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AMHERST COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board of Supervisors

Tom Martin, Chair
District 1
Drew Wade, Vice-Chair
District 5
Claudia Tucker, Supervisor
District 2
David W. Pugh, Jr., Supervisor
District 4

MINUTES

September 8, 2023

Meeting Convened - 9:00 AM

County Administrator
Jeremy Bryant

County Attorney
Mark Popovich

I. Call to Order

At a special meeting of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors held on September 8, 2023 at 9:00 a.m., the following members were present:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Tom Martin, Chairman
Drew Wade, Vice-Chair
Claudia D. Tucker, Supervisor
David W. Pugh, Jr., Supervisor

Chris Adams, Supervisor Candidate running unopposed for vacant District 3 seat

ABSENT: None

STAFF:

Jeremy S. Bryant, County Administrator
Stacey McBride, Deputy County Administrator/Finance Director
Kristen Freeman, Clerk

Berkley Group Executive Manager Kimball Payne served as retreat facilitator.

Chairman Martin called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. Introductory Remarks

III. Questions for Council

IV. Common Themes from the Facilitator's Conversations with Board Members

Mr. Payne shared with the participants common themes and issues raised by more than one participant that he heard during his pre-retreat interviews.

Common Themes

1. Financial sustainability and resiliency

2. Waste management and the landfill
3. Residential growth and its potential impacts on public safety, schools, infrastructure, etc.
4. Public Safety
5. Economic development, including tourism, attracting new businesses and jobs to keep young people in the County
6. Parks and recreation
7. The Madison Heights Master Plan

V. Review the County's Vision, Mission, and Values

Mr. Payne asked the Board to review the County's vision, mission, and values as the foundation for its strategic plan. Participants expressed continued support for the vision statement but were unable to provide a good explanation of the word "connectedness" when asked. Several definitions were offered: responsive, infrastructure, transparency, community identity, and transportation. There was some discussion of removing the word "connectedness" and keeping that concept in the values statement. There was unanimous agreement that the current mission statement was still appropriate. Mr. Payne then asked the participants to consider the County's values. He noted that several of the values previously adopted mirror clauses in the vision statement. He said that effective values statement, which could also be referred to as "operating principles," can be used to describe how an organization will go about its business and the guidelines that will advise its decision-making and operations. Mr. Payne asked if anything should be added to the list. After a brief discussion, the value of "Agricultural Preservation" was suggested as an addition. Another question was raised about the meaning of "connectedness" in the context of the County's values. A consensus evolved that in this context "connectedness" meant "a welcoming community," implying an openness to growth and the new residents that it would bring. The desire to maintain community identity and culture, and a neighborly atmosphere, while welcoming newcomers was acknowledged.

VI. Review Accomplishments Related to Goals and Objectives Identified in the FY24 Leadership Guide

The next item on the retreat agenda was to review accomplishments related to the goals and objectives identified in the FY 2024 Leadership Guide, adopted by the Board in August of 2022. A copy was provided for reference. The first area addressed were the two-year objectives:

2-Yr Objectives

1. Madison Heights Master Plan Capital Improvements.
2. Broadband availability across the entire county.
3. Financing the Gateway sewer project.
4. Recreation and Parks Master Plan.
5. Amherst Nelson Ag. Complex

The **Madison Heights Master Plan** is in final draft form and will be considered by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors as future agenda items. Capital improvements envisioned in the master plan will be incorporated into the County's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). Some projects may take more than two years to complete.

Broadband is anticipated to be available county-wide by 2025. There is no need for further action other than periodic progress updates to the Board of Supervisors.

Financing the Gateway sewer project is complete.

Development of the **Recreation and Parks Master Plan** is underway with final adoption planned for no later than July 1, 2025.

The creation of an **Agricultural Complex**, similar to that in Pittsylvania County and able to host the annual County fair in addition to other events, remains an unfulfilled goal. There was acknowledgement that a jointly owned and operated facility with Nelson County was probably not feasible, however the focus will remain on regional agricultural partnerships that would serve a broad footprint in Central Virginia. Previous cost estimates for the proposed complex were quite high and it was suggested that the scope be re-examined, a market or feasibility study be conducted, and phasing and financing plans be developed.

Next addressed were the FY 24 Budget Priorities.

