

MINUTES FROM THE STRATEGIC WORK SESSION HELD BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THE COUNTY OF WARREN IN THE WARREN COUNTY ARMORY CIVIC CENTER, MEETING ROOM ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023 AT 12:00 PM.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bertadean Baker. Other Commissioners present: Tare Davis, Victor Hunt, Jennifer Pierce, and Walter Powell. Others in attendance: County Manager Vincent Jones, Community and Economic Development Director Charla Duncan, and Finance Director Lee Faines.

Chairman Bakers opened the meeting and welcomed The Hayes Group.

County Manager Vincent Jones gave a brief overview of the agenda and provided insight on what to expect from each item.

Catherine Mendez of Environmental Health provided information on how the septic permitting process works in Environmental Health. Ms. Mendez stated that a current plat, deed, and site plan are needed before Environmental Health can begin the permit process. She further explained how weather and environmental conditions can lead to delays in soil testing required for permits. She stated that delays on that end often cause delays for Planning and Code Enforcement as well. Ms. Mendez stated her department works very hard, but has been short staffed. They currently have new employees that are being trained. She will look into creating flyers that can be distributed to the public that will detail the permit process.

Commissioner Pierce stated that in the month of April she would like to see the county highlight a different department each day on social media.

Ken Krulik, Interim Planning/Zoning Administrator, stated there are 5 employees between Planning, Code Enforcement, and GIS. Krulik stated that most permits in Planning and Code Enforcement take between 1 to 10 days to issue. Sometimes permits will take up to three weeks however that is rare. Mr. Krulik stated that most delays with permits in his department are the result of incorrect information given by the person applying. County Manager Vincent Jones noted that County-wide Zoning created much more work than this department used to have.

Sarah Stroud, CEO of Eastpointe, introduced staff members Terrell Alston, Katherine Dalton, and Victoria Jackson. Each provided updates on activity in Warren County. Ms. Stroud stated that 7 Eastpointe staff members are currently working in Warren County. Commissioner Davis asked if Medicaid expansion would affect services available in Warren County and Ms. Stroud stated it will mean more funds for services. Commissioner Davis also asked where Eastpointe stands in regards to foster care – Ms. Stroud stated that foster care is a constant topic and that they are working on ways to standardize and make services and placements better.

Victoria Jackson of Eastpointe stated that they are very grateful for the support from Warren County Board of Commissioners.

Community and Economic Development Director Charla Duncan provided information on the current work force and opportunities in the county. She stated that safe, affordable housing and the cost of childcare affect people's decisions to work.

Charles Hayes and Dan Parks of The Hayes Group discussed the definition of Economic Development – creation of wealth (prosperity) for a place. Three ways to create wealth are:

- Retain and grow existing businesses
- Create it (entrepreneurship)
- Recruit it (attract)

They stated Economic Development is Community Development, and is not just about economic growth.

Below is a list of priorities from each Commissioner:

Commissioner Pierce – Keep the County moving forward
Competitive salaries
Employee services

County school system

Commissioner Baker – School budget
Farmers Market
Broadband
Warren County Schools' education plan
Becoming more marketable

Commissioner Hunt – Farmers Market
Agribusiness
Work force and affordable housing
Broadband
Education

Commissioner Davis – Talent
Education
Work Force

Commissioner Powell was not available during this portion of the meeting.

Dan Parks stated that Warren County should look into the possibility of creating a Rural Transformation Institute or Rural Studies, similar to Coastal Communities Institute, which could lead to assistance with economic growth.

Sheriff John Branche approached the Board to discuss challenges in Law Enforcement. He currently only has two deputies patrolling the entire county at a time because they are short staffed. There is an immediate need to raise the starting salary for Deputies. Sheriff Branche also stated that due to increased safety concerns, the department is going to be moving to body cameras. He also hopes that if he can hire more staff he will be able to allow all Deputies more time to attend training.

County Manager Vincent Jones noted the end of the Strategic Meeting.

Chairman Baker thanked The Hayes Group and all others that presented and attended this important Strategic Work Session.