

Bertie County, North Carolina
May 19, 2025
COMMISSIONERS' WORK SESSION

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for a Work Session on May 19, 2025 at 10:00AM inside the Commissioners Meeting Room, 106 Dundee Street, Windsor, NC. 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
 Finance Director, Willie Mack Carawan
 Clerk to the Board, Tonya Davis
 Information Technology Director, Joseph Wilkes
 Network Administrator, Dashawn Clark

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ballance called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Bertie County Budget Review

The Work Session focused on reviewing the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. County Manager Vaughan provided an overview of key budget documents, including capital outlay requests, personnel salary requests, and new/reclassified positions. County Manager Vaughan discussed various departmental requests, such as equipment purchases, facility upgrades, and salary increases. The Board raised concerns about Sheriff's Department salaries being lower than surrounding counties and discussed the possibility of increasing part-time Recreation salaries. County Manager Vaughan explained that some requested items were not included in the budget due to limited funds, but they would consider making adjustments as they reviewed the budget line by line.

The Board reviewed revenue projections, including taxes, sales tax, fees, and other sources. There were questions about some revenue projections, particularly for emergency medical services, which are projected higher than previous years. The Board expressed concerns about ensuring revenue projections are accurate to avoid budget issues later. The Board also discussed the timeline for the upcoming property tax reassessment, which will not impact revenues until 2028. The review then moves on to examining expenditures in the proposed budget.

Bertie County Budget Adjustments

The Board of Commissioners discussed budget adjustments, focusing on reducing travel expenses and maintaining employee training funds. The Board agreed to decrease the Governing Body's travel budget from \$50,000 to \$45,000 and keep the employee training budget at \$15,000. The Board also expressed concerns about the County Lobbyist's performance and lack of regular updates, considering whether to terminate his contract early. Additionally, the Board reviewed various budget line items, including equipment purchases, contracted services, and insurance costs, while questioning some discrepancies in the financial projections.

Tax Department Budget Increase

The budget discussion focuses on the Tax Department's proposed increase of \$18,000, primarily in contracted services. Tax Administrator, Jody Rhea, recommended increasing the budget from \$70,000 to \$78,000 due to more construction requiring additional assessment visits. The contract service audits for business personal audits have doubled from \$12,000 to \$25,000. The department currently has seven employees, and County Manager Vaughan suggested exploring the possibility of absorbing a position through attrition if a vacancy occurs in the future, while emphasizing that no one is being fired.

Elections Budget and Staffing Review

The budget discussion for the Elections Department revealed a significant increase of over \$20,000, primarily due to rising election costs and new mandates. The Board discussed the reclassification of a position to Deputy Director of Elections, with an approximate salary range of \$35,000 to \$37,000. There was confusion and debate over the budget numbers, particularly regarding salaries, FICA, and retirement allocations. The Board expressed concerns that the proposed budget may be insufficient based on current year-to-date figures and historical data. County Manager Vaughan agreed to review and clarify the exact numbers for salaries and associated benefits.

Elections Budget Review and Adjustments

The discussion focuses on budget discrepancies in the Elections Department and Register of Deeds. Concerns were raised about underbudgeting for retirement and FICA, with actual expenses exceeding budgeted amounts. County Manager Vaughan agreed to review salary-related line items and consider adjustments. The Board also discussed potential cuts to travel expenses and examine maintenance contracts for voting machines. Questions arise about a \$3,000 salary increase in the Register of Deeds department and a large gap between year-to-date and projected expenses for contract services. The finance team commits to re-examining the budget figures and consulting department heads for clarification on specific line items.

County Budget Review and Cuts

The focus was on reviewing the county budget, particularly examining line items for various departments. The Board discussed discrepancies in projected versus actual spending, especially concerning salaries and retirement benefits. The Board identified the need to cut costs, including reviewing contractor services and exploring options to reduce expenses on equipment and software upgrades.


The conversation ended with an agreement to track changes and determine any necessary adjustments to bring the budget back into balance.

RECESS

The Board agreed to recess and reconvene on Thursday, May 22, 2025 at 10:00AM to continue the budget review, with a focus on making necessary cuts while ensuring essential services are maintained.


Chair, Corey Ballance, Sr.
Bertie County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:


Tonya R. Davis, Clerk to the Board