

**Windsor, North Carolina**  
**August 17, 2015**  
**Regular Meeting**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled meeting at 7:00pm inside the Midway Community Building located at 112 NC 45 N, Merry Hill, NC 27983. The following members were present or absent:

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  
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper  
NET Coordinator Ian Trainor  
Information Systems Administrator Joe Wilkes  
DSS Director Linda Speller  
Finance Officer William Roberson  
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs

Gene Motley of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald was present from the media.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Wesson welcomed all of those present and thanked them for their attendance.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Trent led the Invocation and program participants from the HIVE House, and HIVE House Executive Director, Vivian Saunders, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Linda Smallwood, a grandmother of 3 boys currently involved with the HIVE House in Lewiston-Woodville, came forth to publicly thank the Commissioners as well as Executive Director, Vivian Saunders, for their continued dedication and financial support of the HIVE House. Ms. Smallwood personally thanked Ms. Saunders for her generosity in a time of great loss for her and for the programs that have helped her 3 grandchildren move forward after the passing of their mother, Ms. Smallwood's daughter.

Chairman Wesson thanked Ms. Smallwood for her attendance and empathized. He encouraged her to seek comfort and support from the Bertie County community during her time of grief, as well as to continue to stay strong.

There were no other public comments during this session.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **Tri-County Airport Authority Board project update by Henry Joyner and Chair, Thomas Asbell**

Henry Joyner of the Tri-County Airport and Chair of the Tri-County Airport Authority Board, Thomas Asbell, were present for the meeting to provide a program update to the Board.

Mr. Joyner began by providing a brief history of the airport itself, and also discussed the latest needs of the facility including the extension of the runway, renovations to the airport building, as well as the reinstatement of the jet fueling system.

It was reported that the jet fueling system was operational until July 2014, but that it had since been inoperable. Mr. Joyner stated that the necessary repairs were being made and that the system should be functional in September.

Mr. Joyner also informed the Board of the various companies that utilize the services of the airport including Perdue, NUCOR, WIMCO, Valley Protein, and Golden Peanut, among others. He stated that the jet fueling system could really assist the airport in being more attractive for large jets to use while in the area.

Mr. Asbell approached the Board with a report about the future projects for the airport including a roof and flooring replacement, as well as for the continued need of a hotel and restaurants for these airport clients who visit the area for business. They stated that most clients have to be directed to Ahoskie, Roanoke Rapids, or Rocky Mount for meals and lodging.

The Board discussed funding priorities as well as operational costs of the airport, and encouraged Mr. Asbell to seek grant funding opportunities whenever available. He also stated that it was very important to network and be involved in the State government so that the Tri-County Airport can stand out amongst the other regional airports in the State.

## **HIVE House program update by Executive Director, Vivian Saunders**

Vivian Saunders, Executive Director of the HIVE House, was present to provide a program update to the Board.

She also brought along with her a group of approximately 15 young participants who were currently involved with the initiatives' day program.

Overall, Ms. Saunders stated that there were 34 total participants in the after school program with the HIVE House, and that the initiatives continue to grow into other various age groups such as parents and the elderly.

Ms. Saunders discussed the impact of the Mother Read program in which mothers attend classes through the HIVE House to learn to read themselves, to therefore turn around and be able to assist their children with reading.

She also discussed the various grant opportunities that she has been involved with over the past several months, and is hopeful that some alternative funding would be received soon so that she could continue to provide needed services to the citizens of Bertie County. She emphasized that all of these services were available to Bertie County and not just the citizens of West Bertie.

### **Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper: a). Communication Tower insurance claim report b). ALS evening shift proposal**

Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, and NET Coordinator, Ian Trainor, were present for this portion of the meeting.

The NET Division is requesting an additional shift for ALS transports which would be during the overnight hours. The truck would run 7 days a week/365 days a year would be available for ALS transfers both locally and out of the County.

Mr. Trainor reported that as many as 3 ALS transport calls are turned down on a regular basis overnight as they currently do not have the ability to offer transports at those hours.

Mr. Cooper stated his confidence in the ability to support this overnight shift as well as the needed equipment and staff, and that there was also a high rate of reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid for these calls which would bring the County additional revenue than what it takes for the shift to operate.

Additionally, Mr. Cooper also reported that the number of related calls would only increase as an overnight, ALS transport service would soon no longer be able to provide this service, and those customers could then be picked up by the County instead.

