

RUTHERFORD COUNTY MANAGER

County Commissioners

Julius Owens, *Chairman*
William Eckler, *Vice Chairman*
Susan G. Crowe
Eddie Holland
Roger Richard

Carl Classen, *County Manager*
Hazel S. Haynes, *Clerk to the Board*
Richard Williams, *County Attorney*

March 2, 2012

To: County Commissioners

From: Carl Classen, County Manager

Weekly Report Items **Week Ending March 2, 2012**

General:

This is a highlight of items from the previous week. It is not meant to be exhaustive but to inform the Commissioners and Department Heads.

Board of Elections:

Candidate Filing ended on February 29, 2012 at Noon. During this week we filed one NC House candidate and two County Commissioner candidates. We certified to the state one Congressional and one Superior Court candidate. In addition, the Board of Elections staff are receiving the required campaign reports from these candidates and have begun preparing legal advertisements.

Building Inspections:

Building Inspections has had a very busy week. The staff closed out February with 113 total permits issued for the month. Those include:

- 9 - Commercial projects
- 6 - Residential Additions
- 6 - Residential Remodels
- 12 - New Single Family Homes
- 3 - Multi Family homes (Duplexes)
- 6 - Mobile homes
- Others were misc. electrical, plumbing, mechanical....etc

The staff has been conducting plan reviews for the Horsehead project and have a Pre-construction meeting scheduled for Friday, 3/2 @ Horsehead. We anticipate issuance of the Building Permit and building construction to begin next week.

This week we also received approval to advertise for the vacant position of Fire Inspector. Furthermore, our staff finalized the Energy grant with the State Energy Office totaling \$209,175 in improvements to local government owned buildings. Lastly, the 2012 Residential and Energy codes became effective March 1, 2012 and we held two staff training sessions this week to prepare for the implementation.

Clerk to the Board:

The Commissioner's held a Special Meeting on February 28, 2012. Each Commissioner traveled with the new County Manager viewing their individual districts. Staff is preparing for the March 5th Commissioners meeting.

County Manager:

The new County Manager traveled this week with each County Commissioner viewing their individual districts. Mr. Classen held a meeting with Janet Mason, Superintendent of the Board of Education to get acquainted with the aspects of the school system. The EDC Director met with Mr. Classen in discussion of possible clients for Rutherford County, as well, as discussions of ongoing projects. The staff are preparing to begin the FY2012-FY2013 budget process.

Economic Development:

EDC, in partnership with NC Dept of Commerce, announced on Monday, Feb. 27th, 2012 that Alliance Precision Plastics Corp. will acquire the assets of Molding Dynamics Inc, an injection molding operation located in Spindale. Alliance, headquartered in Rochester, NY, plans to create 54 jobs and invest at least \$300,000 in the local operation during the next 3 years. As a result of the acquisition, workers recently laid off from Molding Dynamics will have the opportunity to apply for new positions with Alliance. Also on Monday, two corporate representatives from Horsehead Corp. visited the site on Hicks Grove Road. They stopped by the EDC office for a brief visit and said the preliminary work being done at the site is progressing nicely. They will be holding another community meeting in the near future to keep the Hick's Grove Road community updated on the progress.

Emergency Services/Emergency Management/Fire Marshal:

EMS Personnel responded to 173 calls, as well as, participated in the Community Healthcare Fair at Isothermal Community College. All EMS staff attended the Advanced Cardiology Course enhancing skills and knowledge. The EMS office has begun updating patient care software to improve tracking and reporting. The staff has also begun working on the FY2012-FY2013 budget needs of EMS. Emergency Management/Fire Marshal received approval from Isothermal Community College for a lease agreement with the Firefighter's Association for use of 10 acres for a regional training facility. The Fire Marshal attended a 6 hour Fire Inspection upgrade class, as well as, attended an 8 hour law enforcement in-service training. The Fire Marshal's Office is continuing to work on the fire district changes.

Finance:

The Finance Department continues to work closely with the Board of Commissioners and County Manager on current projects. The Finance staff is also gearing up for the preparation of the FY2012-FY2013 budget. Documentation and requests have been sent to all departments to begin this process. Budget packages are due to Finance by next week.

