

**Windsor, North Carolina**  
**July 13, 2020**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled meeting today inside the Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was hosted partially in person, and partially via Zoom (conference call). 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 Juan Vaughan, II.  
Finance Director William Roberson  
County Attorney Lloyd Smith

Staff Present (Zoom): Clerk to the Board Sarah Tinkham  
Maintenance Superintendent Anthony Rascoe  
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey  
EFNEP Agent Kathy Copeland  
Elections Director Sheila Holloman  
Planning & Inspections Director Traci White  
Water Superintendent Ricky Spivey

Cal Bryant of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald were present from the media via Zoom.

## INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Bazemore gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## APPOINTMENTS & REPORTS

### **USDA Grant Award announcement and requirements by Stephanie Hardison, Area Specialist, USDA**

Ms. Hardison of USDA was present via Zoom to discuss the Letter of Conditions for FY2020 Rural Business Development Grant in the amount of \$150,000. The technical assistance grant will be used for the Tall Glass of Water (TGOW) project.

The full Letter was made available to the Board of Commissioners in this evening's Board packet.

After the Letter of Conditions was briefly reviewed, Robin Payne, TGOW Project Manager, thanked Ms. Hardison for assistance with this grant. Ms. Payne noted that she was thrilled to have this grant received.

## AMENDING OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Bazemore requested that two (2) items be added to the agenda.

The first entitled "Appreciation" under D-1.

The second entitled "Holiday" under D-4.

Chair Wesson inquired if there were any other additions to the agenda.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to amend the agenda with the two (2) requested items. Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **Board Appointments (B)**

### **Bertie County Public Library Board**

Vice Chair Lee made a **MOTION** to reappoint Kay Brantley and Daphne Bond to the Bertie County Library Board. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Chair Wesson noted that there was one (1) additional vacancy on the Bertie County Library Board. Any citizen that is interested is able to apply for appointment to any of the boards or commissions with vacancies. Applications are available through the Clerk to the Board's office.

### **Voluntary Agricultural District Board**

Vice Chair Lee made a **MOTION** to reappoint Sid Copeland, Harold Lawrence, Joseph Leggett, and Jimmy Mizelle to the Voluntary Agricultural District Board. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **APPOINTMENTS & REPORTS continued**

### **2020 Early Voting Plans for 2020 Election by Sheila Holloman, Director, Board of Elections**

Board of Elections Director, Sheila Holloman, is participating in tonight's meeting to advise the Board of Commissioners of the latest plans related to one-stop voting sites for the upcoming presidential election.

The State Board of Elections has advised all local boards to accommodate as many voting sites as possible. The sites being proposed for this year's election: Board of Elections Office in Windsor, the Lewiston-Woodville Fire Department in Lewiston-Woodville, and a site in the Town of Powellsville.

All health and safety precautions will be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Bertie County Inspections has deemed that no more than twenty people should be inside each of these voting sites at one time to better adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Once the formal plan is approved, dates and hours for voting will be announced to the public.

Early voting is set to begin on/around October 15<sup>th</sup>. Interested citizens are still able to apply to become an election official by going online through the NC State Board of Elections.

Chair Wesson inquired about the process for absentee ballots. Ms. Holloman noted that a form was available on the County's website to request an absentee ballot. If the form is completed correctly, it will be processed by the Bertie County Board of Elections. Absentee ballots can be requested until October 27<sup>th</sup>, and must be returned by Election Day.

In conclusion, Chair Wesson requested that Ms. Holloman report back to the Board when a final plan was approved by the State Board of Elections.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Approve Minutes for Regular Meeting 6-1-20
2. Approve Minutes for Closed Session 6-1-20
3. Approve Minutes for Budget Work Session 6-4-20
4. Approve Minutes for Budget Public Hearing 6-15-20
5. Approve Minutes for Budget Work Session 6-18-20

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve Consent Agenda Items #1-5. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

6. Approve resolution in support of acceptance USDA FY2020 Rural Business Development Grant for Technical Assistance needs -TGOW project

After a brief discussion, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to accept and approve the resolution in support of acceptance of the USDA FY2020 Rural Business Development Grant for Technical Assistance needs related to the Tall Glass of Water (TGOW) project. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

7. Approve NCDEQ-WI Asset Inventory & Assessment Grant & Project Ordinance #20-02 - \$150,000

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the NCDEQ-WI Asset Inventory & Assessment & Project Ordinance #20-02 for \$150,000. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

8. Approve Register of Deeds Fees Report – June 2020

9. Approve Tax Release Journal - June 2020

Commissioner Lee made a **MOTION** to approve Consent Items #8-9. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

**DISCUSSION**

**Budget amendments & Updates from Finance Director William Roberson**

The following budget amendments were briefly reviewed and approved by the Board unanimously:

