

Windsor, North Carolina
JANUARY 13, 2025
REGULAR SESSION

The Bertie County Commissioners met in a Special Meeting Session at 6:00 PM inside the Commissioners room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. This meeting was hosted partially in person and partially via Zoom (conference call). The following members were present or absent:

Present: Chair, Corey Ballance, Sr., District III
 Vice-Chair, Lewis Hoggard, III, District I
 Ronald “Ron” Roberson, District V
 Vivian Saunders, District IV
 Michael White, District II

Staff Present: County Manager, Juan Vaughan, II
 Assistant County Manager David Scarborough
 Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
 Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis
 Information Technology Director Joseph Wilkes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ballance called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The Honorable Annie Wilson, Register of Deeds, administered the Oath of Office to Tonya Davis, Clerk to the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gayle King, a citizen of Merry Hill, asked the board for support as the citizens in the county file a grievance with Timbermill Wind through their website concerning the flashing lights coming from the turbines across the Chowan River. The citizens are also asking Timbermill to notify all citizens within the county and all surrounding counties if they are looking at or planning on installing other wind turbines in the future.

Brad Kernus, a citizen of the Occano Community in Merry Hill, proposed to the board to approve an EMS station in or near the Midway area. Mr. Kernus shared his concerns as to the length of time that it takes for Emergency Services to arrive in the surrounding areas of Occano, Black Rock, Bachelor's Bay, Avoca Farms, and Lawrence Academy. Mr. Kernus stated that there have been several life-threatening incidents that have happened and it has taken too long for EMS to get to that area for the county. Mr. Kernus asked the board to consider allocating funds to repurpose the old fire station in Midway for the use of an EMS station.

Ron Phillips stated that he has recently built a home on the Chowan River and the flashing red lights from the wind turbines are a nuisance to everyone who lives along the Chowan River. The red aviation lights from the turbines flash every 2 seconds from dusk to dawn. Mr. Phillips asked the Board to pass a resolution requesting that APEX move forward with a complete retrofit system of warning lights, ADLS (Aviation Detection Lighting System), that will help in eliminating the light pollution.

Kate Jordan lives in the Mount Gould area and expressed her concerns and aggravation that the wind turbine lights have cause to her photography business, Air B&B business, and other aspects of life living along the Chowan River. Mrs. Jordan asked for the Board's support in helping the citizens fight for the ADLS lighting system and provided the board with information and instructions on how to make complaints on behalf of the citizens.

Lucy Daniels stated that she has lived in Bertie County her entire life and has owned property along the Chowan River since 1976. Mrs. Daniels stated that she came before the board to advocate to get rid of the flashing red lights that are coming from the wind turbines across the river in Chowan County. Mrs. Daniels asked everyone present at the meeting to please help support the efforts of filing complaints on the website that Kate Jordan provided.

Jean Kozachuk, who is a resident in the Occano community, expressed her concerns of the amount of time it takes for EMS to arrive in the surrounding areas of Midway/Merry Hill. Mrs. Kozachuk stated that it takes 30 to 45 minutes for EMS to get to that area and asked the Board to please use the funds available to get an EMS station set up in Midway.

Willie Outlaw stated that he lives on Dailey Road and that his neighbor is putting trash in the woods and sometimes burning it. Mr. Outlaw has asked his neighbor several times to stop dumping his trash in the woods but the neighbor has not complied with the request. Mr. Outlaw stated that he has come before the Board to ask for help on the matter. Commissioner Roberson introduced Traci White, Planning and Inspections Director, to Mr. Outlaw and asked Mrs. White to investigate the issue.

Chair Ballance thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and expressing their concerns and issues. Chair Ballance informed the attendees that the Board would have a discussion about the concerns of the turbine lights.

APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

1. Public Hearing for the Bertie County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance

Traci White stated that the purpose of this hearing is to update the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. There are changes to the ordinance that are required to remain in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program so that our citizens can continue to purchase flood insurance and those who already have flood insurance can retain their policies. The main change to the ordinance was the mapping change, which identifies the Chowan River and the Albemarle Sound as a coastal high hazard area. These areas were traditionally called V Zones. There are strict regulations due to storm surges with high velocity waters. The changes and requirements would be engineered plans depending on the construction type. The area below the regulatory flood elevation set forth in the ordinance may be required to have special construction such as break away walls. All new construction and substantial improvements now in this zone must be located landward of the reach of the high tide. Anchoring water and wind loading must be kept into consideration and more analysis will be required as well to reduce the impact of structures during flooding events. The ordinance will need to be effective by January 17, 2025.

2. Introduction of the Human Resources and Risk Management Director – Nicole Boone

County Manager Vaughan introduced the new Human Resources and Risk Management Director, Nicole Boone. Ms. Boone stated that she was happy to be here and is ready to serve the county, its employees, and the citizens.

