

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT
FIRE TRAINING CENTER
JUNE 20, 2018
1:00 P.M.

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT SUMMARY

Participants

Tom Crow, Chairman
Chas Hardy, District 2
Jim Hix, District 1
Ralph Richardson, District 3
Marty Seagraves, District 4
Kevin Poe, County Manager
Ericka Johnson, Clerk
Gina Roy, Public Development Director
Trey Wood, Finance Director
Jim Shaw, Chamber of Commerce President

Media Present

Mike Buffington, Mainstreet Newspapers

Facilitators

Jim Dove, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
Mott Beck, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

Chairman Tom Crow called the retreat to order and welcomed those in attendance. He then turned the meeting over to Jim Dove and Mott Beck for facilitation purposes. Mr. Dove provided an overview of the agenda and the retreat format. He also gave a brief summary of the 2017 Retreat.

~~~~~

The next item on the agenda was a review of **Prior Year Accomplishments**, led by Kevin Poe. A list of the accomplishments was provided, and there was considerable discussion regarding various items. The handout will be placed in the 2018 Retreat file.

~~~~~

At this time, Jim Shaw provided an **Economic Development Update**. Mr. Shaw's report detailing new companies, expansions, new industrial construction, existing industrial space, population/employment/income, and the outlook for this year was well received. The primary factor in industrial recruitment is availability of a skilled workforce. The Chamber of Commerce is very close to hiring an Economic Development professional. A copy of this report is also included in the file.

~~~~~

Mr. Poe provided a detailed report regarding **County Finances**. Information on the Fund Balance was presented, as was Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), General Fund Budget, Bond Debt Service, 5-Year History of Property Taxes, and a comparison of area millage rates. He indicated that the County has a new auditing firm this year and that the process may take a little longer because auditors are "digging in and asking questions". It is anticipated that the Bond Rating Agency will keep the County's Bond Rating at Aa2, but remove conditions. Bond Debt Service is the biggest financial challenge facing the County. Regarding the overall Tax Digest, it peaked in 2009, there was a lull until 2015, and has almost fully rebounded.

~~~~~

Mr. Poe also provided a handout regarding the new **Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility**. The facility has a projected cost of \$4 million - \$1 million from the previously assigned 2017 Fund Balance, \$1 million to be assigned to the Fund Balance available at the end of 2017, \$1 million assigned to the 2018 Fund Balance, and the remainder from fund raising activities and/or grants. In the best case scenario, groundbreaking could occur in October 2018. An operational budget should be contemplated as soon as possible.

~~~~~

**EMS Issues** were next on the agenda. An "Organizational Review of Jackson County EMS", completed by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at UGA, was distributed and is included in the file. Discussion items included the possibility of MED 7 going 24/7, and eventually adding MED 8 in the Pendergrass area. Regarding EMS in general, a review of various staffing patterns should be undertaken with emphasis on costs vs. benefits. There was discussion as to the advantages of shift supervisors being taken off the trucks. It is felt that supervisors currently are being "stretched thin". Jackson County is near a "tipping point" – we must compare our "wants" to our "needs". A review of the financial impact of various scenarios would be advantageous.

~~~~~

Pay and Benefits were then discussed. Perhaps a Cost of Living adjustment will be included in the next budget. Regarding staff benefits, there were three matters brought forward. The county helping to pay so certified law enforcement officers can participate in the Peace Officers Annuity. Reducing Public Safety employee contribution to the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan would help in recruitment and retention of personnel. The possibility of "buying down" unused vacation leave hours in excess of 200 was discussed.

~~~~~

**Staff** was the next agenda item. Mr. Poe indicated that an additional network engineer is needed in the IT Department, and an additional heavy equipment operator is needed. The salary for both positions would be in the low 40's. The Board of Commissioners seemed receptive to adding those positions as soon as possible.

~~~~~

Gina Roy gave a detailed report regarding the **Public Development Department**. She provided a handout as well, which is included in the file. She discussed protective inspections, the MS4 update, permits issued for single family and commercial/industrial projects, planning and zoning, the transportation plan contracted with RS&H, the comprehensive plan, code enforcement, and Keep Jackson County Beautiful.

~~~~~

Mr. Poe discussed **Proposed Roundabouts**. Responses to the RFPs for engineering services for two roundabouts are expected soon. Those roundabouts are proposed at intersections of SR 53 at New Cut Road and S.R. 124 at S.R. 60. Advantages and benefits of roundabouts as compared to signalization were discussed. The DOT has sent information saying they would fund the design and construction of a roundabout at Gum Springs Road/Jackson Trail Intersection.

~~~~~

Future Departmental Work Sessions was discussed by Mr. Poe. Among these sessions are public development, finance, water/sewer, recreation, and roads. These ½ day sessions will be scheduled at a later date.

~~~~~

The group then engaged in an exercise to **Identify/Prioritize Future Goals**. The following were identified, and those ***bolded*** and ***italicized*** were top priorities.

- ***Find a better source for funding road improvements.***

- **Improve EMS response time and staffing.**
- Attract industry with higher paying jobs.
- Analyze/study construction of new housing and impacts on the community.
- Utilize better electronics and less paper (IPad) for County Boards and Committees.
- **Improve pay/benefits for employees.**
- Evaluate services currently provided with a view toward the future.
- Find more outside funding for agriculture facility.
- **Further reduction of debt.**
- Upgrade promotion of Jackson County statewide.
- Expedite installation of roundabouts.
- Establish priority for road improvements.

~~~~~

Chairman Crow expressed appreciation to the Commissioners, staff, facilitators, and press for attending and contributing to a very worthwhile endeavor. The session was then adjourned.

Minutes Approved: Monday, July 16, 2018.

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tom Crow, Chairman

Jim Hix, District 1 Commissioner

Chas Hardy, District 2 Commissioner

Ralph Richardson, Jr. District 3 Commissioner

Marty Seagraves, District 4 Commissioner

SEAL

Attest: _____
Ericka Johnson, Deputy Clerk