



The Guilford Strategic Alliance: Building Tomorrow, Today

Pursuing and Maximizing
Our Potential



Developing Our Road Map

Focus Groups
Summary Report*
As of March 2008

* So far

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✚ Introduction

Why Focus Groups?

Phase One of the Strategic Alliance Project was Assessment. The goal during this phase was to engage the public in the project, to receive comments from stakeholders and residents, and to establish a benchmark for future public assessments of County performance. Three methods were used to meet the Assessment goal: a community survey, facilitated public forums and focus groups. This report summarizes the focus group discussions.

How did input differ from the community forums and survey?

The focus groups are made up of community stakeholders that have specific interactions with County government. In some cases there is a very strong existing relationship. In others, there is a desire for greater interaction. For example, while the “focus” and direct relationship between the County and the Judicial group relates to courtroom space, crime prevention is an issue that involves the entire community.

Because of the participant make-up of focus groups and the meeting format, questions posed to the groups varied slightly but followed these major themes:

- What does Guilford County/county government do well?
- In what areas does Guilford County/county government need to improve?
- What concerns are important to the focus group and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing those concerns?

How will the input be reflected in the plan?

The comments made at the focus group meetings will be used in the following ways:

Distributed to Department Directors – In many cases there were comments or concerns expressed about specific service delivery issues or occurrences. Individual departments can use the comments to evaluate service delivery and address concerns.

Support, Confirm and Add to Data from Surveys and Forums – The comments have been compared to the data already collected. Most of the comments support themes communicated through the survey and public forums. New ideas and concepts have been included in the list of themes that will contribute to the formulation of objectives and strategies supporting the County's vision and mission statements.

Establish a Dialogue – Through all three segments of the assessment phase, the Guilford Strategic Alliance Committee was commended by participants for asking their opinion and involving the community. Certainly individual departments such as Planning and Public Health reach out to the public continuously. However, it was noted repeatedly that this was the first effort by County government to gather public input on its service delivery and role in the community.

Where do we go from here?

This is not the end. An objective resulting from the strategic plan should be to gather public input and listen to citizens. To implement the County's vision and live up to its mission, Guilford County must continuously measure its performance and listen to the public's voice. The process used during the assessment of this project is the beginning of creating a permanent dialogue with those we serve.



Focus Group Summaries

IMMIGRANT FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Jeff Thigpen

Date: May 29, 2007

Location: Faith Action International House

Groups or Individuals Present:

Rev. Mark Sills – Faith Action International House

Emmale Walker – City of Greensboro Human Relations

Kathy Hinshaw – Center for New North Carolinians

Tammy Kelly-Rouse – Citizen

Eddie and Alexander Gutierrez - Citizens

What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?

- ❖ Security/legal system
- ❖ Recycling and trash collection
- ❖ Quality of life - trees, parks, tranquility
- ❖ Diversity/welcoming attitudes for immigrants
- ❖ Abundance of resources
- ❖ Ability to deal with language differences
- ❖ Leadership to work with immigrants

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Need for program to educate youth to value and respect elders
- ❖ Language needs – English classes on weekend/interpreters in hospitals
- ❖ Need more tutoring in schools for children with special needs
- ❖ Transportation
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Discrimination in job opportunities
- ❖ Need for more Hispanic restaurants

What are important issues Immigrants face in the next five to ten years?

- ❖ Drugs
- ❖ Stress from lack of economic progress
- ❖ Traffic congestion
- ❖ Violence and crime
- ❖ Lack of understanding of positive impact of immigrants in the community
- ❖ Growing too quickly
- ❖ Lack of understanding of government's roles and responsibilities results in barriers to service
- ❖ Mistrust of police
- ❖ Anti-immigration issues results in fear and lack of trust for documented and undocumented individuals

- ❖ Complexity of immigration laws
- ❖ Opportunities to help immigrants connect to resources
- ❖ Opportunities to improve protection of population – vulnerable to being taking advantage of
- ❖ Opportunities to improve communication (language) and relationships
- ❖ Many educational, and economic opportunities exist for your people

JUDICIAL FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Jeff Thigpen

Date:

Location:

Groups or Individuals Present:

What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?

- ❖ Upcoming renovations appreciated
- ❖ Guilford County Security in Courthouse
- ❖ Building Management and Facilities

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Need for better intergovernmental cooperation on projects
- ❖ Need to improve technology
- ❖ Space issues are an ongoing.
- ❖ Parking space for jurors and employees are ongoing concern

What are important opportunities to partner with Judicial Group in the next five to ten years?

- ❖ To improve communication of collective needs (operational and capital) to County Manager and BOC at front end of the annual budget process
- ❖ Working together on space issues (Relocation of Register of Deeds office could provide an option.)
- ❖ The Courts system representatives want to be a partner with County government long term

GREENSBORO NEWS AND RECORD EDITORIAL STAFF

Moderated by: Jeff Thigpen

Date: September 6, 2007

Location: News and Record Offices

Attendees:

Allen Johnson – Editorial Staff

Elma Sabo – Editorial Staff

Doug Clark – Editorial Staff

What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?

- ❖ Most services delivered efficiently and effectively
- ❖ Certain things don't have to be thought about a lot, services are there if you need them.
- ❖ Day to day service delivery is good for the most visible services such as Clerk of Court, Register of Deeds.
- ❖ Many citizens do not have a lot of contact with many of the other services. Pleasant surprise was the International Travel Program at the Health Department when Mr. Johnson had to go overseas.

In what areas does Guilford County/Guilford County Government need to improve?

- ❖ Better intergovernmental coordination
- ❖ City/County/School Board
- ❖ High Point and the School Boards
- ❖ Improve relationship with state government
- ❖ Need more seamless government delivery
- ❖ Need to Listen to citizens (Sidewalks in the city example)
- ❖ Collaboration with other governments in service delivery
- ❖ Trying to figure out what and how services government should be offering in the future
- ❖ Channel 13 problem - perception of government leadership
- ❖ Need Budgeting for Outcomes

What concerns/issues are important to your staff and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing these concerns

- ❖ The difficulties of joint meetings.
- ❖ Ongoing feedback from community
- ❖ Concern over conflict between School Construction Needs and Unplanned Growth
- ❖ Need to develop trust and communication between groups and individuals
- ❖ Better intergovernmental relations may begin at staff level rather than political level
- ❖ Need to capitalize on perception of good quality of life
- ❖ County Employee Fear of Political Upheaval
- ❖ Positive newspaper coverage of programs
- ❖ Revitalizing Website
- ❖ Newspaper Concern to tell if new process is working

SECONDARY EDUCATION FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Jeff Thigpen

Date: October 1, 2007

Location: Education Alliance Offices

Groups or Individuals Present

Margaret Arbuckle - Educational Alliance

Rhonda Copeland - Principal at Fairview Elementary in High Point

Charles Foust - Principal at Brooks Global Elementary

Frank Kendall, Educational Alliance

Nolo Martinez - Educational Alliance - Center for the New North Carolinians

Uma Avva - Educational Alliance

What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?

- ❖ County Government compares well to other counties/takes care of logistics well
- ❖ Welcoming attitude toward change
- ❖ Presence of “cultural brokers”
- ❖ More universities per capita than other areas

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Better coordination needed between schools and county departments
- ❖ ROD/Health Departments regarding birth certificates, immunizations, etc.
- ❖ Mental Health/Public Health/DSS issues
- ❖ Better communications needed
- ❖ Build trust in reliability of data presented by School Board
- ❖ Develop an understanding of school facilities and other needs

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Policy decisions- should schools have the authority to tax?
- ❖ Develop accountability mechanisms for results with indicators for performance
- ❖ Need leadership and collaboration to maximize use of scarce resources
- ❖ Need vision to plan for the future

How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing educational concerns?

- ❖ Need to work with county departments to develop support systems for students in poverty
- ❖ Develop strategies for students to excel at science and technology
- ❖ Develop strategies to position all students in tomorrow’s workforce
- ❖ Reducing suspensions and examining the effectiveness of School Resource Officers (SROs)

How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing educational concerns?

- ❖ Addressing facility growth (bonds)
- ❖ Need to fund Eastern High School
- ❖ Need to address transparency of information about school performance
- ❖ County government should offer leadership in shaping public policy regarding schools
- ❖ Need agreement between Sheriff/High Point Police/Greensboro Police for more even-handed SRO policies and procedures

GREENSBORO FOUNDATIONS FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Jeff Thigpen

Date: October 2, 2007

Location:

Groups or Individuals Present

Judy Wicker, News and Record – Landmark Foundation

Skip Moore – Weaver Foundation

Nancy Capps – Moses Cone Wesley Long Community Health Foundation

Jim Melvin – Joseph M. Bryan Foundation

Sally B. Cone – Tannenbaum-Sternberger Foundation

Chip Hagan – Hagan Family Fund

Susan Schwartz – Cemala Foundation

Walker Sanders – Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro

What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?

- ❖ Strategic Alliance Process
- ❖ Quality of Social Services
- ❖ County Permitting/Planning processes

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ School Readiness
- ❖ County should be leader in planning, land use, law enforcement
- ❖ Support for school system from county departments - (Health, DSS)
- ❖ Education/communication about county/city government functions
- ❖ Improvement in public image – Commissioner meetings
- ❖ More concern with urban issues

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Need for more vision, less micromanagement from elected officials
- ❖ School/County communication based on reliable, verifiable data
- ❖ Need for emphasis on marketable education
- ❖ Incentives need to be understood by the public, the process should be more user friendly for businesses, and they need to be planned for, not just reacted to

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Need to value innovation in schools including private funding for initiatives to address social problems
- ❖ More need for civic consciousness
- ❖ Need to address the belief that economic development opportunities are not equitable distributed across racial demographics
- ❖ Need to incentivize development of tax base

How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing Foundation concerns?

- ❖ Development of Lake Townsend Park
- ❖ After school shared libraries
- ❖ Incentives
- ❖ Quality Economic Development – address problems in Keith Debbage report
- ❖ Quality of Life - Limit Billboards
- ❖ Quality of Schools
- ❖ Group would like to work on prosperity issues
- ❖ Alternative funding to property tax
- ❖ Would be willing to provide monies for convening meetings to help communication between Mayors and Commissioners, Schools, and Commissioners

SMALL TOWNS FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were held with the small towns during town council meetings. For the specific dates and the moderator, refer to the detailed minutes.

What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?

- ❖ Contracts with small towns – tax collections, planning, and animal control (Sedalia, Jamestown, Stokesdale, Oak Ridge, Summerfield, Whitsett)
- ❖ Classes on Emergency Preparedness (Sedalia)
- ❖ Law Enforcement customer service and response time (Pleasant Garden, Jamestown)
- ❖ Solid Waste Program (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ Recreation (Pleasant Garden, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Economic Development (Pleasant Garden, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Communication (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ Funding for Library (Jamestown)
- ❖ Principal Leadership (Jamestown)
- ❖ Good Customer Service from county departments (Jamestown)

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Sheriff response time and communication - possibly need more officers (Sedalia, Stokesdale)
- ❖ Zoning Enforcement (Sedalia)
- ❖ Taxes, Value for taxes paid (Pleasant Garden, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Relationship between School Board and County (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ Relationship between the School Board and the Community (Jamestown)
- ❖ Town not appreciated or given fair share of services (Stokesdale, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Return to original method of sales tax distribution (Stokesdale, Oak Ridge)

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ More funding for community school facilities (dilapidated and overcrowded)(Jamestown)
- ❖ Timing for growth and need for schools (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Quality Education (Jamestown)
- ❖ Safe Routes to School (Jamestown)
- ❖ Funding for Arts (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ School Graduation Rates (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ Communication between county, towns, and town residents (Oak Ridge, Whitsett)

Guilford County/Guilford County Government can improve in the following areas:

- ❖ Animal Control and Rabies Cases (Oak Ridge, Summerfield, Whitsett)
- ❖ Retention of Graduates from Local Colleges and Universities (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Quality of Life Issues to retain young people (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ 911 Consolidation Customer Service (Summerfield)
- ❖ Better planning for emergency services (Jamestown)
- ❖ Inspector customer service (Jamestown)
- ❖ Commissioner Leadership Issues (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Missed opportunities for the county to play a role in public water systems (Oak Ridge)

How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing Town's concerns?

