

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA  
FEBRUARY 24, 2022**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners held a retreat on Friday, February 24, 2023 at The Pines, 1525 N. Road Street, Elizabeth City, N.C.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Charles Jordan, Chairman  
Barry Overman, Vice-Chairman  
Lloyd E. Griffin, III  
Sean Lavin  
Jonathan Meads  
Sam Davis

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sparty Hammett, County Manager  
John Shannon, Asst. County Manager  
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney  
Sheri Small, Finance Officer  
Mike Barclift, Management Fellow  
Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board  
Shatoria Reid, Deputy Clerk to the Board

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM by Chairman Charles Jordan. Vice-Chairman Barry Overman gave the invocation.

**1. AUDITOR PRESENTATION & FY2023-24 BUDGET:**

Austin Eubanks, with Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams, & Co., P.A. presented the County's audit for the year ended June 30, 2022.

Finance Officer Sheri Small provided a list of outstanding debt and reviewed general fund revenues and expenditures.

County Manager Sparty Hammett provided the following FY 23-24 budget priorities:

Mandatory Increases

- Former Elizabeth City Middle School Gym Operational Costs
  - The renovated gym will be ready for Parks and Recreation use in FY2023-24. Operational costs will include staffing and lease payments.
- Employee Retirement
  - Approximately \$120,000 Annual Cost Increase.

Employee Compensation

- Cost of Living Increase (% To Be Determined)
  - 3% COLA in FY22-23, targeting higher COLA in FY23-24 due to inflation.
- Internal Compensation Study - Update
  - General Fund Departments (delay implementation until FY24-25, if unable to implement with no tax increase budget).
  - Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office – have to implement in FY23-24 to stay competitive.

Public Safety

- Sheriff's Office
  - Two Additional Deputies.
- Volunteer Fire Departments
  - Increase per Call Stipend from \$10 to \$15.
  - Budget for two Fire Trucks as a placeholder – Providence (2025 replacement) and Newland (2026 replacement). Prices are escalating on a monthly basis and delivery time is averaging 2-years.

### Other Priorities

- Soil and Water – Drainage Projects – Increase to \$140,000
  - We have drainage concerns throughout the County. This will continue the trend of increased drainage funding (FY18-19 - \$25,000; FY19-20 - \$40,000; FY20-21 - \$60,000; FY21-22 - \$100,000; and FY22-23 - \$120,000).
- Finance Officer – Dual Funding for 6 months
  - Finance Officer Sheri Small will be retiring and I am recommending a one-year overlap – CY2024.
  - Finance Officer Position would be posted September 1, 2023 with January 1, 2024 as the target start date.
  - Sheri has agreed to be available on a part-time basis after retirement.

## **2. FY2022-23 GOALS UPDATE AND 2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

County Manager Sparty Hammett provided the following FY2022-23 Goals Update and 2022 Accomplishments:

### **FY2022-23 GOALS UPDATE:**

#### **FY22-23 Budget**

- Develop a revenue neutral budget.
- Status: Completed.
  
- Based upon funding availability, provide a Cost of Living Increase for all employees (percentage to be determined during the budget process).
- Status: Completed – 3% Cost of Living Increase.
  
- Review Pasquotank County’s existing revenue sources and identify any strategies for maximizing revenue, beyond raising taxes, to be used during the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget process.
- Status: Will be completed during FY23-24 Budget process.
  
- Conduct research and analysis to determine if there are opportunities for other sources of revenue that are not currently being utilized by the County to be used during the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget process.
- Status: Will be completed during FY23-24 Budget process.

#### **County Manager**

- Initiate annual community meetings for staff to convey information to citizens and to answer questions.
- Status: Has not been completed – potentially June 2023.
  
- Develop a Public Information Plan to implement strategies that enhance Pasquotank County’s public image, improve citizen and employee engagement, and promote broader access to information about Pasquotank County government.
- Status: In progress.
  
- Complete project to establish permanent Board of Commissioners Meeting Room.
- Status: In progress – scheduled to be completed in September.
  
- Develop a formal Telework policy and identify positions within the County where Telework is a potential option.
- Status: In progress – developed pilot program at DSS, 10 employees are currently participating.

#### **County Attorney**

- Continue process of updating and codifying county ordinances.
- Status: In progress – completed Planning - 160D Emergency Management Ordinance, and updated all criminal penalties ordinances.
  
