

Windsor, North Carolina
March 7, 2022
COMMISSIONERS MEETING

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled meeting today at 6:00PM 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

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Ron Roberson gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTE LIMIT PER SPEAKER)

ABC Board Chairman Michael Freeman

Chairman of the ABC Board Mike Freeman came before the Board to inform them that the ABC Board has found a location for their store in Lewiston.

Chairman Freeman stated that the sign has already been placed and it’s been there probably about a week as of today.

Chairman Freeman then informed the Board that they may be getting calls in reference to the location of the store.

Chairman Freeman then stated that there was a number on the sign for anyone to call and leave a message and those messages will be forwarded to the ABC Commission.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked Chairman Freeman, what was the anticipated time for the development of the new ABC store project.

Chairman Freeman stated that they have to leave the sign up for 30 days, then the ABC Commission has to schedule a meeting which will be at the end of the 30 days probably within 30 to 45 days. Then after that if they are okay with the project, they will go in and remodel the building to their standards, so how ever long the remodeling takes.

Chairman Freeman then stated that he would guess and say around June or July for the project to be complete.

Vice-Chair Wesson then asked Chairman Freeman if they have set a budget for the project and how much they think this project will cost.

Chairman Freeman stated that the project wasn't going to be that expensive for them because they are renting the building.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked if this will be a long-term rental.

Chairman Freeman stated that it will be a year by year lease.

Chairman Freeman then advised the Board that the location of the new ABC store will be at the Duck Thru in Lewiston.

Chairman Freeman then stated that it was a laundromat inside the building now but they are moving out.

Chairman Freeman then stated that Duck Thru found out that they were looking for a building for the new ABC store and contacted them.

ABC Board member Miles Davis then stated that they were doing something that the ABC Commission was really excited about.

Mr. Davis then stated that he understood the questions and concerns of the people in Lewiston-Woodville that's why he planned to go to Lewiston with Chairman Freeman tonight to answer those questions.

Mr. Davis then thanked Chairman John Trent for helping with the design of the building.

Mr. Davis then stated that the Sheriff's Department will be providing security and Chairman Trent followed up by stating that the Duck Thru also has cameras everywhere.

Commissioner Roberson stated that by having a business in the county we get more revenue to help fund better services for the citizens.

Mr. Davis stated that everyone benefits from the profits made by the ABC store.

Vice-Chair Wesson than stated that he wasn't sure if they ever got a clear answer from when the ABC Board brought a check and a statement to the commissioners and it appeared to be a significant error in the statement.

Vice- Chair Wesson asked Mr. Davis if they had found out why that error was made on the statement.

Vice-Chair Wesson explained that was set aside and it had never been done in any of the prior audits.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that it was a set aside of potential profits.

ABC Board Chairman Michael Freeman stated that the best way he could probably explain it was when they came before the Board and asked to keep a portion of the profits a year before, they kept those profits and they gave the county the other half. So, when the auditor did the books he couldn't figure out where that money came from or where it was supposed to go.

Chairman Freeman then stated that's what caused the error to be made.

Chairman Freeman then stated the auditor came back and redid the audit and met with the County Manager and the auditor then gave a one-page sheet explaining what caused the error.

Vice-Chair Wesson then asked Chairman Freeman if the county received the money because it was approximately thirty thousand dollars.

Chairman Freeman stated to the board that he believed they finally gave that money back to the county.

After a brief discussion about the monies not being received, County Manager Vaughan stated to the Board that they would follow up with the auditor and he plans to add this item to the next work session, which will be on March 21st.

Bernard White

Mr. White stated that he came before the board to represent his mother and the other residents located at the 800 block of Governors Rd. Mr. White stated they came before the board last year and he spoke with two of the board members and the County Manager.

Mr. White stated that after that initial contact was made no other contact or follow up has been done.

Mr. White stated that the other residents still haven't heard anything back in reference to the flood control in that area.

