

Windsor, North Carolina
February 1, 2021
REGULAR MEETING

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a regularly scheduled meeting today inside the Commissioners Room, 106 Dundee 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
Greg Atkins, District II
Tammy A. Lee, District III
Ronald “Ron” Roberson, District V

Absent: John Trent, District IV

Staff Present: County Manager Juan Vaughan, II
County Attorney Lloyd Smith
Finance Director William Roberson

Staff Present (Zoom): HR/Risk Management Director Cortney Ward
Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lee.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was given by Commissioner Wesson.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Director Cortney Ward stated that there were no public comments at this time.

AGENDA CHANGE

Chair Lee stated there is a change in the Agenda and the Board will go into Closed Session.

CLOSED SESSION

A **MOTION** was made to go into closed session under North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11 (3)-(6) by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION** to go into closed session was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

REPORTS & APPOINTMENTS (A)

Update and Presentation by ABC Board Chair Michael Freeman

Chair Lee stated ABC Board Chair Michael Freeman spoke to the Board in closed session and no action is necessary at this time.

Library & Cooperative Extension Construction Project Update by MHA Works Project Architects Amber Idol & Dani Hoff

Amber Idol stated the project was going well and provided updates on the interior and exterior of the facility. Flooring is about 99 percent complete. The bookshelves have been installed. Deliveries for appliances are delayed due to the pandemic. The rest of the furniture will probably be delivered and set up at the end of this month. On the exterior, the metal panels are about 99 percent complete; there is some minor trim work to finish. The wood paneling is about 75 percent complete. The window boxes were onsite last week as well. Exterior lighting is coming along and landscaping has begun. Concrete is about 90 percent complete. The pond is finished. Amber stated that the Building Inspector will probably give a temporary Certificate of Occupancy without the kitchen appliances, so the kitchen will not be able to be used yet. The weather continues to be a factor for completing the exterior. Amber will continue to get a weekly update from the contractors. Amber stated we are now looking at a date past mid-March for the ribbon cutting because of the weather.

Presentation of 2020 Unpaid Taxes Report by Tax Administrator Jodie Rhea

Jodie Rhea stated each year before advertisement, he reports to the board on unpaid real and property taxes that are to be advertised. Jodie stated we are at the same place we were last year at this time (89.96 percent). Jodie predicted that we should have a higher collection rate this year due to the county-wide reappraisal value increase; thus, there is additional revenue to collect. Jodie advised the collection rate is lower than he would like it to be. But given the pandemic, plus the

increase in values from reappraisals, there are several taxpayers that normally pay by now who have not. He stated that normally they advertise in late March or April and he is planning to advertise ahead of time to get the collection rate back up.

Commissioner Wesson wanted to know how far we were off and if that was a problem for us. He also asked if Jodie thought that we would be able to catch up. He stated that if we are going to be off then we need to know.

Jodie stated that he didn't see a problem because after advertising, there is always a big influx of payments. Jodie stated they are going after the taxpayers proactively and trying to get the money in as soon as possible. Jodie stated that he really didn't see an issue.

Commissioner Wesson advised Jodie, as the Board gets closer to the time they are going to have to do budget, to please provide an update on where we're likely to be because this is a major factor in the Budget.

Jodie stated that when he finalizes the month end for each month, he will start sending that information. This will show what has been collected and what is outstanding.

Covid-19 & Vaccination Distribution Update by Albemarle Regional Health Services

Battle Betts and Ashley Stoop advised they had a very successful vaccination clinic in Bertie County today, serving 455 people. Ashley gave an overview of the cases. Ashley stated that as of right now, Bertie County only has 40 active cases. She stated that they were beginning to see a downward trend in active cases. Ashley stated right now there are two vaccines that are approved for emergency use, which include the Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine. Moderna is primarily given in this region. The Moderna vaccine is a little easier to manage, so it really helps them to expedite their processes. The primary difference is that Pfizer is given about 21 days apart and the Moderna is given about 28 days apart. There is some flexibility in those days. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine should receive the emergency use authorization this week. Ashley stated that Bertie County is definitely a model for hosting vaccination clinics. She stated they will be starting second doses this week. Battle stated they are trying to do all they can to get as much of the vaccine as they can.