- ❖ Providing community with water and sewer, concern over well water and drought (Sedalia, Stokesdale, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Contaminated Water Gas tanks (Whitsett)
- ❖ Speed limits lowered (Sedalia)
- ❖ Traffic relief on NC 68 (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Recreational areas, greenways, mini-parks (Sedalia, Jamestown, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Alternative Transportation (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Youth Activities (Sedalia)
- ❖ Planned Economic Development (Sedalia, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Contaminated Wells (Sedalia)
- ❖ Sharing GIS expertise (Jamestown)
- ❖ Need for Libraries (Stokesdale, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Grant writing capabilities (Stokesdale)

How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing Town's concerns?

- ❖ Investigating duplication of services (Pleasant Garden, Jamestown)
- ❖ Utilization of space in municipal buildings to accommodate county services (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Time Warner issues (Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Recreation in Southern Guilford (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ More opportunities to participate in solid waste program (Pleasant Garden)
- ❖ Land Use decisions - water/sewer availability and Jordan Lake rules (Pleasant Garden, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Safe routes to schools (Jamestown)

- ❖ Environment (Jamestown, Oak Ridge)
- ❖ Parking on East Fork Road (Jamestown)
- ❖ County should provide leadership on issues, not defer to Greensboro (Oak Ridge)

HIGHER EDUCATION FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Mark E. Kirstner

Date: November 1, 2007

Location: Guilford County Emergency Services

Groups or Individuals Present

Rebecca Klase – Greensboro College

Victor Archibong – Greensboro College

Rena Dixon – UNC-G

Lem Cox – Greensboro College

Irene Harrington – Guilford College

Silvanus Udoka – NC A & T

Sherrill Hayes – UNC-G

Ruth DeHoog- UNC-G (arrived later)

Donata Nelson - Bennett College School of
Diversity

What does Guilford do well?

- ❖ Efficient and courteous collections of taxes
- ❖ Improvements in public transportation for university students – PART and HEAT buses
- ❖ Strategic Alliance process and community survey
- ❖ Accepts interns to give them real world experience and career exploration
- ❖ GTCC is a strong player in adult education
- ❖ County offers tuition reimbursement to employees
- ❖ City and County works together well in some instances – 911 Metro

In what areas does Guilford need to improve?

- ❖ Students need to feel they are part of the community
- ❖ Shift-work precludes some Guilford workers from furthering their education except for on-line classes
- ❖ County needs to improve in project management
- ❖ County needs to improve public relations effort and tell the story of government in a positive manner
- ❖ County loses young professionals who cannot find an entry level job in their field
- ❖ County needs to improve in collaboration with universities
- ❖ K-12 needs more school nurses – perhaps 1 in each facility

In what areas does Guilford need to improve?

- ❖ County needs to improve in quality development and growth
- ❖ Concern over the quality of K-12 education and student readiness for college and/or the world of work
- ❖ Importance of math, science, and English skills for nursing profession.
- ❖ Concern about K-12 student graduation rates
- ❖ City/County need to examine duplication of efforts
- ❖ County needs to be concerned about land use/natural resource/economic sustainability

- ❖ K-12 School crowding and available resources – textbooks, teacher support

What concerns/issues are important to your institutions, students, and research?

- ❖ Parking is a big issue for Greensboro College and UNC-G downtown
- ❖ Traditional students need paid internships and non-traditional students need career exploration
- ❖ Guilford College would like to attract resident traditional students
- ❖ Colleges need public safety response plans.
- ❖ Colleges are concerned about health of students, particularly health disparities and sexually transmitted diseases.
- ❖ Students do not know what county services are available

How can Guilford County Government be a Player/Partner in addressing concerns?

- ❖ Professors/department heads need to build relationships
- ❖ Students could assist with project management needs.
- ❖ County departments could attend Career Fairs.
- ❖ County could spotlight professor's expertise at county work sessions or commissioner meetings

How can Guilford County Government be a Player/Partner in addressing concerns?

- ❖ Class projects could tackle "wicked problems" of government and make recommendations
- ❖ County and universities could work on applied research projects together, perhaps seeking grants together.
- ❖ Orientation packet could be prepared for students explaining County government along with more information on website, public television
- ❖ Government/staff/student need to seek more opportunities for interaction and communication
- ❖ Gateway Campus – Partnership between UNC-G and NC A & T is an excellent opportunity for economic development in biotech and environmental issues

How can Guilford County Government be a Player/Partner in addressing concerns?

- ❖ Need for a single point of contact for internships, particularly, criminal justice interns.
- ❖ County and local universities need to partner to work on governmental problems- not just rely on Institute of Government
- ❖ Small grants are available for community partners, students, faculty to work on these problems together
- ❖ County/Universities need top involvement of County Manager, Commissioners, Chancellors

ENVIRONMENTAL FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Rob Bencini

Date: November 2, 2007

Location: Guilford County Old Courthouse

Groups or Individuals Present

Scott Rhine, PART

Kay Cashion, County Commissioner

Ginger Booker, Piedmont Triad Council of Government

Alyson Best, GCPDH

Ken Carter, GCPDH

Carolyn Turner, NC A & T, Guilford County

Environmental Review Board

Jeryl W. Covington, City of Greensboro

Susan Heim, Guilford County

Kathi Dubel, Greensboro Economic Development

Jenni Paige, UNC Greensboro

Anna Marshall-Baker - UNCG

Peter Kauber, Guilford Solar

Wendy Cockerham, Weaver Cooke Construction

Anne Tazewell, NC Solar Center/NCSU

Meredith Williams, Guilford County

Shayla Parker, Guilford County

Bonnie Stellfox, Guilford County

Bryce Ball, Guilford County

Brenda Morris, Guilford County

Bridget Lindsey, Guilford County

Warren Simmons, Guilford County

Fred Jones, Guilford County

Alex Ashton, Guilford County

Roger Bardsley, Guilford County

Melanie Buckingham, Environmental Library

Air Quality/Fleet Fuels: What does Guilford County do Well?

- ❖ Collaboration with ten other counties and municipalities to establish an Early Action Compact regarding excess ground level ozone in the air
- ❖ Currently collaborating with PTCOG regarding non-conformity of fine particles
- ❖ County uses hybrid cars and bio-diesel fuel from Greensboro
- ❖ County monitors electricity and water usage
- ❖ County collaborates with PART to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled

Air Quality/Fleet Fuels: What can the county do to improve?

- ❖ Community Awareness
- ❖ Education including health effects of air quality
- ❖ Address proactive planning regulations where feasible

Air Quality/Fleet Fuels: What are opportunities we can capitalize on?

- ❖ Feasibility Study completed by UNC-G and NC A & T concerning resource availability for production of ethanol
- ❖ Addition of sustainable energy cluster for recruitment of new industries to the area
- ❖ State bill will furnish money to equip school buses for bio fuels
- ❖ Study the vehicle purchasing policy from City of Winston Salem.
- ❖ Collaborate with PART to improve ridership of county employees

Solid Waste and Recycling: What does Guilford County do Well?

- ❖ Guilford County is the lead agency for planning for solid waste and coordinating with the towns and cities

- ❖ Development of a Solid Waste Management Plan
- ❖ Educates the public about recyclables
- ❖ Scrap Tire Facility
- ❖ State has identified Greensboro area as needing a new landfill
- ❖ County provides technical assistance to bars and residents about State Law 2005-348 mandating recycling on site for refuse

Solid Waste and Recycling: What can be done to improve Solid Waste?

- ❖ Address perceived inequities from businesses concerning recycling of glass from restaurants and bars (central business districts vs. outliers)
- ❖ Address vendor problems concerning recycling of glass. Current Greensboro contract requires separation of glass by color
- ❖ Improve county government recycling

Air Quality/Fleet Fuels: What are opportunities we can capitalize on?

- ❖ Involving universities and students – Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling at UNC-G
- ❖ Film discussion series offered by Guilford Solar Communities
- ❖ Blog available about the environment at <http://guilfordsolar.blogspot.com/>
- ❖ Kathleen Clay Edwards Library – Greensboro library focused on environment

Water Quality and Availability: What does Guilford County do Well?

- ❖ Guilford protects water quality through regulation of wastewater (septic tanks)
- ❖ Guilford protects water quality and availability through regulation of well construction
- ❖ Guilford works with state, towns, and communities on groundwater contamination and remediation – Whitsett, Stokesdale, and Oak Ridge

Water Quality and Availability: What can be done to improve ?

- ❖ Take care of 8 watersheds and 50-55 miles of land in those areas
- ❖ Need to allow water to recharge – monitoring wells show a 5 to 6 drop in groundwater from May to September
- ❖ Agencies need to work together on regulations – prescription drugs example

Water Quality and Availability: What are opportunities we can capitalize on?

- ❖ Jordan Lake Rules need to be more user friendly, especially those concerning retrofitting for storm-water run-off
- ❖ Education of elected officials and citizens including well water users about the importance of quality and quantity of water
- ❖ Environmental Review Board effectiveness needs to be strengthened
- ❖ Develop a systematic model for University/Government collaboration
- ❖ County needs to publicize environmental efforts

Planning/Sustainable Buildings What does Guilford County do Well?

- ❖ Weaver Cooke Construction building good example of sustainable building

- ❖ Northern Middle School also used Sustainable Design which also provides learning opportunities

Planning/Sustainable Buildings: What are opportunities we can capitalize on?

- ❖ Incentives for recycled materials use and diversion of construction debris from landfill
- ❖ Economic incentives could be given extra consideration for using LEED building design
- ❖ Consideration of Performance Contracting
- ❖ Possible redesign of ordinances

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION COUNTY ADVISORY FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Brenda Morris

Date: November 8, 2007

Location: Agricultural Center

Groups or Individuals Present

Jim Bennett, Master Gardener Volunteer
Kathy Elliott, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce
Ellen Bliven - WGHP 8
Bob Landreth - Farmer/retired county commissioner
Janie Robbins - Small Business Center
Jolaine Lanier - Realtor - Allen Tate
Donna Newton - Community Development Consultant
Mae Yang - Center for New North Carolinians
Melanie Buckingham - Kathleen Clay Edwards Library

What does Guilford County/Government do well?

- ❖ Collect Taxes
- ❖ Provide information about services available to citizens
- ❖ Extension Master Gardner Program
- ❖ School Merger
- ❖ Professional Response in County Administration Office

What does Guilford County need to improve?

- ❖ County website could be improved in regards to pulling up data
- ❖ Better marketing of county services that departments offer to citizens
- ❖ Better connection between state and county services where they overlap
- ❖ Better collaboration between City of Greensboro, City of High Point, and Guilford County will lead to better economic opportunities

Opportunities to be capitalized on

- ❖ Transportation Options
- ❖ Better Image Portrayed by County Commissioners
- ❖ Restore Cuts to Arts Budget

FORMER COMMISSIONERS FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Sharisse Fuller and Billie Martin-Pierce

Date: December 6, 2007

Location: Blue Room - Old Courthouse

Attendees:

Former Commissioners

Mike Barber

Chuck Winfree

Bob Shaw

Forrest Campbell

Doug Galyon

Joe Wood

Fred Preyer

Odell Payne

Dick Maxwell

Phyllis Gibbs

Mary Rakestraw

Jeff Thigpen

Walt Cockerham

Wally Harrelson

Bob Landreth

Dot Kearns

Present Commissioners

Kay Cashion

John Parks

Kirk Perkins

Paul Gibson

What does Guilford County do well?

- ❖ Finance Department
- ❖ Collect Taxes
- ❖ EMS
- ❖ DSS
- ❖ Commitment to Green Space
- ❖ Health Department
- ❖ Guilford Center (Mental Health in general)
- ❖ Watershed Protection
- ❖ Register of Deeds
- ❖ Coordination among departments in dealing with population groups such as children and the elderly
- ❖ Sheriff's Department
- ❖ Economic Development - especially emphasis on small businesses
- ❖ Parks and Recreation
- ❖ Law Enforcement
- ❖ Budget/Finance
- ❖ Human Resources
- ❖ Court Facilities
- ❖ Property Management (planning ahead)
- ❖ Process for Land Use Planning
- ❖ Tax rate stability

What does Guilford County need to improve?

