

**Windsor, North Carolina  
February 18, 2019  
WORK SESSION**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a work session today inside the Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: Ronald "Ron" Wesson, District I  
Greg Atkins, District II  
Tammy A. Lee, District III  
John Trent, District IV  
Ernestine (Byrd) Bazemore, District V

Absent: None

Staff Present: Traci White, Planning Director  
Scott Pearce, Information Technology Director  
Steve Biggs, Economic Development Director  
Cindy Perry, DSS Director  
Melissa Surgeon, Administrative Officer  
John Holley, Sheriff  
Jodie Rhea, Tax Administrator  
Billy Barrow, Cooperative Extension Director  
William Roberson, Finance Director  
Scott Sauer, County Manager  
Sarah Tinkham, Clerk to the Board  
Dominique Walker, ICMA/NCACC Management Fellow  
Jonathan Huddleston, Assistant County Attorney (9:00am)  
Lloyd Smith, County Attorney (10:00am)  
Mitch Cooper, Emergency Services Director (10:45am)  
Kenneth Perry, Chief Deputy (10:00am)

Media: Gene Motley, Roanoke-Chowan News Herald (9:30am)  
Sarah Stalls, Bertie-Ledger Advance (10:00am)

## **RECONVENE**

Chairman Trent reconvened the meeting.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INVOCATION**

Commissioner Wesson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PROPOSAL PRESENTATION – CHATHAM COUNTY**

Chatham County representatives present included: Carolyn Miller, Human Resources, Courtney Goldston, HR Analyst (MBTI instructor), Stephanie Watkins-Cruz, Policy Analyst, County Manager's Office, and Lisa West, Budget Director, County Manager's Office.

The idea of the program was conceived from conversations that took place with Chatham County DSS personnel as well as the DSS Director of Martin County. These efforts led to the development of additional educational opportunities for members of leadership. The original program in Chatham County has graduated 288 participants since 2002 across all departments. The course requires 100 hours of training that takes places once a month. It is at no cost to participants, and the County has invested a lot of resources in the program with successful results.

As a pilot program, a Bertie-Martin Regional Leadership Academy is being proposed. Classes in the program would be offered once a quarter using all of Chatham County's materials encompassing 64 hours of instruction. Proposed curriculum dates and details was submitted to the Board for their review. The program can assist with strengthening skills of current supervisors, as well as increase knowledge for any interested individuals who seek supervisory roles in the future. 20 participants per County.

As a new feature, and a specific one to Bertie and Martin County, a budget course will be offered with this academy, and taught at a level for all staff members to respect the process of completing a budget.

The expected kick off of the pilot program is slated for July 2019 and would last approximately 2 years. An orientation date of June 25, 2019 is also being proposed.

Ms. Miller fielded questions from the Board and overall, the Board was pleased with the proposal and agreed it would be a valuable opportunity for staff.

County Manager Sauer commended Chatham County for their diligent presentation of this idea and that he had received a visit in the very beginning from Ms. Miller, the Chatham Interim County Manager, and the Chatham County Sheriff. He stated that this showed him Chatham County's great pride in the program and demonstrated a commitment to the Bertie-Martin area.

Sheriff John Holley was also present to fully support the program and that it does present a great opportunity.

Commissioner Atkins stated that “there’s a huge difference between a boss and a leader,” and that training was always a good idea.

At this time, Ms. Miller discussed the final project required for completion of the course. After the year of instruction, a case study is assigned and the prospective graduates are assigned to a specific project group. The project will be completed in a 7-month period and will be presented to a panel before graduation.

The Board came to a consensus to “green light” the project and have Chatham County to move forward with the project with assistance from Dominique Walker, ICMA/NCACC Management Fellow as the Project Coordinator. The Commissioners also showed interest in attending the course as well.

### **REPRESENTATIVE ED GOODWIN – BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION AND DISCUSS PRIORITIES OF THIS SESSION**

Chairman John Trent introduced Representative Ed Goodwin of the NC General Assembly to provide a brief overview of the legislative session and discuss priorities of this session. He discussed that while in the General Assembly, he has had to prioritize as much as possible even though the needs of this area are high. The first of which in his district is drainage especially as it relates to hurricane events.

