

RECORD OF A WORK SESSION / MEETING HELD BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THE COUNTY OF WARREN IN THE ARMORY CIVIC CENTER COMMISSIONERS' MEETING ROOM ON WEDNESDAY – OCTOBER 16, 2019 AT 6:00 PM.

The Work Session / Meeting was opened by Chairman Tare Davis and Honorary Chairman Austin Brothers. Other Commissioners present: Bertadean Baker, Victor Hunt, Jennifer Pierce and Walter Powell. Others in attendance: County Manager Vincent Jones, Finance Director Katherine Brafford and County Attorney Hassan Kingsberry.

A moment of silence was followed by prayer and salute to the flag.

Item # 2 Department Head reports:
Senior Center - Vicky Stokes, Director (written report)
Economic Development – Stacy Woodhouse, Director (verbal report)

Item # 4 Consideration of Tax Exclusion Request After June 1st Deadline was presented by John Preston, Interim Tax Administrator:

A request has been made to have an application for property tax relief accepted and approved beyond June, 1 2019 deadline. If the taxpayer can show good cause for the late application, the application can be accepted at the discretion of the Board.

The application, if approved will give the exemption for the current calendar year only: GS 105-282.1(a1). There must be an application filed for the upcoming years and forward.

The recommendation of the of the Tax office, is to accept the application, as it would have been approved had it been filed timely.

On motion of Commissioner Hunt, which was seconded by Commissioner Baker and duly carried by unanimous vote, Tax Exclusion Request from June Gibbs was approved.

Item # 3 Congresswoman Eva Clayton (retired) presented proposed Regional Research Center for Growing Healthy Food concept.

Dear Warren County Commissioners

When the County dedicated the then-new meeting facility at Buck Spring in 2016, the county committed to begin phase II of the development where there would be a larger facility with lodging capacity and opportunities for youth. I was very pleased and humbled to have encouraged and contributed to the building and development of phase I, and I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to begin phase II.

Earlier this summer, Chancellor Martin and his agriculture leadership team at A&T State University visited our county and other counties on their East Carolina tour to learn of the agriculture activities and how they could be engaged. I roughly shared my dream of creating a research center for growing healthy food, using various sustainable methods. The idea received a very positive response from the Chancellor. The Dean of Agriculture has followed up to confirm their interest in determining the value of this opportunity and the feasibility of it being at Buck Spring Park or another location in Warren County.

Before we engage in further conversations; I wanted to share my vision for this Center and seek the approval of the Warren County Commissioners to request the assistance from A&T State University in collaboration with the Center of Environmental Farming Services, CEFS (a partnership between A& T State University and North Carolina State University) and the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention to determine the value and the opportunity of developing a **Regional Research Center for Growing Healthy Food** (vegetables) as an Agriculture Research Station engaging various sustainable methods at Buck Spring Park Plantation or another location within Warren County. Our Vision statement is attached for your review and discussions.

This approval gives the exploratory committee and the University partners permission, to identify governmental, private, and Foundations resources to determine its feasibility.

Why should Warren County be considered for such a Regional Center or Research Station? Warren County has a rich agricultural background, and an increasing number of farmers are

Warren County Research Center on Growing Healthy Food

Our Vision and Goals

Conversations

Several Warren County Elected and Community leaders attended the meeting with North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University's Chancellor Harold L. Martin, Sr. and his agriculture leadership team. I briefly describe the value of having an Institute for Growing Healthy Foods in Warren County as an exciting potential project and assistance requested from North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University's leadership. The Dean of the School of Agriculture in a follow-up conversation encouraged that we develop our preliminary vision, and goals for the center.

The next conversation was with members of the Leadership of *Center for Environmental Farming Service (CEFS)*, which is associated with North Carolina State University and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University. Attending from this group were Nancy Farmer, Director, and several Staff Persons. Invited from the local area were: Victor Hunt*, Warren County farmer and County Commissioner; Crystal Smith, Director, Warren County Extension Service; Gabriel Cummings, Director, *Working Landscapes*; Stacy Woodhouse*, Warren County Director of Economic Development; and Henry Crews, Director of Vance County's *Green Rural Redevelopment Organization (GRRO)*. This group strongly suggested that we should consider the possibility of a Research Center or (Research Station) as there are several around the state and the *Center for Environmental Farming Service* started as a Research Station. As a result of these discussions, the following vision and goals are recommended for our Research Center (Station).

Vision:

Our vision for the Center is to partner with major universities in agriculture (healthy foods), the community college system, the North Carolina Department of Education, and other established organizations with similar goals to provide research education resources for our youth, adults and established farmers.

