

Windsor, North Carolina
January 19, 2023
WORK SESSION

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a Work Session today at 09:00 AM inside the Community Room, 102 Lancaster Ave, 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
Michael White, District II
Corey Ballance, Sr., District III
Ronald “Ron” Roberson, District V
John Trent, District IV

Absent:

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 Wesson called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Chairman Wesson asked the Board if there were any additions or changes that were needed to be made to the agenda.

Commissioner Roberson stated that he had three additions to make to the agenda.

1. Look at increasing the County employee’s salary
2. Move the salaries of the lowest paid employees to \$15 hr.

3. Communications- All County activities should be shared with the churches in Bertie, put on Facebook and on the County website

Commissioner Wesson stated that he would like to take the following recommendations and have a discussion about those topics when the Board has Commissioner's Reports.

Commissioner Roberson stated that would be "Great".

NCGS § 138a-15(e)

Commissioner Wesson read the North Carolina State Ethics Act into the record.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTES PER SPEAKER)

There were no public comments.

**PRESENTATION FOR CROSSROADS MAGAZINE BY
MULTI-MEDIA CONSULTANT, ANNA PHIPPS**

Multi-Media Consultant, Anna Phipps came before the Board to present the Crossroads Magazine. Consultant Phipps stated they will be publishing the annual Crossroads Magazine in February in the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald and Gates County Index.

The feature for this year will be creative local citizens within Bertie, Hertford, North Hampton and Gates County.

Ms. Phipps stated last year Bertie County had a premium position of page 3 and the cost for that publication is \$1,650. She then asked the Board if they would like to run the same publication this year.

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to move forward with advertising in Crossroads Magazine on page 3. Commissioner Roberson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

The Board agreed to use the same publication that they had used the previous year.

**A PECAN PICKLING SHORT FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTATION BY
DR. PATRICIA FERGUSON**

Dr. Ferguson came before the Board and stated that she was hoping for a conversation with them instead of doing a presentation.

Dr. Ferguson stated that she wanted to introduce to the Board the idea of having a Film Festival in Northeastern North Carolina.

Dr Ferguson talked to the Board about establishing a Regional Film Commission and what it takes to establish a Film Commission. Dr. Ferguson then stated that it would take the Board making a decision to explore the idea of a Film Commission and reaching out to partnering counties.

Dr. Ferguson stated that step one would be the Board deciding to explore the idea of starting Film Commission. Then Dr. Ferguson recommended bringing in Hertford and Northampton County.

Dr. Ferguson step two would pulling in people from other counties and having a conversation.

Dr. Ferguson stated the third step would be doing an official vote.

Chairman Wesson opened the floor for some discussion from the Board.

Commissioner Trent made the statement that Bertie County was already known for the two movies made, “Hive” and “Raising Bertie” and that those films won several awards at the Sundance Festival.

Commissioner Trent stated that he thought this was tremendous opportunity for Bertie County and he thought the Board should move forward on the opportunity of establishing a Film Commission.

Commissioner Roberson stated that it was a great idea, he loved it and he would just like to include the Board of Education because of the children and get the schools involved to make this a lot bigger.

Commissioner Balance stated he loved the idea and it would bring surrounding counties together and it would help the County develop another source of revenue. As well as be an opportunity for our local citizens.

Chairman Wesson stated he also liked the idea and what specifically was Dr. Ferguson looking for in terms of formatting to establish a Film Commission.

Dr. Ferguson suggested reaching out to the AFCI- Association of Film Commissioners International and they would be able to assist the Board strategical on how to set up a Commission.

Commissioner Wesson asked the Board what was their pleasure in addressing Dr. Ferguson three steps.

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** that the Board address each and every one of Dr. Ferguson 3 steps with the standards that the Chairman has brought up to Dr. Ferguson. Commissioner Ballance **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

A PRESENTATION BY DEBBIE MANER, NC RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

Debbie stated to the Board that her mission was to help municipal water systems to develop source water systems and to develop Wellhead Protection plans. Debbie stated the Wellhead Protection plan was designated to protect the water systems.

Debbie stated that the NRWA was presenting to Bertie County today an Award for voluntarily going through the process of the Wellhead Protection plan, completing the plan and getting it approved by the state.

The Board then thanked Debbie.

Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey then thanked the Board for allowing Debbie to come before them and present the award from NRWA.

Commissioner Roberson stated that those awards come when the Superintendent goes above and beyond their responsibilities.

Commissioner Roberson stated that Water Superintendent was a godsend to Bertie County and he then thanked Water Superintendent Spivey.

Commissioner Wesson thanked Water Superintendent Spivey for all that he does for the County.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

County Manager Vaughan explained to the Board the role of the Board Chair. County Manager Vaughan stated the Board Chair served as the presiding officer and keeps control of the meetings. The Chair will vote on measures before the Board just like the other Commissioners. The Chair can also call Special and Emergency Meetings and approving the agenda.

