

Windsor, North Carolina
February 7, 2022
COMMISSIONERS MEETING

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled meeting today at 6:00 PM 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 Lloyd Smith
Finance Director William Roberson

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Tammy Lee provided the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3-MINUTE LIMIT PER SPEAKER)

Clerk to the Board LaShonda Cartwright stated there were no public comments at this time.

APPOINTMENTS (A)

UPDATE ON CANDIDATE FILING FOR 2022 PRIMARY ELECTION & ELECTIONS DIRECTOR VACANCY BY BOARD OF ELECTIONS CHAIR MICHAEL FREEMAN

Chair Michael Freeman provided the Board of Commissioners with an update on the candidate filings for 2022 along with information on the vacancy of the Elections Director position.

Chair Freeman stated to the Board of Commissioners that the Board of Elections is still looking for a candidate to fill the position of Elections Director.

Chair Freeman stated that he and the other board members have asked the County Manager to consider reclassifying that position because the responsibilities of the Elections Director have changed significantly since it was initially classified.

Chair Freeman stated that as of right now, candidate filing is set to begin February 24th at 8:00 AM and it ends on March 4th at 12:00 PM. However, the dates for candidate filing are subject to change.

Chair Freeman advised the Board of Commissioners that early voting begins Thursday, April 28th and ends on Saturday, May 14th until 3:00 PM. Early voting will be held from 8:00 AM to 7:30 PM each day.

Chair Freeman stated that the two early voting sites will be in Windsor and Powellsville.

Chair Freeman stated the Primary Election will be on May 17th. Polls will open at 6:30 AM and close at 7:30 PM.

Chair Freeman asked the board if they had any questions.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked Chair Freeman about the process they are using to search for an applicant to fill the Elections Director position.

Chair Freeman stated to Vice-Chair Wesson that they have the Elections Director position listed on the State Board of Elections website as well as the Bertie County website. Chair Freeman also stated the applicant can live outside the county as long as they agree to move to the county within one year and obtain certification.

Chair Freeman stated to the Board that the Board of Elections plans to have retired Elections Director Shelia Holloman to serve as Interim Director during the upcoming elections.

**UPDATE ON RESILIENT COASTAL COMMUNITIES PROGRAM, PRELIMINARY
FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAPS & PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFFING BY
PLANNING DIRECTOR TRACI WHITE**

Planning Director Traci White explained to the Board of Commissioners that the Resilient Coastal Communities Program was a new program in the Division of Coastal Management.

Director White stated that the Resilient Coastal Communities Program started last year and the purpose of the Resilient Coastal Communities Program is to support communities, counties, and towns by pursuing coastal resiliency projects.

Director White stated that they are also working with the Town of Windsor, the County and other municipalities.

Director White stated that there were four phases to the Resilient Coastal Counties Program. The first two phases are currently underway. Those two phases consist of risk and vulnerability assessments, which have been conducting since August of last year.

Phase two of the project is creating a project portfolio and phases three and four will consist of engineer & design followed by project implementation.

Director White stated that a community action team has been meeting monthly since September to help guide the process.

Director White stated the CAT (Community Action Team) has been open for any of the towns to participate and local officials.

Director White advised the board that the final resiliency strategy will be completed in April. It will contain results from the risk assessment and list priority projects and recommended funding sources for each project.

Director White stated that one project will be identified out of the strategy and that project will be eligible for design/engineer funding from the Division of Coastal Management under phase three of the program.

Director White stated that another public meeting is planned for late February.

Director White advised the Board that at that meeting, the resilience projects that are under consideration will be presented and the public will have the opportunity to provide input, which will help determine which projects are considered high priority.

Director White stated that the outcome is to hopefully have a final set of five to ten high priority projects that will be ready to hit the ground when funding becomes available.

Chairman Trent asked if there were any questions from the commissioners.

County Manager Vaughan asked Director White if she has any good news to share about the staffing in her department.

Director White stated that Matt Sopher was hired in December as Building Inspector. Director White further advised the Board that Phillip Barnes has also accepted the position of Building Inspector and will start on February 21st.

Director White stated that updated flood mapping can be found on the fris.nc.gov website.

Director White further elaborated on the process of updating the maps and getting them approved.

PRESENTATION OF 2021 UNPAID REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES

BY TAX ADMINSTRATOR JODIE RHEA

Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea provided the Board with the annual report of the Unpaid Real and Personal Property Taxes for 2021.