We recognize both its educational and practical values. Our immediate focus would be Warren County and Eastern North Carolina. Later we hope to have national and international recognition.

Our Goals:

- To enhance the understanding and interest of youth in growing healthy food by using educational resources, experimentation, and special projects;
- To foster and develop Summer Retreats;
- To enhance adult interest through special classes and workshop utilizing the educational and practical experience of growing healthy food;
- To enhance existing farmers' understanding, productivity, and profitability for using different environmental methods to grow healthy vegetables.

The exploration and feasibility of Warren County Research Center for Growing Healthy Food will be considered first for the Buck Spring site or another appropriate site in Warren County.

It was stated that Warren County leadership needs to approve of the project and engage in the development, by designating a leadership committee to work with various groups. Recommended for committee membership: County Manager Jones, Economic Development Director Woodhouse, Cooperative Extension Services Director Smith and Health Director Dr. Brake, with Commissioner Hunt serving as board liaison.

On motion of Commissioner Baker, which was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and duly carried by unanimous vote, further exploration and feasibility study was authorized.

Proposed Regional Research Center for Growing Healthy Food concept was referred to the November 4, 2019 board meeting for further consideration. Chairman Davis assigned County Manager Vincent Jones and Commissioner Victor Hunt to prepare item for said meeting.

Item # 5 Petition Request to Add Castaway Lane to NC Department of Transportation Road Maintenance System – Ken Krulik, Planner/Zoning Administrator

Petition Request to Add Castaway Lane to NC Department of Transportation's Road Maintenance System was referred to the November 4, 2019 board meeting for further discussion.

Item # 6 Overview of Planning/Zoning Explanation of Proposed Zoning Ordinance; Public Hearing Scheduled for November 4, 2019, Explanation of Amendments to Official Zoning Ordinance:

- * revise language/text to accommodate possible development of commercial property in both commercial and residential uses (mixed use), and
- * incorporate provisions in free-standing Manufactured-Mobile Home Park Ordinance
- * discussed Solar Farm Permit Fee Changes: County Manager Jones and Planner/Zoning Administrator Krulik were authorized to do research on possible fee increases

Item # 7 Heritage Mulch Project – Stacy Woodhouse, EDC Director

Statement regarding mulch processing and dying operations from R. Caruthers, business owner was read by Stacy Woodhouse.

Economic Development Commission Chair Lynch, made a statement regarding Heritage Mulch project: there are many safeguards in place, committee is promoting this business as a good fit for Warren County.

On motion of Commissioner Pierce, which was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and duly carried by unanimous vote, Resolution Accepting Grant Funds in the amount of \$115,000 for Heritage Mulch Project was adopted, contingent upon local funds availability.

Warren County Heritage Mulch RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED, that a grant from the Department of Commerce through the County of Warren be made to assist the Heritage Mulch project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Warren County will administer this grant in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Department of Commerce.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County will administer this grant through the County Finance Office.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the grant will be monitored quarterly to assure compliance with this proposal and the Department of Commerce regulations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the amount of the grant application will be \$115,000.

ADOPTED this 16th day of October, 2019.

Tare "T" Davis, Chairman
Warren County Board of Commissioners

On motion of Commissioner Pierce, which was seconded by Commissioner Baker and duly carried by unanimous vote, Waterline Extension to Heritage Mulch Project was approved, not to exceed \$40,000. Funding source: Public Utilities budget.

Clerk to the Board Angelena Kearney-Dunlap presented an amendment to the "Keep Warren County Beautiful Committee" membership for consideration:

Membership on this Committee is open to middle school and high school aged youth in order to promote the continuation of environmental awareness, development of leadership skills, meaningful community engagement and peer role models.

On motion of Commissioner Hunt, which was seconded by Commissioner Baker and duly carried by unanimous vote, the Keep Warren County Beautiful Committee membership was amended to include Middle School and High School aged youth.

County Manager Vincent Jones provided an extensive County Departments Work Plan Review.

Commissioner Pierce informed Board members and the public that a plaque will be given during Warren County High School's homecoming half-time, November 1, 2019. Recipient of plaque is the class of 1983, for winning fundraiser competition related to April 2019 County Government Day.

On motion of Commissioner Hunt, which was seconded by Commissioner Powell, the October 16, 2019 work session/meeting was adjourned by Chairman Davis and Honorary Chairman Austin Brothers.



Angelena Kearney-Dunlap, Clerk