

**Windsor, North Carolina
April 3, 2017
Regular Meeting**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled 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
County Attorney Lloyd Smith
Finance Officer William Roberson
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper
EMS Division Chief Crystal Freeman
DSS Director Cindy Perry
Office Assistant Amber Dunlow
Council on Aging Director Venita Thompson
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey
Aging Services Coordinator Irma Robbins

School Board Members Present: Bobby Oceana, Chair
Barry McGlone, Vice Chair
Emma Johnson
Jo Davis Johnson
Tarsha Dudley

Bertie County Schools Staff Present: Superintendent Dr. Steven Hill
Finance Officer Lisa Rabon
Assistant Superintendent Sandra Hardy

Gene Motley of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald and Leslie Beachboard of the Bertie-Ledger Advance 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

Vice Chairman Bazemore led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vivian Clark of Windsor presented her concerns to the Commissioners about the funding allotment for CADA, and her dissatisfaction with some of the services provided. Ms. Clerk stated that upon request, she was not given satisfactory information about CADA's homebuyer's program, as well as the lack of assistance citizens sometimes receive regarding handicap ramp installations, emergency funds, etc.

The Board thanked Ms. Clark for bringing forth her concerns.

APPOINTMENTS

Presentation by Dr. Karen Ray about the 350th Albemarle Anniversary Celebration in 2018

Dr. Karen Ray was present to announce the date of the 350th Albemarle Anniversary Celebration which is slated for May 10-12, 2018. The event is still in preliminary stages, and Dr. Ray, as well as Dr. John Hill of Trapp, NC, requested a Letter of Support from the County for the event.

The event will commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the Albemarle regional Counties.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** for the County to support this event through the requested Letter of Support. Chairman Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Update by Venita Thompson, Council on Aging Director, about the home-based meal program

Council on Aging Director, Venita Thompson, and Council on Aging Services Coordinator, Irma Robbins, were present to answer questions, and provide an update about the home-based meal program. The Board received various concerns about the program at its recent community meeting in the Merry Hill/Mid-Way community in February.

Ms. Thompson had provided several attachments in the Board's agenda packet, and the Board also received information about the financial standing and eligibility requirements for the program from Area Agency on Aging Director, Annette Eubank. Additionally, the Board heard from Ms. Robbins about the eligibility requirements, more specifically, how individuals are not eligible for the home-based meal program if they are already being served under the NC Medicaid Community Alternative Program (CAP).

Eligibility requirements for the home-based meal program include: seniors 60 year and older who are home bound except for doctor's appointments, are unable to drive (and therefore require a driver to any and all doctor's appointments, and who do not have anyone in their home who are able to prepare meals on their behalf. As stated above, seniors cannot already be receiving benefits through CAP.

Ms. Thompson also urged the Board and citizens present to consider volunteering as a home-based meal delivery driver for the County especially in the Aulander area. Four (4) volunteers are needed to transport meals once per week.

Commissioner Wesson encouraged Ms. Thompson and Ms. Robbins to begin planning ahead for the next U.S. Census to be conducted in 2020. He emphasized that reaching seniors should be the utmost priority as funding is allotted per County based on aging population.

The Board thanked Ms. Thompson and Ms. Robbins for their report, and commended them for their hard work.

Bertie County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Steven Hill, will provide updates from March 20th re: deficit reduction plan

Bertie County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Steven Hill, provided a brief update to the Board regarding the reduction in force (RIF) process that was currently underway within the Bertie County Public School System (BCPS).

In his report, Dr. Hill noted that all BCPS faculty and staff position were being reviewed, and in order to meet the budget shortfall, a total of approximately 28.5 positions would need to be eliminated from the payroll.

All faculty and staff have been notified of the RIF, and have been asked by the Superintendent to report any intended or desired cross-training they could complete to serve dual-curriculum roles within the school system.

