

Windsor, North Carolina
January 6, 2020
REGULAR MEETING

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for its regularly scheduled meeting today inside the Board of Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor. 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: Interim County Manager Juan Vaughan, II.
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Clerk to the Board Sarah Tinkham
Finance Officer William Roberson
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs
Planning & Inspections Director Traci White
Building Codes Inspector Chris Surgeon
Cooperative Extension Director Billy Barrow
TGOW Project Consultant Robin Payne
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey
ABC Store General Manager Clint Freeman
Administrative Assistant Sheila Powell

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wesson called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Wesson gave the Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments at this time.

APPOINTMENTS & REPORTS

2020 Crossroads/annual progress edition by Media Specialist at Roanoke-Chowan Publications, Anna Phipps

Anna Phipps of Roanoke-Chowan Publications was present to discuss the 2020 Crossroads edition. She inquired if the Board was interested in keeping the same ad spot on page 3 of the edition.

The price of the ad would remain at \$1,550 which is consistent with the 2019 Crossroads edition.

This year's theme for the Crossroads edition is "2020 Vision – looking forward."

After a short discussion, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to move forward with a 2020 Crossroads Edition ad on pg. 3 in the amount of \$1,550. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Hurricane Matthew recovery and grant update by Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planners

Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planners was present to discuss the Hurricane Matthew Recovery programs including the Hazard Mitigation program.

Initial funding for this program was \$6 million, and a total of 45 homeowners are being assisted with acquisitions, relocations, etc. Thirty of those homes have been acquired, and 12 of those have been demolished. Seventeen additional would be demolished as well within the next three (3) months.

Owner relocations have been funded and completed, and recently four (4) new evaluations have been approved. Those are moving forward as planned.

FEMA funding is forthcoming from the State to continue forward with additional plans for some historic homes which has presented a different set of challenges. Once grant agreements are secured, contract work can begin.

Vice Chair Lee thanked Mr. Hilbert for all of his and his firms' work on these projects, and she credit Holland Consulting Planners really allowed the County to be ahead of the curve for these homeowners which was extremely appreciated.

There was a short discussion regarding the grant funding that is still on the way to the County to cover expenses already incurred.

Mr. Hilbert noted that there is a Resolution of Termination on the Board's agenda tonight for the NCORR and CDBG-DR programs. He answered several questions from Chair Wesson about his feelings on turning things over to the State, and if that's the best solution for Bertie County.

ABC Board audit findings by ABC Board member, Michael Freeman

At this time, ABC Board Chairman, Michael Freeman came forward to present the latest audit for the Bertie County ABC Board.

He briefly reviewed the audit and copies were made available to the Board.

Reported sales as of June 30, 2019 were \$860,924 which is an increase from June 30, 2018's audit report was \$801,617.

It was noted that the cost of liquor, operational expenses, and IT costs had increased, and this does present additional challenges that will be more apparent during next year's audit.

Education efforts were also discussed, and the ABC Board received praise for the work that they do with the Bertie County Public School System. These educational efforts are becoming more and more popular in other counties where our County is used as a model.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

FYI – most recent Board vacancy advertisement

The Board reviewed the latest Board vacancy ad. There was no action needed for this item.

Chair Wesson reviewed the vacancy ad and discussed the Board's policy adopted in 2013. This policy allows for anyone interested to apply and be considered for a board, council, or commission.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Approve Minutes for Regular Session 12-2-19, 10-29-19**
2. **Approve Register of Deeds Fees Report – December 2019**
3. **Tax Release Journal – November 2019**

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve Consent Items #1-3 as presented. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

4. **Approve sealed bid recently received for foreclosed property located at 532 Woodard Road – accept advertising for 10-day upset bid per NCGS 45-21.27(a)**

The Board considered the sealed bid, but after some discussion, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to reject the bid. Commissioner Atkins **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

5. **Resolution of termination agreement with NCORR, CDBG-DR program per recommendation from Holland Consulting Planners**

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the Resolution of Termination Agreement as needed for the NCORR, CDBG-DR program. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

DISCUSSION

1. **Budget Amendments by Finance Director William Roberson**

Finance Director, William Roberson, presented all needed Budget Amendments, and fielded questions from the Board as necessary. He also noted that he planned to present a small snapshot of what the Board could face during the FY2020-2021 budget cycle.

