

Windsor, North Carolina
May 23, 2016
Regular Meeting

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners convened for its regular meeting at 7:00PM inside the Blue Jay Fire Department located at 1653 Indian Woods Road. 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
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea
Sheriff John Holley
Maintenance Superintendent Anthony Rascoe
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey

Gene Motley of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald was present from the media.

CALL TO ORDER – BERTIE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order, and thanked the Blue Jay community for hosting and for providing a meal. He also thanked all citizens present for their attendance.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner White led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bertie County Water Superintendent, Ricky Spivey, was present to announce that the County had received a commemorative plaque for “significant achievement” in the creation of a wellhead protection program. The award was given to Mr. Spivey at a ceremony on May 18. Mr. Spivey thanked the Board for their dedication to the project, and the Board commended Mr. Spivey for his contributions to the program.

Adam Caldwell, staff liaison with NC Senator Thom Tillis, was present to introduce himself to the Board and community, as well as to assure the Board that he was available to assist with County initiatives when requested. He stated that he enjoys being involved in local government and look forward to working with the County as a resource.

The Board paused briefly for media photographs.

APPOINTMENTS

Convene as the Board of Equalization and Review to discuss FY2015-2016 appeal presented on 5-2-16

Chairman Trent called for a motion to convene as the Board of Equalization and review. The session is being called in order to discuss the appeal request presented on 5-2-16.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to convene as the Board of Equalization and Review. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Board convenes as the Board of Equalization and Review.

Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, was present to clarify the requested topic of “inventory and spare parts on hand” regarding business personal property.

He referenced an instruction sheet that is mailed to each business owner along with a Business Personal Property Listing report.

Mr. Rhea reiterated that Mr. Dunlow of Dunlow Dozer Service was not seeking an appeal of the taxes owed, only the penalties that have been newly enforced.

Commissioner Wesson stated that “ignorance of the law is no excuse,” and that he believed the Board should follow the procedures set forth in the current law. Similar appeals have been made in the recent past, and the Board has also voted to uphold those penalties.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to deny the request to waive the penalties for Dunlow Dozer Services. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Chairman Trent called for a motion to end deliberations as the Board of Equalization and Review for FY2015-2016.

Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to end deliberations as the Board of Equalization and Review for FY2015-2016. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

**Presentation by Planning Board member, Terry Pratt, regarding
solar/wind farms**

Planning Board member, Terry Pratt, was present to shed light on various research he had collected regarding the overall health impacts on solar and wind farms. The information provided to the Board detailed some negative mental impacts of solar farms in particular.

The Board also received information from the NC Utilities Commission from a meeting held on March 26, 2015.

In light of this information, Mr. Pratt referred to a Memorandum from Planning Board Chair, Nayland Collier, calling for the implementation of a moratorium to new solar farms in Bertie County until the matter can be researched and studies by appropriate experts to ensure the safety of solar panels to the health of Bertie citizens.

After some discussion, the Board noted that solar farms were currently being used in a number of other states, and that they were confident in the research already completed that have vetted their level of safety.

Chairman Trent expressed that he did not believe it was right for the County to tell a land owner what to do with his property, and wanted to leave the decisions solely up to the farmers about whether or not to sell land to solar companies. He also stated that he believed in the positive economic impact of solar farms which have contributed a large amount of jobs to Bertie County residents, and stated that he was glad to see Bertie on the cutting edge of this technology.

Commissioner Wesson also touted the economic impacts of solar farms regarding new jobs, and that solar farms had played a key role in the County's unemployment rate. In years past, Bertie had shown the highest unemployment numbers, and now Bertie has the second lowest unemployment rate. He attributed some of that change to the addition of solar farms in the County.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to deny the requested a moratorium on the continued development of solar and wind farms in Bertie County. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Budget presentation by Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy (HCLA) by Executive Director, Dr. Kashi B. Hall

Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy (HCLA) Principal, Nick Shook, was present to update the Board on HCLA's current needs for FY2016-2017.

In summary, HCLA currently serves 295 children in grades K-4. Plans to add a 5th grade class are slated to happen in the coming school year. HCLA transports students from the following counties: Hertford, Bertie, Chowan, Washington, and Martin.

He mentioned that the main focus for the upcoming budget would be on capital outlay items such as additional clubs and extracurricular activities, lunch & learn sessions, teaching conference and seminars, recreational sports, as well as playground equipment.

Dr. Kashi B. Hall, Founder and Executive Director of HCLA, also presented the school's budget request for additional funding. She stated that the additional funding would help secure e-readers for every child, as well as assist in the acquisition of a permanent school facility at the Cashie Convention Center.

