



**Warren County Board of Commissioners
Board Planning Retreat**

**Vance-Granville Community College – Warren County Campus
Community Meeting Room
210 W. Ridgeway St., Warrenton, NC 27589**

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.



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210 W. Ridgeway St., Warrenton, NC

David Long, Facilitator

Suggested Agenda

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 8:30 am – 8:40 am | Introductions and Planning Retreat Ground Rules |
| 8:40 am – 8:55 am | County Manager's Status Report of Priorities, Goals & Objectives Identified in the Strategic Plan 2011-2014 |
| 8:55 am – 9:15 am | General Discussion with Board and Facilitator |
| 9:15 am – 10:45 am | Group Brainstorming: Identify Priorities and Establish Goals for Warren County |
| 10:45 am – 11:00 am | <i>Break</i> |
| 11:00 am – 11:15 am | Review Brainstorming Results |
| 11:15 am – 12:00 noon | Discuss Focus Topics as Suggested by Board <i>Part 1</i> |
| 12:00 noon | Working Lunch on Site |
| 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm | Discuss Focus Topics as Suggested by Board <i>Part 2</i> |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm | Overview of County's Financial Position – County Manager & Finance Director |
| | Identify Board's Budget Priorities Q&A with Board |
| 2:00 pm – 2:30 pm | Identification of High-Priority Strategic Directions and Initiatives for Warren County |
| <i>2:30 pm – 2:45 pm</i> | <i>Break</i> |
| 2:45 pm – 4:15 pm | Detailed Action Planning for Very High Priorities |
| 4:15 pm – 4:30 pm | Identify Unresolved Issues Wrap-Up and Adjourn |

WARREN COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

2011 – 2014



Warren County Strategic Plan

2011-2014



Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this Warren County Strategic Plan is to provide strategic direction, priorities, goals and objectives for Warren County government. The plan will serve as a guiding document. The plan can be edited as needed and should be reviewed quarterly by The Board of Commissioners and County Manager.

Warren County, founded in 1779, is a place with an important history to the State of North Carolina. This strategic plan aims to serve current Warren County citizens while also providing a tool to help improve Warren County for future generations.

At the Board retreat on March 23, 2011, The Board of County Commissioners assessed the opportunities and challenges at the local, state and national level that will affect Warren County government and that the County can affect. The Board also examined the strengths and challenges of Warren County government itself.

The Warren County Board of Commissioners established six priorities for Warren County government.

Priorities of Warren County Government

- Create jobs
- Improve infrastructure
- Increase tourism
- Support the education of Warren County students
- Retain motivated, committed and qualified employees
- Assess tax rate in a diligent manner

All six priorities are important and are interrelated as each is affected by the others.

Create Jobs

The Board of Commissioner emphasized the priority, *Create Jobs*, as the most critical priority, because the other priorities cannot be successfully accomplished without significant progress in economic development.

Business recruitment, retention and expansion, entrepreneurship and business creation are the central focus of this Strategic Plan, and resources will be allocated as they become available to this purpose.

External and Internal Analysis

Opportunities

What is there in the environment that Warren County government can positively affect or can affect Warren County in a positive way?

- County wide water
- Accessibility of broadband in County
- The lakes provide multiple opportunities including housing, recreation and tourism
- The history of Warren County including potential economic impact
- The possibility of high speed rail connections
- Community college
- Cultural events including a place to present these at the civic center
- Explore potential grants
- Education as an opportunity to educate children to prepare them for the future
- Infrastructure is both an opportunity and a challenge
- Retirees are attracted to the County, especially the Lake areas
- Volunteers can be utilized to serve the County
- Health care law may allow opportunities to rethink health care
- Good quality of life
- A Community where citizens care about each other
- The challenging financial times allow for an opportunity to reexamine the priorities and focus of Warren County

Threats/Challenges

What is there in the environment that could prevent Warren County from meeting its goals?

- Lack of sufficient jobs in Warren County
- Limited skilled labor
- Lack of a strong retail/commercial base in Warren County
- Interchanges on interstates largely undeveloped
- Retaining high-quality staff in a difficult economy
- High residential tax base burden and limited commercial/industrial tax base

- Need to increase tax base in general
- Challenges of globalization (positive and negative)
- Lack of decent and affordable housing
- Reduction of education staff causing many problems
- Cut backs in early childhood intervention programs

Strengths

What strengths does Warren County Government have that will help meet the opportunities in the environment and overcome the threats/challenges?