**2. Human Resources Update by Human Resources/Risk Management Director
Cortney Ward**

Human Resources Director, Cortney Ward, brought forth drafts of several forms related to staff performance evaluations and incident reporting. These forms would be completed by those in supervisory roles and submitted to Human Resources for each respective employees' Personnel file.

No action was needed on this item.

Mrs. Ward also noted several other projects she is currently working on which include a massive update of the County's Personnel policy, an update to the County's organizational chart, and how to address salary compression among all departments.

**3. Cooperative Extension Request for County to Increase Contribution by Cooperative
Extension Director Billy Barrow**

Cooperative Extension Director, Billy Barrow, first noted the recent passing of Deidre Goines, a beloved member of the Bertie County Cooperative Extension team.

He also summarized a letter recently received from Dr. Rosalind Dale, Associate Dean and Extension Administrator with NC A&T and NC State University. The letter details that due to "tight budgets on the state and federal levels," it is their belief that the best way for local areas to continue providing valuable programs for adults and youth, a cost share system was being encouraged across the State.

The letter stated that "this [cost sharing] truly shares the responsibility for local Extension positions between the counties that benefit from local staff and the university that supports them with research-based knowledge."

This could be phased in over the next three years.

No decision was needed from the Board tonight. This item will be included in upcoming budget deliberations for FY2020-2021.

4. Revaluation & Tax Collection Rate Update by Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea

Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, was present to provide a brief update to the Board about the 2020 Revaluation & current tax collection rate.

Mr. Rhea noted that there was a good chance that citizens would see a “moderate increase” in their property values, but final numbers have not yet been submitted by the revaluation team.

Closing out of December 2019 is still underway, but it was expected to see a 74% rate of collections.

5. Fire Prevention Code Enforcement Update by Building Inspector Chris Surgeon

Building Inspector, Chris Surgeon, provided a brief report to the Board regarding the County’s new handling of fire inspections which is required under NC Building Codes.

A total of 300 inspections have been completed, and the currently contracted Fire Inspector, John Rawls, averages 60 hours per week at \$50 per hour.

Vice Chair Lee inquired how long it would be before Mr. Surgeon had the proper qualifications to complete these inspections on his own without the help of a contacted employee.

Mr. Surgeon noted that he is completing his coursework as quickly as allowed by the State, but that manpower will always be an issue, and that the County is so large and really does require more inspectors. He felt that John Rawls, or someone with similar background and experience, would still be needed.

There was some discussion about how businesses are inspected, and if this was done in any particular order and what criteria is considered.

Mr. Surgeon noted that “higher risk occupancies like event spaces” in and around the Windsor area first. County buildings were also first up on the list to ensure that our own buildings are in compliance.

Soon, Perdue Farms and AVOCA, and others, will be addressed since they are higher occupancy.

Planning & Inspections Director, Traci White, noted that this item has been discussed at length in her office, and that they were open to the Board’s thoughts if they needed to make a change.

Commissioners Bazemore and Atkins wanted to ensure that inspections are equitable for all, and were handled with respect and intent to assist those from being non-compliant to compliant.

6. Discuss rescheduling the February 3rd regular meeting in Powellsville

Due to a scheduling conflict, the Board noted a change in their regular meeting schedule as it related to the February community meeting in Powellsville. A new date of February 10th was chosen instead of February 3rd.

The Clerk to the Board was instructed to notify the Town of Powellsville and ensure that this date works for them.

Junior Commissioners' Reports

Qudre Joyner

Junior Commissioner, Mr. Joyner, commended the Cooperative Extension Office for all of the hard work that they put into every single program offered to citizens of Bertie.

He also noted that he would be in attendance at the Tall Glass of Water Input Committee tomorrow, January 7th.

Jahkia Basnight

Ms. Basnight inquired if there were any updates about the recently submitted petition to make the Creekside Subdivision a State road.

There were no updates to report at this time.

Commissioners' Reports

Commissioner John Trent

Commissioner Trent noted how well VINES did in their recent architectural firm presentation, and that they were selected to complete the planning phase of this project.

He also discussed the PARTF grant deadline coming up this spring which will be the primary source of funding for the development of the TGOW site.

Chair Wesson noted that these meetings are open to the public to attend.

Commissioner Ernestine Bazemore

Commissioner Bazemore discussed a grant opportunity for the County to possibly receive funds for repair costs related to public safety vehicles and front-end vehicle damage due to collision.