3. Preservation, Restoration and Rebuilding of Rural Small-Town Movie Theatres in Northeastern North Carolina Presentation by Dr. Patricia Ferguson

Dr. Ferguson presented the Board with a plaque in appreciation to the commissioners for their support of the film festival. Dr. Ferguson also presented a resolution to the Board of Commissioners and asked that the Board make a motion to approve the support of Equity Films' petition for the reservation, restoration and rebuilding of rural small-town movie theatres in Northeastern North Carolina.

4. Updates from Lobbyist Bob Steinburg and Request to renew Lobbyist Contracts

Bob Steinburg, a lobbyist with The WolfeStein Group, thanked the board for allowing him and his colleague, Jackson Stancil, a lobbyist with Jones Street Consulting, to represent Bertie County for the past two years at the General Assembly. Mr. Steinburg presented the Board updated contracts for himself and Mr. Stancil and noted that nothing in the contracts have changed other than the dates (January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2026). The contracts state that each lobbyist will receive \$1,500 per month for 2 years which totals \$72,000.00. Mr. Steinburg reminded the board that he

helped secure \$5.5 million during the first budget session. The lobbyist also secured \$200,000 for the East Coast Greenway Allowance. Mr. Steinburg asked the Board to approve the contracts so that they may continue to advocate for Bertie County's needs at the General Assembly.

Chair Ballance stated that since there are two newly elected commissioners, it would only be fair if the Commissioners were given a chance to review the contracts and understand the lobbying process. A decision will not be made at this time on the contracts.

5. Special Projects Update from Project Consultant Robin Payne

Traci White presented an update for the BRIC Grant in the absence of Robin Payne. The BRIC Grant (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) is for the Hoggard's Mill project and reducing flooding in the town of Windsor. Mrs. White stated that the RFQ's have been requested and the deadline for those to be returned is January 16, 2025. The grant funds received are to hire an engineer to create the plans. Once that has been completed, the process for applying for the implementation part of the grant can begin. Commissioner Saunders asked County Manager Vaughan if he had received any other updates concerning the strategic plan from Mrs. Payne. County Manager Vaughan stated that the strategic plan has been placed on the website and Mrs. Payne was obtaining public feedback. A strategic planning work session was scheduled for January 23, 2025, however due to conflicts with that date it will be scheduled at a later time. Plans are to have the strategic plan finished by June 30, 2025.

6. 2028 County Wide Reappraisal by Jodie Rhea

Jodie Rhea stated that under North Carolina General Statutes, every county is required to reappraise property at least once every eight (8) years. The last appraisal in the county was done on January 1, 2020 and the next scheduled appraisal is set for January 1, 2028. Mr. Rhea informed the Board that the county has always completed a street view appraisal of property. Mr. Rhea stated that doing a street view appraisal does not give an accurate account of each property's value due to not being able to see what is behind houses or structures from the street. There are three types of property appraisals: A Full List of Measure, Walk Around, and Street View. A Full List of Measure will cost \$625,000 - \$650,000, Walk Around will cost \$530,000 - \$575,000, and the last Street View in 2020 cost \$302,960. Mr. Rhea stated that he would prefer a Full List of Measure, but asked the board to consider at least a Walk Around for the next appraisal. There is a state requirement that funds are set aside to cover the cost of the appraisal and it shall not be manipulated at any time. Currently \$80,000 is set aside annually for the appraisal fund. There shall be \$640,000 in the appraisal fund for 2028. Reappraisals are due to the State Department by January 1, 2026. Commissioners agreed that this matter should be added to the February 3, 2025 meeting agenda.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. Peanut Belt Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – (2 positions – Commissioner and a Representative)

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to appoint Vice-Chair Hoggard to the Peanut Belt Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

Commissioner Roberson made a motion to appoint Morris Rascoe to be a representative for the Peanut Belt Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). Mr. Rascoe declined the appointment.

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to appoint Sheriff Tyrone Ruffin to be a representative for Peanut Belt Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval Regular Meeting Minutes for November 4, 2024

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes for November 4, 2024. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

2. Approve FY 2024 -2025 Senior Center General Purpose Funding Application Packet

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the Approve FY 2024 -2025 Senior Center General Purpose Funding Application Packet. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

3. Approve Bertie County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance

Vice-Chair Hoggard made the **MOTION** to approve the Bertie County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

4. Approve Designation of Application Agent Form for the Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Designation of Application Agent Form for the Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

5. Resolution for the Preservation, Restoration and Rebuilding of Rural Small-Town Movie Theatres in Northeastern North Carolina

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to approve the Resolution for the Preservation, Restoration and Rebuilding of Rural Small-Town Movie Theatres in Northeastern North Carolina. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

