

**Windsor, North Carolina**  
**May 5, 2014**  
**Regular Meeting**

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled meeting at 10:00AM in the Commissioners Room located at 106 Dundee Street Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: J. Wallace Perry, Chairman  
Charles L. Smith, Vice-Chairman  
Rick Harrell  
John Trent  
Ronald "Ron" Wesson

Absent: None

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer  
Clerk to the Board Sarah Seredni  
Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston  
Network Administrator Scott Pearce  
Finance Director William Roberson  
Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper  
Emergency Medical Services Director Matt Leicester

Media members present included Thadd White of the Bertie Ledger-Advance.

Other staff members present for a portion of the meeting included: Planning Developer Traci White, Department of Social Services Linda Speller, Cooperative Extension Richard Rhodes, and Register of Deeds Annie Wilson.

Chairman Perry opened the meeting and thanked all of those present for their attendance.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Vice Chairman Smith led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

**BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW**

The Board convened as the Board of Equalization and Review as directed by Chairman Perry.

Mr. Phil Hoggard of the Bertie County Tax Department was present during this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Hoggard informed the Board that the County had not received any property tax appeals.

Members of the public that were present had no appeals to submit

Chairman Perry adjourned as the Board of Equalization and Review.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Miles Davis, Chairman of the Bertie County ABC Board, updated the Board on the “Save a Life Day” tour that will be taking place on Friday, May 9, 2014 at Bertie High School from 8:00am-2:00pm.

Mr. Davis stated that he was not aware that a Resolution would need to be submitted, but requested that the Board still proclaim Friday, May 9, 2014 “Save a Life Day” in Bertie County.

Commissioner Harrell made a **MOTION** to proclaim Friday, May 9, 2014 as “Save a Life Day” in Bertie County. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously

### **APPOINTMENTS**

#### **Bertie County Public Schools budget proposal by Superintendent Elaine White**

Superintendent White, and other Bertie County Public Schools representatives, approached the Board regarding the BCPS budget proposal for FY 2014-2015.

Ms. White presented a PowerPoint detailing the current details of the school system, as well as new initiatives that the Board of Education would like to implement in the new fiscal year.

Mrs. White explained the technology initiatives for the high school and middle school which are funded with a Golden Leaf Foundation grant, in addition to the use of tablet devices for the four elementary schools.

Mrs. White also discussed the State’s School Safety Act requiring alarm systems needed at each school.

Superintendent White stated that the BCPS would be receiving a total of \$17,300,850.00 from the State.

In addition to the State planning allotment, Mrs. White explained that the school system must absorb budget reversions, or cuts of \$1,646,577 including significant reductions in low wealth and small school funds, and the elimination of 5.75 teaching positions.

Additionally, the school system is requesting an amount of \$3,003,000 from the County which is consistent with the sum requested in FY 2012-2013.

NOTE: The FY 2013-2014 County appropriation for school current expense funding is \$2,503,000.00 and the funding requested for FY 2014-2015 represents a \$500,000 increase.

Mrs. White also reported that the budget impact for the implementation of the new charter school is a funding cut of \$5,986 per pupil for state and local dollars.

Superintendent White reported that in 2014-2015, the Bertie County Schools will be using federal funds to provide a free breakfast and lunch program for every child, and that 64% of the children currently qualify for this program.

A capital outlay proposal amount of \$523,976 was also requested by the school system, in addition to the proposed use of \$900,000 in fund balance reserves for a new bus garage.

In follow up to a question from Commissioner Harrell at the last meeting, regarding the option of contracting out and bidding for vehicle maintenance services, Mrs. White indicated that she is in receipt of a letter from the NC Department of Public Instruction regarding this issue. Mrs. White reported that she would forward this letter to County Manager Sauer.

**NC Forest Service's updates for fiscal year 2012-2013 by Bertie County Ranger, Mike Hoggard**

Bertie County Ranger, Mike Hoggard, was present for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Hoggard stated that in 2012, there was a total of 50 fire calls in the County with 25 of those being related to wild fires.

