

Windsor, North Carolina
August 27, 2019
WORK SESSION

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a work session today at 10:00 AM inside the Roanoke-Cashie River Center, 112 W Water St, 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: County Manager Scott Sauer
 Assistant County Manager Juan Vaughan, II
 Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
 Assistant to the County Manager Dominique Walker
 Economic Development Director Steve Biggs
 Parks and Recreation Director Donna Mizelle

There were no media members present.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order.

WORK SESSION

TGOW Planning and Site Development with Ms. Robin Payne, Project Consultant

The Board continued discussion of “Tall Glass of Water” (TGOW) planning and site development with Ms. Robin Payne. Topics discussed included review of RV and campground designs as income potential, state park examples, cabin designs, and horse sites. Ms. Payne

shared that one goal of the day was to outline the Board's vision of the TGOW site for development planners and consulting firms which will be assisting the County with the design for the site development. Commissioner Bazemore emphasized that the plan for improvements at the TGOW site should have something for the Bertie community and that it should have "something for everyone".

The Board discussed the possible placement of a welcome center along the future Interstate 87 corridor and establishing permanent access from both Bal Gra Road and NC 17. Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston discussed and clarified potential easement issues with the Board which remain unresolved.

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** for the Board to direct the County Attorney to initiate discussion with the Sawyers (adjoining property owners) and their representative Mike Neal about two easements connecting to the TGOW site from NC 17 with a minimum width of sixty feet. Chairman Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner Wesson echoed similar statements of Commissioner Bazemore that the Board should discuss the needs of the Bertie community in the early planning process. Community representatives from Merry Hill expressed their concern with the lack of recreation activities in their area. Commissioner Lee shared that the needs of the community should be met first then as more finances become available then continue discussions for other larger activities.

Commissioner Lee noted that making the TGOW park handicap accessible needs to be a priority for the County, and the installation of permanent restrooms and picnic shelters are also important.

Vice Chairman Atkins expressed his support for developing income generation improvements and noted the need for planning and a timetable for this project. Economic Developer Steve Biggs expressed concern for plans to address erosion and to provide for beach renourishment.

County Manager Scott Sauer reiterated the meeting outcomes as establishing a list of all amenities and potential sites for future events to give to development planners. Mr. Sauer also shared that information from the meeting could be used for future grant applications.

Chairman Trent emphasized the need for providing entertainment for the County residents and a mobile amphitheater as an option to consider. The Board discussed site preparedness in lieu of weather and other potential natural disasters. Assistant County Manager Juan Vaughan II provided insight on the Board's plans for the site, future activities, and events.

Ms. Payne shared with the Board estimated capital costs for site development of TGOW and discussed having an on-site supervisor to oversee the site development. The Board also discussed handicap access options for the site. Ms. Payne led a discussion about location references regarding the Chowan River and Albemarle Sound. The Board reached a consensus to have the Albemarle Sound as the geographic reference for the TGOW site.

Economic Development, Funding & Capacity Building with Ms. Robin Payne, Project Consultant

Ms. Payne led the group discussion on job creation, business development and expansion, and workforce development. She shared the benefits from increased traffic for the County and community. Commissioner Wesson expressed the importance of the community visiting and using the TGOW property. Ms. Payne suggested that the Board consider creating an occupancy tax for future lodging opportunities. She also discussed four main models of funding for the Board to consider financing various activities on the property. The Board agreed to let Ms. Payne research examples of other counties' funding models. Assistant to the County Manager Dominique Walker pitched to the Board possibly sharing the County's story with the NC Association of County Commissioners "CountyCast" podcast as a means to bring awareness to the TGOW site and its future development and amenities. Commissioner Bazemore agreed, noting that we need to tell our story, and the NCACC podcast will help us.

First Colony Foundation

County Manager Scott Sauer provided an update to the Board on the First Colony Foundation's progress. He shared that the Foundation believes that the County land (TGOW) may have much more historical value than Site X based on the preliminary archeological survey. The Board agreed that the future welcome center would be located near or on the TGOW site.

Hurricane Matthew Recovery Update with Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planners

At this time, the Board took a break for lunch.

Mr. Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planners gave the Board an update on the acquisition process and demolition process of approved homes within the County.

Other Items

County Manager Scott Sauer provided an overview of the September draft agenda and noted that review of the Road Safety and Maintenance Ordinance was on the agenda for this meeting.

The Board briefly reviewed and discussed a compiled list of impassable roads within the County as recommended by law enforcement and emergency services staff.

Special Appropriations

County Manager Sauer asked for clarification of the Board's directive relative to limiting the expanding number of requests for donations and sponsorships. In light of recent Board approval

for two items, specifically the sponsorship for the Greater Wynn's Grove Baptist Church carnival event and West Roanoke Missionary Baptist Association's first annual fellowship banquet, Finance Director William Roberson has identified a potential conflict with a 2017 motion approved by the Board placing a freeze on donation requests which occur outside of the budget process. Based on this limit, current donations as of April 24, 2017 were to be capped and each donation or sponsorship will be itemized in the County's General Fund budget for special appropriations. The Board discussed that there would be no additional requests for sponsorships for the upcoming budget cycle. Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to add two additional sponsorship requests to the FY 2019-2020 budget cycle based on the Board's recent approval. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Retirement System Contribution-Based Benefit Cap

County Manager Scott Sauer shared with the Board a potential pension spiking issue regarding a long-term county employee, which has been identified by the State Treasurer's Office. The State now provides periodic reports to Chief Financial Officers of all local governments regarding contribution-based benefit cap legislation approved by the NC General Assembly in 2015. These reports identify potential financial liabilities which may exceed the benefit contributions by the employer and the employee. Mr. Sauer reminded the Board that in May of 2015 the County approved significant additional duties for the regional water system superintendent and a corresponding adjustment in compensation due to the merger and consolidation of several municipal and community water systems. With this compensation adjustment, the regional water system superintendent position is identified by the State Treasurer's Office as a potential financial liability for the County under the State's contribution-based benefit cap analysis. Finance Officer William Roberson reminded the Board that with each successive pay period the contribution-based benefit gap is narrowed, and will be minimized in subsequent months.

Hurricane Matthew Recovery Update

Mr. Chris Hilbert of Holland Consulting Planning reported on Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) activities, including thirty-four (34) property acquisitions which were initially approved as part of this program. Four locations have been delayed due to their status, and of the thirty remaining properties, twenty-seven (27) houses have been acquired to date.

Demolition of these properties will soon follow, and eight (8) houses have been bid and one-half of them have been awarded to local contractors. Nine (9) additional demolition bids are prepared and ready, following the ten-day waiting period required by the State.

Four units have been bid for elevating the structures, two of which have recently been awarded, and two are already under contract according to Mr. Hilbert. Four additional elevation bids are being prepared by the engineers and will likely be awarded in October.

Mr. Hilbert also noted that two home owners have received relocation assistance for buying replacement homes, and he continues to work with other citizens who have already relocated. Assisting tenant occupied residences presents more of a challenge, and working to assist persons in this category will take significantly more time, possibly another six months.

Commissioner Wesson inquired about the DRA 2017 projects and the status of progress. In response Mr. Hilbert explained that the Williams property is completed and the Pierce house is under review by the State for this elevation work.

County Manager Sauer reported that there are still many challenges to address with respect to the CDBG-DR projects, and that Holland Consulting Planners have been very helpful in pulling the client information together.

Adjourn

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to adjourn. Commissioner Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah Tinkham, Clerk to the Board