

Windsor, North Carolina
April 20, 2015
Special Meeting

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Meeting at 2:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Room located at 106 Dundee Street Windsor, NC. The following members were present:

Present: Ronald "Ron" Wesson, District I
Stewart White, District II
Tammy A. Lee, District III
John Trent, District IV
Ernestine (Byrd) Bazemore, District V

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer
Clerk to the Board Sarah S. Tinkham
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
Network Administrator Joe Wilkes
Information Systems Administrator Scott Pearce
Finance Director William Roberson
Department of Social Services Director Linda Speller
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper
Compliance Officer Crystal Freeman
NET Coordinator Ian Trainor
EMS Division Chief Matt Leicester
Clerk of Superior Court Vasti F. James
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea
Parks and Recreation Director Donna Mizelle
Code Enforcement Administrator G.T. Pittman
Building Codes Inspector Tommy Dunlow

Barry Ward of the Bertie Ledger-Advance was present from the media.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wesson called the meeting to order and thanked all of those present for their attendance.

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW

Chairman Wesson convened the Bertie County Board of Commissioners as the Board of Equalization and Review.

Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, and Clerk of Superior Court, Vasti F. James, were called forward to administer oaths.

Clerk James read the following oath aloud:

All five Commissioners were officially sworn in as the Board of Equalization and Review.

HEARING OF APPEALS AS THE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW

The Board had received two (2) confirmed appeals to hear at this meeting of the Board of Equalization and Review.

It was announced that an additional session would be held on Monday, May 4, 2015 as a part of the Board's regular meeting.

George Harden approached the Board with his concerns about the proposed penalties being put into place by the County's business personal property auditors, County Tax Services, Inc.

Mr. Harden stated that he did not think the penalties were fair as he had no idea he wasn't listing properly until this year. He also requested additional clarity regarding how supplies and miscellaneous parts are taxed, as well as about how the County deals with depreciation of agricultural equipment.

Chairman Wesson replied by stating that the County is charged with administering tax laws as they have been mandated by the State of North Carolina in order to insure that listing for business personal property is accurate for all taxpayers.

Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, responded to Mr. Harden's concern about the depreciation of equipment. He stated that the State follows a protocol based on the age of the equipment, and as long as it is still in service, it is eligible to be taxed, but the State outlines a depreciation schedule with a minimum twenty-five percent (25%) residual value.

Timothy Francis of Lasca's Italian Restaurant brought forward his concerns about never knowing he was supposed to list business personal equipment in the 22 years that he has owned his restaurant.

When asked if Mr. Francis had received correspondence from the County about such taxes, he stated that he hadn't received any such notices, and Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, clarified that the County historically has contacted businesses who had listed taxes in the previous years.

Mr. Francis stated that he did not mind paying his taxes but that he didn't believe the penalties listed were fair as it makes him look as if he was doing something wrong on purpose.

Mr. Rhea stated that under State law, a business owner is responsible for coming forward and listing taxes for a new business.

Harlan Hughes of Eden House Graphics approached the Board with his concerns about not only the penalties, but the actual process used in determining the amount owed under the new system.

Mr. Hughes was also concerned about when these tax amounts were due to the County.

In response, Mr. Rhea informed all of those present that these amounts would be due by January 6, 2016, but that it wouldn't take nearly that long to resolve each case appropriately.

Chairman Wesson assured all the citizens who had made appeals to the Board of Equalization and Review that they would receive answers to their questions before any final decisions are made, and he also encouraged other citizens to step forward at the next hearing on May 4, 2015 if they felt the need to do so.

Chairman Wesson then opened the floor for a motion to adjourn as the Board of Equalization and Review.

Vice Chairman Lee made a **MOTION** to recess as the Board of Equalization and Review until Monday, May 4, 2015. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

COMMUNITY BASED RECREATION UPDATE

Parks and Recreation Director, Donna Mizelle, and Windsor YMCA Director, Heidi Bonislawski informed the Board of an upcoming assessment that will be completed to gauge community interest about what specific recreation activities should be offered at each community recreation site.

The community based recreation program is slated to begin at the start of next school year. The Board commended Ms. Mizelle and Ms. Bonislawski for their teamwork in spearheading this initiative.

