

2013 Planning Meeting
Minutes, Part 1
October 3rd – 4th 2013

Chairman Perry reconvened the September 16, 2013 regular meeting of the Bertie County Board of Commissioners on October 3, 2013 at 9:00am. The meeting reconvened for its mid-year 2013-2014 planning retreat. The meeting was held in Windsor, NC at the Roanoke Cashie River Center located at 112 West Water Street. The following members were present or absent:

Present: J. Wallace Perry, Chairman
Charles L. Smith, Vice Chairman
Rick Harrell
John Trent
Ronald “Ron” Wesson

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer
Clerk to the Board Sarah M. Seredni
Finance Director William Roberson
County Attorney Lloyd Smith
Planning Developer Traci White
Emergency Manager Mitch Cooper
Information Systems Administrator Scott Pearce
Department of Transportation Scott Emory
UNC Chapel Hill School of Government Professor Richard Ducker
AQUA NC Jim Powers, Tom Roberts, Rick Fox & Bob Hide
Bertie County Schools Superintendent Elaine White
Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy Kashi Nelson

Guest presenters – arrived at
various times

Chairman Perry reconvened the meeting.

Observations from the new County Manager

County Manager Sauer expressed his first impressions during his initial three months in office, and shared his high regard for the Board’s effort to conduct itself with transparency. Sauer also commended the work of the various departments and staff, noting the lean staffing in various areas of Bertie County government. Sauer noted the financial challenges facing the County, especially in light of the federal government’s shutdown and previous reductions due to the federal sequestration process impacting the reimbursements for school debt service payments. A copy of the Bertie high school financing documents from the latest bond sale was distributed to the Board, and Sauer noted the financial statements. Page B-9 was noted, and Sauer commented that the County was closer to its legal debt limit than he was typically comfortable with.

Finance Update/Debt Service Financing Update

County Manager Sauer presented various reports to the Board including a summary of historical landfill revenue and noted the increase over the past ten years. Sauer also noted the need to monitor long term debt service, the budget transfers in the current budget ordinance and the possibility of eliminating the Capital Reserve Fund in the next budget cycle.

The Board received a copy of a water usage report for AVOCA, and Commissioners expressed concerns that numbers appearing on Water Department's report were not consistent with numbers being given to the Board by its engineering firm. The Consensus of the Board was that this information should be investigated between Water Department and engineering firm. The Board also agreed that monitoring this information on a more frequent basis would be critical. After considerable discussion the consensus of the Board was to defer the Automatic Meter Reading proposal from engineering firm until a later date.

Commissioner Trent introduced a **MOTION** for the Board to conduct further research and investigation into other engineering firms for a new engineering consultant with a set time frame of 30 days. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Finance Officer William Roberson presented the Board a copy of year to date financials for the General Fund noting the various revenue and expenditure line items. He also reported to the Board that all County water districts are operating in the black.

It was the consensus of the Board that a "state of the county" report be prepared once the audit was completed to ensure transparency and updated information for citizens.

County Manager Sauer noted that the Board had previously discussed the possibility of seeking voter approval for the Article 46 Local Option One Quarter Percent Sales Tax, through a voter referendum as a strategy to increase revenue for the General Fund. It was the consensus of the Board to place this item on ballot for the May 2014 primary election.

Sauer noted that there had once been some discussion of exploring a Fire & Rescue Service District with county wide tax coverage, since there were no individual fire tax districts in the County. The Board discussed the county wide fire & rescue tax increase, and Chairman Perry and Commissioner Harrell expressed concerns about the timing and consensus was to defer the issue until a later date.

Review recent action items and performance against goals

The first topic discussed was Solid Waste curbside collection, and the Board discussed the public hearing to take place on Thursday, Oct. 10th and its effect on citizens in certain situations and various areas. Sauer recommended using a sign-in sheet as well as guidelines for the hearing. Commissioner Wesson recommended a curbside project "fact sheet" to be dispersed before meeting as well as distributed on the night of the event. Chairman Perry expressed concerns of exemptions and certain items that could and could not be considered curb side items. It was agreed that the County Attorney and County Manager would work to clarify definitions regarding the type of businesses impacted, to ensure that farms were exempted and that the draft

ordinance has consistent language. The consensus of the Board was noted that public input is crucial before a decision can be made.