*****OTHER ITEMS*****
DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)

1. Transfer of Funds for Business/Personal Property Audit

Finance Director Willie Mac Carawan requested two transfers. First, move funds from Fund 27 over to the General Fund 10. These are funds that were set aside to be utilized for the Business/Personal Property for the Tax Department. Second, in the renewal of the maintenance agreement for Munis software, a forms format was added and the fees that were budgeted do not include this new format cost. The IT Department has \$12,993.67 in the standard telephone budget that can be moved over to cover that additional expense.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Transfer of Funds for Business/Personal Property Audit. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

2. Transfer Ownership of 4 Trailer Campers to Avery County

Assistant County Manager David Scarborough asked the Commissioners to approved the transfer of titles of the trailer campers that were donated to Avery County after Hurricane Helene. Mr. Scarborough informed the board that four members of the Powellsville Fire Department, Ralph Brinkley, David Drew, David Powell, and Edward Ward took the initiative to drive the campers over to Avery County. They stopped along the way to put 16 new tires on the trailers, install 2 new toilets, fix roof leaks, and check the propane tanks and heating elements of the campers. They also stopped at Walmart to stock the campers with necessary essentials such as blankets, pillows, towels, food, water, kitchen items, and more. Mr. Scarborough wanted to thank the team for going above and beyond the call of duty. Chair Ballance stated that when Bertie County was in a time of need, other counties stepped in to help our county and donated these campers. Chair Ballance

wishes to extend the same help to others. Chair Ballance also applauded the fire department for the outstanding efforts and dedication to help others.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Transfer of Ownership of 4 Trailer Campers to Avery County. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

Commissioner Saunders asked to recognize the Powellsville Fire Department Chief and the department members with certificates for the humanitarian acts they performed for Avery County at the February 3, 2025 Commissioners Meeting.

3. NCACC – Leading Your County Governing Board, Raleigh – January 30, 2025

County Manager Vaughan reminded the Commissioners of the January 30, 2025 NCACC training Leading Your County Governing Board in Raleigh.

4. January Work Session

County Manager Vaughan stated that the January 23, 2025 Work Session conflicts with a training session with one of the Commissioners and stated that it would be better to schedule the Work Session at a later date. The Work Session includes Commissioners Orientation and Strategic Planning. Chair Ballance stated that the Work Session will need to held in February and to add it to the February 3, 2025 meeting agenda so that a date can be decided for the Work Session.

5. Mayors and Commissioners Dinner – January 9, 2025 at 7PM, Windsor Community Building

Dinner was held on January 9, 2025.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson stated that there is a \$1,000 Scholarship provided by Self Help Credit Union. All 11th and 12th graders are encouraged to apply for this scholarship.

Vice-Chair Hoggard

Commissioner Hoggard thanked everyone for coming out and sharing their concerns.

Commissioner White

Commissioner White reminded and invited everyone to come see the flashing lights from the wind turbines across the river in Chowan County at the Occano Pool House on January 21, 2025 at 5:00PM.

Commissioner Saunders

Commissioner Saunders stated that The Hive House and the Lewiston-Woodville Vitality Center needs books. Commissioner Saunders asked that if anyone has any type of appropriate books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, or other reading materials, please donate to the alternative learning centers so that reading can be encouraged.

Chair Ballance

Chair Ballance stated that he heard and understands the concerns and issues that the citizens presented to the Board. Chair Ballance also thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT

County Manager Vaughan informed the Commissioners that the NACo 2025 Legislative Conference is scheduled for March 1 – 4, 2025 in Washington, DC. However, this conference conflicts with the March 3, 2025 Commissioners Meeting, which may need to be rescheduled. County Manager Vaughan stated that this matter will be added to the February 3, 2025 meeting agenda for discussion.

ATTORNEY REPORT

Assistant County Attorney Huddleston had no report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Morris Rascoe thanked Commissioner Roberson for the vote to appoint him to the Peanut Belt Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). However, Mr. Rascoe stated that he declined due to many other responsibilities that he has at this time.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The Board unanimously moved to enter closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(3)(4)(6).

Commissioner Saunders made a **MOTION** to enter into Open Session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The Board unanimously moved to enter into Open Session.

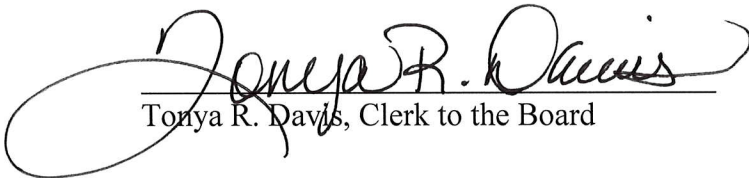
ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.



Chair Corey Ballance, Sr.
Bertie County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Tonya R. Davis, Clerk to the Board