

March 7, 2016

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session on Monday, March 7, 2016 at 6:00 PM at Washington County Union School's Multi-Purpose Room, 37 Mill Pond Road, Roper, NC. Commissioners Johnson, Manning, Phelps, Sexton and Walker were present. Also present were County Manager Willie Mack Carawan, Jr., Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett, Finance Officer Frank Milazi and County Attorney/Assistant County Manager Curtis Potter.

Reverend Harry White gave the invocation. Washington County Union Middle School student Elvado Liang led the pledge of allegiance and Chaley Cabarrus sang the National Anthem. The WCU band also performed.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS: None.

CONSENT AGENDA: **Commissioner Manning made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda:**

- a) Approval of Minutes
- b) Tax Refunds & Releases and Insolvent Accounts
- c) Approval to enter into a lease purchase agreement with MUSCO Financing in order to finance the purchase and installation of athletic lights for Plymouth High School (from the Board of Education)
- d) Approval of Auditor's Contract
- e) Lake Phelps Drainage Resolution

Commissioner Sexton seconded, motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM: Ms. Ann Keyes spoke about the green emergency signs. Residents can request them from her office. These signs help first responders (whether it's the police or an ambulance) to find your residence. Ms. Keyes also mentioned that she is getting ready to start working on abandoned/junk cars in the County. We do have an Ordinance and some residents are not following it.

Thomas Norman, Long Ridge Road, told the Board that he is trying to open a business for kids. He is trying to get a grant for a skating rink. He wants to get kids off the street. Mr. Norman said he feels that a lot of kids on the streets getting in trouble because they have no activities. He thinks it will knock down the problems we have with kids.

Judy Justice, Manteo, NC stated she is running for the District 6 seat: Justice for NC House. She wants to know what the County needs are and is ready to hear what the regular people have to say.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH: Chair Phelps told the Board and the audience that the employee receiving the Employee of the Month Award has been with the County since 2004 (11 years). Chair Phelps called Lt. Clint Blount, Lt. in the Detention Center to the front and explained that the person who nominated her stated that she does above and

beyond her job as a lieutenant—she helps to run shift, keeps time sheets corrected, assists with disciplinary problems with inmates and officers and also makes up work schedules for both full-time and part-time officers. Chair Phelps presented Ms. Blount with a certificate of appreciation. Ms. Arnold took Ms. Blount's picture and it will be placed on the wall in the foyer of the County Administration Building.

RECOMMENDATION OF PROPOSAL FOR VENDOR FOR BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY (BPP) LISTINGS: Ms. Sherri Wilkins spoke to the Board about BPP listings. Recently Ms. Wilkins met with Mr. Carawan and Mr. Potter about vendors for Business Personal Property (BPP) Listings. The County has 571 BPP listings and our assessor has been working on these. Over sixty (60) have asked for extensions. The Tax Office wants to use CTSI—they know the laws in NC. Chair Phelps noted that every year the Tax Office sends out a list of what personal property is owned in businesses within the County. This vendor will check out the businesses to make sure they are in compliance.

Chair Phelps asked about the vendor's fee schedule. Ms. Wilkins stated that the fees are based on the value of the business. She also noted that F4-7 (of the contract) will not apply to our County.

Commissioner Manning feels that the County should hire a company that does this and the County doesn't pay them unless they find something. Ms. Wilkins said she did check on another company and they had a fee schedule too. Mr. Carawan said that during the meeting with CTSI, they stated that companies have gone away from getting a commission on what is made and have gone to a fee schedule. The timeline is set by the County and the County picks the businesses to be looked at.

Commissioner Manning said the County might want to do this on a trial business rather than a long term contract. Chair Phelps said that the County can terminate this contract with a 30 day notice. There is no minimum on how many accounts the County can ask the vendor to look into. Mr. Potter asked that if the Commissioners approve the vendor and their contract that it be subject to legal review. Commissioner Johnson was concerned that the contract was not clear as to when and how the vendor would charge the County.

Chair Phelps asked Ms. Wilkins how many properties the County sends to foreclosure. Ms. Wilkins stated that she sends 100 properties to Zacchaeus every other month. Chair Phelps also added how confusing it is to fill out the BPP form. Ms. Wilkins stated that the vendor will help to educate the County's taxpayers on how they need to fill out this form.

Commissioner Walker made a motion approve the contract with CTSI subject to legal review. Commissioner Manning seconded, motion carried unanimously.

