

**Windsor, North Carolina
June 3, 2019
REGULAR MEETING**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled today at 6:00 PM inside the Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

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

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Finance Officer William Roberson
Assistant to the County Manager Dominique Walker
Board of Elections Director Sheila Holloman
Finance Director William Roberson
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper
DSS Director Cindy Perry
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey
IT Director Scott Pearce
Deputy Tim Hardy
Deputy Jerry Bond

Junior Commissioners: Qudre Joyner
Najella Williams

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

CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INVOCATION

Commissioner Lee gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments during this session.

APPOINTMENTS & REPORTS

Presentation of the proposed Bertie County Public Schools Budget for FY2019-2020 by Superintendent Dr. Catherine Edmonds

Dr. Catherine Edmonds, Superintendent of BCPS, was present to provide the Board their proposed FY2019-2020 budget.

She introduced members of her Board present, as well as School System staff which included the BCPS Finance Director, Steve Harrell.

In addition, School System staff presented a short video, and multimedia presentation detailing the school system's budget requests.

The Board of Commissioners also received several hands outs in regards to capital outlay requests, purpose code budget, and detailed department budgets.

Commissioner Wesson commended the Superintendent and her staff for returning the BCPS finances "to the black." Mr. Wesson also inquired about the School System's goal to add to their fund balance during the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Harrell discussed that the goal was to add 2-3%. The current fund balance sits at \$700,000. The desire is to raise the fund balance to \$1 million.

Superintendent Edmonds fielded various questions from the Commissioners and Junior Commissioners.

“One Voice” publication sponsorship proposal by Ms. Sylvia Walton, a school counselor at Aulander & Colerain Elementary

Colerain and Aulander Elementary School Counselor, Ms. Sylvia Walton, came forward to advocated for more attention to bullying in schools. She stated that she believes in being “proactive instead of reactive,” and that one month of awareness in October is not enough to combat the issue.

She also discussed her outreach activities in elementary schools about setting goals and teach the signs of bullying, and how to respond.

Ms. Walton recommended that the Board consider fund 4th and 5th grade students and their teachers receive a copy of her book, “One Voice,” to use as an individual or group study exercise.

Commissioner Bazemore asked for the thoughts of Junior Commissioner, Qudre Joyner, and Najella Williams. Mr. Joyner discussed his experiences experiencing and witnessing bullying, and stated that this would be a great step forward.

Junior Commissioner Williams also discussed her experience and recommended a book club style project for students to meet and discuss.

Bertie County Complete Count Census Committee update by Ms. Dominique Walker, Assistant to the County Manager

Assistant to the County Manager, Dominique Walker, commended Ms. Walton for her work and shared her personal experience of how bullying impacted her family.

Ms. Walker also shared an update about her latest Census Complete County Committee meeting, and the resolution that was requested by the Chair of the committee.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to adopt the resolution in support of the of the 2020 Census and the Complete Count Census Committee. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

She also recognized Junior Commissioner, Najella Williams, who has recently accepted a summer internship with the Bertie County Administration Office. She will be assisting in special event planning as well as in draft a County resource guide for citizens.

Presentation of the proposed FY2019-2020 budget plan by County Manager Scott Sauer

County Manager Sauer formally presented his FY2019-2020 budget by utilizing a PowerPoint presentation.

The NC Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act requires the Budget Officer (county manager) to present a balanced budget and fiscal plan for the new fiscal year beginning July 1.

Evaluation of budget requests and priorities set by the governing body, requires an analysis of available revenues based on the estimated tax base (assessed property values), the appropriation of fund balance reserves and review of all other General Fund revenue estimates.

The proposed funding for the General Fund in FY 2019-2020 is \$26,195,911 which is an increase of \$1,393,670 or 5.6 percent above the original budget ordinance for the current year.

The proposed General Fund budget includes a fund balance appropriation of \$1,729,650 and a recommended increase in the proposed ad valorem tax rate of nine (9) cents or \$.92 per \$100 assessed value for FY 2019-2020.

Nine cents on the tax rate will yield an additional \$1,153,296.

County Manager explained that one penny on the tax rate will yield an estimated \$128,144 at a collection rate of 97.29% which is based on the audited tax collections in FY 2018 and is the highest tax collection rate for Bertie County in the past ten years.

Mr. Sauer noted that the requested funding for all programs, agencies and departments would require a 35-cent tax increase, resulting in a tax rate of \$1.18 per \$100, if there was no appropriated fund balance used to balance the budget.

The Proposed tax rate for FY 2019-2020 is 92 cents per \$100 of assessed value in the proposed budget plan as recommended by the County Manager. Mr. Sauer explained that the presentation of the recommended budget is the beginning of the process, and will be concluded by the decisions of the governing body after the Commissioners review the budget in detail.

Mr. Sauer explained that the proposed nine (9) cents on the tax rate will yield \$1,153,296 to support General Fund programs, and to balance the budget will also require using Appropriated Fund Balance reserves in the amount of \$1,729,650.

