

**Windsor, North Carolina
April 6, 2026
REGULAR SESSION**

The Bertie County Commissioners met in Regular 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
County Attorney, Lloyd C. Smith, Jr.
Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis
Information Technology Director, Joe Wilkes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Corey Ballance, Sr. called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rachel Bellis from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) discussed concerns about animal welfare in the county, including conditions at a specific property and the Humane Society's work.

Rusty Walden raised questions about a potential policy to euthanize dogs after 10 days and the Bertie County Humane Society's continued access to the new facility.

Jerry Cowand expressed concerns about the implementation of a \$25 million tax deal with eNCore Connects for high-speed internet, urging the board to ask hard questions about the deal's details and transparency.

Mitch Cooper, Fire Chief of Lewiston Woodville, highlighted the need for progress on a grant from 2023 for building projects, suggesting either moving forward with the plans or reallocating the funds to fire departments.

Angela Irwin shared issues with a weatherization grant program, expressing concerns about the condition of her home after the work completed under the grant.

APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

1. Public Hearing for eNCore Connects (Fybe) Fiber Expansion

Conner Crews with eNCore provided the Board with a proposal to approve the issuance of up to \$25 million in tax-exempt bonds to finance Encore's broadband expansion project. The Board discussed the timeline urgency, with the company needing approval by month-end, though they requested time to review the documents and consult with their attorney. The Board agreed to continue the public hearing and reconvene on May 4th to make a decision.

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

The Board convened as the Board of Equalization & Review but had no actions to take at this time. The Board will reconvene as the Board of Equalization and Review on May 4, 2026.

3. Presentation of Employee of the Quarter by HR & Risk Management Director Nicole Boone

Nicole Boone presented the first Employee of the Quarter award to Chrysti Corden from the EMS Department.

4. Introduction of New Business Beyond Your Ordinary by Daja Jenkins

Was not present.

5. Introduction of Life Wise Academy by Kelly Caroon

Kelly Caroon from LifeWise Academy, a Bible education program for public schools, presented the history and details of LifeWise and stated that she has hopes of bring the programs to Bertie County.

6. Updates from Martin Community College by Dr. Tabitha Miller

Dr. Tabitha Miller, President of Martin Community College, presented updates on the college's achievements and initiatives, including a 13% increase in student population, the graduation of 214 students, and new programs like the LPN program and virtual reality EMS training. Dr. Miller stated that the college is facing challenges with housing for faculty and students, and plans to build a new advanced manufacturing building.

7. TDA Quarterly Updates by Laura Orsini

Laura Orsini, Chair of the Bertie County Tourism Development Authority, reported collecting \$11,600 in occupancy taxes and discussed progress on developing visitor centers and a digital map of local attractions.

8. Bertie County Fire Commission Request by Kenneth Perry

Kenneth Perry, President of the Bertie County Fire Commission, proposed increasing fire department funding from \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year per department. Mr. Perry stated that the Fire Commission also discussed simplifying the funding structure by moving all fire department funding from a line item in the EMS budget to the fire tax account, though they were informed this current separation was necessary due to population differences between city and county limits.

9. Financial Summary by Finance Director Willie Carawan

Willie Carawan, Finance Director, provided the Board with a financial summary which including budget amendments of \$20,000.00 for the Veterans Affairs grant and \$375,000.00 non-emergency transport fees, as well as discussion of an audit contract amendment increasing from \$92,500 to \$110,000 due to additional review requirements and restatements.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. ABC Board (1 appointment)

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to appoint Jodie Sary to serve on the ABC Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION** did not pass.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to appoint Miles Davis to serve on the ABC Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 3-2 vote with Chair Ballance voting yay.

2. TDA Board (1 appointment)

Commissioner Saunders recused herself from voting since she serves as Vice-Chair to the TDA Board.

Vice-Chair Hoggard made the **MOTION** to appoint Pamela Chamblee to serve on the TDA Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve the March 2, 2026 Open and Closed Session Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the March 2, 2026 Open and Closed Meeting Minutes. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

2. Approve the February 2026 Tax Release Journal

Commissioner Whites made the **MOTION** to approve the February 2026 Tax Release Journal. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

3. Approve the February 2026 Register of Deeds Fees Report

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to approve the February 2026 Register of Deeds Fees Report. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

4. Approve the Amendment to Contract to Audit Accounts

Vice-Chair Hoggard made the **MOTION** to approve the amendment to contract to audit accounts. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

5. Approve the Wooten Company for Professional Architectural Services for Bertie County Fire & EMS Stations

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the Wooten Company for professional architectural services for Bertie County Fire & EMS Stations. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

6. Approve Lease to Farm County Property

This item was moved to Closed Session for discussion.

