

Windsor, North Carolina
February 12, 2018
PLANNING SESSION, DAY 1 OF 2

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a PLANNING SESSION today at the Roanoke-Cashie River Center Conference Room located at 112 W. Water 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
County Attorney Lloyd Smith
Assistant County Attorney Cliff Smith
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey
Finance Director William Roberson
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper

There were no media members present.

Chairman Bazemore reconvened the Board’s regular meeting from February 5th on February 12th at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room located at the Roanoke Cashie River Center in Windsor, NC.

The initial items for review and discussion were as follows:

Audit review & follow-up – Jeff Best, CPA

County Manager Sauer explained the request for a follow-up discussion with Mr. Best was due to the confusion and inconsistent statements regarding the County’s audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017.

It was noted that the Auditor distributed a draft copy of the audit to the Board of Commissioners on February 5th which had not been reviewed or approved by the County Manager or Finance Officer.

Mr. Best apologized for the confusion and provided an explanation regarding delays experienced due to the corporate transition for his office this past fall. Mr. Best confirmed that the draft version of the audit presented to the Board on February 5th was not the version reviewed and approved by the County Manager or Finance Officer.

There were several questions regarding the presentation of the available fund balance, unassigned fund balance and restricted fund balance for the General Fund raised by the Commissioners.

Finance Officer William Roberson provided further clarification regarding the total fund balance for Governmental Funds is 28.83 percent for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. The unassigned fund balance for the General Fund was \$2,273,153 or 8.99% of total general fund expenditures of \$25,283,790 for the fiscal year.

Due to the timing of the receipt of lottery funds which occurred in July of 2017, an adjustment of \$532,221 was made by the Auditor, decreasing the unassigned fund balance and increasing the restricted fund balance by said amount.

In response to a question from Commissioner White, Mr. Roberson confirmed that the County's available fund balance is 18.61 percent as compared to the NC Local Government Commission standard of 8 percent, and the County's financial policy of 10 percent. Mr. Roberson further explained that had the receipt of the lottery funds occurred prior to the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 2017), the County's available fund balance would have been twenty percent (20%).

In response to a question from Commissioner Trent, Mr. Sauer and Mr. Roberson confirmed their confidence in the Auditor's adjustments to the financial statements submitted to the NC Local Government Commission.

Mid-year financial update for FY 2017-2018

Mr. Roberson also reviewed the FY 2017-2018 midyear financial report of revenue and expenditures for the General Fund and responded to several questions and provided further clarification for the governing body.

Budget schedule and preparation for FY 2018-2019

Additionally, he reviewed the draft schedule for development of the FY 2018-2019 budget plan which will begin March 1st with the department head meeting. The public hearing on the upcoming proposed budget is June 11th at 7:00 p.m.

Budget drivers, trends and options (e.g. referendum on ¼ % local option sales tax)

It was the consensus of the Board that the County will seek requests for proposals for auditing services for the upcoming audit cycle, and this process should begin immediately.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to have staff prepare a resolution requesting the Board of Elections place the ¼ percent local option sales tax on the ballot as a referendum for the voters to consider at the next election in May 2018. Vice Chairman Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Vice Chairman Wesson also suggested that the Board consider directing these new sales tax receipts, if approved, for new programs such as for teacher supplements. He also requested that the Finance Officer prepare a third quarter report for FY 2017-2018 as the County approaches the beginning of the budget process.

Chair Bazemore suggested that the Board consider funding requests from the Town of Roxobel for its spring festival and JROTC's annual banquet. After a brief discussion, the Finance Officer was asked to review the Board's previous policy for special appropriations and subsequent funding approval in the current budget.

The next items for review by the Board of Commissioners were as follows:

LAND ACQUISITION, LAND DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL SALE

Recent interest in former DSS/Health facilities—5.33 acres

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to allow the former DSS/Health facilities be made available for sale and have the property appraised. Vice Chairman Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Following the discussion regarding property issues and related action, Vice Chairman Wesson made a **MOTION** to go into pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) for Personnel. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

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

OPEN SESSION

Vice Chairman Wesson made a **MOTION** directing staff to explore ways to fund the cost of a new position (Assistant County Manager) in the FY 2018-2019 proposed budget. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Chairman Bazemore led the review and discussion for the next list of agenda items related to various projects as outlined below:

SECU Teacher Housing Initiative—acceptance and approval of GLF grant agreement in the amount of \$240,000; approval of MoU with community partners

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the Memorandum of Understanding for the Teacher Housing Initiative with the following community partners—Town of Windsor Board of Commissioners, Windsor

Township Development Commission, and the Bertie County Board of Education. Vice Chairman Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

It was further discussed and a consensus reached regarding the State Employee Credit Union's role which includes processing and managing the payments to contractors during construction; and further understood that the County has no responsibility for the loan obligation or debt service payments which will be the obligation of the Windsor Township Development Commission.

