

**MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 3, 2011 JOINT MEETING HELD BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WITH THE WARREN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE COUNTY OF WARREN IN THE LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM AT 7:00 PM.**

The joint meeting was called to order by Chairman Barry Richardson. Other Commissioners present: Bertadean Baker, Ruby Downey, Jennifer Jordan and Ulysses Ross. Others in attendance: Economic Development Commission members Chairman John Alston, Peter Deschenes, Robert Burton, Brady Martin, Cathy Alston-Kearney, Herbert Burrows; County Manager Linda T. Worth; Butch Meek, President Public Facilities, Benny Finch, Acting EDC Director, Karl Hehl, Stakeholder, and Dr. Peter Appleton, Presenter with University of North Carolina.

Chairman Richardson called for introductions, after which the floor was given to Economic Development Commission Acting Chairman John Alston.

Mr. Alston gave an opening statement with proposal for a regional agricultural venture.

Dr. Peter Appleton through slide presentation gave an overview of the proposed venture: NC Agri-Food Green Technology Campuses – Growing NC’s Bio Economy to be located in Warren and Halifax Counties. Objectives:

- Undertake product development for new agri based products for food and energy.
- Produce Green Technology products for the food and energy markets.
- Market food and energy products to local, state and national marketplaces.
- House on the Warren and Halifax campuses some 8 to 12 new green tech businesses within eight (8) years creating 900 new jobs on each campus PLUS new jobs in direct input supply to the campuses.
- Further jobs would be created in Agriculture, livestock and associated industries.

Venture is projected to attract businesses in:

- research and development,
- production and manufacturing,
- marketing, and
- new start-ups as well as existing businesses looking to expand.

Stakeholders spoke in support of the proposal:

Martha Mobley, Franklin County Cooperative Extension – grant writer  
Mr. Jeff Bender, Warren County Farm Bureau

Bennie Finch, Warren County EDC reminded Boards and citizens that we want unemployment to go down (presently 11.7%), Warren County’s tax base is its citizens, paid employees in the county is down 5%, labor force down 11% (7,700 to 6,700), cash receipts are down for farms, but Warren County’s population is growing, and income is up by 45% (1998-2008).

Mr. Alston, Acting EDC Chairman presented several letters of support from EDC, Town of Norlina, Farm Bureau, Warren County Cattlemen’s Association and Enfield Partnership for Tomorrow.

Stakeholders spoke in favor of venture: Karl Hehl, Victor Hunt, Butch Meek, Ernest Fleming, Charles Guerry and Jimmy Harris.

County Manager Linda T. Worth spoke in favor encouraging the public to embrace the opportunity.

Chairman Barry Richardson stated the Board had to look at the big picture; decisions have to be good for the majority, for the environment and the citizens. Questions are still open regarding

funding needs and sources. How does it work with the project in two counties, let the scale of benefits tip to Warren County.

Mr. Alston stated he was excited about the project. The meeting was called to get everyone on board.

Commissioner Downey – excited after reading the book circulated by Mr. Alston.

Commissioner Ross – thanked EDC Board for what they had done – thanks for the vision. County does not have much green (funds) but does have land.

Commissioner Jordan – rally behind this project, with more information we can support it.

Commissioner Baker – glad to know everyone is excited, this is a great opportunity.

### **Question & Answer:**

Anthony Moran – with meat processing plant, will there be grass feed cows or fed lot cows?

**Answer:** probably both, consumer desire will determine which.

B.J. Wright – will the project handle goats?

**Answer:** yes and sheep. Initial development will take everything but poultry & rabbits.

Mike Jones, Franklin County – tried to sell to whole foods, it is difficult. People want a choice and will spend more on food than they have to in order to get what they want. Jobs will be created; online distribution is key. Project will draw lots of funds into the county if it is done correctly.

Curtis Richardson – likes the idea; will labor come from Warren County or out of State; how many acres is needed?

**Answer:** training will be provided for specific needs. Both campuses will consist of approximately 100 acres.

John Alston, Chairman EDC – we need to move while the iron is hot.

Dr. Appleton made the following points: 1) community and leaders should agree, 2) designate a location for an office in downtown for public visibility, 3) move into first stage, set the foundation for a facility. Initial projected cost \$200,000, asking county government or citizens to donate \$50,000 of that cost. Downtown office can open next week. Why two counties? We can get Federal Funding if we take a regional approach.

John Alston stated that EDC is asking the Board of Commissioners to fund project for \$50,000 so Dr. Appleton can be hired as Coordinator. \$50,000 and office on Main Street will guarantee first years production. Some stakeholders are willing to invest also.

Chairman Richardson - \$50,000 contribution from County is the hard part. What is the structure, how does it work, who benefits, etc. These are questions that need to be answered.

Dr. Appleton – very happy to do it, but cannot do it without being paid. \$50,000 is a retainer to dedicate the next year to the development of the project. It's going to take \$200,000 plus for entire project. Retain him at \$50,000 and he will find the additional funds, some funding has already been identified.

Chairman Richardson – The issue is ownership. When the business is developed will the ownership be investors. With eight to ten operations proposed, is it a mixture of private and cooperative?

Commissioner Ross – develop the project to put folk to work that will generate county pay back.

Merlyn Mimms (private citizen) – what is the investment requirement? Is the maximum from the County \$50,000?

John Alston, EDC Acting Chairman suggested that stakeholders willing to contribute be identified and the county makeup the difference in the \$50,000 retainer for Dr. Appleton.

With no further business to discuss the March 3, 2011 joint meeting of the Board of Commissioners, Economic Development Commission and Community Stakeholders was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

/s/ Angelena Kearney-Dunlap  
Angelena Kearney-Dunlap, Clerk

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