OPTIONS FOR TAX DISCOUNTS: Mr. Carawan explained that at one of the Board's earlier meetings, the Board discussed that the County may need to raise taxes and the Tax Office looked at offering a discount to reduce the burden on the taxpayer. Offering a tax discount will help to generate tax flow and give a benefit to the taxpayer. If the County offered a 2% discount, it would gain the County \$118,000 if everyone took advantage of it. Mr. Carawan said the amount of money the County would receive depends on the tax rate. Ms. Wilkins noted that taxpayers must pay their taxes in July to take advantage of the 2% discount or pay in August to receive the 1% discount. There will be no discount offered after August. Ms. Wilkins suggests

offering the tax discounts so that the County will have cash flow during the first 4 months of the fiscal year. Commissioner Manning asked how much does the County receive now in the first 4 months of the fiscal year. Ms. Wilkins said she could get that information for the Commissioners tomorrow. Ms. Wilkins also mentioned that the tax bills are sent out the first part of July.

Commissioner Manning said the Board needs more information before making a motion and could make a decision in April.

Commissioner Johnson stated that these options would only be available if the Board raises taxes and the Board wouldn't be able to do that until they see the budget. Ms. Wilkins explained that the County could apply for the tax discounts with the DOR (and the application is due in May) and if approved, the Board could still rescind giving the discounts if taxes are not raised, but the County cannot apply after the fact.

The Board directed staff to bring back more information to the April meeting on previous revenues received in July/August for the last few years.

CRESWELL "CALL TEAM" OPTIONS: Mr. Coccaro noted that this was discussed at the last meeting with Lisa Patrick leading the discussion as the leader of this 'call team'. Mr. Coccaro also noted that he talked to Mr. Likens of the State EMS and if the call team remains, it will need to be arranged to fall under the Medical Director (Dr. Lowry) and the EMS Director (Mr. Coccaro). The scope of the call team needs to be addressed if it is to move forward. Currently the call team is not budgeted for. This could cost an additional \$8,000 - \$9,000 a year in a budget that is already stretched. If the call team continues it will need to be budgeted and to be restructured giving Dr. Lowry oversight. Mr. Coccaro's office would handle the timesheets. Mr. Coccaro reiterated that this group was started years ago due to not having enough resources. The system's demographic focal point has changed. However, there is a full time ambulance for that end of the county. Membership for the team is shrinking and it is difficult to get new members. A lot of good things could be done with the team.

Commissioner Sexton asked how the County gets by with paying the Call Team \$1/hr. when they are sitting at home. Is that legal? Mr. Potter said that will be discussed in Closed Session.

Chair Phelps said that there is a need for the call team in Creswell and feels that it is needed. Commissioner Walker said the call team is doing a good job, but needs to be restructured.

Commissioner Sexton explained to the Board that when a member of the call team touches the truck [ambulance] their pay starts, so could there could be 4 providers on the truck and they would all need to be paid.

Chair Phelps said the call team needs to remain and it needs to be put in the budget.

PSAP BACK-UP DISCUSSION: Sheriff Barnes and Ms. Delisa Johnson spoke to the Board about the back-up PSAP and said this has been hanging over their heads for 5 years now and there is still no plan. Ms. Johnson spoke to Chowan and Beaufort counties. Beaufort County is going inside their fire department so they can't be the back-up for Washington County. Chowan County could be Washington County's back-up except their equipment is all different from ours and the travel to get there would hinder our response time. Sheriff Barnes said the system Washington County has in place is 6 years old and next year it will be considered obsolete. New equipment would be covered by the 911 Board (as told

to Sheriff Barnes and Ms. Johnson by Lisa Bone of the E911 Board). Sheriff Barnes recommended that the County find a building to put the new equipment in and move the E911 Center. Ms. Johnson said that when the current equipment becomes obsolete, E911 will send someone down to work with us on what we can do. However, the back-up PSAP plan must be turned in by July 1, 2016.

Chair Phelps asked if the County has any vacant buildings. Sheriff Barnes said the location of the back-up PSAP must be 5 miles away and not in a flood plain. It also must be the same size or bigger than what the County E911 office has now (which is ~275 sq. ft.). The Plymouth Municipal Airport has some room but there is a problem with getting internet there.

Ms. Johnson said that Tina Blow from Raleigh will be coming down on March 16 to see what she can do to help the County's situation.

Chair Phelps said he knew the Creswell prison was available, but not sure if it's up to par for occupancy.