Mr. White stated that he has waited six months to receive answers and still has not heard anything as of yet

Mr. White then stated that he spoke with Commissioner Roberson briefly to request a contact number for FEMA.

Mr. White stated that he came before the board today to plead with them to get assistance for the residents located on the 800 block of Governors Rd.

Chairman Trent stated to County Manager Vaughan that he remembered Mr. White coming before the Board and from his understanding Vic Thompson from Soil and Water had gone to the 800 block of Governors Rd and looked at the area.

County Manager Vaughan stated that from his understanding Mr. Thompson had been out to that area.

Chairman Trent then stated that they need to contact Holland Consulting and find out why they haven't returned Mr. White's phone call as of yet.

Chairman Trent then stated that they needed to get something in writing stating what is happening and what they are doing in reference to the flooding in the 800 block area of Governors Rd.

Chairman Trent then apologized to Mr. White for no one getting back with him, then he stated that someone will get back with him this time.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that he remembered Mr. White coming before the board as well and DOT advised him that a lot of that flooding was coming from that culvert right there at School Rd and Governors Rd.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that DOT advised that they repaired that culvert thinking that might be the solution to the flooding in that area because in the 800 block area of Governor's Rd it is not considered to be a floodplain area.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that the water in that area was backed up because the water could not pass through.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that he thinks that DOT would say fixing that culvert resolved that issue since there hasn't been any flooding in that area since then.

Vice-Chair Wesson then informed Mr. White that when it comes to raising the homes in that area, there is a list that Holland prepared from citizens who filed for damages from FEMA and it's a long list.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that all of those houses in that area are on that list and he knows that for a fact because he has seen the list himself.

Vice-Chair Wesson then informed Mr. White that the town and county has nothing to do with the houses getting raised. Vice-Chair Wesson stated that FEMA decides on which houses get raised based on their inspection of the properties and what the resolution should be when it comes down to which houses should get raised.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated to Mr. White that Holland Consulting should be able to give him a specific answer as what was the designation around his mother's property and the other property in that area.

Chairman Trent then stated that the County Manager is going to get in contact with Holland Consulting and find out what the issues are and then he will get back with Mr. White.

Chairman Trent then stated to put the findings in writing or email however the County Manger chooses to do it.

Mr. White then stated that he spoke to Holland Consulting directly last year. He stated that they informed his mother Ms. Helen White that her name was in the top five on the list, so her house was going to get raised but they had run out of funds at the time.

Mr. White then stated that Holland told him that as soon as they got more funds in his mother's house was going to be the first one to get raised.

Chairman Trent and Vice-Chair Wesson informed Mr. White that Holland Consulting can definitely inform him on the status of raising those homes in that area.

Chairman Trent asked Clerk to the Board LaShonda Cartwright if there were any more public comments.

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

APPOINTMENTS (A)

Schedule 2022 Dates to Convene as Board of Equalization & Review, **Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea**

Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea stated to the Board that tonight they need to set the dates for convening as the Board of Equalization & Review. Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea stated that after speaking with the County Manager they are recommending two dates to convene as the Board of Equalization & Review.

Director Rhea stated that the first date to convene would be April 4th , which will be our first Monday regular meeting and April 20th, which will be a scheduled Work Session.

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** that they convene as Board of Equalization & Review on April 4th and April 20th. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

County Department Position Vacancies Update by **Risk Manager/Human Resources Director Cortney Ward**

Risk Manager/Human Resources Director Cortney Ward provided an update on the vacancies in the County Departments.

Director Ward stated there were no current vacancies in the Planning and Inspections Department at this time.

Director Ward stated that they currently have three vacancies total between NET and the EMS Department at this time.

Director Ward stated they had three vacancies at the Sheriff's Department and three vacancies in Telecommunications.

Director Ward informed the Board that Environmental Health now has Mr. Marquis Holley that started back in November.

Director Ward then asked the Board if they had any questions.