The ultimate goal in the coming years as well is for the charter school to receive a long term charter spanning anywhere from 10-15 years, and additional funding in cash reserves could assist in that effort.

There was a brief discussion regarding available grant funding and Dr. Hall also presented 5-year projections to the Board.

Dr. Hall expressed her desire to come together with the school system and other partners to create an "innovation think tank" to share ideas that could benefit all students in Bertie County regardless of where they receive their education.

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

The Consent Agenda was approved as follows:

1. **Tax Release Journal** – April 2016
2. **Minutes** – Regular Session 5-2-16, Closed Session 5-2-16, Joint Meeting 5-9-16
3. **Fees Report** – Register of Deeds – April 2016
4. **Contracts** – FY 2015-2016 audit services contract with Carr, Riggs, & Ingram; contractual agreement with Council on Aging and Interim Healthcare-Morris Group for senior citizen home care services

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Discuss NC Wildlife Commission's Memorandum of Agreement – long term contract with County vendor's for trash receptacles and portable toilets at the Weeping Mary Road Boat Access area

County Manager Sauer discussed the ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony of the new Weeping Mary Road Boat Access event back on Wednesday, April 27th.

Since that event, the County has corresponded with the Town of Lewiston and a portable toilet company in order to provide trash receptacles and portable toilets at the Boat Access site on a long term basis.

The agreements would also include service and maintenance for the trash cans as well as the portable toilets on a weekly basis.

The Board reached a consensus with the terms provided in a draft, example agreement that was supplied by the NC Wildlife Commission. A similar agreement would need to be in place for Bertie County if the County were to move forward with long term arrangements for trash cans and portable toilets at the Weeping Mary Road Boat Access site.

Discuss updates regarding Regional back-up PSAP grant application and approval for the interlocal agreement which is subject to successful grant funding to construct the regional back up PSAP

After a brief discussion, Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to approve the interlocal agreement with Martin County which is subject to successful grant funding to construct the regional back up PSAP. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Pending Items/Updates

County Manager Sauer provided a brief update about the latest grant results for additional recreational opportunities and features for Blue Jay Recreation. Unfortunately, the most recent grant application from the NC State Trails program was denied, but assured the community that additional grants were in the works.

He also discussed plans to upgrade fencing, and the current ball park, as well as the addition of restroom facilities, and pavilion at the current Blue Jay Recreation Park which will be discussed during the upcoming budget work sessions in June.

Commissioner Wesson took a moment to discuss the recent County decision for all 501(c)(3) organizations that fit JCPC criteria should apply through JCPC only, and would not be funded in the County's budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

He mentioned that in light of the decision, some "unintended consequences" had been discovered. In essence, the Board came to a consensus to reopen the matter during their upcoming budget work sessions which will begin on Monday, June 6.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS

Commissioner Wesson announced that he would be participating in Windsor Elementary's upcoming Career Day event. He also announced that Dr. Karen Rhea had been made aware of an endowment that would provide funding to Blue Jay for its fire department needs.

Vice Chairman Bazemore discussed her time at County Assembly Day on May 18th. The main focuses of discussion included wider broadband access as well as the interest in law that would disallow school systems from suing local Counties due to funding disagreements. She also announced that interviews were due to take place for a new Social Services Director. Interviews are slated for tomorrow, Tuesday, May 24th.

Chairman Trent announced that Casey Owens was now the new CEO of the Windsor YMCA.

Commissioner Lee informed the public that grants were available from Wells Fargo for minority farmers and small business owners.

Commissioner White thanked the Blue Jay community for hosting tonight's meeting, as well as providing a meal. He stated that he would like to "agree to disagree" on the issue pertaining to solar farms in Bertie County. He stated that he understood both sides, and knows that the County has to "move forward," but that he does have "reservations" about solar farms.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS

The County Manager gave no remarks at this time.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS

The County Attorney gave no remarks at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

James S. Pugh of Lewiston-Woodville stated that he would like to see the County continue to push NCDOT for additional road improvements in the area.

Ronald Rascoe of Blue Jay's Community Recreation thanked the Board for their support in securing new and improved recreation items for their community.

Minnie Outlaw of the Indian Woods community stated that she was a "public schools advocate," and stated that the charter school funding should only be considered after appropriate arrangements have been for the public school system.

Anthony Smallwood of Blue Jay's Community Recreation thanked the Board for their support as well.

Robert Cherry, Blue Jay Fire Chief, thanked the Board for coming out tonight to hold their meeting in the Blue Jay Community, and requested that the Board continue to do so. He also thanked all of the local volunteers who made this evening's meeting and meal possible.

ADJOURN

Chairman Trent the meeting at 8:45PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board