The Board commended Mr. Cooper and his staff, but also expressed concerns with Emergency Services and being sure that citizens within the County would be able to be serviced while other trucks would be used out of the County for these ALS transfers.

Mr. Cooper referred the Board to their agenda packets for a breakdown of revenues and expenses, as well as the additional equipment and staff that would be needed.

Mr. Cooper and Mr. Trainor explained that the annual cost for the evening ALS shift expansion will include four new positions—two full time Paramedics and two full time EMTs. Total expenditures on a twelve month basis are projected at \$241,826 and revenues are estimated at \$328,500 for a net gain for the General Fund of \$86,674 based on the anticipated service demand volume.

Mr. Cooper and Mr. Trainor assured the Board though that Emergency Services would always be their priority and that the proper procedures on the 9-11 side would continue to be followed to serve the citizens of this County 24/7/365.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** for the NET Department to move forward in hiring and beginning to offer the overnight shift of ALS transports as discussed. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Mr. Cooper thanked the Board for their support, and also presented another item to them regarding a communications tower insurance claim.

He reported that the County's communications tower was recently struck by lightning which caused the tower's notification lights at the top to be inoperable. Mr. Cooper stated that upon his notification, he contacted an appropriate contractor to inspect the facility, and was told that the cost to repair it would be \$15,000.

Mr. Cooper requested that the Board approve the moving of funds in the amount \$14,346 to his equipment line item in order to afford the unexpected repairs. The insurance deductible is \$1,000.

Finance Officer, William Roberson, stated that the budget amendments would be presented momentarily and were already a part of the Board's consent agenda for tonight.

### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

#### **Lawrence Memorial Library Board**

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to re-appoint Irene Walker, Lewis C. Hoggard, III., and William Cowper to the Lawrence Memorial Library Board. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **Approve Regular Session minutes from 8-3-15**

County Manager Sauer recommended this item for approval.

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to approve the regular session minutes from 8-3-15. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Approve Planning Session minutes from 8-12-15**

County Manager Sauer recommended this item for approval.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve the Planning Session minutes from 8-12-15. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Approve Closed Session minutes for 8-3-15**

County Manager Sauer recommended this item for approval.

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to approve the closed session minutes from 8-3-15. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Accept Home and Community Care Block Grant for Older Adults – County Funding Plan**

County Manager Sauer recommended this item for approval.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to accept the Home and Community Care Block Grant for Older Adults. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Budget Amendments #15-08 and #16-02**

#### **#16-02**

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve Budget Amendment #16-02 in order to set up two budget line items for additional non-profits: Visions for View and Esquires for Education, Inc. as well as to increase the budget for equipment repairs for Emergency Management using the insurance money from lightning strike claim from on 8-6-15. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Budget Amendment #16-02 read as follows:

BUDGET AMENDMENT				
# 16-02				
	INCREASE			INCREASE
10-6100-XXXX-XX	\$	10,000	10-0090-4991-99	\$ 10,000
TO SETUP BUDGET FOR VISIONS FOR VIEW				
	INCREASE			INCREASE
10-6100-XXXX-XX	\$	7,500	10-0090-4991-99	\$ 7,500
TO SETUP BUDGET FOR ESQUIRES FOR EDUCATION, INC.				
	INCREASE			INCREASE
10-4330-5352-00	\$	14,346	10-0050-4839-04	\$ 14,346
TO INCREASE BUDGET FOR EQUIPMENT REPAIRS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT USING THE INSURANCE MONEY FROM LIGHTNING STRIKE FILED ON 8/6/15				
APPROVED ___ / ___ /2015				

**#15-08**

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve Budget Amendment #15-08 in order to set up the budget line item for hospital payments, as well as to increase the restricted drug account with a federal contribution received. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously. Budget Amendment #15-08 read as follows:

BUDGET AMENDMENT				
# 15-08				
	INCREASE			INCREASE
10-0040-4934-10	\$	826,651	10-9800-5980-40	\$ 826,651
30-0070-4981-13	\$	826,651	30-9100-5756-00	\$ 556,210
			30-9100-5756-01	\$ 270,441
TO SETUP BUDGET FOR HOSPITAL PAYMENTS				
10-0025-4431-03	\$	1,944	10-4310-5499-01	\$ 1,944
TO INCREASE THE RESTRICTED DRUG ACCT - FED MONEY REC'D 2/07/15				
APPROVED / /2015				

**DISCUSSION AGENDA**

**Consider Resolution for WWII Coastwise Merchant Mariners**

The Board briefly discussed this item and County Manager Sauer read the resolution into the record.

