

Bertie County, North Carolina
September 21, 2026
COMMISSIONERS' WORK SESSION

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a Work Session on September 21, 2026 at 10:00AM inside the Commissioners Meeting Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: Vice-Chair, Lewis Hoggard, III, District I
Ronald "Ron" Roberson, District V
Vivian Saunders, District IV
Michael White, District II

Absent: Chair, Corey Ballance, Sr., District III

Staff Present: County Manager, Juan Vaughan, II
Finance Director, Willie Mack Carawan
Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis
County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston
Network Administrator, Dashawn Clark

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Hoggard called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chair Hoggard gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hearing – USDA Funds for Firefighter Equipment and the 911 Center

Monica Thornton with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) discussed approximately \$2 million in USDA Congressionally Designated Spending grants awarded to Bertie County, including \$1 million designated for firefighter equipment and \$1 million designated for the development of a 911 Center.

Mrs. Thornton explained that the \$1 million firefighter equipment grant would provide approximately \$83,333 to each of the twelve Bertie County fire departments. The County will serve as the pass-through entity for the funding. Mrs. Thornton explained that the equipment purchases must comply with applicable federal requirements and that purchase orders should not be dated until after the official award of the funds.

Lori Stern, Merry Hill resident, expressed concerns regarding communication surrounding the Merry Hill/Midway Fire Station project and the lack of responsiveness she stated she had experienced when attempting to obtain information from County officials regarding the project.

Mrs. Thornton also discussed the \$1 million designated for the 911 Center. She explained that the project will require additional steps to comply with federal requirements, including environmental reviews, architectural plans, and competitive bidding. An architect will be required as part of the construction process.

County Manager Vaughan also discussed a separate grant awarded through the North Carolina Department of Public Safety for the 911 Center. It was noted that the grant has been delayed since 2024 due to various requirements and difficulties obtaining clear direction regarding the necessary steps to move the project forward.

The County Manager explained that the documentation associated with the USDA funding would be processed and that purchase orders would be dated after the official award of the funds.

Mrs. Thornton stated that once the money has been disbursed, she will send a congratulations letter to the County. Mrs. Thornton informed the County Manager that all purchase orders for the fire

equipment need to be sent to her along with an estimated time of equipment arrival dates.

Commissioner Roberson made a **MOTION** to approve the USDA Funds for Firefighter Equipment and the 911 Center Grant. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.

Appointment to Martin Community College EMS Advisory Board

Commissioner Saunders made a **MOTION** to appoint Chrysti Cordon Cofield to the Martin Community College EMS Advisory Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.

Consideration of Bid for 104 S. York Street, Windsor, NC

County Manager Vaughan informed the Board that a bid offer of \$1,000.00 was received from Brenda Dameron for the purchase of County-owned property located at 104 S. York Street, Windsor, NC. Mrs. Dameron owns the properties adjoining the County-owned property and wishes to purchase the property.

Commissioner Saunders made a **MOTION** to approve the bid offer of \$1,000.00 from Brenda Dameron for the property located at 104 S. York Street, Windsor, NC. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.

Discussion Regarding Developing an Ordinance to Control Data Centers, Solar Farms and Windmill Farms by the Bertie County Planning Board Chair Gayle King

Planning Board Chair Gayle King and Planning and Inspections Director Traci White presented a proposed ordinance to regulate data centers, solar farms, and wind turbines in Bertie County. Mrs. King outlined proposed setback requirements, notification procedures, well testing, noise controls, and environmental protections, including safeguards for local waterways and blue crab habitats.

Mrs. King and Mrs. White explained that the proposed regulations are intended to provide environmental and community protections while allowing responsible development. They also discussed enforcement provisions funded through developer escrow fees and referenced regulations adopted by other counties.

The Board discussed the importance of establishing regulations prior to the submission of future development applications and considered how existing development agreements and vested rights may be affected by any new ordinance.

The Board requested that Mrs. King and Mrs. White provide the proposed ordinance to the County Attorneys for review and recommendations.

Strategic Plan Discussion by Project Consultant Robin Payne

Project Consultant Robin Payne provided the Board with the strategic plan with updates on various projects and initiatives in Bertie County. Key discussions included the Bertie Beach Project's progress, with shoreline stabilization work completed and a grant recently closed, as well as updates on infrastructure needs, recreation planning, and emergency management efforts. Plans were discussed to update the comprehensive recreation plan and gather input from department heads on infrastructure needs with estimates and timelines. Public access and engagement improvements were discussed, including a potential switch to YouTube for meetings to enhance participation. The conversation ended with a discussion about next steps for adopting the strategic plan and the tourism master plan at the next commissioner's meeting after incorporating all updates and corrections.

Economic Development Updates by Director Allison Browning

Economic Development Director Allison Browning provided an update on current economic development activities, grants, and upcoming projects. The Retail Academy, funded through a \$99,000 USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grant awarded to NC East Alliance, is underway in partnership with Hertford and Washington Counties. The 12-month program will provide market, trade-area, and real estate analysis; identify retail recruitment opportunities; and develop marketing materials for Windsor.

Ms. Browning is also updating the County's economic development webpage to better represent each town, adding available sites for site selectors, and specific calls to actions for commercial developers and agriculture/agtech industries. Downtown property-owner information is also being compiled to identify opportunities for vacant building reuse.

Grant requests submitted include \$50,000 for 101 Dundee Street to turn this County-owned site into a pocket park for the downtown Windsor area, \$25,000 with Bertie EMS for an automated chest-compression device, and \$6,500 with Bertie EMS for twelve ballistic vests.

Ms. Browning also provided an update on early planning for extending public water service along Griffin Quarter Road in Lewiston-Woodville. The approximately \$4 million project would serve a corridor containing major agricultural and industrial operations and approximately 450 acres of developable land. Browning is working with Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey to better define the service area, engineering requirements, and potential customer demand before exploring funding opportunities.

Additional updates included preparation for the five-year update of the Mid-East Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Bertie's priority transportation projects identified through the Peanut Belt Regional Planning Organization, and ongoing broadband deployment. The Director noted that Fybe has received funding to extend high-speed service to approximately 1,380 Bertie homes and businesses and has released an interactive map at nconemap.gov.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner White 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 Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to re-enter into open session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.

OTHER ITEMS AS NEEDED

There were no other discussions.

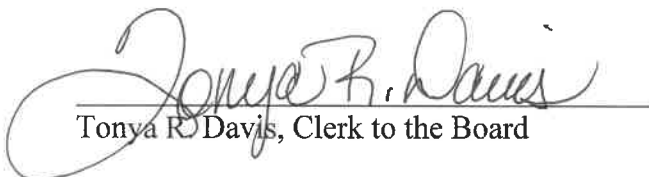
ADJOURN

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.



Vice-Chair, Lewis Hoggard, III
Bertie County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Tonya R. Davis, Clerk to the Board