

January 13, 2020

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a recessed session on Monday, January 13, 2020 at 5:00 PM in the Commissioners' Room, 116 Adams Street, Plymouth, NC. Commissioners Johnson, Phelps, Riddick, Sexton and Walker were present. Also present were County Manager/Attorney Curtis Potter, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett and Finance Officer Missy Dixon.

Chair Phelps called the meeting to order. Commissioner Johnson added Boards and Committees at Item 1A Beaufort County Community College Board of Trustees Appointment

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a) Terms of Employment as County Manager/County Attorney Letter (effective January 1st, 2020)
- b) Approval of Minutes from the December 18th, 2019 Emergency Called Meeting re: the Hospital
- c) Budget Amendments

Commissioner Riddick made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously.

BOARDS & COMMITTEES:

Commissioner Johnson stated that when the General Assembly selected Beaufort County Community College to serve the citizens of Washington County by having a satellite campus of BCCC that Washington County would be able to have a seat on Beaufort County Community College's Trustees Board. The General Assembly allowed the Washington County Board of Commissioners to select that person. The Board appointed Ms. Jean Woolard to serve on the Beaufort County Community College Board of Trustees; however, her term expired December 31, 2019 and she is moving from Washington County so the Commissioners need to appoint a new representative for that Board.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to appoint Commissioner Chair D. Cole Phelps to the Beaufort County Community College Board of Trustees. Commissioner Riddick seconded. Discussion ensued. Mr. Walker asked when that Board meets. Commissioner Johnson said they meet the first Tuesday of even numbered months at 5:00 PM. Commissioner Sexton asked if the Board wanted to put it out to the public and see if anyone else is interested being on that Board. Commissioner Sexton asked if the representative had to be a Commissioner. Commissioner Johnson said no. **Motion carried unanimously.**

DETAILED AGENDA OF THE FY21 BUDGET WORKSHOP: Mr. Potter, County Manager/County Attorney spoke to the Board regarding the detailed agenda of the FY21 Budget workshop (*which is incorporated by reference and hereby made a part of these minutes*).

Mr. Potter noted that he will ask for approval of the Budget Guidelines for FY21 at the February 3, 2020 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Mr. Potter asked the Board how they would like to receive their budget this year. The consensus of the Board is that they still want the hard copy of the budget book.

Commissioner Sexton asked how much trouble is it to add columns for previous years. Mr. Potter said in doing that it makes the print very small. Commissioner Sexton said maybe he could add a 3rd year for comparison. The Clerk mentioned using 11 x 14 paper for the departmental budgets. Commissioner Walker said he would like to add 3 previous years for comparison. Mr. Potter said he felt that using the 11 x 14 paper would make the documents unwieldy.

Chair Phelps asked how our revals can increase when Tyrrell and Bertie counties have decreased. Chair Phelps asked when the reval will come out. Mr. Potter said with the start of January 2021. Commissioner Johnson said Tyrrell County lost about 400 homes in storms last year. Mr. Potter said we (Washington County) are the fastest shrinking county in the state.

Chair Phelps wanted to talk about the additional expenses dealing with the hospital. He asked Mr. Potter what other expenses he expects to incur. Mr. Potter said things go on every week and most recently the IRS got in to the game with payroll taxes needing to be paid regarding the hospital payroll. When something like this happens, the County's bankruptcy trustee has to get involved (which incurs more fees). Commissioner Sexton said he feels that the County can't keep pumping money into the bankruptcy trustee and lawyers. Commissioner Sexton said he wants the bankruptcy judge to go ahead and make a ruling, not keep dragging it out. Mr. Potter said the next hearing is Thursday, January 16. Mr. Potter said if Affinity doesn't have the funds to buy the hospital the judge will see how close they are to having the funds. Commissioner Riddick asked how much we have paid the bankruptcy trustee/lawyers. Mr. Potter said currently the amount is \$65,000.

Mr. Potter noted that regarding EMS Revenues, call volume is down which means less revenue. Transport is making the County more money this year.

Mr. Potter said he would rather pay for some vehicles outright instead of taking out loans. Chair Phelps asked if the County is looking to purchase any additional ambulances. Ms. Jennifer O'Neal, EMS Director, said she may be requesting a replacement for the QRV vehicle which will be approximately \$50,000. Commissioner Phelps asked how many Sheriff's cars have been crashed this year and how many might they be asking for in this budget. (Note: Sheriff's Deputies showed up at 5:52 PM.) Mr. Potter said he knew of two that were totaled. Mr. Potter said he is going to talk to the Sheriff about using the old Animal Services vehicle at the Landfill. Mr. Potter said Commissioner Sexton asked about having driver training for the deputies. Mr. Potter said he and others met with NCACC Risk Pool Management last week and they do offer training. Commissioner Johnson said BCCC will be offering training when the pad opens up.

Chair Phelps asked if the County would be putting the bear on the new vehicles. Mr. Potter said he talked with Mr. Tom Harrison, Director, Travel & Tourism Authority, this week and he said to wait on that until he talks with Roger Brooks (the branding guy) before moving forward. Mr. Potter said the bear that has been put on the new ambulance was done by the EMS Director and she worked with the TTA to get the perfect rendering (and it was done at no extra cost).