- ❖ Relationship with schools

- ❖ More control over school spending
- ❖ Look at capital expenditures for schools cooperatively
- ❖ Look at innovative ways of funding schools – COPS mentioned
- ❖ Look at quality of newly built schools
- ❖ Prototype schools
- ❖ Strategic Planning efforts stay on the shelf – never get implemented, concern this plan might go the way of Forecast 2015
- ❖ Marketing to people that live here about strengths including transportation ,real estate market, geographic placement as the center of the East Coast
- ❖ Market as the Triad - increase role of Piedmont Triad Partnership & Airport area
- ❖ Perception of the current Board's image – not given credit for overall efficiency
- ❖ Differences between City/County government – City Manager more corporate style while County Manager has to network to achieve goals (take direction from all directions)
- ❖ Impact of TV on that image
- ❖ Size of the current board
- ❖ More shared/merged services among county and 2 cities
- ❖ Need to get High Point engaged
- ❖ Need for adequate mental health services – use Medicaid money state is returning to county for this
- ❖ Loss of Medicaid money in schools is a problem. Previously money was used to treat chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes
- ❖ Need to expand services for substance abuse treatment

How to address concerns?

- ❖ Sales Tax referendum for funding services and schools – less reliance on property tax
- ❖ Follow through on this strategic plan
- ❖ Deal with the public in a pleasant way and offer good customer service. Independence Center is a good example of excellent customer service which breaks down silos and offers one-stop shopping to customers
- ❖ Need to address issues of safety in schools especially possibility of re-occurrence of fires such as Eastern High School
- ❖ Flawed system for accountability – school needs funded by the County but school Board accountable for results
- ❖ Citizens should be able to speak to a person , not a telephone system
- ❖ Continue to take care of employees as a great asset
- ❖ Continue to support parks and libraries
- ❖ Welcome joint efforts between county and 2 cities
- ❖ Essential to have good land use planning involving county and 2 cities. This includes airport/highways & transportation hub)
- ❖ Planning around airport; concerns about residential versus commercial/industrial uses of land. Land needs to be preserved for economic development growth
- ❖ Use brain power at the universities
- ❖ Preserve the furniture market

NON-PROFITS FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Beverly Williams

Date: early November to mid-December, 2007

Location: Online e-mail distribution

Individuals and agencies in the focus group are part of an established email distribution list. Therefore it was believed that the best way to communicate with members of this focus group was through email. The questions were emailed and responses received. Since the discussion was not held in a public setting the respondents names have been omitted.

What does Guilford County do well?

- ❖ Guilford County does a good job at assessing and funding GCS budgets and general county operations.
- ❖ Guilford County as a community is representative and caring. The social, faith, non-government, and government structures reflect those values.
- ❖ Good collaboration between smaller agencies; sheriff's department is always responsive to crises needs; Guilford Center adheres to and emphasizes the importance of utilizing best practice policies-even provides resources to implement them.
- ❖ Basic Services (garbage, water, sewer, police). Assists with the process of diversifying the local economy by attracting new businesses and business growth.
- ❖ Improving County-wide transportation for those without personal vehicles.
- ❖ Assists in enhancing community-wide events through the various departments. Provides adequate information on decisions and changes that will impact the citizens.
- ❖ CBO funding to non-profits is a big help. It helps us match state and federal dollars and is a big boost to human services in the county.
- ❖ Both DSS and the Guilford Center are well run departments that carry out their mission to the best of their abilities.
- ❖ The county has an excellent and well run Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC). Human service agencies in the county (public and private) work well together.
- ❖ The website is much improved over what it once was and the response out of the Manager's office is excellent.
- ❖ Keep up their parks and streets; nice people. good trash pick-ups.
- ❖ We have great parks, trails, and family activities.
- ❖ New "green" school good for environment & as teaching aid.
- ❖ Guilford County Cooperative Extension is fantastic.
- ❖ Restaurant recycling program
- ❖ Historic Preservation Committee
- ❖ Watershed protection- people are becoming concerned due to publicity/signs by county
- ❖ Easy to use website
- ❖ Easy to use hazardous waste facility that provides great customer service

In what areas does Guilford County need to improve?

- ❖ Guilford County Commissioners need to step back and look at how their words and actions represent the region. Their divisions hinder growth and support due to lack of credibility in the broader community.
- ❖ The County could improve in the area of planning for social and economic change throughout the community.
- ❖ Collaboration between larger agencies (DSS, public health); reimbursement is extremely slow which creates hardships.
- ❖ I think that often the Guilford County leaders are very short-sighted (i.e. cutting after school youth programs, while gang problems are on the rise). The interpersonal conduct between the Guilford County Commissioners is often unprofessional and certainly embarrassing to the community.
- ❖ Of course more CBO funding would be nice. The Guilford Center through mental health reform does not have enough funds to sponsor treatment for the mildly disturbed patients. This means that mental health problems often go untreated until they become serious problems. Preventing problems early is always better.
- ❖ The most important thing the County could do better is promote collaboration and cooperation between the cities and with the County.
- ❖ The Greensboro Police Department and the City Manager need a complete overhaul. People like Hinson, Fillmore, City Manager Johnson and those in cahoots with them should be investigated. Chief Bellemey is not strong, and promotes officers who are questionable ... David Wray, Sanders and those retired who worked well with him should be re-instated to clean up the mess that has been created. I've never heard of so many people crying 'racist'. Hopefully, the new City Council will have enough intestinal fortitude to do what is right for all of Greensboro. The Greensboro citizens need a positive attitude toward city government, instead of the negative one that has been created. Police reports need to be made public so residents know what is going on. The Rhino Times is excellent in reporting this. News and Record doesn't.
- ❖ Terrible County Planning Board – They let big business take precedent over citizens' welfare (pollution, traffic, urban green space issues) – recent example is the Haw River State Park issue where last August the County Planning Board rezoned adjacent land in favor of developer interests (houses and golf course) instead of for the good of the Guilford County citizens which was only reversed due to public outcry.
- ❖ Concerned about all the air pollution that will be caused by Fed Ex hub (which other communities turned down). I worry about the cost for healthcare for all the asthma this added pollution will cause vs. how many jobs the hub will actually add. Also, water issues with the hub.

What concerns/issues are important to your organizations, clients, and missions?

- ❖ Our organization believes that quality-of-life is the foundation for economic success; quality-of-life is defined as: quality education, unique and dynamic attractions, zero-tolerance for crime, equal mix of green space and infrastructure for economic development.

- ❖ The top ten concerns of the women we see at the WRC of Greensboro include: Financial, Job Seeking, Clothing, Self-Esteem, Depression, Housing, Career Exploration, Rent/Utilities, Counseling/Therapy, and Food.
- ❖ Providing accessible services to residents of Guilford County including homeless, under/uninsured, emerging populations, addressing substance abuse issues, concern regarding Community Based Organization Funding
- ❖ I fear for the whole community, if youth gangs are allowed to further organize and grow. The direct and indirect costs could be tremendous. Controlling building growth, while maintaining/expanding parks and other natural areas in the County. County Commissioners need to focus on making sound group decisions that benefit the whole community, rather than fighting personal battles.
- ❖ The lack of funding for early intervention programs for at risk youth.
- ❖ I represent a number of constituencies and economic development including building a corporate and job base is critical to all of them.
- ❖ Need for more police protection; need to de-emphasize racism, rid city of corruption and people who promote it (City Manager Johnson, retired lawyer Miles and the black caucus). Have competent officers check into gangs and drugs in area.
- ❖ My business is currently developing sustainable products for clients. - It would be nice to talk about what my area of NC is doing in that respect during meetings (that Guilford County is a leader not a follower)
- ❖ Pollution, especially air pollution, dwindling green space sped up by poor planning.
- ❖ Gangs and Crime are a top concern
- ❖ County Planning Board that seems to be pro big business. They look out for whom ever has the most money & do not seem to be concerned with the future.

How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing these concerns?

- ❖ GC Government must support successful endeavors and not reward unsuccessful ones. GC Government must expect, document, and reward accountability. This applies to non-profits, teachers, businesses, law enforcement, etc. GC Government needs a permanent fund for tourism and quality-of-life competitive grants. Grants success must not be based on preferences but rather success, merit, and impact.
- ❖ The Guilford County Government can be a player/partner by continuing to financially support those community agencies that work collaboratively to assist citizens in need in our community.
- ❖ Advocate on our behalf to state legislature for continued funding.
- ❖ More money.
- ❖ The number one need is for the continued full cooperation and support of Guilford County in the implementation of the Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. We especially need the continuing support through the Guilford Center as well as support through Emergency Management (to take care of emergency shelter for the homeless until the Ten Year Plan reaches its goal), the Sheriff's department, Planning Department, and the Department of Social Services. Need high levels of participation from these departments at the monthly meetings of the Homeless Prevention Coalition of Guilford County. (meets the

second Thursday of each month, 9:30a.m. at Jamestown Presbyterian Church on Guilford College Road)

- ❖ By listening to the needs of all and not listening to a select group of citizens who promote their own causes.
- ❖ Maybe have Planning Board think about the long term impact of their decisions instead of quick fixes like adding low paying jobs.
- ❖ Have Guilford County purchase land for possible parks/water shed down the road so developers can not get.
- ❖ Pass laws to keep a certain amount of trees in developments for air quality issues.
- ❖ More aggressive recycling program – add other plastics that we do not recycle now like #6
- ❖ Better green space planning
- ❖ Drive hybrids for county cars
- ❖ Promote solar/wind power
- ❖ Remove graffiti ASAP
- ❖ Add more law enforcement to fight gang violence and drugs

HOSPITALITY, CONVENTIONS, ARTS & SPORTS FOCUS GROUP

Moderated by: Rob Bencini

Date: Wednesday, February 6th 2008

**Location: 4th Floor Conference Room
Old Courthouse**

County Attendees:

Chairman Kirk Perkins

Commissioner Paul Gibson

County Manager David McNeill

Deputy Manager Ben Brown

Strategic Alliance Chair Sharisse Fuller

Greg Niles

Bryce Ball

Melissa Johnson

Martha Rogers

Randy Zimmerman

Focus Group Attendees:

- Charlotte Young - President and CEO, Representing High Point Convention and Visitors Bureau, interested in tourism and economic development.
- Candice Bruton - Greensboro Parks and Recreation, experienced in Master Planning Projects, interested in athletics and tournaments.
- Jeanie Duncan - President and CEO, Representing United Arts Council of Greensboro, interested in cultural resources for Greensboro and outside visitors, as well as the economic impact of arts.
- Henri Fourier – President and CEO, Representing Greensboro Convention & Visitors Bureau, interested in tourism, said it is the “stealth economic engine”.
- Amelia Parker- Executive Director of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, interested in marketing the importance of Greensboro in the history of Civil Rights movement & significance of this asset to down-town community.
- Mable Scott – Associate Vice Chancellor for Development & University Relations, Representing North Carolina A & T State University, interesting in marketing the

economic impact of NC & T, third largest research university in North Carolina with 40,000 loyal alumni.

- Leonora Bryant - Director of Alumni Affairs, Representing North Carolina A & T University, interested in marketing the "World's Greatest Homecoming, partners with the Greensboro Convention & Visitors Bureau, estimated to have \$10 to 11 million in economic impact.
- Mo Milani - Executive Vice President, Koury Corporation, representing business interests in bringing business to the area, has 20 nationwide marketing specialists "selling" Guilford County as a destination for tourists & conventioners to visit.
- Rebecca Clark - Piedmont Triad Film Commission Director, representing film production interests & bringing and keeping young creative professionals in Guilford County.
- Debbie Lumpkins - Executive Director, High Points Area Arts Council, representing Arts Council, interested in marketing Arts Councils (Greensboro & High Point) as top Arts Councils in North Carolina and in the United States. She wants to take advantage of close proximity to Winston Salem, and target children, youth & others from outside the county to take advantage of new facility and arts programs in High Point.
- Allen Oliver - City of High Point Parks and Recreation Director, interested in comprehensive planning for parks and recreation for the future, bringing people to High Point for sports and arts events.
- Pat Pate - City of High Point Assistant City Manager.
- Mark Brazil - Tournament Director, Wyndham Championship, interested in marketing the only major league sporting event in Guilford County.
- Dr. Bonnie Canziani, representing UNC-G's Department of Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management.