The Board stated its confidence in this matter and there was no discussion needed. Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the resolution as presented. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Resolution reads as follows:



## BERTIE COUNTY

106 DUNDEE STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 530  
WINDSOR, NORTH CAROLINA  
27983  
(252) 794-5300  
FAX: (252) 794-5327  
WWW.CO.BERTIE.NC.US

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RONALD "RON" WESSON, Chairman  
TAMMY A. LEE, Vice-Chairman  
JOHN TRENT  
ERNESTINE (BYRD) BAZEMORE  
STEWART WHITE

### A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA BERTIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS IN SUPPORT OF ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF RECOGNITION FOR VETERANS STATUS TO WW II COASTWISE MERCHANT MARINERS

**Findings 1:** Some US Merchant Marine Seamen of WW II gained veteran status under a court ruling via Schmacher, Willner, et al, V. Secretary of the Air Force Edward C. Aldridge, Jr 665 F Supp 41 (D.D.C 1987). The USCG later **required** they meet certain eligibility requirements.

**Findings 2:** Some 10,000 to 30,000 **coastwise** seagoing tug and barge merchant seamen have been or may be denied recognition upon application because actions taken by government agencies (prior to P. L. 95-202) have removed required eligibility records from being available to the veteran.

**Findings 3:** Commandant, USCG Ltr 5739 Ltr of 09 Apr 2010 states, "**The US Government did not issue mariner credentials to females during the World War II.**"

**Findings 4:** USCG Information Sheet #77 (April 1992) identifies **acceptable forms of documentation** for eligibility meeting the requirements pursuant to Schmacher V. Aldridge, 655 41(D.D.C 1987)

- a. Certificate of Discharge (Form 718A)
- b. Continuous Discharge Books (ship's deck/engine logbooks. (Non-military document)
- c. Company letters showing vessel names and dates of voyages. (Non-military document)

**Findings 5:** Commandant USCG Order of 20 March, 1944 **relieves masters** of tugs, towboats and seagoing barges **of the responsibility of submitting reports of seamen shipped or discharged on forms 718A.** This action removes item (a) from the eligibility list in Findings 4.

**Findings 6:** USCG Information Sheet # 77 (April, 1992) further states "Deck logs were traditionally considered to be the property of the owners of the ships. After World War II, however, the deck and engine logbooks of vessels operated by the War Shipping Administration were turned over to that agency by the ship owners, and **were destroyed during the 1970s because they were too burdensome to keep and too costly to maintain.**" This action effectively eliminates item (b) from the eligibility list in Findings 4

**Findings 7:** Company letters showing vessel names and dates of voyages are highly suspect of ever existing due to the strict orders prohibiting even the discussion of ship/troop movement. Then consider item (c) of Findings 4 should be removed from the eligibility list. USCG Info Sheet # 77, page 2 refers

**Findings 8:** Excerpts from Pres. Roosevelt's fireside Chat 23: On the Home Front (Oct. 12, 1942):"In order to keep stepping up our production, we have had to add millions of workers to the total labor force of the Nation. "In order to do this, we shall be compelled to use **older men, and handicapped people, and more women, and even grown boys and girls,** wherever possible and reasonable, to replace men of



military age and fitness; to use their summer vacations, to work somewhere in the war industries." Underage combatants had served in all of America's wars from the time of the Revolution. The unknown number who served in the Second World War perpetuated that legacy. They served with distinction and valor, and indisputably demonstrated that, despite their age, they could serve as well as those around them.

**Findings 9:** Post the Revolutionary War, many Acts of Congress were enacted to provide pensions to those veterans applying for support. Thousands of servicemen were without documented service and remained without any viable means to prove service. Excerpts from documents retained at the NARA provide: Generally the process required an applicant to appear before a court of record in the State of his or her residence to describe under oath the service for which a pension was claimed. This establishes precedence for using certified oaths in conjunction with the Social Security documents as alternative documentation.