Road maintenance responsibility for private roads and insuring access for public safety vehicles—NC Department of Transportation District Engineer, Scott Emory and Professor Richard Ducker from the UNC School of Government served as resources for the Board's discussion regarding the current state of private roads in Bertie County and how to make them more accessible and safer for emergency vehicles as well as other county duty vehicles. Most problem road areas are private roads constructed before 1975 and not eligible for State maintenance since they do not meet current NCDOT paving standards. County Attorney Lloyd Smith suggested the importance of considering potential ordinances for future subdivision developments, including the possibility of approving a mobile home park ordinance to require paved roads. The Board received feedback from Emory and Ducker concerning the limited options for addressing these issues and offered a few potential solutions. Chairman Perry also requested more information about current construction on NC 305 and NC 308.

EMS Paramedic start-up—Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper presented a report detailing the transition of EMS services to First Med on October 1st. He mentioned that feedback has been mostly positive but Cooper addressed one complaint that was conveyed to Chairman Perry by a citizen. Cooper presented his findings about said complaint which involved three main conflicts: response time of First Med, paramedic competency with medical equipment, and family members riding in the emergency vehicle. Cooper addressed the response time, which was within contractual obligations. Cooper also stated that paramedics were familiar with equipment but were skeptical of the results. The final issue with family members being transported in the emergency vehicle was resolved on scene.

At approximately 12:00 o'clock the Board recessed to take a ninety minute break for lunch and returned, reconvening at 1:30 p.m.

Water (present and future operations and long term strategies and options)

County Manager Sauer introduced representatives from AQUA NC, and suggested that there may be a possible partnership with Bertie County for maintenance and operation of water services. The presentation addressed "key aspects" such as customer sensitivity over possible rate increases, and County control over location of future lines constructed in the water districts. AQUA requested an LOI (letter of intent) between itself and Bertie County to continue the research process of a potential partnership. Concerns were raised from various Commissioners about a rate increase for customers and a general reluctance regarding the LOI. AQUA representatives responded that the figures the Board received in its initial communication were preliminary and informational, and were not necessarily accurate because the County's current financial information had not been reviewed at that time. The consensus of the Board was to take the LOI "off the table" and to allow AQUA time to conduct research of various operational options. It was the Board's consensus to consult with an independent, third party engineering firm. AQUA representatives suggested its desire to present possible financial models to the Board by the end of the year, and that an engineering piece could be included.

County Manager Sauer reported that regarding the South Windsor Water Association System transfer to the County, that documents have been delivered to the McDavid engineering firm and that a report is due soon. Sauer asked for guidance from the Board on the Water System's Non-Residential Request Checklist and the consensus was to defer this issue until other information is received. Sauer reminded the Board of its earlier discussion regarding the Automatic Meter Reading System proposal from the McDavid engineering firm, and the consensus was to defer this item until more research had been conducted into present engineering firm and possibly alternative opinions.

Bertie County Schools--Superintendent Elaine White presented an overview of school operations, including student achievement, improved truancy prevention efforts, technology use in the classroom, the principal leadership program, community partnerships, creating more parental involvement, as well as future plans for the school system. The new high school is currently scheduled to open in August 2014. The Board also heard plans of the school system relocating and renovating certain school structures including: relocation of the current bus garage to the existing Bertie high school gymnasium building, relocation of current Central Services office to the 900 Building of Bertie High School's existing campus, and converting the current 100 Building of Bertie High School to a Professional Development Center for faculty and staff.

Courthouse roof replacement and next phase—County Manager Sauer asked Commissioner Trent to report on his review of the Courthouse structural issues, especially the foundation shifting and shearing of the north wing. Commissioner Trent briefed the Board regarding the engineering report and RAM JACK proposal for stabilization of the Courthouse foundation, and the cost estimate of \$16,850. There was much discussion and suggestions from the Board regarding possible historical grant funding sources which should be pursued before work is started on this project. County Attorney Smith indicated that the NC Bar Association might be a possible grant source for this effort.

