

Windsor, North Carolina
April 4, 2016
Regular Meeting

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled meeting at 4:00pm 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
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Finance Officer William Roberson
Network Administrator Joe Wilkes
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs
Sheriff John Holley
Nuisance Abatement Officer Barry Anderson
EMS Division Chief Crystal Freeman
Interim Cooperative Extension Director Craig Ellison
Council on Aging Director Venita Thompson
Human Resources/Risk Mgmt. Director Carolyn Fornes

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order and thanked those present for their attendance.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Trent led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public Comments during this session.

APPOINTMENTS

Food Service Bid presentation by Council on Aging Director, Venita Thompson

County Manager Sauer presented this item and stated that Trump's Restaurant was the only bid received for the Senior Center meal program. The bid remains unchanged at \$4.90 per meal.

The Board had no problem with the bid, but Commissioner Wesson raised concerns regarding the provision in the bid which mentioned the project not being sent out on a yearly basis.

County Manager Sauer reiterated that this recommendation was for only a 12 month contract as done in previous years.

Vice Chairman Bazemore stated that she would like to see additional bids from vendors inside the County.

After some discussion, Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to approve the 1 year contract with Trump's Restaurant for Senior Center food service meals. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Wesson voting against.

Announcement of Spring Litter Sweep by Nuisance Abatement Officer, Barry Anderson

Nuisance Abatement Officer, Barry Anderson, was present to announce the Spring Litter Sweep event due to take place April 16-30.

Mr. Anderson discussed with the Board his process of recruiting volunteers for the sweep. He stated that he networks with the public and private schools, local churches, and other local organizations in securing volunteers for this effort.

County Manager Sauer enlisted the help of the media members present as well to get the word out about the event.

Mr. Anderson assured the Board that any organization looking to help can contact him in advance so that he can then get the proper supplies out to them before the sweep begins.

The Board encouraged all local churches to not only get out there and assist in the cleanup in their communities, but to also consider “adopting a highway” in their community so that a cleaning initiative could take place on a regular basis in more areas of the County.

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Application

County Manager Sauer stated that this portion of the meeting was to update the Board about the upcoming completion of Bertie County’s PARTF Application. The application is being completed by the County’s grant writer, Emily Miller of McAdams & Associates.

Emily Miller of McAdams and Associates reported on her efforts to complete the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund application which will be submitted by the May 2nd deadline, seeking \$500,000 for land acquisition cost reimbursement from the State.

In addition, Chairman Trent called for public comments and feedback from those present about the County’s recent purchase of water front property on the Chowan River in support of the Parks and Recreation Fund grant application. The property is being explored for beach access and recreational use.

Board of Education member, Jo Johnson, was present to introduce a program idea to the Board that could be a good addition to the future plans of this water front property.

Ms. Johnson also brought along Tracy Gregory, Principal, Aulander Elementary, Wesley Dudley, Principal, West Bertie Elementary, Mona Gilliam, Principal, Windsor Elementary, and Jean Boller, Teacher, Aulander Elementary.

Ms. Johnson and each of her colleagues discussed a program called, “Sound to Sea,” in which students from all over the State are able to travel from their home counties to visit the Trinity Center in Salter Path, NC. The program is designed to introduce school aged children in grades 2-12 to various water based habitats. The habitats include a sound/salt marsh, a beach, freshwater pond, as well as a maritime forest. The students, parents, and teachers, are then immersed in the ecosystems and habitats of each, as well as learn about environmental protection initiatives that can preserve these habitats, and the creatures inside, for generations to come.

Students wade through ponds and salt water to study animal and plant life, as well as dissect marine life to study life cycles, and participate in conservation efforts.

These classes and programs are taught by specialized teachers and UNC and NC State faculty and staff.

The educators envision development of year-round environmental education programs for Bertie students similar to the experience provided by field trips taken to the “Sound to the Sea” program at the Trinity Center on the coast. Windsor Elementary Principal, Ms. Mona Gilliam presented a video taken during a recent field trip and she noted that this was a life changing experience for these children, many of whom had never traveled away from home prior to this trip. “We hope to make this kind of experience available right here in Bertie County so that all of our students will have access to this environmental education program, “ said Ms. Gilliam.

In 2015, students from Bertie County visited the Trinity Center for a 2 night stay, which for most of the students was the first time they’ve ever been away from home, or near these water based environments. To document their experiences, each student wrote and drew in their own journal, and excerpts from each student’s journal were then used to create a published book.

Ms. Johnson and her colleagues also emphasized how important these opportunities are for the students of Bertie County, and that they hope to be able to offer this program to as many students as possible in the years to come.

Unfortunately, due to State funding cuts in recent years, teachers who support this program have had to severely limit the amount of time students are able to spend at the Center.

If the County were to include this program in the plans for the water front access project, then students would be able to attend these programs while staying close to home.

A citizen, John Davis, was present to encourage the Board to seek any funding possible so that programs like this can still be accessible to the students of Bertie. He stated that this current Board of Commissioners has already completed very ambitious projects, and hoped that with their support, more students would be able to take advantage of such a “beneficial” program closer to home in their own county.

Mr. Davis stated that this additional funding from PARTF could bring so many needed opportunities to students in the area who otherwise would not have the means to travel, and stated that this program, as well as many others, could positively impact ecotourism.