Mr. Hoggard stated that the largest wild fire occurred off NC 11 HWY and consisted of only woodland areas in which local resources were utilized to contain it.

He also commended the local volunteer fire departments for their continued support as they are a great asset to the NC Forest Service.

Mr. Hoggard also touches on other topics such as Forest Management, Fire Prevention, Information and Education, Water Quality Protection, and Urban Assistance and Pest Control.

Chairman Perry commended the NC Forest Service for their dedication to the County and thanked them for their "first class" service.

## **Bertie County Cooperative Extension – 100 years in North Carolina**

Richard Rhodes of Bertie County Cooperative Extension was present for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Rhodes presented a PowerPoint detailing the history and accomplishments of the North Carolina's Cooperative Extension over the last 100 years. The 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary is officially on May 8, 2014.

### **DISCUSSION AGENDA**

Chairman Perry adjusted the provided agenda in order to accommodate a presenter traveling from Raleigh, NC.

#### **Health Insurance Options – Donna Nixon of Pierce Group Benefits**

Donna Nixon of Pierce Group Benefits was present to make recommendations to the Board regarding an action plan for reducing health care costs while still utilizing the current provider of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

Ms. Nixon provided her recommendation as well as answered questions from the Board.

Ms. Nixon also reiterated to the Board that the current participation in the Flexible Spending Accounts is low, and explained that some employees have been deterred from participating due to the \$4.00 per month (\$48.00 per year) Administration fee associated with the account.

She stated that the Board could consider covering that fee for employees in order to increase the amount of participants in the program.

Ms. Nixon also reiterated to the Board the need for an urgent care facility in the County, due to the high cost of emergency room utilization at the hospital.

Ms. Nixon recommended, and the County Manager concurred, that Alternative #2 provides the lowest out of pocket cost for employees, maintains pharmacy co-pays at the current level, and holds the emergency room co-pay expense to \$300.00 per visit.

After some discussion, Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to accept the recommendation of Pierce Group Benefits on the Alternative #2 health plan. Vice Chairman Smith **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Additionally, Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** for the County to take over the \$4.00 per month fee (\$48.00 per year, per participating employee) for the Flexible Spending Accounts in order to increase participation in the program. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

### **EMS Advisory Council**

The Board tabled this matter until further notice.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **Approve minutes for Regular Session 4-21-14**

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes for Regular Session 4-21-14. Vice Chairman Smith **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Accept minutes for Closed Session 4-21-14**

Per a request by the County Manager on behalf of the County Attorney, the minutes for Closed Session 4-21-14 were deferred for approval until further notice.

### **Accept Register of Deeds Fees Report – April 2014**

County Manager Sauer recommended this item for approval.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to accept the Register of Deeds Fees Report for April 2014. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION AGENDA**

### **Update from the Office of the State Fire Marshall by Emergency Services Director, Mitch Cooper**

Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper informed the Board of a recent report he received from the Office of the State Fire Marshall, which detailed the recent fire inspections for each department. Two departments had corrective action items noted.

Mr. Cooper stated that the State allows each department to correct any errors within a 12 month period.

Mr. Cooper informed the Board that all errors at both departments had since been corrected.

## **EMS Requests – Windsor Station Lease, Bertie/RCCC preceptor contract, Equipment**

### **Windsor Station Lease**

Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston recommended that the Board approve the proposed lease with the Town of Windsor and either: have the lease be recorded at the Register of Deeds office, or to record a memorandum of lease. For either the lease or the memorandum to be recorded it would have to be signed and notarized.

Commissioner Trent asked Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper about the flood insurance at the current building and wondered about coverage of the County's equipment.

Finance Director William Roberson was called upon to investigate the insurance policy to determine if it covers equipment.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to move forward with the Assistant County Attorney's recommendation that the lease with the Town of Windsor be approved and that the signed and notarized lease or a memorandum of lease be recorded. Vice Chairman Smith **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Bertie/RCCC preceptor contract**

Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper presented the latest contract between the County and Roanoke-Chowan Community College in regards to the ride-along policy.

Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to accept the contract with the listed changes. Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Equipment**

Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper and Emergency Medical Services Director Matt Leicester approached the Board regarding an upcoming auction involving equipment that the County will need to prepare for non-emergency transports.

Mr. Cooper and Mr. Leicester requested a total of \$41,800.00 for various items that will be sold at the upcoming auction.

Chairman Perry expressed concern for revenue and the rather constant requests from the EMS Department regarding equipment and other needs stating.

Commissioner Wesson asked if the current figure included auction fees.

Mr. Leicester stated that it did not include auction fees.

Mr. Cooper informed the Board that the auction isn't expected to present a lot of competition amongst the other local non-emergency transport providers as they already have well equipped vehicles to provide those services.

Mr. Leicester and Mr. Cooper stated that they were confident that they could secure this equipment for the stated amount, and could possibly receive it for less than requested.

Mr. Cooper also provided a detailed set of budget options to the Board and requested direction on where the EMS Department should go further.

After some discussion, the Board stated that feedback would be given during Budget Work Sessions as the Board would like the opportunity to digest the information provided by the EMS Department.

In regards to the equipment and the upcoming auction, Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to allocate and cap the spending of the EMS Department at \$41,800. Vice Chairman Smith **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Assistant County Attorney Huddleston requested that the Board also make a formal motion regarding the purchase of the two former First Med ambulances currently being used by the County. The County offered Capital One \$25,000 for the two vehicles, and the offer has since been accepted.

Commissioner Trent made a **MOTION** to purchase the two ambulance vehicles from Capital One for a total sum of \$25,000. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Mr. Cooper informed the Board of recent correspondence he had received from another EMS billing company.

He stated that during various conversations with this company, the County may be eligible to receive a higher reimbursement rate than with the current provider.

After a lengthy discussion, the Board requested that Mr. Cooper contact the alternate company, and have them make a presentation to the Board regarding their services.

### **Review existing County policy regarding road signs and renaming roads**

The Board recognized Diane Spivey to speak regarding the current road sign and renaming roads policy in the County.

Mrs. Spivey, wife of deceased Isaiah Spivey, requested that the Board consider renaming "Spivey Lane" to "Isaiah Spivey Lane" in order to honor her husband, if at all possible.

Due to recent construction, the original “Spivey Lane” road sign was knocked down, and has not yet been replaced.

The Board asked for Mrs. Spivey to stay in touch with the County Manager as the Board will review the policy and will have an answer for her soon.

### **Website posting of Commissioner meeting audio recordings to enhance public access to meetings**

After some discussion regarding the posting of Board meetings to the County website, Commissioner Wesson made a **MOTION** to post the recordings to the County website on the condition that there were no additional costs to do so. Vice Chairman Smith **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

### **Preliminary Budget Discussion**

County Manager Sauer reminded the Board that budget review is ongoing, and in light of discussions at a recent Board meeting regarding tax rates in surrounding counties, he provided each Commissioner with a copy of the NC Department of Revenue’s tax rate summary for all counties and municipalities, including fire district taxes and other special district taxes.

County Manager Sauer noted that Martin, Halifax, and Northampton counties which have various additional layers of property taxes for fire districts and school districts. Bertie County, by comparison, has the equivalent of twos on the tax rate built in to the general county tax rate for fire departments, and imposed no additional fire district taxes.

Mr. Sauer also provided each Commissioner with a copy of the 2013 Local School Finance Study which ranks all 100 counties in North Carolina by the level of per pupil funding for school current expense, capital outlay, and debt service. The report also ranks counties on their ability to pay based on tax base and their individual relative effort. Bertie’s ability to pay ranking is 97<sup>th</sup> out of 100 counties, while its relative effort is 8<sup>th</sup> in the State.