Broadband was also discussed as another one of his priorities, and that in the near future, our students will not have textbooks. That all textbooks will soon be provided via personal devices, but this puts his district at a disadvantage. His goal is to have electric utility companies provide the broadband service, and that there are small pockets of the district that do offer broadband service. He noted that several surrounding counties have found a way to make this happen, and that Bertie does have some of the infrastructure needed to accomplish this goal.

Chairman Trent noted a concern of his regarding the NC Housing Finance Agency and the current policy in place that hinders Bertie County from new affordable housing options, as well as additional grocery and pharmacy opportunities. He also discussed his concerns about local farmers being affected by field flooding that has destroyed harvestable crops over the past several years. Crop insurance has not covered most of these significant losses which creates a financial hardship for many farmers.

Commissioner Wesson also presented a key issue on his agenda which is teacher housing as it relates to retaining good teachers. He discussed the process he has undertaken with Steve Biggs, Economic Development Director, to accomplish a teacher housing complex in Windsor. All that is needed now is the legislature to approve the Windsor Township Development Corporation as an entity that could carry debt. Partisan politics has delayed this project in a county where it is already a struggle to provide quality of living, and that this project has passed the legislation in 6 other counties for those same respective projects. Mr. Wesson encouraged him to review Senate

Bill 8 and see what assistance he could provide to get this approved by the legislature so that the County can move forward.

Commissioner Bazemore thanked Representative Goodwin for his diligence in pushing the broadband initiative forward, but she noted that this County has a growing aging population. This population can also benefit from the broadband access because of life saving equipment that some senior citizens require for quality of life at home.

Commissioner Lee thanked Representative Goodwin for his attendance as well, and reported that the Town of Mount Olive is using their resources to sell broadband service to their town. She also asked about Representative Goodwin's third priority.

Representative Goodwin discussed his last priority which he described as more advantageous which is the installation of a passenger inland ferry system from the beach to coastal towns. It is a system that has been used in other water front states, and he noted that we have one of the largest coastal areas on the East Coast. He has communicated with these other areas who have similar systems in place, and he believes it is a real possibility. He noted that Bertie would indeed be a part of this system. Of course, an initiative like this would need to start small before becoming larger in scale.

#### **PRIVATE ROAD/PUBLIC SAFETY ACCESS REQUIREMENTS—ORDINANCE REVIEW**

Chairman Trent opened the floor to questions from the Board members.

Commissioner Lee discussed her interactions with a member of the School of Government which entailed that they did not believe the County has the statutory authority to pass this ordinance under the nuisance abatement category. The ordinance would also be reviewed by another UNC School of Government colleague.

Commissioner Wesson stated that we, as a County, have a responsibility to the safety of our citizens and that they have "seamless access to County services," and that the protection of citizens should be paramount. He stated that private road owners should take the safety of these roads seriously, and do what is required to ensure safety of citizens who live on these roadways.

Chairman Trent concurred and that emergency personnel vehicle accessibility to reach these citizens, and that all are equal tax payers.

Commissioner Bazemore discussed whether or not the County could afford to fix these roads, and whether or not it was reasonable to levy and place liens on these private road owners. Her concerns were also related to man power, cost, and whether or not private road owners had yet been contacted.

Commissioner Lee noted a policy in Cleveland County that offers temporary loans to private road owners to fix their roads, and the dollars would be paid back to the County via the required means.

Commissioner Wesson directed his remarks to the media and mentioned that education needs to be provided to citizens about the responsibility of road issues even while renting a place to live in a development. There should be an understanding about who is responsible for the upkeep of the road.

County Manager Sauer discussed that the idea was to “strike a balance,” and make things as fair as possible for all citizens to receive the same access to emergency services. He reviewed a compiled list of the most severely damaged roads in the County, most of which had one private road owner. That those road owners and their inability to act impacts many adjoining residential owners.

Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston, reviewed information that was utilized in drafting this proposed ordinance. He also reiterated the need of informing the private road owners via a letter with a grace period included, so these would have the ability to attend a public hearing, as well as to move forward in making plans for the road repairs.