Commissioner Roberson then asked Director Ward if the new hires were Bertie County natives.

Director Ward stated that some of them were but not all of them are Bertie County natives.

Commissioner Roberson personally stated that Bertie County residents should be considered for employment with the County first because of revenue purposes.

Reclassification of Elections Director Position by
Risk Manager/Human Resources Director Cortney Ward

Director Ward stated that they were still in the process of filling the full-time Elections Director position.

Director Ward stated that since the previous classification of the Elections Director position that was done years ago the Elections Director is now responsible for oversight/management of one assistant and a regular part time Election worker along with those traditional duties and oversight of the seasonal election workers.

Director Ward stated that in addition to the responsibility of management, General Statute states that the Elections Director can be assigned duties. Additional duties by the Board of Elections and per the Bertie County Board of Elections have been assigned to this position since the original classification.

Director Ward stated the Bertie County Elections Director position is currently classified under the Salary Grade 67 in the Bertie County Salary Grade Schedule.

Director Ward stated that with all the changes made to the Election Director position it is her recommendation that this position be classified under Salary Grade 71 in the Bertie County Salary Grade Schedule as well as becoming an FLSA exempt position.

Director Ward then gave the Board handouts with the original classification and how much the position has changed since the last classification.

Commissioner Lee asked Director Ward if this would change the qualifications for the position of Elections Director.

Director Ward stated the qualifications would remain the same for the Elections Director position.

Per Commissioner Atkins request Director Ward explained the reason for her recommendation of having the Elections Director position as an exempt position. Director Ward stated that the supervisory duty in that position met one of the three tests to justify the Elections Director position being changed from a nonexempt position to an exempt position.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** that the Board of Commissioners adopt the new Salary Grade Schedule for the Elections Director position of a Salary Grade 67 to a Salary Grade 71. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** that **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Updates on Fire Inspections in Bertie County by
Planning & Inspections Director Traci White

Chairman Trent stated that the State informed them that they need to get all of the Bertie County Schools inspected.

Chairman Trent stated that none of the schools in Bertie County have been inspected.

Inspections Director White stated to the Board that she has been speaking with a Level 3 Fire Inspector that is willing to contract with them. As soon as they are able to get some contracts written up and signed by County Manager Vaughan the Fire Inspector will start inspecting the schools in the County.

Director White stated that the Fire Inspector has stated that he is willing to come one day a week for a few hours each week to help them get caught up with the school inspections.

Director White stated that their new Inspector Matt Roebuck has already started doing trainings with his technical supervisors and their newest Inspector is still waiting to hear back from the state.

Director White also stated that the newest Inspector has already started enrolling in classes so that he can go ahead and start moving forward with his Fire Inspection certification.

Director White stated that she has had conversations with both Inspectors about doing those fire inspections so that they can meet those scheduled requirements of the fire code.

Director White stated that their services are needed a lot in the county and they may need to start looking into fee changes and possibly start charging for fire inspections to help cover some of the cost, but that can be discussed further during the budget discussions.

Commissioner Atkins stated that when looking for a Fire Inspector for the County it's important that we look for someone that has the best interest of the County in their mind.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked Director White what was the long-range goal for the County.

Director White stated their plan was to have their employees for the County to complete their Level 3's.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked Director White how long did she think it would take for someone to obtain their Level 3.

Director White stated that with Fire she would probably say it would take about four years to obtain their Level 3's.

Director White then stated that they only have four locations in the county that require a Level 3 and they are Perdue, Avoca, the hospital and the jail.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked Director White how were they doing on their budget this year.

Director White stated their revenues were not where she was hoping that they would be.

Chairman Trent stated to Director White that the schools are their priority at this point.

Financial Summary by Finance Director William Roberson

Director Roberson stated that one of the concerns that he would like to bring up is Emergency Services because they were up to about 69% and they should be around about 58%. Director Roberson stated that this didn't alarm him too much because this was around the December and January time schedule, which included a lot of overtime to help cover for the holidays.

