

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY

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AGENDA

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Monday, September 27, 2010

2:00 p.m.

Executive Conference Room
Administration Building

Committee Members:

Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman
William McBride, Chairman, Community Services
Stu Rodman, Chairman, Finance
Paul Sommerville, Chairman, Natural Resources
Herbert Glaze, Chairman, Public Facilities
Jerry Stewart, Chairman, Public Safety

Staff Support

Administrative Staff

- 2:00 p.m.
1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. STATUS OF 2010 RETREAT ACTION ITEMS
 3. 2011 RETREAT DISCUSSION
 4. SMART DECLINE CONTINGENCY PLAN
 5. ADJOURNMENT

Background: Our 2010 retreat (as well as past retreats) was useful, but in looking at the time, paper, process and outputs, I can see some room for improvement. As requested, I am very briefly outlining my thoughts in this memo. For each I'll list the item, and provide very brief comments and suggestions. Hopefully others will have ideas as well, and we can collectively fine-tune our 2011 retreat process while it is still in the formative stage. From what I have read, attention to pre-planning before the meeting is very important to maximize payoff.

Comments and Opportunities:

1. Internal Discussion and Communication

Comments: The current retreat process gives us a valuable opportunity to talk and identify issues, opportunities and goals. I believe that everyone felt this was useful.

Suggestions: More time should be allotted for this, including more time allotted to receiving inputs from the staff departments.

2. Prioritization Including Cost Implications

Comments: A system of voting is useful and provides a method of ranking priorities. But the things we vote on may each have radically different costs and complexities. Some may be projects already underway, and a vote for them is just a reaffirmation with low additional cost impact. Some may be large expensive new projects, and a vote for them may have large capital, resource, or operations costs. We have no way of knowing whether the things we vote for fit within or exceed our budget, or if one big thing squeezes out or could be traded-off for many smaller things.

Suggestions: Before we vote on items, some rough measure of cost should be assigned to each, for example: C (less than \$100K); B (\$100k - \$1M); A (over \$1M). That way we would know at voting time that we can only do a few A sized projects, but could fit in many more B and C sized ones. (This one dimensional example may be too crude, but it makes the point. The ranking system should also consider the availability of staff time for projects, since that in addition to dollars, is also constrained.)

3. Definition of Management and Policy

Comments: The difference between these two words is not clear to me. Perhaps it means Tactical vs. Strategic; or executed by Staff vs. County Council. In a quick look through the documents I could not find a definition. Furthermore, as I looked through the results I could not find any more clues. For example, we have formative building projects in both places; we have approved and almost complete projects in the policy section.

Suggestions: Include a definition of these two terms, or chose a more descriptive way of separating items. (e.g. *Items still requiring policy decisions by County Council vs. Items approved but requiring staff tracking?*)

4. Documentation, Methodology and Timing

Comments: There seems to be so much paper involved that we are in danger of losing our way. Going into the retreat we each had a large binder containing mainly empty pages. Then we discussed and voted

on items, but did not get to see the final results (other than our handwritten notes) for many months. That stretched the thread of understanding and memory that started with our vote. Finally, the output received many months later consisted of 6 separate documents.

Suggestions:

The retreat sessions should make use of a computer, printer and video projector. Speaker's talks should be available to us in advance in the binder. When a topic is discussed, and lists formed for priority voting at the meeting, it should be recorded on the computer and projected on the screen as it is created and voted on. That way we each see the same thing and it does not change in the transcription process. Thereafter, hard copies should be available immediately. In this way, most of our work is self documenting, minimizing the effort and delay of post meeting editing. That also makes the facilitator's job much easier.

We also need to think about a concise final document. I believe that even the current executive summary is too long. We need to be able to explain our vision and plan to ourselves and constituents in 2 pages (with perhaps a separate short reference document). It should be available for our approval within 2 weeks of the retreat's end, and it should accurately reflect our words at the meeting. Documentation using the computer at the meeting, as well as reduction of paper, should make this goal achievable.