FY 24 Budget Priorities

1. Upgrade and expand water/sewer infrastructure in developable areas.
2. Monelison fire engine.

Upgrades or expansions to the water and sewer infrastructure will be addressed in the annual 5-year CIP. The Monelison fire engine has been purchased.

The participants were then asked to consider the four major strategic goal areas identified in the FY 2024 Leadership Guide and what progress had been made toward their accomplishment.

Major Strategic Goal Areas

1. Increase citizen satisfaction with their government
2. Promote and support high-quality core services
3. Grow and diversify our economy
4. Be the employer of choice in the region

1. There was consensus that good progress had been made in this area. The Virtual Citizen's Academy was identified as an example.
2. Funding for the renovation/expansion of Amherst High School and the new fire truck were listed as positive accomplishments. With respect to public safety overall, however, a grade of B- to C was suggested.
3. The EDA breaking ground on a new four-tenant building to accommodate start-up businesses was pointed out as an accomplishment.
4. Board members clarified that this was intended for the Amherst County Government to be the public sector employer of choice in the region. There was a suggestion that the goal be restated to something along the lines of, "Have an appropriate staff for the best service delivery."

Goal 1: Increase citizen satisfaction with their government

A suggestion was made to rewrite the goal for great clarity. Related to Objective #2, Increase citizen information and engagement with local government, the participants recognized the value of the information

provided for each department in the “Virtual Citizens’ Academy” but felt that an in-person experience, with a defined program, would be more beneficial. The following actions were identified:

- Initiate an in-person Citizens’ Academy in the Spring of 2025. The Public Information Officer will be the lead person for this activity.
- Conduct an internal review of the County’s website and propose changes to enhance its value as a tool of communication and transparency by May 1, 2024. Follow up with an implementation plan.

Goal 2: Promote and support high-quality core services

It was acknowledged Objective #1, Increase public safety, did not meet the SMART criteria, and needed more specificity. Two actions were identified:

- Develop an EMS Master Plan for adoption by July 1, 2025.
- Consider the purpose, function, and value of the Emergency Services Council. Review and report back to the Board by December 31, 2023.

Regarding Objective #3, Protect and maintain County assets, the following action was identified:

- Prepare and adopt an Asset Management Plan, including fleet management, for initial implementation in FY 2026.

Advancement of Objective #4: Increase recreational opportunities, will be addressed through the Recreation and Parks Master Plan, mentioned earlier, with an anticipated adoption by July 1, 2025. The next step will be:

- A presentation to the Board of Supervisors by the consultant selected to lead the plan development on or before December 2023.

Goal 3: Grow and diversify our economy

Discussion on this goal focused on the relationship between the Board of Supervisors and the Economic Development Authority and the provision of incentives when recruiting potential new businesses. The following action was identified:

- Develop an incentive philosophy, with principles and guidelines, for consideration by the EDA and Board of Supervisors within six months (by April 1, 2024).

Goal 4: Be the employer of choice for the region

Objective #3 under this goal is to, “Utilize technology systems to further departmental goals, improve productivity, and provide better service to County employees.” Currently, there is no plan for technology, including hardware and software, replacement or enhancement. The action identified under this objective is:

- Create a Technology Master Plan with proposed funding mechanisms either through the operating budget or the CIP. Completion within twelve months (by October 1, 2024).

VII. Break for Lunch

The retreat recessed for lunch at 12:00 p.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

VIII. Identify Objectives, Priorities, and Timelines Under Each Strategic Goal Area

Goal 1: Increase citizen satisfaction with their government

A suggestion was made to rewrite the goal for great clarity. Related to Objective #2, Increase citizen information and engagement with local government, the participants recognized the value of the information provided for each department in the “Virtual Citizens’ Academy” but felt that an in-person experience, with a defined program, would be more beneficial. The following actions were identified:

- Initiate an in-person Citizens’ Academy in the Spring of 2025. The Public Information Officer will be the lead person for this activity.
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- Create a Technology Master Plan with proposed funding mechanisms either through the operating budget or the CIP. Completion within twelve months (by October 1, 2024).

IX. Facilitators' Responsibilities and Comments

X. Final Comments from the Chair and Board Members

XI. Adjournment

By motion of Chairman Martin and with the following vote, the Board adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

AYE: Mr. Martin, Mr. Wade, Mrs. Tucker, and Mr. Pugh

NAY: None

ABSENT: None



Tom Martin, Chair
Amherst County Board of Supervisors



Jeremy Bryant, County Administrator