

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Monday, August 22, 2011
4:00 P.M. Special Session

MINUTES

Place: Commissioners' Room, Second floor, Durham County Government Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC

Present: Chairman Michael D. Page, Vice-Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow, and Commissioner Brenda A. Howerton

Absent: Commissioner Joe W. Bowser

Presider: Chairman Page

Chairman Page opened the meeting. He announced that Commissioner Bowser would not arrive until after 5:00.

Interim Deputy County Manager, Michael Palmer acknowledged the Management Team who had been involved with the process of developing the application and interview process for the candidate to replace Commissioner Becky Heron: Perry Dixon, Lowell Siler, Michael Davis, Marqueta Welton, Elaine Hyman, Michelle Parker-Evans, Deborah Craig-Ray, and Carol Hammett.

The process outlined interviews with 10 candidates to be held on September 6, 2011 at 1:00 pm. All candidates were screened by the Tax Office and were current with their taxes.

Other considerations for the Board's decision included room arrangement. It was suggested that the candidates be seated at a table facing the Board. The group also suggested using a moderator. Dr. Tyrone Baines' name was mentioned as a possibility. David Thompson was also suggested. All Board members agreed with having a moderator. Chairman Page confirmed that Dr. Baines was out of the country.

The Moderator would introduce the candidates and proceed to rotate questions among candidates so that everyone had the opportunity to go first for one of the questions.

The Board discussed how best to have the candidates answer the questions. The Board prioritized the questions and assigned times for the questions.

Each candidate would be given 5 minutes to answer the first series of questions. Answering the first series (Personal Information) would serve as the opening statement. Two minutes would be allotted for each remaining question. One minute would be allowed for a closing statement.

Manager Ruffin suggested that once questions were determined, the information be shared with all candidates.

The Board would identify the candidate(s) and ask any follow up questions for additional clarity. Each candidate would not have to answer the follow up question.

The Board stressed the need to stay on schedule and agreed to end the interviews by 5:15 pm.

The Board would take a break when appropriate.

The Board agreed to delete the question regarding the decision to run in the next election.

Commissioner Howerton asked for a transcript of the interview to allow the Board to be able to reflect on the process after the meeting.

Vice Chair Reckhow asked if each Board member could have an opportunity to ask a wild card question at the end of the interview.

The Board selected the following interview questions to be asked:

Questions

Personal/background (5 minutes)

- a. Why are you interested in being a Durham County Commissioner?
- b. What are your credentials for being an effective elected official, and what personal strengths or talents would you bring to the position of County Commissioner?
- c. Tell us about any community relationships you believe would be helpful in accomplishing your goals as a Commissioner.
- d. How do you describe your leadership style, and how would it help you as County Commissioner?

Budget/taxation (2 minutes)

- How would you prioritize County government functions while trying to make necessary budget adjustments?
- Imagine, as a County Commissioner, that you have just been told by County staff that the County faces a budget shortfall of \$10 million in the upcoming fiscal year, which starts in three months. Please describe your approach for addressing this deficit and balancing the budget.

Economic Development (2 minutes)

- What specific initiatives would you propose that the County implement to improve the local economy, attract new business and ultimately create new jobs?
- What is your definition of “smart growth”?

Education

- A quality public education system is one of the most critical requirements for a county's growth, prosperity and economic vitality. What are two specific ways you believe the Board of Commissioners should work with the Durham Public Schools' Board of Education to ensure a quality school system?
- What recommendations would you make as a Commissioner in addressing school funding shortages?

For the "wild card" question, each applicant will draw a single question from a hat. Those questions will be selected from the following:

Other Policy Issues

1. What would be your top two priorities to address as a Commissioner and what would you hope to accomplish in each area?
2. Please describe your ideas for enhancing Durham County's regional collaboration with area local governments and other entities.
3. What state legislative issues does Durham County need to advocate for in coming years?

Understanding of government/role of a commissioner/staff and media relations

1. Tell us what you think a Commissioner's responsibilities include, and what role does a Commissioner have in the administration of a county?
2. What three attributes do you believe every Commissioner should possess?
3. How do you view the role of the County Manager and other professional staff in terms of supporting your goals and objectives as an elected official?
4. How would you work with people from varying perspectives to achieve results and move the County forward?

Miscellaneous

1. In which direction would you like to see the County move? Please describe.
2. Name a few areas in which there is inherent consensus and inherent conflict in Durham, and how would you work to enhance consensus and minimize conflict?
3. What information or assistance would be most important to you as a County Commissioner to help you provide the most effective service to the citizens of Durham County?
4. What is working well in Durham County Government? What needs improvement? How can this be achieved?

Manager Ruffin asked for direction for staff regarding candidates requesting to speak about the process. The Chair commented that the responses should come from the applicant's point of view regarding the County. The Board members concurred. The Manager will inform staff not to engage candidates in discussing the process or responses to interview questions.

Chairman Page stressed that the responses should be based on the candidates' research and own thoughts.

The Board agreed to conclude the interviews by 5:15. The Moderator will have to keep everyone on schedule.

The Board agreed to come in early on the 12th for follow up discussion at 4:00 pm with the intentions of discussing and possibly selecting a candidate. If a decision is not made that day, additional days will be selected for further discussion.

Commissioner Howerton asked if one of the applicants was absent the interview day, would they be excluded. Chairman Page felt it was important that they be present. The Board agreed that applicants would not have a second interview opportunity if they were not present on the 6th.

Vice Chair Reckhow suggested that the Board could use some of the time on the Worksession agenda for follow up discussion. Manager Ruffin pledged to keep the agenda manageable to give time for Board discussion.

Vice Chair Reckhow inquired about further background checks/criminal checks. The Manager agreed to have the Sheriff's Office conduct background checks, but the process would not include credit records.

Chairman Page clarified that the application contained a disclosure that the applicants signed agreeing to a background check.

Chairman Page noted some confusion about the Democratic Party's recommendation and the Board's process. He stressed that there were two different processes, and while the Board would receive the Democratic Party's recommendation, that did not mean it would be the Board's decision.

Attorney Siler commented that the Statute requires that the party of the resigning person be the same party of the person appointed, but the Board does not have to take the recommendation of that party.

Vice Chair Reckhow asked about the voting process. There were two options: one by ballot and the other by motion. Attorney Siler responded that both options were acceptable. The Board weighed the pros and cons of the two options.

Mr. Palmer suggested considering narrowing the candidates and have a much smaller pool. The Board concurred with his suggestion.

The Board agreed to discuss the process of elimination at the September 7 Worksession.

Attorney Siler will research the elimination process—how would you go back in the pool if you have been eliminated?

Staff was directed to refine the notes from the discussion and get the information back to the Board.

Chairman Page concluded that he would like the process to be as transparent as possible.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned to Closed Session.

Commissioner Howerton moved, seconded by Vice Chair Reckhow that the Board adjourn to Closed Session per Statute

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

V. Michelle Parker-Evans
Clerk to the Board