Windsor, North Carolina
September 8, 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 Smith, Jr. Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis IT Director, Joe Wilkes

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

1. **Shipyard Landing Road Abandonment Discussion and Request by Dean Byrdsonge**

Dean Birdsong expressed concerns regarding individuals riding four-wheelers on his property at Shipyard Landing and leaving trash behind. Mr. Birdsong asked whether the Board would consider assisting him with the abandonment of Shipyard Landing Road. He stated that he owns property on both sides of the road and would like to install a privacy fence to prevent the public from accessing his property.

County Attorney Smith explained the procedures required for the abandonment of a public road and noted that the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has primary authority over State Road 1531. He suggested that Mr. Birdsong contact NCDOT for further assistance regarding the matter.

2. **Food Bank Request by Linda McNair-Moore**

Linda McNair-Moore, not only representing Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church but all Bertie County food pantries, requested assistance for local food pantries, noting the reduction in funding being received and asked for support from the County. Commissioner Roberson presented Mrs. McNair-Moore with a donation of $1,000 to assist with the purchase of food for the food pantries in the county.

3. **Request to Consider Redevelopment of the Aulander Elementary School Property by Delivering With Pride, LLC.**

Patricia Peele, representing Delivering With Pride, LLC (DWP), presented a proposal for the Board to consider the development of a community and economic development reuse concept for the former Aulander Elementary School property.

Mrs. Peele explained that DWP would like to explore redeveloping the former school into an Aulander Community Marketplace & Small Business Center. The preliminary concept includes affordable indoor vendor and retail spaces, small business and incubator areas, community and meeting space, seasonal indoor and outdoor markets, service and storage areas, and opportunities for local employment and entrepreneurship.

Mrs. Peele acknowledged that the facility may require significant rehabilitation, including improvements to the HVAC and other building systems. DWP would like to explore whether available building-reuse and economic-development funding could support a phased redevelopment of the property in partnership with Bertie County.

DWP stated that it is prepared to develop a detailed project proposal, preliminary space-use plan, phased renovation budget, job plan, vendor-interest documentation, and preliminary funding strategy.

Mrs. Peele concluded by stating that the goal is to transform the currently unused property into an active economic and community resource for Aulander and Bertie County.

4. **Project Updates by Project Consultant Robin Payne**

Project Consultant Robin Payne provided an update on the TGOW Project and shoreline stabilization efforts. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application in the amount of $614,961 was discussed. The application is scheduled to be submitted by November 2, 2026, with a potential funding announcement expected in September 2027.

Ms. Payne reported that the project includes plans for a pavilion, stage, and inclusive seating areas at Bertie Beach. She noted that, if the grant is approved, the project will have a tight nine-month installation timeline.

The strategic plan update was also discussed and will be added to the Board's work session agenda for September 21, 2026.

5. **Proclamation from Governor Josh Stein Proclaiming September 2026 as National Senior Center Month by Rebecca Stapleton**

Council on Aging Director Rebecca Stapleton read the Proclamation issued by Governor Josh Stein proclaiming September 2026 as National Senior Center Month.

6. Council on Aging Updates by Director Rebecca Stapleton

Council on Aging Director Rebecca Stapleton provided an update on the Bertie County Council on Aging (COA) and its efforts to provide quality services and programs for senior adults throughout the County.

Director Stapleton reported that the COA has been working toward becoming a Senior Center of Excellence through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging. However, the Division has temporarily halted the certification process while the program is being revised. The COA has already implemented many of the requirements and plans to pursue the new certification once the program becomes available.

The COA was monitored by the Mid-East Area Agency on Aging in January for its Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) services and received no deficiencies or corrective actions.

For FY 2025-2026, the COA provided the following HCCBG services: Home Delivered Meals: 5,780 meals served to 36 clients, Congregate Nutrition: 6,108 meals served to 82 clients, Housing and Home Improvements: 14 ramps constructed through HCCBG funding, with an additional four ramps constructed through another grant, for a total of 18 ramps, and Personal Care Level II: 2,386 hours of service provided to 11 clients.

Director Stapleton reported that Medicare SHIIP counseling was provided by trained coordinators Rebecca and Alicia. They provided one-on-one counseling to more than 500 individuals and conducted 45 group counseling sessions during the annual open enrollment period, reaching more than 1,500 Medicare beneficiaries. The COA also assisted individuals who were new to Medicare and provided guidance to UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage beneficiaries regarding the ECU Health and UnitedHealthcare negotiations. The COA secured an estimated $137,967 in cost savings for Medicare beneficiaries during calendar year 2025 and plans to increase counseling and cost savings efforts during the coming year.

