

Windsor, North Carolina
August 9, 2016
Special Meeting

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Meeting inside the Commissioners Room located at 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. 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 Lloyd “Clif” Smith, III.
Finance Officer William Roberson
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper
EMS Division Chief Crystal Freeman

Leslie Beachboard of the Bertie Ledger-Advance, and Gene Motley of the Roanoke-News Herald were present from the media.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order and thanked those present for their attendance.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Lee led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Trent made one small change to today’s agenda and called forward members of the ABC Board including Chair Miles Davis, and member James S. Pugh. Clint Freeman, General Manager of the ABC Store in Windsor, was also present.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of a proposed voter referendum for allowing mixed beverages and the calling of an ABC election in November, 2016

ABC Board Chair, Miles Davis, presented various statistics to the Board that he had received from various State Highway Patrolman in the area. Most statistics have shown that alcohol related fatalities are significantly lower in counties with “liquor by the drink” laws in place.

Mr. Davis also noted that these mandates can significantly reduce the occurrence of illegal “shot houses” in the County as it provides for strict regulation from the State Alcoholic Law Enforcement Agency. He stated that State agents have the right to investigate suspected facilities at any time.

Additionally, Mr. Davis recalled that the last time this initiative was placed on the ballot, it failed by the smallest margin of 13 votes during a special, non-presidential election.

It was Mr. Davis’s recommendation to put this referendum on the November 2016 ballot so that it has the best chance of being seen by the majority of voters. He stated that presidential elections garner much more voter attention and participation, and that this vote could be the “tell all” vote needed to put the issue to rest. It could also be the best opportunity for the Board to see where the voters fall on this issue.

There was a brief discussion regarding the need for this referendum, as well as who would benefit with very few restaurants in the County that fall outside of a municipality. The Board also discussed that if this issue were to go to the ballot via referendum that the County would have to be committed to communicating the positive benefits that have been experienced in other counties.

The Board also discussed the potential economic development impacts.

James S. Pugh also chose to speak on the matter, and stated that he supported Mile Davis’s leadership, and encouraged the Board to strongly consider the referendum during the upcoming November election.

Clint Freeman, General Manager of the ABC Store in Windsor, was also present to echo the same sentiments, as well as added that the ABC Store constantly receives one day, limited alcohol licenses for private events such as parties, receptions, reunions, and other functions. He mentioned that the sale of mixed beverages is prohibited at private events inside Bertie County, and that this vote could give the County the opportunity to “get ahead of the curve,” while also reducing alcohol related fatalities at some of these private events where there is limited security.

Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to allow this issue be placed on the November 2016 ballot via referendum. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 3-2 vote with Commissioner's Lee and White voting against. Commissioner Lee and Commissioner White both echoed similar sentiments regarding their personal beliefs of opposing the issue.

Commissioner Wesson wanted the record to reflect that his support of the referendum doesn't necessarily mean he will vote in favor of a "liquor by the drink" law in the County, but that he felt the citizens should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions.

The Board concurred that the issue should be left in the hands of the citizens for an additional vote during an election that will bring forth the most voters.

Commissioner White wanted the record to reflect that he had received calls from citizens that have asked him to not support this referendum, and that even though this particular topic was against his beliefs, he wanted the citizens to have the chance to decide.

After some additional discussion, Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to instruct the County Attorney to prepare a resolution for the Chairman's signature, and to draft all necessary correspondence. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Lee voting against.

The approved resolution reads as follows:

RESOLUTION REQUESTING A MIXED BEVERAGE ELECTION

Whereas:

- A. Bertie County is one of the one hundred counties of North Carolina;
- B. Bertie County is a county which already operates at least one county ABC store;
- C. Bertie County may hold a mixed beverage election as it already operates at least one county ABC store pursuant to N.C.G.S. §18B-600 *et seq.*;
- D. Bertie County last held a mixed beverage election on Tuesday, November 3, 2009, when the question was defeated but the certification of said vote was more than three years before the date of this Resolution and the proposed new election date. Therefore, this election is authorized by N.C.G.S. § 18B-604(a).
- E. For Bertie County to hold a mixed beverage election a written request must be sent to Bertie County Board of Elections;
- F. Without the Bertie County Board of Commissioners endorsing or opposing said issue, the citizens of Bertie County should be allowed to vote on said issue;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that:

- 1. Bertie County desires to hold a mixed beverage election at the Tuesday, November 8, 2016, general elections throughout the County.

2. A copy of this Resolution is to be served upon the Bertie County Board of Elections.

3. Lloyd C. Smith, Jr., of Pritchett & Burch, PLLC, as County Attorney, is to send a written request on behalf of the Bertie County Board of Commissioners to the Bertie County Board of Elections.

4. The Bertie County Board of Elections is authorized and requested to place for referendum on the ballot, for consideration of the citizens of Bertie County on the Tuesday, November 8, 2016, the following language as set forth in N.C.G.S. §18B-602(h), to-wit:

To permit the sale of mixed beverages in hotels, restaurants, private clubs, community theatres, and convention centers.

FOR


AGAINST

The foregoing Resolution was introduced by Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Ernestine Byrd Bazemore, and seconded by Commissioner Ronald Wesson adopted by a vote of 3-2 with Commissioner Tammy Lee and Commissioner Stewart White providing the dissenting votes.

This the 9th day of August, 2016.