- Common interest to serve Warren County citizens and make the County better for future generations
- Good working relationships between Board, County Manager and Staff
- Committed County Manager and staff
- Board and Staff from diverse backgrounds
- Warren County's state legislative delegation has been responsive
- Availability of volunteers to serve on various Boards and to serve the County in other ways
- Committed law enforcement staff
- Committed fire department

Weaknesses/Challenges

What weaknesses/challenges does Warren County have that must be overcome to meet the opportunities in the environment and overcome the threats?

- Lack of written strategies to attract and retain businesses and industry
- No one currently serving permanently in the position of Economic Development Director
- Lack of clear zoning policies in some parts of the County
- Difficult economic times leading to limited financial resources
- Retaining County Staff can be a challenge

Warren County Mission Statement

The mission of the Warren County Board of Commissioners is to provide leadership and support for an effective county government that seeks to enhance the quality of life for the people of Warren County.

Warren County's Priorities, Goals and Objectives

Create Jobs

Goal 1: To create jobs for Warren County citizens.

Objective 1A: Attract and hire a well-suited Economic Development Commission Director. Financial resources will be allocated for the search process and for the position.

Objective 1B: Develop an Economic Development Marketing Plan for Warren County including: business recruitment, business retention and expansion, and entrepreneurship and business creation.

Objective 1C: Establish a broad umbrella economic development group and meet with this group by June 30, 2012.

Objective 1D: Develop an incentive policy.

Objective 1E: Upgrade Warren County and Economic Development Commission websites to ensure that both websites contain the information and "user friendliness" needed to attract businesses, retain businesses and encourage entrepreneurship.

Objective 1F: Collaborate with towns to work together on downtown revitalization.

Improve Infrastructure

Goal 2: To improve the infrastructure of Warren County.

Objective 2A: Evaluate needs of water and sewer as well as natural gas and pursue funding to meet needs identified.

Objective 2B: Explore the possibilities of providing public water to additional subdivisions.

Objective 2C: Determine the most effective ways to ensure that the water/sewer costs paid by the citizens are managed and reflect the benefit to the citizens.

Objective 2D: Encourage nonprofits and others to collaborate and partner with Warren County to improve the quality and affordability of housing for Warren County citizens.

Objective 2E: Evaluate and address needs identified in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) including planning for emergency medical dispatch, upgrades to emergency communication systems (fire, EMS, Law Enforcement) and EMS satellite options.

Increase Tourism

Goal 3: To increase tourism in Warren County.

Objective 3A: Review discussion of occupancy tax.

Objective:3B: Implement tourism strategic plan that was previously developed as resources are available.

Support The Education of Warren County Students

Goal 4: To support the Board of Education's Mission to improve and enhance the quality of education for Warren County students.

Objective 4A: Provide adequate funding within county's resources for building facilities.

Retain Motivated, Committed and Qualified Employees

Goal 5: To retain motivated, committed and qualified employees in Warren County government.

Objective 5A: The objectives mentioned under the priority section Create Jobs are needed in order to create a stronger environment to meet this goal of retaining employees.

Objective 5B: The County Manager will develop an employee recognition program based on performance for Board review by July 2012.

Assess Tax Rate In A Diligent Manner

Goal 6: To assess the tax rate in a diligent manner.

Objective 6A: Assess the tax rate with an emphasis on not increasing tax rate, unless necessary, and finding ways to increase the tax base. Improve the balance of commercial, industrial and residential tax sources.

COUNTY MANAGER'S STATUS REPORT
OF
PRIORITIES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES IDENTIFIED IN THE
WARREN COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN 2011 – 2014

**COUNTY MANAGER'S
STATUS REPORT
OF
PRIORITIES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES IDENTIFIED IN THE
2011-2014 WARREN COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN**

At the March 23, 2011 Strategic Planning Board Retreat, the Warren County Board of Commissioners established the following six priorities in the Warren County Strategic Plan 2011-2014 for Warren County government:

- Create jobs
- Improve infrastructure
- Increase tourism
- Support the education of Warren County students
- Retain motivated, committed and qualified employees
- Assess tax rate in a diligent manner

Following is a status report of each priority goal as of January 2016:

Goal 1: To create jobs for Warren County citizens.