Two citizens including Terri Pierce of Pierce Lane and the other of Thomasville Lane, were present for this discussion. Ms. Pierce discussed two school buses that are no longer able to use the road, as well as correspondence from other area providers (CPTA, REA), as well as a letter received from Sheriff John Holley about members of the Sheriff’s Office not being able to reach residences. Photos were presented to the Board and it was discussed that all resources have been exhausted to address concerns for both roads. The road owners have been asked to fix the road, but financially they are unable to do so. It was discussed that “stabilization” is what is being requested.

Chairman Trent made a **MOTION** to move forward with a Public Hearing for the proposed Private Road/Public Safety Access ordinance. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion with the addition of researching the policy currently in place in Cleveland County. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 3-2 vote via show of hands with Chairman Trent, Vice Chairman Atkins, and Commissioner Wesson voting in favor, and with Commissioners Bazemore and Lee voting against moving the ordinance forward to a public hearing.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

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

## **MOVING PROJECTS FORWARD**

### **Tall Glass of Water**

County Manager Sauer reported that the next phase in the project includes public access, visioning, site plan development, and branding. The Board came to a consensus to participate in a Work Session before their regular meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The Work Session will begin at 4:00 PM.

#### **Roanoke River flood control—February 21<sup>st</sup> meeting hosted by Senator Erica Smith**

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board of the upcoming stakeholders meeting for those counties lying on the lower Roanoke River basin. A meeting has been scheduled for this Thursday, February 21, 2019 at 12:30 PM. Dr. Riggs will present the NC LOW report “From Rivers to the Sound” highlighting the Bertie Water Crescent and the importance of the TGOW project.

The Town of Windsor Board of Commissioners and the Mayor will also be present for this report.

Mr. Sauer also reported that reports and presentations are being prepared by County staff, and that the County should expect to see visitors from the Army Corp of Engineers, commissioners from Washington, Martin, Northampton, and Halifax Counties, as well as dignitaries like Senator Erica Smith and Congressman G.K. Butterfield.

County Manager Sauer was also notified by Congressman Butterfield’s Office of a possible funding opportunity via a federal appropriate bill for the County. The County Manager sought suggestions on what the County should provide as project ideas to the Congressman’s Office when requested.

There was a short discussion but the priority was placed on a capital project at the Tall Glass of Water site for its development including a Visitor Center/Welcome Area as well as a type of Education Center. Several Commissioners mentioned their desire to see as much “infusion as possible” with not only youth but with senior recreational opportunities as those currently scarcely available within the County. Swimming programs, a state-of-the-art law enforcement/firefighting training center, and an underground, pedestrian tunnel (or pedestrian overpass) between the old and new Bertie High School were also discussed.

### **Bertie Martin Regional Jail—Chowan County request, proposed joint resolution & RFQ**

The Board discussed the proposal being considered by the Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Board to add Chowan County inmates, required facilities, and staff to the current facility on County Farm Road. An RFQ process was completed, but interviews have not taken place yet.

County Manager Sauer was looking to move forward with interviewing the firms that have completed the RFQ process, and then have direction on whether or not there should be a feasibility study, and if so, the Board's approval and direction to fund it. The Board briefly discussed if it was their preference to put in the third share of funding to add Chowan County, or if another arrangement should be made among the affected counties.

Vice Chairman Atkins raised the question about the benefits to Bertie if this were to move forward. County Manager Sauer stated that the benefits to Bertie are unclear at this time, but that the current standing places Bertie County in a good position.

Thus far, this discussion has been only among County Managers and their respective governing bodies.

A three-way meeting was discussed between all respective (full) Boards so that the initiative can be deliberated. The meeting would be held in Bertie.

County staff was instructed to work on scheduled this meeting.

### **Library & Cooperative Extension—latest Golden LEAF Foundation update**

County Manager Sauer reported that as of February 15, 2018, \$176,000 had been spent on the new Library & Cooperative Extension joint project, and that the remaining funds from the planning and design grant for Golden LEAF will be rolled over into a capital project budget including final design, bidding, and for construction costs.

### **Capital Projects—and review of Board activities for 2018 (slide show)**

The Board reviewed this slide show during lunch at noon.

