

Windsor, North Carolina
May 15, 2017
Regular Meeting

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled meeting inside the Blue Jay Volunteer Fire Department located at 1653 Indian Woods Road. 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
Finance Officer William Roberson
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey

School Board Members Present: Bobby Oceana, Chair
Jo Davis Johnson

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

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

Commissioner White led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

James S. Pugh of Indian Woods presented his concerns about grass height on the side of roads in his area, and that he would like for the County to assist in contacting NCDOT about getting it cut.

Chief Robert Cherry of Blue Jay welcomed the Commissioners to Blue Jay, and thanked them for bringing the meeting to the area. He also mentioned concerns with ditches and juggins in and around the Blue Jay area, and a request he made previously to NCDOT in which no action was taken.

Chairman Trent and Commissioner replied to both concerns and assured Mr. Pugh and Mr. Cherry that they would be sure to discuss these concerns in a follow up phone call and meeting with NCDOT to be held in the very near future.

Anthony Smallwood of Blue Jay thanked the Board and any County staff involved in securing the Blue Jay Recreation grant from Kate B. Reynolds. He also reiterated that Blue Jay stands ready to assist with the grant and reaffirmed their commitment to continued recreation efforts at the current recreation park.

APPOINTMENTS

Presentation of FY2017-2018 proposed BCPS budget by Superintendent Dr. Steven Hill

BCPS Superintendent, Steven Hill, and Finance Officer, Lisa Robbins, were present to present the proposed FY2017-2018 budget.

In summary, the following was presented:

- FY 2015-2016 Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE) Ranking (child nutrition excluded) which reflects Bertie County Schools at \$11,400 per student total PPE for the aggregate of State, Federal and Local expenditures.
- FY 2017-2018 ADM Allotment K thru 12 which is 2,191 students for Bertie County.

Dr. Hill's Proposed Budget Summary reflects:

- Local funds of \$3,073,000 (presumably \$3,003,000 current expense and \$70,000 court fines and forfeitures)
- Capital Outlay of \$375,000 (no project detail included)

The list of local funds includes:

- \$350,000 payments to charter school
- \$50,339 Office of Superintendent
- \$73,000 Legal Services
- \$253,419 Board of Education
- \$13,828 Human Resources
- \$75,000 Financial Services
- \$625,502 Maintenance
- \$176,374 Transportation
- \$145,000 Custodial Operations
- \$871,340 Utilities
- \$110,082 Communication Services
- \$32,550 e-rate
- \$10,034 Regular Curricular
- \$8,000 Security Support Services
- \$9,511 Media
- \$107,216 Co-Curricular
- \$32,803 Social Worker
- \$106,000 Regular Instruction

Additionally, Dr. Hill briefly updated the Board about the deficit reduction plan that has been proposed and submitted to NCDPI and the NC Board of Education.

The plan submitted will be reviewed at the NC Board of Education's next meeting on Friday, June 9th.

Commissioner Lee inquired if any additional staffing cuts were expected, and Commissioner White presented his concerns about the Board of Education's choice to charge \$5,500 a month in rent at the Bertie Early College for the temporary EMS Station One.

In response to Commissioner Lee, Dr. Hill stated that future reductions in force were still a possibility, but that the school system would have to wait for the State Board of Education to review the recently submitted deficit reduction plan. The State Board would be the authority on this matter, and would direct the school system in any further action.

To answer Commissioner White's concerns, Dr. Hill stated that he could take the matter to his Board at an upcoming meeting.

Update by Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planners

Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planners was present to update the Board about the latest amount of applications received for a potential buy out or elevation program.

Mr. Hilbert reported that 102 applications have been received, 37 of which were from residents outside of the Windsor town limits.

At this time, the deadline for additional applications has passed, but new applications can be submitted as "alternative" applications that would not receive priority, but they could be considered if funding allowed.

All applications are due for State review.

More information will be presented as it is received about this endeavor.

Presentation regarding a resolution against the NC Wildlife SELC Shrimp Ban

Terry Pratt, Chairman of the Albemarle Fishermen's Association, came forth to present his concerns, as well as the resolutions of NC counties denouncing the proposed House Bill 867. The bill limits or bans commercial fishing of various fish, and shrimp trawling within 3 miles of the North Carolina coast.

Mr. Pratt provided various information that incited a lengthy discussion among the Board.

This was the Board's first reading of the information, and no action was required. This item will appear again on a future Board agenda for further discussion.

Budget requests by Martin Community College Interim President, Dr. Kenneth Boham

Dr. Kenneth Boham, Interim President of Martin Community College (MCC), was present to answer any questions or concerns about the budget that was submitted by MCC for FY2017-2018.