BUDGET AMENDMENT				
# 20-11				
INCREASE			INCREASE	
10-0025-4323-02	\$ 14,416		10-6100-5695-09	\$ 14,416
TO INCREASE FINES AND FORFEITURES (REV/EXP) - PASS THROUGH ACCOUNT				
INCREASE			INCREASE	
10-5860-5220-00	\$ 7,818	CONGREGATE	10-0025-4586-02	\$ 23,455
10-5860-5399-22	\$ 15,637	HDM		
INCREASE FUNDING FOR FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE ACT				
INCREASE			INCREASE	
17-4327-5399-01	\$ 54,614	911 FUNDS	17-0090-4991-99	\$ 54,614
IMPLEMENTATION OF EMD (EMERGENCY MEDICAL DISPATCH - 911 FUND BALANCE)				
INCREASE			INCREASE	
10-6360-5121-00	\$ 25,000		10-0025-4431-30	\$ 72,572
10-6360-5181-00	\$ 3,000			
10-6360-5182-00	\$ 4,000			
10-6360-5183-00	\$ 5,000			
10-6360-5290-02	\$ 10,000			
10-6360-5399-00	\$ 10,572			
10-6360-5499-06	\$ 10,000			
10-6360-5499-90	\$ 5,000			
SETUP BUDGET FOR HHS-CARES ACT COVID-19 MONEY				
APPROVED <u>    </u> / <u>    </u> /2020				

All supporting documentation was submitted to the Board in tonight’s agenda packet, and is also available online through the County’s website.

**Employee appreciation**

Commissioner Bazemore recognized County employees who have continued to work throughout the pandemic even with small children, elderly parents, etc. She inquired if the COVID-19 money recently received by the County could be used to give a bonus to all County staff.

County Manager Vaughan noted that the new funding received would only be eligible for emergency response workers such as law enforcement and EMS.

After a short discussion, County Administration was encouraged to continue to research the possibilities of any new funding that could be passed down from the NC General Assembly which could be used for an across the board increase.

## **Invoice for Disaster Recovery Coordinator Services, Mid-East Commission**

The Board briefly discussed past meetings, and noted that no one recalled this item being presented to the Board by the Mid-East Commissioner.

Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, noted that there was a partnership presented to the Board with East Carolina University. At the time, Mr. Cooper noted that no funds were being obligated, and that this was simply a “bridge” between the County and ECU to update the County Emergency Operations Plan. The Plan was then used for a project of the length of a semester.

Mr. Cooper recalled that this was mostly a conversation piece, and that he had not committed the County to any costs. He mentioned that for \$10,000, he would like to see a new plan that can be ready to submit to the Board for approval instead of a set of suggested changes to the Plan.

There was interest from Commissioner Bazemore and Commissioner Trent to receive a presentation from the Mid-East Commission about when and where costs were discussed for this project. There was consensus for Mr. Buck to approach the Board with this matter at the August 3<sup>rd</sup> work session.

## **2020 NACo/NCACC Voting Delegates – virtual business meetings & conference**

The Board reached consensus to have Chairman Ronald Wesson as the voting delegate for both the NACo Business Meeting, as well as the NCACC Voting delegate.

## **First read: proposed 2021 Commissioners meeting schedule, 2021 State Holiday schedule**

Commissioner Bazemore proposed that June 19<sup>th</sup> (Juneteenth) be added to the County’s holiday schedule beginning in 2021. Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to add this holiday to the County’s local holiday schedule in addition to the NC State holiday schedule. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Commissioner Lee presented a couple of concerns with April 2021’s meeting dates which will be closely reviewed.

## **Census 2020 Update – response rates by municipality**

Planning & Inspections Director, as well as Census liaison, Traci White, presented the following updates:

National	62.0%
NC	58.2%
Bertie County	49.5%
Askewville	66.4%
Aulander	37.4%
Colerain	48.3%
Kelford	36.3%
Lewiston Woodville	33.7%
Powellsville	45.1%
Roxobel	42.5%
Windsor	55.7%

Ms. White also discussed a rapid grant opportunity through the NC Census Count Coalition with applications due on July 24<sup>th</sup>. The grant focuses on outreach opportunities for under counted populations. She noted that citizens could receive a free snow cone or similar item for coming out and speaking with Census Count Committee members, or Census takers.

There was some additional discussion about doing outreach at the local food banks in the County.

Commissioner Bazemore noted that it could be very beneficial for the County to host another virtual town hall with all town mayors to better encourage areas to keep completing their Census surveys.

**Proposed increase for cost per panel for solar farms**

This discussion is in follow up to a question posed by Commissioner Trent at a recent meeting.