Welcome and Introductions

- ❖ Sharisse introduced County attendees and went over Strategic Alliance purpose, timeline, and reviewed draft goals. She expressed an interest in getting feedback from participants.
- ❖ Rob welcomed participants and introduced the topic. Participants present were introduced.
- ❖ Commissioner Gibson explained the strategic planning process and Chairman Perkins expressed gratitude for the work that these organizations do but explained the difficulties of the budgeting process.

What does Guilford County/Guilford County government do well?

- ❖ Parks.
- ❖ Acquiring and running trail systems.
- ❖ Providing services (money) for large groups who want to have events here.
- ❖ Track & Stadium at NC A & T, Carolyn Allen Park baseball fields.
- ❖ Great cooperation on providing infrastructure for film industry & providing a film friendly environment.
- ❖ Agricultural Tourism growing (Winery Consortium) - being posted on GIS map for Green Government.

In what areas does Guilford County/Guilford County government need to improve?

- ❖ Need to capitalize on phenomenal facilities we have here – Sheraton Convention Center, Greensboro Coliseum. This is hard to do when corporate base is declining.
- ❖ Need an alternative funding source to help bring events in.
- ❖ Communications are pretty good but could improve – Example of what works is partnership between News and Record, Greensboro Convention & Visitors Bureau, and United Arts Council of Greensboro with the calendar of events that has been developed. High Point organizations participates with the calendar but not as much as Greensboro.
- ❖ Need to capitalize on furniture market & build partnerships between GTCC, UNC-G, and High Point University to ensure the furniture market remains strong.
- ❖ Media coverage of commissioner controversial matters may work against marketing the area for meetings and tourism.
- ❖ Need to strengthen Greensboro/High Point/Guilford County partnerships.
- ❖ Greensboro Auditorium sound needs to be improved.

What concerns/issues are important in each area and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing these concerns?

- ❖ Commissioners/Public need to be educated about the value of Hospitality/Conventions, etc. Advocates could come at speak to the public during speakers to the floor period of Commissioner Meetings.
- ❖ Explore special revenues for Hospitality/Conventions so don't have to compete with Education/Public Safety.
- ❖ Whole community needs to embrace events such as A & T homecoming for its economic impact, rather than viewing it is a bother with influx of visitors.
- ❖ Community needs to explore and discover activities available at colleges and universities in the County. Colleges need to improve communication to communities about what's available.
- ❖ Need to capitalize Greensboro as a destination with new SkyBus tickets.
- ❖ Need to tell the story of Guilford County's standing in Quality of Life indicators, try to develop performance indicators that show the benefits and importance of the sector.
- ❖ Need to institute a "bragging" campaign about the specialness of Greensboro, why College Alumna loves the area.
- ❖ International Civil Rights Museum – Sit-In Movement that spread to other cities.
- ❖ Why do we love Greensboro, Guilford County, and High Point?
- ❖ What pulls at our heart strings?
- ❖ Need to collaborate with other N.C cities to bring in international visitors.
- ❖ Unified Events Calendar – although it is for 12 County Triad region, often has more Greensboro items on it. <http://www.gotriadscene.com/index.php?app=eventDetail&id=519>
- ❖ Need a plan for prioritization so that strategies can be developed – this could be part of the overall Guilford strategic plan. However, need to consider all interests, not just loudest advocates.

Wrap-Up

- ❖ Rob asked for those interested in a partnership between Public Schools, GTCC magnet Program to develop an early college curriculum based on “Disney style” customer service to e-mail him so he could gauge the interest in this. Ms. Parker mentioned UNC-G Museum studies partnership with Museum studies that she is working on.
- ❖ County Manager asked that the group consider continued to meet to work on strategies that would benefit the community. This will allow synergies and more accomplishments than just single subsets of the group working alone.



DETAILED NOTES FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Immigrants Focus Group
May 29, 2007

I. Welcome and Introductions

- a. Reverend Sills explained the history of the FaithAction International House
 - 1) Founded in 1997, first located at Greensboro College
 - 2) Been at 705 North Greene Street since September 12, 2000
 - 3) Provide cross cultural training for health care and human service professionals, operate an Immigrant Assistance Center, and work on Care Teams. Care Teams founded as a response to Katrina victims, whom they continue to serve as they are displaced by demolition and rebuilding. They also provide a legal resource center.
 - 4) Have 2 multicultural Girl Scout troops, and many activities to celebrate diversity.
 - 5) They believe diversity is an economic and social strength. Example - Kay Chemical location here because they can obtain employees who speak 23 languages. The organization's motto is "We are a nation of immigrants- united - made strong by our diversity."
- b. County Attendees: Sharisse Fuller, Mark Kirstner, Rob Bencini, Jeff Thigpen, Elaine Inman, Merle Green, Alan Perdue, Yolanda Harris
- c. Immigrant Representatives: Emmale Walker, Human Relations, City of Greensboro, Kathy Hinshaw, Center for the New North Carolinians, Javier , Tammy Kelly-Rouse, Edie Gutierrez and her son, Alexander
- d. Latinos and Hispanics in Guilford County are not a homogeneous group but multi-cultural

II. Strategic Alliance

- a. Mark Kirstner explained the Strategic Alliance and the county's desire to reach out into the community and try to commit to develop the county's first comprehensive strategic plan.
- b. Explained the assessment phase - getting input from all the citizens; 9 public forums, surveys, and now focus groups to get at hard to reach populations.

III. Focus Questions

- a. What do Guilford County and/or Guilford County Government do well?
 - 1) Lot's of resources
 - 2) Other Voices Program
 - 3) Most programs offer instructions and staff who are bilingual
 - 4) Media is available to communicate and educate Latinos
 - 5) Good leadership - many people want to work with immigrant population and help, also good leadership in the immigrant communities
- b. What do Guilford County and/or Guilford County government need to improve on?
 - 1) Help immigrants connect to the resources
 - 2) Protection of this population - lack of understanding leads to a vulnerability to being taking advantage of

- 3) More in-depth education about what government agencies and departments do – maybe spend 1 day with each services; do this regularly (Raleigh Program)
 - 4) Sometimes language services are only minimal – at certain times of a day or through a machine (not an actual person)
 - 5) Welcome sign in all languages but interpretation or spoken language not available
 - 6) Need to build relationships with communities (Colonial Apartments)
 - 7) Need 100% commitment – work with immigrants is complex – ordinary task that takes 1 hour might take 3
 - 8) Build Trust – immigrants feel harassed because of race, ICE, deportations, misinformation about government services and changes in service delivery (example , driver’s licenses)
 - 9) Involving immigrants in processes and developing new policies. Some policies cause unintended consequences because they are not well thought out (heavy regulation of driver’s license may cause uninsured motorists and deportations cause children to be left in this country without parents)
- c. What are the unique challenges from your perspective that Guilford County will need to address to best serve Latino and/or immigrant populations?
- 1) Confusion about what governments are responsible for what activities (example water bills and housing)
 - 2) Explaining the limits of government authority - Where are limits of government? – Arbitrary boundaries (city and county government)
 - 3) Immigrants do not understand the local, state, federal, system of government – very confusing with many departments. No Latin American County has the complexities in government that the U.S does.
 - 4) Lack of trust in the police (understanding of the system and possible corruption in their home country)
 - 5) Fear of the ICE program – may result in immigrants not reporting crime, may be afraid to call 911, fear of being detained even if documents in order. May not have proper documents readily available so will be detained even if not illegal.
 - 6) Anti-immigration movement creates a hostile environment for immigrants resulting in fear and lack of trust for documented and undocumented individuals.
 - 7) Immigrants are learning English quickly but need to consider that many hold 2 or 3 jobs and may be reluctant to attend classes at Community Colleges but would attend classes at church.
 - 8) Working with immigrants is not a 9 to 5 commitment, providing services at government buildings, need to work on weekends, provide space/activities for children, provide outreach to churches, partner with local businesses who employ Latinos (Timco and Hotels)
 - 9) Latino Festival is a good event to get feedback for the Strategic Alliance
 - 10) Need to understand barriers in intake process because of documentation issues (important for provision of human services)
 - 11) Leadership for the Latinos is different, community leadership is very important
 - 12) Problem solving is more difficulty because of complexity of immigration laws

- 13) Lack of proper documentation makes immigrants more vulnerable to abuse in housing, employment relationships, public safety, and domestic abuse.
- 14) Immigrants need more understanding of what is a crime and what is not.

Guilford County Strategic Alliance Focus Group

News and Record Editorial Staff

September 6, 2007

10:30 to 12:00 noon

Attendees:

Allen Johnson

Elma Sabo

Doug Clark

Jeff Thigpen

Mark Kirstner

Merle Green

Sharisse Fuller

Melissa Johnson

Martha Rogers

Chairman Paul Gibson

County Manager David McNeill

- I. Welcome and Introductions – Jeff Thigpen
 - a. Jeff expressed the Committee’s desire to improve communication by “letting the left hand know what the right hand does” and to create a plan that doesn’t sit on a shelf.
- II. Mark Kirstner presented an overview of the strategic planning process and the proposed timeline that explained where we are and where we are going. The goal is to have the process incorporated in the budget by January 2009. Mark explained that we are in the assessment phase and have spent quite a bit of time in getting feedback from the public through public forums, written and on-line surveys, and focus groups (Latino and Judicial Group). Citizens have expressed an appreciation that county government has tried to solicit their input into the plan. This will be an ongoing effort. The Board will take action on selecting a mission, vision, and values tonight. Since all of the large departments have strategic plans, the Committee will use these as part of a comprehensive process. The goal is to connect strategic planning to programs and department’s plans with specific goals and targets. These then will be connected to the Guilford County budget. After service levels are defined by the budget, along with specific measures, the results will be evaluated and reported to the citizens. The ultimate goal is to hold the government accountable to the public.
- III. Three Questions
 - a. What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?
 - i. Most services delivered efficiently and effectively
 - ii. Certain things don’t have to be thought about a lot, services are there if you need them.
 - iii. Day to day service delivery is good for the most visible services such as Clerk of Court, Register of Deeds.
 - iv. Many citizens do not have a lot of contact with many of the other services. Pleasant surprise was the International Travel Program at the Health Department when Mr. Johnson had to go overseas.
 - b. In what areas does Guilford County/Guilford County Government need to improve?
 - i. Better intergovernmental coordination (Clark)
 1. City/County/School Board
 2. High Point and the School Boards

3. Improve relationship with state government
 - ii. Need more seamless government delivery (Clark)
 - iii. Need to Listen to citizens (Sidewalks in the city example) - (Gibson)
 - iv. Collaboration with other governments in service delivery (Gibson)
 - v. Trying to figure out what and how services government should be offering in the future (Gibson)
 - vi. Channel 13 problem - perception of government leadership (Gibson)
 - vii. Need Budgeting for Outcomes (Gibson)
- c. What concerns/issues are important to your staff and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing these concerns
 - i. Need buy-in for strategic planning from future boards, department heads (Gibson)
 - ii. Need to try to ensure that future boards will agree by making it a community process (not Gibson's plan)
 - iii. Need to involve cities (Johnson)
 1. Jeff discussed the difficulties of joint meetings.
 2. Greg Niles initiative at staff level discussed.
 3. October Elected Officials Breakfast at Cooperative Extension (McNeill)
 - iv. Ongoing feedback from community
 1. Use of technology discussed by Sharisse
 - v. Concern over conflict between School Construction Needs and Unplanned Growth (Johnson)
 1. Municipalities think growth's impact on school construction is the School Board's Problem (undercrowded/overcrowded schools)
 2. Lack of coordination causes tensions among governments, communities, parents, and students
 - vi. Need to develop trust and communication between groups and individuals (Merle)
 1. Not talk at each other but to each other - example Duncan and Gibson at State of the Community (Johnson)
 2. Need progress together not individually (Johnson) - example Regional Solid Waste. Some progress has been made individually but not at a county wide level.
 - vii. Better intergovernmental relations may begin at staff level rather than political level (Gibson)
 1. Consolidated government such as Nashville will most likely not work in this county.
 - viii. Need to capitalize on perception of good quality of life (Clark)
 - ix. County Employee Fear of Political Upheaval (Johnson)
 1. Sharisse said this was a misconception. County government operates as a team. Department heads not afraid to speak up.
 2. Merle said department heads check egos at the door and treat political leaders with great respect but are mainly interested in getting the job done. Chairman Gibson said that department heads were hardworking and capable and that communications were good between department heads and Commissioners.

