

**Windsor, North Carolina
February 3, 2025
REGULAR SESSION**

The Bertie County Commissioners met in Regular Session 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: Chair, Corey Ballance, Sr., District III
Vice-Chair, Lewis Hoggard, III, District I
Ronald "Ron" Roberson, District V
Vivian Saunders, District IV
Michael White, District II

Staff Present: County Manager, Juan Vaughan, II
Assistant County Manager, David Scarborough
Assistant County Attorney, Jonathan Huddleston
Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis
Information Technology Network Administrator, DaShawn Clark

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ballance called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jason Duvall with Carolina Rebuilding Ministry updated the Board on the progress and accomplishments that his organization has had on repairing homes in Bertie and Washington Counties. Carolina Rebuilding Ministry set a target a year ago to repair 60 homes but has actually repaired a total of 90 homes with the help of 3,000 volunteers. \$1.2 million dollars of economic revenue was received within the two counties that Carolina Rebuilding Ministry serves. The Good Shepherd Food Pantry also shares the facility with the ministry at the old Southwestern School building. Executive Director of The Good Shepherd Food Pantry, Debra Freeman shared with the Board that they are helping an average of 800 families a month. The Food Pantry provides over 300 backpack foods for elementary and middle school students and over 150 food boxes are delivered to residences throughout the county per week. Mr. Duvall stated that he had reached out to Robin Payne concerning grant opportunities through CDBG

Block Grant for repairs of the Building 100 roof at the Southwestern property. The grant will provide funds to Carolina Rebuilding Ministry to repair the roof at the Southwestern building. Mr. Duvall asked the Board for permission to move forward with the grant.

Mike Petruncio and James Caddy with the North Carolina Forestry Service updated the Board with their different program areas and information about their upcoming proposed budget. Mr. Caddy informed the Board that Bertie County has 350,000 acres of forest land in Bertie County with 315,000 acres of that land being private. The County has 12 fire departments, 5 NC Forestry Service personnel in the county (1 County Ranger, 2 Assistant County Rangers, a Forest Fire Operator, and a Smoke Chaser). With Bertie being one of the largest counties in North Carolina both in size and in work load with the forestry acreage, the 5 personnel are greatly needed. On average, there are approximately 33 forest fires per year in Bertie County. Mr. Petruncio provided the Board with a copy of the proposed budget, stating that last year's budget was approved at \$171,000 without a truck. This year's requested budget is \$211,177 with the truck included.

APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

1. Presentation of Certificates to the Powellsville Volunteer Fire Department

Chair Ballance presented Certificates of Appreciation to the Powellsville Volunteer Fire Department personnel (Ralph Brinkley, David Drew, David Powell, and Edward Ward) who voluntarily drove the donated campers to Avery County, NC and provided the families with supplies after the devastation of Hurricane Helene.

2. Request to Waive County Permit Fees to Install a Fire Hydrant by Ralph Brinkley

Ralph Brinkley of the Powellsville Volunteer Fire Department informed the Board that there are actually two requests from the Fire Department. 1) The request to waive county permit fees to build a Fire House that will be located in Hexalena intersection area. 2) The request for the County to incur the cost to install a fire hydrant at the location of the new Fire House once built in Hexalena. The cost of the parts for the fire hydrant will be around \$1,500 which does not include labor cost.

3. 2025 Edition of Crossroads Magazine by Anna Phipps

Anna Phipps from the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald attended the meeting via Zoom. Ms. Phipps provided the Board with a copy of the Bertie County advertisement page from the 2024 edition of Crossroads Magazine along with the pricing guidelines. Ms. Phipps stated that there will be 5,000 copies of the magazine produced and will be inserted in the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald in February 2026. Ms. Phipps asked the Board if they are still interested in placing the same advertisement in the 2025 edition at the cost of \$1,615.

4. Report of 2024 Unpaid Real and Personal Property Taxes and Order to Advertise the 2024 Tax Liens by Jodie Rhea

Jodie Rhea stated that as of January 27, 2025, the total of unpaid 2024 Unpaid Real and Personal Property Taxes is \$1,194,312.48, which includes \$1,037,523.16 for Real Property and \$156,789.32 for Personal Property. Mr. Rhea asked the Board to approve the Order to Advertise the 2024 Tax Liens. Commissioner White asked Mr. Rhea to provide the Board with the total amount collected in 2023. Mr. Rhea stated that he will provide that information to the Commissioners via email.

