

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.

INVOCATION

Commissioner White gave the Invocation.

PLANNING SESSION PART #1: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2015

Chairman Wesson introduced facilitator Madeleine Henley, who led the Board on a brief team building exercise where each Commissioner, Manager and Clerk received collective comments from around the table, highlighting individual strengths that each person brings to the process.

Ms. Henley asked each Commissioner to describe expectations for the planning session.

Chairman Wesson suggested that this is an opportunity to build on the trust factor with each other, and to develop a clear sense of priorities.

Vice Chairman Lee indicated that it is important to get the Board caught up on prior issues and projects.

Commissioner Bazemore said that she hoped this meeting would provide a useful framework for the budget and to develop team work.

Commissioner White reported that he is still learning and he is interested in receiving department head reports and becoming hands on with some of the issues facing the County.

Commissioner Trent felt the Board was developing a pretty tight working relationship.

Facilitator Henley suggested that she would work with the Board to reach all of these goals, and that she would try to make the experience fun and engaging.

Ms. Henley led a discussion regarding the Board's understanding and support for the agenda preparation process, general communications with the Manager, and receiving public comments during the meetings.

It was the consensus of the Board to keep the meetings informal and to encourage as much discussion as possible before a matter was put to a vote.

It was also the consensus of the Board to continue the two public comment periods at each meeting, and to limit individual comments to three (3) minutes per person.

Next on the planning session agenda was a brief discussion of the importance of developing a mission and vision statement for the County, especially as the Board works toward approving a budget and funding priorities for next fiscal year.

Commissioner Trent summed up the discussion suggesting that the Board's role could be described as making life better for all citizens of Bertie County.

Ms. Henley led a discussion regarding core values, with Commissioners suggesting Economic Development, education, infrastructure and quality of life as key to their roles.

Ms. Henley also noted that many organizations use a system of S.M.A.R.T. objectives, which is an acronym for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant to Goals, and **T**ime bound.

She also led a discussion regarding keeping a "balanced scorecard" for decision making by including the opinion of citizens, developing management tools, looking at staff operations, and always being mindful of the finances.

Chairman Wesson suggested that since the afternoon had two major blocks for Economic Development and the Board of Education, there was need to focus discussions on these matters.

Economic Development was discussed first and each Commissioner weighed in with comments, suggestions, and concerns for improving the County's economic development efforts.

Commission Trent spoke first, commenting on the importance of job fairs, trade shows and improving our marketing for Bertie County.

He also had specific suggestions regarding methane opportunities, the need for time share rentals and investment, and possibly a private airstrip accessible to Scotch Hall and surrounding areas.

Vice Chairman Lee reported on the recent regional meeting hosted by the US Fish and Wildlife, and the planning process at the coast.

She also noted her participation in a recent meeting to develop the market and production of sweet potatoes in Bertie County.

Commissioner White discussed the impact of the "Bucks for Bertie" and the price increases for hunting leases which resulted in local residents being priced out of hunting lands which have been used for generations.

His remarks led to a discussion regarding methane extraction and the impact of federal subsidies for energy alternatives.

Commissioner Bazemore indicated that we currently do not see economic development activity in Bertie County, and she would like to see growth especially in the area of retail expansion.

She also asked about re-defining the role of the Economic Developer.

Chairman Wesson discussed the four business clusters which were previously identified by the Board, suggesting there has been weak leadership under the current structure for economic development, noting that it is time to make a change.

He also expressed strong interest in alternative energy such as methane and the possibility of reviewing options for the County's former landfill site.

The Board's discussion led to a consensus that the County needs to evaluate its marketing efforts and the structure of our economic development system. It was agreed that there was a need to prepare a historical summary of projects and prospect activities.

County Manager Sauer suggested that the Board could seek to engage a consultant, using the process similar to the Board's effort to select a new consulting engineer for certain Water Department projects.

It was the Board's consensus to have the Manager prepare a Request for Qualifications for consultants to recommend marketing strategies and an evaluation of the County's economic development system.

It was also noted that the Board expected written reports from the Economic Developer on a monthly basis.

Additionally, the Board discussed their concerns regarding the Bertie County Public School System and the Board of Education.

