

Windsor, North Carolina
February 19, 2018
REGULAR MEETING

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regular meeting today inside the Merry Hill/Mid-Way Community Building located at 112 NC 45 North, Merry Hill, 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
 Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
 Finance Officer William Roberson
 DSS Director Cindy Perry

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

At 7:00 p.m. Board Chair Ernestine Bazemore called the meeting to order, which was held at the Merry Hill community center. Commissioner Stewart White provided the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment: Mr. James Pugh of the Indian Woods community spoke in support of efforts to dedicate NC 308 from Mt. Olive Church to the county line with Northampton County in honor of Mr. John Bond. Mr. Larry Taylor of Sutton Road, Merry Hill reported that trash service remains an ongoing problem under the convenience center management by Republic Services. Commissioners Lee, White and Wesson shared similar concerns regarding operations at the convenience centers with trash overflowing.

Department of Social Services Director, Ms. Cindy Perry provided a report on the most recent fiscal compliance monitoring by the State for various programs. Correspondence dated February 5, 2018 was shared, indicating no findings and no corrective action required. Likewise, the report reflects no adjustments or financial penalties. Each of the Commissioners commended Ms. Perry and her staff for their work and excellent performance. Ms. Perry further reported on implementation of HB 630, new legislation known as the accountability and compliance act. She shared a sample contract which will be required of each County DSS with the State effective July 1, 2018.

Economic Development Commission Director, Mr. Steve Biggs provided an update on the progress of the new Dollar Store currently under construction which is set to open in mid-May. Mr. Biggs also introduced a new business owner and operator, Mr. Jerry Cowan of Eagles View UAV, a drone service. Mr. Cowan provided an overview of his operations and shared a brief video to share examples of his firm's services. Board Chair Bazemore suggested that a flyover at the landfill during Republic Services spring open house would be very informative for citizens to view the facility.

Board Chair Bazemore reminded the Commissioners and the audience that the County needs citizens to volunteer for committee assignments and local boards such as the Nursing Home Advisory Committee and the newly established Poverty Commission.

Consent Agenda: Board Chair Bazemore reviewed each item on the consent agenda as follows:

1. Approve Minutes for Regular Meeting 2-5-18
2. Approve Minutes for Closed Session 2-5-18
3. Approve Minutes for Closed Session 2-12-18
4. Approve Minutes for Planning Session meetings 2-12-18 and 2-13-18
5. Approve Bond Resolution for the Board of Commissioners acting as the Board of Commissioners for Water District III authorizing the sale of water system revenue bond, Series 2018 of Bertie County Water District III in the aggregate principal amount of \$1,717,000 prepared by bond counsel.
6. Resolution calling for special election to consider an additional one-quarter percent county sales and use tax for the May 2018 primary.

Vice Chairman Wesson offered a MOTION to approve the consent agenda as presented, and Commissioner Trent offered a Second to the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Discussion Agenda:

1. County Manger Sauer reviewed the grant project concept proposal for providing mobile units in partnership with VIDANT and Chowan County for dental and medical care in the outlying areas, in response to the Golden LEAF Foundation's (GLF) regional partnership development initiative. This project is in the "discussion stage" will be reviewed with GLF staff and representative of the NC Rural Center and the Friday Institute later this month or early March.

2. County Manager Sauer reviewed the budget guidelines for special appropriations previously approved by the Board relative to new requests, and provided a summary of funding allocations in the current year. After discussion among the Commissioners, Commissioner Trent offered a MOTION to approve a \$1,000 donation for the upcoming Roxobel spring festival. Vice Chairman Wesson offered a Second to the Motion, and the vote was unanimous to approve.

3. County Manager Sauer reviewed Windsor Bertie County Chamber of Commerce request for table sponsorship at 10th annual Black History Dinner on February 20th, 2018 and provided a summary of previous County donations and sponsorships since 2012 with amounts ranging from \$100 to \$500. Commissioner Trent made a MOTION to approve the request for a \$100 table sponsorship, and Vice Chairman Wesson offered a Second to the Motion. The vote to approve was unanimous.

4. County Manager Sauer provided a review of audit report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017 in follow-up to the most recent Board meeting. Mr. Sauer addressed the audience and explained that the Auditor distributed a draft copy of the audit to the Board of Commissioners on February 5th which had not been reviewed or approved by the County Manager or Finance Officer. County Manager Sauer reported that he and County Finance Officer Mr. William Roberson, met with the Auditor on February 6th, and Mr. Best apologized for the confusion and provided an explanation regarding delays experienced due to the corporate transition for his office this past fall. Mr. Best confirmed that the draft version of the audit presented to the Board on February 5th was not the version reviewed and approved by the County Manager or Finance Officer.

