

**BERTIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMISSIONERS ROOM
MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021
10:00 AM**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled work session today at 10:00AM inside the Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was hosted partially in person, and partially via Zoom (conference call). The following members were present or absent:

Present: Ronald “Ron” Wesson, District I
 Greg Atkins, District II
 Tammy A. Lee, District III
 Ronald “Ron” Roberson, District V
 John Trent, District IV

Staff Present: County Manager Juan Vaughan, II
 Assistant County Manager David Scarborough
 Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
 Finance Director William Roberson

Staff Present (Zoom): Clerk to the Board LaShonda Cartwright

Call to Order

Chairwoman Lee called meeting to order @ 10:01 a.m.

Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation was led by Assistant District Forester James Caddy.
Pledge was led by Chairwoman Lee.

NC Forestry Service Program Updates by Mike Petruncio, NC Registered Forester

Informed Commissioners of programs, staff and equipment that are assigned and work in Bertie County.

Fire Control program works with local volunteer fire departments, training and working closely with them to respond to grass, woods, brush and forest fires. They are responsible for investigating and reporting all fires. In Bertie County, for 2021, there were 21 fires covering 71 acres.

Commissioner Trent asked about Emerald Ash Bore and Southern Pine Beetle. Mr. Petruncio explained the disease and Forestry Services response to such infestations, as well as treatment and preventative measures that landowners should and can take to address.

Other emergency responses include search and rescue and assisting after major weather events (hurricanes, tornadoes, floods).

Another program is the acquisition of and delivery of surplus federal equipment for fire departments and other agencies in Bertie County.

Educational programs to include information education programs, school programs, Smokey the Bear and other presentations such as parades and other events.

Assistant District Forester James Caddy identified Bertie County as one of the top 5 counties to which forestry resources are provided. He provided a report from 2018 that identified the resources per county, and the areas serviced by the Forestry Service.

Cost-share program provided to Bertie County landowners has ranged from \$212,000 - \$230,000 over the past several years. Mr. Caddy works with landowners to assist in work plans for their property.

Other programs delegated from Division of Water Quality include the checking of loggers in the County, to keep sediment out of streams and shaded, and controlled fires.

Mr. Petruncio identified the General Statute cooperative agreement with counties and referred to NC General Statute Section 113-54. He discussed the cooperative agreement with Bertie County, and the budget appropriation from Bertie County for FY22, \$127,000, of which they asked for \$162,000. The \$162,000 amount is same as last year to which they did not receive either. The reason for this is the need for a new fire response truck. After 100,000 miles, these trucks become a safety issue due to the weight and use of these vehicles.

Commissioner Atkins thanked them for their cooperation and participation with Bertie County.

Fire Study: Next Steps by Gregory Grayson, NC Fire Chief Consulting

Presentation regarding the Fire Study commissioned by Bertie County. The discussion is in regards to modernizing the funding structure for fire service provision. Continuous improvement of fire service is what NC Fire Chief Consulting focuses on. Presentation highlights concerns and feedback of volunteers regarding funding, increased call volume and equipment.

Discussed loss of volunteers in NC and nationwide, being 10% per year, and how to keep volunteerism viable. Funding options include rural fire districts, service districts and general fund provisions, of which Bertie County is currently one of the last 3 counties that do so. He took time to explain the service district and how to sustain and grow the service district without placing more of a burden on the general fund. Service districts could include municipalities if they so choose, but are not required. NC Fire Chief Consulting will be working with the fire departments and local government officials to explain this process and develop a workable plan that Bertie County believes best to provide continuous fire service.

County Manager Vaughan advised that funding for this project was not budgeted, and requested that staff be allowed to go back and identify a funding source for this project, and bring back a recommendation at the next Commissioner's meeting. This is the direction that he was given from the Commissioners.

RECESS

At 12:05 p.m., a recess was called by Chair Lee, and she brought the meeting back into session at 12:15 p.m. The TGOW Update, scheduled for 11:20 on the agenda was started at this time.

TGOW Updates by Consultant Robin Payne

July 6, site visit at TGOW with Dr. Riggs, DEQ, NC Water Resources and NC Natural Heritage staff were present.

Website draft is completed and being edited, will explain in more detail more about TGOW and its usage. July 13th, the TGOW team met with Bertie County School curriculum planners to discuss potential use for both teachers and students for future educational opportunities, which is beneficial to Vines Construction in planning facilities.

Branding process is being reviewed and getting feedback from community, businesses and others. Bertie County High School shop class making picnic tables for site.

NC Smart Growth is producing a management plan focusing on income and expenses of the project. This will be of extreme benefit to the team when looking at funding options such as loans.

Draft maintenance and position needs for facility provided and discussed.

Chair Lee expressed a desire to consider during next budget cycle to have a staff member on-site once bathrooms and other improvements made to the site.

Schedule with Vines in regards to the site development was presented.

Vision on stage and pavilion was discussed to assist Vines in developing site plans.

Site plan was shown and details shared and explained.

Funding for project: Phase 1 grants received. Campground funding is going to be difficult to receive because it is revenue producing. Traditional loan breakdown for campground needs to be evaluated.

Department of Social Services Salary Adjustments as Required by the Office of State Human Resources by Human Resources/Risk Management Director Courtney Ward

Director Ward provided a handout.

This review is required by the State, and usually due by July 31.

Approval is being requested by Director Ward based on the information she provided to the Commissioners of the salary scheduled based off of the study she developed, that provides salary increases for positions in DSS.

MOTION was made by Commissioner Roberson to Approve the mandated salary adjustments that were required by the Office of State Human Resources as well as the Bertie County DSS salary schedule for 2021-22. The **MOTION** to adopt the mandated salary schedule adjustment was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. After some discussion, the **MOTION** was **APPROVED** by unanimous decision.

Resolution Approving the MOA Between the State of NC and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation

Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston is recommending the approval of the MOA. He explained that the initial hold up in adopting this MOA had to do with national attorney fees, and this has been addressed and resolved.

The **MOTION** to adopt a resolution approving the MOA between the State of NC and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation was made by Commissioner Wesson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION** was **APPROVED** by unanimous decision.

Interlocal Agreement Between Bertie County & Chowan County for Building Inspection Services

County Manager Vaughan addressed the agreement. It is similar to the one Bertie County currently has with Washington County, and will provide additional inspectors for Bertie County until such time we are able to fill the two positions currently vacant.

The **MOTION** to adopt a resolution approving the Interlocal Agreement Between Bertie County & Chowan County for Building Inspection Services was made by Commissioner Trent and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION** was **APPROVED** by unanimous decision.

Recommendation for Commissioner R. Roberson to Serve on the Vidant Bertie Hospital Directors Council

The **MOTION** to appoint Commissioner R. Roberson to Serve on the Vidant Bertie Hospital Directors Council was

made by Commissioner Wesson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION** was **APPROVED** by unanimous decision.

Other Items as Needed

Commissioner Lee shared to all that on August 24th, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at Chief's Bar & Grill, first Coffee and Donuts with our Veterans. All are invited to participate.

MOTION to Adjourn made by Commissioner Atkins. The **MOTION** passed unanimously.