

Camden County Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting - Strategic Planning Work Session
June 24, 2024; 9:00 AM
Taylor's Oak Restaurant
101 Taylors Lane
Camden, NC

Minutes

A duly-noticed special meeting of the Camden County Board of Commissioners was held on June 24, 2024 at 9:00 AM at Taylor's Oak Restaurant in Camden, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a Strategic Planning Work Session.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Troy Leary at 9:00 AM. Also Present: Commissioners Randy Krainiak, Sissy Aydlett and Tiffney White. Absent: Chair Ross Munro

Staff Present: County Manager Erin Burke and Clerk to the Board Karen Davis.

The Session was led by Denise Stinagle, NCACC Outreach Associate.

On June 24th, 2024, the Camden County Board of Commissioners and Camden County staff met to conduct a strategic planning session facilitated by Denise Stinagle with the NC Association of County Commissioners. A survey was distributed to board members prior to the session to obtain early feedback. The aggregate responses were shared for the Board's review and discussion. The survey responses served as the basis for the strategic planning session discussion and the development of the following four priorities:

- Broadband
- Land Use and Economic Development
- Community Trust
- Senior Center/Adult and Senior Recreation

During the planning session, the Board discussed each priority and the challenges or issues and identified action items for each critical area. These action items provide a framework for the manager and staff and a foundation for measuring results and progress on each priority.

Other topics identified and discussed included Sheriff Support, Water, Sewer, and EMS. Initiatives and action steps are currently in play for these topics.

Priority – Broadband

The Board discussed the lack of broadband service and the detrimental impact this has on citizens. In addition to Broadband, concern was also expressed with the lack of reliable cell/mobile communication and even landline service. Without service, telehealth is not an option and business owners are stifled. An example was shared where a resident was told by a provider that service wouldn't be available for multiple weeks. This is unacceptable and leaves the individual without basic emergency 911 access. Lack of service could be detrimental to the senior population. Several mentioned the interest in Tower Technology and the need to better understand options.

Action Items:

- Participate in an education session on wireless internet using tower technology. NC Department of Information Technology is an available state resource.
- Identify and understand current service areas and Internet Service Providers (ISP) in Camden County.
- Reach out to ISP's and engage in discussion on what it would take to expand. Identify the roadblocks.
- Identify information on low-income senior supplement programs and share with citizens allowing more affordable access for those with service.

Priority – Land Use and Economic Development

The Board acknowledged that current challenges with water and sewer directly impact economic development. Growing the commercial tax base to provide amenities for citizens and jobs is desired. The Board budgeted for a Comprehensive Plan for FY 24-25 which hasn't been updated since 2012. This will be extremely helpful and a strong base for moving forward. A

Development Moratorium is being considered while permitting, design, and construction of new water and waste water facilities are completed. The Economic Development Board comprised of community members and commissioners hasn't met for a few years but has been historically a valuable resource.

Action Items:

- Update the Comprehensive Plan in the upcoming fiscal year.
- Plan for an education update around a plan to utilize staff from the UNC School of Government.
- Initiate steps to activate the Economic Development Board. Work with staff to review and update bylaws, reappoint members, and set goals for the Economic Development Board to work towards.
- Partner with NC Cooperative Extension to set a date this year for a program at an appropriate time for the Ag Community to learn more about voluntary conservation options for land protection.

Priority – Community Trust

Frustration in the community and a lack of trust for the Board of Commissioners was discussed. The disappointment may be regarding the length of time it is taking to build the newest school and growth that is not planned. There is now a clear path to construction of the high school and the additional time brought added state funding, which is a huge positive. A Comprehensive Plan is funded, and a Development Moratorium is being considered to address concerns for both water and waste water capacity.

Action Items:

- Create a citizen's academy to increase awareness of county operations.
- Encourage each commissioner to check calendars and communicate with other commissioners if unable to attend designated meetings.
- Continue to participate in educational opportunities and programs offered by the UNC Local Elected Leaders Academy (LELA).
- Update the community access channel and seek out avenues to share information like the Senior Center Newsletter.

Priority – Senior Center /Adult and Senior Recreation

Board members noted that Camden County has a large senior population, estimated that individuals over 50 comprise over a third of the population and the seniors 65+ is the fastest growing segment. The senior center needs an update and improvements to accommodate the community. It's important for the community to have a quality senior center and recreational opportunities centered around the adult population.

Action Items:

- Begin a design building plan for a senior center in FY 24-24.
- Work with staff to develop programs that support citizens 18-55 and beyond.
- Develop a Masterplan for the 42-acre South Mills Water Association land.
- Consider areas where an indoor walking facility could be considered.

At the conclusion of the day, the Board expressed their appreciation for the session. They felt that progress was made in prioritizing the County's needs with defined steps for moving forward.

There being no further matters for discussion, Vice Chair Leary adjourned the meeting at 2:27 PM.