- Provide oversight of the Restructuring discussion to ensure that Pasquotank County meets all legal requirements mandated by the State of North Carolina.
- Status: Completed.

### **Information Technology**

- Continue to expand the use of new technology based on cost versus benefits and funding availability.
- Status: Completed and ongoing – implemented County Secured Wifi, which allows IT and certain equipment to access our network and servers securely which aids in IT's ability to trouble shoot without needing to be wired in anywhere in the County.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

- Review compensation for certified Emergency Medical Services employees to address recruiting and retention.
- Status: Completed.

### **Fire Services**

- Provide an allocation of funding for an annual banquet for each of our four Volunteer Fire Departments to help recognize the firefighters for their commitment to Pasquotank County.
- Status: Completed – \$1,000 per VFD.

### **Finance Office**

- Aggressively pursue grant funding to assist with: Broadband; Newland Park; Utilities Department projects; and other County needs.
- Status: In progress.

### **Sheriff's Office**

- Complete the second phase of the strategy to improve Courthouse Security to include funding two additional full-time Deputies to be assigned to the Courthouse.
- Status: Completed, then Sheriff's Office reclassified one of the positions to add an additional Captain.
- Increase funding for training for Sheriff's Office staff.
- Status: Completed – Sheriff's Office requested \$15,000 for training, and \$40,000 was approved.

### **Planning and Inspections**

- Finalize the Comprehensive Plan Update to provide a vision for the County while addressing future growth and land use.
- Status: In progress – will be completed in March.
- Finalize street condition assessments and notify property owners/developers of their subdivision's status and maintenance options.
- Status: In progress.

### **Utilities Department**

- Continue implementing Water and Sewer Master Plan projects as recommended by staff and approved by the Board in February 2020.
- Status: Design of the expansion of the Reverse Osmosis Plant from 2 to 3 Million Gallons per Day is in progress and is scheduled to be completed in July 2023 and construction completed in July 2024. Water line upgrades for the Newland territory purchased from the South Mills Water Association are in progress and scheduled to be completed in the summer. Several other projects are moving forward.

### **Countywide Drainage**

- Continue to work through the Drainage Advisory Committee to address countywide drainage and water quality issues.
- Status: Countywide Drainage Committee meets bi-monthly and projects are in process throughout the County.
- Continue the effort to establish a Drainage District in the desert.
- Status: Drainage Committee members are continuing to work toward establishing the Desert Drainage District.

### **Economic Development**

- Engage with aerospace companies to promote the development of the Pasquotank County Aviation Research and Development Commerce Park for aviation related investments.
- Status: In progress – ongoing efforts.
  
- Engage with speculative builders to promote the Pasquotank County Commerce Park for a potential shell building partnership.
- Status: No progress to-date.
  
- Engage with Offshore Wind industry to promote the Pasquotank County Commerce Park or other county properties for industry support of the future Offshore Wind Farm development.
- Status: No progress to-date.

### **Lobbyist/Legislative**

- Follow-up monthly with our Lobbyist to ensure support of both the NCACC’s legislative goals and Pasquotank County’s local goals.
- Status: Completed to-date.
  
- Schedule two Board presentations for our Lobbyist to provide legislative updates and updates on their efforts in pursuing the County’s legislative goals.
- Status: Retreat is second meeting.

### **2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **Countywide – Newland Park**

- On August 29<sup>th</sup>, we were notified that we received a \$500,000 PARTF Grant towards the park development and construction costs.
- On October 12<sup>th</sup>, we were notified that we received a Land Water Conservation Grant that would pay an additional \$175,000 of the cost to purchase the former Tractor Pull property.
- The Board awarded the park design contract to Benesch on December 5<sup>th</sup> and design/permitting is scheduled to be completed in August, with a 12-month estimated construction time starting in October.

#### **Central Communications – Renovation of Central Communications Center**

- The Central Communications Center was renovated to include new carpet, console furniture, and dispatch radio equipment.
- Installed two 800mhz frequencies located on the Wellfield Tower site for redundancy in case we lose the Navy Tower site that houses the state’s equipment.

#### **Cooperative Extension – Training & Services**

- Family & Consumer Sciences: 292 people gained knowledge to increase family economic security (how to access SNAP benefits and SHIP Medicare Part D; food cost management; cost comparison skills; shop for reverse mortgages; select long term care insurance); 599 youth and 86 adults increased fruit and vegetable consumption; 563 youth and 53 adults increased physical activity through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).
- Agriculture: 569 pesticide applicators received 998 continuing education credit hours.
- 4-H: Pasquotank County 4-H volunteers donated a total of 1,102 hours during 2022 working with youth.