5. 2028 County Wide Reappraisal Procedure by Jodie Rhea

Jodie Rhea reminded the Board that at the January 13, 2025 Commissioners Meeting that he had presented 3 types of reappraisal procedures (1) Full Measure & List \$625,000 - \$650,000, (2) Walk Around \$530,000 \$575,000, and (3) Street View \$340,000 - \$400,000. Mr. Rhea asked the Board which type of appraisal they would like to move with for the 2028 County Wide Reappraisal Procedure.

6. Special Projects Update from Project Consultant Robin Payne

Robin Payne updated the Board on the Special Projects related to Bertie County including, Flood Resiliency BRICK Grant, Tourism Development Authority (TDA), Outdoor NC, Destination Bertie, Blue Jay's grant received (\$30,000 for America 250), Blue Jay and Indian Woods main county event in 2025, Bertie Beach, and the Strategic Plan.

7. Update on Lewiston Woodville Water System Replacement by Ricky Spivey

Ricky Spivey was not present during the meeting. The update will be presented at the February 24, 2025 Work Session.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. Appointment to the Bertie Martin Regional Jail Commission

At the Boards request, this item will be moved to the March meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve Register of Deeds December 2024 Fees Report

Commissioner White made the **MOTION** to approve the Register of Deeds December 2024 Fees Report. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

2. Approve Town of Aulander Resolution to Adopt Bertie County Ordinances for Solid Waste Management and Junkyards and Abandoned Motor Vehicles

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Town of Aulander Resolution to Adopt Bertie County Ordinances for Solid Waste Management and Junkyards and Abandoned Motor Vehicles. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **4-1** vote. Commissioner Saunders was a nay vote.

3. Approve the Request to Waive County Permit Fees to Install a Fire Hydrant

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the Waiver of County Permit Fees to build the Fire House in Hexalena. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

At the Boards request, the approval to Install a Fire Hydrant in Hexalena will be moved to the next Commissioners Meeting.

4. Approve the 2025 Edition of Crossroads Magazine

Vice-Chair Hoggard made the **MOTION** to approve the 2025 Edition of Crossroads Magazine. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

5. Approve Meeting Minutes for December 2, 2024, January 13, 2025, and Closed Session Minutes for January 13, 2025

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the Meeting Minutes for December 2, 2024, January 13, 2025, and Closed Session Minutes for January 13, 2025. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

6. Approve 2024 Unpaid Real and Personal Property Taxes and Order to Advertise the 2024 Tax Liens

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the 2024 Unpaid Real and Personal Property Taxes and Order to Advertise the 2024 Tax Liens. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

7. Approve the 2028 County Wide Reappraisal Procedure

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve 2028 County Wide Reappraisal Procedure – Full Measure and List. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Roberson. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

8. Approve Lobbyist Steinburg and Stancil contracts

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Lobbyist Steinburg and Stancil Contracts. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Saunders. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 3-2 vote. Vice-Chair Hoggard and Commissioner White were nay votes.

9. Budget Amendments

David Scarborough stated that the funds received from the EMS Grant of \$5.5 million for new fire trucks and construction plans are in two separate accounts currently and needs to be moved into individual accounts for better tracking. The locations of the construction and/or fire trucks will be Kelford Fire Department, Lewiston Woodville Fire Department, Midway/Merry Hill, and Windsor Fire Department.

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the Budget Amendments. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 5-0 vote.

10. Carolina Rebuilders Ministry

Commissioner Roberson made the **MOTION** to approve the Carolina Rebuilding Ministry to move forward with the grant for the Southwestern roof repair. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Vice-Chair Hoggard. The **MOTION PASSED** with a 5-0 vote.

*****OTHER ITEMS***** **DISCUSSION AGENDA (D)**

1. Discussion of next Work Session

County Manager Vaughan suggested February 24, 2025 for the next Work Session. The Board agreed to hold a Work Session on February 24, 2025 at 10:00 AM in the Commissioners Meeting Room.

2. NACo 2025 Legislative conference in Washington, DC March 1-4, 2025

County Manager Vaughan reminded the Commissioners of the upcoming NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, DC on March 1-4, 2025.

