

**Windsor, North Carolina
January 22, 2020
WORK SESSION**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled **WORK SESSION** today inside the Board of Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor. The following members were present or absent:

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

Absent: Ronald “Ron” Wesson, I

Staff Present: Interim County Manager Juan Vaughan, II.
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Clerk to the Board Sarah Tinkham

Sarah Stalls representing the Bertie Ledger-Advance were present from the media.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Lee called the meeting to order and acknowledged the passing of Chairman Ron Wesson’s mother, Nellie Ward Wesson. The Chairman is absent today as he is preparing the funeral arrangements with his family.

She called upon Commissioner Bazemore to give the invocation.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Bazemore gave the Invocation.

WORK SESSION

“Housekeeping” related items for today’s work session

Interim County Manager, Juan Vaughan, II, detailed several items included in the Board’s folders for today’s work session. He also summarized today’s agenda.

Rules, Procedures & Best Practices for the Board

The Interim County Manager began discussions on the first agenda item regarding an open discussion for rules, procedures & best practices to adhere to as a Board. He also noted the chain of command that he would like the Board to follow in the event that there is a concern about a County Department Head.

His desire would be to have any related concerns about individual departments or department heads be reported to him first instead of reaching out to the department head directly.

He discussed several conversations he has recently had with Chair Wesson, and he was asked to note that the Chair was interested in additional transparency as it relates to all Board members being made aware of special project or grant meetings. He noted that in the past, meetings were scheduled for various reasons, but not all Board members were made aware.

Vice Chair Lee inquired if the “pet projects” each respective Board member participates in is included, and if there was anything that she needed to change about how she approaches these items with the Board.

Commissioner Bazemore discussed that she is sometimes guilty of “trying to fix everything” when becoming aware of a citizen concern, and reaching out to the Department Head directly. She stated that she would make all efforts to bring it to the Interim County Manager first in the future.

Vice Chair Lee mentioned that it was distracting for her during Board meetings to hear side conversations being conducted by fellow Board members. She asked that all Commissioners consider holding any questions or concerns until the end of a report during a regularly scheduled Board meeting.

Recommendations of next steps for County Manager and Assistant County Manager

Interim County Manager Vaughan noted that he has served in an interim capacity since November 1st. He discussed that former County Manager, Scott Sauer, has served faithfully in his role as a Special Projects Consultant. It was noted that his contract ends on February 29th.

Mr. Vaughan discussed his recommendation for the Board to allow the contract to expire, and that he did not feel that it was necessary to extend it. However, he wanted to be sure to note that it is a Board decision.

He also mentioned that it was becoming increasingly more important to think ahead about a permanent County Manager, as well as the hiring of a new Assistant County Manager. There is always a steady need for extra hands, and Mr. Vaughan noted that he is ready to assist the Board with this process.

Commissioner Bazemore commended Mr. Vaughan for the job he has done since taking over as Interim County Manager, and that it was not an easy job to inherit. She also noted that it may not be a bad idea for the Board to consider keeping Mr. Sauer on to assist only with the Tall Glass of Water grant project.

Commissioner Trent echoed the same sentiments about the job Mr. Vaughan has been doing since moving into the Interim County Manager role.

Vice Chair Lee discussed the possibility of hiring a County Manager and an Assistant County Manager/Attorney or Grant Writer, and if Mr. Vaughan felt this would be a feasible, dual title.

Mr. Vaughan nodded that it would provide for a full plate, but that it was a very valid idea to consider.

On this note, Commissioner Atkins asked about the Finance Office in particular. He wanted to know if there was a plan in place in the event that the Finance Director, William Roberson, was no longer able to fulfill his duties.

Mr. Vaughan noted that “succession plans” were to be a topic of discussion at an upcoming Department Head meeting. It was his desire to hear from each department head about what they are doing to cross train someone in their department to perform the same duties, if ever needed.

The Board stated that they believed in cross training and planning in advance for the unexpected.

Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Facility Study – incorporation of Chowan County inmates & staff

The Board moved forward with this topic on the agenda to allow the Project Consultant more time to arrive at today’s meeting. The Board had an excerpt from the August 5, 2019 meeting minutes available to review in their agenda packets.

Vice Chair Lee stated that she would like to see the Board move forward with this study along with Martin County even if it was purely for informational purposes. She noted that if the jail would need an additional wing, it is better to have the best information available in order to decide.

Commissioner Atkins noted that he did not agree with this initiative, and that from what he has seen, regional jails do not usually work in anyone’s favor.