The Board commended the Principals and teachers, as well as Ms. Johnson, present today to give their feedback on the project, and thanked those who work so hard each day ensuring that students of Bertie have beneficial learning opportunities.

The Board of Commissioners reviewed the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application for the 137 acre tract of land on the Albemarle Sound which is being developed to provide public access to the beach area, water recreation, restroom, picnic and camping facilities in the first phase. In the second phase, it is the governing body's goal to develop a comprehensive master plan for the site with recreational features, both land and water based. Additionally, the Board of Commissioners envisions this site as an educational venue for the natural sciences and historical exploration along the 2,200 linear feet of coastal waters on the "inner banks" of North Carolina.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** for Ms. Miller, with assistance from the County where needed, to move forward in the submission of the PARTF application. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no Board Appointments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon review by Chairman Trent, Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve the Consent Agenda in its entirety as presented. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Consent Agenda was approved as follows:

1. **Minutes** – Regular Session 3-21-16, Special Meeting 3-21-16
2. **Fees Report** – Register of Deeds, March 2016

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Discuss mental health program consolidation as proposed by NCDHHS – Vice Chairman Bazemore represents Bertie County on the Trillium Board

County Manager Sauer stated that this item was for informational purposes only at this point, and any questions could be directed to Vice Chairman Bazemore as she is a member of the Trillium Board.

Discuss Assistance to Firefighters grant application

Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, was present to inform the Board that a grant of \$93,190 was received for “personal protective equipment” to assist County fire personnel.

Mr. Cooper requested permission from the Board to begin using that funding.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** granting permission to the Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, to begin using the mentioned grant funding for its outlined purpose. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Board also briefly discussed required Hepatitis B vaccinations with EMS Division Chief, Crystal Freeman. She stated that a discussion about required vaccines for County employees, and what, if any, cost responsibility fell on the County, was already in progress.

Shared & Vacation Leave (maximum accumulation) Policy – first introduced on 3-7-16

After a short discussion, Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to conditionally approve this item pending changes and additions from the Human Resources/Risk Management Director, Carolyn Fornes. Commissioner White and Lee both **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Discuss adoption of Public Comment Rules & Procedures

County Manager Sauer introduced this item for the first time which is simply a set of Public Comment Rules & Procedures that could be utilized for all public meetings.

After some discussion, the Board concurred that an addition should be made which gives the Chairman the authority to either shorten or extend the allotted time for public comments, if so needed.

Changes will be made accordingly and the policy will be resubmitted to the Board at a later date.

Pending Items/Updates

All pending items and updates were presented at the Board's Special Meeting earlier today at 2:00PM.

Surplus property resolution approval – hiring of Bill Forbes of Forbes Realty & Auctions, LLC.

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, updated the Board on the current standing of the surplus property auction slated to take place on June 4th at 10:00 over at the Council on Aging Senior Center Gymnasium.

He briefly discussed the various paperwork items needed to be in place before things could continue forward, and those items include resolutions and contracts for both real and personal property.

The County would also need to officially hire Bill Forbes of United County Forbes Realty & Auctions, LLC.

Mr. Huddleston also discussed the need for terms regarding online bidding and discussed that an online auction would take place a few days prior to the live bidding auction. This online bidding would be the most cost and time efficient way of selling some of the personal property, and not having to move it from its current location to the Senior Center Gymnasium. The items will be photographed from their current location and then posted online for a bidding window.

Vice Chairman made a **MOTION** to approve the documents provided by the County Attorney and continue efforts to prepare for the auction on June 4th. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS

Commissioner Wesson thanked the Board for allowing him to serve on the County Commissioners Planning Initiative Board, and also reminded the community of the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation Community Forum to be held on Wednesday, April 27th from 6:00-8:00PM.

Vice Chairman Bazemore had no reports at this time, but forwarded a concern that she had received from a citizen regarding the lunch time hours of the Planning & Inspections Department.

Commissioner Lee announced that it was almost time for Farmer's Market season and encouraged all to purchase local fruits and vegetables, and that area Farmer's Markets were feverishly working on ways to accept EBT cards as a form of payment. She also reported that she had recently participated in a Three Rivers Healthy Carolinians initiative in which a throat cancer survivor was present to speak with students at Bertie High School.

Commissioner White announced the 4-H Strawberry Fundraiser, and encouraged all who were able to participate. He also encouraged those present to be involved in their local communities in "keeping Bertie clean" and free of trash and litter.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS

The County Manager gave no remarks at this time.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, covered his remarks under the Discussion section, but did remind the Board of a needed Closed Session.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bertie County Register of Deeds, Annie Wilson, was present to announce that her colleague, Shakedia Williams, had recently received her certification as an Assistance Register of Deeds.

She would receive a formal recognition of her accomplishment at an annual conference in September in Asheville, NC.

The Board commended Ms. Williams for her accomplishment, and thanked Ms. Wilson for her leadership.

Ms. Wilson then thanked her entire staff for their hard work and diligence in serving the citizens of Bertie County.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of employment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.

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

The Board shifts into Closed Session.

OPEN SESSION

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to return to Open Session. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

ADJOURN

Chairman Trent adjourned the meeting at 5:45PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board