

CUMBERLAND COUNTY POLICY COMMITTEE
NEW COURTHOUSE, 117 DICK STREET, 5TH FLOOR, ROOM 564
August 4, 2011 – 10:30 AM
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Ed Melvin, Chairman
Commissioner Jimmy Keefe
Commissioner Charles Evans

OTHER COMMISSIONERS
PRESENT: Commissioner Kenneth Edge
Commissioner Jeannette Council

OTHERS PRESENT: James Martin, County Manager
Amy Cannon, Deputy County Manager
James Lawson, Assistant County Manager
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney
Phyllis Jones, Assistant County Attorney
Sally Shutt, Communications and Strategic Initiatives
Manager
Amy Hall, Public Utilities Engineer Tech
Julean Self, Assistant Human Resources Director
Candice White, Clerk to the Board
Kellie Beam, Deputy Clerk to the Board
Press

Commissioner Melvin called the meeting to order.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: JUNE 2, 2011 MEETING

MOTION: Commissioner Evans moved to approve the minutes as presented.
SECOND: Commissioner Keefe
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

2. CONSIDERATION OF LANGUAGE USED IN EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS
FOR GRAY'S CREEK WATER & SEWER DISTRICT REFERENDUM

James Martin, County Manager, recognized Sally Shutt, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Manager, and Amy Hall, Public Utilities Engineer Tech, who worked on the "Frequently Asked Questions for Gray's Creek Water and Sewer Referendum". Ms. Shutt referenced the draft of "Frequently Asked Questions" as provided and explained that the questions will be used in the public education campaign for the Gray's Creek referendum:

What is the Gray's Creek Water and Sewer District?

Cumberland County commissioners hired consulting engineers to develop a county-wide master plan in 2009 for the development of a countywide water system. The rural water feasibility study recommended forming water and sewer districts in order to develop the water system in an orderly and prioritized fashion.

Gray's Creek Water and Sewer District, the first district recommended by the plan, was formed in October 2009 in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes. The County Commissioners serve as the governing board.

What is proposed for Gray's Creek water and sewer district?

A Preliminary Engineering Report calls for the district's water system to be constructed in five phases over approximately 15 years, with each phase constructed on a three-year schedule or as close to that as possible. Citizens in the district will vote on a bond referendum on November 8, 2011, to approve funds for the first three of the five phases of the water system. The amount of the referendum will be \$21 million.

The first phase (1A and 1B) of the project will cost approximately \$6 million, to be funded over a 40-year period by loans obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

What will the total project cost?

The estimated cost for all five phases is approximately \$26 million.

What will be the cost for each household or parcel owner in Phase 1A and 1B?

- The early connection fee will be \$350 prior to and during construction. After that, tap-on fees will range from approximately \$1,500 to \$2,000 depending on the size of the line and any unforeseen construction issues.
- Plumbing inspection fee = \$35
- Availability fees – A monthly availability fee of approximately \$28 will be charged to the owners of all parcels of property that abut or have direct access to a County water line. For developed properties, an availability fee will be charged to each building on the premises for which a minimum charge for water service would be required if connected to the County's water system.

For undeveloped parcels that would qualify for the issuance of a building permit for the construction of one or more buildings, a single availability fee will be charged regardless of the size of the parcel.

One-time Expense	Estimated Cost
Connection Fee	\$350
Plumbing Inspection Fee	\$35
Installation of 50 foot line from main water line to building (find out length of	\$600*

average line is and use that x\$12 per foot)	
Estimated TOTAL for initial start-up costs for customers signing on for service	\$985

*This is an estimate for installing a 50-foot line at \$12 per foot.

Estimated Recurring Costs	
Monthly availability fee	\$28.14
Monthly water bill for a customer using 4,500 gallons of water a month : Includes availability charge of \$28.14, plus \$14.59 water usage charge	\$42.73

How much will the monthly water bills be?

As stated above, all parcel owners along roads where water lines are constructed will be charged a monthly availability fee of \$28.14. Water system customers will have an additional monthly water usage charge. A monthly water bill for customers using 4,500 gallons of water per month will be \$42.73, which includes the minimum availability charge of \$28.14.

Do we have to connect?

No, but you will be charged an availability fee as indicated above.

Can we buy a tap for future use and not use water now? How much will that cost each month?

Yes, as long as the owner agrees to be responsible for marking the location of the tap and protecting it from damage. The owner will have the initial connection fee and the monthly availability fee.

Will the availability of water increase the tax value on my property?

Perhaps, if the availability of water has affected the sales price of similar properties at the time of the next revaluation. Property values may decline, remain stable or increase, depending on what the economy is like and how much demand there is for property in the area at the time of the next revaluation.

What is the timeframe for Phase 1?

The entire process from design to completion of the first phase of construction will require approximately 18 months.

Will the County run the line to my house?

No. The County's responsibility stops at the NCDOT right of way line, typically 30 feet from the centerline of the road.

How much will it cost to run the line to my house?

It depends on the distance and obstacles, such as tree roots, and directness of connection. Local plumbers are hesitant to provide quotes without visiting the property. Estimates may range from \$10 to \$12 per foot with a straight-shot path and no tree roots.

The homeowner can “do it yourself” at a lesser cost.

Will the City of Fayetteville annex the district if a water system is constructed?

No. The water system will be constructed to rural development standards, not municipal. Annexation depends on population density, not the availability of water.

The state legislature approved an overhaul of North Carolina’s annexation law this year. The measure allows citizens to block an involuntary annexation if 60 percent of property owners submit a petition opposing it.

Will connection be mandatory for existing buildings?

No. However, an availability fee will be charged to every property owner whose land abuts, or has direct access to a water line. For parcels without buildings, there will be only one availability charge. For parcels that have multiple buildings for which water is typically supplied, an availability charge will apply to each building.