The County Manager presented the following chart to explain funding for special appropriations for the largest components of the recommended funding in FY 2019-2020:

Special appropriations--proposed

- **\$6,141,716** **Proposed for FY 2019-2020**
- - 3,027,671 School current expense
- - 375,000 School capital outlay
- - 70,000 Fines & forfeitures pass thru to schools
- - 55,000 Roanoke Chowan Community College
- - 59,275 Martin Community College - Windsor
- - 31,500 Martin Community College capital outlay
- - 1,147,006 Bertie Martin Regional Jail
- \$ 1,376,264 recommended amount--other agencies

The County Manager presented the following chart to review budget trends since FY 2012-2013:

Budget drivers

- **FY 2019-2020 payroll cost = \$9,248,498**
- FY 2012-2013 payroll cost = \$5,030,491

- **FY 2019-2020 staffing = 235 positions** (five frozen) in Sheriff's Office with two (2) new positions countywide
- FY 2012-2013 staffing = 147 positions

- FY 2019-2020 employee health insurance = \$1,610,768
- FY 2012-2013 employee health insurance = \$1,310,400

The single largest growth area in the General Fund since FY 2013-2014 has been the investment to provide the highest level of pre-hospital emergency response capability with the implementation of the EMS Paramedic program, including 38 positions for EMS Paramedic & EMT staffing, and 19 positions for Non-Emergency Transport staffing.

In the past five years the Board of Commissioners has placed a high priority on improving services to the citizens of Bertie County, especially in the areas of public safety, law enforcement and courthouse security.

The proposed budget for FY 2019-2020 includes recently approved effort by the Board of Commissioners to improve recruitment and retention of public safety employees (law enforcement, communications and emergency services). Increased compensation for existing EMT and Paramedic staff and vacant positions will have an annualized fiscal impact of \$73,361 in the new fiscal year, noted Mr. Sauer.

Recent approval for raising the base pay of a Deputy Sheriff position to \$40,000 and the related compensation realignment to address salary compression within the Sheriff's Office, will have an annualized fiscal impact of \$372,662 for the new fiscal year.

The Board also approved increases for the base pay for Communications personnel to improve staff retention and recruitment efforts and will have an annualized fiscal impact of \$57,232 in the new fiscal year, which is also included in the proposed budget.

County Manager Sauer explained that these recent Board actions to improve staff retention and staff recruitment, plus the new formula for local government retirement contributions will have a significant cumulative fiscal impact as summarized in the following chart:

Fiscal impacts for public safety and law enforcement, retirement contribution

- EMS and Non-Emergency Transport \$ 73,361
- Deputy sheriff & salary compression \$372,662
- Communications staff \$ 57,232

- New NCLGRS formula change \$104,953
- Aggregate impact Total \$608,208
- Or equivalent of 4.75 cents on the tax rate

Mr. Sauer shared a historical perspective for the audience and explained the addition of staff positions in last year's budget also have a significant fiscal impact for FY 2019-2020.

Budget drivers—staffing approved in FY 2018-2019 without a tax increase

- **Five (5.0)** Deputy Sheriff positions for Courthouse security.
- **Two (2.0)** Communications positions.
- **One (1.0)** Records Specialist position in the Sheriff's Office
- **One (1.0)** Shelter Attendant position at the Animal Shelter.
- **Three (3.0)** new positions transferred from the CADA Hurricane Matthew Recovery Program to serve in various departments.
- **One (1.0)** new position as an Assistant County Manager.
- **13.0** Total—positions approved in the FY 2018-2019 Budget Ordinance
- *The Board made budget adjustments in FY 2018-2019 based on calculations for lapsed salaries due to vacant positions and related savings in order to incorporate these new positions without increasing revenue, and without a tax increase.*

County Manager explained that in terms of new staffing recommended for FY 2019-2020, two new positions are recommended:

- One building inspector to increase the County's capacity to meet the enforcement requirements of the new State Fire Prevention Codes
- One administrative assistant position to support the Board of Elections with its expanding responsibilities with new voter ID regulations, in preparation for the upcoming 2020 election cycle.

Additionally, the following compensation components are included in the proposed budget:

- Health Savings Account -- continued contribution for each employee of \$200.
- Three percent (3%) 401 k contribution continued for all non-public safety employees
- Three percent (3%) salary increase for all non-public safety employees effective July 1, 2019 with a net cost to the General Fund of \$166,845 or the equivalent of 1.3 cents on the proposed tax rate.