During the presentation, Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea stated to the Board that this year's collection of taxes is slightly higher than last year's at this time.

Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea stated to the Board that following the presentation is a letter to advertise the delinquent taxes.

Chair Lee made the **MOTION** to give authorization to Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea to advertise the delinquent taxes. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 FINANCIAL SUMMARY BY FINANCE DIRECTOR

WILLIAM ROBERSON

Finance Director Roberson provided the board with a Financial Summary that went through December 2021.

Finance Director Roberson reviewed reimbursements that have been received and stated that there is still approximately \$464,000 of outstanding reimbursements for which we are waiting and hope to receive soon. This outstanding reimbursement is from Golden LEAF Foundation for the Library/Cooperative Extension facility.

Director Roberson discussed the financial summary and provided an explanation for some line items being slightly higher than expected at this time.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS (B)

1. Reappointment to CPTA Board – Denise Clark

Chair Lee made the **MOTION** to have Ms. Clark reappointed to the CPTA Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

2. Reappointment to Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee – Commissioner Wesson

Commissioner Roberson **MOTION** to reappoint Commissioner Wesson to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision

CONSENT AGENDA (C)

1. Approve Register of Deeds Fees Report – January 2022

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Register of Deeds Fees Report – January 2022. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

2. Approve Tax Release Journal – December 2021
3. Approve Tax Release Journal – January 2022

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to approve Tax Release Journal – December 2021 and Approve Tax Release Journal – January 2022. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

4. Approve Minutes for Regular Meeting 7-7-21

Commissioner Wesson made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes for Regular Meeting 7-7-21 with redline changes. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

5. Approve Minutes for Closed Session 7-7-21

Commissioner Wesson made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes for Closed Session 7-7-21 with redline changes. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

6. Approve Minutes for Regular Meeting 1-10-22
7. Approve Minutes for Closed Session 1-10-22

Commissioner Wesson made the **MOTION** to approve both sets of minutes for Regular Meeting 1-10-22 and Closed Session 1-10-22. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Chairman Trent asked the county attorney Lloyd Smith if those minutes have been reviewed by him.

County attorney Smith stated to Chairman Trent, "Yes sir."

8. Approve Budget Amendments

Finance Director stated to the Board that he had three budget amendments. The first one was an adjustment made to match the amount received from the LIEAP Program.

Finance Director Roberson stated the second budget amendment was for pandemic relief assistance provided by LIEAP.

Finance Director Roberson stated that the third amendment was the invoice that was received from the Tax Accountant who completed the audit.

Commissioner Wesson made the **MOTION** to approve the Budget Amendments. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

9. Proclamation Honoring Chaplain Ricardo Hardison

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to approve the Proclamation Honoring Chaplain Ricardo Hardison. Commissioner Roberson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Chair Trent then read the Proclamation aloud for the board.

10. Purchase of Teaching Housing Site by Partners for Bertie County Public Schools from Bertie County

County Attorney Smith provided the Board with a brief explanation on the bid process of this agenda item and further stated that Vice Chair Wesson should recuse himself from this process.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve Purchase of Teaching Housing Site by Partners for Bertie County Public Schools from Bertie County. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision (not including a vote from Vice Chair Wesson).

OTHER ITEMS
DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)

1. FY 2022-23 Budget Calendar

County Manager Vaughan stated to the board that have a copy of the FY 2022-23 Budget Calendar in their packets.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that they already have had their budget kickoff for Department Heads so they are a little bit ahead of schedule.

County Manager Vaughan advise the Board that on their meeting calendar previously approved by the Board, they have the Budget Public Hearing scheduled for June 21st. However, due to the progress that has been made, they can actually conduct that Public Hearing on June 6th to have the budget process completed sooner as requested by the Board.

County Manager Vaughan further stated that his goal was to make the Budget Presentation on May 23rd and to ensure that the Board receives that budget prior to the budget presentation.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that May 24th through June 3rd is the time designated for the Board to have budget work sessions.

County Manager Vaughan then asked the board for a **MOTION** to amend the Meeting Schedule Calendar.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve having the Meeting Schedule calendar amended to show the Budget Public Hearing date as **June 6, 2022** instead of **June 21,2022**. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

2. COVID Update

HR Director/Human Risk Manager Cortney Ward provided the board with an update on COVID and the fact that Bertie County only has three employees as of Friday, February 4, 2022 who are absent due to having COVID-19.

