

Windsor, North Carolina
August 10, 2020
WORK SESSION
Rescheduled from August 3

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled meeting on this rescheduled date inside the Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. The meeting was rescheduled due to preparations for Hurricane Isaias.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this rescheduled 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 (**Zoom**)
Greg Atkins, District II (**Zoom**)
Tammy A. Lee, District III (**Zoom**)
John Trent, District IV (**Zoom**)
Ernestine (Byrd) Bazemore, District V (**Zoom**)

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Juan Vaughan, II.
Finance Director William Roberson
Economic Development Director Steve Biggs

Staff Present (Zoom): Clerk to the Board Sarah Tinkham
Human Resources & Risk Mgmt. Director Cortney Ward

Cal Bryant of the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald and Thadd White of the Bertie-Ledger Advance were present from the media via Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wesson called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

BRIEF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chairman Wesson made a brief statement thanking various members of the County staff, religious organizations, and all of the State assistance and strike teams who have been serving Bertie County since the storm impacted our area about one (1) week ago.

All County staff were commended for their diligence and hard work.

Chairman Wesson noted that the work will continue to assist citizens during their time of need.

MORNING ROAD TORNADO/TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS

Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper, provided a lengthy update to the Board about recovery efforts.

He distributed a hand out containing all of the affected addresses with the majority centralized in the Cedar Landing Community.

There was some discussion about why Siloam Baptist Church was utilized as an Emergency Operations Center instead of Cedar Landing Baptist Church or St. Paul's Church. Mr. Cooper noted that due to the timing of this tornado (overnight), options were limited due to blocked roads, power outages, and other factors.

Siloam Baptist Church was utilized because they were with power, and could provide access to a large parking area for response vehicles and equipment, several large meeting spaces with power immediately available in the overnight hours. It was also easily accessible from a main highway.

Plans for outfitting Cedar Landing Baptist Church as a point of distribution (POD) site for essential supplies was also discussed in the earliest stages to ensure supplies would be available closer to the area most impacted. The POD site is in operation, but will close by the end of this week if there is not enough need for the items.

Mr. Cooper also discussed logistics about the teams still located in Bertie County, and that the time was near for the County to resume day to day operations in the recovery phase of this disaster. The Baptist on Mission are also conducting meal services, while Hearts with Hands is assisting at the County's Storm Relief Donation Center set to open this week.

The initial damage assessment was completed in just nine (9) hours with the assistance of the strike teams in place to assist the County.

He emphasized that temporary housing was a huge priority at this time, as well as getting donation items from the various donation points to those most in need. There is currently an option available for placing campers on County-leased land, but discussion is still needed to make this happen.

Debris removal was also briefly discussed, and more information on that is forthcoming.

The Board also asked various questions of two (2) representatives from North Carolina Emergency Management.

TGOW UPDATES – ROBIN PAYNE, PROJECT CONSULTANT

Grants Submitted

TGOW Project Manager Robin Payne reviewed each of the grants to be submitted for Phase I including information on match requirements.

A lengthy discussion ensued about the archeological resources at the site, as well as shoreline stabilization.

Commissioners proposed additional meetings to learn more about both initiatives.

Ms. Payne also briefly discussed the 2020-21 North Carolina Division of Coastal Management Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access (CAMA Grant). The grant amount would be \$146,772.

Ms. Payne reviewed each of the activities proposed to DCM for funding and reviewed a timeline for beginning Phase I work.

A public comment notice was issued on July 27, 2020 with informational materials available on the County website, in tonight's agenda packet, and on the County Facebook page.

Chairman Wesson gave an additional opportunity for new public comments to be submitted. No comments were received during this Public Comment period.

Ms. Payne then distributed a copy of 1 email comment from Bertie citizen, Scott Sauer, that was received in July.

After a brief discussion, Commissioner Tammy Lee made a **MOTION** for Bertie County to submit a grant application for the 2020-2021 NC Division of Coastal Management Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access (CAMA grant) in the amount of \$146,772. Commissioner Bazemore the **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

After an additional discussion, the Board came to a consensus to refrain from applying for the NC Resilient Coastal Communities program grant at this time.

RECESS

The Board took a brief 15-minute recess before returning to work through lunch.

CONSENT AGENDA

Council on Aging Food Service Contract

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to approve the Council on Aging Food Service contract. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

Council on Aging In-Home Healthcare Contract

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve the Council on Aging In-Home Healthcare contract. Vice Chair Lee **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

Home & Community Care Block Grant for Older Adults

Vice Chair Lee made a **MOTION** to approve the Home & Community Care Block grant for Older Adults materials. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

Eastern North Carolina Civic Group resolution (per Chair Wesson)

Commissioner Bazemore made a **MOTION** to approve and pass the Eastern NC Civic Group resolution as introduced by Chair Wesson. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

Updated DSS salary schedule

Chair Wesson made a **MOTION** to approve the update DSS salary schedule per State protocol, as well as to update the County's salary schedule to reflect the same. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

NC Rebuild – Disaster Recovery Funds – North Carolina Office of Resiliency & Recovery

A representative from NC Rebuild will be available to present at an upcoming Board meeting.