Status of Objectives 1A – 1F:

Objective 1A: In April 2014, the Warren County Economic Development Commission hired Mr. Ken Bowman to serve as the County's Economic Development Director. Mr. Bowman has worked diligently to recruit to Warren County businesses/industries seeking to locate new or expand existing facilities in this area. He has also established a good working relationship with the businesses/industries currently located in our county. Mr. Bowman and the Economic Development Commission have established a collaborative working relationship with other counties in Region K to promote the Triangle North Regional Economic Development Project, and they also work closely with the Research Triangle Regional Partnership, of which Warren County is a member, on business/industry recruitment efforts.

Objective 1B: In conjunction with the Warren County Economic Development Commission, the Economic Development Director is currently creating an Economic Development Marketing Plan for Warren County.

Objective 1C: Nothing to report.

Objective 1D: The Warren County Economic Development Incentive Policy and Economic Incentive Agreement as recommended by the Warren County Economic Development Commission was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on 1/6/14.

Objective 1E: The Warren County Economic Development Commission website is currently being upgraded and will contain the information and “user friendliness” needed to attract businesses, retain businesses and encourage entrepreneurship. There is also a Warren County Tourism website that has been completed. Both websites are linked to Warren County’s official website. Additionally, the Triangle North-Warren, Warren County Chamber of Commerce, and the Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce websites are linked to Warren County’s official website.

Objective 1F: Warren County welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with our incorporated towns on downtown revitalization. Several County officials and employees recently participated in the Warrenton Town Café to aid the Town of Warrenton’s revitalization efforts. Our County Economic Development Director is working collaboratively with the Town of Warrenton to recruit small businesses into the town.

Goal 2: To Improve the infrastructure of Warren County

Status of Objectives 2A – 2E:

Objective 2A: Warren County continues to pursue grants and low-interest loans to finance the extension of public waterlines into unserved areas of the county. Grant funding from the NC Rural Center in the amount of \$387,000 was used to extend waterlines across Eaton’s Ferry Bridge on Lake Gaston to serve citizens on the north side of the lake. This project was completed in 2015. In 2013, a low interest loan in the amount of \$867,500 from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund was used to replace two clarifiers and the plant control and monitoring system at the County’s 30-year old Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. In the last three to five years, natural gas lines have been extended by Frontier Energy along Ridgeway and Front Streets which has resulted in several County buildings now using more efficient natural gas for heating. County officials have also encouraged Frontier Energy to extend natural gas lines into other areas in the Town of Warrenton and unincorporated areas of the county.

Objective 2B: Warren County Public Utilities is actively pursuing opportunities to provide public water to subdivisions around Lake Gaston and in other unincorporated areas throughout the county. Additional water customers are needed to provide sufficient revenues to support the County’s Water/Sewer Districts.

Objective 2C: Warren County Public Utilities has on several occasions enlisted the assistance of the NC Rural Water Association to conduct water/sewer rate studies. Results from those rate studies have been the basis upon which annual water/sewer rates have been established for the County’s Water/Sewer Districts. Factors affecting water/sewer rates are: 1) the statutory requirement for Water/Sewer Districts to be self-supporting (which is difficult for a developing water/sewer system trying to grow its customer base while paying debt service for waterlines and associated appurtenances); 2) annual increases in the cost of water purchased from the Kerr Lake Regional Water System; 3) limited revenues to cover depreciation expenses in the Water/Sewer Districts’ operating budgets; 4) challenges associated with growing the customer

base in areas of the county where citizens are currently using wells as their primary water source.

Objective 2D: The County continues to work collaboratively with non-profits to improve the quality and affordability of housing for Warren County citizens. The most notable collaboration is the CDBG funded housing development project, Ephraim Place Subdivision, with Warren Family Institute.

Objective 2E: Two EMS substations have been constructed in unincorporated areas of Warren County. The first substation was constructed and occupied in 2011, and the second was constructed and occupied in 2012. We are currently moving forward with plans to construct an EMS Headquarters Facility on land purchased by the County in 2015 that is located on US Hwy 158 By-Pass. The facility is anticipated to house the EMS Base, Back-Up 911 PSAP, Sheriff's Office Sub-station, and an Emergency Operations Center that will also serve as a Training Center for emergency service providers. Warren County's E911 Center deployed Emergency Medical Dispatch in July 2015. Phase I of the VHF Radio System Upgrades Project was completed in February 2014, and Phase II of that project is ongoing.

Goal 3: To increase tourism in Warren County.

Status of Objectives 3A – 3B:

Objective 3A: Nothing to report.

