

CUMBERLAND COUNTY POLICY COMMITTEE  
COURTHOUSE, 117 DICK STREET, 5TH FLOOR, ROOM 564  
OCTOBER 1, 2015 – 10:30 A.M.  
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Charles Evans  
Commissioner Jimmy Keefe  
Commissioner Jeannette Council

OTHER COMMISSIONERS  
PRESENT:

Commissioner Larry Lancaster

OTHERS PRESENT:

Amy Cannon, County Manager  
James Lawson, Deputy County Manager  
Tracy Jackson, Assistant County Manager  
Melissa Cardinali, Assistant County Manager for Finance/  
Administrative Services  
Sally Shutt, Governmental Affairs and Public Information  
Officer  
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney  
Vicki Evans, Finance Director  
Deborah Shaw, County Finance  
Thomas D. McCollum, Ft. Bragg Public Affairs Officer  
Candice White, Clerk to the Board  
Kellie Beam, Deputy Clerk to the Board  
Press

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 6, 2015 REGULAR MEETING

MOTION: Commissioner Council moved to approve the minutes.

SECOND: Commissioner Keefe

VOTE: UNANIMOUS (3-0)

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARDS

BACKGROUND:

In May 2015, there was consensus of the Board of Commissioners for the clerk to the board to conduct a survey of other County's procedures as it relates to their citizen advisory boards. Of particular interest were their nomination and appointment procedures, protocols as it relates to departments that have boards recommending new members and representation of their citizenry.

Sixteen (16) counties were surveyed. Alamance, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Davidson, Durham, Guilford, Johnson, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Onslow and Pitt counties responded. Catawba, Forsyth, Gaston, Union and Wake counties did not respond.

Commissioner Keefe will present some of these proposals during the meeting of the Policy Committee. The clerk to the board also developed proposals consistent with the 2015-2016 Strategic Plan objectives under Goal 4 to increase citizen engagement and to improve communications and collaboration between the County and citizen advisory boards.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Proposals presented to Policy Committee for consideration and discussion.

\*\*\*\*\*

Commissioner Keefe stated the purpose of this presentation is to review the current procedures and implement appointment protocols to promote a culture which affords citizens who wish to serve the opportunities to represent Cumberland County. Commissioner Keefe stated the Board of Commissioners relies on recommendations and expects citizen advisory board members to be knowledgeable, engaged and informed on the issues presented.

Commissioner Keefe stated Cumberland County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap or disability. Commissioner Keefe stated he would like to revise the citizen advisory board application to request this information from applicants for appointment so the Board of Commissioners can appoint members that reflect the diversity of the County's population. Commissioner Keefe further stated he would like to revise citizen advisory board applications to include questions about specific qualifications required of some citizen advisory boards.

Commissioner Keefe stated the purpose and need of a particular citizen advisory board:

- Some rarely meet and may be able to be absorbed by others
- Some are mandated by state statute
- Some are combined City and County citizen advisory boards
- Some have members not appointed by the Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Keefe stated an assessment of appointees needs to be done for citizen advisory boards that have difficulty filling categorical or general slots and have difficulty obtaining a quorum. Commissioner Keefe further stated the number of members on a citizen advisory board may be too many or too few. Commissioner Keefe stated he would recommend a review and assessment to go to the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Keefe stated the process of selecting citizens to become citizen advisory board members is a much larger process than simply nominating and appointing a citizen. Commissioner Keefe stated his recommendation is that the procedure be separated into four (4) separate stages to ensure the most qualified and engaged persons are selected:

- Recruitment
- Citizen Education
- Citizen Advisory Board Training
- Assessment Survey

Commissioner Keefe explained his proposed recruitment ideas:

- Media Releases
  - Bi-monthly media releases for upcoming term expirations and hard to fill vacancies
  - Media releases prominently displayed on County webpage
  - Chairman may read upcoming term expirations/vacancy list at Board of Commissioners' meetings
- Social Media
  - Email blasts targeting graduates of Citizen Academy and other leadership programs
  - Use of Facebook/Twitter
- Local Education Colleges and Universities
  - Media releases to be forwarded to Fayetteville State University, Methodist University and Fayetteville Technical Community College to promote student involvement
- Citizens Academy and the Institute for Community Leadership
- Chairman to submit an op-ed in September on the County's citizen advisory boards
- Advertising in print media publications in March
- Governmental Affairs Officer to mention, promote and recruit at monthly Chamber Coffee Club meetings
- Board of Commissioners to promote citizen advisory boards during interactions with constituents

