open land so there would have to be a balance between the two. Clean industry would be the preference for the area.

Vice Chair Reckhow commented that joint planning sounds like it would be good. She stated that there is not a current economic development plan in the County. She indicated that although there is no current cross county planning, we should look at the opportunity.

Manager Ruffin proposed that the two County Managers' staffs work together and report back to the Board on anything that could be pursued on a joint basis.

Chairman Page suggested spending ½ day together with the two boards to focus on a plan once the Managers have reported back.

Chairman Lunsford commented that he feels that this process should not be rushed, but it should be explored.

County Attorney Siler asked for a description of the proposed areas to be looked at. Vice Chair Clayton responded that Person County was thinking about somewhere close to the airport to use as a marketing tool. He added that there were no pre-determined sites at this time.

Chairman Lunsford remarked that the airport had been upgraded in the last few years so it could handle larger planes.

Commissioner Puryear commented that the partnership could create jobs for Person County and Durham County. He suggested an open dialogue between the economic teams from both counties along with both managers.

County Manager Ruffin suggested an August or September time line for reporting back to the Boards. The report will include a scope, analysis and background.

There was consensus among the group to meet again when the report is ready to be presented.

### **Falls Lake Watershed Discussion**

Vice Chairman Jimmy Clayton began the conversation. He stated that legislation passed regarding the Falls Lake regulations. According to Mr. Clayton, the Division of Water Quality does not have the personnel to monitor the rules. He added that Person County is not opposed to clean water, but they want to be treated fairly.

Manager York stated that she and Assistant County Manager Drew Cummings worked together to draft a memo. She remarked that it is a complicated issue and there is not enough information.

Mr. Cummings presented additional information to the Boards. He indicated that Falls Lake is not a typical lake. It is broken into five road crossings that restrict flow considerably, and the lake is also very shallow in its upstream sections. In addition, the Lake is politically difficult because it covers part of six counties. Both of these aspects make the upper portions more susceptible to algae growth, the main water quality issue for the Lake.

The rules for the Lake have been accelerated without enough discussion on how the model will work. He stressed that next year will be crucial during the 60-day comment period.

The goals rules focus on how much overall reduction will occur. Stage One is focused on the lower part of the Lake (east and south of NC 50). This is set to last for 10 years. Stage Two is set to last for 15 years.

Goal Three is for Durham and Person Counties to include septic systems and sandfilter system. After January 15, 2011, the counties will have 3.5 years to develop a plan to get back to the 2006 loading levels, another year to implement, and another 5.5 years (until 2021) to get down to

those 2006 levels. Stage II is more focused on the upper lake portion (west and north of NC 50). This stage also represents a greater financial burden.

The Agriculture aspect is one area where Durham and Person Counties share considerable interest. This rule applies to farming, horticulture, and poultry and livestock operations above a certain number of animals. Voluntary groups would be in charge of monitoring this rule.

Commissioner Reckhow asked about the goal for agriculture reductions. Mr. Cumming responded that it was a 20 percent reduction for agriculture and livestock.

Mr. Cummings proposed two ideas to both Boards regarding the State and Federal Entities rule.

- 1) Continue to be in close conversation over the next year to work to extend this;
- 2) After rules are approved, to commit to looking at ways of jointly implementing in parts of the counties that abut to each other that may have cost savings for both counties.

Commissioner Reckhow commented that the item regarding septic systems seemed very time consuming. Some landowners won't be able to afford to replace septic systems. She suggested seeking expert guidance from NC State University.

### **Open Dialogue Between Boards**

Chairman Lunsford spoke on behalf of Person County and thanked the Durham Board of County Commissioners for agreeing to meet and have dialogue. He added that he hoped it was just the beginning.

Chairman Page thanked the Person County Board for coming over and invited them to stay for dinner with the Durham Board.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.