Objective 3B: In October 2013, the Warren County Economic Development Commission oversaw the development of a Tourism Marketing Plan for Warren County that builds upon the Tourism Strategic Plan (2009-2012) that was developed by interested stakeholders including the Warren County Economic Development Commission, Warren County Chamber of Commerce and the Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce. Both plans establish the framework to effectively organize, develop and market tourism opportunities in Warren County. According to a survey on the 2012 Economic Impact of Travel on NC Counties prepared for the NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development by the US Travel Association, tourists spent \$25.29 million in Warren County in 2012, an increase of 7 percent over 2011. That percentage increase placed Warren County in the top five counties in the state in percentage increase from tourism.

Goal 4: To support the Board of Education's Mission to improve and enhance the quality of education for Warren County students.

Status of Objective 4A:

Objective 4A: Warren County continues to provide adequate financial resources to Warren County Schools for various building and facility needs. Since 2011 the Board has allocated funding to Warren County Schools to complete the following capital projects:

- a) Warren New Tech High School Construction – Completed 2011
- b) Replaced Roof on Warren County High School – 2012

- c) Replaced Roof on Warren County Middle School – 2013
- d) Purchased Modular Units for Warren Early College High School – 2013
- e) Purchased Modular Unit for Northside Elementary – 2015
- f) Replaced Windows @ Northside Elementary – 2015
- g) Purchased Land & Building for New Maintenance Garage – FY 2015
- h) Allocated Funds for Parking Lot Site Work at Hawkins Campus – FY 2016

Goal 5: To retain motivated, committed and qualified employees in Warren County government.

Status of Objectives 5A - 5B:

Objective 5A: See status of Goal 1 Objectives.

Objective 5B: Warren County Human Resources Department annually hosts an Employee Service Awards Program that recognizes employees with years of service in increments of 5 years, i.e. 5, 10, 15, 20, etc. Employees are treated to a luncheon and given Certificates of Appreciation in recognition of individual years of service.

In 2015, the Warren County Board of Commissioners adopted the following policies to move employees through their pay ranges and reward employees financially for years of service.

- a) Salary Progression Policy
- b) Longevity Pay Policy

Goal 6: To assess the tax rate in a diligent manner.

Objective 6A: The Board of Commissioners continues to diligently set the tax rate. The tax rate in FY 12 was set at \$.62. The rate was increased to \$.66 in FY 13, and has remained at \$.66 since that time. As a result of the economic slow-down, minimal increases in the County's tax base have been experienced since FY 12. We are gearing up this year for the Octennial Revaluation that will take effect January 1, 2017. Counties adjacent to Warren County that have recently conducted revaluations have experienced reductions in assessed valuation.

WARREN COUNTY CAPITAL PROJECTS

2011 – PRESENT

Warren County Capital Projects - 2011 to Present

| <u>Project</u> | <u>Details</u> |
|---|--|
| EMS Station 2 (New Construction) | Open House September 2011 |
| EMS Station 3 (New Construction) | Open House November 2012 |
| County Admin Offices (Renovation) | Completed November 2011 |
| Warren New Tech School Construction | Completed May 2011 |
| Senior Center - 2nd Bldg. Added | Exercise Building 2011 |
| Waste Water Treatment Plant | Replaced Clarifier and SCADA in 2013 |
| Warren Agriculture Enterprise Center | ADFP Grant - Cold Storage 2014 |
| Meter Replacement W/S District II | 2014 |
| VHF Radio System Upgrades | Phase I - Completed February 2014 Phase II - on-going |
| Recreation | Upgrades to Soul City Park in 2012 Pickleball Court @ Rec Complex in 2014 JG Gym Painted & Replaced Bleachers 2015 Land purchased for expansion in 2015 |
| Buck Spring Park Upgrades Buck Spring Project- Phase I | PARTF Grant Completed April 2014 On-going |
| Eaton Ferry Bridge Crossing (Waterline) | Completed February 2015 Rural Center Grant funds of \$387,066 |
| Courthouse Roof | 2015 |
| DSS Roof | 2015 |
| Detention Roof | 2015 |
| Tax Office Roof | 2015 |
| Armory Parking lot Paving | 2015 |
| Warren County Schools Capital Projects: | |
| WCHS Roof | 2012 |
| Middle School Roof | 2013 |
| Modular Units - WECHS | 2013 |
| Northside Windows/Solar Shades | 2015 |
| Northside Modular Units | 2015 |
| Warren Co Schools New Maintenance Garage | Purchased Land and Building in FY 2015 |
| EMS Headquarters Facility Project | On-going Land purchased in 2015 |

DAVID LONG CONSULTING, FACILITATOR
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

DAVID LONG CONSULTING

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DAVID LONG has served as a professional planner and facilitator, primarily within the State of North Carolina, since 1974. *He has led numerous retreats and goal-setting sessions, and has assisted clients in developing a broad range of plans.* Clients include elected officials, planning boards, boards of education, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, tourism organizations, special task forces, grassroots organizations, non-profit organizations and regional partnerships.

