

SILER CITY TOWN BOARD

The Siler City Town Board of Commissioners met in **Special Session on Thursday, August 19, 2010 at 5:30 p.m.** in the City Hall Courtroom with Mayor Charles J. Johnson presiding. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Chatham County's application for the Community Challenge and Transportation Planning Grants.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Sam Adams, Cindy Bray, Helen Buckner, Larry Cheek, John Grimes, Pat Perry, and Tony Siler.

TOWN STAFF PRESENT: Town Manager Joel J. Brower, Town Attorney William Morgan, Planning Director Jack Meadows, Finance Director Wanda G. Ingold, and Town Clerk Karen Alman.

Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. He apologized for not getting the information out sooner that he received via e-mail from Chatham County Board of Commissioner Chair Sally Kost; however, he was out of the country. This meeting is to clear up misconceptions of the purpose for this grant and to answer any questions Board members may have. Sally Kost was present along with Dr. Cynthia Van Der Wiele who is the Chatham County Department Director of Sustainable Communities Development. Dr. Van Der Wiele explained that one of the goals of the County Commissioners this past year was to update the County's comprehensive land use plan. They also realized they were near the top of the list for the NCDOT to update the County transportation plan. She pointed out that in early July of this year, a federal grant opportunity through HUD and USDOT became available in which local governments could apply for planning grants for either transportation projects or land use projects or a combination of the two. The County felt they could develop a transportation plan that was better suited for Chatham County than what the State typically does to include surface, transit, bicycle and pedestrian consideration. Van Der Wiele explained that several different initiatives have been working during the past couple of years on land use issues such as the EDC on a strategic plan, the agriculture department on a farm land protection plan and the Chatham Conservation Partnership working on a conservation plan. Their hopes are to work to incorporate these plans, have a more collaborative process and include the public. About 30-percent of the federal funds would be allocated to a community based collaborative land use plan and transportation plan. The hope would be to work together to "harmonize" the County plan and Town plan stating that property that was contiguous to the Town's ETJ will have issues to be worked out regarding conservation areas, transportation and farm land protection issues. Van Der Wiele also pointed out that the Town giving a letter of support would allow to "get federal funding above and beyond what the County can towards a comprehensive transportation and land use plan". Letters have been received from the Towns of Goldston, Pittsboro and Cary and the NCDOT. Because the County is so diversified, it is thought that working in a neighborhood or small area plan approach is best.