Human Resources:

The Human Resources Department welcomed new employees Chris Roberts, Carl Classen and Casey McIntosh. They also conducted interviews for two vacant Landfill positions, as well as, one vacant Customer Service Representative position in the Tax Office. The Human Resources Office is working with the State Health Plan to assure that employees are prepared for the 2012 Open Enrollment. Lastly, the Human Resources Department is receiving budget requests preparing for the FY2012-FY2013 budget.

Information Resources:

The IT department has been busy getting ready for the installation of the 911/GIS server, SAN, and VMware upgrade that will begin next week. Jai & Peter have been removing old equipment to make room for the new equipment. Vicki & Ann have been replacing old desktops with new desktops. This Friday, March 2nd beginning at 2:30 pm, everyone will need to log out of the financials and HR software for a Keystone upgrade of that software. Jill has been verifying duplicated records in the master name file of the VisionAir software and also filling in for the other IT staff wherever needed. Please remember Jill's family as her aunt in Waynesville passed away this week. Lastly, over the past several years, the IT department has used a software package called Track-It for their work orders.

Library:

The County Library System has applied for 2 LSTA grants through the State Library. One is for additional downloadable E-Books and Audio Books and the other is for new technology for the public network. There are 3 library webpages: www.rutherfordcountylibrary.org; www.haynesbranchlibrary.org and www.mountainsbranchlibrary.org. Check out the research and reference button Kenneth has added to these pages, and please like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/rutherfordcountylibrary.

Parks and Recreation:

The staff completed the annual grassroots arts grant application to the state. We expect to receive approximately \$17,000 to grant out for FY2012-FY2013. A working overview on Linder Park, including the fitness classes was conducted and similar documentation was started on other county parks. Preparation for the Frank West Park is still in progress. A basic design for the bathrooms was designed and a local contractor is preparing an estimate. Staff is also creating a maintenance plan with a range of options and costs. The staff also organized a "Friends of Chimney Rock Park" meeting with the Chimney Rock Park Advisory Committee. Contact was made with Michael Duncan on the progress of moving the playground equipment from the old Rutherfordton Elementary School to Honeysuckle Park in Cliffside. The move is 30% complete with an expected completion date of mid-March.

Planning:

The Planning & Public Works Department teamed up with the IT Department and created a web page where they have posted all of the Weekly Reports on the Greyrock Project. When the Commissioners adopt a Project Ordinance, the ordinance will also be posted on the site along with the corresponding project budget. Further, the project engineer will be providing status reports when construction work begins later this spring. The web page can be found under the Planning Department web page. The Planning Department also hosted Marty Blackwell from the State Energy Office for an update on the Gas to Green Landfill Project. The update revealed that the project is up-to date with the blower flare being installed, pipelines under construction and communications with SEO regarding weekly contractor payrolls. The maintenance department continues to service county buildings and properties. This week they assisted the Sheriff's Department in the removal of 88 poker machines and installed a new institutional washing machine in the Detention Facility. Staff are still seeking estimates for capital requests, as well as, preparing for the upcoming budget.

Register of Deeds:

The Register of Deeds office had an active week with 418 transactions collecting \$15,025.00.

Senior Center:

The Senior Center continues to service the Seniors of Rutherford County. This week staff serviced over 338 seniors in an assortment of activities. In addition, AARP volunteers have been at the center preparing tax returns and a member of SHIIP (Seniors Health Insurance Information Program) has been available to help seniors with Medicare questions and issues.

Social Services:

State staff were at the agency to continue training regarding NC FAST (North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology). NC FAST represents technological tools and business processes that will make accessing information less cumbersome and be consistent across all counties in North Carolina. It will enable workers to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time assisting families. Also, DSS fiscal staff hosted a budget template training conducted by our Local Business Liaison in the Rutherford Center training room. Fiscal staff from six other Departments of Social Services was in attendance. Management and fiscal staff participated in the monthly state fiscal conference call. FNS (Food and Nutrition Services) began a new way of processing FNS applications called Task Management or Case Banking. The goal is to improve efficiency and to provide improved customer service.

The agency continues to receive and review customer satisfaction surveys that are distributed at the reception window. The survey asks consumers how satisfied they are with the treatment and service they received during their visit to the agency. Thus far the results are very favorable.