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

1. Discuss Reappraisal Cycle

Jodie Rhea, Tax Administrator, informed the Board that he recommends transitioning from an 8-year to a 6-year reappraisal cycle to better reflect market values and reduce inequities among taxpayers. Mr. Rhea explained that moving to a 6-year cycle would align Bertie County with best practices and help maintain fairness in property taxation.

2. Discuss EMS Scheduling Options

John Rawls, EMS Director, recommended maintaining the current 24–72-hour schedule rather than switching to 12-hour shifts, citing benefits for employee mental health and the ability to cover sick leave. The EMS department is currently short-staffed with 4 vacancies and 3 people on medical leave, requiring them to fill 7 positions.

3. Mayor's and Commissioners Dinner April 9, 2026 Lewiston, NC, 7:00 PM

The Board was reminded of the upcoming Mayor's and Commissioners Dinner that will be held on April 9, 2026 at 7:00 PM in Lewiston, NC.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson thanked everyone for their support and vote during the March 3rd election.

Vice-Chair Hoggard

Vice-Chair Hoggard thanked all of the fire departments for all that they do for Bertie County and its citizens and they are very appreciated.

Commissioner White

Commissioner White congratulated Chrysti Corden on her nomination as Employee of the Quarter.

Commissioner Saunders

Commissioner Saunders also thanked the fire departments and mentioned that while she serves on the Mid-East Regional Housing Authority, she sees the effects of fire damages to homes and people lives.

Chair Ballance

Chair Ballance thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and stated that he is highly supportive of the Life Wise Academy and congratulated Chrysti Corden as Employee of the Quarter.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT

County Manager Vaughan reported that Congressman Don Davis provided the county with two grants totaling \$2 million: \$1 million for critical fire station equipment and \$1 million toward the 911 communications facility grant match.

ATTORNEY REPORT

County Attorney Smith presented a Memorandum of Understanding that would ensure the Fire Truck titles would go directly to volunteer fire departments, with no lien on the equipment, and the County would serve as a pass-through entity.

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the Memorandum of Understanding for the fire truck titles to go directly to volunteer fire departments, with no lien on the equipment, and the County would serve as a pass-through entity. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Betty Cherry from Powellsville asked the Board for help because she is being denied access to her property by a neighbor.

KimiAnn Corey, 911 Communications Director, commented that she supports the Life Wise Academy and thanked all of the fire departments for all that they do throughout the county.

David Ray of Lewiston stated that he supports Life Wise Academy as well.

Tim Bazemore, Jr. owner of Coastal Medical Transport and Dakota from Bertie Ambulance Service expressed their concerns with other non-emergency transportation services trying to operate in Bertie County.

Jacques Turner from MedEx Transport provided the Board with an article from December 2013 when Bertie County declared a state of emergency and accepted an offer from MedEx for five loaner ambulances and temporary employment of MedEx personnel. Mr. Turner stated that the county would benefit from having MedEx Transport services.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Sanders made the **MOTION** to enter into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3)(4)(6). The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

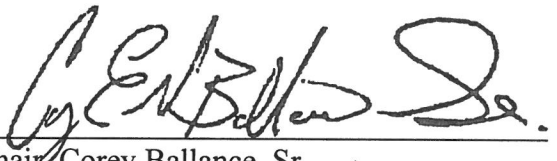
Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to re-enter into open session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to approve the farm lease agreement of county property to Charlie Brown for \$110.00 per acre for a one-year lease term. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

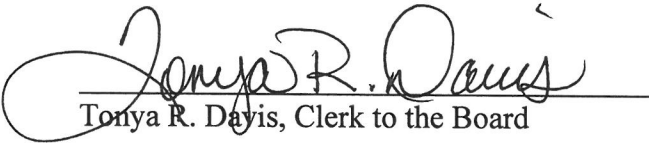
Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to release the January 8, 2024, February 5, 2024, and February 20, 2024 closed session minutes to the public. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

ADJOURN

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