Mr. Sauer explained that the Board had reviewed this matter with the Auditor in its planning session on February 12, and there were several questions regarding the presentation of the available fund balance, unassigned fund balance and restricted fund balance for the General Fund raised by the Commissioners. Finance Officer William Roberson provided further clarification regarding the total fund balance for Governmental Funds is 28.83 percent for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. The unassigned fund balance for the General Fund was \$2,273,153 or 8.99% of total general fund expenditures of \$25,283,790 for the fiscal year. Due to the timing of the receipt of lottery funds which occurred in July of 2017, an adjustment of \$532,221 was made by the Auditor, decreasing the unassigned fund balance and increasing the restricted fund balance by said amount. This adjustment was primarily attributable to the State lottery funds in the amount of \$495,000 which were received in mid-July, after the close out for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. Mr. Sauer confirmed that both he and Mr. Roberson have confidence in the Auditor's adjustments to the financial statements submitted to the NC Local Government Commission.

Mr. Sauer also explained that the Board has directed the Finance Officer to issue a request for proposals (RFP) seeking auditing firms to interview prior to the next auditing cycle for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

5. Highlight's of governing body's 2018 planning session were provided in a PowerPoint presentation covering the County's water system improvements, flood studies currently being conducted by NC State University and East Carolina University, and a preview of the site development and conceptual design for the new public library and cooperative extension offices at the corner of Camden Street and Sterlingworth Road.

Board Chair Bazemore then asked Mr. Joe Wilkes with the County's IT staff to provide the County's "2017 Report to the Citizens" slide show, which was originally produced for the Board's town hall meeting in October.

Public comments: There was informal discussion regarding access to the Roanoke River for fishing and boating, and Commissioner Trent shared information regarding the new boat ramp and pier located at the end of Weeping Mary Road in Lewiston-Woodville. There was also concern raised for the lack of snow removal for senior citizens living out in the County, a brief discussion regarding the sales tax referendum.

Commissioner reports:

Commissioner White expressed support for the quarter cent sales tax as the only "fair tax" and he further explained that his term of office will end in November. He stated that he will not seek re-election and has appreciated the support from all County citizens during his representation for District Two.

Commissioner Lee explained that the Board's interest in the sales tax referendum is driven by the need to identify funding to support the school board's ability to provide teacher pay supplements in the future. She also shared her recent experience in attending the black history celebration at Martin Community College.

Vice Chairman Wesson reported that recent studies indicate that sixty percent (60%) of Bertie County children are not participating in pre-school or day care programs in preparation for kindergarten, which is detrimental to their learning experience going forward. Mr. Wesson reviewed the County's support for the "Better Beginnings for Children" program, which has helped to identify nearly 450 eligible pre-school children which have been under served. He also indicated that Bertie is one of eight counties which will be highlighted at an upcoming conference by the NCACC.

Commissioner Trent gave a brief update regarding infrastructure upgrades for courthouse security and progress on constructing a new EMS Station One facility on County Farm Road. He explained the Board's emphasis on utilizing local contractors for these projects and the need to support local businesses. He also reported that the County is financing these projects and improvements with local funds on a "pay as you go" basis rather than incurring additional debt.

Board Chair Bazemore reported on her representation on the NC Association of County Commissioners Board of Directors, and she reviewed several key legislative initiatives.

Specifically, Chair Bazemore explained the NC General Assembly’s “Medicaid transformation” and its focus on improving health care outcomes. Ms. Bazemore also reviewed the recent mandate for classroom size reduction and statewide efforts to address the OPIOD epidemic through multi-jurisdiction legal action. Lastly, she shared training opportunities for local businesses to seek NC DOT certification for historically underutilized businesses and minority enterprises.

Commissioner Wesson also briefly explained the importance of all citizens to insure their participation in the upcoming 2020 Census process and the financial impact to the County.

Note for the record—the Series 2018 bond resolution for Bertie County Water District III prepared by bond counsel and approved by the governing body will be incorporated into the official minutes for this meeting.

At 9:02 p.m. Commissioner Trent made a MOTION to adjourn, which was Seconded by Commissioner Lee and the vote was unanimous.

Ernestine Bazemore, Chair

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board