

Windsor, North Carolina
September 14, 2016
Work Session

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners recessed their September 6th regular meeting in order to meet today for a planning work session at the new Sheriff's Office located at 222 County Farm Road. The meeting took place between 2:00 and 5:00PM. 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

There were no media members present.

RECONVENE

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, announced that Clif Smith welcomed his first child with wife, Peggy, this past weekend. Their new daughter's name is Isabella.

County Manager Sauer notified the Board that Albemarle Regional Public Library Director, Teresa Cole, has officially retired from the library system. He stated that the Library Board is in the process of hiring an interim director until a permanent replacement can be secured.

Also, County Manager Sauer reminded the Board of the pre-construction conference for Water District III will be held on Tuesday, September 27 at 11:00 AM inside the County Commissioners Room at the County Administration Building.

The Board then began addressing the rest of the agenda topics and action items.

The Board received the following items in their work session folders to coincide with today's discussions:

- Topics for discussion
- Recent Board of Education correspondence
- County Buildings itemized request
- Copy of manager's evaluation form
- ECU homework and proposed schedule and names
- Administration building suggested lettering
- Tobacco & Smoking restriction options
- Perdue Farms decision by NCPTC
- Environmental Enhancement Grant guidelines
- ABC "mixed beverage" NC General Statutes
- Recreation survey examples
- Travel Policy

DISCUSSION

NC Property Commission pending appeal from Perdue Farms

Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, was present for this discussion.

County Manager Sauer began with the notification that Perdue Farms was planning to file an appeal of the latest decision the Property Tax Commission to dismiss their first 2012 revaluation appeal.

Tax Administrator Rhea notified the Board that he had also received word on September 8th to inquire about whether or not the Board would be interested in meeting to resolve this matter rather than taking it to the NC Court of Appeals.

After some discussion, the Board came to a consensus that they would wait to see if Perdue filed a notice of appeal.

Guidance on Board of Education's request and schedule joint meeting

County Manager Sauer briefly summarized the most recent joint meeting that took place with only a few members of each Board on August 24th.

In that meeting, the Commissioners were notified that the Bertie County Public School System has discovered an estimated shortfall of at least \$500,000 for the new academic year with impacts for nearly one hundred staff. This would be broken down into monthly payments of \$42,000 over a 12-month period.

During today's discussion, the Commissioners expressed their concerns about the school system's current audit in progress, as well as their desire to see serious consideration being made to the consolidation of the Early College and the new Bertie High School.

Vice Chairman Bazemore stated that "a lack of planning on their part does not equal an emergency on our part," and that she hoped the Board of Education would be more open at this point to consider more dramatic cost saving strategies.

A short discussion ensued regarding the Board of Education's latest comments about why the Early College and Bertie High School could not be combined onto one campus. The general feedback received was that this practice was not allowed under NCDPI provisions. County Manager Sauer then brought forth evidence of the contrary where this has been successfully implemented in other counties via a waiver from the NCDPI

In order to address the concerns of both Boards, Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** for the County to provide the first payment of \$42,000 with some contingencies in order for the school system to receive the next payment. Additionally, the motion also addressed a proposed meeting date of Monday, September 26th a 9:00AM for both Boards to meet and discuss appropriate strategies to address the shortfall including a potential "equity proposal and partnership." Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Per additional conversation, the County Manager is to prepare a letter listing the following conditions that will apply to the motion stated above:

- Joint meeting to review the earlier discussions which occurred in the interim Superintendent's office on August 24th for the benefit of both Boards since only five of the ten elected officials were present that day.
- Auditor's preliminary report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2016 to include initial findings or concerns regarding the school system's current cash position.
- Steps toward campus consolidation beginning with the transfer of the Early College Program to the new high school or the 900 building on the former high school campus. As reported to the governing body on September 14th, in January 2016 the State approved eight (8) location waivers for the requirement that the Early College programs be housed on a separate campus, in most cases due to lack of space at the local community college in various local school systems.
- To facilitate the joint vehicle maintenance and fuel purchase initiatives, fifty percent (50%) equity or ownership of the fuel tanks and the new bus garage and related equipment will be transferred to the County. Oversight for bulk fuel purchases for gasoline and diesel fuel will be supervised by the County.
- Transfer of title and ownership of the former South West middle school campus (Early College high school) to the Bertie County Board of Commissioners for the consideration of \$1.00.

- Change in legal counsel for the Board of Education to use a local attorney.
- Report to the Board of Commissioners regarding academic performance and end of grade (EOG) testing for all grade levels.
- Report to the Board of Commissioners regarding average daily membership as of the 10th day September for the number of students enrolled as compared to the same figure from one year ago.
- Report to the Board of Commissioners regarding Central Office staffing and recent rotation of program directors and principals.