Charter Schools – request regarding planned Heritage Collegiate Leadership Academy
A report was given by Kashi Nelson to request a temporary building lease for a new charter school in the county. Ms. Nelson requested a temporary lease to use the already occupied Askewville Pre-School building located at 214 E. Askewville St., Windsor, NC 27983, and the possibility of collocating with the current pre-school. Chairman Perry assured Ms. Nelson that feedback would be given about approval or denial of this request as well as about other possible County-owned properties no later than October 31st, 2013. **NOTE:** Feedback was received later in the afternoon that the Askewville Pre-School site was not owned by the County and that a request should be submitted to the Bertie County School System. Other possible, County-owned properties were investigated but none fit the needs of the charter school.

Former Board of Elections building programmed for Cooperative Extension offices (revised cost estimates)--An itemized report was presented by Commissioner Trent regarding costs of renovating the Old Election building. The floor plan was also discussed in regards to needs of the 4-H program and Cooperative Extension.

Commissioner Harrell introduced a **MOTION** to cap the spending for the Board of Elections building at \$75,000 and it was noted that this included an appropriation of fund balance reserves to cover this cost. Vice Chairman Smith **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

DRC office remediation, available space, custodian and utility expenses—The Board discussed a request made by West Roanoke Missionary Baptist Church to lease a portion of the County owned DRC building in Windsor. Consensus was for the County Manager to discuss idea further with the association and to develop a lease.

Other County owned facilities—County Manager Sauer updated the Board on the facility inventory of County owned properties previously prepared by John Ed Whitehurst at the Board's request. Photographs of current county owned properties were reviewed and discussion was conducted on ways to better utilize the properties or to sell them off. Consensus was reached to take steps to offer for sale, the following properties: old house at the entrance to the Recreation Complex, the former Maintenance Shop building, Dr. Jordan's former office, the former Health Department and old Social Services building. County Attorney Smith will follow up by recommending a potential auction services provider to handle these sales for the County.

There was also discussion regarding the Hexlena voting precinct facility and an offer from an adjoining land owner to acquire the facility, maintain it for public use, and make it available for other activities. A report will follow later from Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston regarding this matter.

There was also a general consensus to consider the donation of the food bank facility to its occupant, a nonprofit organization, in lieu of further maintenance costs for the County.

The Board also discussed facility needs for the Sheriff's Department and the possibility of relocating the Sheriff's offices to the Board of Education's administrative building once the school staff is relocated to the former high school 900 building. The County Manager was instructed to follow up with Superintendent White regarding the County's interest in this facility.

Data Center's report on paperless agenda packages—Scott Pearce demonstrated tablet technology for the Board's use in receiving meeting agendas and their use to study materials prior to and during a board meeting. It was the Board's consensus to check pricing with the State contract and to order the computer tablets as soon as possible using existing funds in the Board of Commissioners budget.

Data Center discussion of software options (tax software hosting)—County Manager Sauer reported that the Tax Office computer system is outdated, and the maintenance vendor has discontinued service on the hardware effective in 2014. He indicated that the Data Center staff and Tax Office personnel will be looking at options, including contacting a vendor recommended by John Ed Whitehurst, who may desire partnering with Bertie County as a host site for its regional server. The Board will receive an update at a later date.

Facility public use guidelines, standards and existing practices—The Board reviewed draft revisions for public use policies at the Bertie County Senior Center. Consensus was reached to allow various events (that were previously prohibited in the earlier draft) to be held in the Senior Center but reaffirmed that religious services were still not allowed.

Commissioner Harrell introduced a **MOTION** to amend the Senior Center policy as discussed. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Evening Wrap-Up/Pending Matters

ABC Board Appointment – Vice Chairman Smith introduced a **MOTION** to appoint James Pugh to serve on the ABC Board for remaining balance of Eddie “Blue” Watford’s term. Commissioner Trent and Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. A vote was taken with the results of 4-1 with Commissioner Harrell voting “no.” The **MOTION PASSED** with the majority in favor.

Roanoke-Chowan Community College Board of Trustees Appointment – Vice Chairman Smith introduced a **MOTION** appointing Commissioner Wesson to represent the Bertie County Board of Commissioners on the RCCC Board. Commissioner Harrell **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Sheriff’s Department contract for providing traffic safety unit in construction zone on US 13/17 for Ralph Hodges Construction - County Attorney Smith outlined the possible contract elements for an agreement between the Bertie County Sheriff’s Department and Hodges construction regarding the “public safety” issues involved with one-lane traffic not following posted speed limits and endangering workers. A rate of \$78 per hour for an officer and a car, with a four hour minimum was proposed.