### **Budget, Finance, FY2018 Audit Status and General Fund Performance**

County Manager Sauer indicated to the Board that the audit report and presentation of the financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018 is running later than scheduled. Mr. Sauer explained that the new GASB 74 and GASB 75 reporting standards require the incorporation of a detailed actuarial study for the OPEB section of the audit report, and this analysis was not ordered until December due to a miscommunication between County Administration and auditors. Mr. Sauer provided a draft copy of the audit report and referred to Exhibit 3 on page 23 which indicated an unassigned General Fund balance of \$3,631,954 and he

also provided a summary sheet of historical General Fund reserves dating to FY 1999-2000. Mr. Sauer also noted that the final audit report will include an adjustment for the unassigned fund balance to reflect the appropriated fund balance for the subsequent year (current year) of \$1,902,304 which decreases the unassigned fund balance to \$1,729,650. Mr. Sauer referred to the historical report noting that the governing body typically appropriates fund balance reserves for the budget ordinance but does not utilize the entire amount for General Fund expenditures. He referred to the draft audit Exhibit 6 on page 27 noting that for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018 which reflected an appropriated fund balance of \$2,022,737 of which the net change in fund balance resulted in a decrease of \$319,256.

There was a lengthy discussion of the County’s use of fund balance reserves for capital projects on a pay-as-you-go basis versus debt service financing to include:

Major capital projects (excluding regional water system)

\$74,995	Old County Building (Cooperative Extension offices)	
	Sheriff's Law Enforcement Center & 911	
\$251,181	Communications	
	Blue Jay Recreation Park improvements (over 3 fiscal	
\$163,050	years)	
\$936,818	Courthouse Renovations (over 5 fiscal years) project	
	details:	
		\$143,087
	Foundation and structural reinforcement (RAM JACK)	
	Juris Link--secure video link with BMRJ and BCI	
	facilities	\$57,000
	Sally Port, inmate transfer tunnel & security corridor	\$245,147
	(including metal detectors and demolition/reconstruction)	
	Video surveillance system	\$99,054
	<u>Phase One renovations (excluding foundation)</u>	\$392,530
	Painting & Sandblasting(exterior)	
	Scaffolding, equipment (lifts, compressor) & fencing	
	rental	
	Window replacement (materials & labor)	
	Custom shutters	
	Painting, casework & flooring (interior)	



\$1,426,044 Total - *pay as you go* (major capital projects since FY2013-2014)

*Not including minor projects absorbed in Public Buildings budget:*

DRC building moisture remediation (carpet & paint)  
Council on Aging/Recreation Department (roof replacement)  
Maintenance Building expansion by 50%  
Water Department operation center equipment storage

Bertie Martin Regional Jail renovations: \$200,000 county share

The County Manager also provided a historical staffing report noting that for the FY 2012-2013 there were 147 authorized positions in the budget, and for FY 2018-2019 the approved budget included 234 authorized positions with an increase in the County payroll from \$5,030,491 in FY 2012-2013 to the current payroll of \$8,746,155 for the FY 2018-2019. There was also a discussion about the pending adjustments in the required employer contribution for the local government employee retirement system, which will entail a minimum increase of \$104,953 for each of the next three fiscal years for Bertie County.

Commissioner Wesson noted that the upcoming revaluation process will allow the Board of Commissioners to “true up” the property tax revenue for this eight-year cycle to offset the increased costs of providing County services.

Commissioner Lee inquired about the County’s compliance with the minimum fund balance requirements from the NC Local Government Commission, and the County Manager noted that the unassigned fund balance will be below the recommended eight percent level. County Finance Officer William Roberson further explained that the total fund balance for the General Fund as of June 30, 2018 is \$6,408,660 and is approximately twenty-four percent (24%) of General Fund expenditures.

County Manager Sauer also provided a detailed overview of the five year operating costs for the EMS Paramedic Program and Non-Emergency Transport Service and noted that the County’s monthly operating support has decreased from \$112,808 in FY 2014-2015 to \$82,051 in FY 2017-2018 which is a reduction of twenty-seven percent (27%) while the number of Non-Emergency Transports have risen from 460 per year in FY 2014-2015 to 4,233 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018 or an increase in volume of more than eight hundred percent.