Refinement of the housing project initiative and operational sustainability

In light of Mr. James Eure’s presentation (as a representative of Partners for Hertford County Public Schools) at a recent Board meeting, decisions are necessary regarding the organizational structure, and oversight for day-to-day operations.

County Manager Sauer also reminded the Board to consider the current needs being addressed by the old DSS Building as a storage space for various County Departments. He also recommended that the Board address potential options to replace this space, and have those costs be incorporated into the planning process. Lastly, there is the issue of destroying or relocating county records currently being stored at the site.

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, also addressed various legal matters surrounding the project including land deeds, the advantages of a non-profit, corporation, or foundation in securing the project more efficiently.

Hotel project

This item was tabled.

Public Buildings---project updates

The Board was taken on a brief tour of the new Sheriff’s Office as they were already meeting in the Sheriff’s Office Board Room. Staff was settling in well. Some items still need to be addressed, but overall, the new Sheriff’s Office was ready for move in when it began in mid-September.

County Manager Sauer reported that Courthouse renovations were underway. It was stated that painting had begun on first floor of the courthouse, and once that is completed, the second floor would receive the same treatment.

Next, County Manager Sauer reported that he had receive tenant requests from the renters inside the DRC building on Granville Street. The requests pertained to ADA compliance repairs and building security concerns from the Probation Office.

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to approve \$13,000 in additional contingency funds to be added to the Public Buildings budget to address these issues. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Lastly, County Manager addressed the latest actions with addressing HVAC related concerns inside the Administration Building. He reported that all HVAC work had been completed, and that the attic of the building had been cleaned and sanitized. The Board also came to a consensus of the positioning of lettering on the Administration Building on the Dundee Street side of the building.

Non-Emergency Transport

The Board discussed an office relocation for the Non-Emergency Transport Division from its existing space in the DRC building to the former Sheriff's Office building on Dundee Street.

Parking behind the DRC facility is very cramped with 3 to 4 ambulances, plus staff vehicles. The offices in the DRC building are well suited for the appraisal team who will be on site for 18+ months during the revaluation process.

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** for the Non-Emergency Transport Division be relocated to the old Sheriff's Office Building, as is. If there is any expense for painting or carpet, it be absorbed by the department budget. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Revaluation

Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea was present for this discussion.

Effective January 1, 2020, the County will begin its thirty-six (36) month process in January 2017 with the announcement to receive proposals by the County, followed by the RFP selection process for the mass appraisal contractor. Contractor responsibilities will include development of the schedule of values, field work by appraisal staff for the 18,300 parcels, informal & formal appeals and final notices of value sent to property owners.

Regional Landfill Host Agreement

The Board set a calendar for developing negotiating criteria for renewal of the twenty (20) year franchise and landfill host agreement for Republic Services, which expires in mid-October 2018. The Board also requested that Republic Services Representative, Josephine Aiken, return to a Commissioner meeting to address various citizen concerns.

Review water projects for all Districts

The pre-construction meeting for Water District III improvements is set for September 27th at 11:00 a.m. Design work for Water Districts II and IV continues.

Mixed Beverage Voter Referendum

The Board reviewed pending questions with the County Attorney regarding information for permits, facilities or law enforcement for “liquor by the drink” in advance of the November 8th election.

Blue Jay Recreation Park

Mr. Sauer reported that in addition to taking quotes from local contractors for the parking lot grading and materials, Maintenance Director, Anthony Rascoe has received a proposal from NCDOT to handle this project in conjunction with the driveway access improvements.

Mr. Woody Pierce is working on a plan to have his crews install the pipes and construct four (4) forty-foot driveway entrances to the parking area, in addition to handling the grading and compacting.

Mr. Pierce has suggested that his pricing on the “crush & run” material (estimated 300 tons) will save the County significant costs. For comparison, Mr. Rascoe has sought quotes from two local contractors for this project. Commissioner White suggested another contractor, Mr. Gerald Waters, for additional price comparison.

Countywide Recreation Master Plan

The Board reviewed the latest progress and proposed community input session schedule for the remainder of September, October and November.

The Board also provided recommendations for citizen appointments to the recreation advisory committee, identified agency representatives, as well as instrumental community partners who to participate in planning and program offerings.

TGOW/Albemarle Sound Waterfront

The Board began outlining facility management strategies and alternatives, including use of high school CADET students and graduates. Also, they discussed NCSU School of Design & Landscape Architecture’s proposed scope of work. NCSU faculty have expressed that their participation will extend beyond the academic year and provide continuity for site layout, facility design and trail development.

