

Pickens County Council Planning Retreat
March 10, 2018
8:30 AM

County Council met for a planning retreat at the Pickens County Airport, with Chairman Roy Costner presiding. Agendas, bearing date, time, and location of meeting were mailed to members of council and local news media on March 7, 2018.

Council Members in Attendance:

Ensley Feemster
Roy Costner
Chris Bowers
Carl Hudson
Wes Hendricks
Trey Whitehurst (Absent)

Staff in Attendance:

Gerald Wilson, County Administrator
Crystal A. Alexander, Clerk to Council
Ken Roper, County Attorney
Ralph Guarino, Finance Director
Ray Farley, Economic Development Director
Jay Pitts, Tourism Director
Carlos Salinas, Airport Director
Sharon Johnson, Community Relations Director
Scott Smith, Emergency Services Director

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Roy Costner called the planning meeting to order and thanked everyone for their participation. Councilman Carl Hudson led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

COUNCIL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES - ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION:

UPDATE ON EXISTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Gerald Wilson, the County Administrator, provided the following update on the goals and objectives that were discussed at the retreat in October of 2018.

1. Fire/Emergency Services Plan: – **In Process**
 - a) Emergency Services Director to finalize proposed plan the second week in November
- Scott Smith, the Emergency Service Director, stated that the presentation was delayed, as the first board meeting was in November.
 - b) Countywide Fire Consolidation
 - i. Plan to be beneficial to citizens
 - ii. Cost savings assessment
-Mr. Smith stated that the board focused heavily on the funding side, with the first goal of the board being to develop a unified funding mechanism.
 - c) Fire Fees vs. Millage
-Mr. Smith advised that the board determined that the fee based system was “all over the board”; and therefore, the board focused on a countywide millage based system. Mr. Smith stated that the board held an informational meeting with the fire chiefs and chairmen of the fire boards to discuss the proposed plan. He stated that the plan is

believed to be fair and equitable plan, which would provide consistency throughout the County. Mr. Smith stated that the proposed plan would remove district lines, which were created for funding purposes. He clarified that the \$6.2 million operating budget originated by combining all of the district's operational budgets together.

d) **Mutual Aid System – Complete**

-Mr. Smith advised that this system, also known as Automatic Aid, went live in July of 2017. He stated that this system is working great; that there have been approximately 68 box alarms since Christmas Day.

e) **ISO Rating Improvement**

-Mr. Smith advised that ISO ratings are being considered as the board develops the plan.

f) **Cross-Training Staff**

-Mr. Smith advised that personnel needs are being reviewed as a part of the plan.

g) **Equipment Needs Assessment (needs vs. wants)**

-Mr. Smith stated that the equipment needs assessment was performed as a part of the recently proposed plan.

h) **Expedite Plan**

-Mr. Smith stated that the fire chiefs and board members would continue to meet to move forward towards a plan.

i) **Marketing for Community – Community Leader Meeting**

-Mr. Smith stated that the ESAB would hold town hall meetings and other public meetings to effectively communicate the plan.

To summarize the fire/emergency services plan, Mr. Wilson advised that the plan cannot be implemented this fiscal year. He clarified that the first step was to open the proposed plan up for comment to the fire chiefs and fire boards. He stated that over the next thirty days, comments will be submitted to the ESAB. He further stated that the fire chiefs would be meeting with the ESAB one on one. Mr. Wilson advised that after that process is complete, the goal is for the ESAB to bring a more comprehensive plan that staff, volunteers and fire boards all agree on, to present for Council's consideration. Mr. Wilson stated that then a vast marketing campaign would need to occur through town hall meetings and community meetings to get input from the community. He stated that this plan would be at least fifteen months out.

Chairman Roy Costner asked for clarification of how to obtain a true equipment need, when you hear both sides at different council meeting.

-Mr. Smith responded that the determination is needs based, with consideration of life cycle expectation and actual usage of equipment factored in to that determination.

