

**Windsor, North Carolina**  
**January 5, 2015**  
**Regular Meeting**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled meeting at 4:00pm in the Commissioners Room located at 106 Dundee Street Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: Ronald "Ron" Wesson, District I  
Stewart White, District II  
Tammy A. Lee, District III  
John Trent, District IV  
Ernestine (Byrd) Bazemore, District V

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer  
Clerk to the Board Sarah S. Tinkham  
County Attorney Lloyd Smith  
Network Administrator Joe Wilkes  
Finance Director William Roberson  
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs  
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea

Gene Motley of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald and Thadd White of the Bertie Ledger-Advance were present from the media.

Chairman Wesson welcomed all of those present, and thanked them for their attendance.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Wesson gave the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Norman Cherry of Lewiston was present to represent Martin Community College as the Interim Director of the Bertie Campus, and provided the Board with a hand out detailing the courses being offered at MCC for the new semester. He also informed the Board that a meeting space was available at the MCC Bertie Campus that the Board could utilize, if needed.

There were no other Public Comments.

## APPOINTMENTS

### **Presentation of audit report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014 by Mr. Jeff Best of Carr, Riggs & Ingram, CPAs**

Mr. Best presented each Commissioner with a draft copy of the audit, and explained that the NC Local Government Commission's final approval should be received in just a matter of days.

He explained to the Board that there have been many changes in governmental accounting standards and that some terminology has changed. For example, a Board would typically receive a letter with an "unqualified" opinion when a unit's financial statements were fairly presented in all material respects, which is good news for the Board.

For the year ended June 30, 2014 Mr. Best explained that there is good news for the Board and the County's financial position, but the terminology has changed and the auditors are now issuing an "unmodified" opinion.

Mr. Best discussed with the Board, that if he were a member of the governing body, his initial focus would be on the net change in fund balance and he referred the Commissioners to page 21. According to the audit after all adjustments, the net change in fund balance for the year ended June 30 2014 is \$585,233 which is the amount of increase for the fund balance reserves.

He also explained that the NC Local Government Commission monitors the fund balance level for counties and municipalities as a measure of fiscal soundness. In Bertie County's case, the fund balance is nearly thirty-two percent (32%) of projected expenditures for the next year which is very strong for a County of this size.

Mr. Best spent considerable time reviewing each section of the audit report and noted that he would be willing to attend a work session with the Board after each Commissioner has had more time to review the documents.

County Manager Sauer suggested that the report be immediately posted on the County's website so that it is available for the citizens to review.

County Attorney Lloyd Smith asked for clarification on two issues—confirmation that the audit report is an "unmodified" opinion; and confirmation that there were no findings of deficiencies for internal control.

Mr. Best assured the County Attorney and the Board that he could answer affirmatively on both questions.

Chairman Wesson thanked Mr. Best for his patience in providing such a thorough report, and indicated that the Board would welcome further discussion at a later date.

### **Windsor Rotary Club/Pound the Sound Committee – request for sponsorship**

John Davis and Billy Smithwick of the Town of Windsor and Windsor Rotary Club informed the Board of an opportunity to sponsor a triathlon event in collaboration with Scotch Hall Preserve to be called “Pound the Sound.” The event will take place on Saturday, June 13, 2015.

Mr. Davis stated that the Windsor Rotary Club was looking to make this event as much of a team effort as possible and that other local organizations are on board.

Chairman Wesson stated that this event was a great idea, and that it fits nicely into their Economic Development cluster of adventure/tourism.

Vice Chairman Lee expressed concerns about an influx of other organizations looking to receive sponsorship, and that not all events can be supported by the County.

Commissioner Trent responded by stating that events like this could show a corporate hotel chain that Bertie County is worth the investment as these events can grow each year.

After some additional discussion, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to sponsor the Pound the Sound event with a donation of \$1,000. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

In conclusion, Mr. Davis encouraged all of those interested, citizen or public official, to participate on the Pound the Sound Committee.

### **Request to present at the Board’s 2015 Planning Retreat – Patricia Ferguson, President of the African American Caucus and lead convener of the Poverty Summit hosted at Chowan University**

Patricia Ferguson, President of the African American Caucus, approached the Board with the latest tier designations released by the State.