Chairman Trent made a **MOTION** to authorize the County Attorney to extend the deadline for securing the access easements for the 137-acre tract as requested by Mr. Alex Rich and approve a new deadline of December 19th, 2016 which allows an additional ninety (90) days.

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

PARTF--\$500,000 approved for TGOW land acquisition

County Manager Sauer stated that in November, the County should receive the grant agreement, as well as a contract that binds the County to use this property for recreation purposes for a period of 25 years.

Agreements for PARTF grants are due back to Raleigh in January, after which time funds will be available for disbursement.

The Board also discussed the addition of a Welcome Center.

Next PARTF

Mr. Sauer also alerted the Board that another PARTF grant application will be due May 1, 2017. Following presentation of the comprehensive master plan for county wide recreation, the County will have the foundation for preparing the next PARTF application and designation for grant funds based on the Board's priorities and acceptance of the master plan.

Environmental Enhancement Grant by Attorney General's Office

County Manager Sauer stated that grant information was provided by Stacey Feken of the Albemarle Pamlico Natural Estuary Partnership, who was referred to the County through Commissioner Lee. He announced that grants were available in amounts up to \$500,000, and a letter of intent is due September 30th, and the application is due November 10th, 2016.

The grant has strict program guidelines and a focus on conservation, preservation, and restoration of natural and environmental resources. The project description that may best fit Bertie County is the "long term environmental enhancement and environmental education" category and could provide funds toward establishing an education center, where programs such as the "Sound to the Sea" program recently presented by several local elementary school teachers and principals, could be offered.

Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to move forward with the application for this additional grant. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

CAMA Application

Communication with the property owner of the 10.35 acre-tract has been received, but there has been no consensus as of yet.

Other grant opportunities

Blue Jay Park or other facilities focused on disabled veterans and handicapped children may be available through the PARTF Connect NC Bond monies (\$3 million statewide), and applications are due December 1st.

Charters of Freedom

Commissioner Lee updated the Board on the progress of the Charters of Freedom project status and discussed the proposed locations for the monument. She stated that the Hope Plantation, new Bertie High School, Albemarle Sound front, and grassy area near the old Sheriff's Office have all been placed on the list of potential sites. She also stated that the committee has chosen to go with the glazed cement option to cut down on costs. A donation has been received for the full amount of the monument.

Chief Building Inspector

The Board discussed the upcoming retirement of Chief Building Inspector, G.T. Pittman. There was a consensus for the County to go ahead and advertise for this position so that the new Inspector could potentially shadow Mr. Pittman before his retirement.

Veterans Service Office

After a discussion with Mr. Milton Parker, Veteran Services Officer, Mr. Sauer reported that he was in favor of being classified as a full time employee with full time hours. The Board instructed County Manager Sauer to move forward with this change.

Fire Service Funding Options

No additional discussion was needed on this item, and the Board instructed the County Manager to move forward as necessary.

Salary study recommendations

The Board was in favor of continuing the discussions and implementation options after the impact of the proposed new sales tax has been realized.

It is very likely that the "new revenue" will not be evident and received at the local level until November.

Public Safety and Private Road Access Ordinance

The consensus of the Board was that they were ready to consider the most recent draft of this ordinance received from the County Attorney.

Dangerous Weapons Ordinance—review first draft—review latest draft

The consensus of the Board was that they were ready to consider the draft of this ordinance received from the County Attorney.

Smoking and Tobacco Prohibition Ordinance—confirm elements for first draft

The consensus of the Board was that they were ready to receive and consider a draft of this ordinance from the County Attorney.

Broadband access

This item was discussed but no action was taken.

Review County property currently under lease

A separate report will be forthcoming at a future meeting.

OPEB Actuarial Study

County Manager Sauer reported that data has been sent to the actuarial team for review and analysis of post-employment benefits (retiree health insurance) and options presented for consideration with the budget. Report is anticipated by December.

QSCB Sinking Fund

County Manager Sauer informed the Board that the financial advisors are continuing to review trends and upward movement of the interest rate to lock in at 2.0 percent or above for the QSCB sinking fund.

Manager's Evaluation

The Board came to a consensus to complete County Manager Sauer's evaluation upon the completion of the Board's joint meeting with the Bertie County Board of Education on September 26th.

RECESS

Chairman Trent recessed the meeting until 9:00AM on Monday, September 26th in order to have a joint meeting with the School Board inside the Commissioners Room at the County Office Building located at 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC 27983.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board