Commissioner Trent noted that he has not yet formed an opinion on this project, and would not be ready to vote on the matter. He would like further information about the addition of Chowan

County inmates, and that even if the County agreed to partly fund the feasibility study, that it was not a firm commitment from Bertie to accept Chowan's additional inmate. He did not want Chowan to be under the impression that the \$24,917 they would commit to the feasibility study would also be Bertie's approval to move forward with taking on Chowan County inmates despite the results of the study.

There was a lengthy discussion where each Commissioner discussed this point in particular, and that respective Boards and County Managers to work out before coming to a final decision.

There was a consensus for the Interim County Manager to confer with the Martin and Chowan County Managers to discuss this matter, and the expectations each respective entity may have about the project.

Board Appointments

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to appoint James Peele to the CADA Board. Commissioner Atkins **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to appoint Dr. Chris Cordon to the CADA Board. Commissioner Atkins **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to reappoint DiAnne Bazemore to the Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Board. Commissioner Atkins **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner Atkins made a **MOTION** to appoint Elizabeth Huff to the Bertie County Public Library Board. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

At approximately, 10:53 am, the Board took a brief, 5-minute recess.

Update from Project Consultant Scott Sauer

Throughout his update, Mr. Sauer referred to a number of items that he submitted to the Interim County Manager. The list is included:

- 1) NC Department of Commerce 2020 Tier Designations & Rankings (Bertie County is now # 6 out of 100). **See 12-20-2019 email and links.**
- 2) Blue Jay Recreation Center update for current phase—indoor facility with basketball courts and outdoor playground—future phases may include new baseball and soccer fields.
- 3) Animal Shelter update on renovations.
- 4) Shooting range training facility improvements.

- 5) Courthouse improvements—review any pending items, plus security staffing update from the Sheriff (vacancies, recruitment and impact of salary adjustments).
- 6) Midyear Financial Report – all funds plus review of cash on hand and fund balance projections.
- 7) Status of reimbursements for EMS Station One (both FEMA and NC Department of Commerce).
- 8) Audit for fiscal year ended June 30, 2019—status ?
- 9) Library & Cooperative Extension project capital outlay requirements—Albemarle Regional Library has committed \$400,000 for technology, furniture and equipment—Cooperative Extension’s furniture and equipment are not funded, grants possible, corporate sponsorship.
- 10) FY 2020-2021 Budget Calendar and schedule for public hearing.
- 11) TGOW—Easement from adjoining property owner and County Attorney to certify legal access to the park (PARTF application requirement)—needed ASAP. See 1-10-2020 email.**
- 12) TGOW—Report from First Colony Foundation re: archeological activities and findings, next steps?
- 13) TGOW—Report from Dr. Stan Riggs re: status of capital campaign for construction of Cultural, Heritage & Education Center—to be located on Salmon Creek State Natural Area.

Note: Clarification is needed for Board of Commissioners understanding and confirmation of this initiative led by Dr. Riggs, especially as it relates to the County’s planning and design concept for “learning center” on the County-owned TGOW property. VINES design team needs to have a clear understanding of the Board’s intentions and priorities.
- 14) Review PARTF grant application schedule and key items pending (easements, update of County’s CIP, CAMA & Corps of Engineers report) and others.
- 15) TGOW—VINES design team and potential retainer?
- 16) TGOW—2020 Beach Day, set the date and planning calendar for this event.
- 17) NC Department of Transportation presentation on corridor planning for Interstate 87 and the Welcome Center proposal for the TGOW property.
- 18) Republic Services—status of landfill expansion state permit, schedule for landfill host agreement renewal and related legal work, convenience center operations, upkeep for vehicle entrances to sites, and any other concerns or pending service improvements.
- 19) AVOCA—fire line extension—status?

