

**Windsor, North Carolina**  
**February 17, 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  
Greg Atkins, District II  
Tammy A. Lee, District III  
Ronald “Ron” Roberson, District V  
John Trent, District IV

**Staff Present:** County Manager Juan Vaughan, II  
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston  
Finance Director William Roberson

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Lee called the meeting to order.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**CLOSED SESSION**

A **MOTION** was made to go into closed session by Commissioner Trent under North Carolina General Statute §143-318.11(a) (3-5). The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 5-0 vote.

## **APPROVAL OF BERTIE COUNTY CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

County Manager Vaughan stated the approval of the Bertie County Conflict of Interest Statement was needed to be eligible for a grant. The board adopted a conflict of interest policy in 2015 as a part of a federal procurement policy. USDA provided a template with the conflict of interest statement they will approve, which was forwarded to Attorney Huddleston.

Attorney Huddleston stated the new conflict of interest statement is appropriate and is statutorily required under NCGS §153A-53 and § 160A-86, which is mentioned at the beginning of the policy. He further mentioned every county has to have a Code of Ethics or Conflict of Interest Policy in place, which came into effect six or eight years ago. The conflict of interest statement approved in 2015 is geared almost exclusively to Federally funded projects and the State said they did not feel like they were included in that. He stated that the updated statement doesn't just talk about federal or state projects; it just says projects. The **MOTION** to **APPROVE** this item was made by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

## **WATER RATE STUDY-WATER SUPERINTENDENT RICKY SPIVEY**

Superintendent Ricky Spivey stated that at the last meeting we were requested to provide the water rates of surrounding counties to compare to our rates. Mr. Spivey presented the Board with a handout, which included water rate information from several surrounding counties (Chowan, Greene County, Hertford, Northampton, Martin, Pasquotank and Perquimans).

Superintendent Rickey Spivey and the Board discussed the flat rate of the other counties and the flat rate that we have, which is \$15.50 (whether you use the water or not) and \$4.50 per thousand gallons. Mr. Spivey suggested going from the flat rate of \$15.50 to \$16.50 and the commodity rate of \$4.50 to \$5.50. Mr. Spivey showed the Board some projections in different scenarios, which would yield a big increase in revenue for our Water Department.

Superintendent Spivey pointed out that it was highly recommended back in 2016 to at least look at the possibility of increasing the water rates at least once every year or every other year. Superintendent Spivey stated it was not done. Superintendent Spivey stated that his recommendation is to move forward with the increase.

County Manager Vaughan stated that in 2018 the Water Department fell short approximately \$8,000, which was pretty close to breaking even and in 2019 they fell short approximately \$190,000. County Manager Vaughan stated that loss had a lot to do with Avoca's reduction of water use.

Discussion about the amount of increase needed continue among the Board, Manager Vaughan, Superintendent Spivey and Director Roberson.

County Manager Vaughan stated that he, Superintendent Spivey, and Director Roberson were going to get together and provide the additional information requested by the Board including the amount of fund balance in the Water Fund.

### **RECESS**

Chair Lee advised that they would recess until 12:15pm.

### **BUDGET UPDATE & DISCUSSION CONTINUED**

County Manager Vaughan stated that Finance Director William Roberson had a handout highlighting where we currently are with our budget. Director Roberson distributed and discussed the handout.

County Manager discussed the slide the auditor showed during his audit presentation where he stated the available fund balance as a percentage of general fund expenditures is 3.3%. County Manager explained the 3.3% was the unassigned fund balance. County Manager Vaughan advised that our available fund balance for fiscal year 2018-19 is 7.44%.

Finance Director William Roberson stated he is not aware of any requirement for the unassigned fund balance to be a certain amount.

The Board, the Finance Director, and the County Manager discussed the lateness of the audit and the importance of timely audits.

County Manager Vaughan advised the Board that as of right now there is not a work session scheduled for the month of March, just a regular meeting scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup>. The Board advised the County Manager to change the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to a morning meeting at 10:00 AM instead. The March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting was then changed from 6:00 PM to 10:00 AM to allow for further discussion on the budget with public comments still on the Agenda.

County Manager Vaughan stated that he sent the fire departments a letter as requested by the Board. The letter requested audits for fire departments that had audits available. If audits were not completed, the fire departments were asked to provide revenues and expenditures for the last three years.

### **OTHER ITEMS AS NEEDED**

County Manager Vaughan stated there were no additional items for discussion.

## ADJOURNMENT

A **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting the meeting was made by Commissioner Trent. The **MOTION** was **SECOND** by Commissioner Wesson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

The meeting was then adjourned.