Dr. Hill also reported that he had been in close contact with the North Carolina Department of Instruction (NCDPI), as well as working with the Board of Education and their Legal Team in pursuing the surety bonds for the former Finance Officer, Pearline Bunch.

The Board thanked Dr. Hill for this updated plan, and Vice Chairman Bazemore suggested that he look into House Bill 481 which refers to NC Education Lottery Funds that could soon be dispersed to public schools.

Presentation by DSS Director, Cindy Perry for Child Abuse Prevention Month

DSS Director, Cindy Perry, and Office Assistant, Amber Dunlow, were present to announce that April is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month.

They inquired if they could blue pinwheels on the grounds of County office buildings in honor of this month's purpose, as well as to represent the number of children neglected or abused within Bertie County.

The initiative is spread awareness as well as provide resources for prevention. Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to allow blue pinwheels be placed on County grounds in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month during the month of April. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Update and discussion about upcoming 2017 Board of Equalization and Review meeting dates by Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea

Tax Administrator, Jodie Rhea, was present to assist the Board in scheduling dates for the Board of Commissioners to meet as the Board of Equalization and Review.

The Board concluded that the first meeting as the Board of Equalization and Review would be held on Monday, April 24th at 10:00 AM in this location, followed by another meeting on May 1st which will coincide with the Board's regularly scheduled, 4:00 PM meeting in Windsor.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no Board Appointments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon review by Chairman Trent, Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to approve Consent Agenda Items C-1 thru C-4, and C-6 while pulling C-5 for further discussion and separate vote. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Consent Agenda was approved as follows:

1. **Minutes** – Regular Session 3-20-17, Work Session 3-20-17
2. **Fees Report** – Register of Deeds – March 2017
3. **Bid acceptance** – 603 Holley Avenue in Windsor
4. **Budget Amendment** – #17-08

Sponsorship Request – 2017 Relay for Life

Commissioner Lee requested additional discussion about this item, and inquired if this item was covered during the Board's budget work sessions prior to the FY2016-2017 budget approval.

The Board briefly discussed this item, but it was tabled until a later time during this meeting.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Latest updates regarding FEMA and the previous announced grant for EMS Station 1

Vice Chairman Bazemore asked to add a discussion to tonight's agenda about the funding that was supposed to be received from FEMA regarding a new EMS Station 1.

In response, County Manager Sauer updated the Board on the latest developments.

In summary, the County has been working diligently with FEMA since the aftermath of Tropical Storm Julia, and the following flooding event from Hurricane Matthew. Through several meetings with various FEMA officials, the County has thoroughly discussed every damaged County building, as well as maintained normal EMS operations despite losing one EMS Station which is EMS Station 1 that was formerly located behind Southern Bank in Downtown Windsor on East Granville Street.

Since Hurricane Matthew, the County has worked closest with FEMA Representative Arnad Sinah on securing FEMA funds to build a new EMS Station 1 located on County Farm Road which is outside of the County's flood zone.

As of the last onsite FEMA meeting, the County Manager had received notification from Mr. Sinah that the full, requested amount of \$289,000 was being recommended to the federal government to fund the new "temporary" EMS Station 1. Mr. Sinah indicated that it was being done so with great confidence that it would be approved.

Now, via e-mail notification received late last week, the County learned that its application would likely be rejected, and new questions were being raised by FEMA at the regional staff level that had been previously answered in several of the in-person meetings held at the County.

The main questions revolved around why items were disposed of from EMS Station 1 before Hurricane Matthew, and why the station was relocated to the former Bertie High School campus before October 6th. The FEMA reviewer did not acknowledge the fact that Tropical Storm Julia had occurred approximately 2 weeks prior to Hurricane Matthew where EMS Station 1 was a total loss.

FEMA also questioned why a lease was requested in late September before Hurricane Matthew for EMS Station 1 at the former Bertie High School.

County Manager Sauer and Finance Officer, William Roberson, discussed the efforts that were originally made to “segregate” the two storm events at the very beginning of FEMA’s local meeting, and that they were directed by FEMA staff to treat the two storm events as one event.