She also noted that it was almost time for 2020 CENSUS, and that the County needs passionate CENSUS advocates in each community to push this forward so all citizens of the County are counted as these numbers are considered when the County is being considered for grant opportunities.

She announced that the County will have a quarter-cent sales tax initiative on the ballot again this year. A quarter of a penny added to the County sales tax would yield \$175,000 for school system supplements.

On another note, she announced that she had recently been appointed by the Governor to the Roanoke-Chowan Community College Board of Trustees. She will be taking the oath in the very near future.

She expressed concern about the Blue Jay Recreation Park not being completed. She noted that this project was the top priority of the Board for a couple of years, yet the project still has not been made completed. She emphasized that the project should be reprioritized so that it can be completed as soon as possible.

Lastly, she invited all of those present to attend the Martin Luther King Jr. parade here in Windsor on January 20th at noon.

Commissioner Tammy Lee

Vice Chair Tammy Lee asked that the quarter cent sales tax initiative be addressed at an upcoming work session, and that a strategy be put into place to get the initiative passed.

She also invited all of those present to the Tri-County Airport Authority groundbreaking event on Wednesday, January 15 at 11:30AM at the Tri-County Airport in Woodland. The project is being funded by NC DOT Aviation.

Commissioner Greg Atkins

Commissioner Atkins gave no remarks at this time.

Chairman Ronald Wesson

A new organization will be relocated to Bertie County this month called Carolina Rebuilders Ministry. On Monday, January 20th, this group (in partnership with several other groups) will be participating in a “day of service” completing 6-8 small repair projects for homeowners in need. The group completes small to large scale projects, for free, because of a grant secured from the Duke Endowment.

All were encouraged to participate.

Chairman Wesson also apologized to citizens about the inconveniences that citizens have suffered at the local convenience sites especially over the Christmas/New Years holidays. It was requested of Interim County Manager Vaughan to invite Republic Services forward to present a corrective action plan to address the many concerns being expressed to Board members.

Lastly, he announced his desire to see this Board adopt the NCACC President’s yearly initiative as their own which is middle income housing.

Interim County Manager’s Reports

Interim County Manager Vaughan noted that Bertie County citizens should be ready and prepared to complete the 2020 CENSUS through the medium most accessible to them – online, on the phone, or via mail. That the information collected is reviewed in so many different ways when it comes to Economic Development, grant opportunities, and many other ways.

He emphasized that law enforcement agencies are not privy to this information.

He also noted that the quarter-cent sales tax initiative campaign will begin very soon, and noted for the public that this tax would not apply to groceries or gasoline including on what visitors to our County spend.

The Board was also reminded that the time was coming to receive Cooperative Extension's Report to the People. A date is forthcoming.

Assistant County Attorney's Reports

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, reported that the current draft of the lease is in the hands of Carolina Rebuilders Ministry. A new draft should be forthcoming.

He also noted that the Superior Court complaint had been drafted, and that he needed direction on whether or not to go ahead and file it with the Court, or to have the Board of Commissioners review it before it is filed. All Commissioners were fine with the immediate filing, however, Commissioner Bazemore did request to see the draft.

Lastly, he responded to requests about an ownership agreement for all artifacts found at the Tall Glass of Water site. That draft has been started, but is not yet ready for the Board's review.

Public Comments Continued

Jamaal Summy, candidate for District Court Judge, came forward to introduce himself to the Board and citizens of Bertie County.

Robert Spivey of Windsor reported a sewer concern. Chair Wesson informed him that the County "is not in the sewer business," and that his concern would be better addressed by the Town of Windsor.

James Pugh of Lewiston-Woodville noted that he had a guest in town today who he convinced to stay for tonight's meeting.

Michael Freeman, Chair of the ABC Board, reminded the Board that he would need a Closed Session with the Board in relation to Economic Development. He also noted to all citizens present the photo identification is now no longer required for the March primary.

At this time, Chair Wesson entertained a motion for a brief Closed Session. Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations. The action approves the signing of an economic development contract or commitment, or the action

authorizing the payment of economic development expenditures, shall be taken in an open session. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

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

ABC Board

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the ABC Board's request allowing them to withhold \$12,000 of profit from last year to instead be used for capital outlay per the discussion just conducted in Closed Session. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

ADJOURN

Chair Wesson **ADJOURNED** the meeting at approximately 8:30pm.

Ronald Wesson, Chairman

Sarah Tinkham, Clerk to the Board