

Windsor, North Carolina
April 4, 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
County Attorney 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 Ron Wesson gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTE LIMIT PER SPEAKER)

Mayor Cordon, Lewiston-Woodville

Mayor Cordon from Lewiston-Woodville came before the Board to present a resolution pursuant to NCGS §18B-801 for the Board’s consideration. Mayor Cordon stated she is seeking an agreement from the Bertie County Board of Commissioners to support no further consideration for the location of the ABC store in the town of Lewiston-Woodville and its municipal boundaries. Mayor Cordon then stated that her presence and request is on behalf of the town’s citizens..

Mayor Cordon then stated that at a Public Hearing held on March 22, 2022, it was asked by a show of hands how many people oppose a liquor store coming to Lewiston-Woodville. Mayor Cordon stated that to her knowledge and understanding, everyone in attendance at the meeting raised their hands against having a liquor store located in the Lewiston-Woodville area. She then stated that to further clarify, it was then asked a second time if anyone was in favor of an ABC store coming to the Lewiston-Woodville area and no one was in favor of nor expressed an interest in an ABC store coming to Lewiston-Woodville.

Mayor Cordon then stated the Town is submitting a resolution to the proper individuals, agencies and newspaper. Mayor Cordon further stated on behalf of the Town she is asking that Bertie County Board of Commissioners to support the Town's decision.

Mayor Cordon then thanked the board for its attention.

Commissioner Lee asked Mayor Cordon if they have received an update from the ABC Board or Commission.

Mayor Cordon stated that she spoke to Mr. Miles Davis. She then stated that her understanding is there will not be an ABC store in the Lewiston-Woodville area. However, she had not received anything official or in writing.

Michel A. Bond

Mr. Bond came before the Board of Commissioners requesting a letter of support for his ergonomically-designed paint brush. Mr. Bond stated that for the past two years he has been speaking with Jamie Johnson of Ace Hardware in Ahoskie, NC in an effort to form a partnership with the store to sell his paint brushes.

Mr. Bond hopes that a letter of support coming from the Bertie County Board of Commissioners would help Ace Hardware sell his paint brushes.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that he knows Mr. Bond well and he is very familiar with the fine work that he does for the County and the citizens of Bertie County. Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that he knew about Mr. Bond's paint brush design. He further stated that a lot of people over the years have shown an interest in Mr. Bond's ergonomically-designed paint brushes. Vice-Chair Wesson stated that he remembered when it was patented, and he commends Mr. Bond as an entrepreneur and sticking with it and trying to make it happen.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated he agreed that the Board could not formally endorse his paint brush, but he would recommend talking about the service that Mr. Bond has performed for the County as well as praising his entrepreneurial spirit for his invention.

Chairman Trent said he thinks that would be appropriate and then asked the county attorney if there would be any legal ramifications behind that.

The county attorney advised there were no legal ramifications behind it.

Chairman Trent then advised Mr. Bond that he should also talk to Sherwin Williams and thinks this will be a good idea.

The board then gave a consensus that they would give a letter of support to Mr. Bond for his ergonomically-designed paint brush.

Chairman Trent then followed up by saying Mr. Bond was an outstanding man and he appreciates all the work that he has done for them.

Commissioner Lee thanked Mr. Bond for coming to see them.

Commissioner Roberson thanked Mr. Bond for all that he does and told him to keep up the good work.

Commissioner Atkins related how he met Mr. Bond over thirty years ago and how he did a great job painting his house.

The Board then thanked Mr. Bond collectively.

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

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

REPORTS & APPOINTMENTS (A)

1. Recognition of the Bertie High School Lady Falcons for Participation in State Championship

The Bertie High School Lady Falcons were unable to attend.

2. Request to Renew Albemarle Regional Library Agreement by Executive Director Hugh Davis

Director Davis thanked the board for allowing him to attend the meeting and he asked them to renew the agreement that have had in place since 1948 for Bertie County Library to be a part of Albemarle Regional Library system.