Mr. Sauer also mentioned that under the guidelines and requirements for the funding, it appears that if FEMA does not look at these events as one flooding event, then the County does not qualify since Tropical Storm Julia technically destroyed EMS Station 1.

Prior to the second flooding with Hurricane Matthew, the County was taking proactive steps to clean and repair EMS Station 1 to return to operational status. Hurricane Matthew’s increased flood levels demonstrated that due to frequent repetitive damages, the County could no longer put its staff at risk by remaining on East Granville Street.

Chairman Trent discussed the impact of these latest developments, and stated that there would be a very frank discussion ahead at the next joint meeting of the County and FEMA. He also expressed his frustration with FEMA and the process thus far and how new representatives visit for these meetings and require the County to start the entire process over at square-one.

County Manager Sauer also began to address the possible uphill battle that could be involved with Lawrence Memorial Library, and getting that facility temporarily set up in the Food Lion Shopping Center.

The Board had additional discussion which resulted in the desire to contact Senator Burr and Senator Tillis.

Discuss timeframe for completion of lease, and opening of temporary Lawrence Memorial Library location – Food Lion Shopping Center

County Manager Sauer summarized the Board’s visit today to the vacant unit in the Food Lion Shopping Center that once held the NCSECU and, more recently, the Windsor Post Office.

County Attorney, Lloyd Smith, mentioned that a copy of the proposed lease with the Legal Team’s red-lined changes had been submitted via email to the County Manager just before this meeting.

The unit is 6,400 square feet which is larger than the original Lawrence Memorial Library space, and the County Manager recommended that the Board consider a monthly rent cap of no more than \$2,500, and a term of no longer than 36 months.

The Board came to a consensus to move this initiative forward as quickly as possible, and Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to accept the above stated terms (rent cap of \$2,500, term of no longer than 36 months). Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Discuss PARTF grant reimbursement conditions

After a brief discussion, Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to accept the PARTF grant reimbursement conditions as outlined in the Board’s agenda packet. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Water District III – Agribusiness extension proposal

County Manager Sauer discussed a request the County had recently receive from an agribusiness on Roquist Pocosin Road. The business is looking to tap into County water for two (2) large chicken houses.

The County Attorney and County Manager briefly discussed the possible terms which would include a 20-year service agreement.

The Board came to a consensus for the County and this agribusiness to continue the dialogue until a resolution is found.

Discuss appreciation lunch for faith based community leaders and volunteers for both Tropical Storm Julia and Hurricane Matthew

Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, was present for this discussion.

County Manager Sauer requested Board discussion about a possible appreciation lunch for the many faith based organizations and community leaders and volunteers that have come to the County's aid during Tropical Storm Julia and Hurricane Matthew, as well as recent tornadoes.

Some of those organizations includes: The Methodist Men, The Baptist Men, the American Red Cross, as well as the Bertie Interfaith Recovery Team, among others.

The Board came to a consensus and asked that County staff move forward with this event.

Discuss sponsorships for upcoming community events:

NAACP 34th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet – April 15, 2017

Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to provide a \$500 sponsorship to the NAACP 34th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Lee voting against.

Three Hundred Years of Indian Woods, 1717-2017: North Carolina's Tuscarora Reservation – October 7-9, 2017

This item was an FYI and Save the Date reminder.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS

Commissioner White initiated more discussion about the sponsorship request for Bertie's 2017 Relay for Life Event in May.

Vice Chairman Bazemore encouraged the Board to wait on this decision until other matters such as a replacement elevator in the Courthouse and a new kitchen for the Cooperative Extension Office were appropriately considered.

After some additional discussion among the Board, Commissioner White made a **MOTION** for the County to make a \$2,000 sponsorship (in line with last year's amount) to the 2017 Relay for Life Event. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Lee voting against.

Vice Chairman Bazemore requested additional discussion before this motion was officially completed and passed.

