

Blue Ribbon Committee on the Future of Wake County

Meeting Summary

**Tuesday, September 11, 2007
Brier Creek Country Club, 9 – 11 am**

Goals/Objectives

1. Update committee on status of recommendations, including legislative activity, since the last update meeting on May 2, 2007.
2. Overviews of October 9th bond referenda on Wake Tech, public libraries and open space; Little River Reservoir plans; revaluation; transportation issues.
3. Continue to build connections among committee members.

Welcome and Overview

BRC Co-Chairman Frank Holding Jr. welcomed the committee, thanked fellow committee member **Tom Anhut** for hosting this meeting at Brier Creek Country Club and outlined the agenda for the day. Commissioners' Chairman Tony Gurley provided a brief update and overview of what has happened since the group's last meeting, on May 2, 2007. Some highlights include:

- Adoption of the fiscal 2007-08 budget of \$920 million, with \$300 million of that going to the public school system's operations. The budget also emphasized mental health and public safety programs. Wake Technical Community College funding increased 18 percent, for a total appropriation of more than \$17.5 million.
- The courthouse and downtown parking deck and other building plans are proceeding; the project is in the early design stages, and the committee can expect a more detailed update in the spring.
- The County and City of Raleigh have signed an Interlocal Agreement to give Raleigh development and management responsibility for the Little River Reservoir.
- A "state-of-the-county" study on reclaimed water has been completed; the draft is in the committee's information packet, and any comments should be directed to County staff. (One BRC recommendation was to expand investment in reclaimed water facilities, a factor that will become increasingly important during times of drought.)
- The County continues to buy open space. Since the May Blue Ribbon meeting, the County has entered five agreements to buy another 152 acres of land, including 113 in the Marks Creek area as well as land in the Cedar Ford Creek Corridor and also in the Lowery Creek Corridor.
- The County realized some of its legislative goals, including authority for optional revenue sources. The General Assembly granted local governments the ability to ask voters to approve sales taxes or land transfer taxes; the County is studying these options now, along with the timing of putting one or both to a public vote.

Legislative Update

Rep. Jennifer Weiss, co-chair of the Wake County Delegation, provided an overview of General Assembly activity. Her key messages included:

1. Counties gained authority to seek a 0.4-percent land transfer tax or 0.25-cent sales tax as local revenue options. No restrictions were placed on the use of this money, but the issue must be placed before voters by referendum.
2. The budget grants permanent Medicaid relief to counties, and legislation was approved to grant mental health parity by requiring health insurance coverage for certain mental illnesses.
3. The House and Senate approved separate measures to address gap funding for the Western Wake Expressway, but adjourned without reaching consensus on funding. Rep. Weiss also noted that some parties wish to take a comprehensive look at transportation, rather than solve problems piecemeal, and that urban counties really need to work together to address transportation infrastructure and congestion mitigation issues.

Wake County Transportation Issues Update

Wake Commissioner Joe Bryan, who also is chairman of the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), provided an update on transportation trends and challenges. As the BRC learned during its studies last year, total additional funding needed in Wake County beyond traditional sources by 2030 is \$6 billion. Commissioner Bryan noted that CAMPO is working on several fronts to advance the BRC's recommendations, but the challenges of limited funding remain. One highlight was the creation of the Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC), with 38 people appointed to develop a unified regional vision for major transit investments over the next 30-50 years. Work is now underway with recommendations to MPOs expected by the end of 2007.

Little River Reservoir Update

City of Raleigh Public Utilities Director Dale Crisp outlined the city's progress on and plans for development of the Little River Reservoir over the next 15 years. The reservoir will provide 20 million gallons of drinking water per day when the project in eastern Wake County is completed. Various regulatory and environmental impact studies are underway.

Wake County Property Revaluation 2008 Project

Wake County Revenue Director Emmett Curl gave an overview of the County's property revaluation project, which is being conducted now. He said that average property values are expected to increase about 40% countywide, similar to the average increases of 43% seen in both the 1992 and 2000 revaluations. Notices will be sent to property owners on Nov. 20.

The BRC recommended that the County move to a four-year reval cycle, and leave the property tax level intact as a way to gain additional revenue to pay for infrastructure needs. The Commissioners received a report on this issue earlier this year, and are expected to make a decision in February 2008 about whether to change the cycle. Tax rates are set in June as part of the budget adoption process.

Wake County Bonds on the October 9, 2007, Ballot

Three countywide bonds are on the ballot for consideration by Wake County voters:

- Wake Technical Community College -- \$92 million
- Wake County Public Libraries -- \$45 million
- Wake County Open Space Program -- \$50 million

David Cooke, Wake County Manager, discussed the use of bonds as the most economical way to pay for infrastructure, and explained the tax implications (2.25 cents/\$100 of valuation, or \$45 on a house assessed at \$200,000). The other presenters included **Stephen Scott**, President, Wake Technical Community College and BRC member, **Tom Moore**, Wake County Library Director, and **Sig Hutchinson**, Chairman, Wake County Open Space & Parks Advisory Committee and BRC member.

The bonds will be used to help Wake Tech add classrooms at the Northern Wake Campus and establish a permanent Western Wake Campus, build training facilities for nurses and other health professionals and public safety officers, and renovate and repair older buildings on the Main Campus. The library bonds would build three new libraries, expand or replace three existing libraries and repair or renovate seven others, while the open space bond would continue the county's program to preserve open space in partnership with other local governments and agencies. For more information, the presentation is included in your packets, or you may visit www.wakegov.com/2007bonds.

Conclusion and Next Meeting

Committee Co-Chairs Fred Day and Frank Holding Jr. thanked members for attending, and announced that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, March 18, 2008, from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. We'll send information about the location of that meeting closer to the time.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 18, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.; location TBD.