3. Discussion of March 3, 2025 Commissioners Meeting

The Board agreed to cancel the March 3, 2025 Commissioners Meeting due to the absence of Commissioners attending the NACo Legislative on March 1-4, 2025. The Board agreed to hold a Work Session on March 17, 2025 at 10:00 AM in the Community Meeting Room.

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to approve the cancellation of the March 3, 2025 Commissioners Meeting and approved a Work Session on March 17, 2025 at 10:00 AM in the

Community Meeting Room. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.

4. Project Updates by David Scarborough

David Scarborough informed the Board that Bertie County was awarded \$5,500,000 from the NC Department of Public Safety Disaster & Relief and Recovery/Mitigation/Resiliency Directed Grant. The Scope of Work addressing this grant award is to expand fire response and evacuation capabilities throughout Bertie County, addressing locations that have hazardous materials within the County. With limited response capabilities in the areas of the Ashland Corporation and Perdue Farms areas, the need to enhance emergency equipment and buildings in these areas are deemed vital. This grant provides both emergency equipment and buildings; the equipment to enhance response to these facilities to protect citizens and contain emergencies until further regional and state resources can respond, and the buildings will assist with the housing of the equipment & staff to be better strategically placed. It will also help with the emergency response times of daily emergencies. The grant was awarded as follows:

Lewiston Woodville Fire Department: \$1.5 million to address a building that will house both Fire and EMS equipment and personnel. Currently the closest EMS station is in Aulander; this will decrease response times by up to 10 minutes in this area. \$500,000 to purchase a new fire truck more suited to address hazardous suppression and response capabilities.

Kelford Fire Department: \$500,000 to purchase a new fire truck more suited to address hazardous suppression and response capabilities.

Midway/Merry Hill: \$750,000 to address a building that would house both Fire and EMS equipment and personnel. This would reduce EMS response time by up to 10 minutes. \$500,000 to address a new fire truck more suited to address hazardous suppression and response capabilities. \$750,000 to address an additional building to house a fire truck situated more closely to the Avoca, Occano, San Souci and Cooper Hill areas. This will put that area into a protected class which should drastically reduce insurance rates and potentially boost the economic development potential of that area.

Windsor Fire Department: \$1,000,000 to address a new fire truck that will increase fire suppression and technical rescue support to the County at large. Windsor FD is the Primary Mutual Aid Department for both Merry Hill & Lewiston.

In 2016, the Bertie County Board of Commissioners identified the construction of an outdoor basketball court located at the Recreation Center as one of the priorities for the then engaged grant writers McAdams & Associates. However, no advancement was made regarding this project at that time. As part of the funding from the Office of State Budget & Management (OSBM) in 2023, the Board allocated \$58,613 towards this project, and in March of 2024 an RFP was posted requesting proposals. No proposals were received. When the Board was asked what direction they wished to take, the consensus was to delay the discussion of next steps to a future work session. At the October 21, 2024 work session, after discussions on how to encourage vendors to submit proposals and make this project into a reality, a new RFP was developed and posted. On December 19, 2025, proposals for the Bertie County Construction of Outdoor Basketball Court were received. Review of proposals were held until the first of January

due to the holidays. Two proposals were received, from A.R. Chesson Construction and Sport Court Carolina, Inc. Both proposals are higher than the funding that has been allocated to this project. Administration is once again requesting direction from the Board on how it wishes to move forward with this project.

The Board directed Mr. Scarborough to contact the two proposed bidders to inform them that the County would not be moving forward at this time with the construction of the basketball court until funds are available.

In FY21, Bertie County received \$1.8 million in ARPA funds. The Board of Commissioners allocated \$300,000 towards construction of a new animal shelter. In June of 2022, DWG Architects, PLLC was selected to provide an assessment of needs, architectural designs and construction management. In March 2023, \$208,387 was allocated by the Board towards the animal shelter construction from additional funds received from the State. In March 2023, the Needs assessment & preliminary designs were presented to the Board. After the presentation, the Board expressed a desire to reduce the plans in order to address the concerns related to costs. In August 2023, the Board of Commissioners directed Administration to contact surrounding counties to address regionalizing animal shelter needs. After reaching out to Martin, Hertford, Chowan, Halifax, Washington and Tyrell Counties, it was determined that at this time no County was able to consider this proposal. October 2023, a construction bid request for proposal (RFP) was posted by Bertie County. Three bids were received, ranging from \$1.3 million to \$2.9 million. In April 2024, in a work session the Board discussed the next steps and /or other options.