The Board discussed in length the requirements for sponsorship and funding requests, and inquired with Finance Officer, William Roberson, if items like these are handled in the Board's annual budget approval.

County Manager Sauer and Finance Officer Roberson stated that these donations (much like other events the County is asked to sponsor) are dealt with on a case by case outside the normal budget window.

It would be up to the Board to require each event organizer to submit a formal funding request packet prior to the Board's budget work sessions. As the motion was now contested by Vice Chairman Bazemore, Commissioner Wesson **WITHDREW** his **SECOND** for the **MOTION** in favor of tabling the item until a later time for further discussion.

As a result, the motion was voided.

Commissioner Lee began her reports by discussing the Charters of Freedom Monument that will be placed in a vacant area between the County Office Building and the Courthouse. Clearing of the area has recently been completed, and the site is almost ready for concrete. She also

discussed the upcoming Habitat for Humanity Event on April 21st, and announced that on April 24th, there will be a Domestic Violence Awareness prayer vigil on the Courthouse steps at 5:00 PM.

Vice Chairman Bazemore commended the Town of Roxbel for their first annual Roxobel Ag Fest on Saturday, April 1st. She also reported that the new office for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners which were damaged by smoke and water due to a large fire, is now located at 353 Six Forks Road in Raleigh. No word yet has been received about when the permanent location will reopen. The relocation is due to a construction fire that damaged various buildings in Downtown Raleigh including the NCACC Offices and the adjacent Quorum Center.

Commissioner Wesson reported that he was moving forward with the partnership team at NCSECU regarding a grant for middle-income housing in the Windsor area for teachers, local and State employees, and law enforcement personnel.

Commissioner White encouraged all citizens to attend this year's Relay for Life event on May 19th from 6:00 PM to Midnight.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board four new ambulance vehicles are being delivered tomorrow, April 4th, at 11:00 AM. USDA Representatives, Select Customs, and all other involved vendors will be present for the loan closing in this location beginning at 11:00 AM.

Also, the Bertie Rescue event committee will be meeting in this location tomorrow as well at 6:00 PM.

Additionally, County Manager Sauer reminded the Board about the 10th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet on April 6th at the Bertie Correctional Institution.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS

The County Attorney gave no remarks at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Board of Education member, Tasha Dudley, requested that any vacant County jobs be forwarded to the Superintendent so that employees affected by the BCPS RIF could be given that information.

The Board also suggested that the Board of Education consider hosting a job fair with assistance from the NC Works Career Center in Windsor. Employers such as the Bertie Correctional Institution and NUCOR are advertising vacancies. A vacancy for a 4-H Coordinator at Bertie's Cooperative Extension will also be advertised in the near future.

Board of Education member, Emma Johnson, asked Commissioner Wesson a possible construction start date for the NCSECU grant funded housing initiative for teachers and Local/State government employees.

Commissioner Wesson stated that the initiative is still in the preliminary stages, and that more information will be shared when it becomes available.

Vice Chairman Bazemore encouraged County staff to look into grants from the USDA that could assist local fire departments. Also, she asked if it were possible for the Democratic Party to host a meeting in the County Administration Building or the County Courthouse.

County Attorney Smith interjected by stating that he did not recommend that the Board approve this request, and that if the County allows one political party to meet on County grounds, they are legally required to let any other party do the same.

The Board came to a consensus to deny the Democratic Party's request to meet in any County owned building or facility.

There were no other Public Comments.

County Manager Sauer requested a brief Closed Session under N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3) and (a)(4).

CLOSED SESSION

Chairman Trent made a **MOTION** to go into **CLOSED SESSION** pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3) to go into closed session to consult with the County Attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege that exists between the attorney and this public body and pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations. The action approves the signing of an economic development contract or commitment, or the action authorizing the payment of economic development expenditures, shall be taken in an open session. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to return to Open Session. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

ADJOURN

Chairman Trent **ADJOURNED** the meeting at 6:35 PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board