After more discussion, Councilman Wes Hendricks wants to everyone to consider the following: discerning between wants and needs; inconsistent fees; concerns with each fire district's community identity; establish an anonymous comment line for people whom may be concerned with sharing their honest opinions regarding this matter; concerns with district lines as it pertains to ISO ratings; recommend recruiting volunteers at Pickens County high schools, etc.; when requesting public input on this matter, ensure that it is communicated that the plan is in process and not a "done deal"; a request to obtain an assessment of homes in the County in \$50,000 value increments.

Chairman Costner questioned a referendum to let the citizens' vote of the fire fee vs. a millage based system.

-Mr. Wilson responded that the deadline for a referendum is August 15th.

After further discussion amongst the members of council, Mr. Wilson stated that he would brief Council over the next couple of months, once comments are received by the ESAB. He stated that this plan needs to be effectively communicated over the next year to obtain public input.

2. Efficiency in Information for Citizens

-Sharon Johnson, the Community Relations Director, advised that media releases are being published on social media and the county website, as well as being sent to the media outlets. She stated that this effort was to better inform the public. Ms. Johnson stated that the Team Up and Clean Up effort publication has been effective, with most organizations reaching out to the County stating they'd like to participate, versus the County having to engage them. She provided Council with data of videos and/or posts views and likes. Ms. Johnson provided an update on the video and audio for recording and sharing council meetings. She discussed the possibility of using lapel microphones in the future.

3. 150th Anniversary Celebration

a) Mark Wood

b) Partner with Oconee County

-Jay Pitts, the Tourism and Marketing Director, provided an update on the 150th anniversary celebration and Mark Wood. He advised that he is working heavily with the Historical Society of Pickens County on this project. He stated that the County has contracted with Mark Wood to come to work with Pickens County School teachers and students, in eight different schools, on April 11-12, 2018. He advised that Mark Wood would also hold a private concert on April 13, 2018. He clarified that this event is a much smaller scale than what is planned with Mark Wood in 2019.

c) Create 150th logo

-Mr. Wilson stated that the new logo has been created, with the help of two students from Pickens County School District.

d) Create social media page(s)

-Mr. Wilson advised that Sharon Johnson was working on the social media page.

4. Sister County with District in Germany (*Sister Cities International*)

-Mr. Wilson stated that this matter would be discussed further at the Committee of the Whole meeting.

-Chairman Roy Costner and other members of council discussed the proposed sister city. Chairman Costner discussed their visit to era-contact in Germany. He clarified that this proposed partnership takes time and more steps have to be taken. Chairman Costner stated that in his opinion, this proposed relationship would have a positive impact on economic develop, well in to the future.

Councilman Wes Hendricks stated that in his recent meeting with the Governor, he learned that the "higher-ups" in the state were very complimentary of the recent trip to Germany. He stated that he learned that approximately 150 or 180 businesses in the state are from Germany.

After much more discussion, Chairman Costner reiterated that this matter would be discussed thoroughly at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

5. Rebrand County

-Mr. Wilson advised that to brand the County, it is important to include transparency through social media, print media and conversations.

-Sharon Johnson stated that rebranding starts by determining the target audience. She stated that ideas should be: something that people can resonate with; something that people want;

something simple, that people will remember; etc.

-Council discussed this matter in more detail. Chairman Costner advised that he wants to move forward with this quickly.

6. **Animal Adoptions**

-Ken Roper, the County Attorney, provided an update on animal adoptions. He stated that the County Ordinance was changed to allow for adoptions; funds were allocated for equipment, supplies, a trailer and new building to promote this initiative. He stated approximately 2,000 animals are brought in to the facility annually.

-Council, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Roper discuss this matter in more detail.

7. **Possible Countywide Food Bank**

-Mr. Wilson stated that staff has reached out to several different groups. He advised that he plans to visit a food bank in a neighboring county at the end of the month. He invited the members of council to attend. Mr. Wilson advised that there are commitments to bring a food bank into Pickens County, if the organizers can identify a location to house that facility. He advised that he would provide more information to Council as it is received.

8. **Budget Preparation**

-Mr. Wilson advised that this year's budget was going to be difficult to balance without a tax increase, due to additional staffing required by the Department of Corrections for the new jail, which plans to open in the next 6-12 months.