Mayor ProTem Grimes stated his concern regards what the money will be used for pointing out that the direction of the County is to be more restrictive on development and wondered if these funds would be used to create more restrictions. Van Der Wiele stated that the first six months will be spent going out into the community in each area of the County to interview citizens to find out their visions and what their concerns might be and trying to develop common themes. Grimes commented that the long range plan of the Board of Transportation is to upgrade US 64 through Chatham County in order to relieve congestion on I-40 and I-85 and he thinks that this would be "conducive to the economic health of Chatham County". He knows there is opposition on the County Board to this and wants to be assured these funds will not be used to fight the upgrade on Highway 64. Van Der Wiele responded the monies would be used to develop a County transportation plan in accordance with NCDOT guidelines because eventually it will have to be approved by the Board of Transportation. It is not "an endeavor to fight those plans". Commissioner Cheek asked what effect it might have on bringing industry by trying to combine the two land use plans if Siler City wants growth and other areas do not? Van Der Wiele replied that the county "would be embarking on this endeavor whether we get funded or not"; however, more citizen input could be gathered by receiving the grant. A consulting team would be hired to go through the plans to see where Siler City and others want to see growth occur and the areas can be identified appropriately. Mayor ProTem Grimes commented that another thing that concerns him is that when the Town was expanding the Town's raw water supply, members of the County Board supported the Town's opponents. Van Der Wiele stated "the first plan was a test document but did not have any maps attached to it. From a staff perspective it was very hard to interpret so that was one of the fundamental flaws of that plan". Commissioner Adams asked what influence Siler City will have by supporting this endeavor? She answered "so that a perfect transition zone can be identified for farm land protection". Commissioner Cheek stated it seems that the County and Town transportation plans would have to have the same goals and same rules asking Van Der Wiele how she hoped to accomplish this? She answered "to identify where there is and is not a consensus and try to figure out appropriate solutions". Commissioner Cheek reiterated that Siler City wants industry and it is a concern when County representatives "go against you" when instead they should be working with the Town. He wants to be sure he makes the right decision for the citizens of Siler City. Chatham County Board Chair Sally Kost advised the County has written several letters of support trying to market Siler City. She also stated the County will do a land use plan with or without this grant, but by getting the grant it would allow for more citizen participation and have a more comprehensive plan. Having a map is going to be an important part of this process so there will be a visual which will help in marketing ability because you will be able to specifically point out where the Town or County wants to grow. Mayor Johnson asked how the \$1,000,000 grant will be used? Van Der Wiele replied that half of it will be used for their staff time as it is a three year process with the other going to the consulting team. Kost added that citizen participation and having a detailed map will be very beneficial but will take much work. Adams commented that having good transportation corridors are vital to Siler City's growth. Kost hears the complaint that people think the county is anti-growth which she states is not correct. She stated "that until we have a map and a land use plan that really lays it all out you are going to have people anti everything because they do not know what to expect. This process will help to engage the community to develop a plan so that everyone will know what is coming and there will be no surprises". Adams again asked why it is so important for Siler City to endorse this grant funding? Van Der Wiele responded that Siler City is part of the County and she would like to see the County and Town work together. Mayor ProTem Grimes added he certainly hoped the County and Town could work together. Commissioner Bray asked what would happen if the Town decides not to write this letter of support. Van Der Wiele answered it would put up a "red flag" if she were on the federal agency reviewing this application because there would be a town within the county that is not supporting this effort. Kost again stated that the County will do this anyway and without the grant funding there will be little citizen input and it will be completely funded with tax dollars. Commissioner Perry brought up the fact that the County spent several thousand dollars on a study of the Rocky River that the town knew nothing about and this continues to be a concern for the Town. Van Der Wiele replied that she cannot do anything about the past, but she can


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"work to make the future right". Mayor ProTem Grimes again mentioned the County working against the Town in its effort to build the reservoir to have adequate drinking water for its citizens stating "I will not forget it but I'm willing to look past it and do what I can to help with this matter". Commissioner Perry also brought up that this request was last minute and there has not been enough time to review. She also pointed out that the Town is told one thing and the County does something else such as the continuation of the County supporting the Friends of the Rocky River. Commissioner Buckner referred to the recent study performed on the Rocky River by John Alderman that was sent to the Town stating one of the stipulations in the study is to educate the judicial system on the number of different species located in the river. adding they have much more important things to do. In response Kost stated that she respected what Board members were saying, but if there is a problem with the river and funds can be received to clean it up, then it is a win-win situation for everyone. Several Commissioners commented that the river meets all federal and state regulations. Commissioner Cheek pointed out the County's help with the business park and thanked them for their help; however, when the Town was trying to solicit industry the County sided with Friends of Mount Vernon Springs when ISP was trying to locate in the southwest part of the County. Board members want the County to understand these are the things that concern them as the County has worked against the Town in the past. Kost does believe that the Town and County are now working together for economic development better than they ever had. Commissioner Buckner affirmed this meeting has given an opportunity for everyone to "air their grievances" adding the Town wants to work with the County but the wants to be assured that the Town Board and the citizens they represent will be heard and taken seriously during the planning process of this land development plan and transportation plan. Commissioner Siler commented more can be accomplished by working together.

Mayor ProTem Grimes made a motion for Mayor Johnson to sign the letter of support for the County's application for Community Challenge and Transportation Planning Grants. Upon a second by Commissioner Siler, the motion unanimously carried. *(Schedule 10-A)*

Commissioner Adams asked for a copy of the final grant request which Van Der Wiele will send electronically. She also mentioned that they envision the Town being part of the steering committee making the Town a direct partner and playing an active role in the entire process.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.



Charles J. Johnson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Karen C. Alman, Town Clerk