UPDATE FROM THE COUNTY MEDICAL DIRECTOR, DR. MICHAEL LOWRY

Bertie County Medical Director, Dr. Michael Lowry, was present to provide insight to the Board about his role in the County, as well as to provide his thoughts on the latest improvements to the Emergency Medical Services Department.

Dr. Lowry stated that he had been the County's Medical Director for 6 and ½ years and that it was his job to ensure all EMS/NET personnel are performing according to all State protocols, and medical directives since they operate under his medical license.

Additionally, Dr. Lowry listed the many procedures and medications the County can utilize with the Paramedic level care being offered. He expressed that because of the change, more lifesaving procedures are being utilized even before a patient reaches the hospital which increases the likelihood of a patient's survival.

Commissioner Trent inquired if Dr. Lowry was the Medical Director for the Non-Emergency Transport services in the area including the County's system.

Dr. Lowry stated that he has served as Medical Director for the Non-Emergency Transports on a voluntary basis, but that there was one company still deciding if they would like to contract with him, or find another suitable alternative.

Chairman Wesson inquired if there was an evaluation process completed to discover areas in need of improvement within the County EMS division.

Dr. Lowry informed the Board that an evaluation is completed on a quarterly basis by the North Carolina Office of EMS, and that results from those evaluations can be provided when available, or on a yearly basis.

Vice Chairman Lee asked if there was a certain amount of time required for EMS personnel to stay on scene.

Dr. Lowry stated that fifteen (15) minutes is the standard amount of time, but that time is variable due to the procedures usually spent liberating a patient, administering IV's, transferring and lifting a patient via stretcher, as well as applying the use of any medical equipment such as EKG's, etc.

DISCUSS CURRENT ABANDONED/CONDEMNED BUILDING POLICIES WITH ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY, JONATHAN HUDDLESTON

Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston reviewed the agreement with municipalities to administer the State Building Code through the Inspections Department.

He clarified that the building inspector will provide an assessment of the dwelling at the Town's request, but the enforcement of the municipal minimum housing code is the Town's responsibility. The assessment is provided to the Town and the property owners.

The Board also discussed the kind of authority the County had to be on the property of decrepit properties and inquired with the Assistant County Attorney about their options.

Assistant County Attorney Huddleston stated that the County does have authority in certain situations, such as those where the public could somehow be at risk, under the Nuisance Abatement provisions of the County.

The consensus of the Board was that there should be a clear line drawn between what is the responsibility of the County and that of the Towns. Assistant County Attorney Huddleston said that the County and the Town of Aulander have dealt with municipal minimum housing code violations before, that there was a clear line between when the County's work ended and when

the Town hired an attorney for enforcement actions, and that it appears to have worked without any problems. He said that the same procedure would be followed this time.

**DISCUSS WATER PROJECT UPDATES INCLUDING BUDGET ITEMS FOR
FY 2015-2016**

County Manager Sauer briefed the Board on pending water projects including: South Windsor distribution improvements which could potentially be funded with USDA Rural Development grants and loans as well as the System Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) project. The County is seeking monies from the State's Revolving Fund.

Mr. Sauer reiterated that both projects being prepared are on an "at risk" basis by the consultant with no cost obligation or encumbrance of County funds.

Mr. Sauer continued by stating that after two unsuccessful CDBG applications, efforts are now focused on USDA Rural Development financing (combined grant and loan packages), plus State Revolving fund monies with no interest.

Mr. Sauer noted that one of the County's biggest struggles has been "the law of unintended consequences" whereby if the County water system has experienced regulatory violations, or "NOVs – notices of violations" then the County's grant applications would have scored more points on the rating scale. This same issue also effects the South Windsor Water system which also had no violations for its operation in recent years.

Most recently the Board engaged Green Engineering to update the water system's hydraulic model. Green Engineering has also been engaged to evaluate the requests from the Town of Lewiston-Woodville and the Town of Roxobel for consolidation of their water system design and installation of an appropriately sized booster pump station to address water pressure issues in and around the Town of Roxobel.

Mr. Sauer reported that the initial takeover of the Lewiston and Roxobel water systems would occur on July 1, 2015 and that all of these items were being presented simply so the Board was aware of actions that were approved at previous meetings.