-Ralph Guarino, the Finance Director, provided a brief overview of the budget. He advised that a recommendation will be provided to Council by the April meeting.

-Council, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Guarino discussed this matter in more detail.

9. **Hangars at the Airport**

-Mr. Wilson reminded everyone that the groundbreaking for the new Airport hangars is going to be next week.

-Carlos Salinas, the Airport Director, discussed the 2018 SCAC Statewide Aviation Survey and the bids for the new hangars.

-Ralph Guarino stated that the request is to obtain additional funding in the amount of \$71,270.00. He clarified that while he recommends being cautious of taking funds out of fund balance; he recommends taking this request from fund balance, as this is revenue generating income.

-Council, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Salinas discussed this matter in more detail.

10. **Building Codes**

-Mr. Wilson stated that Building Codes, as it relates to mandatory codes, have been approved. He clarified that all of the provisional and discretionary codes are in the Committee of the Whole.

11. **Industrial Park Extension**

-Mr. Wilson stated that this matter would need to be discussed during executive session at a later time.

12. **Public Transportation Opportunities**

- Mr. Wilson stated that staff has met with Catbus and explored different ideas.

13. **Tourism**

-Mr. Wilson stated that he does not want to discuss this item in detail, but he is going to recommend adding a project to executive session for the April meeting to brief council.

14. **Economic Development**

-Mr. Wilson commended Ray Farley for his continuous efforts to fill the Industrial Park. He stated that Mr. Farley has a vision and strategy that can be discussed in executive session at a later date.

15. Countywide Prayer Service (November)
 - Mr. Wilson asked for clarification from the Council if they want to pursue this further.
 - Chairman Roy Costner and Vice Chairman Chris Bowers stated that they would like to see this become an annual event. Chairman Costner stated that he would like to plan this now and not wait until October.
 - Mr. Wilson further stated that Council has made a lot of progress throughout the County last year. He briefed the members of council on all of the projects underway to include, but not limited to: Twelve Mile Road side of the Catechee Beach project; Pole Shed/Amphitheater; Burdine Lodge; Mile Creek cabins; etc.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a):

Chairman Roy Costner called for a motion to convene into Executive Session, as defined by S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a), to discuss the following item after a short recess.

- Motion was made by Councilman Wes Hendricks, seconded by Vice Chairman Chris Bowers and carried unanimously (5-0).
 - Economic Development – Section 30-4-70 (a) (5)
 - Personnel and Social Media

PUBLIC SESSION RECONVENED:

Chairman Roy Costner called the Public Session back to order and advised there would be no action taken.

COUNCIL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES - ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Council discussed goals and objectives collectively during the previous updates provided by the Administrator and members of staff.

DEFINE VISION FOR PICKENS COUNTY - ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Council discussed their vision for Pickens County in ten years and compiled the list below, in no particular order:

1. Economic Development:
 - a) New Industrial Park with additional jobs
 - b) Increase the County’s tax base through economic development
 - c) 75% of the people who live in Pickens County to be employed in Pickens County
2. Gateway to the Appalachian Resort
3. Pickens County to become a drive to destination
4. Creation of a transportation bypass for Clemson and Easley
5. Emphasis on education in Pickens County
6. Controlled, sensible growth
7. Reasonable taxes compared to other surrounding counties
8. Maintain the “Pickens County charm” amidst the growth
9. Become the envy of the state through education, employment and recreation
10. Become a great place to live, work and play
11. Controlled growth with protected values
12. Planned development to include: jobs; housing; and infrastructure
13. Efficient government
14. Sustainable tourism centered around culture and the assets in each of the communities in the County

ADJOURN:

Hearing no further business, Chairman Roy Costner called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Chris Bowers, seconded by Councilman Wes Hendricks and carried unanimously (5-0). Pickens County Council stood adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectively Submitted:

Approved:

Crystal A. Alexander, Clerk to Council

Roy B. Costner, III, Chairman of
Pickens County Council