

# **Henry County Board of Supervisors**

## **Planning Session**

### **January 31, 2008**

The Henry County Board of Supervisors held its annual planning session at 3 p.m. on January 31, 2008 at the Henry County Emergency Services Training Center. The following Board members were present Chairman Jim Adams, Vice Chairman H. G. Vaughn, Debra Buchanan, Paula Burnette, Jim McMillian, and Tommy Slaughter.

Staff members present were Benny Summerlin, County Administrator; Tim Hall, Deputy County Administrator; George Lyle, County Attorney; Jimmie Wright, Director of Accounting; Tim Pace, County Engineer; Dale Wagoner, Director of Public Safety; and Matt Tatum, EMS Coordinator.

Also present were Tiffany Haworth of the Non-Profit Leaders Network, who served as moderator; Debbie Hall with the Martinsville Bulletin, and two citizens.

The Board and staff discussed a date for a Board tour of County businesses and new industrial land recently purchased by the County. It was decided that the tour would take place May 29 beginning at 9:30 a.m., and that the Board of Directors of the Henry County Industrial Development Authority would be invited to take the tour as well.

Tiffany Haworth, event moderator, began the planning session by asking each Board member and County staff member to introduce themselves and provide some background information. The Board then began to go over its 2007 short-term goals to see how the list was reached. The goals, and the work toward them, were as follows:

- 1) Identify the next CDBG project and any other grants that we can go after
    - Community Meetings
    - Site selected (Blackberry District)
    - Fieldale Grants
    - Received two grants – Riverside Drive (\$25K), South Street (Engineering Analysis)
    - \$500K Water Project Grant
    - Transportation Grant (Collinsville)
  
  - 2) Explore opportunities to further our tourism efforts through infrastructure development
    - Access points
    - Acquired real estate for Soccer Complex
    - Mayo River Park
    - Smith River, improved water quality
    - Fieldale Trail extended
    - New Visitor Center
    - Designated Wilderness Trails
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- Opened Public Safety Facility
- Norfolk Southern Grant
- Enhanced website
- Jamestown event

3) Continue to identify additional growth areas for industrial development including adjoining states and counties

- RTI
- Shell building, planning for a new one
- Two purchases for industrial development (Patriots Centre/220South)
- Waterline extended (Route 58)
- Collaborative discussion with other counties about industrial development
- Shell building built and sold
- Enhanced collaboration between City and County

4) Explore the elimination of the physical County decal

- Under discussion, still need to reach consensus
- The decal helps law enforcement
- Decal enhances revenue

5) Explore whether we should conduct an annual session among the elected bodies in the region to discern mutual direction and strategies (start up)

- Meetings have taken place among City Manager, County Administrator, Board Chairman, and City Mayor
- Regional meetings attended
- Board of Supervisors' members are active on other boards

6) Review public safety response times and consider options for improvement (short term review, long term for follow up)

- Focus and brainstorming session held with local fire and EMS directors
- Recommendations provided by Public Safety

7) Hold a work session (soon) to assess our success in communication and consider ways to improve it and to reduce apathy (i.e. information/media, public meetings, tours, etc.)

- Did a community tour last year
- Board of Supervisors have appeared on television/PR
- Website enhanced
- Improved media relations

8) Look at County corridors that access NCI, VMNH, the Sports Arena, and Soccer Complex and make sure that we capitalize on opportunities and eliminate potential problems

- State funding received for access road to Soccer Complex
- EDC erected County entrance signs

9) Consider whether to create a County Police Department for law enforcement

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- Discussion took place

10) Consider a partnership with the City of Martinsville to improve the reservoir for recreational purposes (start up)

- Meeting has been scheduled for discussion

11) Resolve the Social Services Department and Health Department relocation with the City of Martinsville

- Have made commitment to relocated Social Service Department
- Increased public relations and information to public

12) Approach the City of Martinsville to create a regional water/sewer authority

- Discussion took place and City indicated little interest in pursuing

13) Approach the City of Martinsville to merge recreational programs and departments into the existing regional park authority

- Re-introduced discussion with City
- Identified Arena and Soccer Complex as key points to discuss collaboration

14) Monitor convenience centers to stop abuse

- Fenced and secured properties
- Created more open hours
- Two of seven centers are staffed
- Created a safer, cleaner environment
- Provided for more community recycling
- Increased media relations
- Good thing for citizens of County
- Project had good planning
- Provided community services for court probationers
- Saved the County money

15) Upgrade the emergency communications system

- In progress
- Made purchase of enhanced emergency communication system components
- Installation will occur in 2008

The Board and staff reviewed the long-term goals established in 2007 and progress toward meeting those goals. The specific goals and progress made included:

1) Provide information to the Board about illegal immigration (impact statement that includes schools, social services, law enforcement, etc.)