Director Davis stated that this is a 10-year renewal and they are appreciative of all the support that has been given to them.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the renewal of the Albemarle Regional Library Agreement. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

3. Results of 11-Month Walk- Through of Library/NC Cooperative Extension Facility by Architect Amber Idol

Ms. Idol gave the board a quick update on the new Library/NC Cooperative Extension Facility. Ms. Idol stated that on March 24th, they completed a walk-through of the Library & NC

Cooperative facility. This was around the 11-month point; the contractor warranty will expire at the end of April.

Ms. Idol stated that they like to do the walk throughs at the 11-month point so that they can determine any items or issues that the user may have. This process will allow them to go through that list before the 1-year contractor warranty expires.

Ms. Idol stated they did a complete walk through of the interior and exterior of the building and she is currently compiling a list. Ms. Idol stated that she has three lists that she is making and one list is a contractor warranty list, which means the contractor is responsible for fixing those issues because they are within his scope of work.

Ms. Idol stated she has a separate list for furniture related items because that was out of the contractor's scope.

Ms. Idol stated the third list includes additional items that the users may want or need. She stated this list will not be under the contractor's warranty either. This will include items that will be additional to the project and if the users would like those items addressed, they will put that request in their funding to do so.

Ms. Idol stated those lists will be in her report and they will be sent out to everyone at the meeting for their review and if anyone has any comments they can let her know.

Ms. Idol stated that they still have a month before the one-year mark and if any of those items have been noted within this year, A.R. Chesson is responsible for fixing and any item that has been repaired or something may happen to it again, A.R. Chesson will come back and fix that as well. However, any items outside that one year, are no longer the responsibility of the contractor. It will be more of a manufacturer or product warranty item. At that point, they can help the County reach out to that manufacturer in attempts of having any issues resolved.

Ms. Idol stated none of the items on the list were major and they are currently trying to work with the manufacturers for some of the items right now.

4. Convene as Board of Equalization & Review, Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea

A **MOTION** was made to Convene as Board of Equalization & Review by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Tax Administrator Jodi Rhea stated that at this time they did not have any appeals to present. Mr. Rhea then stated they could recess until the April 20th meeting.

Chairman Trent stated that they will be recessing the Board of Equalization & Review until April 20th at 10:00AM.

A **MOTION** to recess convening of Board of Equalization & Review until April 20th at 10:00 AM was made by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

5. Financial Summary by Finance Director William Roberson

Finance Director Roberson provided the Board with a financial summary. Director Roberson stated that the summary he was providing was through the month of January.

Director Roberson began by going down the expenditure line items. He stated the department that stands out is Emergency Services. He then stated that Emergency Services was sitting around 77% and that still looked a little high. Director Roberson then stated that they know that Emergency Services was going to be a bit high due to overtime around the holidays. Mr. Roberson stated that it was little less than the difference was last month, so it is starting to improve.

Director Roberson then stated that the total expenditures to this date was 53.8% and 67% is the point where we are, so it looks like the County is keeping their expenditures in check.

Director Roberson then reviewed the finances for the Water Department and stated the biggest thing worth noting is the increase in Sales & Services Total, now at 78% compared to 63%.

Director Roberson stated that the reimbursables are a little bit higher than what he thought he would have had before. Director Roberson stated that's because now it includes the total amount that they will receive back from Golden Leaf. Directed Roberson then stated they received those funds back in March and that money is now in the bank.

Chairman Trent asked Director Roberson how much the reimbursement was?

Director Roberson informed Chairman Trent that the reimbursement ended up being \$412,000.00.

Vice-Chair Wesson asked Finance Director Roberson if he saw anything in the next few months that could derail the County on the progress it was making.

Director Roberson stated that he doesn't foresee anything at the moment that could cause any issues.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS (B)

1. Appointment of Clinton Freeman -Economic Development Board

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to appoint Clinton Freeman to the Economic Development Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

2. Appointment of Crystal Godwin -Economic Development Board

Vice-Chair Wesson made the **MOTION** to appoint Crystal Godwin to the Economic Development Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

CONSENT AGENDA (C)

1. Approve Register of Deeds Fees Report -March 2022

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

2. Approve Tax Release Journal -February 2022

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to approve Tax Release Journal February 2022. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

3. Approve Regular Meeting Minutes 2-7-22

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve Regular Meeting Minutes 2-7-22. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

4. Approve Work Session Minutes 3-15-2021

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to approve Work Session Minutes 3-15-2021. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

5. Approve Budget Amendments

Finance Director Roberson stated that the first and third amendments were grant money. Director Roberson then stated the second amendment was a situation where someone had an accident. They hit a deer and he needs the Board's approval to put those funds back in the account so that the vehicle can be repaired.