Commissioner Keefe explained his proposed Citizen Education ideas:

- Spotlight one citizen advisory board per month
  - Cumberland Matters Television Program with department head and board chairman
  - Column in Cumberland Matters Newspaper containing interviews with department head or board chairman
  - Cumberland Matters column in Up & Coming Weekly and Saturday Extra
  - Spotlight on WFNC radio via "Sally's Spot"
- Webpage Description
  - Enhance the duties and descriptions of citizen advisory boards by including category specific positions and requirements to fill them
  - Post citizen advisory board agendas and minutes on County website in a central location for easy access by citizens
- Prior Experience and Education
  - Continue to give consideration to graduates of Citizens Academy, Institute for Community Leadership and other local leadership academies and programs

- Prior experience/participation on other citizen advisory boards will be considered

Commissioner Keefe explained his proposed Orientation and Training ideas:

- General Orientation booklet – Clerk to the Board
  - Welcome letter addressed specifically to the new appointee and signed by the chairman of the Board of Commissioners
  - General information such as contact information, strategic plan, Code of Ethics, organizational chart and citizen advisory board meeting times and places, and membership roster
- Full and Complete Orientation – Board Specific
  - Department head, staff liaison and/or citizen advisory board chair will provide a full and complete orientation to cover information specific to their citizen advisory board and provide a tour of their facility
- Welcome & Information Session
  - Will be held annually in October and will cover the strategic plan, budget, how a department or citizen advisory board fits into the strategic plan, what's happening in Cumberland County, what's on the horizon and staying connected through the website and social media

Commissioner Keefe stated he would like to propose that each citizen advisory board member be asked to participate in a survey to assess their experience and provide feedback because it is important for the Board of Commissioners to be informed about the experience that citizen advisory board members have while serving. Commissioner Keefe stated it would also allow citizen advisory board members an opportunity to share anything positive about their experience and anything that could have been improved about their experience while serving on one of the County's citizen advisory boards.

Commissioner Keefe discussed his proposed recommendations:

- Review and assess all citizen advisory boards and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners
- Work with the County clerk's office and Public Information Office to recruit citizen advisory board members
- Chairman of the Board of Commissioners will appoint a Nominating Committee
  - Will meet quarterly to review applications
  - Nominating Committee will consider:
    - Individual applications
    - Recommendations from department heads/staff liaisons/citizen advisory boards
    - Recommendations from County Commissioners
- Make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Keefe stated the proposed process would be:

- Nominating Committee will meet quarterly after the adjournment of the Policy Committee meeting

- Chairman of the Policy Committee will also act as chairman of the Nominating Committee
- All Commissioners, department heads, staff liaisons, applicants or other citizens may attend and provide input
- Last minute applications will be vetted by County departments and presented to Nominating Committee
- Recommendations from the Nominating Committee will be placed on the consent agenda as a report from the Committee (same as Facilities, Finance and Policy Committees) along with draft minutes of the meeting
  - Any County Commissioner may pull the nomination from the consent agenda and make their own nomination at that meeting
- Appointments will be placed on the agenda of the following meeting
  - Nominating Committee chair will read aloud the names of all appointees

Commissioner Evans stated he does not believe the question of race/sex needs to be on the citizen advisory board application because he does not want citizens to feel uncomfortable applying. Commissioner Evans stated he feels having the question of race/sex may be a deterrent for some potential applicants. Commissioner Keefe stated the Board of Commissioners cannot just assume that our citizen advisory boards' makeup is in line with our County population. Commissioner Keefe further stated if the County does not ask the applicant to identify race/sex there would be no way of knowing that the citizen advisory boards are in line with our County population.

Commissioner Council stated this is a sensitive issue but she feels in an effort to try to balance our citizen advisory boards we need to make sure we can look at an application and determine the race and gender of the applicant. Commissioner Council stated the Board of Commissioners would never use race/gender to discriminate against an applicant. Commissioner Evans asked if the same idea would be used on the appointment of commissioners to certain boards. Commissioner Council stated she feels every year the chairman always does a good job balancing the boards.