The COA utilized EDTAP funding from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Community Passenger Transportation Agency (CPTA) to provide medical, general, and out-of-county shopping transportation. Two buses transported participants to the North Carolina State Fair, and additional trips were provided to the Smithfield Outlets, Raleigh, and the Burlington Outlets. A total of 158 unduplicated clients were served through the program.

Director Stapleton reported that the COA offered a variety of classes and workshops, including art, crochet, chair exercise, line dancing, and computer classes. Evidence-based workshops included *A Matter of Balance*, *Diabetes Self-Management*, and *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*.

The COA had six participants compete in the Greenville/Pitt Senior Games, with several members of the crochet group bringing medals back to Bertie County. The COA continues to promote participation in the Senior Games and hopes to increase the number of participants in the upcoming spring competition.

Several special events were held throughout the year, including the Senior Prom, Older Americans Month Celebration, Scam Jam, Christmas Party, and Senior Expo. Director Stapleton reported that the events were well attended and frequently had waiting lists.

In addition to scheduled programs, participants regularly enjoy bingo, a monthly Grief Support Group, educational presentations from guest speakers, and a monthly birthday celebration with cake and ice cream. The COA also has three notaries on staff who provide free notarization services to seniors throughout Bertie County.

Director Stapleton emphasized that the COA strives to meet seniors where they are by attending health fairs, speaking to church groups, promoting nutrition sites, and participating in other community outreach efforts. The COA operates three satellite nutrition sites, which are open from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and provide meals, activities, and resources. There has been significant growth in participation at the nutrition sites, in activities, and resources offered. The COA also partners with Blue Jay's Recreation Center in the Indian Woods community to provide Senior Day every Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The COA maintains an active Facebook page with 773 followers, an email distribution list of more than 100 individuals, and distributes more than 200 calendars and newsletters through the Senior Center and nutrition sites.

Director Stapleton reported that the COA works closely with numerous agencies both within and outside Bertie County to benefit local seniors. The COA has partnered with ECU Health to serve as a Community Health Hub, which provides a dedicated computer for telehealth visits, the ability to obtain vital signs, and access to a resource directory.

The COA was also selected to participate in Goodwill's produce box program, through which 100 produce boxes were distributed from the Senior Center. Bertie County Cooperative Extension provided a digital navigator who conducted workshops and classes at the Senior Center and nutrition sites.

Director Stapleton stated that the Senior Center is looking toward the future and plans to work with the Economic Development Director to pursue grant funding to expand services. The COA will focus on increasing grant funding and expanding transportation services. The Senior Center also secured an additional $200 in funding from Roanoke Electric for fans.

The COA plans to apply for State Senior Center certification once the certification program becomes available. The COA also intends to advocate for and seek funding for the construction of a new Senior Center, as the current facility has reached its capacity. Director Stapleton stated that the COA currently utilizes every available space, and programs must sometimes be limited or discontinued because of space constraints. Many programs have waiting lists, and additional space is needed to accommodate the County's growing senior population.

Director Stapleton expressed appreciation to the Bertie County administration and Board of Commissioners for their continued support of older adults in Bertie County. She stated that the COA could not provide these services and programs without the County's support.

7. **Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Presentation and Updates by Jail Commission Chair Vivian Saunders**

Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Commission Chair Vivian Saunders provided an update on the ongoing efforts to repair and reopen the facility following the recent riot. Chair Saunders reported that the insurance company, Sedgwick, has provided $500,000 toward the repair efforts, with an insurance coverage cap of $2.5 million. She stated that the anticipated timeline for completing the necessary repairs and fully reopening the facility is approximately 12 months.

Chair Saunders also reported that previous inspection reports identifying multiple violations had only recently been provided to the Commission in written form, although oral updates regarding the inspections had been provided by Jail Administration.

Chair Saunders further discussed ongoing staffing challenges at the facility and the unsuccessful partnership with Chowan County. She explained that the partnership was not feasible due to insufficient staffing, following the loss of six detention officers to the new ICE Detention Center in Winton, North Carolina.