Soil and Water:

The Soil and Water staff completed the Agenda and information folders for the March 1, 2012 District Board Meeting. The staff also attended the Ag. Literacy meeting to finalize the volunteer schedules going to each school, as well as, worked on the information that will be taught to the second grade students. The District Technician continues working on a solid waste lagoon closure, finalizing details of a stream bank project, scheduling the contractor/engineer for the Rutherford County Walk Trail project, taking new applications, and continues inspections of ongoing projects.

Solid Waste:

The following activities are highlights of the Solid Waste Department.

- The Solid Waste Department is working closely with David Garrett regarding the issue with the concrete at the Transfer Stations. The structural engineer came and took core samples of the concrete and should have the results of the testing soon.
- The main phase of the gas to green project is almost complete.
- The Solid Waste Department welcomes new part time scale operator Deborah Conard.
- The eCycleSecure electronic recycling program monitored 1,611 recycled products, 36 recycled computers, 10,901 recycled televisions, 368 recycled printers, and 307 other low grade recycled electronics.
- The Solid Waste Department received 66 loads from the convenience centers and sent out 34 loads to the Lenior Landfill.

Tax:

The property revaluation notices have been sent out to all property owners of record. The preliminary total value of the County dropped \$564,938,290 (10.1%) from \$5,032,288,600 to \$5,597,226,890. These figures are preliminary pending appeals. The Tax Office is fielding calls from property owners asking questions about their revaluation notices. Property owners are urged to call the Tax Office (828-287-6177) with questions about their valuation and about the appeal process. A good synopsis of the appeal process can be found on the Tax Office web site. The GIS Department continues to work on tax listings and maps for Greyrock and QueensGap properties. In addition, they have installed 8 new road signs.

The Tax Office reviewed all of its 655 existing taxpayer payment agreements this week. Many taxpayers had multiple accounts. The Tax Office removed 334 from this list who have either paid or failed to keep the arrangement. 322 taxpayers have active payment agreements. The Tax Office has garnished 491 taxpayers so far this fiscal year and 170 still have balances. For the month of February, the Tax Office has collected 90.2% of real property collected. This is slightly ahead of last fiscal years' rate. The Tax Office has filed the execution of sale and met with the Sheriff's Department on seven properties which will be auctioned on April 4. Two of these properties were to unknown owners and Rutherford County will be the first in the state to complete foreclosure on an unknown owner.

The Listing/Billing Department has also been busy since February 29 which was also the last day to list personal property taxes without a penalty. They continue to download and list property as they receive the files from South Data. Because of this ability, they will be able to begin business listing almost a month earlier than in previous years. They also completed \$1,900+ in discovery bills. The Tax Office staff has met with the Town of Ellenboro to discuss possible partnering for business property auditing and discovery.

Tourism:

TDA began the planning and research for the FY2012 - FY2013 media plan. The staff worked with the developer on the in-construction Mobile App and QR codes. A Visitor Guide landing and download page was added to the website. The staff received and processed 840 requests for visitor information. Also, a story "pitch" sheet for N.C. Department of Tourism's media tour of Washington, D.C. was prepared. The staff also worked with the host committee for a September Cycle North Carolina which may bring over 1,000 cyclists to the area. For the Visitor Information Network (VIN) we completed the first drafts of two VIN presentations for citizens / stakeholders / officials.

Transit:

This past week Transit drove 9,912 miles, transported 1,097 passengers and collected \$14,986.99 in revenue. There were no safety violations. The Transit Director submitted a capital reimbursement request to NCDOT (grant) for \$37,312, and received an administrative reimbursement payment from NCDOT (grant) for \$94,868. Additionally, the Transit Director submitted semi-annual ROAP report to NCDOT per grant requirement. Transit drivers distributed a survey to all passengers riding the deviated fixed route in Rutherfordton, Spindale and Forest City. Thirty surveys have been returned.

Veterans Office:

The staff made 159 veteran contacts this week. They also had 105 telephone interviews, with 115 mail-outs for veterans to complete documents and requests for service. In addition, they assisted a veteran widow in receiving a back time check of \$201,537. The Veterans Office continues to open their food pantry and gave out 6 bags of food to needy veterans.