Commissioner Harrell introduced a **MOTION** to approve the request for placing a deputy at the Construction site to help deter speeding. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Employee Wellness Program—Finance Officer William Roberson reported that Pierce Group (County employee’s health insurance provider) has prepared an implementation plan for the possibility of the County saving money on employee health insurance premiums by providing general health assessments, preventive care habits, etc. Employees would earn credits and in turn with 125 overall credits and/or 100% employee participation the County would receive 5% off health insurance premium. The process must be started by the end of the year in order to take effect next year

Consensus made to have participation in these assessments as voluntary until year end and at that time other options may be considered to increase employee participation.

Consensus also made to contact Pierce Group to schedule a time for a representative to address employees about the program.

Meeting was recessed at 7:02 p.m. and schedule to reconvene in the morning at 9:00 a.m.

This 3rd day of October.

J. Wallace Perry, Chairman

Sarah Seredni, Clerk to the Board

Minutes, Part 2
October 3rd – 4th 2013

Chairman Perry reconvened the October 3, 2013 regular meeting of the Bertie County Board of Commissioners on October 4, 2013 at 9:00am. The meeting reconvened for Day 2 of its mid-year 2013-2014 planning retreat. The meeting was held in Windsor, NC at the Roanoke Cashie River Center located at 112 West Water Street. The following members were present or absent:

Present: J. Wallace Perry, Chairman
Charles L. Smith, Vice Chairman
Rick Harrell
John Trent
Ronald “Ron” Wesson

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer
Clerk to the Board Sarah M. Seredni
Finance Director William Roberson
County Attorney Lloyd Smith
Economic Developer Steve Biggs

Chairman Perry reconvened the meeting.

Board consideration for assigning staff priorities, continued

A strategic planning update was to be given by UNC Kenan Institute but that report was cancelled due to a scheduling conflict.

Golden Leaf Foundation FY2014 grants opportunities—County Manager Sauer and Economic Developer Steve Biggs updated the Board on the latest cycle for Golden Leaf Foundation grant applications. There was much discussion about prior efforts to establish a pilot extraction facility to assist with agricultural research, and the consensus of the Board was to look at other options. Two possible options were discussed involving sewer projects with the Town of Windsor. The final consensus of the Board was to have a letter drafted that would postpone the submission of this grant project for one year.

Economic development – setting the course for the next 3-5 years

The Board provided several strategic priorities for emphasis of the County’s economic development program capitalizing on Bertie County’s agricultural base and natural resources. Areas of emphasis included recruiting a fertilizer plant operation, and developing a biomass facility; focus on wildlife tourism (hunting and fishing) and promotion of investment projects, such as Scotch Hall, using a time share financing model. Consensus made to establish committees (strategic work groups) with defined objectives, and to hold separate meetings

exploring particular partnerships, resources, and advertising that could aid in promotion of mentioned initiatives.

911 Communications: Possible consolidation with Martin County

Presentation was made by David Bone, Martin County Manager, about a possible opportunity for consolidation of both Bertie and Martin County’s EMS services into one entity with two state of the art centers: one being the primary center in Martin and the secondary center being in Bertie. Commissioners raised concerns about Bertie having the secondary center when Bertie County is considerably larger than Martin County. Following Mr. Bone’s presentation there was discussion with Sheriff John Holley regarding his thoughts on the matter. The Board’s consensus was to move forward with a non-binding RFP and noted serious concerns about the successful implementation of such a plan. The County will assume no financial obligation at this time.

At the conclusion of the agenda, there was much discussion about the productivity from this type of meeting format and the Board’s desire to stay engaged with these projects, with the commitment to follow up with a similar meeting in approximately thirty days.

The Chairman declared that the Board would be in recess until 5:00 p.m. on October 10th when the Board would reconvene in its meeting room at 106 Dundee Street.

This 4th day of October.

J. Wallace Perry, Chairman

Sarah Seredni, Clerk to the Board