

**Windsor, North Carolina
September 16, 2019
PLANNING SESSION**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a PLANNING SESSION today inside the Roanoke-Cashie River Center, 112 W. Water Street, Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: Ronald "Ron" Wesson, 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 Manager Juan Vaughan, II.
Clerk to the Board Sarah Tinkham
Finance Director William Roberson
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs

There were no media members present.

CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM. The Board postponed their start time so that they could represent the County at the funeral of Robert "Bob" Spivey, former Bertie County Commissioner and former Windsor Town Mayor.

PLANNING SESSION

Revaluation update & presentation of the Schedule of Values

County Manager Sauer reiterated that the public hearing date for the 2020 revaluation schedule of values is set for September 30th at 6:00 PM inside the Windsor Community Building.

Members of the revaluation team present included Gary Piner, Renee McGinnis, and Gene Rountree.

Mr. Piner thanked the Board for allowing them to be here today, and that he and his team have enjoyed spending time in Bertie. Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, was also present for the discussion.

In summary, residents will receive letters of any property value changes in January 2020. He then asked Ms. McGinnis to begin summarizing the 2020 Schedule of Values for Bertie County. There was a lengthy review of the document with each Commissioner receiving a 3-inch binder with the materials enclosed.

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, inquired if a real-life data table is used to devise the base rate for each category of property.

Commissioner Lee asked the Tax Administrator if he had any idea how things would end up, but he was not able to give a full picture about where the County would stand after revaluation is completed. He said the he did expect at least a moderate increase in values.

Chairman Trent reiterated to the staff and Commissioners that he will not be present at the September 30th public hearing since he is scheduled to be out of state for a week. The public hearing will take place at 6:00 PM inside the Windsor Community Building.

Land transfer & acquisition for Cashie Golf and Country Club property---update and next steps to facilitate the transfer to the Town of Windsor and establishment of firefighter training facilities in partnership with Martin Community College.

Assistant County Attorney Huddleston distributed a hand out to the Board and County staff present that summarized the history of the offer. Feedback was requested about how the Board would like him to proceed regarding the proposed increase in purchase price.

County Manager Sauer also distributed a hand out giving further background information that the Board jointly discussed including the resolution previously adopted by the Board on March 11, 2019 documenting his transaction.

In accordance with the Exchange of Property statutes, if approved by the Board for the Cashie River Golf Club, the updated purchase price will be re-advertised.

Chairman Trent reviewed the needed points for the sale. Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to approve the updated price discussed at this meeting of \$16,350.71, and the re-

advertisement of the purchase price if the sale is approved by the Cashie River Golf Club. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Old DSS/Health Department property disposition—two potential interested parties and discussion of strategies for long term lease with reversion clause, private sale of property with advertisement for upset bid, possible joint location for both interested parties or other recommendations from the governing body.

Commissioner Wesson discussed his involvement on the Board of Directors for the Carolina Rebuilding Ministry. He noted that the organization had received a \$600,000 grant from the Duke Endowment to span at least 6 years. He discussed that the group would like to come in and completely renovate and landscape the two buildings so that they could expand their services offered to area seniors. The main purpose would be to house volunteers in the area to complete major home renovations for those eligible under the program.

Vice Chairman Atkins inquired if zoning issues would arise, and if there was anything that needed to be addressed.

Another church group, Open Door Church, was also interested in the property but would perform a complete demolition and build a new church.

Commissioner Bazemore asked if we could have both groups attend an upcoming Board meeting to discuss the opportunity with each group.

The hope was that both groups would converse together to see if a mutual resolution could be reached before the Board revisits the matter.

Republic Services—request for two-year extension for landfill host agreement with no change in the current terms or conditions of the contract.

County Manager Sauer requested that the legal team follow up immediately with Republic Services' legal team. The Assistant County Attorney summarized a phone call he held with Republic's legal team just this morning, and he highlighted some of the changes in this agreement.

The contract would be in effect until October 8, 2021, all terms would remain the same, but Mr. Huddleston noticed a \$1 million financial assurance clause that he would like the Board to discuss.

There was some confusion about a 1-year extension previously approved and the reason for a 2-year extension of the agreement being presented now.

Commissioner Bazemore also expressed interest in the County working with a consultant in the future to ensure the County is still receiving the best service possible.