Sheriff Barnes said he knew of some other buildings not owned by the County that might be available.

Chair Phelps asked the Mayors of Roper and Creswell if they knew of any places in their towns.

Sheriff Barnes said the site has to be named in the plan.

Mr. Carawan said once the plan is approved, the County can ask for an extension for implementation. Sheriff Barnes said the County has been told that we are apt to lose funding if we don't submit our plan on time.

Commissioner Manning asked if E911 could go into a rented building. Sheriff Barnes said yes; however, he would want a long term lease.

Chair Phelps stated that tonight's Commissioners' meeting will be recessed to March 10 and he asked staff to research county buildings and bring it to the March 10 meeting.

Mr. Carawan said he felt the Sheriff and Ms. Johnson could start drafting the E911 back-up plan and leave the location blank until the Board can resolve this.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT: Ms. Ann Keyes spoke to the Board to say that the Washington County Planning Board is asking the Washington County Board of Commissioners to approve their recommendation to amend the zoning text in the Washington County Zoning Ordinance.

The existing text under Article 3A R-A Rural Area—Single Family Detached Residential District (C)Uses Permitted by Special Use Permit:

q) Commercial outdoor recreational activities, including hiking, hunting, boating, horseback riding, swimming, skeet and trap shooting, shooting preserves and fishing

The recommended text is:

d) Commercial **indoor**/outdoor recreational activities, including hiking, hunting, boating, horseback riding, swimming, skeet and trap shooting, shooting preserves and fishing

Ms. Keyes stated that the Planning Board is trying to work with the citizens within the County in a manner that would not comprise the intent of the ordinance and assist the citizens of the County as well.

Ms. Keyes asked the Commissioners if they would approve having a public hearing on this text amendment at the April 4 meeting.

Commissioner Sexton made a motion to approve a public hearing on April 4 regarding the Zoning Text Amendment. Commissioner Walker seconded; motion carried unanimously.

NCACC “MEETING IN A BOX”: Ms. Bennett explained that the County has received their materials for the NCACC’s “meeting in a box” and they were enclosed as a separate booklet in the Commissioners’ agenda packages and included the NCACC Legislative Goals.

Since the General Assembly’s short session begins on April 25, the NCACC hopes that Commissioners can meet with their representatives before then and prior to the NCACC District Meetings.

As mentioned before, the Eastern District Meeting will be held on April 6 at the Vernon James Center in Roper.

There is an opportunity for the Commissioners to meet with our representatives (Tine and Smith-Ingram) on the same day as the ribbon cutting for the Beaufort County Community College Washington County Center (March 10). Ms. Bennett stated she is trying to coordinate that meeting.

Chair Phelps noted the legislative goals Washington County has, such as drainage, recreation money, money for PSAP, discretionary money for Cherry Bridge, ferries, uses of sales tax from the Sales Tax Fairness Act. Mr. Carawan said he would like to see the lotter money reinstated for school capital projects. Commissioner Manning said he would like to see funds made available for Cherry Bridge and clearing some of the canals since these cause drainage issues. New schools were also mentioned as a topic for discussion.

COURTHOUSE SECURITY: Chair Phelps reminded the Commissioners that the judges have been pressing for the five counties in this district to move ahead with their courthouse security.

Chair Phelps said he would like to revisit which door is to be the main entrance—the back entrance by the Sheriff’s Office or front entrance on Adams Street. Ms. Denise Moulden, Clerk of Court said it may be more feasible to use front entrance under columns where there is a porch because on court days there is a greater amount of people and the porch would shield if there was inclement weather. Ms. Keyes said there will be issues no matter which door is used and she will support whatever is decided. Chief Deputy Norman said there can only be one entrance--more than one defeats the mandate from Judge Paul of having only one entrance.

Chair Phelps noted that parts have been ordered and should be here shortly and begin being installed.

Commissioner Sexton said it seemed to be more feasible to build a roof/shelter for the back entrance. Discussion ensued.

Chair Phelps said that the consensus of the Board is that the rear entrance will be the one entrance and the cost for a roof/canopy/shelter for this entrance will be put into next year's budget.

BUDGET TIMELINE GOALS: Mr. Carawan stated that he held a Department Budget Kick-Off meeting on March 2, 2016. Mr. Carawan told the Department Heads that their departmental budget request was due back to him on March 18.