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

6. Albemarle Regional Library Agreement

Chairman Trent stated they already discussed this item and it was **APPROVED. (for voting details see REPORTS & APPOINTMENTS (A) item #2).**

7. Access Agreement for Tidewater Land & Timber, LLC

Chairman Trent asked the county attorney if he had any information to share regarding this agreement.

Attorney Smith stated they did not know how the money was supposed to be divided.

County Manager Vaughan stated that the \$1,000 is only supposed to be paid to the County. He then stated that the Assistant County Manager, David Scarborough, had spoken with the Town Administrator Allen Castlloe and Tidewaters method of paying the town would be to provide rocks and gravel for the path for the town, but the \$1,000 is to Bertie County.

The County Attorney Lloyd Smith stated that it needs to be specified in the agreement who will be receiving the \$1,000.

Commissioner Roberson asked County Manager Vaughan if Tidewater Land & Timber, LLC had stated when the County would receive the money.

County Manager Vaughan stated that one of Attorney Huddleston's suggestions was to include that it would be 10 days within the effective date of the agreement.

Attorney Smith reiterated that the changes basically were just a general liability waiver and a request that Bertie County be added on as a third-party insurer on their policy.

Commissioner Lee made the **MOTION** to approve the Access Agreement for Tidewater Land & Timber, LLC with the suggested changes made by the attorney. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

OTHER ITEMS
DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)

1. Bertie County Regional Water System Capital Improvement Plan

Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey was available by phone and he stated to the Board that an updated Capital Improvement Plan is needed for the Lewiston-Woodville project.

County Manager Vaughan stated that the Regional Water System Capital Improvement Plan was needed for the grant they were pursuing to upgrade the water system in Lewiston-Woodville. County Manager Vaughan then stated the point of the Regional Water System Capital Improvement Plan was to meet the requirements of the grant.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Bertie County Regional Water System Capital Improvement Plan. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Lee. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

2. Upcoming Meetings

County Manager Vaughan stated that they had a Work Session coming up on April 20th at 10:00 AM.

County Manager Vaughan then stated that the Mayors and Commissioners Dinner is scheduled for April 14th at 7:00PM in Lewiston.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS (E)

Vice-Chair Wesson

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that he received a call from our representative, GK Butterfield, requesting the County to submit projects for funding. Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that he forwarded this request on to County Manager Vaughan, Economic Director Steve Biggs, and Consultant Robin Payne.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that this was a unique opportunity and the TGOW project would be the kind of earmark for which Representative Butterfield would be looking at. He then stated that TGOW was a big project and they wanted to help the County with this project.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated the key thing is that the request is due next week which is April 13th.

Vice-Chair Wesson then explained to the Board an idea that he had about utilizing the old Southwestern School building as a startup incubator for new businesses in the county. He stated this may also be a good project to submit for the earmark money.

Chairman Trent stated that would be a good idea because all it takes is a vision.

Chairman Trent stated that broadband throughout the county is something else that needs to have earmark money because we have a match to this grant. He then stated that they were not sure what that match is because it could be anywhere from 20% to 50% of an eight-million-dollar grant.

Chairman Trent stated that this is something else that they should make a priority on because they do not have the money to match that grant if needed.

Chairman Trent stated that broadband is the most important thing that we can get in this county. He stated that it would help revitalize businesses and companies. He followed up by saying that broadband would be an attraction for outside companies.

Chairman Trent stated that he agreed with Vice-Chair Wesson and broadband needs to be included on the list of earmark projects.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that for this particular project for the broadband it could not be included in the earmark funding because you can't use federal funds to support another federal project like that.

Vice-Chair Wesson then followed up by saying however, under Reginald Speight and Rural Development, the broadband project would be something that they could do.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated if there was any other project that they could think of, it needs to be done fairly quickly.

Commissioner Lee then stated that the Tri-County Airport could definitely use some earmark funding.