3. Improvements needed in being unafraid to try new things and not having a fear of failure. Need new ways of delivering government programs (Gibson)
4. County Management Team needs to unleash talents and work together (McNeill)
- x. Positive newspaper coverage of programs (Sabo)
 1. Role of Melissa Johnson, importance of a single contact
- xi. Revitalizing Website
 1. News Feed
 2. Interactive Comments
 3. Chat Room - (talk Department Head about service) - Jeff Thigpen
- xii. Newspaper Concern to tell if new process is working
 1. Evaluation of results - Performance Auditing (Gibson)
 2. Reporting to the Public - Accountability for efficient and effective government (Gibson)
 3. Balanced Score Cards goals that match goals up to mission and vision (Sharisse)
 4. Incorporation into the Budget Process (Gibson)
 5. Barriers
 - a. Leadership - education and understanding from political leaders
 - b. Technology - New technology (Lawson) helps with data availability and reliability for measurement of progress (Jeff)
 - c. Department heads need to feel unafraid of being held accountable and feel like failure is an opportunity for learning how to do the process better. (Gibson)
 - d. Channel 13 - political resistance (Gibson)

IV. Other

- a. One Guilford
 - i. October 17 at Dana Auditorium from 9 to 12
 - ii. Chairman Gibson to give an overview of strategic planning
 1. A & T and UNCG joint ventures
 2. High Point furniture market
 3. Education and youth development - Amos Quick
 4. will have break out sections

County gets strategic - September 7, Allen Johnson Blog

We met this morning with several representatives of county government.

They wanted to update us on Guilford's first-ever strategic planning process. And they wanted to ask what we thought about county government's strengths and weaknesses.

Among those attending was commissioners Chairman Paul Gibson, Register of Deeds Jeff Thigpen, County Manager David McNeill, HR Director Sharisse Fuller, Health Department Director Merle Green and Transportation Director Mark Kirstner.

The whole idea, they said, is to improve the way county government operates by creating a unified vision, setting clear priorities and working toward more focused objectives.

You don't hear this kind of stuff from county government very often, where two-fisted, knockdown, dragout disagreements typically rule the headlines. To paraphrase Tina Turner in "Proud Mary," Guilford never ever had a strategic plan.

But the folks who visited us seem genuinely committed and enthused about what the process can accomplish. Gibson quipped, "We're going to have to change our evil ways."

The county has been holding forums to seek public input on the process, as well as meeting with other groups in the community.

This is a good idea that ought to reap all kinds of dividends, especially long term. It also could build better relationships with other governments in the county.

But the current commissioners will have to endorse the process. And so will future commissioners.

"The majority of the board has bought into this," Gibson said of the current commissioners.

But when asked what could derail the process, he didn't hesitate. "Channel 13."

Cable Channel 13 televises the commissioners' meetings.

October 1, 2007

Meeting with **Educational Alliance** - 5011 High Point Road

Time: 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Margaret Arbuckle - Educational Alliance

Rhonda Copeland - Principal at Fairview Elementary in High Point

Charles Foust - Principal at Brooks Global Elementary

Frank Kendall, Educational Alliance

Nolo Martinez - Educational Alliance - Center for the New North Carolinians

Uma Avva - Educational Alliance

Sharisse Fuller, Guilford County Human Resources

Martha Rogers, Guilford County Internal Audit

Jeff Thigpen, Guilford County Register of Deds

Rob Bencini, Guilford County Administration

1. Welcome and Introductions: Margaret Arbuckle made participants welcome. Everyone introduced themselves.

2. Strategic Alliance Timeline: Jeff Thigpen welcomed participants and explained the Strategic Alliance Process. Sharisse Fuller passed out copies of the adopted mission and vision and the Strategic Alliance timeline.
3. Three Questions – posed by Martha Rogers
 - a. What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?
 - i. County Government (when compared to others) does a lot of things better.
 - ii. Welcoming attitude toward change.
 - iii. Proposed Mission and Vision is great. Challenge will be living up to it.
 - iv. Presence of cultural brokers such as Margaret Arbuckle.
 - v. More universities per capita than other areas.
 - vi. Take care of the logistics well.
 - b. In what areas does Guilford County/Guilford County Government need to improve?
 - i. Discussion held about better coordination/interactions between ROD/Health Department concerning certified birth certificates, immunization records, etc.
 - ii. Need to make an effort to build dialog on issues, not draw lines in the sand.
 - iii. Need to build trust in data presented by the school board. County staff needs to examine, understand, and validate to report back to Commissioners
 - iv. Principals say elected officials need to do a “walk-through” in 113 schools to understand the impact of funding decisions (example – Brooks Elementary only has social worker 1 to 2 hours once a month. Fairview, which has a 96% free and reduced lunch, has a social worker ½ a day.) Not all schools are fully air-conditioned. Brooks has air-conditioning in classrooms but not in halls.
 - v. Need for year-round dialog with Commissioners (not just May 15 to July 1st) to build relationships with the Principals to learn what the school needs are.
 - vi. Need to examine policy decisions concerning funding – should School Board have the power to raise taxes
 - vii. Need to examine disconnect between citizen priority for funding and what gets funding (Economic Development and Schools are high priorities)
 - viii. Need to examine coordination with Mental Health/Public Health/DSS and Schools. Student to school nurse ratio is very high (1/2800).
 - ix. Principals need policy makers to understand the difficult nature of their work. Making the AYP goals is “tricky” because you can miss it by subgroups. Fairview has a transient group of children who move a lot. The Principal there receives extra monies because it is a Title I school but has to develop priorities to help them meet their AYP goals. Does she choose funding for social workers, daytime tutors, afternoon tutors, or reading specialists? Which will help the most in the mission to raise AYP scores?
 - x. Strategic alliance vision fits very well with what Principals are trying to do – prosperity, safe and healthy communities, and provide educational opportunities. “If you don’t educate children, they will steal from you later.”
 - xi. Principals measure success by the ability to “grow children”. It takes everyone working together. Attendance rate is a good process measure. However, having all the resources needed available for the child in place is critical (nurses, social workers). Taxpayers should consider what they would want for their child and the cost of not educating child. Today’s children are a “different generation.” Although 50% are respectful and polite, many of them are not. “You can’t teach yesterday’s lesson to today’s child.” “Success Maker” is a good program.

- xii. Need for more cultural brokers for economic/ educational improvements.
 - xiii. Need leadership to be accountable to bring resources to solve problems. Money is a quick fix. A systems change and collaboration between government, cultural brokers, and organizations such as Cities in School is necessary to maximize use of scarce resources.
 - xiv. Elected officials need to be more visionary. Need to be planning before the storm. We need to know what resources we have in the county, not just have a patch mentality that is shortsighted. We need to be planning for 5-10 years down the road.
 - xv. Need to develop indicators for accountability, leadership, and performance. Define what is success (return on investment in kids).
 - xvi. Need to examine public policies in regards to which one are critical to success in schools and which ones inhibit progress.
- c. What concerns are important in the field of education and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing those concerns.
- i. Increase in poverty levels among students. Need to work with county departments to help develop support systems.
 - ii. Demographic Transformation – old responses will not work with “new” students.
 - iii. Never get beyond basic needs (finite resources). Need to be excellent (not just adequate) at science and technology.
 - iv. Need to position tomorrow’s workforce.
 - v. In working with both ends of the spectrum (Exceptional and Gifted Students, don’t drop the one’s in the middle.
 - vi. Reducing suspensions and examining the effectiveness of School Resource Officers. Are counselors more effective?
 - vii. Growth in kids in schools. Putting off the bond issue for 5 months not a good decision.
 - viii. Failure to fund Eastern High School is embarrassing.
 - ix. Professionals have the knowledge/ability to pay to choose the best schools for their children to attend. What about the less fortunate who cannot economically choose or do not have the information available to make the best decisions about their child’s educational future?
 - x. County government should be more than a player/partner when it comes to education, should offer leadership, shape public policy, etc.
 - xi. Concern that there is a two-tiered educational system. Many send their children to private schools.
 - xii. Need an agreement between law enforcement (Sheriff’s/High Point/Greensboro) for more even-handed SRO policies and procedures application.
4. Closing Comments
- a. Mr. Martinez believes we need to develop 5 top issues for education and develop 4 or 5 initiatives to address these issues in the next 3 to 4 years. He suggested a task force (Guilford County/Guilford County Educational Alliance/Chambers of Commerce) could work on such goals and strategies.

- b. Ms. Arbuckle believes Commissioners should develop some trust in school spending requests. This could be accomplished by understanding financial and academic outcomes. Perhaps an evaluation or audit might help.
- c. Mr. Martinez thinks we need to develop performance measures for accountability of quality of education return on investment. He said that in Guilford County it is difficult to determine who is responsible for the quality of education. He said that in Wake County, he knew who was responsible.
- d. Ms. Avva is concerned about transparency and communication with the average citizen. She thinks there should be community indicators such as those used by Grand Rapids, Michigan. These make the priorities, goals, and accomplishments easily understandable and provide information to the citizens about when they should have a concern about a particular area.

October 1, 2007

Sedalia Town Meeting

Sedalia Town Hall 7 P.M.

Attendees: Greg Niles, Martha Rogers, Sedalia Town Board, Audience, Planning Board Chairman Duane Bryant

1. Welcome and introduction by Mayor Morgan.
2. Greg presented overview of Strategic Alliance process, mission and vision, timeline.
3. Greg asked three questions and received feedback.
 - a. What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?
 - i. Working with small towns on tax collections and planning.
 - ii. Getting Sedalia's tax revenues to them in a timely manner.
 - b. In what areas does Guilford County/Guilford County Government need to improve?
 - i. Sheriff response time could be improved.
 - ii. Sheriff needs to come to Town Meetings more often to develop a dialog with the Sedalia elected officials.
 - iii. Zoning Enforcement needs to be improved (particularly junk cars).
 - iv. Officials needed more understanding of zoning enforcement process. Mr. Niles provided them with requested information. They may want a stricter policy.
 - v. Fire, EMS has provided Sedalia with classes on emergency preparedness.
 - vi. One instance reported of where EMS did not recognize address. They were confused about the distinctions of Gibsonville/Sedalia.
 - c. What concerns/issues are important in field of education and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing those concerns?
 - i. Want to partner with the County on providing their community with water and sewer. Greensboro is not helpful in this regard.
 - ii. Wants County to work with them to help get the speed limit lowered on Sedalia road.
 - iii. Would like the county to work with them to develop recreational areas, greenways, mini-parks

- iv. Need youth activities. They do not have a Scout troop in the area. Need something like 4-H. Lot's of kids have time on the hand, they would like empowered youth development programs to combat effects of drugs and violence.
- v. Particularly interested in the part of the vision "values economic developing, producing a rich quality of life". Interested in promoting economic development that fits in with Sedalia lifestyle (versus urban sprawl). Want to be a Guilford County "Jewel". Values the presence of wildlife.
- vi. Concerned about environmental impacts of such things as contaminated wells.

October 2, 2007

10:00 to 12:00 a.m.