- 20) Valley Proteins—hydraulic study recommendations to meet flow requirements and static pressure—status?
- 21) Water system operations—SCADA certifications from the State which will allow weekly versus daily schedules, and the impact on staff overtime.
- 22) Water rate study—pending, for consideration with budget.
- 23) 2020 Census coordination and staffing assignments, plus support and update from Mid-East Commission as appropriate.
- 24) Solar project on Woodard Road and the proposed economic development agreement under review by the County Attorney.
- 25) \$250,000 CDBG Broadband grant being administered by Roanoke Electric Cooperative—status?
- 26) Bertie County—Town of Windsor utility infrastructure reimbursement for the prison—update for the Board.
- 27) Bertie County—Town of Windsor lease agreement for the Dominion Power solar farm on County property adjacent to the prison—update for the Board.
- 28) Bertie Martin Regional Jail’s feasibility study for incorporation of Chowan County inmates and staff.
- 29) County Attorney’s review of Closed Session Minutes for unsealing certain public records.
- 30) Status of titles & deeds for the multi-party land transaction with the county, town and Cashie Golf Club for the firefighter training facility. **See 1-10-2020 email.**
- 31) Fire Service consultant study—is it likely to move forward? The Fire Association remains very supportive of this project. This item has been discussed at length by the Board for several years.
- 32) Amendment to the Road Safety & Maintenance Ordinance as recommended by the County Attorney. **See Lloyd’s 1-3-2020 email.**
- 33) David Peele’s request for Golden LEAF Foundation grant support for Carolina Rebuilding Ministries renovations to the former DSS and Health Department facilities to be leased from the County. **See 1-3-2020 email.**
- 34) Personnel Policy revisions/update pending.
- 35) DSS Salary study of regional market analysis pending.

- 36) Local Option Sales Tax ballot referendum for March 3—review marketing/public education campaign with Superintendent Smallwood and the Board of Education. **See 1-7-2020 and related links.**
- 37) Timber sale for 10 acre County owned property on Wakeland Road. **See 1-7-2020 email.**
- 38) Wells Fargo bank building—remains available. **See 1-9-2020 email.**
- 39) Resiliency Planning and long range planning with the Town of Windsor, seeking State grants from the NC ORR—to include: apartments & townhouses (teacher housing initiative too), public safety operations center for Sheriff and Emergency Management (including warehouse), public safety radio communications system upgrade, pedestrian tunnel under NC 13 for students crossing between Bertie High School and the athletic facilities & administrative offices, mobile generators for emergency storm shelters at school facilities, new police station (Well Fargo building), Windsor Utilities Department relocation, replacement of Windsor’s wastewater treatment plant, relocation of Windsor commercial business district, relocation of Livermon Park & Zoo, TGOW improvements and NC DOT Welcome Center on I-87. **See 1-2-2020 email re: Sampson County EMS grant.**
- 40) Review need for in-house full time County Attorney.

Mr. Sauer distributed several documents submitted by Dr. Stan Riggs. The first document is related to Site X, and a proposal for a Cultural, Heritage & Education Center located on Salmon Creek State Natural Area.

He noted that he was encouraging Dr. Riggs to approach the entire Board through the Interim County Manager to discuss this project as it will need the blessing of the entire governing body.

Clarification is needed for Board of Commissioners understanding and confirmation of this initiative led by Dr. Riggs, especially as it relates to the County’s planning and design concept for “learning center” on the County-owned TGOW property. VINES design team needs to have a clear understanding of the Board’s intentions and priorities.

He also conveyed that Dr. Riggs had asked Mr. Sauer to reach out to the school system about an organization he is passionate about called “Time for Science,” which is the group responsible for the Star Party (the next Star Party in Bertie is scheduled for Tuesday, January 29 at Bertie Middle School).

Mr. Sauer distributed a document prepared for Interim County Manager Vaughan which identified discussion topics and agenda suggestions for upcoming Board meetings. He complimented the Board’s selection of the VINES design team and how impressive their initial approach to the TGOW project has been with the initial input committee meeting. Mr. Sauer emphasized that there are key items for the PARTF grant application including certification by the County Attorney related to control of the property and access to the TGOW county owned

land. Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston responded and indicated that these documents could be prepared and executed within the week.

Commissioner Lee noted that she had heard reports of a cement truck entering and exiting the Tall Glass of Water/Bertie Beach site farming path on at least one occasions. County Administration was instructed to investigate.

Next, Mr. Sauer reported the latest listings from the NC Department of Commerce 2020 Tier Designations & Rankings which shows Bertie County new ranking as now the 6th most impoverished County in the State. There are 100 total counties in North Carolina.

Mr. Sauer reported that one of the projects that he would be assisting with in the coming weeks is the review of the draft audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019 and preparation of the management and discussion analysis of county operations. In particular, Mr. Sauer noted the anticipated decrease in fund balance of at least \$1.4 million as reviewed with the Board at his final meeting on October 29th where reimbursements for Hurricane Matthew recovery projects are still pending, in addition to revaluation expenses which were budgeted for this year. He also described the annual review of ambulance program revenue and expenditures for both 911 Paramedic and Non-Emergency Transport services, which typically require net tax support of nearly \$100,000 each month to sustain 24-hour seven days a week operation.