ATTEST:

BERTIE COUNTY


Sarah S. Tinkham
Clerk to the Board of
of Commissioners
(SEAL)

BY: _____


John Trent, Chairman of
the Board of Commissioners of
Bertie County

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

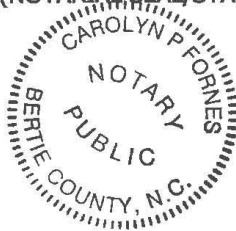
COUNTY OF BERTIE

I, CAROLYN P FORNES, a Notary Public, for the County and State aforesaid, certify that Sarah S. Tinkham personally appeared before me this day and acknowledged that she is the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners of Bertie County, a political subdivision of the State of North Carolina, and that by authority duly given and as the act of the Board of Commissioners of Bertie County, the foregoing instrument was signed in its name by its Chairman, sealed with its seal, and attested by Sarah S. Tinkham as Clerk to the Board of Commissioners of Bertie County.

Witness my hand and notarial seal or stamp, this 9 day of August, 2016.

Carolyn P. Fornes
Notary Public
Printed Name CAROLYN P FORNES

My commission expires: 5-15-2020
(NOTARIAL SEAL/STAMP)



Update on capital project financing applications for various water department system improvements currently under review by the NC Local Government Commission

County Manager Sauer reported that notification had been received from the State Engineer that the financing applications for various water department system improvements for Water District III had been approved, and that the application was now in the hands of the NC Local Government Commission (NC LGC).

The NC LGC will be reviewing the application at an upcoming Executive Committee meeting on September 6th, and final authorization occurs within six days, in the event that the application meets their requirements.

Additionally, Mr. Sauer reported that he had received word from the NC Drinking Water State Revolving Fund that the loan applications for Water Districts II and IV have been approved.

He also distributed a hand out highlighting the proposed locations of booster pump station sites in Water District III, and that the County's engineer, Green Engineering, were pushing forward on determining the most appropriate location.

Commissioner Wesson inquired about the latest developments with the South Windsor area.

Mr. Sauer informed the Board that the renovations for South Windsor should begin this November, and continue through next November, 2017.

Update on the USDA Rural Development financing proposal for replacing several ambulances

Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, and EMS Division Chief, Crystal Freeman, were present during this portion.

County Manager Sauer reported that as of midnight Monday night, Bertie County Non-Emergency Transport had completed a total of 82 transports, which presents a record number of transports so early into the month of August.

He stated that the NET Division was growing at an expeditious rate, and that additional ambulances and equipment are desperately needed to meet the demand.

Mr. Cooper briefly discussed some of the reasons for the influx including the closure of one Non-Emergency Transport company, Priority Medical, as well as the addition of several dialysis patients, nursing homes, and consistent hospital transfers.

Mr. Cooper also mentioned that four (4) ambulances are currently assigned to that division, but that even their spare truck is being used when the call volume is particularly high. He mentioned that is becoming more and more common for all 4-5 trucks being on the roads all day, every day.

Mr. Sauer also announced that the NET Division is projected to receive and complete a total of 300 transfers this month alone which has not yet been seen under the County system. He also noted that this growth makes the work of Kim Miller at USDA Rural Development even more crucial as the age and wear and tear on the NET and EMS vehicles are beginning to take a toll on the ability to respond.

The Board had a brief discussion regarding what funding is currently available in Mr. Cooper's budget to cover the cost of additional ambulance vehicles and equipment for Non-Emergency Transport.

Mr. Cooper responded that he had enough funds in his budget now to cover 2 more ambulance vehicles and the needed equipment, and he stated that he'd like to push forward with the purchasing process for Non-Emergency Transport.

The Board also discussed the impacts of the recent withdrawal of non-emergency franchise companies in Washington County, and whether or not the County had taken business from the recently closed Priority Medical.

Commissioner Wesson expressed concerns with maintaining the needed "man power" here in Bertie especially with Beaufort County looking to follow Bertie's model for a County operated, Paramedic EMS system.

County Manager Sauer stated that paperwork and other details could be gathered for the Board to review at any upcoming meeting before any final decisions were needed.

Update on the latest CAMA grant application for land acquisition funding

County Manager briefly updated the Board on the letter of intent needed from the property owner regarding the 10.35 acre-tract of land being sought for expanding the walking path to the water front beach access.

He stated that the County Attorney, Lloyd Smith, was currently awaiting a response from the property owner, and that he had laid out the Board's intentions for the grant funding.

Mr. Sauer stated that he wasn't sure if the final decision would be received in time, but that he was hopeful.

OTHER REPORTS

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board of the date he was given for the "Raising Bertie" film viewing at the new Bertie High School. The date of the event is Wednesday, August 24th at 10:00AM inside the auditorium. He expected an invitation for the Commissioners to attend to arrive any day.

Commissioner Lee reported that a Habitat for Humanity meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 17 at 2:00PM. Information would be presented at that meeting regarding Habitat, as well as 2 additional programs that could benefit citizens of the County. That meeting will be held inside the Glass Conference Room at the County Office Building. She also announced that the United Methodist Church in Colerain has agreed to house a permanent food bank for that area, but that volunteers were needed.

The Board concurred that the mobile food pantry should be secured in Bertie County by all means necessary especially in towns that could provide permanent residence for a food bank.

Commissioner Wesson informed the Board of a new partnership between NCDOT and the high schools of Bertie County to provide routine clean-up of various areas throughout the County. The program would consist of members of each football team volunteering to pick up trash along the roadways in their own local areas. The Board was asked to support the initiative but no funding was required by the County.

Vice Chairman Bazemore reminded the Board that the time of year was approaching to provide a performance evaluation for County Manager Sauer.

ADJOURN

Chairman Trent adjourned the meeting at 2:20PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board