County Manager Sauer distributed a one page fiscal summary prepared by Finance Officer and highlighted the improved tax collections. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018 the collection rate is 97.29 percent demonstrating much improvement in the past ten years. Mr. Sauer noted that the tax collection rate for the prior year was 95.73 percent.

Additionally, the County Manager reviewed the Bertie High School debt service and the interest reimbursement formula for the Qualified School Construction Bonds (QSCB) noting that the interest reimbursement reduction calculation for the County has steadily decreased during the Congressional sequestration process from 2013 through 2018. The County's Financial Advisor had cautioned the governing body to be watchful as the federal budget processes may be amended, specifically during the annual sequestration exercise.

The fiscal summary also provided a ranking of the ten largest taxpayers which will be recorded in the final audit for the year ended June 30, 2018.

## **COMMISSIONER PRIORITIES**

### **Commissioner Bazemore**

Recently, Commissioner Bazemore was impacted by an internet scheme that requested her direct deposit be changed on her behalf. The email was received via Human Resources. County Manager Sauer assured the Board that this has been addressed.

Assistant County Manager position is still a part of the future program and within the budget. Advertising is the next step. A job ad can be drafted based on another County's job description.

Commissioner Bazemore also discussed the location or a need for a Board policy. The policy could be derived from Robert's Rules or another county's policy on how to engage during meetings, etc. The suggestion was also made to add a clause about holiday closings so that employees are well aware of the early closure beforehand.

### **Commissioner Lee**

Personnel policy review and update could be reviewed by an Assistant to the County Manager or an actual Assistant County Manager. The State website contains a proposed Personnel Policy and other counties could be contacted.

She also discussed employee performance appraisals that an Assistant to the County Manager or an Assistant County Manager could take over as well, and an example form was submitted to the County Manager by another County. Others could be received as well.

Commissioner Lee also reiterated her desire to be County owned property either be used or be made surplus to sell as additional revenue.

### **Vice Chairman Atkins**

Currently, the training room at the current shooting range location behind the jail is in limbo since the Peace Officers Association is no longer being utilizing the facility. Bathroom and kitchen are in need of remodeling, and an HVAC system is also needed, but there is a new roof on the building. This building could be remodeled per an unofficial estimate from a licensed contract for \$10,000. This facility is also still needed as a shooting range and training room facility.

### **Chairman Trent**

Public Safety/Private Road Access Ordinance is Chairman Trent's priority that has already been discussed during this meeting.

### **Commissioner Wesson**

Commissioner Wesson inquired about our obligation to the Golden LEAF Foundation and the Town of Lewiston-Woodville/HIVE Grant.

County Manager Sauer distributed correspondence and emails as background information to the Board. Commissioner Wesson stated that this information had already been distributed and this is what raised questions in his mind about the project.

There was some discussion about how fast the project progressed and the desire for it to have been more widespread in the community.

Commissioner Bazemore reiterated her concern for better communication among the Board so that the Board can better assist with similar opportunities in the future.

### **SETTING PRIORITIES FOR OTHER PROJECTS, PENDING ITEMS AND PROVIDING BACKGROUND REPORTS**

Commissioner Lee inquired about an idea she had received from a County employee about a signal actuator on County Farm Road for emergency vehicles. The cost would be \$40,000-\$50,000 and the District One NCDOT Board member is willing to delegate funding for this project. She mentioned the need for a letter from the Board would be needed to move forward.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to move forward with a letter for this initiative. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

There was some additional discussion about the teacher housing initiative. A packet was submitted to Representative Goodwin this morning during his remarks and the Board of Commissioners also received that same packet at this time from the County Manager. As

mentioned, partisan politics are being presented as a hinderance to S.B. 8 and that hopefully within the next 2 weeks there will be a resolution.

The Board also heard a proposal from County Manager Sauer about whether or not the Board would be interested in temporarily employing Hurricane Florence disaster workers. After a brief discussion, a proposed number of 20 workers was given. County Manager Sauer stated he would provide updates as more became available.

### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to appoint Commissioner Atkins to the DSS Board. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to appoint Commissioner Atkins to the Economic Development Board. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **ADJOURN**

Chairman Trent made a **MOTION** to **ADJOURN** the meeting. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously. Adjournment occurred at approximately 3:30 PM.

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John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board