Vice Chairman Wesson made a **MOTION** for the County to accept the Golden LEAF Foundation's grant of \$240,000 for the Teacher Housing Initiative and acceptance of the grant agreement. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Throughout this lengthy discussion the Commissioners were of the consensus, that the County must improve its communications strategy to reach Bertie County citizens through publications, social media and additional town hall type events. The County Manager was encouraged to explore options to address this critical issue of community outreach and finding ways to "tell our story" in Bertie County, explaining the Board's priorities, accomplishments and the need for community input.

Golden Leaf Foundation – new grant initiative and suggested projects—successful application must reflect regional cooperation (multi-county)

County Manager Sauer briefed the governing body regarding the Golden LEAF Foundation's Regional Partnership Development grant opportunity offered in cooperation with the NC Rural Center and the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation for Northeastern North Carolina, and reviewed various concepts that had been shared in recent weeks.

It was the consensus of the Board to pursue a regional two county project (Bertie & Chowan) in partnership with VIDANT to seek funding for two mobile units, one for dental services and one for medical services to advance the strategy of providing community medicine for our residents.

Regarding other projects discussed above, the Board asked for Commissioner Trent's guidance in reviewing the contract for the 2020 property tax revaluation.

Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan

Additionally, the County Manager was directed to prepare correspondence to the consultant for the Comprehensive Recreation Plan seeking a timeline for project completion; and a letter of thanks to the Dare County volunteers who assisted with the animal shelter this winter.

WORKING LUNCH – ABC Board and discussion of future plans

During the working lunch period, the Board of Commissioners met jointly with the Bertie County ABC Board and received a report on long range plans for the ABC system, including a request to transfer ownership of the Windsor store from the County to the ABC Board. No action was taken on this matter, but it was the consensus of the Board of Commissioners to have the property appraised.

EMS and Non-Emergency Transport Update

Mr. Dave Pickren of Colleton Software and Tarheel Medical Billing provided a financial review of collections for both EMS and Non-Emergency receipts for the current fiscal year, and an overview of historical trends.

Dr. Michael Lowry, the County's medical director for EMS provided an update on staff training, changes for medical protocols and challenges faced by the EMTs and Paramedics in the field.

Water System Improvements

Green Engineering project manager, Mr. Rodney Tart provided a summary of the capital projects and financing for all current projects in the County's regional water system. His PowerPoint presentation included a review of system mergers and consolidations with South Windsor, Roxobel and Lewiston-Woodville.

RECESS

At 4:30 p.m. Chairman Bazemore recessed the meeting until the next morning at 9:00 a.m.

- NCSU Cashie River Feasibility study & ECU NC LOW project
- Blue Jay Recreation Park – site plan complete
- Revaluation – contract status & review of schedule
- Republic Services--Landfill operation franchise renewal based on “life of site” criteria using current volumes—in anticipation of future permit modification (3-year application process) and host agreement renewal.
- Republic Services—community education and “Earth Day” activities coordinated with Cooperative Extension (4-H) and Bertie County Schools.
- TGOW – public access, parking, beach, restrooms & trail development
- Animal Shelter – state inspector is requesting plan of action for renovations

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Present: Ronald "Ron" Wesson, District I
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Tammy A. Lee, District III
John Trent, District IV
Ernestine (Byrd) Bazemore, District V

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer
County Attorney Lloyd Smith
Assistant County Attorney Cliff Smith
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey
Finance Director William Roberson
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper

Chairman Bazemore called the meeting to order and reconvened the session from the prior day.

Chairman Bazemore led the discussion reviewing items from the prior day, recapping each item and clarifying the Board action, consensus achieved with direction to staff and management.

EMS Station One – bid status

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to direct staff to have the EMS Station One design reviewed and the scope of work reduced in order to achieve bid proposals within the allotted budget. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

It was also the consensus of the Board, that Commissioner Trent review the scope of each pending capital project and work with staff to make adjustments to reduce costs and keep these projects in budget, including during review of subcontractor proposals and construction.