**Findings (10):** US CG Official Shipping/Discharge documents (Forms 718A) were obtained from the National Archives and Records Administration, Wash. DC that contained information proving Active Duty (AD) services for some WW II coastwise barge and tug Mariners. Together with information obtained via a FOIA request to the National Maritime Center, research brought forth additional information. **Research conducted between June-August 2013, in concert with the NMC,** using official records of 1172 coastwise mariners and the USCG Merchant Marine Casualties of WW II report of 1950 identified:

**WW II Coastwise Mariners Listing: Excel Sheet #1**

- 1172 Mariners identified via official USCG Shipping/Discharge Forms 718A
- 84 Mariners may be women according to their feminine sounding names; OR 7.2%
- 1058 Mariners' ages were specified. Ages ranged from 10 to 78.
- 583 Mariners identified within draft age and included those in 4F status; OR 55.1% of known ages.
- 525 Mariners identified at over the draft age of 37; OR 49.6% of known ages.
- 114 Mariners with age not specified; OR 09.7%
- 47 Mariners who served were under the age of 17; OR 4.4% of known ages.
- 16 Mariners KIA with 1 receiving DD Form 1300.

**National Maritime Form DD 214 Listing: Excel Sheet #2**

- 794 Mariners were identified on NMC Coastwise Mariners listing identifying Active Duty services.
- 291 Mariners on NMC listing had no USCG MMLD numbers listed; OR 36.6%
- 85 Mariners issued DD Form 214 from NMC listing, OR 10.7% of NMC; OR 7.2% of WW II CMM

**Merchant Marine KIA & MIA Casualties from all causes = 9521 \*** (usmm.org)

- 5662 Mariner Casualties from USCG per 1950 Report \* (USCG 1950 casualty report)
- 3859 Mariner Casualties from Other Sources \* (Additional sources = Art. Moore and US Congress)

**Merchant Marine Casualties recognized by all sources = 414**

- 344 Mariner Casualties from USCG 1950 Casualty Report \* (USCG 1950 casualty report)
- 70 Mariner Casualties from NMC report & not listed on USCG 1950 Casualty List \* (NMC DD 1300 Report)
- 1 Mariner in NMC DD 1300 files as having received Form DD 1300 yet 16 identified on WW II CM listing

**Rationale: 9521 Merchant Mariners KIA or MIA serving and only 414 receiving Veteran status.**

**Findings 11:** The USCG cannot provide a true estimate of merchant mariners serving in WW II. GAO/HEHS-97-196R refers. Estimates range from 250,000 to 840,000 from recognized historians and GAO audit... None of these historians were aware of these 10,000 to 30,000 coastwise merchant seamen where many served without proper credentials and were not included in above estimates. Some were elderly handicapped; others women and some were school children who served in billets, drew wages and paid taxes. They served on the same vessels in the same hostile war zones and performed the same

services alongside others who were documented. Yet, only about 91,000 merchant mariners have been recognized as veterans with just 1192 of these veterans in receipt of compensation or pension benefits the VA refers. This is a vast disparity in ratio of the other service branches.

**Findings 12:** DOD and NARA Agreement N1-330-04-1 of Jul, 08, 2004 puts in place a procedure to transfer military personnel files of individuals from all services, (including civilian personnel or contractual groups who were later accorder military status under the provisions of Schmacher, Willner, et al, V. Secretary of the Air Force Edward C. Aldridge, Jr 665 F Supp 41 (D.D.C 1987). This agreement affects military personnel records of individuals 62 years after separation from service. Action has taken place for all except the US Merchant Marine IAW above stated court order. This inaction by the **Department of Homeland Security via (COMDT USCG)** has caused many of the mariners to have gone unrecognized for their services. Many seafarers have passed without ever gaining recognition or benefits and soon all will be History. National Personnel Records Center estimate there are between 1400 to 2500 Cubic feet of Shipping/Discharge documents being stored at the NARA district offices and NMC yet to be transferred to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri. NMC cites about 91,000 out of 250,000 to 840,000 have ever received recognition as veterans; and, with many unable to gain access because of age and health condition requiring assistance for others outside family. Had compliance taken place, these records would have been available to all and providing the mariner a chance to being recognized many years ago and enjoying the benefits awarded to them via court order.

