

Windsor, North Carolina
February 2, 2015
RECESSED

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners recessed their regular meeting on February 2, 2015 in order to meet at the Roanoke-Cashie River Center for a Planning Session on Monday, February 9, and Tuesday, February 10, at 7:30am. 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

Facilitator: Madeleine Henley, Walking Stick Associates

There were no media members present.

RECONVENE

Chairman Wesson reconvened the February 2, 2015 meeting.

PLANNING SESSION PART #2: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2015

The first discussion for the morning covered a wrap-up of the joint meeting with the Board of Education.

Chairman Wesson emphasized the need for a “model” or program design with participation from the County Recreation Department, YMCA, school personnel, Town/community representatives, and volunteers so that expectations can be clarified and documented in order for the County’s to reach its community recreation goals.

The Chairman suggested that this needs to be on the short list of near term priorities, and the consensus of the Board was to plan on serving two communities initially with one being the Town of Aulander.

The Board also discussed the school bus garage project and talked about the opportunity to partner with the Board of Education in developing a joint vehicle maintenance program to include County vehicles.

The consensus of the Board was to keep this item on the list for the near term, and to explore meeting with the NC Department of Public Instruction staff to gain a better understanding of state policy on this matter. It was also noted that Mr. Ledford, the School Transportation Manager, should be included in any future discussions.

County Manager Sauer noted several items that may need an additional work session, such as the review of the County personnel policy, customer service expectations, and a thorough review of the non-emergency transport income and expenditures to date.

County Manager Sauer suggested that it may be appropriate to discuss putting the ¼ cent local option sales tax voter referendum on the ballot for consideration for the third time.

He also suggested that the Board may want to consider holding a special election with this single item on the ballot versus the primary or general election.

Many of the Commissioners were concerned about the cost of a special election, and discussion was deferred until a cost estimate is available from the Board of Elections.

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board of the upcoming meeting with the Cooperative Extension and the district director from NC State University regarding the latest staffing realignment and changes for Bertie County which will be held at noon on February 19th.

He also mentioned the efforts of County Tax Services, Inc. which is under contract to verify and confirm the accuracy of business personal property and equipment listings in the Tax Office.

It is anticipated that Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, will have CTS, Inc. provide an update to the Board in the near future.

County Manager Sauer also advised the Board that CPA Bob Segal has initiated his work to review opportunities to identify revenue due to Bertie County and areas where expenditures may be reduced.

It was also discussed that the Board will be provided an overview of the County's Emergency Operations Plan in the coming months in addition to scheduling training for the governing body which is required by the State for incident command and emergency management functions.

The County Manager also briefly outlined several other program concepts to consider in the future:

- Partnership with high school/community college to establish culinary program at former high school, and development business incubator to provide efficient low cost meals for jail and congregate meals at senior center nutrition sites.

- Establish “criminal justice academy” with high school and community college similar to EMT-Basic cadet program recently launched—to encourage career path for law enforcement and corrections officers by building a workforce locally.
- Seek legislative/statutory personnel policy change to lower the age limit for State Corrections Officers from age 20 to 18, since high school graduates can join the military at age 18, carry a weapon and serve as an MP or guard at a military prison. Again, building the local workforce (75 job vacancies as of Feb 5).

The next session was led by the County’s health insurance broker, Ms. Donna Nixon from Pierce Group Benefits, Inc.

Ms. Nixon reviewed trends in national health care and outlined issues to anticipate with the Affordable Care Act.

Ms. Nixon also presented a report outlining the outpatient, pharmacy, hospital, and physician visit expenditures for the past three years for Bertie County employees and retirees covered by the County’s plan.

The next presentation was from Green Engineering regarding the recent water system evaluation, and efforts to implement various recommendations to address the unaccounted water loss, as well as several other projects.

Mr. Leo Green, III. and Mr. Rodney Tart updated the Board on the status of the USDA grant and financing applications for the South Windsor improvements, as well as the merger opportunities with the Towns of Lewiston-Woodville and Roxobel.

It was the consensus of the Board that the budget will include provisions for an update to the water system’s hydraulic model and consolidation of the budgets for the water system, for accounting purposes only, and leaving the water districts intact for future project financing as necessary.

Following the Water Department session with Green Engineering, the Board received several brief updates from the County Manager.

The Mid-East Commission Interim Director, Mr. Bryant Buck, will review the County’s request to examine census block data for the 2010 low to moderate income levels for several portions of Bertie County that may have been under reported, which can significantly impact the County’s eligibility for various federal grant opportunities.

Mr. Sauer also discussed providing the newest members of Bertie County’s legislative delegation with a few local mementos to insure that Bertie County’s presence is noted for anyone visiting their legislative offices.

The Board was reminded of the upcoming Annual Black History Dinner sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce on February 17th.

Vice Chairman Lee suggested that the County consider hosting a NCDMV driver's license office on a permanent basis in lieu of the mobile unit which comes to Windsor.

It was the consensus of the Board to pursue this matter using existing vacant, or soon to be vacant county office space.

The County Manager noted that the contractor mower for the former landfill site is retiring, and it was the consensus of the Board to put this work out for competitive bid.

Vice Chairman Lee reported on her first Tri-County Board meeting and recommended that the County support the local match request for the fuel system upgrade which will replace the underground tanks with above ground fuel storage.

Vice Chairman Lee made a **MOTION** to provide a \$5,000 local match. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

County Manager Sauer noted that a staff member suggested having the County install an automatic teller machine (ATM) in the Courthouse or County Administrative building for the convenience of the public.

The consensus of the Board was to defer action until a more detailed report is available.

Commissioner White stated that he had significant concerns regarding pay disparities for County staff and suggested that the Board consider engaging professional services to conduct a salary study and classification review for all county positions.

The County Manager was asked to research the date of the most recent pay study and share this information with the Board.

At the close of the meeting, the Board discussed the importance of setting a timetable for these items discussed during the two day planning session, indicating that some were to be immediately considered, others will be reviewed as part of the budget, and several matters will be developed in a three to five year plan.

The Chairman indicated the need to find better ways of reaching County citizens, through the press, the county website and possibly social media.

Facilitator Henley thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve Bertie County and each Commissioner was asked to participate in a brief evaluation of her services.

ADJOURN

Chairman Wesson adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30pm.

Ronald D. Wesson, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board