There was short discussion about a representative for the Bertie County 2020 CENSUS Count Committee and potential resiliency fund opportunities.

Resiliency Planning and long range planning with the Town of Windsor was highly recommending including seeking State grants from the NC ORR—to include: apartments & townhouses (teacher housing initiative too), public safety operations center for Sheriff and Emergency Management (including warehouse), public safety radio communications system upgrade, pedestrian tunnel under NC 13 for students crossing between Bertie High School and the athletic facilities & administrative offices, mobile generators for emergency storm shelters at school facilities, new police station (Well Fargo building), Windsor Utilities Department relocation, replacement of Windsor’s wastewater treatment plant, relocation of Windsor commercial business district, relocation of Livermon Park & Zoo, TGOW improvements and NC DOT Welcome Center on I-87.

Republic Services General Manager, Joe Dehner – serving improvement, convenience center operations, upkeep of vehicle entrances to sites, schedule for landfill host agreement renewal and related legal work

Joe Dehner, General Manager with Republic, was present to hear the Board’s recent concerns about the various convenience sites throughout the County.

Vice Chair Lee noted that she was made aware of a Republic Services employee at the Hardenton site who was photographed sleeping on the job during business hours.

Other concerns presented including stray nails causing flat tires, full compactors and containers, and citizens being turned away from their most conveniently located sites, as well as issues related to higher traffic times during the holidays.

Vice Chair Lee noted that it is not just Christmas/New Year holidays that are important. She believes that the public this spring will be eager to get outside and clean up their yards around Easter, and beyond, which would also create additional traffic to the convenience sites.

As a side note, Vice Chair Lee discussed an opportunity for Republic Services to sponsor a wall or wing of the new Tri-County Airport terminal building in the Woodland area. He requested the contact information of the correct person to speak to at the airport about this potential partnership.

During lunch, Board members shared updates about various projects including the suggested date of the annual Report to the People hosted by Bertie County Cooperative Extension. The proposed date is February 18th which coincides with the Board's regularly scheduled work session. The Board concurred with that date. Cooperative Extension will be contacted by County Administration.

RECESS

The Board **RECESSED** to attend an awards ceremony honoring Sheriff John Holley.

Report from First Colony Foundation by John Ed. Whitehurst – archeological activities, findings, next steps

Mr. Whitehurst reported that there had been a number of artifacts recovered from the TGOW site. A total of 80 artifacts which have been classified into five (5) different categories. This is a significantly higher amount than what was found at Site X.

Based on these findings, they believe at least 10 people actually lived in this area. This would signify that the group of 100 who originally landed there split off into smaller groups.

This phase of digging will end in mid-March and a formal report of findings will be submitted to the Board at that time.

Vice Chair Lee inquired if this archeological digging could somehow harm or hinder our use of the beach property.

The Board also discussed the next steps in general terms since there is no precedence in Bertie County for this sort of discovery. The County will lean on archeologists to determine the best way to proceed. In the meantime, the Board will look forward to mid-March for the final report.

Updates from Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey – Valley Proteins project options, AVOCA fire line extension, water system operations – SCADA certifications

Mr. Spivey noted that in order to fulfill Valley Proteins' recent request is to have the County's engineering firm, Green Engineering, install a water tower, water pump station, and line extension with a price tag of \$2 million.

It was reported that 300,000 gallons of water are used per day at the level of 60 psi. This is a significant amount, and to ensure that existing water customers do not face water service interruption, a water tower and additional pump station is the only feasible option.

A meeting with Green Engineering and Valley Protein is scheduled for tomorrow, 1:00 pm, Thursday, January 23, and more information about this endeavor would be available after that time.

More updates on this project will be reported to the Board as soon as they are available.

AVOCA was discussed as they have recently submitted a request to extend the County's fire line to the plant for about \$11,000. This would be remitted up front by the County, but would later be reimbursed by AVOCA, if the project were to be approved.

Lastly, Mr. Spivey noted that the County's SCADA system has done very well since it's installation, and that currently it is in the process of being certified by the State.

At 2:53pm, the Board took a 2-minute recess.

Updates from Maintenance Superintendent Anthony Rascoe – Blue Jay Recreation Center completion, Courthouse & Government Center improvements, shooting range training facility

Mr. Rascoe presented a PowerPoint presentation of pictures taken around the County of various projects that need attention on a daily basis. Most projects required minor repairs, and are handled in house so that the County does not have to hire contractors.