A brief discussion was held by the Board and Battle in reference to getting the minority community vaccinated.

Chair Lee asked Battle how will the line on Wednesday be monitored for the second dose. Mr. Battle advised in order to ensure the second dose clinic goes smoothly and no one holds up the line, they are asking people to bring their CDC printed card that shows the verification of the first dose. This would expedite the process. Ashley stated that they have asked people to sign up on their website so that they can send targeted messages.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS (B)

1. Appointment of Commissioner to Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC)
2. Appointment of Commissioner to East Carolina Behavioral Health-Northern Regional Advisory Board (ECBH-NRAB)

Commissioner Roberson volunteered to be appointed to these two Boards.

The **MOTION** was made for Commissioner Roberson to serve on these two boards by Commissioner Atkins. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

CONSENT AGENDA (C)

1. Approve Register of Deeds Fees Report – December 2020
2. Tax Release Journal – December 2020
3. FY 2020-2021 Senior Center General Purpose Agreement
4. Budget Amendments
5. Approve Order to Advertiser Unpaid Taxes

A **MOTION** was made to accept Consent Agenda Items 1-2 by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

Chair Lee asked the Board if there were any questions regarding the FY 2020-2021 Senior Center General Purpose Agreement. There were no questions.

A **MOTION** was made to accept Consent Agenda Item 3 by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

Finance Director William Roberson explained the first budget amendment is related to the FY 2020-2021 Senior Center General Purpose Agreement and the County's match. The second budget amendment is for a grant received by the Board of Elections. The third budget amendment is for the use of lottery funds. The fourth budget amendment is for the recurring contracted services with CTS in the department of the Tax Administrator. The fifth budget amendment was for Families First Act funds received by the Council on Aging. There were no questions from the Board.

A **MOTION** was made to accept Consent Agenda Item 4 by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Atkins. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

There were no questions regarding Consent Agenda Item 5. A **MOTION** was made to accept Consent Agenda Item 5 by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)

Update on Tax Software Contract and Request to Convert Current System Data

Chair Lee stated this item was discussed in closed session because of unexpected details that came up, which will be shared at a later time.

Confirm Work Session on 2/17/2021

Chair Lee asked if everyone on the Board had the work session on their calendars, which will begin at 10:00 AM.

Calendar Review

Chair Lee stated our new commissioner, Commissioner Roberson, has been attending the Essentials of County Government training. The next session will be held virtually on February 25th.

Chair Lee stated the NACo Legislative Conference will be held virtually from March 8th through March 26th. We will get a headcount of the commissioners who would like to join and determine if it would be better to purchase the registration at the group rate or individually.

Chair Lee stated Ethics training will be held virtually on March 23rd.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS (E)

Commissioner Atkins

Commissioner Atkins mentioned he recently received some concerns from citizens regarding convenience sites. A new manager was recently hired and it might be a good idea to invite him to a meeting.

Commissioner Wesson

Commissioner Wesson mentioned that a hot topic for our legislatures has been Medicaid expansion. Both parties seem to be close to agreeing on a plan for Medicaid expansion offering a considerable amount of choice. A significant amount of our citizens will qualify.

The NCACC approved five goals and the first one is related to broadband. There is bipartisan support for the bond providing financial support for broadband in rural communities.

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson had no reports.

Chair Lee

Chair Lee stated today was move-in day at Tri-County Airport. It was a great day and Commissioner Roberson showed up to help and worked really hard. Chair Lee also stated that County Manger Vaughan agreed for some staff to assist at the airport to help speed up the process and they worked really hard. Chair Lee stated that the airport was built with no local money and was 100 percent funded by DOT Aviation. All furnishings were purchased by local businesses. This is something that the citizens in this county can be proud of. The ribbon cutting will be held on February 11th at 1:30 PM. Chair Lee also stated there was a ribbon cutting this past Sunday at Mr. E's Kitchen & Catering in Aulander. She stated the weather wasn't favorable, but the festivities inside the restaurant were absolutely great. The entertainment and food was wonderful. Support your local businesses.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS (F)

County Manager Vaughan

County Manager Vaughan stated that there was no report for tonight.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Director Cortney Ward stated that she had not received any public comments this evening.

The **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 4-0 vote.

The meeting was **ADJOURNED**.