County Manager Vaughan then asked the board for some clear direction on the projects that they would like to submit since the due date was approaching during the following week.

Commissioner Lee stated that the TGOW project should definitely be submitted and the Board agreed.

County Manager asked the Board if they had a consensus to move forward with TGOW as well as the Southwestern School partnership.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that Tri-County cannot be submitted by the County, but it could be submitted by that Tri-County Airport Board.

Vice-Chair Wesson congratulated the NAACP on their Annual Freedom Fund Banquet that was held on Saturday at the middle school.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that it was a wonderful event and a complete sell-out. He stated that Bakari Sellers from South Carolina was the keynote speaker.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that they were going to lose a couple of citizens who are moving away from the county and they are Dr. Johnny Hill and Dr. Karen Ray, who have been very active in this community for years. He then stated that they both were retired college professors and they sold their property in Trap and are moving to Richmond.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that have done so many service projects and non-profits and it was because of Karen's idea that Youth Bertie was started five years ago and they are now feeding 210 plus children every week for the last five years in the school system.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that John served on the Elections Board, Democratic Party, and a lot of other state and county organizations.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that he attended a zoom meeting on how to save money on your electric bill. Vice-Chair Wesson then pointed out the off-peak rates that the citizens need to be aware of and that means if you are doing things between 9:00 PM-7:00 AM, the kilowatt rate is only between 7¢ and 10¢ per kilowatt hour. However, if you are using electricity outside of that peak, you could be using as much as \$2.50-\$3.00 an hour.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that Consultant Robin Payne sent something from Destinations by Design, which is the firm that they would be using for some of their design work.

Vice-Chair Wesson then stated that he thought they were a very capable firm and some of the projects it used in terms of basic content were very good. However, he stated he had a real issue when you looked at its imaging. The images shown in their projects are concerning because of approximately twenty plans, he only saw two people of color.

Vice-Chair Wesson stated that even in its group shots there was no diverse images shown.

Vice-Chair Wesson followed up by stating if it is going to represent Bertie County, its imaging needs to reflect the people of Bertie County.

Chairman Trent stated to Mr. Vaughan that he thinks it needs to get some other people involved possibly or send a message over and have a conversation about this issue.

Commissioner Lee stated that they needed to make sure that this company understands and knows what their expectations are.

Economic Director Steve Biggs stated that Dr. Smallwood, his Executive Assistant, Kim Cooper, and Kim Outlaw are on that board along with Robin and himself. Director Biggs then stated that they understand and he has had that conversation with Robin and it is definitely being resolved.

The Board then thanked Economic Director Steve Biggs for handling this issue.

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson thanked Director Biggs for handling the issue with Destination by Design. He then thanked Vice-Chair Wesson for his follow up on that situation as well.

Commissioner Lee

Commissioner Lee stated that she serves on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, which met this past weekend. She added that when one of the commissioners serve on that board, it is at the expense of that board and not the taxpayers of this county.

Commissioner Lee then stated they approved a five-year contract for Kevin Leonard just to hold on to him as other organizations have been interested in him. Commissioner Lee then stated everyone knows what a great job he does for the counties of North Carolina as the Executive Director.

Commissioner Lee stated they also voted to change the way they were bringing in legislative goals. She stated that in the past you had to have a vote of fifty plus one to bring a legislative goal to the full body, now it will require three-quarters vote.

Commissioner Lee stated that you will be able to see those changes in a handout.

Commissioner Atkins

Commissioner Atkins stated that he did not have anything to report.

COUNTY MANGER'S REPORTS (F)

County Manager Vaughan stated that Project Consultant Robin Payne reminded him that they needed an official vote from the board when it comes to getting grants and funds.

County Manager Vaughan then asked the board if they could have a vote for the TGOW project and for the Southwestern School project for submission to Representative Butterfield's office.

Vice-Chair Wesson made the **MOTION** to approve the TGOW project and Southwestern School project. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS (G)

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTES PER SPEAKER)

Clerk to the Board LaShonda Cartwright stated that she did not have any public comments at this time.

ADJOURN

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

John Trent, Chair

Clerk to the Board, LaShonda Cartwright