The project was put on hold until the County could determine if it would receive more funding from the State. September 2024, DWG Architects was asked to once again review Tyrell County shelter plans to determine if this design could be updated and provide a more affordable options to t h e County. After review and discussion with Tyrell County Animal Shelter staff, this could be done, but there were concerns noted that would require adaptation changes. The cost of redesigning Tyrell County Shelter to address Bertie County requests would be an additional \$48,000, which could be supported with funds allocated to this project.

Chair Ballance asked Mr. Scarborough what the requirements are from the State to stay in compliance? Mr. Scarborough stated that the State is not too concerned with the building at this time but the up keep of the building and having the staff to perform the up keep on a daily basis. The State is also recommending a HVAC and ventilation system be installed. Mr. Scarborough informed the Board that the chain link fencing needs replacement.

Chair Ballance asked if hiring part-time employees to help with the up keep of the shelter would be beneficial? Mr. Scarborough said that part-time employees would be helpful but repairs to the shelter are necessary. Chair Ballance stated that some temporary fixes to the shelter could be done until funding could be found to get the shelter in compliance. With the temporary fixes to the shelter, there may be available funds left over to add to the basketball court.

Commissioner White asked how many employees work at the shelter? Mr. Scarborough stated that there are three full-time employees, 2 Animal Control Officers who patrol the county, pick up animals and look for violations and 1 Shelter Manager who feeds the animals, cleans the shelter twice daily, walks/exercises the animals, and processes daily paperwork. Commissioner Roberson stated that part-time employees are not necessary since the Animal Control Officers

should be helping the Shelter Manager at the site.

Mr. Scarborough asked the Board on the direction he should take concerning the contract with DWG Architects, PLLC. The Board stated that they would have that discussion during the February 24, 2025 Work Session.

Chair Ballance thanked Mr. Scarborough for the updates.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Roberson

Commissioner Roberson stated that during the recently attended NCACC Leading Your County Governing Board training, which he found to be very informative that included communication skills and respect for each other.

Vice-Chair Hoggard

Vice-Chair Hoggard stated that he attended the training as well and gathered information about General Status.

Commissioner White

Commissioner White stated that in reference to the citizens' concerns about the turbine lights in Chowan County, TimberMill has agreed to install the ADLS system which will prohibit the lights from flashing until an aircraft has started approaching the area. The installation will take about 6 to 9 months to complete.

Commissioner White asked when will the NET (Non-Emergency Transport) update and the Audit update take place. County Manager Vaughan stated that the updates will take place during the February 24, 2024 Work Session.

Commissioner White asked about the open Assistant Finance Director position. County Manager Vaughan stated that currently the position is still open and since the Finance Department has 2 part-time personnel helping out along with contracted services with Greg Isley, CPA, PA in the payroll department, that once the department is caught up then the position will be posted.

Commissioner White also asked to see how much has been spent with Greg Isley, CPA, PA.

Commissioner Saunders

Commissioner Saunders sends her appreciation and thanks to the women of the Occano and Merry Hill area for donating books to the Alternative School Library in Lewiston.

Chair Ballance

Chair Ballance stated that he attended the January 21, 2025 meeting at the Pool House concerning the turbine lights. Chair Ballance heard and saw the concerns that the citizens' have in that area. Chair Ballance asked how many Paramedics do we have in the County. John Rawls,

EMS Director, responded that the County has approximately 25-30 Paramedics with several working per shift and are stationed in several areas through out the county.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT

County Manager had no report.

ATTORNEY REPORT

Assistant County Attorney Huddleston had no report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ronald Wesson mentioned to the Board that the two-year contract with Bob Steinburg and Jackson Stancil can be terminated after one year.

James Lee asked the Board to consider if there will be any other charges concerning the reappraisal process that was approved since someone will be actually walk around properties in the county.

CLOSED SESSION


Closed Session was not needed.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Saunders made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Commissioner White. The **MOTION PASSED** with a **5-0** vote.


Chair Corey Ballance, Sr.
Berrie County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:


Tonya R. Davis, Clerk to the Board