

Unsealed by Board of Commissioners 04/13/2015.

SEALED MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
April 25, 2011 – CLOSED SESSION

Per NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of business in the area served by this body, closed session was entered into at 9:10 p.m. Present were Chairman Hawkins, Commissioners Chapman, Chappell, Hogsed, and Phillips, County Manager Artie Wilson, County Attorney David Neumann, Planning and Economic Development Director Mark Burrows and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Planning and Economic Development Director Mark Burrows updated Commissioners on potential economic development opportunities and discussed possible incentives. He asked for direction from the Board on how to proceed and what information Commissioners would like for staff to bring back to them.

1. Project Bear – This is a \$50 million project to be located in the upper end of the County. The developer/owner has visited the site three times with an anticipated fourth visit. The total number of projected employees is approximately 100. Northern South Carolina would be the primary area for a wellness health spa facility with the need for a small facility near Rosman that would be the primary area for transition work such as laundry and shipping. Property is available but there may be a need for access to water and sewer. At this point no financial assistance has been requested, but the owner has not yet secured financing either.
2. EZ Flow Building – This building is on the market for \$950,000. Mr. Burrows has been working with an existing manufacturer that expressed interest in trying to obtain this building for purposes of work that would involve an out-of-state company with an investment initially of \$2-3 million and up to \$7 million over three years with 30 employees. The existing manufacturer is looking for ways to acquire the building that would minimize the company's financial exposure. There may be an opportunity to help them in the future.
3. Project Fishbowl – Sierra Nevada Brewing Company is seeking to expand its operation to the east coast. A couple of their site requirements includes a Greenfield site (can be remediated Brownfield site) of 40-50 acres and rail access.
4. TRI – This is a project Mr. Burrows learned about through the BioFuels Center of NC. He has had discussions with an individual about the possibility of locating this \$100 million investment in a building that will house both the manufacturing of biodiesel and the raw input (wood) on a 20-acre site. Rail access would be a necessity. It would take roughly \$3 million to upfit the rail line. The Biofuels Center has helped identify a wood supply. Norfolk Southern could help identify another wood source as well. Renova Partners has declined to express an interest in this type of industry on their property. Another potential site is the current location of the Transylvania County Airport which is for sale; however, the old Ecusta site is ideal. TRI would have a need for financial assistance. Mr. Burrows is working to get all the potential players talking with each other because this is a complicated project. This project is in its early stages.
5. Project JO – This is a project Mr. Burrows has just learned about. Project JO is seeking to make a \$25 million investment and needs 15-30 acres. He does not have much information on this project.
6. Renova – In 2007 Renova Partners expressed an interest in the old Ecusta site for high-end residential and retail. They acquired the property in 2008 and began the process of remediating the property. They have been working hard to complete their plan but they have not gotten any traction with developers wanting to build and invest in high-end residential and retail. The financing entity, Prudential, still sees this as a viable property. Mr. Burrows said he is unsure if Renova Partners would be interested in any of the potential projects he discussed. He suggested

putting together a packet or presentation about the potential economic development opportunities to present to Renova Partners for their consideration. It is important to remember that the property is privately owned and the County must be respectful of that fact.

Commissioners agreed that the site owned by Renova Partners is an ideal location for some type of manufacturing facility or facilities, and any of the ones Mr. Burrows just discussed. The real question is whether or not Renova Partners would be willing to consider changing their strategy from high-end residential and retail to manufacturing. Mr. Burrows wondered if the County should continue to pursue further efforts with them or spend time on other areas if their strategy remains the same.

Chairman Hawkins does not believe Project Fishbowl would be a project that is contrary to Renova Partners' strategy. This project would also bring with it retail opportunities and a few hundred thousand visitors to the site. Also, TRI is a real possibility. He said there is an opportunity to brand the County with some of these projects which helps bring attention from Raleigh with funding support. Chairman Hawkins suggested Mr. Burrows focus on trying to help secure property for the TRI project first. All these projects Mr. Burrows discussed total an investment of approximately a quarter of a billion dollars which would do so much for the citizens and this County.

As far as giving direction to staff, Chairman Hawkins thinks the Board needs to know how much it would cost to purchase the property owned by Renova Partners, either a portion of it or all of it, and whether or not there should be a third party involved to discuss these matters with Renova Partners and perhaps Prudential. If Renova Partners can think differently about their property, then there can be real discussion about developing the property in stages. Mr. Burrows stated that knowing a selling price for the property to inform potential businesses would go a long way in making these projects become reality.

After a lengthy discussion, Commissioners gave the following direction to staff, with time being of the essence:

1. The Manager and Mr. Burrows should continue to meet with those involved with these projects and Renova Partners.
2. Present information about these potential projects to Renova Partners.
3. If Renova Partners is not interested, would Renova Partners be willing to sell the property, either a portion of it or all of it, to the County and at what cost? Then the County should decide whether or not to pursue any further.

Mr. Burrows will continue to keep Commissioners informed of all the projects.

Chairman Hawkins moved to leave closed session, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously carried.

Mike Hawkins, Chair
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board