Ms. Ferguson emphasized the importance of considering the poor in every County decision, and that poverty cannot be eradicated without active participation from policymakers. She also spoke regarding the importance of County and township participation regarding the next Census data collection in 2020.

The Board agreed, and stated that inaccuracies in the Census data have a serious impact on the County’s eligibility for various grant funding.

Additionally, Ms. Ferguson requested that she be included on the Board’s upcoming Planning Retreat agenda.

The Board agreed that Ms. Ferguson would be given a time slot on the Planning Retreat agenda, as well as announced to all of those present that Planning Retreats are open to the public.

## **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

The Board reviewed an application from Maggie Witherspoon to fill an open vacancy on the Nursing Home & Adult Care Home Advisory Board.

After some discussion, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to appoint Maggie Witherspoon to the Nursing Home & Adult Care Home Advisory Board. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **Approve minutes for Regular Session 12-15-14**

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes for Regular Session 12-15-14. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Employee Eligibility Records Retention – County Tax Administrator**

Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea was present to answer any questions about this item. After a brief discussion, Mr. Rhea recommended that this item be accepted by the Board.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to accept the new Employee Eligibility Records Retention schedule as outlined in the Board's electronic agenda packet, and as recommended by the Tax Administrator. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **CDBG Project Close-Out Extension Request for Scatter Site Housing Project Number 11-C-2304**

County Manager Sauer recommended this item for approval.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve this item as recommended. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Accept Register of Deeds Fees Report – December 2014**

County Manager Sauer recommended that this item be accepted as presented.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to accept the Register of Deeds Fees Report for December 2014. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **Authorize Public Hearing for CDBG projects and FY2015 funding on January 20, 2015**

County Manager Sauer requested that the Board authorize a Public Hearing regarding CDBG projects for FY2015 on January 20, 2015 at 7:00pm inside the Aulander Community Building. This public hearing would take place during the Board's regularly scheduled meeting.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to authorize a Public Hearing as requested. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION AGENDA**

### **Green Engineering presentation of Lewiston-Woodville Water System Evaluation and discussion of Town of Roxobel for a similar water system evaluation and possible merger**

Chairman Wesson introduced Rodney Tart of Green Engineering, noting that the Board of Commissioners had previously acted favorably to accept the Town of Lewiston-Woodville's offer to accept the town's water system, pending an evaluation of the feasibility for consolidation with the County's regional water system.

Green Engineering's evaluation included a review of the Town's records, State archive documents and a detailed physical inspection of the system.

The distribution system consists of 18 miles of water mains with pipe sizes ranging from 1 and ½ inches to eight inches in diameter, with various materials such as galvanized steel, cast iron, asbestos cement and PVC which were all common during the period of construction dating to the early 1960s.

Smaller lines and all galvanized steel pipe will require replacement, in addition to replacing all meters in the early stages of this transition.

There was significant discussion about the viability and cost associated with rehabilitation of the 100,000 gallon elevated water storage tank which has been out of service for at least a decade.

Green Engineering also examined the consumption rates, billing records and the latest water supply plan filed with the State. There was no major maintenance issues identified that will give cause for the State to take any enforcement action.

Mr. Tart noted that implementation of revisions to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996 has influenced many small water systems to consolidate with other larger systems.

The transfer of Lewiston-Woodville's system assets to the County's regional water system will eliminate any future liabilities that may result from the continued operation of such a small system.

Green Engineering's report summarizes the benefits of this proposed consolidation stating "this merger also secures the long-term sustainability of the public health protection to the citizens in the area and will further strengthen the Regional Water System's financial position by providing a more favorable 'economy of scale' operation."

With the merger of the County's regional water system and the Town of Lewiston-Woodville system, a total of 326 connections will be added, most of which are residential customers averaging 4,500 gallons per month.

The County's system wide residential average consumption is 3,685 gallons per month, and the Lewiston-Woodville customer base is projected to add a net increase of approximately \$50,000 per year in new revenue for the County's Water Department operations.

In the year 2014, the County acquired the South Windsor Water Association system adding 185 customer accounts, and with the possibility of merging with the Town of Roxobel, there is also the opportunity to add 165 customers, which will continue to enhance the improved economy of scale for the County's regional system.

