

Bertie County, North Carolina
February 24, 2025
COMMISSIONERS' WORK SESSION

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a work session today at 10:00AM inside the Commissioners' Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: Vice-Chair, Lewis Hoggard, III, District I
Ronald "Ron" Roberson, District V
Vivian Saunders, District IV
Michael White, District II

Absent: Chair, Corey Ballance, Sr., District III

Staff Present: County Manager, Juan Vaughan, II
Assistant County Manager, David Scarborough
County Attorney, Lloyd C. Smith, Jr. present only for Closed Session
Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis
Information Technology Director, Joseph Wilkes

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Hoggard called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chair Hoggard gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Local Reentry Council Presentation by Greg Singleton, Dean of Academic Programs at OIC of Rocky Mount, NC

Greg Singleton shared the purpose of the OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center) with the Board. Mr. Singleton stated that the OIC is committed to creating a more equitable local economy that welcomes and uplifts unemployed, underemployed and justice involved people who are seeking employment pathways to a career, entrepreneurial and/or healthcare. The purpose of the Local Reentry Council is to bring together local stakeholders and community resources to assist returning citizens and their families with their transition by identifying and reducing barriers to their reentry, developing a network of service providers, develop a public education campaign, and identify potential funding support. The mission of the LRC is to improve public safety, lower the collateral cost of incarceration, and to improve taxpayers through gainful employment. Mr. Singleton stated that 98% of incarcerated individuals will return to society at some point and his mission is to have these individuals work ready when they return. A part of the States newly-funded Local Reentry Councils are Bertie, Chowan, Hertford and Gates counties. A proposed budget has been submitted to the State for \$225,000 which will cover the four counties mentioned above.

Update on Lewiston-Woodville Water System Replacement and Approve Resolution of Tentative Award to Green Engineering by Water Superintendent, Ricky Spivey

Ricky Spivey, Water Superintendent, updated the Board on the status of the Lewiston-Woodville Water System Replacement. The grant application was submitted in March 2022 but the letter of intent was not received until August 2022 in the amount of \$4.9 million to overhaul or upgrade the Lewiston-Woodville Water System. The state legislation released an additional \$2 billion for infrastructure needs. In 2023 the North Carolina Appropriation Act Sections Law allocated another \$2 billion for water and sewer infrastructure including direct grants for 201 systems. In October 2024, bids were set out for the construction and there were not any bids received. In November 2024 bids were set out again and only one bid was received from Hobbs Construction from Wilson, NC for \$3,948,893. On January 21, 2025, County Manager Vaughan signed the last application to send to the state for review and approval. Once the application has been approved, Mr. Spivey will come back before the Board to request that the contract be awarded to Hobbs Construction. Once the contract is awarded to Hobbs Construction, a meeting will be scheduled to proceed. According to the contract, Hobbs Construction will have 300 days to complete the job. Mr. Spivey stated that the Town of Lewiston will be notified before the project begins.

Commissioner Roberson asked Mr. Spivey how long does it take the State to approve applications? Mr. Spivey stated that it could take six months to a year for approval.

Commissioner Saunders asked Mr. Spivey to contact the Town of Lewiston-Woodville to be added to one of their meeting agendas so that he can give the citizens an update on the water system.

Commissioner Roberson made a **MOTION** to approve the Resolution of Tentative Award to Green Engineering. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 5-0 vote.

Strategic Planning by Robin Payne

Robin Payne provided the Board with extensive detailed working documents on the Strategic Plan. Ms. Payne expressed the importance of developing downtown areas to attract visitors, businesses and new residents, and discussed organizational excellence initiatives, including revamping the county website, implementing strategies to attract and retain staff, and considering digital analytics tools for project management. Commissioner Saunders expressed concerns about the strategic planning process, suggesting that it was creating more tasks and workload for department heads rather than providing a guide for success. The discussion revolved around the need for a completed strategic plan to review and approve, rather than a working document. The Board members agreed that they wanted a rough draft of the final strategic plan, including a budget to review and provide feedback. They also discussed the importance of aligning the strategic plan with their vision and priorities.

Commissioner White asked Ms. Payne what the timeline was for the Strategic Plan? Five or ten years? Ms. Payne stated that the timeline is five years.

The Board discussed various county projects including a basketball court, animal shelter, and potential sale of the old Good Shepherd Food Pantry property.

Commissioner White expressed concerns about the need for economic growth and revenue generation in the county.

Vice-Chair Hoggard asked how much does one penny of sales tax bring into the county? County

Manager Vaughan stated around \$140,000.

Vice-Chair Hoggard asked Ms. Payne how and when will Bertie Beach start generating revenue since so much money has been spent on the project?

Ms. Payne stated that TGOW is based around Bertie County's assets. Ms. Payne stated that she wants to build up infrastructures around each municipality and make the towns vibrant again so that they will attract people and start generating revenue for the county. Ms. Payne stated that the towns are beautiful but they need help to draw in people to the locations. Renovating vacant buildings in each town will be beneficial for economic growth and generating revenue.

