

THE REGULAR SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEW KENT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WITH SENIOR STAFF WAS HELD ON THE 12TH DAY OF MARCH IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TEN OF OUR LORD AT FIRE STATION ONE IN PROVIDENCE FORGE, VIRGINIA, AT 12:00 NOON.

IN RE: CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Evelyn called the meeting to order.

IN RE: ROLL CALL

Thomas W. Evelyn	Present
David M. Sparks	Absent
James H. Burrell	Present
Stran L. Trout	Present
W. R. Davis, Jr.	Present

Chairman Sparks was unavailable because of work commitments.

IN RE: INVOCATION

Mr. Burrell gave the invocation.

IN RE: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Vice Chairman Evelyn thanked Fire Chief Tommy Hicks and his staff for hosting the meeting and providing lunch.

Board members commended staff for their hard work and professionalism. There was discussion regarding the necessity of the semi-annual meetings, and Board members encouraged staff to speak openly with any suggestions or comments.

There was discussion regarding how the previously enacted hiring freeze would affect an upcoming vacancy in the Parks & Recreation division. It was suggested that staff make recommendations to the Board on a case-by-case basis.

IT Director Jonathan Stanger reported that his department was working on moving the County systems from a physical to a virtual environment, which would save money on hardware and servers, and he explained how he had arranged to locate a server at the high school to mirror the County server. He also spoke about the continuing problem with retention of files that were no longer needed.

Building Official Clarence Jackson reported that the number of building permits was increasing, with 17 permits issued for single family dwellings through February 2010, compared to 7 for the same period in 2009 and 39 in 2008. He indicated that 5 permits had been issued in March, with 19 more to process. He spoke about the consistent number of homes being constructed in more modest price ranges. He advised that the average turn-around period for a permit in his office was five days and they were continuing to offer next-day inspections. He described changes being adopted by the General Assembly that would not require sprinklers in single family dwellings, but would require them in all townhouses and apartments. There was discussion as to how that would affect construction in some of the developments and Fire Chief Hicks explained that sprinklers were designed to take care of fires in the room of origin - not the entire structure - which

would not be a "huge volume" but would likely require a connection larger than the standard water connection. He commented that some localities waived the increased fees for the larger connections necessitated for fire suppression.

Community Development Director George Homewood advised that his department was "busier than ever" despite the slow economy. He explained that his staff was "spending a lot of time talking to people who wanted to do something that is not permitted, or who don't know what they wanted to do". He indicated that, as a result of the recent General Reassessment, they were "flooded" with lot consolidation requests in instances where there were two lots with one house but being assessed as two building lots.

He indicated that there were some bills being considered by the General Assembly that would affect New Kent, one of which would require that cash proffers be collected at the time of application for certificates of occupancy rather than building permits. He noted that since most cash proffers were indexed and increased over time, it could result in an increased amounts being collected. He reported that there were several bills that dealt with vested rights and what constituted affirmative government action. He explained that one of the bills provided that anything in writing to a landowner would be considered an affirmative government action upon which the landowner could rely, which left questions as to how long that reliance existed and what the landowner needed to do to keep that vested right alive, and he cautioned that if the law changed, the County would need to be careful of anything that it put in writing. He indicated that there were also some bills under consideration that would give localities more authority in dealing with signs in rights-of-way. He spoke about a bill that would require localities to allow, as a matter of right, any accessory dwelling unit that provided medical care for a defined individual in need of medical care for prolonged time.

Regarding turn-around time on plat reviews, he advised that they continued to give priority to commercial requests, but that the turn-around time for other reviews was in the 35 – 45 day range, with many of the delays due to surveyor errors.

Board members inquired about the increase in the number of cell tower applications. Mr. Homewood explained that the technology used by AT&T for its I-Phones required more towers than the technology used by other carriers. He confirmed that there were still problems with coverage on some parts of Routes 249 and Route 60. He predicted that the next wave of wireless tower applications would be generated by requests for coverage on the waterways. He suggested that creating a broadband network was more cost-effective than installing fiber optic cable and it might be in the County's best interest to establish such a network. County Administrator Lawton reported that Economic Development & Tourism Director Rodney Hathaway was looking into a grant for that and how it might work in New Kent. Mr. Homewood confirmed that any cell tower approved in the County was required to provide space for County emergency services needs, but that would not be the same as space for a broadband network. Mr. Lawton suggested that the County start thinking about owning the towers, and that it made more sense to have a wireless network than a cable network. Mr. Trout suggested that working with Charles City County on a regional approach might be more successful.

There was discussion about existing cell towers in New Kent. Mr. Lawton suggested that the County could hire an engineer to look at the County to identify and target areas that needed coverage and such a study could include a broadband network.

Parks & Recreation Manager Kim Turner reported that several FY10 CIP park projects were being deferred, but that they had finished all work at Quinton Park and were finishing up a

Phase I project at the Wahrani Nature Trail. She pointed out that New Kent was behind in updating its master plan, which required update every five years, and spoke about having some of the work done at no cost by interns at Virginia Commonwealth University.

She reported that her division had reached its projected program revenue but not the projected rental revenue, and she hoped that the two would balance each other out. She spoke about the popularity of the new on-line registration, as well as how they were working with other departments and agencies to improve services. She indicated that it had been a difficult transition in assuming responsibility for the historic school.

She advised that she had made some re-organizational recommendations, which included increased use of part-time staff to help with the upcoming position vacancy, as well as becoming independent from the General Services Department. She commented that she felt that one meeting with Senior Staff per year would be sufficient and would be best scheduled for a date after the budget was adopted, in either July or August. She indicated that she would like to see some team-building initiatives to promote a more positive environment and improve work relationships.