The Board came to a consensus to request additional information from the Board of Education regarding their capital funds, as well as to brainstorm areas for cost savings specifically regarding the consolidation of schools.

The Board stated that it was their priority to develop a more concise message to send the public about the management of the public school system, as well as the charter, and private schools in the County.

There was also a brief discussion about the upcoming meeting regarding the available manufacturing and training space at Bertie Correctional.

Vice Chairman Lee will be attending a meeting in Raleigh later in the week on this topic.

The Board worked through lunch and continued to work through its agenda of discussion points.

There was a brief discussion regarding the recently proposed Electronic Monitoring program for pre-trial detainees to enhance management of the jail's population.

The consensus of the Board was to meet with the Sheriff to discuss its successful implementation.

County Manager Sauer reported that a rewrite of the Road Name Change Policy is pending legal review, and the Board's consensus is to move forward with this project and consider for approval within the next thirty (30) days.

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board that the Solid Waste and & Recycling convenience center proposals were received February 3, and are ready for review and consideration.

It was the consensus of the Board to discuss this matter at the next regular meeting.

County Manager Sauer updated the Board on the status of an office lease for the former Day Reporting Center building, which is now five (5) months in arrears.

It was the consensus of the Board that the Manager will immediately notify the tenant to resolve the lease payment balance or prepare to vacate the premises.

County Manager Sauer also reminded the Board of an annual agricultural lease agreement for county-owned land located on County Farm Road.

The consensus of the Board was to review the lease and revise the payment terms at \$200 per acre.

The Board discussed the number of vacant or idle property owned by the County and the need to sell them, and get them listed for taxes.

It was the consensus of the Board to seek a local realtor to handle the sale of these properties.

The Board reviewed a couple of items for consideration at the next regular meeting, including the CDBG project utility easement for the Farm Lane water extension, and the Interlocal agreement with the Town of Colerain for the administration of the flood damage prevention ordinance.

Project concepts discussed with the Board included a potential joint project with the Town of Windsor to acquire, develop, or otherwise provide for the continued operation of a civic center, and expanded convention facility to host large business meetings, trade shows, and other programs.

It was the consensus of the Board to open a dialogue with the Town regarding the viability of this type of project, with the goal of making Bertie County a business destination point that will attract investment for a hotel and related amenities.

The County Manager also outlined potential strategies to address the continued challenge of poorly maintained private dirt roads as it relates to establishing emergency vehicle access.

It was acknowledged that this effort raises many policy and statutory issues that will need to be fully addressed in order to find a workable solution.

The Board also discussed the concept of hiring a full time, staff County Attorney, and the potential benefits for staying current on various legal matters.

It was the consensus of the Board that this matter will be considered with the upcoming budget.

Meeting with Bertie County Board of Education and Superintendent Elaine White

The Bertie County Board of Education, as well as Superintendent White, arrived for a joint meeting with the Board of Commissioners at 4:00pm.

Superintendent White discussed upcoming programs and issues for the next budget cycle.

Superintendent White reviewed the progress on the 100 building at the former high school campus, noting office space allocated for the Smart Start program, EMT Cadet Program, and the HVAC training area.

Mrs. White also reported on a recent meeting the County Recreation Director, Donna Mizelle, and the availability for the former high school gymnasium for use by the public.

There was also considerable discussion between the two Boards regarding establishing community recreation programs building on a partnership with the school system, the YMCA, and the County's recreation department.

It was agreed that this initiative should be a high priority for all concerned parties.

Superintendent White provided an overview of student population trends in enrollment, the recently released State report cards on school performance, current expense budget expectations, use of various school campuses, and the costs of operating various campuses including the impact of the new high school utility costs.

The two Boards engaged in a discussion of addressing the needs of all Bertie County children including those in private schools, the charter school, and the public school system.

There was also the discussion of consolidating some campuses and the possible sale of school property to generate funds for school needs in the future. The discussions covered many items of interest for the two Boards, yet no formal action was taken, and no budget items were considered or approved.

Both Boards agreed that this was a good start for the upcoming budget season.

RECESS

Chairman Wesson recessed the meeting until Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 7:30am. The Board will meet for the second, and final day of their annual 2015 Planning Sessions at the Roanoke-Cashie River Center.

Ronald D. Wesson, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board