Financial Summary by Finance Director Willie Mac Carawan

Finance Director, Willie Mac Carawan, discussed the financial status of the county's general fund and utilities fund. The general fund was reported to be doing well, with revenues exceeding expenditures by about \$3.4 million. However, the water department's revenues were only at 52% year-to-date and expenditures are at 26%. Mr. Carawan also mentioned that there were some entries left outstanding and some drafts from state agencies that needed to be identified.

Commissioner White expressed concern about the County's revenue collection, with only 51% collected and 41% outstanding.

Commissioner Saunders asked Mr. Carawan to provide a monthly financial report at each Board meeting so that the Board would have a better financial understanding.

Mr. Carawan stated that an Assistant Finance Officer is still needed. At the current time, the funds for that position are being utilized to pay outside contractors part-time to help relieve the work load.

Commissioner White asked Mr. Carawan about the money that has been collected from last year, and is that tax money collected from January 2024? Mr. Carawan stated that it is money collected since July 2024, this fiscal year.

Commissioner White asked County Manager Vaughan to find out how much tax money has been collected.

Commissioner White stated that NET was cut substantially but the budget states \$950,000. Mr. Carawan stated that was the approved budget. County Manager Vaughan stated that the figure went back up during budget time. \$747,00 was the original goal but salary increases were given and it raised the budget to \$950,000. The Board at that time stated that salary increases in EMS were needed so therefore NET should get increases as well to match surrounding counties salaries. Mr. Carawan stated that EMS and NET employees received a \$3 per hour increase in pay while other employees received a 3% increase in 2024.

Commissioner Saunders asked if NET was making a profit? County Manager Vaughan stated that when the county took on NET, the idea was to make money and help offset the cost of EMS. Since that time, in some years it has but in recent years it has not. It is being monitored now to determine if NET is actually making money.

Commissioner Saunders asked how many years has it been monitored? County Manager Vaughan stated that it has been on the radar since he has been here. Commissioner Saunders asked how long have you been here? County Manager Vaughan stated 5 years. Commissioner Saunders asked has NET made any money in 5 years? County Manager Vaughan stated that it has only made money a

couple of years but majority of the years that it has been in operation, it has not.

Strategic Planning by Robin Payne

Ms. Payne stated that the NC America 250 Grant is due on February 28, 2025. The grant is for \$10,000 and will be used for the America 250 NC Bertie County's Black and Native Patriots of the Revolutionary War event scheduled for October 3 and 4, 2025 to be held at the Blue Jay Recreation Center in Indian Woods. Ms. Payne asked the Board to approve the Resolution of Bertie County Recognizing and Approving of the Bertie County Official America 250 NC Committee.

Commissioner Saunders made a **MOTION** to approve the Resolution of Bertie County Recognizing and Approving of the Bertie County Official America 250 NC Committee. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

Ms. Payne asked the Board to approve Deal Engineering to receive the award for the drainage modeling for the Flood Resiliency Project 7.3.4 Upper Cashie River Basin for which is north of Hoggard's Mill. Ms. Payne stated that the grant for this project is from BRIC for \$112,000 and the county has already set aside \$37,500 eighteen month ago for the match.

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to approve Deal Engineering to receive the award for drainage modeling for the Flood Resiliency Project 7.3.4 Upper Cashie River Basin. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-0** vote.

Equity Films Update by Patricia Ferguson

Mrs. Ferguson informed the Board that Equity Films is making positive impacts on individuals who are making short films. Mrs. Ferguson stated that she received an email thanking Equity Films for choosing their short film to be a part of the Equity Film Festival. Since that time, the individual has created an additional four short films that is screening at other festivals. Mrs. Ferguson mentioned to the Board that Chowan University has agreed to host a Film Festival. Mrs. Ferguson proposed to the Board to consider an eight county Regional Film Commission and invite the counties to have a conservation.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner White made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3)(4)(6). The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The Board unanimously moved to enter closed.

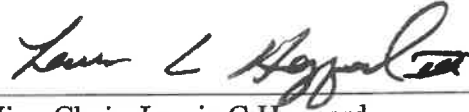
Commissioner Roberson made a **MOTION** to re-enter into Open Session. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The Board unanimously moved to re-enter into Open Session.

There were no comments from the Board.

Vice-Chair Hoggard stated that there were some numbers and other things that the Board reviewed during Closed Session concerning EMS and NET. There were no decisions made. The Board will continue to review the information presented and will respond back on this matter during the March 17, 2025 Board Meeting.

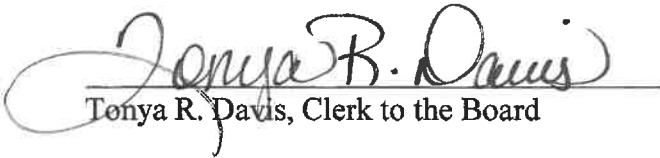
ADJOURNMENT

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



Vice-Chair, Lewis C Hoggard
Bertie County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Tonya R. Davis, Clerk to the Board