Commissioner Bazemore asked why there was such a long delay in the completion of the Blue Jay Recreation Park. Mr. Rascoe noted that there was a change in one of the contractors which halted progress there. At that point, Mr. Rascoe had to balance another project for the County in the meantime before work at Blue Jay could resume.

In closing, Mr. Rascoe noted that due to several set backs and changes requested by the Blue Jay Recreation Committee, the project is now over budget. An additional funding amount of approximately \$42,000 was now needed to complete the building.

Interim County Manager Vaughan and Finance Officer Roberson agreed to meet with Mr. Rascoe to review his projects and assist him with re-prioritizing his department's operating budget with the goal of absorbing these costs.

Budget Updates from Finance Director William Roberson – mid-year financial report, status of reimbursements for EMS Station One, status of audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, FY2020-2021 Budget Calendar and scheduled public hearing

The Finance Director distributed several reports to the Board for their review.

Currently in regards to EMS Station One reimbursements, a final inspection report was submitted and forwarded along to FEMA. A progress report was also submitted to the Department of Commerce for a \$300,000 amount that the County is owed. That request was submitted back on January 15th.

A financial statement ending December 31, 2019 was submitted to the Board per the request of Chairman Wesson. Several items of interest were noted including a recommendation that the Board call on Colleton Software to provide an update to the Board about recent changes to Medicaid billing.

There has been a noticeable difference in available cash flow which can be related back to revaluation costs and reimbursable project funds that have not yet been received.

Mr. Roberson acknowledged that he had been asked to provide an update about the County's recent audit. A draft has been requested but not yet received. He noted that the Board should be prepared to see a \$1.5 million drop in fund balance.

Commissioner Trent asked if former County Manager, Scott Sauer, had any thoughts on this report.

Mr. Sauer explained that the County coordinated very closely with the Blue Jay Recreation Center Committee during the interior build-out, and several changes have added to the project cost increases. These added features included the atrium style entry with a vaulted ceiling, commercial glass on the front exterior and masonry trim.

Mr. Sauer noted that the purchase of the 10.35-acre tract adjacent to the Tall Glass of Water project required \$120,000 from the County's fund balance. He also noted that projects like the Commissioners Room, and even several years back with the Charters of Freedom project required more funding than originally budgeted.

TGOW – Vines Design Team and compensation, PARTF application schedule, easement from adjoining property owner & certification of legal access to park, 2020 Beach Day

Vice Chair Lee noted that this would be a good opportunity to discuss another beach day event.

Clerk to the Board, Sarah Tinkham, gave a brief report about the plans for a 2nd annual Bertie Beach Day. This year's event, if the Board chose to move forward, would be designed to allow a variety of vendors to participate. It was noted that a majority of any needed budget would be to provide free activities and to ensure the farming path and beach are accessible and presentable.

The event would take place after Memorial Day, but there was some concern about scheduling something that conflicted with graduation weekend for Bertie County Public Schools.

The committee was asked to meet and discuss a budget proposal to be submitted to the Board at an upcoming Board meeting.

Interim County Manager Vaughan also noted that the Board needed to discuss the proposal submitted by VINES which requested funds in advance of securing PARTF funding. PARTF funding will most likely be the main source of funding for the development of this project.

There was a lengthy discussion about this matter, and Commissioner Atkins sought clarification about how each firm during their presentations was asked and informed about the potential upfront costs involved.

Several Board members and the Finance Officer were interested in the option to remit \$25,000 to the architectural firm now, while allowing for an additional \$25,000 be remitted sometime in the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020.

Attorney Updates by Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston – status of titles & deeds for the multi-party land transaction with the County & Cashie Golf Club, amendment to the Road & Safety Maintenance Ordinance, County Attorneys' review of Closed Session minutes

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, noted that Carolina Rebuilding Ministries notified him that they were in agreement with his suggested changes, and all that is left to do is approve the lease. Since the life of the lease is 10 years or more, he noted that the lease has to be posted in the newspaper. He asked that this item be discussed again at the February 10th meeting, and more information is forthcoming.

Economic Development Director, Steve Biggs, inquired if the ownership agreement had been signed yet involving historical artifacts being collected. Mr. Huddleston stated that this agreement was still forthcoming from County Attorney, Lloyd Smith.

He also confidently certified that the County has access to the TGOW farming path, and that a document could be written up very quickly to address this concern.

Mr. Huddleston also noted that Closed Session minutes will be reviewed as soon as they are received, and a report could be given at the February 18th meeting.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to **ADJOURN**. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Ronald Wesson, Chairman

Sarah Tinkham, Clerk to the Board