Mr. Carawan said that he is not comfortable setting a schedule but only so far out. Since the Board will be meeting a second time in April, (on April 18, with Dominion Power) Mr. Carawan would like to present a brief overview of the budget at that time. Commissioner Work Sessions could be scheduled any time from April 19 – May 13th, with a public hearing on the budget on June 6th. Mr. Carawan noted that by not setting specific dates, the Board has the flexibility to recess its work sessions to a specific date and time to address unforeseen issues, such as doctor appointments, planting schedules, workshops, and/or trial dates. In doing so, it also allows the entire Board to meet as a group and review/discuss the proposed budget, while making suggested changes for the Commissioners APPROVED budget.

Chair Phelps would like to see an additional full-time employee in the Recreation Department. He stated he would also like a part-time economic developer or grant writer; however, he was not sure when the Commissioners could get together to set priorities within the budget.

Commissioner Johnson would like to look at the plan for the school system to see how much money the County may have to supply them.

Commissioner Walker said the County needs to work on finding more money for Recreation.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS: Mr. Carawan presented the following budget amendments:

Commissioner Sexton made a motion to approve budget amendment #2016027 from Cooperative Extension for breaking out the benefits for Cooperative Extension personnel. Commissioner Walker seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sexton made a motion to approve budget amendment #2016028 from Drainage for reducing the Drainage Fund to preserve Fund Balance. Commissioner Walker seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve budget amendment #2016029 from Travel & Tourism for removing Travel & Tourism from the general ledger's Adopted Budget, ADDING Travel & Tourism to the Amended Budget. Commissioner Manning seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sexton made a motion to approve budget amendment #2016030 from Tyrrell EMS & Transport for removing Tyrrell EMS & Transport from the general ledger's Adopted Budget, ADDING Tyrrell EMS & Transport to the Amended Budget. Commissioner Walker seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve budget amendment #2016031 from the Airport for purchase of additional Aviation Fuel in order to continue selling the fuel to third parties for a profit. Commissioner Walker seconded; motion carried unanimously.

FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT: Mr. Milazi said his Finance Officer's Report was delivered in the Commissioners' Board Packages.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the sanitation/landfill revenues— she would like to have that information all together rather than going to different pages to find the information.

BOARDS & COMMITTEES:

Albemarle Commission: Washington County Community Advisory Committee:

Ms. Brandi Jordan, the Regional LTC Ombudsman for the Albemarle Commission's Area Agency on Aging is requesting the re-appointment of Kim Cotten-West and Theresa McNair to the Washington County Community Advisory Committee. These are three-year terms.

Ms. West and Ms. McNair have agreed to serve if re-appointed.

Commissioner Sexton made a motion to approve the re-appointments listed above. Commissioner Johnson seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Senior Center Advisory Board

Ms. Joyner, Senior Center Director has requested the addition of Norma Perkins, Sue Lilley and Jan Adams to the Senior Center Advisory Board.

Ms. Perkins, Ms. Lilley and Ms. Adams have agreed to serve if appointed.

Commissioner Manning made a motion to approve the appointments listed above. Commissioner Sexton seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sexton asked how many seats were on the Senior Center Advisory Board. Ms. Vanessa Joyner, Senior Center Director stated that there are seven (7) seats available. Currently she has four (4) filled. The appointment of these three (3) tonight completes their Board.

OTHER ITEMS BY CHAIRPERSON, COMMISSIONERS, COUNTY MANAGER, CLERK OR ATTORNEY:

Commissioner Johnson reminded the Commissioners of the NCACC Eastern District Meeting being held at the Vernon James Center on April 6.

Commissioner Johnson said she is working on finding grants for the County, working on making sure that legislation keeps food stamps, looking for EMS grant funding for rural counties and she is also asking Congress to maximize costs for Cooperative Extension.

Commissioner Johnson also mentioned the ribbon cutting at the Beaufort County Community College Washington County Center beginning at 3:00 pm with tours from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm.

Commissioner Manning stated he attended the Washington County Drainage Committee meeting. During the meeting they were budget discussions regarding Lake Phelps drainage and Scuppernong and Kendrick's Creek service district. He also attended a RC&D meeting.

Commissioner Sexton noted that all Commissioners should have received a letter from Seaboard Timber regarding the lack of internet in their area (near airport and the County's Commerce Building). Mr. Potter said the County has been looking at options that are available for government users (which wouldn't cover private companies such as Seaboard Timber). Mr. Potter suggested adding this to the list to talk to our representatives about on March 10.