The Board’s agenda packet included the following attachment:



**Planning & Inspection Fees**

**Commercial Permits – Solar Farms**

<b>Cost per panel since 2014</b>	<b>Cost per panel FY 2020-21</b>	<b>Proposed Cost</b>
\$0.35 per panel/\$1,000 minimum	\$0.50 per panel/\$1,000 minimum	<b>\$1.50 per panel/\$1,000 minimum</b>

**SOLAR FARM EXAMPLE FOR COUNTY COMPARISON**

For a \$5,000,000 solar farm with \$17,640 panels:

- 1) Chowan County - \$50 per pod; usually 15-20 panels per pod; approximately \$2.50-\$3.33 per panel

Total Cost: \$44,100 - \$58,741

- 2) Hertford County - \$6 per \$1,000 of construction costs (\$50.00 minimum)

Total Cost: \$30,000

- 3) Northampton County - \$4 per \$1,000 of construction costs

Total Cost: \$20,000

- 4) Halifax County - \$5 per panel for first 200 and \$1 per panel after 200

Total Cost: \$18,440

- 5) Washington County - \$0.50 per panel

Total Cost: \$8,820

- 6) Martin County - \$0.20 per panel

Total Costs: \$3,528

- 7) Bertie County

At \$0.50 per panel, Total Cost: \$8,820

At \$1.50 per panel, Total Cost: \$26,460 – Recommended

Vice Chair Lee made a **MOTION** to increase the cost per solar panel from \$0.50 per panel to \$1.50 per panel. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Looking Ahead: County operations at the end of the extension of Phase 2**

The Board received a copy of a memorandum that all Department Heads received this week discussing the safety precautions that are currently planned for reopening county offices.

Currently, the following is in place from Governor Cooper:

D. Section 1(G) of Executive Order No. 124 is amended and restated as follows:

“Duration. This Section shall remain in effect for one hundred (120) days, until 11:59 pm on July 29, 2020, unless rescinded or superseded by another applicable Executive Order; provided, however, that after that date, the provisions of this Section shall continue to apply to arrearages that accumulated while this Executive Order was in effect.”

### **Commissioners’ Reports (E)**

#### **Vice Chair Lee**

Vice Chair Lee commended Renee Draper in Aulander for her new job opportunity in Hertford County. She also noted several concerns about the Hardentown and Rosemead convenience/trash sites, and felt that more work needed to be done to ensure these sites were always accessible to the public as needed. She mentioned two (2) occasions where a Republic Services employee was not present at their post upon the scheduling opening, and that several compactors are full at each site making it difficult for residents to drop off their trash.

She also discussed her recent Tri-County Airport Authority Board meeting where construction is still underway on the new terminal building. Furniture and fixtures are being discussed.

#### **Commissioner Trent**

Commissioner noted that he was asked to participate in a meeting with Roanoke Electric Cooperative. They gave a brief update about Roanoke Connect and that a new contractor had just been hired. No completion dates have been discussed thus far. Refueling stations are also being brainstormed for electric vehicles. Also, solar panels were briefly discussed. Roanoke Electric was also participating in water towers as hot spots for broadband in those nearby areas.

### **Commissioner Bazemore**

Commissioner Bazemore noted that additional access to internet and broadband is so important, and that COVID-19 has really shown those in this county how important it is for students and citizens to have affordable internet options. The County's Economic Development Director, and Grant Writer/TGOW Project Manager, Robin Payne, are encouraged to seek grants to bring more internet options to the County. Lastly, she noted how the Bertie Beach farm path is in good shape.

### **Commissioner Atkins**

Commissioner Atkins gave no remarks at this time.

### **Chair Wesson**

Chair Wesson thanked all County employees for their service during the pandemic.

He also noted that several renovations were due to begin in the courthouse and Administration building.

Lastly, he noted that the new MCC President was due to present several new programs at the Bertie-Martin Community College Campus in Windsor.

### **County Manager's Reports (F)**

Mr. Vaughan announced that the occupancy certificate had been received for the new Blue Jay Recreation Center. He also reported that sadly, the NC Works Career Center in Windsor closed permanently on June 30, 2020. There are alternative site options in Windsor that could be cheaper, and satellite options are being explored in both Powellsville and Lewiston-Woodville.

He also reminded the Board about the 10:00 AM Board work session on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. It will now be held in this location instead of at the Roanoke-Cashie River Center.

## County Attorney's Reports (G)

County Attorney Smith reminder the Board about a needed Closed Session to discuss personnel matters.

## Public Comments

Melissa Pasek requested an update about renovations to the Bertie County Humane Society.

Mr. Vaughan noted that the renovations for this project are still in the works and have been budgeted in this year's budget.

Gwen Bond-Williams discussed how she would like to see the Board host another Town Hall meeting with Commissioners, citizens, and County staff to better improve communications between citizens and their town officials.

Iris Liverman of Cooper Hill Road in Windsor came forward to express her concerns about alleged fraud relating to an unauthorized phone service. She also noted frequent occurrences of loud, "bomb" like noises as well as bright lights in the very near vicinity of her home. She stated that she felt as if she was being targeted. She also noted that she had contacted local authorities about these occurrences. In addition, she noted a visit from Water Department personnel that have made her feel that she was being improperly charged for water usage.

The Board will discuss this matter again on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3). Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

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

## ADJOURN

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.