Chief Deputy Treasurer Norma Holmes reported that delinquent real estate and personal property tax bills had been mailed out the prior week and those that were not paid by the end of the month would be sent for collection, DMV stops or Set-Off Debt. She indicated that \$10 million had been transferred from the County's checking account into staggered certificates of deposit at Citizens & Farmers Bank. She advised that the tax collection rate was approximately 95%, that there had not been any recent tax sales, and that Treasurer Herb Jones was still expected to return from military duty in November. The Board commended her and the rest of the staff in the Treasurer's Office for their hard work during Mr. Jones' absence.

Interim County Attorney Michele Gowdy reported that Verizon was interested in donating to the County an existing cell tower in the area of the main refuse site and the Board would need to decide whether or not it wanted to accept it.

Sheriff F. W. Howard, Jr. advised that call rates, reports and arrests had increased, with the largest increase being in larcenies and breaking and entering. He attributed the continuing problem with vehicle break-ins to the visibility of GPS units and encouraged GPS owners not to record home addresses in their units because it could "set them up" as a repeat target. He reported an increase in prisoner confinement costs which he attributed to the increase in crime, reporting that a recent Grand Jury returned the largest number of indictments ever, most of which were drug-related.

There was discussion regarding a pending bill in the General Assembly relating to bail bonds. Sheriff Howard indicated that the State Sheriff's Association was actively opposing the bill because it would result in higher bail bonds and more people in jail.

He indicated that a previously reported problem with the video magistrate process had improved.

Mr. Burrell noted that the national crime rate had been in decline and asked why crimes were increasing in New Kent. The Sheriff advised that he felt that the crime rates everywhere were increasing because of the economy, and that New Kent was unique because it was bisected by the interstate.

He reminded that his office had not had any new County-funded deputies since 2006. He reported that their average call response time was 19 minutes, down from 12 minutes five or six years earlier. He explained call-stacking where calls were rated by priority, due to the shortage of staff. There was also discussion regarding the increased population at Henrico Jail East, where Sheriff Howard reported double bunking due to the increase in arrests and the backlog in transferring inmates to State prisons.

Financial Services Director Mary Altemus reported that her department was working on the budget and audit, and waiting for some firm funding numbers from the General Assembly.

Public Utilities Director Larry Dame reported that the Parham Landing plant expansion project was "moving along"; that the reclaimed water line project had been delayed because of some erosion concerns by VDOT but the contractor would be allowed to begin work again the following week; and that the renovation work at the Chickahominy plant was on schedule.

He advised that both the Pilot truck stop and New Kent Crossing Shopping Center were in the process of connecting to the County's water system. He spoke about work performed at the Utilities office which resulted in some additional parking capacity. He noted some infiltration and inflow work that had been done and some that was needed to be done in the area of the Jail. He also spoke about the groundwater withdrawal permits that had been issued for Bottoms Bridge, Farms of New Kent, and The Colonies, as well as the pending permits for Colonial Downs and Route 33 which were in modeling.

General Registrar Rosanna Bencoach spoke about some bills pending in the General Assembly. She mentioned an emphasis on earlier mailing of absentee ballots, as well as a move away from paper poll books. She reported that the State Board had been authorized to set a primary date for August of 2011 and that the Third District Democratic Chairman had already requested a primary. There was discussion regarding the use of touch screen voting machines. Ms. Bencoach advised that two precincts had been converted to optical scan machines and that although localities could no longer purchase new touch screen machines, they could continue to use their existing machines until they needed replacing. She noted that funding was in the CIP budget to change over one precinct each year to the new machines, and in the event redistricting resulted in an additional precinct next year, there should be enough machines to cover it, as long as the CIP funding continued. There was discussion regarding redistricting and she advised that the Census results were expected by March of 2011, after which time both the General Assembly and localities would be drawing new district lines at the same time. She predicted that it would be a very hectic process and that notifications would have to be mailed out to every affected voter.

Human Resources Specialist Darla Stanley reported that her office continued to work on updating policies and procedures, as well as trying to identify cost savings where possible. She spoke about a new pay card process available to employees without direct deposit. She explained that the Employee Assistance Program was also available to family members of any employees covered under the County's health insurance and encouraged anyone needing help to take advantage of the process.

General Services Director Jim Tacosa advised that bids on the renovations in the Administration Building were due later in the month and that he was still working on cost estimates for the work proposed for the historic school. There was discussion regarding the removal of the existing awning in front of the historic school, and there was consensus of the Board members to proceed with removal.

Fire Chief Hicks reported that in-house ambulance billing began on March 1 and was proceeding well. He noted that at some point in time they may have some additional staff and computer needs but he would keep everyone informed. He confirmed that as of March 1, all payments for ambulance services would be received directly by the County but that the recently discharged billing vendor would continue to collect the funds paid on accounts they were still holding for an 18-month period after their discharge.

Following discussion, there was consensus among the Board to skip the Volunteer Dinner for 2010 and to combine the Employee picnic with County Government Month activities, but to maintain the Weekly Reader in its present format, and keep the State of the County event but in a different format and venue.

Mr. Trout spoke about a new grant search opportunity through the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission available to all of its member localities. Mr. Burrell suggested that New Kent should partner with Charles City County to improve the chance of receiving grants.

IN RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Burrell moved to adjourn the meeting. The members were polled:

Thomas W. Evelyn	Aye
James H. Burrell	Aye
Stran L. Trout	Aye
W. R. Davis, Jr.	Aye
David M. Sparks	Absent

The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.