Mr. Potter noted that the current economic development funds shown are for taking care of punch list items on the Commerce Building.

Mr. Potter said on February 3rd, he will bring a Budget Amendment on 4e and 4g under Item 4 current FY20 performance.

Mr. Potter mentioned the Washington County Drainage Committee will be meeting on Tuesday January 21. Chair Phelps said that more drainage money needs to be spent in the Eastern part of the County. Flooding is getting worse there. Commissioner Sexton said that the state and federal folks have heard our cries for additional funding. Commissioner Sexton stated he will meet with Mr. Potter after the meeting to discuss more.

Mr. Potter said the school system is still waiting for the State to balance its budget. They may ask for some of the teacher supplements be revisited. They also may ask the County for assistance in purchasing land for a new school. They may also ask the County to help with funds for a program that uses a “coded” entrance to the schools. Washington County School Supt. Yanisha Mann is scheduled to speak at the Commissioners’ meeting on February 3.

Mr. Potter said the hospital’s Pension Plan is now a pay as you go plan. We pay out approximately \$26,000 a month and the County has no extra funding in that plan. Commissioner Johnson asked how many years is the plan. Mr. Potter said it is a 20 year payout.

Commissioner Sexton wants to build a reserve for water. Mr. Potter said he would put that in the budget.

Mr. Potter said some changes may need to be made at the Landfill to increase revenue. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Sexton said to the Chair that the County Manager should be looking into some kind of plan to retain the positions where folks keep leaving. Chair Phelps said he agrees. This seems to be the worst year for the County in training employees and then they leave us to go work elsewhere. Discussion ensued. Mr. Potter said he doesn’t foresee hiring for any new positions.

Mr. Potter said tax deferment or decrease to solar companies would help the County to have more solar companies come to our area.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the County is changing its lights to LED lights. Mr. Potter said not at this time. Commissioner Johnson said there is data proving that there is a cost saving after they are installed; however, the initial installation cost is still there.

Chair Phelps said it looks like lights are on in the Courthouse at night. He suggested someone check to see if all of them are needed at night.

Commissioner Riddick said recreation has fallen through the cracks. She asked if there is any way to add funds to Recreation for a new building. Chair Phelps said he would like to see that also. He said last year the Board put \$10,000 into a line item for Recreation and should continue to put funds in there to be able to have a match for a PARTF grant.

Chair Phelps said the County needs an Economic Development plan. He said he feels the County needs a Capital Improvement Plan. He also feels the County needs a new EMS Base.

Mr. Potter said he would like to know where the Board is on selling some of our property—even recreation property. The main issue is where to build if the County were to receive a PARTF grant. If the County could consolidate some of the land, we could use that as collateral for the PARTF grant. Chair Phelps said if Washington County Schools builds something new, then Washington County High School could be used as a recreational facility. Commissioner Riddick asked Mr. Potter to ask Ms. Mann to discuss that when she comes to the Board meeting in February. Commissioner Riddick said the County may need to hire more people in Recreation. Chair Phelps said he feels there needs to be an overhaul of the Recreation Department—there needs to be some new programs. More discussion ensued. Mr. Potter said he will talk with the WCS Supt. about collaborating with the school system and our Recreation Department and doing something similar to what Tyrrell County does.

Chair Phelps asked did any of the Board members have any thoughts on the EMS base. Mr. Potter said he agrees with Chair Phelps. Mr. Potter said he will work with Ms. O’Neal on some ideas.

Commissioner Riddick asked what was going on with the group that split off from the Strategic Plan Committee—the Economic Development part with Ms. Bunny Sanders, Mr. Tom Harrison and Ms. Mavis Hill. Mr. Potter said they are still making plans. However, the rest of the committee has been waylaid by the hospital crisis. Commissioner Walker said he feels the Strategic Plan Committee needs a Facilitator to keep the Committee on task. Chair Phelps wants this on the agenda for February 3 regarding status of Strategic Plan Committee and a Facilitator.

Commissioner Johnson said she would like to see the County hire a grant writer. She sees all kinds of grants available for Tier 1 counties. She said she feels that the County is missing out on a lot of funding. The County needs to focus on grants dealing with agriculture. We need someone with the time and energy to do this. Commissioner Johnson said she is not sure how the County would afford it, but feel it’s needed. Chair Phelps said he has talked about this for many years so he is in agreement with Commissioner Johnson that the County needs a grant writer or an economic developer—they may be both in one position. Mr. Potter said he would need the Boards support to see the grants from beginning to end. The County can’t just get wrapped up in applying and not be able to follow through to the end of administrating the grant. Mr. Potter said he feels it is unfair that the Board doesn’t think we don’t apply for grants. Ms. Rouse and Ms. Keyes received a \$20,000 grant for security cameras. Also look in the EMS budget, there are thousands of grant dollars in there. Mr. Potter said many departments look for grants. The Board would like to see a position of Economic Developer/Grant Writer in the budget. Discussion ensued.

At 7:34 PM with no further business to discuss, **Commissioner Riddick made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

D. Cole Phelps
Chair

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