8. **Financial Summary & Budget Amendment by Willie Carawan**

Finance Director Willie Carawan presented a budget amendment to the Board in the amount of $18,000 to cover lobbyist costs through December 2026. Mr. Carawan provided financial updates and reported that expenditures were exceeding revenues in various funds.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve Budget Amendment #1 in the amount of $18,000 to cover lobbyist costs through December 2026. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

County Manager Vaughan addressed concerns regarding water bill late fees. He clarified that late fees would be waived for customers who contact the Water Department regarding the late receipt of their bills.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. **Department of Social Services Board (2 appointments) (1 Commissioner, 1 Citizen)**

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to appoint Chair Corey Ballance (commissioner) to the Department of Social Services Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

Chair Ballance made the **MOTION** to appoint Vernetta Henderson (citizen) to the Department of Social Services Board. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-1** vote. Commissioner Saunders voting Nay.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Approve the August 3, 2026 Open and Closed Session Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the August 3, 2026 Open and Closed Session Meeting Minutes. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

2. **Approve the July and August 2026 Register of Deeds Fees Reports**

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

3. **Approve the June and July 2026 Tax Release Journals**

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to approve the June and July 2026 Tax Release Journals. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

4. **Approve the Annual Settlement & Charge of Delinquent Personal Property Taxes**

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Annual Settlement & Charge of Delinquent Personal Property Taxes. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

5. **Approve the Senior Center General Purpose Funding Application for FY 2026-2027**

Vice-Chair Hoggard made the **MOTION** to approve the Senior Center General Purpose Funding Application for FY 2026-2027. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

OTHER ITEMS
DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)

1. **Consideration of Bid on Aulander Elementary School**

County Manager Vaughan informed the Board that only one sealed bid had been received for the purchase of the former Aulander Elementary School property. The sealed bid was submitted by George Duncan in the amount of $20,100.

County Manager Vaughan asked the Board whether it wished to accept or reject the bid.

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to reject the sealed bid offer of $20,100 for the Aulander Elementary School property. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

2. **Status of Department of Social Services Board**

County Manager Vaughan informed the Board that the North Carolina Social Services Commission is scheduled to appoint two members to the newly reestablished Bertie County Department of Social Services Board on Wednesday, September 9, 2026.

County Manager Vaughan explained that the Bertie County Board of Commissioners has already appointed two members to the DSS Board. Once the North Carolina Social Services Commission appoints its two members, the four appointed members will select the fifth member, thereby completing the full Bertie County Department of Social Services Board.

3. **Project Updates**

The County Manager Vaughan clarified that $1 million in federal funds for firefighter equipment and $1.5 million for the 911 center have not been lost despite recent misinformation, with paperwork being completed for disbursement. The discussion also addressed ongoing negotiations for fire and EMS stations, including the requirement to hire an architect per the Brooks Act.

Chair Ballance stated that he had been contacted by firefighters about why an architect was needed for the construction of the fire and EMS stations. County Manger Vaughan stated that an architect is required due to the Brooks Act.

Commissioner Saunders asked if the Fire Chiefs will be included in the process of building the fire and EMS stations with the architects? County Manager Vaughan stated that they absolutely will be included in the process.

County Manger Vaughan provided updates on the animal shelter construction which is nearing completion with electrical, plumbing, and fencing work.

4. **Next Meeting: Work Session – Monday, September 21, 10:00 AM Commissioners Room**

County Manager Vaughan reminded the Board that a work session is scheduled for Monday, September 21, 2026 at 10:00 AM inside the Commissioner Meeting Room.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson reported that the 4-H program recently took 35 children to East Carolina University (ECU) to participate in learning how to swim.

Vice-Chair Hoggard

Vice-Chair Hoggard reported attending the 119th North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference in Durham County, NC.

Commissioner White

Commissioner White reported that he and Council on Aging Director Rebecca Stapleton attended an event at Pitt Community College (PCC) where a presentation on housing initiatives was provided. Commissioner White stated that PCC carpentry students construct houses as part of their training, which are then sold or auctioned to the highest bidder.

Commissioner Saunders

Commissioner Saunders had no report.

Chair Ballance

Chair Ballance had no report.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT

County Manager Vaughan reported attending the 119th North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference in Durham County, NC and discussed plans to hold opioid settlement fund meetings in multiple locations across the county to encourage citizen participation.

ATTORNEY REPORT

Attorney Smith had no report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sheriff Tyrone Ruffin announced that a September 11th Remembrance Ceremony will be held in front of the Bertie County Courthouse on Friday, September 11, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. The ceremony will honor and remember the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

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 Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to re-enter into open session. 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