#### **County Attorney’s Office – Updated Ordinances and Record Retention Policies**

- The County Attorney’s Office continued the process of updating ordinances and updated all Record Retention policies.
- Provided assistance with all major County projects.

#### **Pasquotank Board of Elections – Voting Equipment Implemented & Addressed Operational Obstacles**

- Implementation of both new voting equipment and electronic poll books across the two scheduled elections this year.
- Successfully planned for and carried out the first municipal/primary combination election in Pasquotank County while implementing massive geocode changes in response to redistricting and the delayed timeline.
- Executed two free, fair, and secure elections on a crunched timeline due to the delay of the primary.

### **Emergency Management – Grants, Exercises, and Emergency Plans**

- Numerous grants awarded totaling over \$45,000; these grants assisted with the purchase of a new vehicle and response equipment for EM along with road-side safety equipment for the volunteer fire departments in Pasquotank County.
- Multiple incident exercises conducted that allowed for interagency coordination during large scale incidents; EM was able to return to training and incident exercises since the pause from COVID.
- Healthcare and Child Care Facilities – Emergency Plans; EM staff worked with child care and healthcare facilities in Pasquotank-Camden counties to ensure they have emergency plans in place to comply with State and Federal guidelines; staff conducted training and planning classes with these facilities.

### **EMS – Tiered Response Implementation**

- During the early stages of EMS staffing shortages, PCEMS was analyzing ways to fill vacancies and ensure that Paramedics were available to respond to 911 calls on a regular basis. Tiered Response allowed our EMS System to staff ambulances with EMTs and AEMTs, and send Paramedics on Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs) only when needed.
- The 911 Center was a large contributor to the success of this program as well, since they are the primary point-of-contact for all incoming 911 calls. Effective utilization of Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) allows EMS to send the correct resource to each call. If a Paramedic is specifically needed based on the patient’s chief complaint, an alert by the 911 Center is sent automatically via page. Each shift has up to three QRVs available, with up to seven available during weekday peak times.

### **Finance Office – Certificate of Achievement for Excellence & Unmodified Audit Opinion**

- The Finance Office received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the year ended June 30, 2021.
- The June 30, 2022 audit received an unmodified opinion from the auditors. The unmodified opinion is expressed when the auditor concludes that the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

### **Fire Departments – Fire Trucks & Grants Received**

- Received two fire trucks: Weeksville VFD - 2022 Spartan Pumper/Tanker and Providence VFD - 2022 75’ Spartan/Smeal ladder.
- Obtained the following grants to help upgrade and standardize fire equipment throughout the county:
  - NC Volunteer Fire 50/50 Grant - \$60,000 total, \$30,000 match
  - NC Forestry 50/50 Grant - \$10,000 total, \$5,000 match
  - NC COVID Fire Grant - \$10,000, No match
  - NC Fire Supplemental Grant - \$35,000, No match

### **Human Resources – Safety Inspections, Optional Employee Benefit, & Recertification Training**

- Completed a Safety and Risk Audit/Inspection of all county buildings with Michelle Harris (Risk Control Specialist, NCACC).
- Implemented an employee legal assistance service (US Legal) during open enrollment 2022, that went into effect for employees that chose to enroll January 1, 2023.
- Completed and passed the Annual HBR Recertification and Contact Training with the NC State Health Plan.

### **Information Technology – Technology Upgrades**

- Upgraded six network switches in the Courthouse and Public Safety Building.

- Upgraded video in Courtroom C with wireless HDMI, new monitors, and a new projector.
- Upgraded Public Safety Training Room for video conferencing – removed projector and installed new monitor, microphones, and a camera.

### **Pasquotank Library – Ongoing Operational Improvements**

- After the resignation of the Circulation Supervisor, who had responsibility for cataloging new materials, Kim Perry and Jonathan Wark worked to train another Library employee to catalog materials.
- After meeting with Library staff, some internal workflows were streamlined to rely less on paper forms and transition to shared spreadsheets.
- To prepare for a proposed weeding project, Kim Perry and staff undertook the first (in many years) inventory of the library collection. The Library staff has done an outstanding job working as a team and is making great progress.

