



Commissioner John Turpin opened the meeting by discussing the importance of Economic Development in Stokes County.

Economic Director Ron Morgan began the session by updating the Board regarding the Stokes County Economic Development Board in which members were appointed by the Board of Commissioners. Years later the Economic Development Board was rolled into a non-profit Board called the Stokes County Development Corporation, Inc which is a 501C(6), which is still partly in existence. The organization was similar to a Chamber of Commerce.

Director Morgan discussed the following:

- Two years ago, after the Angelo Economic Study and the Piedmont Triad Vision Economic Study, there was the development of the Stokes County Tourism Council
- Currently, the Development Corporation is being merged with the Stokes County Tourism Council
- Angelo Economic Study and Piedmont Triad Vision Economic Study both have pretty much the same goals and strategies:
  - Top priority for the Economic Region in Stokes County is to improve and invest in the K-12 Education System
  - Focus on the Work Force Development population who has no skills
  - Development of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Stokes County – very expensive tool to produce –possible funding available with one to one match
  - High speed internet for every household in Stokes County
- Forsyth Tech Community College located on the Government Center complex
- Forsyth Tech Community College Small Business Center located in Walnut Cove
- One man Economic Development Staff with a moderate budget to deliver all related economic development services in Stokes County
- Development Stokes County Economic Development Web Site
- Web Site – network create for visitors to Stokes County
- Creation of Treasures of Stokes County brochure
- Creation of Sauratown Trails Map
- Creation of Dan River Map – New (from Jessup Mill to Moratock Park)

- Piedmont Triad Partnership – awarded \$15 million grant from the US Department of Labor – to address the population that has been left behind from jobs lost from tobacco, furniture, textiles, etc.
- Limited amount of industries coming to Stokes County from the location of Dell (Forsyth County) and FedEx (Guilford County) – usually impacts 12 mile radius- beyond that there is will impact - could be some small industries in the future
- Urgent need for skilled labor force in Stokes County
- Currently, do not have the labor force in Stokes County for jobs in the future
- Stokes County labor force – 22,000 people of which 72% go outside the County to work
- Quality of life in Stokes County
- Loss Agricultural in Stokes County
- Growers’ CoOp has resources available for farmers to look at different products and techniques to replace tobacco
- Major difficulty for farmers to change from tobacco to a different crop
- Technology driving the economy changes
- Current Economic Projects in Stokes County – major project to develop a lodging area near Hanging Rock State Park
- Developing a program to be placed on the Web Site to help individuals “Start a New Business”
- Tourism in Stokes County – pros and cons
- Getting Tourism in Stokes County – major hurdles
- Need to look at all resources in Stokes County
- Low unemployment rate in Stokes County compared to like size counties
- 1996 Stokes County Land Development Guide- only document that Stokes County currently has that reflects land development in Stokes

The Board discussed the following issues regarding the Economic Development in

Stokes County:

- Vocational studies taken out of the schools – negative effect – not all students desire to go to a 4-year college – need for carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc.
- Need for infrastructure, water, and sewer for economic growth and produces residential growth
- Families in Stokes County who have strong family heritage
- Families in Stokes County who desire to continue to run the family farm
- Possible new industry in Stokes – organic vegetables and herbs
- Working out of the home – need for high speed wireless internet over the entire county
- Need to help citizens get started in own business

- Need to help current businesses get stronger
- Development in Stokes County over the next 5 to 10 years
- Need for a Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Stokes County
- Economic Development needed to take the burden off the taxpayer
- Need for an inventory of space available for commercial growth
- Need for an inventory of space not zoned commercial that could possibly be used as commercial in the future
- Tourism in Stokes County – pros and cons
- Maintaining the quality of life in Stokes County
- Residential growth puts further demands on the tax dollar – schools, emergency services, public safety, etc
- Need for all areas in Stokes County to work together
- Stokes County a bedroom community to larger surrounding counties
- Stokes County - Tourism designation

The Board discussed in detail the need and value of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Stokes County and possible ways to achieve accomplish this goal with limited funding.

Chairman Wayne Smart noted the following:

- Storage facility at Brook Cove not currently being used – someday to acquire from Reynolds to use as an industrial area
- Need for infrastructure in Stokes County
- Sewer needed in Germanton to attract residential and businesses (water already there)

Budget Director Dennis Thompson commended the work done by Economic Development Director Ron Morgan for his hard work and dedication over the years to Stokes County.

Budget Director Thompson discussed what economic development means to Stokes County, impacts to Stokes County, and value to Stokes County. Director Thompson also commented briefly on the need and value of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The Board concluded their special economic development session by developing the following objectives:

- Do an outline of a comprehensive land use plan and learn its resources

- Involve planning professionals
- Make sure to support economic development with tourism as a major sector
- Develop an industrial development resource list
- Inventory of water and sewer needs
- Strategic plan for quality of life, industrial development
- To incorporate other municipalities with the comprehensive land use plan
- How to become the “best” county possible

Economic Development Director Ron Morgan expressed his appreciation to the Board for taking their time to hold this special session regarding economic development in Stokes County.

Chairman Inman requested guidance in the future from Director Morgan as to how the Board could help with Economic Development issues in Stokes County. Director Morgan responded that a meeting such as this is a great start for everyone involved.

Commissioner John Turpin presented information regarding the Eight-County North Carolina/Virginia Regional Tourism Planning Initiative. Commissioner John Turpin stated that correspondence received from Surry County Manager Macon Sammons is requesting funding (approximately \$2000) for Consultant’s fees for the remainder of the FY 2005-06 to be used by the Regional Tourism Planning Initiative along with additional funding (estimated at \$7500) for the FY 2006-07. Budget Director Dennis Thompson spoke regarding the Progress Report, which detailed the background of this group. Budget Director Dennis Thompson may be taking over the consultant duties of this group in the future. Commissioner John Turpin requested that the Board review the information for discussion at the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Inman entertained a motion to adjourn the special session. Commissioner McHugh moved to adjourn the special session. Vice Chairman Joe Turpin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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**Darlene M. Bullins**  
**Clerk to the Board**

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**J. Leon Inman**  
**Chairman**