Commissioner Walker congratulated the coaching staff of the PHS Vikings girls basketball team—they are going to be playing in the championship game next week.

Chair Phelps thanked the Roper and Creswell Mayors and Town Council members for attending tonight's meeting.

Ms. Bennett reminded the Board they need to recess to March 10 to meet with Representative Paul Tine and Senator Erica Smith-Ingram after the BCCC WCC ribbon cutting.

Mr. Potter stated that he put a notice in The Roanoke Beacon regarding the RCCHC lease. A few amendments were made so the lease had to be re-noticed.

Mr. Potter also noted that the County received notice that we could receive \$3.2M in airport funding which would require a \$361,000 match; however the County might be able to get the match down to 5%. Mr. Potter said that Mr. Brabble has some good ideas for some cost savings.

Mr. Potter said he received a preliminary report about the timber tracts at airport; however, the report will need to be amended because one area was missed. Replanting season is now, so the County may have to wait until next year to replant.

Chair Phelps mentioned the ¼ cent sales tax referendum that will be on the ballot in March and asked Mr. Potter to reiterate what it's all about.

KNOW THE FACTS

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ¼ CENT SALES TAX REFERENDUM

- In 2007 the North Carolina General Assembly authorized counties to levy an additional ¼ cent of sales and use tax on certain items upon the approval of the voters.
- At this time 27 counties including Martin County have approved the tax, and others continue to consider its approval as a source of additional revenue for local government.

- In 2015 the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution providing Washington County voters with the opportunity to approve the tax by placing a referendum question for voter approval on the March 15, 2016 primary election ballot.
- **Tax Rate:** The current local sales and use tax is set at 2 percent. When added to the state sales and use tax of 4.75 percent, the total sales and use tax in Washington County is currently 6.75 percent which is the lowest rate in North Carolina. If the ¼ cent sales and use tax is approved, the new rate will be 7 percent.
- **Ballot Format:** The referendum question on the ballot will read as follows:

[] For [] Against

Local sales and use tax at the rate of one-quarter percent (0.25%) in addition to all other State and local sales and use taxes.

- **Taxed Items & Exemptions:** The ¼ cent sales tax would apply to most items purchased in Washington County, but **THE TAX WILL NOT APPLY to several commonly purchased items including unprepared food (i.e. groceries), gasoline, prescription drugs, and motor vehicles.**
- **Broader Tax Base:** Unlike other kinds of taxes including property tax, the ¼ cent sales and use tax will apply equally to everyone in the county including travelers and tourists, and not just to residents or property owners.
- **Tax Revenue:** The annual revenue estimated to be generated from the ¼ cent sales tax is approximately \$177,000. To generate the same amount of revenue using the property tax would require an increase of over two (2) cents. In addition, unlike other sales tax revenue currently collected, the revenue from the ¼ cent sales tax would stay entirely within Washington County and would not be subject to redistribution by the North Carolina Department of Revenue.
- **Intended Use for Revenue:** The resolution approving the referendum provides that the tax is intended to be used to help fund: *“Capital and operational costs associated with maintaining an adequate paramedic level EMS system, and an adequate emergency dispatching system”*.
- **Voting:** Voter Registration ends February 19th. Early Voting in Washington County starts March 3rd and ends March 12th. The March Primary Election will be held on March 15th. For more information about voting in Washington County contact Elections Director Dora Bell at (252) 793-6017, or by email at: washington.boe@gmail.com

Chair Phelps asked Ms. Rebecca Liverman to speak about CONNECT NC. It, too, will be on the ballot in March. This is a \$2 billion bond referendum that requires no new tax increase. There are 76 shovel-ready projects including some in Washington County. On February 23 at 6:30 PM at Vernon James Center there was a community meeting to let the public know what this bond means to the various agencies. Washington County will receive money for Pettigrew State Park and Goose Creek State Park.

Chair Phelps noted that early voting ends March 12, 2016 at 1:00 PM.

Commissioner TAJ made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11 (a)(6) (personnel) and §143-318.11 (a)(3) (attorney-client privilege) and Commissioner Manning seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Back in Open Session, Commissioner Sexton mentioned that he has a building to rent that could be used for the 911 PSAP back-up. Discussion ensued.

At 9:40 PM with no further business to discuss, **Commissioner Sexton made a motion to recess the meeting to Thursday March 10 at 6:00 PM at the Beaufort County Community College Washington County Center. Commissioner Manning seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

D. Cole Phelps
Chair

Julie J. Bennett, CMC, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board