The consensus was for the legal team to research the matter further so that the Board may be able to discuss it more substantially at its next regular meeting on October 7, 2019.

OPIOID litigation legal update

Mr. Huddleston discussed an update he received regarding the federal OPIOID suit that was filed against Purdue Pharmaceuticals. Purdue Pharma is expected to file bankruptcy in the coming days, and a settlement is being presented to those currently participating in the suit.

County Manager Sauer emphasized that the Board would need to decide if the County should remain involved with the case as a plaintiff. A decision would need to be made by November 22, 2019.

Tall Glass of Water project update—Staff have scheduled meetings and site visit with both CAMA and PARTF representatives for later this month.

TGOW Easements—update from legal, review potential charitable donation in exchange for 60’ access easement to NC 17—meeting with property owner agent needs to be a priority.

TGOW—consideration for farm lease continuation, modification or cancelation

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to discontinue the farming leasing at the TGOW site in favor of planting grass and leaving the area vacant. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

TGOW – RFQ for planning and site development (architect/engineer) design team; review and consider approval to proceed with distribution of RFQ document and proposed timetable for responses in order to prepare grant documents for PARTF application in May 2020.

An RFQ process was discussed including a timeline, and the County Manager was simply looking to receive approval to distribute the RFQ seeking interested consultants for planning and site development for the TGOW project. Mr. Sauer also highlighted the pertinent dates, including the deadline for submittals, noting that all copies should be sent to Interim County Manager, Juan Vaughan, by November 15.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to disallow hunting on County owned property. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Consensus was also reached for the County Manager and Administrative staff to move forward with distributing and conducting the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process.

NC LOW – next report just released, “Flood Dynamics in the Bertie Water Crescent” –

The County Manager noted that Bertie County will be featured in two upcoming documentaries that will also feature Dr. Stan Riggs.

In addition, Dr. Riggs would like to schedule a meeting with the County and the Town of Windsor to provide a project summary based on the latest report – copies were distributed by Mr. Sauer.

Various Project updates (items had no action but were briefly discussed):

Courthouse security, staffing update and facility signage – Staff positions are still vacant, and improved signage is also in the works to better direct citizens around the Administration Building and courthouse.

Commissioner Lee noted the improvement in cleanliness of the County Administration Building, and complimented the newest addition to the Maintenance Department on their efforts.

Animal Shelter – timetable for current fiscal year – This project has been budgeted for in this budget year, and the Chairman was asked to assist with the project. He mentioned he would have plans submitted to the rest of the Board within the \$80,000 budget requirement.

Library and Cooperative Extension—Lancaster Avenue damages & mitigation. Need to proceed with notice of adjoining property owner regarding demolition of old barn on County property. – A progress meeting is being held tomorrow afternoon, and the owner of the old barn has been contacted. The property in the barn is being removed and the barn will be demolished in the coming weeks. The Town of Windsor is assisting with repairs and improvements for Lancaster Avenue which will be scheduled at a later date.

Blue Jay Recreation Center – timetable for project completion – No project completion date has been confirmed yet. There has been no further word about a fire hydrant requirement either.

Long Branch Drainage project status, potential matching funds and State budget approval – There is no known change in status at this time.

Broadband Grant Projects – request an update from Roanoke Electric and new funding available through State Broadband Infrastructure program (Bertie allocation is \$641,000) – There is no known status at this time, but the County Manager would like Roanoke Electric to come back to deliver an update to the Board.

Personnel – Administration

The Assistant County Manager reported that the closing date for the Human Resources & Risk Management Director had passed. Mr. Vaughan requested that the Board grant him to ability

extend the application deadline in order potentially broaden the applicant pool. Mr. Vaughan noted that very few of the current candidates had HR experience. A total of 18 applications have been received. He noted that the Residency Requirement does present an additional hurdle in the recruitment process.

Commissioner Bazemore discussed her concerns with filling the position as quickly as possible especially in regards to salary changes for the respective DSS positions.

Interim County Manager

Commissioner Wesson make a **MOTION** to approve terms of employment and compensation as previously discussed to include \$1,000 per month increase for base pay, \$400 per month travel allowance, and \$50 per month mobile telephone stipend during the interim period. This change would become effective November 2, 2019. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Special Project Consultation – Scott Sauer, post retirement

Chairman Trent inquired if there was interest to keep County Manager Sauer on as a consultant basis beginning December 1st. Vice Chairman Atkins expressed his interest, as well as Chairman Trent, and Commissioner Wesson. The State retirement system requires a 30-days break in service before a previous employee can return to work for a local government entity in any capacity.