Meeting with **Foundations** Group

324 West Wendover Avenue, Greensboro

Attendees:

Martha Rogers, Guilford County Internal Audit

Jeff Thigpen, Guilford County Register of Deeds

Merle Green, Guilford County Health Department

Judy Wicker, News and Record - Landmark Foundation

Sharisse Fuller - Guilford County Human Resources

Skip Moore - Weaver Foundation

Nancy Capps - Moses Cone Wesley Long Community Health Foundation

Jim Melvin - Joseph M. Bryan Foundation

Sally B. Cone - Tannenbaum-Sternberger Foundation

Chip Hagan - Hagan Family Fund

Susan Schwartz - Cemala Foundation

Walker Sanders - Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro

Rob Bencini - Guilford County Administration

1. Welcome and Introductions - Skip Moore and Sharisse Fuller
2. Strategic Alliance Timeline and overview - Sharisse Fuller
3. Three Questions - Jeff Thigpen
 - a. What does Guilford County/Guilford County Government do well?
 - i. This process is an asset, just getting together and listening to what folks have to say.
 - ii. Quality of Social Services is good. Social Services has a good reputation in the community
 - iii. County permitting/planning has a better reputation than same processes in city.
 - b. In what areas does Guilford County/Guilford County Government need to improve?
 - i. Getting children ready for school. There are lots of good programs in specialized areas in this regard but they could be coordinated to maximize resources.
 - ii. Guilford County could be the leader in planning, land use, law enforcement if the County would take leadership in these areas.
 - iii. Need to build connection with school systems. Relieve some of their burden with support from Health Department/Social Services.

- iv. Community needs education/communication about what county/city government does.
 - v. Need improvement of public image (Commissioners meetings)
 - vi. More concern about urban issues (75% of residents live in High Point and Greensboro. Belief that High Point and Greensboro should put more pressure on county to concentrate on urban issues, drive the county toward excellence. Two powerhouse cities should work together.
 - vii. Better knowledge about parliamentary procedures.
 - viii. Need to learn the definition of vision. (Good example of how vision works is Roger Cotten's vision for Maple Street Building)
 - ix. Elected officials too involved in county administration/management.
 - x. Concern that School/County committee about school budget doesn't meet any more. (Requirement of Bryan Foundation commitment of \$1.2 million dollars to settle school lawsuit).
 - xi. Marketable education is invaluable.
 - xii. Need understanding of incentives and public education about the value of economic incentives. Should not deny incentives in public meeting. If not going to give them, shouldn't deny in public.
 - xiii. Lack of civility at Commissioner meetings poor example for young people.
 - xiv. Need trust/relationships between Board of Education and County Commissioners based on data driven. Believe that concern expressed about too many high paid school officials is not verifiable based on examination of pertinent data.
 - xv. Incentive policy (from approval to execution) is a nightmare for businesses to work with.
 - xvi. Need to plan for incentives in advance. For example, possibility of Sygenta incentive was well known in advance but done in reactive mode.
 - xvii. Need to value innovation in schools, trying new approaches, as Superintendent is prone to do.
 - xviii. Need to realize that many of the problems in schools are social problems, not educational problems. Guilford County Schools is 46th in the nation in free and reduced lunch rates.
 - xix. Need to work with private resources such as Educational Alliance - "Commitment to Excellence" program. Commissioners need to provide support for such efforts, could result in more private funding for initiatives.
 - xx. Need for civic consciousness - Citizen's academy, more communication to citizens.
 - xxi. Encouraged by staff leadership (leadership through influence).
 - xxii. Race discussion - belief that economic development opportunities are not equitable distributed.
 - xxiii. Need to incent further development of tax base through identification of vacant land of 3 acres or more. Three planning departments should work together on this. Should identify barriers to development (Negative example sewer at North State Chevrolet property - Positive example is Governor's Court Development where government underwrote interest on un-sold units for 2 years)
- c. What concerns/issues are important in field of education and how can Guilford County government be a player/partner in addressing those concerns?

- i. Foundations, county and city governments need to work together
 1. Development of Lake Townsend park
 2. After School Shared Libraries
 3. Incentives
 4. Quality development
 5. Quality of Life (limit billboards)
 6. Discuss quality of schools at other times beside budget time.
 - ii. Proposal for group to work on four or five initiatives that would positively affect prosperity, economic development, tax base, safe and healthy communities, school readiness, creation of business opportunity in poorest zip codes.
 - iii. Need to consider alternative funding (to property tax) such as sales tax.
 - iv. Need to develop initiatives to improve problems in Debbage report
 1. tax base flat
 2. per capita income down
 3. growth in number of older citizens
 4. reduction in growth of younger citizens
 5. increase in poverty rates (free and reduced lunch numbers)
 6. growth in adults working 2 jobs - Adults over 18 need to earn a living wage.
- d. Concluding Remarks
- i. Weaver Foundation paid for dinners for meetings between Mayors and Commissioners in the past. Seem willing to consider it again
 - ii. Need to work on corporate ways to continue to remind public and commissioners where the Strategic Alliance is in the 20-month progress.
 - iii. Could coordinate/attend Education Leadership Academy sponsored by Guilford Educational Alliance (meets 4 Wednesdays in the evening. Great model for civic consciousness
 - iv. Foundations have own particular interest but their vision/mission statements are very similar to the one adopted by the county

October 2, 2007

Meeting with Pleasant Garden Town Council

Location: Pleasant Garden Town Hall

1. What does Guilford County Government do well?
 - Law enforcement (excellent service)
 - Law enforcement – providing space in the new town hall increases presence and response times
 - Solid waste program (inclusive)
 - Recreation Department – but need to focus equal energy in the southern parts of the County
 - Economic development – Guilford County needs to ready to compete in a global market.
 - Communication – between the town and county government
2. What does Guilford County Government not do so well?
 - Taxes – continual increases every year
 - Taxes
 - Closure scrutiny of the budget before adoption and raising taxes

- Take politics out of votes – perception that votes follow party lines, not on the merits or desires of the public
 - Relationship between BOCC and BOE – parents and children suffer due to the deteriorating relationship between boards
 - Funding for the arts – missing opportunities, diversity
 - Schools – high drop out, not graduating rates
3. Opportunities for partnerships between Town and County
- Investigate duplication of services – eliminate redundancies/more cost-effective
 - Ready to help enhance recreational opportunities in the southern part of the County
 - More opportunities to participate – inclusive; i.e., solid waste program
 - Future land use decisions for areas now with water/sewer availability
 - Impacts that could result from the adoption of the proposed Jordan Lake rules

October 4, 2007

Location: **Oak Ridge** Town Council

1. What does Guilford County Government do well?
- Planning (Bill Bruce)
 - Planning & Zoning
 - Gathering Information
 - Keep local permit office – consider other satellite locations
 - Parks & Recreation (Rodger Bardsley)
 - Technical Assistance
 - Planning Department
 - Tax Department – courteous and helpful
2. What does Guilford County Government not do so well?
- BOCC – bickering, hard to get things done
 - Animal control – response time, especially related to rabies cases
 - BOCC unity
 - Financial hardships on towns by taking away sales tax
 - Lack of white collar industries, focus on manufacturing/distribution
 - Retention of graduates from local colleges and universities
 - Quality of life issues (leisure/rec. activities) to retain young people
 - Communication – between county and towns, and town residents
 - Timing of growth and the need for schools
 - Missed opportunities for the County to play a major role in public water system(s)
 - Following up with well intended plans
3. Opportunities for partnerships between Town and County
- Help support town's efforts to secure water, don't hinder
 - Traffic relief on Hwy 68
 - Library expansion
 - Air Quality

- Water
- Alternative transportation and linkage of greenways/trails
- Jordan Lake rules as proposed – County to update towns
- County appearing to give up leadership roles on important issues to Greensboro
- Future development south of the town limit (HOT area/Pleasant Ridge)
- Groundwater quantities and monitoring
- Utilization of space in municipal buildings to accommodate County services
- Well usage and drought regulations
- County should assist Oak Ridge obtain water from Madison; actively support, not remain passive or impede progress
- Monopoly of Time Warner – lack of competition
- Give equal weight/attention to the small towns as the cities
- Assure true, meaningful value for taxes paid

October 16, 2007

7:00 p.m.

Location: **Jamestown** Town Council

Strategic Alliance Meeting with the Jamestown Council

Sharisse Fuller gave the history of the Strategic Alliance, along with the time line for progress. The Town Council presented Sharisse and Martha with answers to the following questions both orally and with some written documentation.

I. What does Guilford County do well?

- ◆ Jamestown is pleased with their contracted law enforcement services.
- ◆ Jamestown is pleased with the funding they receive for the Jamestown Library.
- ◆ They are pleased with the ten-year relationship with the Tax Department where Guilford County Tax Department assesses, bills, and collects for them.
- ◆ They are pleased with contracts for Inspections, Gibson Park, Historic Preservation and election services.
- ◆ They are pleased with sidewalk construction.
- ◆ Principals of High School provide good leadership in the community. Since 1959 there have only been 3 Principals at Ragsdale and they live in and are committed to the Jamestown Community.
- ◆ Customer service is good (Clerk's Office, Inspection Department, Tax Department research, Soil Erosion Control, Emergency Services, Emergency Management Division, Historic Preservation, Elections, Issuance of flood elevation certificates and flood inspections.)

II. What does Guilford County need to improve?

- ◆ Jamestown wants more communication and services from the School Board. They believe the children in the area are "short-cheated" because of overcrowding, overuse of trailers, run down facilities.
- ◆ Other areas receive more promise of funding – cite the \$80 million airport high school, while they can't even get the fence painted
- ◆ Quality of Education – only one chance to educate these children.

- ◆ Children in the area need safe routes to schools – sidewalks, bridges over bypass. Traffic patterns need to be examined (not just in Jamestown City limits but in the area in general.)
- ◆ Ragsdale is overcrowded – kids cannot maneuver in the halls. Although schools promised, more seats have not been provided .
- ◆ Need to look at services more on a County level, not just High Point, Greensboro, Jamestown. Example over 40 Fire Departments in the County. The Fire Departments could be consolidated. Jamestown uses intergovernmental services in some instances. This is a fairer way to get services to the county.
- ◆ Opportunities for regional partnerships should also be examined (Piedmont Triad).
- ◆ Planning and Development needs to place a higher priority on emergency vehicle access when planning for new development.
- ◆ Planning and Development needs to consider whether developments are more than five miles away from the nearest fire station.
- ◆ On-call inspectors should be reachable in a timely manner after hours and on weekends.
- ◆ Development Certification process could be improved.

III. What are opportunities for partnerships?

- ◆ Safe Routes to Schools - need tunnel to by-pass railroad.
- ◆ Clean Air and Healthy Environment Issues
- ◆ Sidewalks, Greenways, pedestrian and bikeways needed – helps keep citizens healthier and builds community.
- ◆ Need places for family activities
- ◆ Parking on East Fork Road near Greenway is treacherous. Children also ride bikes over the bridge which is dangerous.
- ◆ County could share GIS data to help Jamestown with land development issues.

October 18, 2007

Location: **STOKESDALE** Town Council

1. What does Guilford County Government do well?

- Have a good working relationship with Planning; services; making the rate schedule easier to understand and getting fees adjusted. Received good support in setting up Planning from Jim Elza and it has been great
- Good experience with contractual relationships – animal control; personnel training
- Likes the mission statement and hopes it helps

2. What does Guilford County Government not do so well?

- Return to the original method of sales tax distribution; other towns are using taxes to make up for the change; the County should reassess the approach
- Law enforcement – There are drugs and gang issues; sheriff needs more officers; courts need more judges
- Towns are viewed as being self-sufficient but they feel like the red-headed stepchild
- Areas like here need water; they are buying from another County, but there needs to be a strategy for those needs
- There is not a “fair share” proportional to taxes paid
- The area is forgotten

- There appear to be subsidies for some areas that receive planning services
3. Opportunities for partnerships between Town and County
- Libraries – need one in that area; they have land; the County could provide staffing
 - Towns could join each other for library and other public services; Stokesdale is a central place to service 3 towns
 - Ability to have County assistance for grant writing from those trained in skills and/or templates to use to obtain grants.