Dr. Boham also noted an additional position MCC would like to add called a "Transition Advisor," which would assist high school students with the transition from high school into the programs at MCC.

In his recent experience, Dr. Boham has found that there is a strong "skills and interest gap" between students wanting to enter the trade fields such as plumbing, electrical, HVAC, welding, etc. which are jobs in the highest demand currently.

The Board also discussed the CSX Railroad expansion that would provide thousands of jobs in and around the County in the coming years, and stated their desire to have a work force ready to fill those jobs.

Chairman Trent also inquired about how both MCC and Roanoke-Chowan Community College (RCCC) have been working together recently across the service boundary lines set by the State.

Dr. Boham responded that RCCC and MCC still continue to have a solid working relationship, and do not plan to hinder that progress.

Citizen concerns presented by Franklin “Bonnie” Jones

Franklin “Bonnie” Jones of Aulander presented various concerns to the Board including an inconvenience he recently experienced in obtaining his DD-214 which is given to service members upon their exit from the military.

Mr. Jones described the process as taking much longer than he felt was appropriate, and required him to visit both the Register of Deeds Office, and the Veterans Service Representative several times before he could receive a copy of the document.

Mr. Jones also asked why there was no basketball court at the Bertie Recreation Department, and why the same recreation efforts weren’t being made in all Bertie County communities. He stated that when new equipment, or upgrades are placed at one recreation area in one town that the same upgrades should be placed at all recreation areas throughout the County.

The Board discussed two grants that were recently received for the recreation park in Windsor, as well as in the Blue Jay community. Those grants had been in the works for several years, and the grant given to the Bertie County Recreation Park in Windsor was specifically given for that site under the grant’s guidelines.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Jones for his comments, and also assured him that the Board has recreation on its list of items to revisit once flood recovery requirements are completed.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

There were no Board Appointments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon review by Chairman Trent, Vice Chairman Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve the Consent Agenda in its entirety. Commissioner White **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Vice Chairman Bazemore requested minor changes to the minutes for 5-1-17 before being officially approved.

The Consent Agenda was approved as follows:

1. **Minutes** – Regular Session 5-1-17, Closed Session 5-1-17

2. **Tax Release Journal** – April 2017
3. **Agreement** – CPTA, Council on Aging
4. **Report** – ARHS Annual Child Fatality Prevention Team
5. **Lease** – EMS Station 1, Bertie Early College, 300 Building
6. **Budget Amendment** - #17-10
7. **Work Authorization** – Holland Consulting – Disaster Recovery and Flood Mitigation

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Report presented by Vivian Clarke

This item was deferred.

Golden Leaf grant update – four (4) recent applications submitted by the County

County Manager Sauer notified the Board that members of Golden Leaf would be visiting the County this Friday, May 19th at 11:30 AM in regards to four (4) applications recently submitted for funding.

The meeting will begin at the Bertie Early College,

Latest draft – proposed temporary library lease – Food Lion Shopping Center

After some discussion, the Board asked for Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, to continue negotiating with the property owners of the Food Lion Shopping Center. Mr. Huddleston commented on the work and progress being made on the temporary library lease.

A new draft of the lease will be presented at an upcoming meeting.

Water project bid review for two DWSRF projects

County Manager Sauer and Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey discussed the latest bids received that are valid for 60 days. The bid opening occurred on Wednesday, May 10th.

The bids received include improvements within the Roxobel water system merger, and the water loss reduction project.

After some Board discussion, the County Manager requested a motion that would conditionally approve these bids pending review and approval by the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the NC Local Government Commission, and at that time, the Board would be able to revisit the two bids for a final approval.

The projects, vendors, and bids are as follows:

- Water District II – Water System Improvements and Water Loss Reduction Plan
 - Contract 1 – Temple Grading and Construction, \$373,050
 - Contract 2 – Custom Controls Unlimited, Inc., \$473,734

- Water District IV – Water System Improvements and Town of Roxobel merger
 - Contract 1 – Herring & Rivenbark, Inc., \$933,335
 - Contract 2 – Custom Controls Unlimited, Inc., \$487,924

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to conditionally approve the bids in the amounts for each project listed above pending the review by the NC Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and the NC Local Government Commission, and upon approval, the Board of Commissioners will give a final approval before proceeding with the projects. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Auctioneer Contract – William R. Forbes, Jr. – foreclosure & surplus property auction

Assistant County Attorney Huddleston discussed the two property tax foreclosures and one surplus property being listed for auction in an Auctioneer and Consultation Services Contract with William R. Forbes, Jr.

The properties for tax foreclosure are the old Sunoco located at 211 US 13 Bypass in Windsor and 354-358 Woodard Road in Windsor. The County surplus property is located at the corner of 310 S. Commerce Street and Pearl Street in Aulander.