Director Roberson then stated that on a more favorable note that if you looked at the expenses line item they were at 42.4% and that is actually a little better than around last year at this time.

Director Roberson stated that the expenses at this moment are staying pretty much in check.

Director Roberson stated that the cash in hand line item looks a whole lot better than it did last year at this time.

Director Roberson then stated that he only had two reimbursables. The first he stated that already documented that the monies came in February and the last one, which is the big one. Director Roberson stated that he followed up with a phone call and they informed him that he should receive payment by Friday.

Chairman Trent asked Director Roberson if that was for Golden Leaf, the Library and Cooperative Extension.

Director Roberson stated that was the money that he was referencing.

Director Roberson then stated as a side note that Director White's department is currently well under budget at the moment. He then stated as far as Director White's contracts, she should be okay for awhile in that area.

Chairman Trent asked Director Roberson if they could talk about the Water Department next.

Director Roberson stated that in the Water Department, sales and services looked really good. He then stated that the expenditures were up a fraction compared to last year but they were still well below what they expected it to be this time, based on seven months out of twelve.

Chairman Trent asked Director Roberson to provide them with a projection since it was March and three months out.

Director Roberson asked the Board if he could provide them with a projection at the upcoming work session, by then he would have an overall projection not only for water but the other departments as well.

The board agreed to wait to receive the projections at the upcoming work session.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS (B)

County Manager Vaughan stated there were no Board Appointments at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA (C)

1. Approve Register of Deeds Fees Report- February 2022

Vice Chair Wesson made the **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the Register of Deeds Fess Report- February 2022. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

2. Approve Budget Amendment

Director Roberson explained to the Board that they had an increase in funding for the Home Community Care Block Grant and through Mid-East of about \$16,000. Director Roberson stated there was a match that went with it but he was able to find it in another line item, so they wouldn't have to allocate any fund balance. Director Roberson then stated that he had taken care of it.

Chairman Trent asked Director Roberson if he remembered what the match was. Director Roberson stated that it was 10%.

Director Roberson stated the second amendment is that they received confirmation from the State on what their crisis money would be. He then stated that they actually had come in with less than what was budgeted, so he is making the adjustment to get that item in line with what the State said they were going to receive.

Chairman Trent asked Director Roberson what that figure would be.

Director Roberson stated that it was a reduction of about \$25,000 but it's also revenues and expenses coming out.

Director Roberson stated that the last amendment was that Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea had received another invoice for his audits, so he needed to put those funds back in that account to pay that.

Commissioner Lee then made the **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the Budget Amendments. Vice Chair Wesson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

3. Approve Project Amendment

Director Roberson stated this amendment was for TGOW and after careful research he had found out that there was an approval from the Division of Water Resources for \$197,226. Director Roberson stated that he had the letter on his desk and discovered that the contract had been signed but he didn't receive a copy of the signed contract. So he needs to put the money in that account to be spent on the TGOW project.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the Project Amendment. Vice-Chair Wesson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

4. Approve Resolutions for Designating Bertie as a Distressed County

County Manager Vaughan explained to the Board there were two resolutions that need to be approved located behind C-4 and C-5 of the Agenda Packet.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that one of the Resolutions is clarifying that we are a distressed county and the other Resolution states that if there is a balance we will do what we can to make sure that balance is covered.

Vice-Chair Wesson mad the **MOTION** to approve both resolutions for the grants of the Lewiston-Woodville Water System. Commissioner Roberson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

5. Approve 2021 Records and Disposition Schedule for General Records
6. Approve 2021 Records and Disposition Schedule for Program Records

Clerk to the Board LaShonda Cartwright explained to the Board that General and Program Records Schedule came from the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Ms. Cartwright then stated that according to N.C. Gen. Stat.§ 121-5(b) and N.C. Gen Stat.§ 132-3 you may destroy public records only with the consent of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources(DNCR).