Board meeting schedule changes - 2018

The Board also had considerable discussion regarding the remaining calendar of meetings for 2018, and it was the consensus of the Commissioners to revise its meeting schedule as follows:

February 19 th	7:00 p.m.	Merry Hill/Midway Community building
March 5 th		Cancelled
March 12 th	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
April 2 nd		Cancelled
April 16 th	4:00 p.m.	Poverty Commission – kick off
	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
May 7 th	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
May 21 st		Cancelled
June 4 th	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
June 11 th	7:00 p.m.	Public Hearing on the proposed budget
June 18 th		Cancelled
July 2 nd	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
July 16 th		Cancelled
August 6 th	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
August 20 th		Cancelled
September 4 th		Cancelled
September 10 th	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
September 17 th		Cancelled
October 1 st	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
October 15 th		Cancelled
November 5 th	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
November 19 th		Cancelled
December 3 rd	6:00 p.m.	Commissioners meeting room
December 17 th		Cancelled

County Manager Sauer reviewed the Bond closing schedule for the NC LGC and USDA Rural Development related to the Water District III financing which will occur on or before March 29th. The County Attorney should receive the closing package from bond counsel and USDA prior to February 15th and it is due March 9th to Raleigh.

County Manager Sauer also reviewed the Poverty Commission calendar, project responsibilities and briefed the Board regarding challenges regarding the grants for underwriting this program. The NCACC has approved the ICMA fellowship for a period up to 24 months—the Board previously stated its approval for 12 months.

The federal portion from the VISTA program has not been secured and will not be participating, leaving a funding gap of \$8,000 to \$10,000. It was the consensus of the Board to continue with this project and to support the intern/fellowship with local funds to make up this gap in the budget.

Library and Cooperative Extension joint use facility

Mr. Albrecht McLawhorn with MHAworks, the design firm selected by the County in October presented a conceptual site plan, with multiple configurations and an overlay of the “rough schematic” facility profile for the new library and cooperative extension offices. There was also significant discussion regarding the timetable for acquisition of the property (originally scheduled for February 9th) and the pending groundwater testing and analysis in follow up to earlier field investigations.

The Board was very receptive of the preliminary concepts and the efforts to minimize site costs and overall construction expenses given the project budget.

Fire Service and long-range planning

Mr. Jodey Sarey, President of the Bertie County Fire Association and Mr. Josh Kilpatrick, Treasurer of the Association, provided an overview of fire department needs and financial challenges regarding replacement of fire apparatus, turnout gear and related equipment for all twelve fire departments in the County.

The Board was very receptive to further communication and exploration of funding options in cooperation with the Office of the State Fire Marshall and USDA Rural Development.

There is considerable effort being undertaken to improve insurance ratings for fire departments, which will in turn, reduce homeowners’ insurance costs for Bertie County residents.

WORKING LUNCH -- Courthouse Security renovations – start up in mid-February

Chief District Court Judge Brenda Branch joined the Board of Commissioners and Board of Education for a working lunch and discussion of school security issues, changes in the Juvenile Court system impacting the school system and security improvements for school facilities.

Judge Branch also explained the state initiative for “school justice partnerships” at the local level to improve outcomes for students adjudicated through the juvenile delinquency process.

There was also a brief discussion regarding the courthouse security improvements and renovations recently approved by the governing body, and Judge Branch expressed her sincere appreciation to the Commissioners for their support and effort on this matter.

School finance update

Following lunch, the School Finance Officer Ms. Lisa Rabon provided an overview of the school system's recent audit presentation and provided an overview of the upcoming budget process.

Board members and Commissioners discussed a renewed interest in working together on projects such as the joint fueling and purchase of petroleum products, examining shared expenses such as lease payments, and efforts to improve student performance and enhancing early childhood education.

There was also discussion of the teacher housing initiative, grant opportunities through the Golden LEAF Foundation and the benefits of working cooperatively on programs such as the "Sound to the Sea" and "One book, One District."

County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston provided an overview of the nationwide efforts to combat the OPIOID crisis and reviewed the process for joining forces with other counties in "multi-district litigation" on a regional basis as supported by the NCACC.

Vice Chairman Wesson made a **MOTION** to approve the appropriate resolution and to join in this engagement, which will have no additional legal expenses for the County. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously to proceed under legal counsel's guidance.

Other Items

There was also discussion regarding the need for a noise ordinance, and to have follow-up discussion on whether or not the County had previously adopted such regulations.

County Manager Sauer asked for clarification on a pending item—the status of the draft private road ordinance, and it was the consensus of the Board that this item had been tabled indefinitely and would not be a staff priority.

County Manager Sauer also reminded the Board of the request from the Bertie Martin Regional Jail Commission for a joint meeting with both counties and their respective Board of Commissioners to review priorities for the next budget cycle. In particular, the Jail Commission will be recommending adjustments for employee salaries and strategies to improve staff recruitment and retention.

ADJOURN

Chair Bazemore **ADJOURNED** the meeting at approximately 4:30 PM.

Ernestine Bazemore, Chair

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board