

Windsor, North Carolina
January 20, 2021
WORK SESSION

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled meeting (work session) today at 10:00 AM inside the Council on Aging Gymnasium, 103 W School Street, Windsor, NC. Because of 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 (Zoom)
Greg Atkins, District II
Tammy A. Lee, District III
John Trent, District IV
Ronald “Ron” Roberson, District V

STAFF PRESENT: County Manager Juan Vaughan, II
Finance Director William Roberson
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston
HR/Risk Management Director Cortney Ward (Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lee.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Wesson.

SWEARING -IN OF MR. RON ROBERSON AS COMMISSIONER REPRESENTING DISTRICT V BY THE HONORABLE ANNIE WILSON, BERTIE COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS.

Ron Roberson was sworn in to the position of Bertie County Commissioner for District V by Mrs. Annie Wilson, Register of Deeds.

DISCUSSION OF BOARD'S PROCEDURE FOR SELECTING CHAIR & VICE CHAIR

Commissioner Atkins suggested improving the way the Board selects Chair and Vice Chair. He made a few suggestions, which included using the rotation method.

Commissioner Trent stated he agreed with Commissioner Atkins.

Commissioner Wesson stated he agreed with the idea of a rotation, but emphasized the importance of everyone understanding the role of the Chair.

FIRE STUDY: NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATION OF THE BERTIE COUNTY FIRE ASSOCIATION

Emergency Management Director Mitch Cooper presented a recommendation for funding from the Bertie County Fire Association.

The Board reviewed the recommendation and agreed it was important to be aware of each department's financial standing. The Board requested for County Manager Vaughan to request three years of audits if available or total revenues and expenditures for the past three years from each fire department.

TEACHER HOUSING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Commissioner Wesson advised that we have a high turnover for our teachers due to not having housing options in our area for them to reside. He stated they made applications to the SECU to consider twenty-four units-2 bedrooms, 2 baths with market rate rent for teachers and SECU approved it. The land would be given to us free and clear by the Town of Windsor.

Commissioner Wesson stated the problem now is that the construction cost has gone up significantly from two years ago. He advised they received a call from the foundation advising them to form a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. He stated they have begun forming the 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Commissioner Wesson stated SECU Foundation is having a board meeting in Raleigh in April and we are the only major topic on the Agenda. After meeting, they will decide if they will close the gap with the 2.3 million which is already there for them and whatever the new number is for us to contribute.

Commissioner Wesson stated that he has been working on the 501(c)3 and Economic Development Director Steve Biggs has been working on the funding piece. Commissioner Wesson projected having it complete by the end of February.

COVID LEAVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

County Manager Vaughan advised the Board that the Family First Coronavirus Response Act required them to provide employer-paid sick leave and extended paid family medical leave to the employees affected by COVID-19. County Manager Vaughan stated the FFCRA expired on December 31st.

County Manager stated that even though it is no longer a requirement, to ensure a safe working environment, we should encourage our employees to stay home if they have COVID-19.

Human Resource Director Cortney Ward discussed the FFCRA and provided a presentation on a recommendation of the FFCRA replacement, which would be the Bertie County Pandemic Leave Assistance Program and the Bertie County Childcare Assistance Program.

The Board advised they were in **AGREEMENT** with the presentation that they were presented with by Human Resource Director Cortney Ward.

CLOSED SESSION

The **MOTION** to go into closed session was made by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION PASSED** by a unanimous vote.

The **MOTION** to return to open session was made by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** by a unanimous vote

RECESS

The meeting was recessed by Chair Lee until 12:30PM.

TGOW SHORELINE STABILIZATION PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

Chair Lee called the meeting back to order and apologized to the presenters for running a little behind schedule.

Robin Payne, Steve Biggs and Mr. Wood provided a presentation on the TGOW Shoreline Stabilization.

Economic Development Director stated to the Board that he thought what they were going to see today was going to be very interesting. Mr. Biggs then stated that his job today was to introduce them to George Woods and then advised the board that he placed a copy of George's biography on their desk.

Mr. Woods discussed some options with the Board that could be used for the TGOW project.

During the discussion, the Board mentioned safety and liability concerns with the cliff. The Board also asked about the best way to prevent shoreline erosion to preserve as much of the beach as possible.

Robin stated they've had made a lot of progress and the next step would be to take it a step further with additional research. She stated they would move forward with putting options down on paper to share with the Board at an upcoming work session.

Robin then gave the board a brief report and a campground estimate of \$3.8 Million for core infrastructure.

The Board then thanked Robin for all of the excellent work that she has done.

2019 AUDIT PRESENTATION AND 2020 AUDIT UPDATE BY GREG ADAMS, CPA

Greg Adams provided the 2019 audit presentation by way of Zoom. He reviewed the audit findings and summarized some of the key items in the audit report.

Greg stated that he recently spoke with Finance Director William Roberson and County Manager Vaughan and requested some additional items that were needed. As soon as those documents are received, he could have the 2020 audit complete in about two weeks.

The Board expressed its discontent with the untimeliness of the audits and stated that going forward audits should be received in a timelier fashion.

BUDGET UPDATE

Finance Director William Roberson distributed a handout and provided an update on the budget. Director Roberson stated that there was an increase in sales tax this year. He also stated that with the courts not being in session, we are seeing a small reduction in court fees.

The permits and fees in the utility/water department was greatly reduce due to the Governor's order. Fees could not be charged during the pandemic, so that area took a big hit. However, the sale of water was a little bit higher compared to this time last year.

William then stated he is still trying to receive reimbursements for past projects in the amount of \$373,000.

Director Roberson briefly reviewed how the CRF funds were dispersed and provided a summary of the distribution of tornado relief funds.

TAX SOFTWARE UPDATE – JODIE RHEA

Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea advised that they are at a standstill with the tax software update. He stated that as of this year, the system is forty years old. Therefore, that software application has not been taught in decades.

Administrator Rhea stated that because of this, the new software vendor is experiencing some challenges with converting the data. He further stated that the current vendor can do it, but it comes at a cost of \$45,000 plus an additional \$1,500 each time they have to a data dump.

Commissioner Trent stated to Jodie to reach out to Keystone.

Chair Lee stated since we've already spent money on the program, it makes no sense not to move forward.

Administrator Rhea advised the board that until this issue is resolved they are at a standstill.

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** for Administrator Rhea to call Keystone to see if they can proceed with getting an application and purchasing the equipment so the taxes can get out on time.

After some discussion, the consensus of the Board was for Attorney Johnathon Huddleston to go back and look at the BIS contract and follow up at the February meeting with options for moving forward.

Chair Lee asked Commissioner Roberson if he would withdraw his **MOTION**.

Commissioner Roberson **WITHDREW** his **MOTION**.

Administrator Rhea stated he would get the contract to Attorney Huddleston.

OTHER ITEMS AS NEEDED

Chair Lee advised Commissioner Roberson of two upcoming trainings that he should attend.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Trent made the **MOTION** to **ADJOURN**. The **MOTION** to **ADJOURN** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The meeting then was **ADJOURNED**.