November 1st

Higher Education Focus Group

- I. Martha provided the welcomes and introduced the County Staff present.
- a. Sharisse Fuller
 - b. Mark Kirstner
 - c. Rob Bencini
 - d. Melissa Johnson
 - e. Alan Perdue
 - f. Julia Courts
- II. Mark had the College Professors introduce themselves and then provided an overview of the Strategic Alliance Process and
- a. Introductions
 - i. Rebecca Klase – Greensboro College
 - ii. Victor Archibong – Greensboro College
 - iii. Rena Dixon – UNC-G
 - iv. Lem Cox – Greensboro College
 - v. Irene Harrington – Guilford College
 - vi. Silvanus Udoka – NC A & T
 - vii. Sherrill Hayes – UNC-G
 - viii. Ruth DeHoog- UNC-G (arrived later)
 - ix. Donata Nelson - Bennett College School of Diversity
 - b. Professors and staff talked about there might be overlap in what Action Greensboro is trying to do and what we are trying to accomplish.
 - c. Greensboro is a college town that doesn't act like one.
 - d. Colleges and Universities do not have as much connectivity with Guilford County as they do with cities because of Law Enforcement and Security.
 - e. Professors also thought that there was overlap with what Erskine Bowles is trying to accomplish with UNC-Tomorrow. These are the questions he is asking.
 - ◆ What are the most important challenges facing your community and how can the University campuses help?
 - ◆ What programs and services should the University offer?
 - ◆ What knowledge and skills do our students need to be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow?

- ◆ How can the University help improve economic opportunities in your area?
- ◆ How can the University better serve you/your community?

III. Mark went over the 4 questions

- a. What does Guilford do well?
 - i. Efficient and courteous collection of taxes
 - ii. PART transportation – new HEAT bus alleviates stress and concern over transportation and parking in students
 - iii. Consortium of Schools allows students to take classes at different colleges but transportation has to be arranged. PART and HEAT help in that regard. Schools that participate in the Consortium are: Bennett College, Elon University, Guilford College, High Point University, Greensboro College, Guilford Technical Community College, North Carolina A & T State University, and UNCG
 - iv. The Strategic Alliance process and community survey good to measure what the county is doing well.
 - v. Accepting interns to give them real world experience and career exploration.
 - vi. GTCC is a strong player in adult education in the county and needs consideration.
 - vii. County offers tuition reimbursement for Guilford County employees to go back to school.
 - viii. 911 Metro and Cert Team good example of City and County working together
- b. In what areas does Guilford County need to improve?
 - i. Students need to be made felt that they are part of the community.
 - ii. Criminal Justice, Interdisciplinary and Public Safety majors are available but shift-work often precludes these workers from taking advantage. Instead, they rely on on-line classes.
 - iii. County doesn't perform project management very well.
 - iv. Public Relations – Students do not know what the county government does other than public schools and parks. Charlotte Mecklenburg talked about how great they were long before they actually were.
 - v. Students would like to stay in the community but they cannot find an entry-level job in their field.
 - vi. All facets of the community should work together (County, city/ Universities/Nonprofits such as Action Greensboro/Triad area including High Point and other smaller jurisdictions to attract and keep young professionals.
 - vii. Need more collaboration
 - viii. Concern as a citizen about quality development and growth
 - ix. Concern about the quality of Guilford County K-12 education. Students are not ready for college.
 - x. Concern about Dropout rate. Children should not be allowed to quit school at 16.
 - xi. Need for City/County to examine duplication of efforts/concern about stream lining government

- xii. Need to tell the story of government – Example ASPA advertisement for young people to go into government work.
- xiii. Need to consider that not all children are going to college – prepare for the world of work
- xiv. Need to be concerned about Land Use/Natural Resources/Economic Sustainability
- c. What concerns/issues are important to your institutions, students and research?
 - i. Parking is a big issue for Greensboro College, UNC-G downtown, not for UNC-G staff at Brown Summit.
 - ii. More traditional students need paid internships and non-traditional students need career exploration for career changes
 - iii. Attracting Guilford County public education students to the Guilford Campus. Even though Early College offers benefits, it hasn't increased Guilford County resident admissions that much.
 - iv. Need Public Safety Response Plans for colleges – police, fire, and emergency preparedness.
 - v. Concern about the health of students, particularly health disparities, HIV, STD's.
 - vi. Students do not know what county services they can access.
- d. How can Guilford County Government be a player/partner in addressing those concerns?
 - i. Professors and department heads need to build relationships (Example – George Gilbert and Rebecca Klase)
 - ii. Students could assist with project management. Time constraints of the semester will have to be worked out.
 - iii. County departments could come to Career Fair at NC A & T and other colleges as well.
 - iv. Could spotlight professor's expertise at work sessions or County Commissioner meetings.
 - v. Class Projects could address “wicked” problems of government (Example – school suspensions)
 - vi. Working on applied research projects together; perhaps seeking grants together
 - vii. DVD, packet could be prepared to be given out at student orientation about government services. Perhaps more information should be available on website, Public TV
 - viii. Both government staff/professors/students need to seek more opportunities for interaction and communication.
 - 1. University Expert List
 - 2. County Speaker's List
 - ix. Gateway Campus - Partnership between UNC-G and NC A & T is excellent opportunity for community development in biotech and environmental issues.
 - x. Opportunities to partner with criminal justice for interns. Need an established contact or partner or single point of connection
 - xi. Need to consider that local universities and colleges know about governmental problems – not just rely on the Institute of Government

- xii. Small grants available for community partners, students, faculty to work on problems – Experts at UNC-G on conflict resolution and at Guilford on principled problem solving
- xiii. Need top involvement of County Manager, Commissioners, Chancellors

IV. Wrap-Up

- a. Would like to get the group back together for more in depth discussion of measuring progress.
- b. Communicate the list of individuals who were present for networking opportunities.

In an e-mail from an invited educator, Eileen Mieras Kohlenberg, Associate Dean and Director of Graduate Study, UNC-G School of Nursing, she offers the following:

I think we need to focus on improvement in the following areas:

1. Improvement of our public school facilities and resources:
 - a) Our classrooms are crowded; some students do not have textbooks; and new teachers do not always have enough support for mentoring
 - b) Addition of school nurses: The health and welfare of students in the public schools would be greatly enhanced by having a school nurse in each facility.
 - c) Good math, science, and English skills are important for our entering college students – especially in nursing.
 - d) 2. Programs that address healthy living and environments are also important for our county.

November 2, 2007

Environmental Focus Group

Commissioner Cashion welcomed the group and they introduced themselves. Mark Kirstner explained the timeline and strategic alliance process. Sharisse Fuller, the chairwoman of the Strategic Alliance Committee also welcomed the group. Rob Bencini, the convener facilitated the discussion.

Attendees:

Martha Rogers, Guilford County
Scott Rhine, PART
Kay Cashion, County Commissioner
Ginger Booker, Piedmont Triad Council of Government
Alyson Best, GCPDH
Ken Carter, GCPDH
Sharisse Fuller, Guilford County
Carolyn Turner, NC A & T, Guilford County Environmental Review Board
Jeryl W. Covington, City of Greensboro
Susan Heim, Guilford County
Kathi Dubel, Greensboro Economic Development
Jenni Paige, UNC Greensboro
Anna Marshall-Baker - UNCG
Peter Kauber, Guilford Solar
Wendy Cockerham, Weaver Cooke Construction
Anne Tazewell, NC Solar Center/NCSU

Meredith Williams, Guilford County
Shayla Parker, Guilford County
Bonnie Stellfox, Guilford County
Bryce Ball, Guilford County
Brenda Morris, Guilford County
Bridget Lindsey, Guilford County
Warren Simmons, Guilford County
Fred Jones, Guilford County
Melissa Johnson, Guilford County
Alex Ashton, Guilford County
Roger Bardsley, Guilford County
Melanie Buckingham, Environmental Library

I. Air Quality/Fleet Fuels

a. What does Guilford County do well?

- i.** Ginger Booker from the Council of Government explained the 8-hour ozone standard and the consequences for non-attainment. Currently eleven Piedmont Triad counties exceed health standards for ground level ozone in the air. The next step would be designation by the EPA as a nonattainment area. The PTCOG worked with these counties and 20 cities to establish an Early Action Compact to avoid ill consequences for industry.
- ii.** Ginger is currently working on non-conformity for fine particles. This means higher standards for location and expansion of industries if not in compliance by 2010. Guilford's soot concentrations are under the allowable limit but were cited by the EPA because of traffic volume and population contributes to Davidson's non-compliance.
- iii.** The PTCOG has also advocated using bio-fuels and conserving energy/water/fuel for a number of years.
- iv.** Anne Tazewell from the North Carolina Solar Center, North Carolina State University gave an update on clean transportation and efforts to increase usage of bio fuels. There is a call for projects for available grant funding of \$500,000. Her office can provide technical assistance for Fleet Managers to increase use of alternative fuels to improve air quality. Bio fuels are also being looked at as a new economy for the state. Growth in this area can only help since we have no competition (fuel refining plants).
- v.** Use of hybrid cars - county has 4 cars
- vi.** Greensboro has used bio diesel fuel for a while. County uses city of Greensboro for fueling and City has been proactive in obtaining bio fuels.
- vii.** County monitors energy usage for electricity and water. The County also uses Energy Star.
- viii.** Scott Rhine from PART discussed the successes of PART in bus ridership and in Park and Ride lots in reducing vehicle miles traveled. PART has a multitude of programs to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled. Elon College has outfitted all of its buses to be biofuel buses. Now they market it to show its dedication to the environment

b. What can we do to improve Air Quality/Fleet Fuels?

- i.** Community Awareness
- ii.** Education
- iii.** Health education about impacts (asthma, air awareness)
- iv.** Planning regulations can affect Air Quality

c. Opportunities

- i.** Peter Kauber mentioned the resource availability of crops for production of ethanol. He mentioned a feasibility study for production of ethanol that Jim Weeks had done in conjunction with A & T.
- ii.** Kathi Dubel from Greensboro Economic Development explained the strategy to add another industry cluster of sustainable energy to our current economic clusters of aviation, transportation and logistics, advanced manufacturing, financial and data centers, and life sciences. She is currently working on a bio fuel project for the area. It would be an opportunity to help bring a new economy to Guilford County. She is also working on a bio fuel hub project.
- iii.** State bill will furnish money to equip school buses to use bio fuels.
- iv.** County should obtain vehicle-purchasing policy from City of Winston Salem. They do not purchase larger vehicles if not needed.
- v.** County has furnished PART a list of zip codes of all staff to try to improve parking downtown.

II. Solid Waste and Recycling

a. What is Guilford County doing well?

- i.** Susan Heim reported that Guilford County was the lead-planning agency for solid waste, coordinating with the towns and cities.
- ii.** Current Solid Waste Management plan was adopted in June of 2006
- iii.** Division keeps abreast of solid waste issues and educates the public about recyclables
- iv.** This division runs the Scrap Tire/White Goods facility. The County has received 100% cost recovery for tire disposal costs. They try to address illegal tire disposal. Susan is working on a convenience site to try to increase recycling. They have received private sponsorship to fund this convenience site.
- v.** State has passed new regulation to try and address landfill issue. This new legislation assesses a \$2/ton tipping fee on all solid waste. New landfills are harder to find sites for. State has identified need for new landfills in Raleigh, Greensboro, and Charlotte. Possibility of getting into a bidding war with Mecklenburg for disposal of trash
- vi.** Cost of metals has been beneficial to help recycle waste.
- vii.** Cost of landfill is \$36 to \$38 per ton. The waste to energy alternative is \$80/ton.
- viii.** State Law 2005-348 has mandated bars and restaurants (holders of permits to sell alcoholic beverages on premises) to recycle all beverage containers on site. The recycling program must provide for the separation, storage, and collection of the containers. Knowingly disposing of the containers in landfills is prohibited. This takes effect on January 1st 2008. Enforcement for this new rule has not been adequately defined and funded. This law presents big problems for glass since recycling glass is not profitable. Currently, the City of Greensboro Guilford jurisdictions has an agreement with FCR Incorporated for disposal of recyclable materials. Other players are Reflective Recycling in Winston Salem and a new recycler in Asheboro. The largest processor is in Raleigh but transportation costs are an issue because of the distance.
- ix.** County has been providing technical assistance to bars and restaurants outside the central business units of High Point and Greensboro assessing their waste and meeting the recycling mandate.

b. What can we do to improve Solid Waste?