Sauer also noted that the School Superintendent’s budget presentation requesting current expense funding equal to the FY 2012-2013 budget reflects a \$500,000 increase as compared with 2013-2014 budget ordinance, or the need to increase the tax rate by four cents.

County Manager Sauer then reminded the Board that 364 days earlier, the Board was presented with a budget plan requiring a tax rate of ninety-eight (\$0.98) cents in order to fund the department and agency request for FY 2013-2014. Ultimately the Board approved a budget with a six cent tax increase, and an appropriation of \$500,000 from fund balance reserves.

Sauer suggested that using \$500,000 from the County’s reserves to pay annual operational costs is not sustainable. Furthermore, receipts from the regional landfill host fees are down nearly \$200,000 for the current year.



Sauer reminded the Board that as the budget officer for the County, he is compelled by North Carolina General Statutes to present a balance budget by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Chairman Perry urged the Commissioner to look at all of our spending because this will be a very tough budget with difficult decisions to make.

**Consideration of NCSU Forestry and Environmental Resources proposal to conduct a resource supply analysis**

After some discussion, the Board came to a consensus to table this matter so that it could be discussed during approaching Budget Work Sessions.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS**

There were no Commissioners Reports.

**COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORTS**

County Manager Sauer informed the Board that at a recent meeting, approval was given for the County to donate \$500.00 to the Relay for Life event in May 2014. In addition, Mr. Sauer stated that the event organizers were still in need of a proclamation making May 2014 "Relay for Life Month."

The Board was presented with a resolution.

Commissioner Trent made a MOTION for the Board to declare May 2014 as "Relay for Life Month." Vice Chairman Smith SECONDED the motion. The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

The Resolution reads as follows:



**BERTIE COUNTY**

106 DUNDEE STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 530  
WINDSOR, NORTH CAROLINA 27983  
(252) 794-5300  
FAX: (252) 794-5327  
WWW.CO.BERTIE.NC.US

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
J. WALLACE PERRY, Chairman  
CHARLES L. SMITH, Vice-Chairman  
RICK HARRELL  
JOHN TRENT  
RONALD "RON" WESSON

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**  
SCOTT T. SAUER, County Manager  
SARAH SEREDNI, Clerk to the Board

**AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY  
RELAY FOR LIFE PROCLAMATION  
BERTIE COUNTY 2014**

**WHEREAS**, the American Cancer Society is a community based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer through research, education, advocacy and service; and

**WHEREAS**, 140 new cases of cancer are projected to occur in Bertie County in 2014, and 52 Bertie County citizens are expected to die from cancer this year; and

**WHEREAS**, racial and ethnic cancer disparities exist across the entire cancer spectrum from primary prevention to palliative care; and

**WHEREAS**, Relay For Life provides vital funding for cancer research and cancer control programs in Bertie County; and


**WHEREAS**, Relay For Life, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, will celebrate and honor, Bertie County citizens and their families that have been affected by cancer.

**NOW THEREFORE**, We the Bertie County Board of Commissioners do hereby proclaim the month of May 2014 as Relay For Life Month throughout the county and encourage all Bertie County residents to recognize the American Cancer Society's many contributions to improving the quality of life for all of our citizens; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that We the Bertie County Board of Commissioners do hereby encourage all citizens to join the celebrations and activities of Relay For Life on May 16 & 17, 2014.

This the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2014.

  
J. Wallace Perry, Chairman

  
Sarah Seredni, Clerk to the Board

## COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

There were no County Attorney reports.

## CLOSED SESSION

As per recommendation from the County Attorney, Vice Chairman Smith made a **MOTION** to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations. Commissioner Wesson **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

The Board goes into Closed Session.

Vice Chairman Smith made a **MOTION** to return to Open Session. Commissioner Wesson and Commissioner Trent **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

## OPEN SESSION

No public was present.

## ADJOURN

Chairman Perry adjourned the meeting at 1:20pm.