A sale will be conducted within the next several months.

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to approve the proposed Auctioneer and Consultation Services Contract with William R. Forbes, Jr. for the the sale of all three tracts and to approve a Resolution Authorizing Public Auction of Real Property for the one surplus property. Vice Chairman Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

COMMISSIONER’S REPORTS

Commissioner Wesson

Commissioner Wesson opened his comments by saying that the comments he was about to make give him no pleasure.

Mr. Wesson then went on to say that he was “disgusted” by the transparency or lack thereof recently demonstrated by County Manager Sauer.

Commissioner Wesson stated that he had been informed via the TV news media that morning of a meeting in his district with representatives from the Governor’s Office and members of the State Emergency Management Office. The two parties were reviewing the flood recovery efforts for the County, and the Town of Windsor.

Commissioner Wesson stated that he then contacted County Manager Sauer to confirm if this meeting had been scheduled through County Administration.

Mr. Sauer confirmed the scheduling of this meeting and stated that he had been asked to make the meeting “private.”

Commissioner Wesson then informed Mr. Sauer that no “private meetings” concerning County business should ever be scheduled or attended unless all members of the Board of Commissioners are informed in advance.

The County Manager then forwarded a voicemail recording from a Mr. Flynn of the Governor's Office to show that he had been asked to make this meeting "private."

Commissioner Wesson then stated that upon listening to the recording, it was clear that Mr. Flynn's use of the word "private" meant that this would not be a public meeting. Commissioner Wesson stated that this was clear because later in that same recording, Mr. Flynn asked the County Manager to "invite any elected official that he desired" to attend the meeting.

Additionally, Commissioner Wesson stated that he had been elected to represent the district of Windsor and that he felt knew his district as well as anyone else.

He then stated that since Mr. Sauer had taken the time to notify the Chairman (Commissioner Trent), that he could certainly have notified the entire Board.

Commissioner Wesson stated that Mr. Sauer was practicing what he called "selective notification," and that this was not the first time. He stated that in response to County Attorney Smith's statement that if we desired anything from the County Manager, we should communicate that to the County Manager.

Commissioner Wesson stated that he had asked Mr. Sauer on at least three different occasions (public and private), to inform all County Commissioners of all pertinent meetings scheduled concerning County business prior to such meetings.

He stated that County Manager Sauer had failed to do so with recent meetings with Golden Leaf, the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation, and FEMA where only he and the Chairman had been notified or invited.

Commissioner Wesson then asked if any of the Commissioners had viewed or approved the grant applications submitted under the County's name to Golden Leaf, to Kate B. Reynold, or for Blue Jay, and all gave non-verbal responses that signified that they had not been given the opportunity to review the grant applications.

Commissioner Wesson then closed his comments by saying that this lack of transparency demonstrated by the County Manager was unacceptable and that it needs to stop immediately.

Vice Chairman Bazemore

Vice Chairman Bazemore "dittoed" Commissioner Wesson's comments, and stated that as a Board, "we need to do better." She also suggested a work session to rectify these things. She also reported that she attended Powellsville Awareness Day on May 6th, and that she would be submitting information for three different resolutions that the event organizers requested for citizens turning 100 years old. In addition, she mentioned the latest unemployment numbers for Bertie County as of March 2017 is 531 citizens. The number in poverty as of 2015 is 4,605, and she mentioned these numbers because support is needed from all to address every single citizen in this community.

Chairman Trent

Chairman Trent concurred with the Vice Chair's comments.

Commissioner Lee

Commissioner Lee reported that she and Vice Chairman Bazemore had just returned from County Assembly Day in Raleigh where they were able to meet with State representatives. Also, she mentioned that with help from Bertie's state representation, a new terminal was in store at the Tri-County Airport Authority near Aulander. She mentioned that he had spent considerable time with Rep. Howard Hunter, and thanked him for his support of the new airport terminal.

Commissioner White

Commissioner White gave no remarks at this time.

Chairman Trent

Chairman Trent encouraged all of the public present to visit the HIVE House in Lewiston-Woodville to witness the current grant-funded renovations being completed.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS

The County Manager gave no remarks at this time.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS

The County Attorney gave no remarks at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Terry Pratt clarified some of his statements made in his previous report, and referred the Board to House Bill 867 for further information.

Chief Robert Cherry of Blue Jay thanked the Board again for hosting tonight's meeting in Blue Jay, and acknowledged every citizen present, and thanked them for being involved in their local government.

There were no further public comments.

ADJOURN

Chairman Trent **ADJOURNED** the meeting at 9:00 PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board