County Manager Vaughan stated that when it comes to the Board as a whole the Board creates, changes and consolidates County services as needed or desired. The Board can change the composition in the manner of selecting the Boards, Commissions and agencies, promote orderly and efficient administration of County affairs subject to limitations (limitations are set by North

Carolina General Statues). The Board also hires professionally trained Managers. The Board also contracts with an approved Auditor for an annual audit, the Board hires an Attorney, Clerk and Tax Administrator.

County Manager Vaughan stated in his role being a manager he hires and fires as needed employees within his chain of command and supervise all Departments. County Manager Vaughan stated that when comes to meetings about County business he needs to be made aware.

County Manager Vaughan also stated that any directives that come from the Board should go through him because that's why he is here; he is that link between the Board and Department Heads.

County Manager Vaughan stated that he is to uphold all laws and regulations and he serves as the Budget Officer for the County.

County Manager Vaughan further stated his other duties and responsibilities.

County Manager Vaughan presented the Board with a Powerpoint slide showing the chain of command and went over the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Commissioners.

County Manager Vaughan summed up the process for developing and implementing the budget for the County.

INTRODUCTION OF DEPARTMENTS -DEPARTMENT HEADS

Each Department Head for Bertie County came before the Board and provided the Board with their mission statement, a brief description of their departments, the services provided and things that were coming up within their departments.

After Planning Director Traci White delivered her presentation Commissioner Trent asked if a Commissioner could serve on the Planning Board.

Director White stated that would be a question for County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston.

Commissioner Roberson then recommended Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey serve on the Planning Board representing his District, District V.

OVERVIEW OF 2023 COMMISSIONER ORIENTATION MANUAL

RECESS – LUNCH

Chairman Wesson called for a working lunch.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to nominate Commissioner Roberson to be on the Social Services Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

- Albemarle Regional Health Services (ARHS)

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to nominate Commissioner Ballance to serve on the Albemarle Regional Health Services (ARHS) Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

- East Carolina Behavioral Health (NRAB)

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to nominate Commissioner Ballance to serve on the East Carolina Behavioral Health (NRAB) Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

- Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Board made a **Consensus** to **TABLE** until the next meeting due to finding a representative from Bertie County.

- Tri-County Airport Authority

The Board made a **Consensus** to **TABLE** until the next meeting due to determining if former Commissioner Tammy Lee will still be able to serve.

- Social Services (DSS)

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to nominate Commissioner Roberson to serve on the Social Services Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

- Child Fatality Prevention/Community Child Protection Team

The Board made a **Consensus** to **TABLE** until the next meeting due to having to find a member for our local law enforcement agency to serve.

- Economic Development Commission

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to nominate Commissioner White to serve on the Economic Development Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Register of Deeds Fees Report (November & December 2022)
- Tax Release Journals (November & December 2022)
- Minutes
(10/3/22 Regular Session, 10/3/22 Closed Session, 11/28/22 Convene as Waster District IV, 11/30/22 Emergency Meeting)
- BRIC Gant Match
- Budget Amendments
- Project Ordinances
- Project Amendments
- CRM Resolution

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the Consent Agenda as a whole. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

RECLASSIFICATION OF SENIOR RECORDS SPECIALIST POSITION

HR/Human Risk Director Cortney Ward came before the Board to recommend a Salary Grade change within the Sheriff's Office for the Senior Records Specialist position.

Director Ward stated that some of the roles and responsibilities for the Senior Records Specialist Position have changed.

Director Ward stated that her recommendation is to reclassify the Senior Records Specialist position from a Grade 60 with a pay range hiring rate of \$24,573 - \$38,088 to a grade 63 with a hiring rate pay of \$27,822 - \$43,218.

Commissioner Roberson stated that this Salary Grade change was well needed and Director Ward did a great job!

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** that the Board move forward with the recommendation from Director Ward of changing the Senior Records Specialist Position from a Grade 60 to a Grade 63. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

TERMS OF SALE FOR EARLY COLLEGE PROPERTY

County Manager Vaughan provided the Board with copies of the new contract offer from the Superintendent Dr. Smallwood without the contingencies.

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to move forward with the purchase. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

There was no further discussion in regards to the new offer.

Chairman Wesson asked for all the Board members in favor of accepting the offer from the School Board, taking the school property with the only contingency being the county have the transfer fee of the Deed.

The Board **voted 5-0** in favor of accepting the Deed from the school.

Chairman Wesson then started the discussion in reference to the Lease Agreement for Carolina Rebuilders Ministry (CRM)

County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston spoke to the Board in reference to the Lease Agreement for Carolina Rebuilders Ministry (CRM) and he stated that the only issue he had with the Lease Agreement was the length of the term of the lease.

County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston asked the Board how would they like to handle the length of the Lease Agreement and recommended changing the term of the lease from 15 years to 10 years.

Commissioner Trent asked the parties involved with the Lease Agreement to come up before the Board to entertain questions from the Board.

Chairman Wesson opened the floor for discussion.