Lastly, County Manager Sauer announced that he and Water Superintendent, Ricky Spivey, would be meeting with the USDA Rural Development staff on Wednesday, April 29, 2015 to review the South Windsor project.

The Board appreciated the reminder about these items and Chairman Wesson requested that if additional financial considerations arise, the Board would like to be informed of the needed additions.

The Board was also provided with the following hand out in their electronic agenda packet:

Active Water Department projects

1) **South Windsor distribution system improvements (Water District III) USDA Rural**

Development application:

- Water distribution system upgrade including all meter replacement for 326 customers
- District III SCADA works to include master units at Connie’s and Ricky’s offices, wells 1 & 2 and tank 1,
- Automatic meter reading system for all existing water meters in District III
- Woodard Road water main reinforcements consisting of installation of ± 27,500 linear feet of 6-inch water main.

Project cost estimate: \$3,089,801 (seeking grant and loan financing with possible 2.75% over 40 years)

Annual debt service payment: \$128,350 which is offset by revenue from system consolidations

-65,280 South Windsor customer revenue
 -56,059 Lewiston-Woodville customer revenue
 -60,526 Roxobel customer revenue

-53,515 Estimated annual net revenue gain for consolidated water system*

2) **System Control and Data Acquisition project application for 0% State Revolving Fund loan**

- 4 additional bulk meters (for Scotch Hall, Avoca, and two other locations)
- Roxobel meter replacement for 160 customers
- Lewiston-Woodville meter replacement for 310 customers

Project cost estimate: \$1,832,910 State Revolving Fund 0% loan application under development

Annual debt service payment: \$91,646 which is offset as follows:

-53,515 net revenue gain—see note above*
 -55,000 annual cost savings achieved by SCADA (analog phone lines eliminated)

-16,689 Projected total system annual savings in operational
 cost for consolidated system

Note: The \$53,515 net revenue gain is conservatively estimated with \$-0- grant dollars from USDA.
 For every \$100,000 in grant received, the loan payment is reduced by \$4,563 per year.

DISCUSS FIBER COMMUNICATIONS EXTENSION FOR SHERIFF'S OFFICE
PENDING RELOCATION

Information Systems Administrator, Scott Pearce, was present to reiterate to the Board the importance of securing the fiber needed to connect the old School Board Administration building on County Farm Road for the Sheriff's Department.

County Manager Sauer stated that since there is a 6 month lead time for this project, so a decision was imperative to at least order the needed fiber line.

The Board was also presented with quote options for the actual installation of the fiber which is representative of a 10 year projection. The three (3) quotes were presented to the Board in their electronic agenda packet and read as follows:

**Cost Analysis for Internet Access/Telephones
 Only for New Sheriff's Office/Communications Center**

Option 1

County Owned Fiber

	One Time Charges	Recurring Costs	Cost Over 10 Years
Installation	\$61,870.00	None Yearly	\$ 61,870.00

Option 2

MCNC Fiber

	One Time Charges	Recurring Costs	Cost Over 10 Years
Installation	\$42,717.00	\$ 6,000.00 Yearly	\$ 102,717.00

Option 3

Stand Alone Facility

	One Time Charges	Recurring Costs	Cost Over 10 Years
T1 for Telephones	\$1,524.00	\$340.00 x12	
Internet Access	\$24.00	\$1,200.00 x12	
Watchguard Firebox	\$4,000.00	\$3,000.00 x1	
Totals	\$5,548.00	\$21,480.00 Yearly	\$220,348.00

After some discussion, Vice Chairman Lee made a **MOTION** to proceed with Option 1 and County Owned fiber for \$61,970 to complete this project. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

**DISCUSS TAX OFFICE IMPLEMENTATIONS OF NEW SERVER INSTALLATIONS
AND DATA TRANSFER PROCESS PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD**

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board about a project to replace the main Tax Office server as budgeted in FY 2014-2015. He stated that the project was approved at \$80,000 and that he was updating the Board on the action that will soon take place with the installation of the new server, as well as the completion of the County Tax Office data transfer.

The Board concurred.

ADJOURN

Chairman Wesson adjourned the meeting at 4:30pm.

Ronald D. Wesson, Chairman
Bertie County Board of Commissioners

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board