The County Manager noted that the Board of Commissioners has two days scheduled this week for budget work sessions, where the Commissioners will review the proposed budget line by line, and department by department. He emphasized that it is very rare that the Board will accept the proposed budget without making adjustments for department funding and a significant effort to minimize the impact on taxpayers.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no Board Appointments.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve Minutes for Regular Meeting 5-6-19
2. Approve Minutes for Closed Sessions 5-6-19, 5-20-19 (2)
3. Approve Minutes for Work Session 5-6-19, 5-20-19
4. Tax Release Journal for April 2019
5. Resolution to clarify NC DHHS communications regarding Medicaid Transformation and school-based mental health services
6. Renewal of NCDHHS annual Memorandum of Understanding with DSS for FY 2019-2020_Interim Healthcare Contract – In-home Personal Care Aides

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve the Consent Agenda in its entirety. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Update on legal review of proposed facility lease for Bertie Recreation complex for July 6th and compliance with PARTF grant guidelines.

County Manager Sauer provided a brief review, and stated to the audience that a policy and lease agreement is being drafted to meet PARTF grant guidelines.

This item was discussed in further detail at their 4:00 PM work session.

Presentation of bid tabulation and recommendations by the design team for the new public library and cooperative extension facility.

County Manager Sauer briefly reviewed the discussion that took place during the Board's work session at 4:00 PM.

Ultimately, the Board decided to reevaluate the need for commercial kitchen hoods and corresponding ventilation needs for the Cooperative Extension wing of the project. This would allow the Board to continue to expect aesthetically pleasing ceiling and flooring elements already planned for the facility.

Review TGOW "Bertie Beach Day" scheduled for June 29th

County Manager Sauer announced that on June 29th, the County would be hosting a Bertie Beach Day at the TGOW site off Ball Gra Road from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

A flyer was shown to the audience and the event will feature kayaking, swimming, and a free fish fry and hot dog lunch.

More information about the event will be shared on the County's website and Facebook page in the coming days.

Confirm schedule for budget work sessions and public hearing

At this time, the Chairman asked the County Manager to review the following schedule of budget related events:

- Wednesday, June 5th – 9:00 AM – Budget Work Session, this location
- Thursday, June 6th – 9:00 AM – Additional Budget Work Session, if needed, this location
- Monday, June 10th – 7:00 PM – Budget Public Hearing, this location
- Tuesday, June 18th – 11:00 AM – Approval of FY2019-2020 County budget

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Wesson

Commissioner Wesson thanked those present for being involved in the County governing process and encouraged all citizens to review the detailed budget packet. He also thanked those who attended his swearing in to the Martin County Board of Trustees Board. Lastly, he discussed a group called the Cross Coalition that assists low income individuals in installing wheelchair ramps, roof repair, and other needed home repairs all free of charge to homeowners. He noted that housing was needed for about a dozen workers who would need temporary residence in the County.

Commissioner Lee

Commissioner Lee discussed her latest North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Board of Directors meeting in Asheville and discussed an initiative called TestIt which shows an internet user details on their Wi-Fi usage and coverage. This application is through the National Association of Counties (NACo). In addition, she reminded the Board about a voting delegate for NACo. She also discussed HB 67 that would allow for additional wording regarding the quarter cent sales tax.

Vice Chairman Atkins

No reports at this time.

Commissioner Bazemore

Commissioner Bazemore wanted to assure the citizens that this proposed budget is simply a working draft, and that things will continue to evolve. She also commended the Junior Commissioners for their thoughts on how to make the Junior Commissioner pilot program better for years to come. She also thanked Ms. Sylvia Walton for the work that she is doing to help prevent the loss of young life in Bertie County due to the effects of bullying.

Chairman Trent

Commissioner Trent took this time to express his support for maintaining VIDANT Health as the teaching hospital for the Brody School of Medicine. He discussed how important it was for citizens to be aware, and stated that this proposed change could present detrimental impacts to the health of Bertie County citizens.

JUNIOR COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Junior Commissioner, Qudre Joyner, commended the Board on the Bertie Beach Day event, as well as implored the Board to consider funding the One Voice initiative within the school system. He also requested that the Board consider assisting in a project with the local chapter of Future Farmers of America (FFA) to assist in the Farm to Table initiative.

Junior Commissioner, Najella Williams, also applauded the County for deciding to host a Bertie Beach Day, and stated that the bullying project that was introduced at tonight's meeting could serve so many Bertie County students. She encouraged the Board to invest in the project.

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

William Williams reiterated that he had been approaching the County for consecutive 4 years about the relocation of a water meter that is located in the middle of the edge of his driveway. He stated that the location of the meter impedes the use of his driveway and his ability to pour concrete.

County Manager Sauer responded by stating that it is a challenging situation and that he and Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey were aware of the situation. At this time, the County Manager was not prepared to offer any suggestions on how to address it.

Water Superintendent Spivey provided his expertise in this particular area. He reported that a contractor could be hired by the County at the owner's expense.

The County Manager and Water Superintendent Spivey were directed to conduct a cost analysis and be in contact with Mr. Williams.

RECESS

Chair Trent **RECESSED** the meeting until the Board's budget work session this Wednesday, June 5th at 9:00 AM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah Tinkham, Clerk to the Board