**Whereas: (1)** By court order, Schumacher v. Aldridge 665 F Supp 41 (D.D.C. 1987) provided for veteran status to certain US Merchant Marine seamen during WW II (07 December, 1941 to 31 December, 1946) with the same benefits accorded all veterans as administrated by the Veterans Administration. There were **no provisions** for the elderly handicapped, women or schoolchildren to even be considered for their services as mariners serving anywhere within the US Merchant Marine providing an avenue to veteran status.

**Whereas: (2)** The USCG Information Sheet #77 of Apr. 1992 identifies specific criteria to be used to prove active duty performed by an individual seaman for the purpose of attaining veteran status and findings (5), (6) & (7) identified specific **official government actions** that **removed** these particular documents from the reach of the mariner. This **clearly identifies the requirement** to put in place a method of utilizing **alternative** documentation and other approved methods to replace specific documents removed from use by the government actions cited elsewhere in this document.

**Whereas: (3)** Women were removed from ships at the onset of WW II and not allowed to serve in any capacity by direction of the War Shipping Administrator, Admiral Emory S. Land. The Captains of the Ports (USCG COTP) were given specific directions to **deny** official USCG maritime credentials to any woman requesting them. They served but without official credentials in every capacity on most vessels. Families were the sole crew on many barges throughout the WW II and afterwards. Companies **welcomed this arrangement** because **critical** crew replacements were **reduced** considerably. This allowed those barges to move the bulk war materials more quickly and freed the more abled bodied seaman to man the larger seagoing ships taking vital supplies to troops on all the fronts, keeping the enemy from our doors. A **win win** situation vital to war defense. **To date** there is **no law or other avenue** recognizing women as veterans of the US Merchant Marine during WW II

**Whereas: (4)** President Roosevelt's speech of 12 Oct, 1942 puts in place the use of elderly and handicapped individuals, school children and women in an effort to support war efforts by replacing men of military age and fitness, and in stepping up our production of war materials for those on the front lines. Because of this speech, women, the elderly disabled and schoolchildren entered the varied war defense plant services in droves and many found their way into the coastwise barge and tug trades as well.

**Whereas: (5)** DOD & NARA Agreement N1-330-04-1 of July 08, 2004 **provides for the transfer** of military records to the National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO for use as archival records, open to the public. But **inaction by the DHS for the mariner in over 10** years has caused the veteran loss of due access of his records that may have accorded him recognition as a veteran. Recommend Congressional inquiry into delay of WW II Merchant Mariners personnel records.

**Whereas: (6)** Previously attempted bills, HR 1288 and S-1361, would have provided for **alternative records** to be used in place of **records lost, destroyed or denied** for coastwise seamen affected; and allowed women and school children be recognized for their services rendered for the first time ever. There are **no laws** in place to allow for resolution of this issue.

**Whereas: (7)** The elderly disabled, children and women have served in every war this nation has ever known. Most have served without recognition but history is replete with actions of young children stepping up to serve, some receiving our highest honors and others serving in our highest ranks of service, congress and the presidency; e.g. President Andrew Jackson (age 13); America's first Admiral, David Glasgow Farragut was appointed a midshipman at (age 9) by President James Madison; Willie Johnson (age 11) was recipient of the Medal of Honor; Albert Cohen of Memphis TN who enlisted at age 11 & KIA age 15. History is filled with children defending this nation and Coastwise Mariners had their fair share of them. **Findings #9 & #10 provide support info.**

**Whereas: (8)** Although they served gallantly and with honor, actions taken against those that were elderly and disabled, school children and women by denying them official credentials during WW II is considered **discrimination** today.

**Whereas: (9)** The process used to determine whether an individual performed service under honorable conditions that satisfies the requirements of a coastwise merchant seaman who is recognized as having performed active duty service under the court ruling via Schmacher, Willner, et al, V. Secretary of the Air Force Edward C. Aldridge Jr 665 f Supp 41 (D.D.C.1987). There are no considerations in any **existing** legislation that provides for women who served, under aged schoolchildren or elderly handicapped seaman any avenue to attain veteran status. Nor is there a current avenue to use alternative methods of recognition or other actions that have proved effective in past wars for use in lieu of documents that were denied and/or destroyed by several specific official government actions.