With a retirement date of November 1st, the soonest the current County Manager could consult with the County would be December 1st.

Commissioner Bazemore would like to discuss the need for a consultant after the 30-days has passed.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to contract with Scott Sauer on a consultant basis at \$5,000 a month for a period of 3-6 months beginning December 1st. Schedule of hours and location of workspace (in person or remote) will be at the discretion of the Interim County Manager. Vice Chairman Atkins **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Bazemore voting against.

Additional Project updates (items had no action but were briefly discussed):

FY 2018-2019---Audit and preparation of Management Discussion & Analysis – The audit process begins next week and will last roughly one (1) month.

Golden LEAF Foundation---grant reporting for Library & Cooperative Extension, in addition to serving as owner's representative for construction project meetings and site visits

Hurricane Matthew Recovery—reporting, reimbursement and advocacy for project completion for CDBG-DR, EMS Station One, DRA-17 and HMGP coordination with Town of Windsor

Blue Jay Recreation Center—final grant reporting upon construction completion

Water Department—project completion for SCADA certification, and other existing projects. Discussions have begun with the Town of Powellsville for an engineering assessment and possible grant funding to facilitate possible merger and consolidation with County system. Water rate study for possible customer rate adjustments for FY 2019-2020.

Inspections Department—review of proposed realignment of Fire Marshal duties with Fire Prevention Code Enforcement building inspector responsibilities.

OPIOID litigation—assist County Attorney with preparation of documents to be filed

Voter referendum—local option quarter cent sales tax and preparation of materials

Fire Service District Tax—to achieve uniform funding for VFDs.

District Attorney – Vice Chairman Atkins noted that the District Attorney is moving into additional offices of the second floor of the Courthouse. County Manager Sauer was not aware of this change, and indicated he would verify the Clerk of Court.

Previous request made by Dr. Otis Smallwood, BCPS Superintendent -- \$151,267 for across the Board supplements for all school employees

Commissioner Bazemore asked to revisit the request made by the Bertie County Public School system for teacher supplements to retain qualified teachers. The school system is requesting approximately \$151,267 which would be added to the current expense appropriation.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve the request of \$151,267 to the Bertie County Public School system for across the Board supplements for all school employees.

There was further discussion on where this funding would be taken as it relates to the County budget noting that this is a one-time, non-recurring appropriation.

The Finance Director noted that this sum would have to come out of the County's fund balance.

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board that the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019 will likely reflect a decrease in the General Fund due to Hurricane Matthew recovery projects for which reimbursements remain outstanding of approximately \$750,000. Furthermore, he reminded the Board that with the completion of the Revaluation consulting contract, more than \$300,000 has been expended which was previously held in reserve. Mr. Sauer also noted that the recommended, proposed budget for FY2019-2020 included a nine-cent tax increase, of which only 3.5 cents was made effective on July 1, 2019.

Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion.

The topic of a quarter cent sales and use tax was discussed to aid in the teacher supplement issue as well. County Manager Sauer discussed the possibility of a special election so that this initiative was the only item listed on a ballot. This could work more favorably for the County if it were advertised as the only item on a ballot instead of on a more congested one.

Vice Chairman Atkins and Commissioner Lee both expressed their support for the Board of Education's request, but requested additional time to review the County's financial information prior to voting on this matter.

The **MOTION PASSED** in a 3-2 vote with Commissioners Lee and Atkins voting against.

Commissioner Lee again clarified that she was in support of the initiative, but was looking for more time to review the matter before participating in a formal vote.

Items deferred until the Board's regular meeting on October 7th

- Discussion of "impassable" road notifications--Road Safety and Maintenance Ordinance
- Review of proposed revisions and amendments—Ambulance Franchise Ordinance
- Combined job description – Building Codes Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshal

Commissioners Room Renovation Update

County Manager Sauer, at the request of the Commissioners, provided an update on the renovation project. Samples of granite were identified and review by the Board. Consensus was reached on which granite would be used to proceed with the project.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to **ADJOURN** the meeting. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Chairman **ADJOURNED** the meeting at approximately 4:00 PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah Tinkham, Clerk to the Board