Commissioner Keefe stated the nominating and appointing process could be tightened up to get better representation from citizens. Commissioner Keefe further stated that with our citizens' education programs we could have the best advisory boards in our state but we are missing procedures and protocol. Commissioner Keefe stated we are constantly seeing people requesting to serve on citizen advisory boards that do not live in Cumberland County and constantly seeing requests for third terms. Commissioner Keefe stated many citizen advisory boards do not meet at all and some cannot function because they cannot obtain a quorum.

Commissioner Council stated she is impressed with the thoroughness of the presentation and the information she received from other counties. Commissioner Council stated some of the proposed procedures would turn into a full time staff job. Commissioner Council stated she does feel we need to do an assessment on the current citizen advisory boards to find out which ones are necessary. Commissioner Council stated she would like to have the County Attorney's Office find out which citizen advisory boards are

necessary before Commissioner Keefe's proposed appointment process begins. Commissioner Keefe requested the County Attorney's Office and the County Clerk's office do a review and assessment on our citizen advisory boards to see which boards meet and which boards can be reduced.

The consensus of the Policy Committee was to request the County Attorney's Office and the County Clerk's Office do a review and assessment on the current citizen advisory boards to find out which ones are necessary, which ones are mandated by the state and which boards do not meet and bring back to a later Policy Committee meeting. Commissioner Council stated she would also like to see an assessment done as people come off citizen advisory boards. The Policy Committee agreed with Commissioner Council that each citizen advisory board member be asked to participate in a survey to assess their experience and provide feedback regarding their experience.

Candice White, Clerk to the Board, stated a lot of the ideas she put together were based on the Strategic Plan and when this is brought back to the Policy Committee the committee can decide whether staff should move forward with the items consistent with the Strategic Plan.

### 3. UPDATE ON BAN THE BOX

James Lawson, Deputy County Manager, stated that in 2011 Commissioner Evans asked staff to research "Ban the Box". Mr. Lawson explained "Ban the Box" is removing the question off the employment application that asks about prior criminal convictions. Mr. Lawson stated the use of this question on employment applications is a wide spread practice among employers but has been perceived as a mechanism to weed out applicants with criminal records from further consideration. Mr. Lawson stated the goal was to make sure that all perspective candidates interested in Cumberland County employment were encouraged to apply for employment and given due consideration.

Mr. Lawson stated staff did recommend to "Ban the Box" to the Policy Committee in August 2011 and "Ban the Box" was approved by the Board of Commissioners in September 2011. Mr. Lawson stated a Background Check Policy was also approved that includes procedures to get supplemental information from candidates at the point they are selected for an interview. Mr. Lawson further explained this means at the point an ex-offender secures an interview the supplemental information gives them an opportunity to provide additional information to explain how they have overcome their issues and facilitate dialogue with the interview panel to let them know why they are best suited for the position.

Mr. Lawson stated from his perspective he feels "Ban the Box" has had a positive impact on encouraging ex-offenders to apply and has increased their chances for an interview. Mr. Lawson further stated he feels department heads are being objective and considering all candidates based first on qualifications and giving due consideration to their criminal

convictions. Mr. Lawson stated ex-offenders have been hired in Cumberland County and those situations have been successful.

Mr. Lawson stated at this point he does not have any quantifiable data but he has been in conversation with the Human Resources Department and they are in the process of developing a way to capture the data so it can be tracked as far as ex-offenders being hired in Cumberland County.

Mr. Lawson stated he has personally seen that “Ban the Box” has restored hope in many ex-offenders that are very thankful that Cumberland County is willing to accept their application and give them an interview. Commissioner Evans stated he would like to thank Mr. Lawson and staff for working on “Ban the Box”.

Commissioner Evans stated he has heard ex-offenders have had a problem getting access to Fort Bragg to continue their contract jobs. Sally Shutt, Governmental Affairs Officer, stated there is a process already in place regarding access control procedures based on Department of Defense (DOD) mandate. Ms. Shutt stated if you have a DOD card you are already in the automated system. Ms. Shutt further stated if you are a non-DOD card holder you are required to get a pass and a criminal background check is conducted. Ms. Shutt stated if you are denied access to Fort Bragg due to criminal activity there is a waiver application process in place. Thomas McCollum, Fort Bragg Public Affairs Officer, stated the waiver process has been in place for some time now and an employee who was denied access could request the waiver application from his or her employer. Mr. McCollum further stated the waiver application process is also available on-line and explained on Fort Bragg’s website.

#### 4. OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS

No other items of business.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:43 AM