At this time, Chair Wesson briefly summarized the program as one that is available to citizens who received damages due to federally declared storms.

The program can provide funding for replacement construction as well as rehabilitation of damaged homes for those who own their homes as well as the land.

How to apply was also briefly discussed, and would not present additional burden on County staff as NC Rebuild could provide intake services over the phone or online.

More information about this program is forthcoming.

Second Draft: 2021 Commissioners Meeting Schedule, Local & State Holiday Schedule

County Manager Vaughan noted a couple of changes that were made since the first draft was submitted to the Board back in July.

No action was taken at this time, but the schedules will be present for a final time at an upcoming meeting.

At this time, Chair Wesson inquired if the Board would still like to host their regularly scheduled meeting on August 17th.

There was consensus that the Board was comfortable in cancelling the meeting on August 17th as storm recovery efforts continue.

Census 2020 Initiatives

Traci White, Census Liaison for the Census Count Committee, discussed the new Census deadline of September 31st, 2020. This is an additional change to the schedule. The previous deadline was the end of October.

She noted that funding would be needed if the County would like to consider a Census event where incentives could be provided during a promotional Census event.

Mrs. White also discussed the Census bus, and how it was originally intended for recruiting Census takers.

Chair Wesson wanted to see if we still had the opportunity to employ Bertie residents as Census takers so that way citizens may be more likely to open the door, and consider filling out the Census if they have not done so already.

The County's new Census representative was impressed with Bertie's progress thus far, and that response rate numbers may actually be higher than what appears online.

There were some conversations about enlisting the area church organizations to assist in promoting completion of the Census.

COVID Updates

- **State of the County**
- **Reopening of County facilities upon completion of newly extended Phase 2**
- **Ending of covering fees for online payments**

Current COVID-109 numbers were presented by County Manager Vaughan.

Mr. Vaughan reiterated that Phase 2 was extended until Friday, September 11th.

Commissioner Trent inquired if the moratorium on utility cut offs to which Mr. Vaughan clarified that it expired on July 31, 2020.

A discussion was also needed about whether or not the Board would like to extend the County's current policy of by appointment only services at all County buildings, as well as consider continuing convenience fees for water and tax bills.

There was consensus among the Board to keep County facilities under the current policy of being open to the public by appointment only until at least September 11, 2020.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to continue waiving convenience fees for water bills, but to cease covering the fees related to paying property tax bills online. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** in a 4-1 vote with Vice Chair Lee voting no.

There was also a short discussion about local area COVID-19 outbreaks.

Disaster Recovery Coordinator Services – Bryant Buck, Executive Director Mid-East Commission

Bryant Buck, as well as Lisa Williams, of the Mid-East Commission were present for this discussion.

The grant process was summarized, and discussed the background of this project which led to the issuance of an invoice for a Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

Some confusion is still apparent as to when the County committed to the \$10,000 fee for these services.

Part of the services provided included a full review of the County's Emergency Operations Plan.

Executive Director Buck also briefly summarized other grant opportunities that could become available soon related to the pandemic and storm response and recovery.

Several Board members noted that they would have expected this sort of financial commitment be presented to the entire Board in advance.

No conclusion about dispensing payment for this invoice was reached at this time.

CLOSED SESSION

Vice Chair Lee made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session 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 Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously after the roll call vote.

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

OPEN SESSION

Prioritizing County Projects

County Manager Vaughan allowed the Commissioners the opportunity to discuss prioritizing County projects.

Some of the projects includes a cost living adjustment for all employees, the teacher housing initiative, furnishings for the new Cooperative Extension/Library facility, mandated upgrade in voting machines, courthouse clock renovations, etc.

Commissioner Bazemore also inquired if the Assistant County Manager position was budgeted into this year's budget, and the Board was informed that this is the case.

A brief discussion was also conducted about the Board become clearer about how the Bertie County Morning Road Tornado Relief Funds will be dispersed. Commissioner Bazemore noted that rumors were out there, and that the Board should be transparent.

It was decided that the local Tornado Relief funds will be used to help citizens with as much immediate assistance as the County can provide as it continues to work with State and Federal partners to address larger needs and long-range solutions.

Those who were most impacted will have first priority. Cash gift cards from the credit union will be used for disperse the funds as they do not impose any fees.

Donations can be made to the Relief Fund via PayPal by going to paypal.me/BertieStrong. A donation button is also available on the County's website.

This fund is the only County sanctioned and approved fund by the Bertie County Board of Commissioners for Tropical Storm Isaias and the Morning Road tornado.

Donations to the Relief Fund may also be made payable and mailed to Bertie County, ATTN: Bertie County Morning Road Tornado Relief Fund, PO Box 530, Windsor, NC 27983.

The Board noted that funds will be dispersed as long as new donations are being made for tornado and Tropical Isaias victims.

Financial & Audit Updates

Overview & Discussion of Priorities

The Board reviewed several documents provided by the Finance Officer, William Roberson.

There was also a lengthy discussion about the County's current fund balance. Efforts will continue to be made to secure a final copy of the latest audit. Arrangements will also soon be underway for the next audit scheduled to take place this fall.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to **ADJOURN** the meeting at approximately 3:00 PM. Commissioner Bazemore **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.