

Bertie County, North Carolina
October 7, 2024
COMMISSIONER MEETING

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a work session today at 6:00 PM inside the Commissioners' Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. 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
Michael White, District II
Corey Ballance, Sr., District III
John Trent, District IV
Ronald "Ron" Roberson, District V

Staff Present: County Manager Juan Vaughan, II
Assistant County Manager David Scarborough
County Attorney Lloyd C. Smith Jr
Information Technology Joseph Wilkes

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Trent called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTES PER SPEAKER)

Ms. Rachel Bellis, representing People for the Ethic Treatment of Animals (PETA), shared photos of several dogs along with the areas where they are housed. Without standards of care, dogs are allowed to live in substandard conditions. She requested an ordinance to prevent suffering and cruelty.

Commissioner Roberson asked that Director Daphine Little, Department of Social Services, be recognized and it was announced that the Bertie County Department of Social Services is no longer under the oversight of the state.

APPOINTMENTS & REPORTS

UPDATES AND REQUESTS BY NC FOREST SERVICE

Mr. Mike Petrucio, District Forester for District 7, noted that the district has several foresters dispatched to the western part of the state. The funding request to Bertie County was \$199,149. The County budgeted \$127,262. We have followed up about additional funding several times. We are here to request \$171,149 from Bertie County to fund forest services. This new request removes a truck and equipment for the truck. This is an addition of \$43,887 from the budget allocation.

The Board expressed the need to seek outside grants and other sources of funding.

Mr. Tommy Sports, District 7 Regional Forester, the importance of employees and appreciation to the Board for previous support. The funds are needed to fund salaries and without additional funding we will be forced to make a reduction in force. We serve the landowners and citizens regarding protection and fire control in this county. He shared statistics on the service and programs provided by NC Forest Service.

Chairman Trent questioned if the state has provided increases. Prior to the last two budget cycles we haven't had such issues. The request to the county was a 40% increase. The County Manager will have to determine where to find the money.

Mr. Sports replied that the state has increased funding too. Three years ago, \$50,000 was made available separately. Total funding is a percentage of the State and local funding.

Chairman Trent reiterated that the County Manager must find the money if he can and inform the Board how this will be addressed.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATES BY DIRECTOR DAPHINE LITTLE

Director Little announced that the Bertie ~~County Department~~County Department of Social Services is no longer under State oversight. In April of 2022, NCDHHS took over child welfare of Bertie County. In June 2024, NCDHHS did a total records review and three months later announced that we are no longer under corrective action. Strategies developed are implemented and according to policy. She acknowledged the tremendous dedication of the child welfare staff. She expressed excitement for the leadership guiding child welfare. We have turned a challenging chapter to success.

PRESENTATION OF TRILLIUMS ANNUAL REPORT BY NORTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT BOBBIE LOWE

Ms. Lowe shared statistics regarding services provided. The NC General Assembly changed the population and number of tailored plans and allowed structured changes. There were six MCO's and now there are four. The Secretary issued a directive that Trillium, Sandhills, and Eastpoint MCO's consolidate. We worked on consolidation plans that were approved mid-December. We went from a 28-county agency to 46 counties. Trillium now serves 46 counties in North Carolina. We now have five regions. The Tailored Plans have been operating since July of 2024. Most people in the county who receive Medicaid are on the standard plan. Bertie County has 7,200 receiving Medicaid and 513 people

on the tailored plan. We now have a team that works with individuals in the prison system to assist in obtaining services when their prison term ends. The substance prevention curriculum in the schools is for youth and we are working on educational sessions for parents.

Commissioner Wesson noted that Medicaid Expansion allowed us to reach more citizens and the need for additional funding to assist our DSS staff. Counties that are performing well need additional funding. He noted that the opioid expansion funds will need to be spent to have an impact on the citizens and reduce stress on our departments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE BY DIRECTOR FRANKLIN WILLIAMS

Director Williams shared that our CAB grant application was submitted on September 6th. The [General Assembly](#) [NCGS](#) created legislation that eliminated the local match. The House has approved and now, it must go to the Senate. The BEAD process has begun and will assist with Broadband access. The survey went well and designates sites to determine if they truly have been served. We have industries that are dealing with failed wells, and we immediately contacted our legislature to assist. We need a water line installed. The initial cost is \$4 million, and we are working with an engineering firm to update. Housing continues to be an issue. The developers have requested to work directly with landowners without county assistance.

He apologized for incorrect information shared with the Board regarding the 911 Center grant, specifically the \$1.3 ~~Million match~~ [Million match](#) allocation request submitted as part of the Community Project Funding requests. There was a small window to get the request submitted and into the competitive review process. He originally indicated that it was 100% done, which was incorrect. The funding request has been submitted to the appropriations committee, and are included in the appropriations bill, but this bill has not yet been approved.

The Tri-County Airport purchased a tractor and Commissioner Ballance plans to attend the next meeting.

The Mideast COG received funding to assist Counties with Broadband. Instead of paying for mapping, we worked with the Rural Center for initial mapping in all five counties. We will need to do the exceptions. The same firm that worked with the Rural Center will be available for a fee.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Register of Deeds Report for September 2024 was presented for Board consideration.

On a motion by Commissioner Ballance, seconded by Commissioner Roberson, the Board unanimously approved the Register of Deeds report for September 2024.

A Resolution supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans was presented for Board consideration.

On a motion by Commissioner Ballance, seconded by Commissioner Wesson, the Board unanimously approved the resolution.

The Resolution Authorizing the Establishment of a Tourism Development Authority in Bertie County and Penalties for Failure to Submit Occupancy Tax Returns or Payments was presented for Board consideration.

On a motion by Commissioner Ballance, seconded by Commissioner Wesson, the Board unanimously approved the resolution.

OTHER ITEMS

The proposed 2025 Holiday Schedule and the Board of Commissioners Meeting Schedule for 2025 was presented for Board consideration.

On a motion by Commissioner Roberson, seconded by Commissioner Ballance, the Board unanimously approved the schedules.

Ms. Rebecca [Jennette](#), representing Bertie County Cooperative Extension, stated that she and her team recently submitted a grant of nearly \$11 Million allowing us to add additional staff and serve a larger area. She promoted the Bertie DigiCon Digital Skills and Equity Conference at the Bertie County Cooperative Extension Office taking place on October 12th at 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM. The first 100 people will receive a bag of promotional items.

She also shared information regarding remote work positions and the benefits for citizens accessing employment opportunities in rural areas.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Wesson requested an update on county properties. He will be at a housing conference to answer questions regarding the Teacher Housing Project. Units are currently full. He expressed appreciation to Bertie County EMS for assisting western counties.

Commissioner Ballance recognized the Sheriff's Office for its work and dedication.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORTS

On September 26th County Manager Vaughan attended a workshop with other community partners regarding Artificial Intelligence. He recognized the EMS staff supporting counties in the west. He congratulated the Child Welfare Unit of DSS being taken off the corrective action status. E-911 and EMS are currently fully staffed.

COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORTS

No Report

CLOSED SESSION

On a motion by Commissioner White, seconded by Commissioner ~~Balance, the~~Ballance, the Board unanimously voted to enter closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(3)(4)(6).

On a motion by Commissioner Roberson, seconded by Commissioner Balance, the Board unanimously voted to re-enter open session.

On a motion by Commissioner Wesson, seconded by Commissioner Ballance, the Board unanimously approved the opt- in to the Kroger Settlement Agreement to be released to the National Consortium.

RECESS

On a motion by Commissioner Roberson, seconded by Commissioner Ballance, the Board unanimously voted to recess the meeting until October 21st at 10:00 AM.