

Each Commissioner then commented on the proposed lease agreement. Vice-Chair Holbrook began by reading a prepared statement. He read the statement as follows.

“Sometimes it is very difficult to put into words the message you would like to convey, however, there are a couple of things that have made strong impressions on me during all these decisions.

1. It is good to see the emotion and passion of our citizens regarding Cleveland County’s history.
2. It is difficult and not always popular to be involved when decisions of this magnitude have to be made.
3. I have attempted to listen to both sides during this process and have tried to form decisions that would be most beneficial to the county.
4. It is impossible to please everyone, and as you attempt to work for solutions through negotiations and conversation you need to remain flexible and remember that a “territorial compromise is an important ingredient for progress.”
5. My goal for the county is that we will utilize the vision and creativity of our citizens and consultants, and as we move forward that we will communicate better, that we will listen better, that we will compromise for the betterment of all, and that we will work together.

Some questions have come to me from some of our citizens concerning a couple of items in the lease that I want to share with Destination Cleveland County. They have also caused me some concern.

1. Questions on whether it is good to limit the hours for Cleveland County citizens. They are taxpayers and owners of the building.
2. I understand that most museums across the country are not profitable. So it looks to me that DCC will need to really be creative in order to be self-sustaining entity and therefore, this places a great deal of importance of maximizing the Don Gibson Theater.

Both parties have voiced valid concerns and even though we have difficulty agreeing on each point, it is important that we make a decision and move forward.

I said when I entered the political arena that I wanted to see if I could make a positive contribution to our county and our citizens, and that is really the only reason I sought this position. That is what I am attempting to do. Understanding that we might not always agree, I have listened, tried to do what is best in my thoughts and actions, have been professional and have not sacrificed my integrity. I can honestly feel I did what was right. So my challenge to all of us is let’s move the county forward. Lets be creative, visionary and dream to the point that we challenge ourselves. If the history of Cleveland County has been a bright, beacon of light, let it not be said when history looks at our generation that we were viewed as a generation unwilling to accept the challenges of the future. Let it not be said that we were a generation with little vision and creativity, with little willingness to work together for progress, with leadership unwilling to lead, with ceilings on our ability to achieve, with leaders and citizens that refused to take daring steps. In my opinion the restoration of the Historic Courthouse and the Scruggs Center is a step forward. However, I do not believe that as a stand-a-lone venue it will attain the travel, tourism and economic benefits that all of us would like to see, but, combined with the Gibson Theater venue it has fabulous potential. I would encourage DCC to be even more visionary in their plans for that venue. It can provide not only entertainment for our citizens but with the museum and Scruggs Center it can provide the ingredients for economic revitalization. We can dream of even a Carolinas Music Hall of Fame hosted by our own Don Gibson and Earl Scruggs.

I really encourage you to challenge all of us to raise the bar and let’s look at accomplishing something that will truly be historic for a future generation.

Yes, I am willing to support the first phase of something that can be wonderful, but I ask you to evaluate and ask yourself to consider being even more creative and visionary regarding the Gibson Theater and its amenities. The winners would be both venues plus, travel and tourism, merchants, restaurants, our economy in general, and most of all Cleveland County and our citizens.”

Commissioner Accor spoke next. “I have been in Education for twenty-eight years and I realize that even for children, there will be some upsides and downsides to everything. I have been invited by Destination Cleveland County and by Ms. LeGrand to a number of meetings and each time; I have been shown nothing but courtesy. I believe that the questions regarding this have been answered to the best of my ability. Tonight, when I make my decision, it will be based on the next generation and the future of this county.”

Commissioner Hutchins noted that he has also spoken to both sides. He attended meetings of those for this proposed project and against the proposed project. "I endorsed the concept, upfront, of partnering with a private entity to sustain the courthouse for a museum regardless of whose name is on it whether it is Earl Scruggs, Elvis or anyone else as long as we can maintain control. I feel like we have worked hard on this lease agreement and I do feel like we have control. It is a start, any start is not perfect. Up until after lunch, I still had not decided which way to go. I have talked to people all over the community to find out what the people wanted rather than what each group wanted. I feel like we have a good thing going and I feel like after the vote, I certainly hope, that we all can back up and move ahead."

Commissioner Hawkins also spoke regarding the proposed lease of the historic courthouse. "Many of you are aware of a book called *The Purpose Driven Church* by Pastor Rick Warren. One of the things that Mr. Warren addresses in his book is change. We must recognize change when change is needed. Most of you know what we had in the old Cleveland County Historical Museum. It was horrible. That is why the doors have been padlocked. What I will say to you now, and will always say, is that, I will always support those individuals who champion positive change for our county. I will support the individuals who step up to recognize change and accept change which is one of the hardest things to do, and make change positive for Cleveland County."

Commissioner Hutchins asked the County Attorney, Bob Yelton, to answer the question, "What makes the old lease terminated?" Mr. Yelton explained that in his legal research and opinion, based on cases and statutes in North Carolina, when the museum association abandoned the building and stayed abandoned for a period of over 180 days, it was the county's prerogative to take over the building free of the lease and also take control of all of the property in the building. This property has been abandoned for four or five years.

Chairwoman Boggs concluded the comments by the Commissioners by stating, "I had the privilege Saturday morning, of going to the egg hunt held at the old courthouse. I was out there on the grounds of that beautiful courthouse. I thought, everyone there was from Cleveland County, probably, and everybody was getting along so well. It reminded me of a family gathering. It felt like we were one big, happy family out searching for Easter eggs. I couldn't help but look up at that building. The exterior is beautiful but if you just glance in those windows, you can see what dis-repair that building is in and how sad it looks. My grandparents have been gone for a long time. It has been years since I have been in my grandmothers homes. I remember, as a child, going to my grandmothers and playing outside. What a joy it was to be able to go into her house. Looking at the building I thought, I cannot go into our county's house. I have a three-year old grandson and a husband that were both born and raised in Cleveland County. My grandson has never been through those doors, and I dare say, it has been decades since my husband has been through those doors. I owe it to those two, as well as to the rest of this county, for those doors to be open and for the citizens of Cleveland County to be able to go into their house. There will be generations of memories that will be brought back to life. If we do not bring back those artifacts, the history of Cleveland County may cease to exist."

**ACTION:** Ronnie Hawkins made the motion, seconded by Mary Accor, and unanimously adopted by the Board, *to approve the proposed lease agreement.* (copy found on Page \_\_\_\_\_ of Minute Book 30).

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

**ACTION:** Eddie Holbrook made the motion, seconded by Johnny Hutchins, and unanimously adopted by the Board, *to remove Commissioner Reports from the agenda.*

### **ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, Johnny Hutchins made the motion, seconded by Ronnie Hawkins, and unanimously adopted by the Board, *to adjourn the meeting*

(at 8:00 p.m.). The next regular meeting of the Commission is scheduled for ***Tuesday, April 1, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.*** in this Commission Chamber.

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*Rebecca Jo Powell Boggs, Chairwoman  
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*

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*Kerri Melton, Clerk  
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*