

# Hyde County Commissioners meeting summary

## February 20, 2011

*(Please note, this summary is not intended to replace official minutes of the meeting. Minutes will be approved at the next Commissioners' meeting)*

**Commissioners present:** Vice Chairman Dick Tunnell, Anson Byrd and Barry Swindell on the mainland; Chairwoman Sharon Spencer and Darlene Styron on Ocracoke.

**Others present:** County Manager Mazie Smith, Deputy Clerk to the Board Lois Stotesberry, County Attorney Fred Holscher on the mainland; Deputy Clerk to the Board Jamie T. Carter on Ocracoke.

### In summary:

- Minutes from the Feb. 6 meeting were approved as presented.
- No one spoke during public comment.
- A public hearing was held to receive public comments prior to the closeout of a \$75,000 Talent Enhancement Demonstration Grant offered through the State office of Rural Development Programs. Presenter Kris Noble, in the office of economic development and planning, said the grant is designed to allow the county to take on grant-writing tasks in house and utilize consulting services. Hiring consultants for assistance with federal grants said Noble, "is the way to go." She said the county consistently utilizes such grants, including the Community Development Block Grant. Commissioner Chair Spencer commended the planning department. "You're doing an outstanding job."
- Department heads introduced new employees. In the Emergency Management Department, acting director Justin Gibbs introduced new EMS part-timer Hayden Whitfield. Chief Deputy Guire Cahoon introduced three new employees. Deputy William Boyd will serve Ocracoke, Deputy Josh Hopkins will serve the mainland and Lorraine Mooney will that will work as a telecommunications specialist at the public safety center in Swan Quarter.
- Bob Thomas, who is celebrating 25 years in the Hyde County Water Department, was named Hyde County's Employee of the Month for February. "This is such a pleasure," said County Manger Mazie Smith, who described Thomas as an active member in the community, a valuable employee and a friend. She lauded his skill at the water department and said Thomas was known across the state as the "reverse osmosis guru." He came to work for Hyde at a time when the water quality was very poor and now, with his expertise, Hyde's water exceeds quality

standards. Thomas is set to retire at the end of March and Public Works Director Clint Berry said “the water department will be losing a great asset.”

- With Thomas retiring, commissioners acted to designate an operations manager for the water treatment facilities and a back-up manager for the water and sewer facilities. Commissioners gave Berry the go-ahead to appoint Baron Berry and Joseph Sadler, respectively, to these positions and to announce the job position as water treatment plant operator.
- Commissioners had a first reading of the First Responder Contract with local fire departments. Justin Gibbs said all fire chiefs had been involved in composing the contract for fire suppression. No action was taken, but commissioners discussed the agreements, which included two separate contracts, reviewed by the county attorney.
- Commissioners directed county staff to re-negotiate with the Hyde County Board of Education in a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the use of O.A. Peay School for emergency operations and storm-clean up volunteers. Staffers were to convene with the Board of Education at their Feb. 21 meeting to outline the contract.
- Discussion about potential increases for ferry tolls was lengthy and emotional as Commissioner Styron related how this proposal would seriously affect islanders. The county manager recommended lobbying in Raleigh against ferry tolls based on discrimination against the poorest counties in the state. The commissioners agreed that they should lobby against all ferry tolls (not just Ocracoke) and that they should make arrangements for a contingency of concerned citizens to speak at the Joint Legislative Committee meeting on March 9 in room 1228 at the Legislative Building in Raleigh. They also directed Mazie to contact Beaufort and Pamlico County managers to ask them to join with Hyde County in lobbying against all ferry tolls.
- A revised budget calendar was approved. The new dates reflect a change in the board’s retreat on March 10.
- Budget transfers were approved for the finance office, department of social services, health department, inspections and administration. None of the line items increase the county budget.
- After a closed session, board members took action to Release \$102,787 to Bond Safeguard Insurance Company for property of Hyde-A-Way Shores and to instruct the county manager to administer the release.

- Commissioners reviewed staff reports from animal control, elections, health department, planning and economic development, veteran services, human resources and the water department.