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# Strategic Direction for Dorchester County

## March 15, 2016

### Introduction

**Council Members:** George Bailey, David Chinnis, Jay Byars, Willie Davis, Carroll S. Duncan, and William R. "Bill" Hearn

**Staff:** Jason Ward, Charlie Potts, John Frampton, Jessica Shuler, and Tracey Langley

**Facilitators:** Bill Tomes

Members of Council were asked what they wanted to accomplish during the day. The following were mentioned:

- An update on where we are and what our needs are
- Plan for the future for the betterment of citizens and being fiscally sound
- Where we are today and where we are going, and the progress we have made
- Decide on adjustments to be made to the strategic plan
- Discuss the reality of the Local Government Fund
- Identify actions to be taken

Council then reviewed the vision and mission statements:

### Vision Statement

The government of Dorchester County will be recognized for its innovative, efficient, and effective delivery of services. County government will be characterized by its enlightened policy leadership, dedicated and professional employees, its commitment to quality, and its citizen focus.

In partnership with its citizens and businesses, it will play a leadership role in achieving a balance between growth, the environment, and preservation of the unique cultural and natural characteristics of Dorchester County.

### Mission Statement

Dorchester County Government delivers essential services that contribute to the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. In doing so, we seek to meet the collective needs of our citizens in a cost-efficient manner.

The Council then identified the following current challenges to achieving the vision

1. Cuts in Local Government Fund
2. Highway funding
3. Tax structure
4. Federal policies

5. Competition with other counties
6. Geographic limitations
7. Challenges of providing services to growing areas/rural areas
8. Finding/retaining good employees
9. Communication with citizens
10. Technology changes/impact on industry
11. Infrastructure needs
12. Impact of Volvo plant in Berkeley County
13. Managing growth
14. Working with other elected bodies (school districts, municipalities) to address issues
15. Quality of life demands from citizens
16. Homeless citizens and youth
17. Workforce development and availability of technical education

## Issue Identification

Based on Council's vision for the County and the challenges faced, Council Members identified the following issues to be addressed over the next two to three years.

1. Health care in the western end of the County
2. Wetlands strategy
3. Delivery of County services
4. Quality of life facilities (parks, libraries)
5. Zoning issues (impact on the public)
6. Unfunded state mandates
7. Shortage in the Local Government Fund
8. Drainage issues
9. Retention of County employees
10. Consolidation of County operations
11. Economic development
12. Getting some of the Volvo related businesses
13. Planning for future industries
14. Finding additional revenue sources
15. Citizen education on funding and zoning issues
16. Workforce development
17. Planning for growth

## Strategic issues

Council then reviewed issues suggested by staff during the staff retreat in January. Those issues included Roads/Transportation, Water/Sewer Infrastructure, County Facilities, Public Safety, Human Resources, and Information Technology. After reviewing all of the issues, Council categorized the issues into the following issue areas and developed key results and strategies for each:

### **1. Funding**

#### **Key Results:**

- Diversify revenue stream
- Build capital projects without impacting property taxes
- Fully fund Local Government Fund

**Strategies:**

- A. Communicate with state senators about the importance of fully funding the Local Government Fund
- B. Consider a hospitality tax
- C. Perform a residential property audit

**2. Economic Development**

**Key Results:**

- Improve the “hit rate”
- Increase jobs and investments
- Increase office space
- Increase retail businesses
- Address the wetlands issue

**Strategies:**

- A. Work with the legislature in getting a Trident Technical College campus in Dorchester County
- B. Request assistance from the governor and delegation about wetlands regulations at the state level
- C. Seek assistance from hydrologists about wetlands issues (\$)
- D. Focus on zoning and infrastructure in the SC 27/I-26 area of the County (\$)

**3. Delivery of County Services**

**Key Results:**

- Improve employee retention
- Improve customer service to taxpayers

**Strategies:**

- A. Continue to develop online delivery of services (\$)
- B. Streamline County services, beginning with development review and building inspections (\$)
- C. Develop a plan for consolidating operations to include: (\$)
  - a. Moving state offices
  - b. Moving some County operations from St. George
- D. Establish a revenue office (\$)
- E. Fund training for employees (\$)

**4. Growth Management**

**Key Results:**

- County is zoned for managed growth
- Plan for road funding
- Have infrastructure in place for future development
- Improve library access for citizens
- Improve County parks

## Strategies

- A. Replace main library branch (\$)
- B. Meet with property owners to explain zoning changes
- C. Consider recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission on Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and operating and capital costs (\$)
- D. Consider recommendation from the Library Board on Library Master Plan, and operating and capital costs (\$)
- E. Seek TIGER grant funding for roads
- F. Seek CHATS funding for roads
- G. Seek grants through SCDOT and Federal Highway Administration for roads
- H. Seek funding through Rural Infrastructure Authority, Economic Development Administration and Private/Public partnerships for infrastructure funding (\$)
- I. Seek additional authorization under the Water Resources Development Act (\$)
- J. Prepare Stormwater Capital Improvement Plan and recommend funding for projects (\$)
- K. Meet with health care providers about providing services in western Dorchester County