Clerk to the Board LaShonda Cartwright stated to the Board that it is her recommendation to APPROVE both 2021 Records and Disposition Schedule for General and Program Records. Ms. Cartwright then stated that this Schedule is subject to change with in a few months depending on what the State Archives roll out again in reference to records and retention.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the 2021 Records and Disposition Schedule for General Records and the 2021 Records and Disposition Schedule for Program Records. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

7. Approve Employment Agreement for Interim Elections Director

County Manager Vaughan stated that the Elections Director position is still currently vacant and it would it would be nice to have someone in that position with the Primary Elections coming up soon.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that this agreement is to have the previous Elections Director Shelia Holloman come back to help oversee the Primary Elections.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that Mrs. Holloman is prepared to come back this week upon the approval of the Employment Agreement.

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to approve the Employment Agreement for Interim Elections Director. Commissioner Roberson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

OTHER ITEMS
DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)

1. Discuss Partnering with Roanoke Connect Holdings, LLC for Broadband Services

Chairman Trent asked the County Manager if they could hold off on having this discussion until the Work Session on the March 21st so that the board would be able to have a length discussion on this topic.

County Manager Vaughan agreed on waiting to have the discussion about Partnering with Roanoke Connect Holdings, LLC for Broadband Services until the Work Session on March 21st.

2. Status of COVID-19 and Mask Requirement in County Facilities

County Manager Vaughan stated that COVID-19 and the community cases were down significantly and within the organization we didn't have any employees that were out on quarantine or isolation.

County Manager Vaughan stated that the County was now in the low community level, which meant the mask requirement from CDC has gone away.

County Manager Vaughan then stated since things have improved significantly he would like to lift the mask requirement. So, starting tomorrow at 8:30AM, masks will no longer be required. Mr. Vaughan then emphasized that if people still wanted to wear their mask they are free to do so.

The Board then thanked the County Manager and the COVID Task Force Committee for all of their hard work and staying current with all the CDC guidelines pertaining to COVID.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT (E)

Vice-Chair Wesson

Vice-Chair Wesson congratulated the Lady Falcons.

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson stated that he hopes that the citizens of Bertie County will rally behind the Bertie County Lady Falcons. He then wished the Lady Falcons the best on their upcoming Championship and stated that he will be in attendance.

Commissioner Lee

Commissioner Lee stated that she serves on the Executive Health Board for the eight counties Health Department. Commissioner Lee also stated that she serves on an additional board for oral health.

Commissioner Lee then stated that because of her advocacy for Bertie County the boards have looked at the Water Districts in the county and they will be going to one of the towns and providing them with adequate fluorine in their water. Commissioner Lee then stated that your oral health is just as important as your medical health.

Commissioner Lee further stated that she was very excited about this project and she was happy that they were able to obtain the funding to purchase the equipment to help get the fluorine added to the water system.

Commissioner Atkins

Commissioner Atkins stated that he didn't have anything to report.

Chair Trent

Chair Trent stated that the board is still doing everything they can do to pursue affordable housing. He then stated that Vice-Chair Wesson as well as himself have been talking to a construction company out of Raleigh call Mills Construction.

Chair Trent then stated that he and Vice-Chair Wesson are determined to get affordable housing in Bertie County because that's how tax bases move up and that's how you keep employers with employees and that also brings retail.

COUNTY MANGER'S REPORT (F)

County Manager Vaughan stated that he didn't have any reports.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS (G)

The county attorney state that he didn't have any reports.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTES PER SPEAKER)

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

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to go into Closed Session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

OPEN SESSION

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to come out of closed session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Wesson. **The MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Chairman Trent stated that before him he had a Resolution for Sheriff Wallace Perry and he will be presenting it at his funeral service at 2:00PM at Colerain Baptist church.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Chairman Trent then adjourned the meeting.

John Trent, Chair

LaShonda Cartwright, Clerk to the Board