- Participated in coalition of counties to look at immigration issues
- Recommendations made to General Assembly

2) Follow through with the results of study and promote development of utilities on Route 58 West

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- Study under way for Route 58
- 3) Initiate a specific plan (perhaps within the Comprehensive Plan) to ensure that we have good development where I73 comes through the County
    - Public hearing was held for recommendations
    - Working with City to pursue a grant to re-write Comprehensive Plan and other planning activities
  - 4) With partners, identify the changing needs of the aging population and determine how needs can be met by mobilizing volunteers
    - Developed a joint City/County public transportation pilot program
  - 5) Expand the water infrastructure for the Route 58 East corridor
    - Under design

The Board and staff discussed continuous goals established in 2007 and the progress toward those goals. They were:

- 1) Recruit higher paying diversified jobs
    - RTI
    - Collaborative efforts for community to get higher education/GED
    - Real estate purchases
    - Shell building – planning for re-sale
    - Created good foundation for EDC through conscientious planning
  - 2) Explore opportunities to further our tourism efforts through marketing the County
    - New Visitor Center
    - Designated Wilderness Trails
    - Opened Public Safety Facility
    - Enhanced website
    - Jamestown event
  - 4) Continue to pursue delinquent taxes
    - Second real estate sale planned
    - Lawsuit
    - Continued efforts in place
  - 5) Continue to vigorously support, create, and supplement cleaner community efforts
    - Anti-Litter Campaign
    - Community Pride sub-committee
    - Enhanced funding through Gateway
    - Increased Highway clean-up
    - Convenience Centers
    - Inoperable vehicle ordinance
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- 6) Push for completion of Route 58 improvements (i.e. lobby with the General Assembly, VDOT, etc.)
    - Meetings have taken place
  - 7) Continue to support and fully fund the EDC
    - Accomplished and on-going
  - 8) Continue to work with existing industry to assist with expansions
    - On-going commitment
  - 9) Commit as a Board to engage in an activity to socialize/have fun together
    - Not a priority, but on-going commitment
  - 10) Complete an assessment of the services that we are providing to see whether there are efficiencies to be gained (provide information to the Board regarding efforts)
    - Identified Refuse as cost-saving efficiency
    - Regional jail authority could provide framework for efficiency
    - Public Safety building an example of efficiency
  - 11) Continue to support and promote the Airport
    - Board of Supervisors funded re-location of road
  - 12) Continue to push for Interstate 73
    - On-going commitment
  - 13) Continue to work for the improvement of our educational system and facilities
    - On-going commitment
    - \$3.5 million Bond to renovate Drewry Mason School
  - 14) Continue to support NCI to increase funding and growth, along with Patrick Henry Community College
    - On-going support for NCI and PHCC
  - 15) Continue to monitor and increase our fund balance
    - Although spent \$3 million cash on capital projects, increased fund balance by \$1 million
  - 16) Continue to monitor potential reversion by the City of Martinsville
    - Efforts have increased to work with City
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Board members and staff were asked to create their “dream headline” for 2008, and each participant provided one. A brainstorming session on how to achieve those results followed. The consensus was:

### **Increase Job Creation and Higher Paying Jobs**

- Increase educational attainment of Henry County citizens
- Create incentive to increase educational attainment
- Support school’s efforts to decrease drop out rate

### **Increase State Support**

- Support EDC for relationship building with state
- Streamline process for tobacco and Governor grants

### **Infrastructure Projects**

- Water and sewer extended in needed areas
- 58 W. water project
- Completion of soccer complex
- Identification of next industrial site
- Identify next shell building project
- Resolution of the Social Security building issue
- Overview of County/City partnerships
- Increase efficiencies of Parks and Recreation
- Improve services and eliminate duplication of services in County/City
- Look for efficiencies in state constitutional offices

### **Increase Community Pride and Clean Community**

- Increase educational efforts to reach children about recycling and clean community issues
- Promote corporate involvement in clean community and pride efforts

### **Increase County Government Public Perception**

- Increase visibility of Board of Supervisors in the media
- Explore adding a public relations staff person
- Promote more participation of board of supervisors on local boards and committees
- Explore accreditation of Sheriff’s Office

### **Increase Public Perception from Outside of Henry County**

- Devote resources to increased tourism efforts
- Promote safe, clean, affordable quality of life

### **Other**

- Complete Comprehensive Plan
  - Continue conversation about illegal immigration
  - Advocate for broadcasting of meetings and research local statistics and information
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- Enhance higher level of regional cooperation
- Continue to support organizations that can help Henry County reach its goals
- Continue support of health and human services organizations
- Explore other means of raising money to help develop goals and objectives (i.e. Harvest Foundation)

The Board then established its 2008 goals. They included:

### **Short-Term (One Year)**

- 1) Develop Master Plan for Roma and Bryant
- 2) Explore grants to fund 58W water project
- 3) Support accreditation of Sheriff's Office
- 4) Complete access road to soccer complex
- 5) Initiate Comprehensive Plan
- 6) Continue to explore ways to address public safety response times issue (improve relationships)
- 7) Discuss storm water run-off issues
- 8) Investigate new shell building opportunity
- 9) Resolve Social Services facility issues
- 10) Staff two more Convenience Centers
- 11) Increase fund balance
- 12) Explore ways to increase visibility and availability of services to citizens
- 13) Continue to work on promoting better regional cooperation
- 14) Complete an assessment of the services in Henry County with marketing strategies

### **Long-term and Continuous Goals**

- 1) Continue to work on Comprehensive Plan (include industrial site in plan)
  - 2) Continue to develop ways for County/City to work together to create efficiencies
  - 3) Explore ways to advertise "reasons to live in Henry County"
  - 4) Explore ways to increase tourism to the area
  - 5) Explore ways to preserve the environment
  - 6) Identify and develop strategies to address post-employment/retirement benefits
  - 7) Continue to promote community pride
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- 8) Work toward decreasing unemployment and increasing job opportunities
- 9) Initiate a specific plan (perhaps within the Comprehensive Plan) to ensure that we have good development where I73 comes through the County
- 10) Expand the water infrastructure for the Route 58 East corridor
- 11) Continue to pursue delinquent taxes
- 12) Continue to vigorously support, create, and supplement cleaner community efforts
- 13) Push for completion of Route 58 improvements (i.e. lobby with the General Assembly, VDOT, etc.)
- 14) Continue to support and fully fund the EDC
- 15) Continue to work with existing industry to assist with expansions
- 16) Continue to support and promote the Airport
- 17) Continue to push for I-73
- 18) Continue to work for the improvement of our educational system and facilities
- 19) Continue to support NCI and Patrick Henry Community College

Tim Pace, County Engineer, presented a study of stormwater issues to the Board. Mr. Pace. He and his staff were asked by the County Administrator to investigate stormwater issues at the request of Mr. McMillian. Mr. Pace said Henry County does not have a stormwater runoff ordinance, and since most of the underground storm utilities are inadequate, Mr. Pace said he and his staff concentrated on the above-ground issues.

Mr. Pace made a presentation that outlined specific problems in the Collinsville area that concentrated on a 2.7-mile stretch of Daniels Creek. He estimated that it would cost \$30,000 to \$50,000 to address the problems within that stretch, but all the work would have to be done outside of the stream itself because of regulatory issues. He also pointed out that similar work was done to the same stretch of Daniels Creek about 10 years ago. Some general discussion ensued, and the Board requested that this issue be placed on the Board's February agenda for further discussion.

Dale Wagoner, Director of Public Safety, addressed the Board concerning emergency services issues. He disseminated to the Board and staff a copy of a letter he sent to the County Administrator in December 2007. The letter outlined a meeting held with leaders from local volunteer fire and emergency services units. The meeting was designed to receive input from the squads on how to address response times, quality of care, and other issues. Ms. Haworth, who served as the moderator for that meeting, categorized that meeting as ineffectual. Mr. Wagoner said the squad leaders' response to all issues was that the volunteers were doing all they could do and that the matter could be solved through more recruiting and retention activities. But Mr. Wagoner said he thought there had been a deterioration of service. Mr. Wagoner said some units, such as the fire

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departments for Collinsville, Bassett, and Ridgeway, were doing exceptional jobs by responding to fires within eight minutes. Ms. Haworth said she was sympathetic with the demands placed on the volunteers, but it was difficult to get the department leaders to lay down their borders and there was an issue with getting them to come together as a group. Some general discussion of these issues ensued.

Mr. Summerlin said he thought another issue was the quality of the care being provided. Mr. Tatum, EMS Coordinator for Henry County, said he reviewed some call records from a squad he would consider one of the best in the County, and he determined that based on that review, only 25% of the calls resulted in optimal patient care being provided. Mr. Wagoner said one issue is the lack of mentors available to help guide younger and more inexperienced squad members. Mr. Adams asked how these problems should be addressed, and Mr. Summerlin responded that this isn't an issue about more money for retention and recruitment activities; this is an issue about having enough people available to provide quality care. He said the best approach would be soft billing for services to generate enough revenue to make meaningful improvement. Mr. Wagoner said one way to move forward would be to take a variety of steps, including incentives for volunteers; paid leadership; career providers to act as mentors; and private providers to fill the gaps. He added that there is no magic solution; a consensus needs to be reached among the Board of Supervisors, the volunteers, and the squads. General discussion of a path forward followed.

Mr. Vaughn asked for details on the costs of giving a free County decal to a volunteer after the volunteer's first year of service with a squad. Ms. Buchanan suggested that the incentives be based on a volunteer's number of calls answered. Some further discussion about incentives, how to allocate those incentives, and how to provide other recognition for the volunteers ensued. It was the general consensus that these matters be included in discussions for the FY 2008-09 County budget.

There being no other discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.