**The following actions are recommended:**

**(1) Initiate congressional actions to:** Provide sufficient response to support Merchant Mariners' provisions of HR 1288 (with wording intact to insure all coastwise barge and tugboat mariners who served during WW II (regardless of age, gender or disability) are recognized as veterans in accordance with or similar to: court ruling via Schmacher, Willner, et al, V. Secretary of the Air Force Edward C. Aldridge, Jr 665 F Supp 41 (D.D.C 1987, **granting veterans status**

**(2) Initiate congressional inquiry into:** Delay of WW II Merchant Mariners personnel records movement to National Military Personnel Center.

**(3) Initiate congressional actions to:** Recognize WW II Mariners identified as KIA/MIA as Veterans of this Nation.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Bertie County, North Carolina Board of Commissioners hereby supports these efforts on behalf of the World War II Coastwise Merchant Mariners and urges our Representatives in the Senate (Senators Richard Burr and Thom Tillis) and in the House (Representatives Walter Jones and George K. Butterfield) to fully support and initiate all necessary actions, including full



support of HR 1288, "WW II Merchant Mariners Service Act", to pass legislation approving the above findings and recommendations.

Adopted this 17<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015.



Ronald D. Wesson, Chairman  
Bertie County Board of Commissioners,



Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board

**3 pending Department of Social Services contracts: a.) CPTA – Work First and Medicaid, b.) CPTA Amendment #1, c.) Interim Healthcare, d.) Gilliam & Gilliam Attorneys**

County Manager Sauer deferred to Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, to provide his feedback about these contracts.

Mr. Huddleston provided some changes that were recommended by County Attorney, Lloyd Smith, mostly concerning inconsistencies in names and the condition of the signature pages.

It was also recommended that someone from the County such as the County Manager or the Chairman be authorized to sign the contracts as well.

Linda Speller, Director of DSS, stated that she could request that the State put an additional signature line on the contract, and that she would also confer with the County Attorneys on their suggested changes.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to have Ms. Speller work with the County Manager and the County Attorney, as well as the State, to secure the recommended changes, as well as to add Chairman Wesson to the signature page. Once those changes are made, the Chairman is authorized to sign. Vice Chairman Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

**COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

Commissioner Trent informed all of those present that a new solar field was being built on Black Jack Road and that all County permits had been finalized.

He also informed those present about a program being offered by Diversified Energy in which churches could sign up to receive gas service for a discounted rate of \$1.599 per gallon even without being a member already. Citizens were directed to contact Diversified Energy for more information.

Lastly, Commissioner Trent stated that more truck driving positions would soon be advertised and available at Valley Protein.

Commissioner Bazemore reported that she had attended the Back2School Rally this past weekend at the new Bertie County Central Services Complex in Windsor, and that it was a well-attended event. She also commended the work of Linda Speller, and her staff, at DSS, and announced that a foster parenting class would soon begin that could educate potential parents.

Vice Chairman Lee reported that various grant proposals from the Board of Health were just delivered to County Manager Sauer, and that the public could stop by and view them at any time.

Commissioner White requested that Mr. Cooper give an update on the latest efforts made to secure generators at the 3 emergency shelters around the County.

Mr. Cooper responded by stating that quotes were still forthcoming, and that it looks like Bertie Middle School would still be the most appropriate emergency shelter on the Windsor side of the County as it still features a transfer switch, and a cafeteria that is located in the center of the building. The new Bertie High School was considered and it was expected to be an emergency storm shelter, but the placement of the cafeteria in the new facility was not the safest option in an emergency situation due to the proximity to windows and the exterior of the building.

Chairman Wesson commended the Board as well as Economic Development Director, Steve Biggs, for the hard work over the last 6 months in assisting the County's unemployed in finding employment. He stated that Bertie County's overall unemployment rate has dipped lower than other surrounding counties, and that can be attributed to the many efforts made by the Board and the Economic Development Department.

### **COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS**

The County Manager gave no remarks at this time.

### **ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS**

The Assistant County Attorney gave no remarks at this time.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS CONTINUED**

Willie Outlaw of Powellsville requested additional information about the sales tax redistribution bill that is currently being considered on the State level.

Chairman Wesson responded by stating that, if passed, the bill could provide over \$800,000 of additional income to Bertie County as well as to other impoverished counties in the Northeastern NC region. He stated that Mr. Outlaw, and all citizens, should continue to follow the progress of the State government in regards to this bill as it could be very impactful to the area.

**ADJOURN**

Chairman Wesson adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:15PM.

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Ronald D. Wesson, Chairman

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Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board