There was also significant discussion about the actions necessary to secure state and federal grant funding to assist with making the necessary improvements and to bring the Town's water system into compliance with the county's specifications and operating standards.

Following the presentation by Mr. Rodney Tart of Green Engineering, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to proceed toward accepting Lewiston-Woodville's water system as follows:

- 1) The County will immediately prepare an emergency operating agreement to manage, maintain and sustain the Town's water distribution system effective March 1, 2015 or as soon as practicable;
- 2) The agreement to ultimately accept the Town's water system will include payments to the Town equal to the outstanding debt service which is not to exceed \$18,000;
- 3) The County's intent is to offer services for billing and collection services for water, sewer and other Town fees in compliance with NC General Statutes;
- 4) The County's acceptance of the elevated storage tank will be subject to the availability of grant funds to restore the tank to operational standards;
- 5) The County will work closely with Town officials to secure any and all possible state or federal funds necessary to maintain the viability of the distribution system to serve all existing water customers;
- 6) The County and its engineer will coordinate meetings with the appropriate state and federal agencies, including the regional engineer, to receive consideration for safe drinking water funding as provided for in 15A NCAC 01N .0202 (c) which states:  
"A public water system in significant non-compliance with the Act may receive assistance if the assistance shall ensure compliance with the Act. A public water system that does not have the technical, managerial and financial capacity may receive assistance if the owner or operator shall agree to undertake changes in operation of the water system that will ensure the system will achieve technical, managerial, and financial capacity over the long-term."

- 7) The County will coordinate with the Town of Lewiston to ensure a smooth transition which may transpire over a period of months as the Town and County collectively pursue financial support through the State's Water Infrastructure Disadvantage Communities Program, Financially Disadvantaged System projects, and Consolidation of Non-Viable Systems programs which may be applicable for this merger.

Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Additionally, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to engage Green Engineering for a similar evaluation of the Town of Roxobel's water system for a merger with the County's regional system. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Roanoke-Chowan News Herald – Crossroads Edition – February 2015**

Toby Wilder of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald approached the Board regarding the February 2015 Crossroads Edition of the publication.

Mr. Wilder stated that the County had invested in a \$500, ¼ page advertisement in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the Crossroads Edition in 2014.

He stated that he was present tonight to seek their support again for the 2015 edition.

The Board came to a consensus that an additional advertisement would benefit the County's Economic Development goals.

After some discussion, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** for the County to purchase a ½ page advertisement in the Crossroads Edition for 2015. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Discuss North Carolina's Coastal Plain National Wildlife's "Balancing Nature and Commerce Initiative" to foster nature based tourism – Natural Resources Planner, Pam Wingrove**

Pam Wingrove, Natural Resources Planner with the North Carolina Coastal Plain, introduced herself to the Board, as well as gave a brief overview of her organizations initiatives.

She stated that he would like to network with the County especially regarding Economic Development.

## **Revenue Enhancement and Expense Reduction proposed from Bob Segal, CPA**

County Manager Sauer stated that this item was purely informational, and that the Board could decide if they would like to have Bob Segal present at an upcoming meeting.

Vice Chairman Lee made a **MOTION** to have Bob Segal present to the Board at any upcoming meeting. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

Chairman Wesson discussed the facility tour that the Board held prior to the meeting, reviewing maintenance issues at the Courthouse with Maintenance Director Anthony Rascoe.

In particular, Chairman Wesson noted that the next phase of RAMJACK procedures is pending in order to "shore up" the foundation which has shifted and created cracks on the buildings' exterior.

He noted that this project is funded in the current budget and that the County Manager was seeking Board approval and concurrence since this project was initiated prior to the Board's new membership.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to proceed with the needed improvements. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner White expressed his desire to see a new public access boat landing on Salmon Creek.

There were no other comments at this time.

## **COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS**

The County Attorney gave no remarks at this time.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS CONTINUED**

Annette Eubanks of the Mid-East Commission Area Agency on Aging was present to simply inform the Board of the Mid-East Commission's Executive Board meeting on Wednesday, January 7, 2015.



**ADJOURN**

Chairman Wesson adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:00pm.

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Ronald D. Wesson, Chairman

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Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board