Vice-Chairman White expressed concerns in leasing the building to Carolina Rebuilders Ministry and the Food Pantry. He suggested that the County look at ways of using the building for the County instead.

Chairman Wesson stated the only reason the County decided to take ownership of the school building was because they had two well known organizations the Carolina Rebuilders Ministry

and the Good Shephard Food Pantry that were willing to come in and lease the building and make the much-needed repairs at no cost to the County.

Chairman Wesson opened the floor for discussion in reference to the \$100 offer for rent from Carolina Rebuilders Ministry and Good Shephard Food Pantry.

The Board then discussed the \$100 offer for renting the building.

Chairman Wesson stated it is two pieces that he wants the Board to vote on as a whole.

1. Moving forward with leasing the building to Carolina Rebuilders Ministry and the Good Shephard Food Pantry
2. Accepting the offer of leasing the building to Carolina Rebuilders Ministry and the Good Shephard Food Pantry for \$100 a month.

The Board and County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston went through the lease line by line to discuss the revisions that needed to be made to the Lease Agreement.

Commissioner Wesson made the **MOTION** that pursuant to the transfer of the title from the School Board to Bertie County (which has to take place first) the Board agrees to lease the property to Carolina Rebuilders Ministry (CRM) with the understanding that they are sub-leasing to Good Shephard Food Pantry via the terms of the lease which are as follows: 10 years with renewal option, but only if both parties agree, and \$100 for the monthly rent. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Inaudible conversation by the Board. (This portion of the meeting focused on the properties identified by Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea as county-owned properties and foreclosed properties that could be considered available for sale. Each property was identified by tax map and then discussed.)

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to move forward with the list that has been given as far as properties availability, as far as our selves and the prices that are already their which are at tax value. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

TGOW UPDATE, YEAR OF TRAILS CELEBRATION, COASTAL RESILIENCY
PROJECT BY ROBIN PAYNE

Project Consultant Robin Payne provided the Board with an update of Tall Glass of Water. She showed the Board photos of the progression being made with the construction of the beach while explaining the steps and the process of the construction currently being done.

She stated to the Board there is a Year of Trails Celebration this year and coming July 21st, 22nd and 23rd our region will be hosting an event that is sponsored by the Year of Trail Group and they would like for Edenton, Tall Glass of Water and Salmon Creek to come together for that weekend in July.

Commissioner Roberson stated that there needs to be signs put up to advertise Tall Glass of Water.

Vice-Chair White also stated signage should be in place to show where Tall Glass of Water is located.

Robin stated there will be signs going up at Tall Glass of Water as soon as everything is ready and all projects have been completed.

Robin then explained the Coastal Resiliency Project to the Board. She stated that in Phase III Bertie County received \$45,000 to move forward on this project.

Robin stated that Mr. Woods had provided a document that went over each of the sites and that document was used for the BRIC application that was sent to Mid-East.

Now for part II Mr. Wood's will go back and do the design drawings for the Cucklemaker Swamp area and also perform a Hydrology study.

The Board made a **Consensus** to allow Mr. Wood to move forward with part II of the project.

Robin stated that it would work best if she could have two days back to back for Strategic Planning.

The Board decided to have the Strategic Planning Session on February 20th & 21st at 9:00 AM in the Commissioners Room.

ITEMS TO CONSIDER FOR REVENUE GROWTH

Chairman Wesson suggested that the Board consider hiring a Grant Writer to help assist the County with securing grant funding for upcoming major projects.

Commissioner Roberson stated that the Board should prioritize bringing up the County employee salaries to \$15 an hour.

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to move forward as far as voting for a Grant Writer for the grants that the county can't get a hold of and aren't able to do because of personnel issues

and then we turn around and start the search with a July start date. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ballance. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

Assistant County Manager David Scarborough asked for clarification regarding the hiring of a Grant Writer or a Grant Coordinator, as each have specific roles that may or may not be interchangeable. The consensus was that the Board would allow the County Manager and Human Resources to develop an appropriate job classification and job description.

Chairman Wesson stated that Lobbyist Bob Steinburg has presented to the Board a 2-year agreement to lobby for Bertie County. Chairman Wesson stated that Lobbyist Steinburg has come back with an update to his offer still a 2-year agreement but giving the County an option to opt out of the second year with 60 days' notice at the end of 11 months should the County decide that he has not done anything that benefits the County.

Chairman Wesson stated this is the third piece that he is offering around revenue growth.

Commissioner Roberson stated that he had concerns with hiring a Lobbyist while the County employees are still being underpaid.

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to move forward with the Lobbyist to help assist the County with moving things through the halls and chambers of the Legislative. It will be a two-year contract with a 60 day opt out on the second year. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Balance. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-1 vote.

CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NCGS § 143-318.11 (a)(6)

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

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to adjourn. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a unanimous decision.

The meeting was adjourned.

Ronald Wesson, Chair

ATTEST:

LaShonda Cartwright, Clerk to the Board