- i.** Cities offer recycling to central business districts only for glass. This has resulted in complaints from other areas that these businesses are receiving favorable treatment

- ii. One of the problems with the FCR contract for glass recycling is FCR requires glass to be separated. The company in Raleigh is using optical scanning and glass does not have to be separated by color. Transportation costs are the issue.
- iii. Many County government offices and facilities do not provide for any kind of recycling. This is because of the cost of obtaining separate dumpsters and location of dumpsters downtown displaces parking spaces.
- c. Opportunities
 - i. Jennie Paige works in the Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling at UNC-G. It got its start as the result of student movement to push for recycling. They have a broad base of student volunteers and will work with governments on brainstorming, pulling together expertise, educational awareness, and on providing a large number of volunteers for environmental projects when needed.
 - ii. Anna Marshall-Baker, Professor at UNC-G said the Environmental Studies Major at UNC-G is also an opportunity to have students work on community projects involving the environment.
 - iii. Peter Kauber of Guilford Solar Communities provides a film discussion series about the environment. The NOVA video "Solar Energy – Saved by the Sun" presents a provocative mix of scientists and ordinary citizens who are all pushing the envelope of solar energy's untapped potential. This film will be shown on Saturday, November 3 at the Piedmont Environmental system.
 - iv. Peter Kauber also operates a blog dedicated to the environment at <http://guilfordsolar.blogspot.com/>
 - v. Melanie Buckingham is from The Kathleen Clay Edwards Library which is a branch of the Greensboro Public Library. It has an environmental education focus with environmental collections and programs for all ages. The library is located in a 98-acre passive park which includes a native plant garden, rain garden, a bird and butterfly meadow and hiking trails. The library building has some green building features including carpet tiles and daylighting. It is located at 1420 Price Park Dr. Greensboro, NC 27410.

III. Water Quality/Quantity

- a. What is Guilford County doing well?
 - i. Ken Carter from Public Health pointed out ways the Health Department is protecting water.
 1. Protection of water quality through regulation of wastewater (septic tanks)
 2. Well Construction, studying impact of 10,000 gallon wells on quantity of existing wells in area
 3. Underground gas tanks; groundwater contamination and remediation. The Department works with the state on the clean up and monitoring of these sites.
 4. Contamination at Whitsett, Stokesdale, and Oak Ridge. From the Greensboro News and Record, A state toxicologist has told Whitsett he'll try to help the Town Council get grant money for a water system. Ken Rudo, a scientist with the N.C. Division of Public Health, spoke at the Oct. 9 council meeting. Because some residents' wells have been contaminated by petroleum from leaking underground storage tanks, the town wants to build a water system to hook up their houses to the Burlington-owned water line running along U.S. 70. But the town, which doesn't collect taxes, doesn't have the money. It's looking for county, state and federal grant money to fund the \$600,000 water system. Rudo said he would talk to staff in charge of two

state grant sources: the Rural Center and the loan and grant unit of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "If the funding is still there, I think you'd be a pretty high priority," Rudo said."

5. Stokesdale is also looking for funding sources for public water.

6. The Health Department worked with Oak Ridge to get a community well that was clean drinking water.

b. What can we do to improve Water Quality and Quantity?

i. Walter Simmons pointed out Guilford County is in the headwaters of the Cape Fear and all of the water we use in Guilford County, is rain fall that falls in Guilford County. There are 8 watersheds and approximately 50-55 miles of land in the watersheds that need attention.

ii. Drought and threat of more droughts over the winter and into next summer bring additional risks. Ken Carter said that the monitoring wells that Guilford County has shown a 5 to 6 drop in groundwater from May to September. In the 5 or 5 years, the county has been monitoring, ground water levels have been steadily going down. Well drillers are reporting having to drill deeper wells. There is a need to allow water to recharge

iii. Regulations sometimes prove a challenge as City of Greensboro tried to improve water quality by having a collection day for unused prescription drugs and had to involve many agencies.

c. Opportunities

i. Jordan Lake rules about nutrient roles present opportunities and challenges for Guilford County. One particular requirement that is onerous is the requirement to retrofit for storm water run-off. Downtown will be difficult because of lack of available land to do it. It will be difficult in the county because of amount of land that will be required. Although agricultural run-off is a big problem, it is not addressed by General Assembly rules.

ii. Need to educate commissioners and citizens about the importance of quality and quantity of water.

iii. Carolyn Turner talked about the charge of the Environmental Review Board. This is a board of 15 board members who have a background in the area. The Board is quasi-judicial in nature as it hears and recommends on cases dealing with water use. They evaluate the roles and criteria of water regulation.

iv. Erskine Bowles is urging the connection of Universities to communities. Need to follow through and develop a systematic model to have the Universities work with County Government on environmental issues. Chancellors should be involved.

v. Well water users need to be educated.

vi. The County needs to publicize what they are doing in relations to the environment.

IV. Planning/ Sustainable Buildings

d. What is Guilford County doing well?

i. Wendy Cockerham of Weaver Cooke Construction reported on the building of their new headquarters. As part of their mission to be a good steward of the environment, they used sustainable techniques, methods and materials on its new headquarter buildings.

ii. Result is the building uses less energy, water, and has greater fresh air intake, lots of daylight and outdoor views.

iii. waterless urinals and dual flush toilets

iv. It was constructed with regional and recycled materials.

- v. Construction debris was diverted from the landfill.
- vi. Although there may be an upfront cost premium, life cycle costs have to be considered and how long it takes to recoup.
- vii. Uses renewable resources such as wood and does not use particle board which has toxicity of glue.
- viii. Northern Middle School also constructed with Green design.
- e. What can we do to improve sustainable buildings?
 - i. Need to consider usages. Sustainable buildings are not done by a lot of developers who have plans to “flip” the building. Governments build for long periods in the future so it makes sense for them to consider it.
- f. Opportunities
 - i. Planning Commissioners could give incentives for recycled materials and for construction debris being diverted from land fills.
 - ii. Economic Incentives could be given extra points for using LEED building design.
 - iii. Use of Performance Contracting if monies not allotted in CIP budget.
 - iv. Redesign of ordinances
- V. Connectivity/ Wrap-up
 - a. Lot's of players and connectivity in environment
 - b. Need a working group of people to meet and problem solve.
 - c. Chancellors of Universities need to be involved. Pressure to preserve a quality environment is strong.
 - d. Guilford County doesn't get the same amount of publicity for its efforts but it is lumbering along, getting good results.
 - e. Need to report progress and results.
 - f. Need for Public Relations - Digital sign messages - Did you know your county government did this? Needs to be visible to everybody.
 - g. Possibility that County could involve students in a marketing and publicity campaign.

November 8, 2007

Cooperative Extension County Advisory Focus Group

Comments from this meeting were submitted in summary form. Refer to summary.

December 6, 2007

Former Commissioners Focus Group

Facilitated by Billie Martin-Pierce and Sharisse Fuller & Notes taken by Ida Milan

County Manager David McNeill & Chairman Paul Gibson welcomed the group. Sharisse went over the Strategic Alliance Time Line

From the County Website

FORMER COMMISSIONERS CONVENE TO ASSIST WITH COUNTY STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

On December 6, a number of former Guilford County Commissioners gathered to use their experience and offer their opinions on the future direction of Guilford County government. The Guilford County Strategic Alliance Committee, which is guiding the County's strategic planning process, invited former Commissioners to be part of a focus group to provide input on the County's strategic plan.

Seventeen former Guilford County Commissioners participated in this historic event: Margaret Arbuckle, Mike Barber, Forrest Campbell, Walt Cockerham, Doug Galyon, Phyllis Gibbs, Wally Harrelson, Dot Kearns, Bob Landreth, Dick Maxwell, Odell Payne, Fred Preyer, Mary Rakestraw, Bob Shaw, Jeff Thigpen, Chuck Winfree and Joe Wood. Following the focus group meeting, those attending were honored at a reception and later at the Board of Commissioners meeting.

Current Commissioners Kay Cashion, Paul Gibson, John Parks and Kirk Perkins also attended to welcome former Board members and to hear first-hand their thoughts on what the County is doing right, strategic issues that need to be addressed, and ideas for actions to solve these problems. The County's Strategic Alliance Committee will compile and analyze responses from this and other community focus groups. This feedback will be used to help formulate goals and strategies for Guilford County as part of the strategic planning process.

Attendees:

Former Commissioners








Mike Barber
Chuck Winfree
Bob Shaw
Forrest Campbell
Doug Galyon
Joe Wood
Fred Preyer
Odell Payne

Dick Maxwell
Phyllis Gibbs
Mary Rakestraw
Jeff Thigpen
Walt Cockerham
Wally Harrelson
Bob Landreth
Dot Kearns

Present Commissioners

Kay Cashion
John Parks
Kirk Perkins
Paul Gibson

What does Guilford County do well?

-  Finance Department
-  Collect Taxes
-  EMS
-  DSS
-  Commitment to Green Space
-  Health Department
-  Guilford Center (Mental Health in general)

- # Watershed Protection
- # Register of Deeds
- # Coordination among departments in dealing with population groups such as children and the elderly
- # Sheriff's Department
- # Economic Development – especially emphasis on small businesses
- # Parks and Recreation
- # Law Enforcement
- # Budget/Finance
- # Human Resources
- # Court Facilities
- # Property Management (planning ahead)
- # Process for Land Use Planning
- # Tax rate stability

What does Guilford County need to improve?

- # Relationship with schools
- # More control over school spending
- # Look at capital expenditures for schools cooperatively
- # Look at innovative ways of funding schools – COPS mentioned
- # Look at quality of newly built schools
- # Prototype schools
- # Strategic Planning efforts stay on the shelf – never get implemented, concern this plan might go the way of Forecast 2015
- # Marketing to people that live here about strengths including transportation ,real estate market, geographic placement as the center of the East Coast
- # Market as the Triad - increase role of Piedmont Triad Partnership & Airport area
- # Perception of the current Board's image – not given credit for overall efficiency
- # Differences between City/County government – City Manager more corporate style while County Manager has to network to achieve goals (take direction from all directions)
- # Impact of TV on that image
- # Size of the current board
- # More shared/merged services among county and 2 cities
- # Need to get High Point engaged
- # Need for adequate mental health serves – use Medicaid money state is returning to county for this
- # Loss of Medicaid money in schools is a problem. Previously money was used to treat chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes
- # Need to expand services for substance abuse treatment

How to address concerns?

- # Sales Tax referendum for funding services and schools – less reliance on property tax
- # Follow through on this strategic plan
- # Deal with the public in a pleasant way and offer good customer service. Independence Center is a good example of excellent customer service which breaks down silos and offers one-stop shopping to customers

- # Need to address issues of safety in schools especially possibility of re-occurrence of fires such as Eastern High School
- # Flawed system for accountability – school needs funded by the County but school Board accountable for results
- # Citizens should be able to speak to a person , not a telephone system
- # Continue to take care of employees as a great asset
- # Continue to support parks and libraries
- # Welcome joint efforts between county and 2 cities
- # Essential to have good land use planning involving county and 2 cities. This includes airport/highways & transportation hub)
- # Planning around airport; concerns about residential versus commercial/industrial uses of land. Land needs to preserved for economic development growth
- # Use brain power at the universities
- # Preserve the furniture market

From: Jeff Thigpen’s website

Quick Points:

- * Milk toast government is not the right way to go and Guilford County government is not in that category--Mike Barber
- * Guilford County needs to engage the talents of the local university system--Chuck Winfree
- * Mental Health issues are crucial and need to be a priority--Forrest Campbell
- * What makes this planning effort different than all the others put on the shelf?--Bob Landreth
- * Guilford County should take care of its greatest resource, its employees--Joe Wood
- * There needs to be more done on issues of substance abuse. We have made some progress, but not nearly enough--Wally Harrelson
- * The congeniality of the Board of Commissioners has been an issue for some time. Does Guilford County need an 11 member Board?- Richard Maxwell
- * Fed Ex is going to be an engine for growth in the Triad. We need to preserve the land and land use in the area to help facilitate that growth- Walt Cockerham

Non-Profit Organization Focus Group

Comments from this meeting were submitted in summary form. Refer to summary.

Hospitality, Conventions, Arts & Sports Focus Group Focus Group

Comments from this meeting were submitted in summary form. Refer to summary.