From 1974-2004, David served with the NC Department of Commerce as a liaison between state and local governments based in Winston-Salem, Asheville, Wilmington and Fayetteville. From 1986-2004 he served as the chief planner in a twenty county area of the Piedmont region of North Carolina, based in Winston-Salem, with responsibility for delivering planning services to over 150 communities in the fields of community planning, public management, and economic development.



He is deeply understanding of the unique roles of elected officials, managers, and non-profit leaders and is exceptionally skilled in working with these valued leaders to advance steadily on solid ground.

In 2004, David initiated a private consulting practice and continues to serve public, non-profit and private organizations. Responding to the competitive realities of the global economy, he has committed much of his energy to assisting communities in adapting to challenging economic times. *He especially enjoys helping communities find common ground and reach their full potential by gaining traction and achieving a shared sense of purpose, vision and overall direction.*

David has assisted over 425 organizations in conducting retreats/input sessions and in crafting creative plans and policies. He served on the adjunct

faculty of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he taught a popular course in strategic planning. *David is a recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, awarded by the Governor for lifetime service to the State of North Carolina.*

David's recent work has focused on consensus building, strategic planning, growth management, economic development, and public policy. Along with colleagues Carol Rhea and Jeff Michael, he organized and led a groundbreaking regional planning initiative, the Yadkin/Pee Dee Lakes Project, built on principles of grassroots public participation; has assisted in establishing many local and regional tourism organizations; and has advised the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

David was instrumental in the late 1970s and early 1980s in laying some of the foundations for the highly successful revitalization of the City of Asheville as well as the resurgence of the broader mountain region. He also assisted many communities in the coastal region in implementing the initial phases of the Coastal Area Management Act.

David holds a BA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a Master of Public Affairs (MPA) from Western Carolina University, a certificate in nonprofit management from Duke University, and was a longtime member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

David is a tenth generation North Carolinian with deep roots in the State, and operates as a fully independent practitioner. He and his wife Ann, a retired teacher, currently reside in Greensboro. Twin daughters Sarah and Elizabeth (age 29) are his heroes and constant inspiration for creating communities that value the unique talents and perspectives of each and every citizen.

Please see client list next page.

Examples of Clients Served: Retreats, Strategic Plans, Goal-Setting

Advantage West
Apex, Town of
Archdale-Trinity Chamber of Commerce
Asheboro-Randolph Chamber of Commerce
Bethania, Town of
Black Mountain, Town of
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
Camden County
Carthage, Town of
Central Carolina Education Consortium
Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership
Chapel Hill, Town of
Chatham County
Chinqua-Penn
Clemmons, Village of
Dan River Basin Association
Danbury, Town of
Davidson County
Davidson County Schools
Davie Chamber of Commerce
Davie County
Deerfield Beach FL, City of
Downtown Mocksville
Downtown Salisbury
Garner, Town of
Graham County
Greenville, City of
Historic Salisbury
Kannapolis, City of
Kernersville, Town of
Lewisville, Town of
Lexington, City of
Lexington Tourism Authority
Marshville, Town of
Mebane, Town of
Montgomery County EDC
Moore County Planning Department
Morrisville, Town of
Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce
Newton, City of
North Carolina Arts Council
North Carolina Department of Commerce
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
North Wilkesboro, Town of
Northwest Piedmont Council of
Governments
Piedmont Land Conservancy
Piedmont Triad Partnership
Pittsboro, Town of
Randolph County
Reidsville, City of
Rockingham County
Rockingham County Chamber(s) of
Commerce
Rockingham County EDC
Rockingham County United Way
Spencer, Town of
Stanly County Chamber of Commerce
Stokes County EDC
Stokesdale, Town of
Surry Arts Council
Surry County
Surry County Board(s) of Education
Wadesboro, Town of
Waynesville, Town of
Wilkes County Chamber of Commerce
Yadkin/Pee Dee Lakes Project
Yadkin County Schools
Yadkin County
Yanceyville, Town of