Will connection be mandatory for new construction?

Maybe, based on existing subdivision regulations that require any subdivision creating 2 to 10 lots to connect to public water if it is within 300 feet; any subdivision creating 10 to 20 lots to connect to public water if within 500 feet; and any subdivision creating 20 or more lots, either in a Sewer Service Area or with a density of greater than two units per acre, regardless of the distance. The Planning Board has the authority to waive these requirements in hardship circumstances.

Will the county extend the system to take in new subdivisions or development?

Once construction is complete, Rules, Regulations and Specifications will be established and the conditions under which extensions are made will be outlined. These will likely be at the developer’s cost and in those circumstances that do not strain the capacity of the system as it is developed.

May an owner keep an existing well to use for irrigation or other non-household purposes?

Yes, but the county will require a licensed plumber to certify that there is no cross-connection to the public water. Wells may be used to water landscaping or livestock, wash cars and fill pools.

Where can I learn more?

- Review the Water Use Ordinance for Gray’s Creek Water & Sewer District, available on the County’s web site, http://www.co.cumberland.nc.us/public_utility.aspx, or pick up a copy from the Department of Public Utilities, in the Historic Courthouse at 130 Gillespie Street.
- Call the Public Utilities Department at 678-7637.
- Attend one of the following community meetings at 7 p.m.:
 - Tuesday, September 27
 - Thursday, October 13
 - Thursday, October 27

Ms. Shutt explained this information will be used in a brochure and a mailer that will go out to the Gray's Creek district residents, and copies will be available at all the public meetings, courthouse, public utilities, libraries, planning and inspections, and recreation centers. Ms. Shutt further explained there will be a webpage set up with all the frequently asked questions. The Policy Committee provided input but felt for the most part that staff were on the right track with the draft.

3. CONSIDERATION OF "BAN THE BOX" INITIATIVE

James Lawson, Assistant County Manager recognized Julean Self, Assistant Human Resources Director, who passed out the county's current employment application. Mr. Lawson stated Commissioner Evans approached him a few months ago inquiring about the employment application and the hiring process; and Commissioner Evans shared his concerns about prior offenders who feel they are not getting equal consideration when it comes to employment opportunities. Mr. Lawson also stated Commissioner Evans indicated prior offenders feel intimidated in applying because of the perception they are immediately excluded from the process at the point it is known they have prior convictions. Mr. Lawson pointed out the question on the employment application that asks if an applicant has ever been convicted of an offense other than a minor traffic violation.

Mr. Lawson stated Commissioner Evans has contacted other jurisdictions and found they share the same concerns and interest in removing the question from their applications. Mr. Lawson explained this initiative has become known across the state and the nation as "Ban the Box". Mr. Lawson stated when the county conducted research, they found there was a lot of interest in removing this question, and the City and County of Durham have already implemented policies to "Ban the Box". Mr. Lawson advised the EEOC has indicated there could be legal implications involved with including the question on the application because of the disparate impact to minorities.

Mr. Lawson stated staff's recommendation is to remove the question from the county's employment application and implement revised policies that would provide for background investigations during the latter portion of the hiring process. Commissioner Melvin stated he had no problem with banning the box, but he wanted to ensure that background checks would still be conducted. Other comments followed.

Commissioner Keefe asked Mr. Lawson to bring everything together at one time, requesting the Policy Committee consider banning the box when the revised policy is brought back to them. Mr. Martin confirmed when the county makes an offer of employment, it is subject to an acceptable driving record and background investigation. The consensus of the Policy Committee was for staff to bring the revised policies and the ban the box initiative to the next meeting of the Policy Committee for joint consideration.

4. CONSIDERATION TO REPEAL “CHAPTER 10 – PERSONNEL” OF THE COUNTY CODE

Phyllis Jones, Assistant County Attorney, stated the proposal is to repeal Chapter 10-Personnel from the County Code and make it a stand alone ordinance that would not be part of the Code of Ordinances. Ms. Jones further stated the citizens in the county don't have an interest in personnel issues because those issues are primarily employee issues. Ms. Jones explained it will still be an ordinance, it just would not be in the Code of Ordinances. Ms. Jones also stated Chapter 10-Personnel needs major revisions and the proposal is to repeal the chapter so as not to delay republication of the County Code. Rick Moorefield, County Attorney, stated staff have been working to clean up the Code and once the Code is published, it is cumbersome and costly to have it changed. Mr. Moorefield stated staff's recommendation is to take a resolution to the full board at the August 15, 2011 Board of Commissioners meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Keefe moved that the Policy Committee approve the recommendation of the county attorney.

SECOND: Commissioner Evans

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

5. OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Commissioner Keefe handed out information in reference to the retention and vocational education of high school students. He stated the current drop out rate of lower income students in Cumberland County is 40%. Commissioner Keefe said most people like the idea of a vocational high school but realize there is no funding. He would like to see a pilot program started with the assets the county currently has. He stated the timing is good because of what the county was able to do with Workforce Development and FTCC. Commissioner Keefe asked Mr. Martin if he could speak with Dr. Keen and Dr. Till on a preliminary basis to see if they would be willing to partner in a vocational high school program. Commissioner Keefe stated the idea is when students receive their high school diplomas, they will also receive their certification for their chosen vocation.

Mr. Martin stated he spoke to Dr. Keen and Dr. Till and there is already some semblance of this type program. Mr. Martin further stated Dr. Till stated they are working towards this program, and he and Dr. Till plan to have a meeting to further discuss the program. Commissioner Keefe stated he wants the community to know that the county is working with its partners to provide this type of educational opportunities for its high school students.

There were no further items of business.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:55 AM