HR Director/Human Risk Manager Cortney Ward stated to the board that the COVID-19 Task Force recommends to the board moving forward with the following changes: county buildings and doors will reopen to the public and the citizens will be served face to face beginning Tuesday, February 8, 2022; and there will be a meeting with Parks & Recreation and Council on Aging in the coming days to develop a plan to safely resume activities within those departments.

Director Ward stated that face coverings will still remain a requirement as well as social distancing.

Director Ward then stated that at this time they are still working on making rapid testing available to our Bertie County staff through our EMS department. They hope to roll those tests out within the following weeks.

Director Ward then discussed the protocols for quarantine and isolation. Chairman Trent asked Director Ward, County Manager Vaughan and the Recreation Department if they could meet and put something together in reference to the seniors having their dance and bring it back to the board.

Chairman Trent then followed up by stating that he wanted them to make this kind of a priority because he has received several calls in reference to the seniors being able to resume their dances.

County Manager Vaughan agreed to get back with the board within a week or so by email with an update on the seniors returning to their dances.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS (E)

Commissioner Lee

Commissioner Lee reported that the Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey will be in Windsor on tomorrow at 8:30 AM to distribute checks to the Fire Department. All Commissioners are invited to attend.

Commissioner Lee then stated that Friday from 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM MedAssist will be handing out over-the-counter medications at the Convention Center and it is a drive-through event.

Commissioner Lee followed up by stating that she plans to attend Chaplain Hardison's retirement.

Commissioner Lee then stated that she received a call from Reginald Speight that used to work with Congressman Butterfield. He is now serving as the North Carolina State Director with USDA of Rural Development. He has Bertie County on his radar for ways that he can provide assistance.

Commissioner Atkins

Commissioner Atkins did not have anything to report.

Vice -Chair Wesson

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that the MedAssist Program that Commissioner Lee spoke about was a great program and if you go to their site, you can register and choose the products that you would like to have. However, if you don't choose to do so, you will just get a generic pack.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that with regards to Aulander and Director Speight getting back with us, they only have one qualified census tract in Bertie County and that is Aulander. That is why the concentration is on that particular area.

Vice-Chair Wesson thanked the Board for the vote of confidence and transferring the property to the Partners for Bertie County Schools. This is going to be a great project.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that he believes housing is an absolute must for this county in terms of future planning.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that we have the jobs and we have the lowest unemployment rate in the state of North Carolina eight months in a row during the heart of the pandemic. He further stated that we have the jobs, but we don't have adequate housing.

Vice Chair Wesson stated that we need middle income housing for working people in this county.

Vice Chair Wesson then stated that in this county we do not have a long-term economic development plan. He followed up by saying we need to be working on a 3-5-year plan that identifies the key issues that this county needs to address so we can start preparing for those things now.

Chairman Trent

Chairman Trent stated that most of the employment is in West Bertie County and Griffins Quarter Road should be designated as an Industrial Park. Those are the things that this Board of Commissions need to talk about, look at, and have that in our future as far as a five-year plan.

Chairman Trent stated they also need to look at the land on Highway 11 and identify locations of these future projects.

Chairman Trent then stated the next thing to look at is retail. We have one grocery store in 720 square miles. People are driving 20-25 miles just to buy groceries and 20-25 miles to buy their medications.

Chairman Trent followed up stating that he is going to be bringing ideas to the Board and Commissioner Wesson will be assisting.

COUNTY MANAGER’S REPORTS (F)

County Manager Vaughan stated that the Board of Commissioners has confirmed Bertie County’s participation in the housing consortium program along with four surrounding counties, which include Halifax, Hertford, Martin and Northampton.

County Manager Vaughan stated that we are moving along in that process and we were at the point where they have asked us to obtain resolutions or letters of support from the municipalities within each county. Manager Vaughan stated that each municipality has been contacted and of the eight municipalities in Bertie County, Powellsville has confirmed their support and passed the resolution so far.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that five municipalities intend to pass the resolution at upcoming meetings. He further stated that two municipalities intend to pass the resolution and have requested for someone to join their meeting to answer questions their Boards may have. One of those meetings is tonight in Lewiston at 7:30 PM and County Manager Vaughan plans to attend. County Manager Vaughan stated the other meeting will be held on Monday, February 14th in Aulander at 6:00 PM.

COUNTY ATTORNEY’S REPORTS (G)

County Attorney Lloyd Smith stated that he did not have any reports.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

John Trent, Chairman

LaShonda Cartwright, Clerk to the Board