### **Maintenance Department – Remodeling Projects**

- In addition to handling all the ongoing maintenance projects, the department completed the following in-house renovations:
  - 911 Call Center Remodel – The department removed all of the existing CAD units, installed new wiring for the new CAD units, installed new carpet, painted and installed new blinds.
  - Public Safety Building – Painted all hallways and shared spaces throughout the entire building including District Attorney’s wing. The department also replaced the old border carpet in the Training Room.

### **Planning & Inspections – Inspection Activity & Land Use Plan**

- The department issued 1,438 building related permits and collected \$203,857.95 in permit related fees. Building Inspectors performed 3,106 initial inspections and 486 re-inspections.
- The Fire Marshal performed 100 fire inspections, 45 fire related investigations, and participated in 5 public education events.
- Development of the new County Land Use Plan began in March 2022. The final draft was presented to the Planning Board in December and the Board of Commissioners during a work session in February.

### **Register of Deeds – Technology Improvement**

- In July 2022, the Pasquotank County Register of Deeds (ROD) Office implemented Get Certificate Now, an online service that assists the public by providing them the convenience of requesting vital records from their home or office. The public can request a copy and securely transfer payment via their credit card. This includes Birth Certificates, Death Certificates and Marriage Licenses. Purchasers have the option of coming in to pick up their document or have it mailed to them.

### **Sheriff’s Office – Enhanced Training**

- The Office attended three days of training from Blue to Gold Law Enforcement Training. The training included a 4-hour block on de-escalation techniques, a 4-hour block on duty to intervene, and an 8-hour block on advanced traffic stops along with search & seizure.
- The Office hosted and sent deputies to the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association (LEEDA) for a week-long class on supervisor leadership.
- The Office attended a 8-hour class on The C.A.L.M. Approach (Communication, Active Physical Control Maneuvers, Lateral Recovery Restraint, Monitor). This practical solution provides deputies a safe and practical de-escalation response matrix that can be used when encountering unarmed individuals who are actively resisting deputies.

### **Social Services Department – Telework Pilot Program**

- Currently ten staff are working from home:
  - Two in Adult Medicaid.
  - Three in Food & Nutrition Services.
  - Five in Family & Children’s Medicaid.
- The program has increased productivity, not only among the ten staff working remotely, but also noticed a difference within the unit and in the office.
- Supervisors have found the transition easier than expected.

- The measures and expectations for pilot participation were high – so DSS top performers are working from home, and if given the opportunity, would love to be able to continue to work from home on an ongoing basis.

### **Soil & Water – Funding Received**

- Our county District Office sought and received Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (StRAP) funding for repair and removal of stream debris from the floodplain. We have been allotted \$227,100 in funds for estimated cost to repair project efforts (four original projects are being expanded due to lower than anticipated costs).
- Water quality benefits from the Cost Share Program are already being seen. \$38,000 in state funds are currently encumbered for implementing contracted best practices.

### **Solid Waste Department – Increased Tonnage & Expansion of C&D Landfill**

- The department continued to operate safely without any major accidents in 2022, while handling 19% more tonnage as compared to 2021. A total of 38,958 tons of material (MSW, LCID, recyclables, etc.) were handled in 2022 compared to 32,487 tons in 2021.
- Expansion of the C&D Landfill Cell 6B Phase 2 started in 2022. Construction will be completed soon, and the cell should be operational by mid-2023. The department expects this cell to add another 2.5 - 5 years of additional capacity at current rates.

### **Tax Department – Revaluation Process**

- During 2022, the Pasquotank Tax Department continued the revaluation process, under North Carolina law, which states each county must conduct a countywide revaluation of all real property (land, buildings, and other improvements) within the county at least every eight years for tax assessment determination. The purpose of revaluation is to re-establish equity among properties that may have appreciated or depreciated in value at different rates since the county's last revaluation.
- The appeal process yielded minimal appeals.

### **Utilities Department – Projects Completed & Grant Received**

- Installed Temporary Pump Station for Newland area.
- Installed 975 remote read meters in the Newland area.
- Water rate study completed and implemented on July 1, 2022.
- Received a \$150,000 grant from the NC Department of Environmental Quality for the Weeksville Asset Inventory Project.

### **3. ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE:**

County Attorney Mike Cox provided an update on the County's current Animal Control Ordinance, and made the following recommendations:

1. Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (2018) (keep)
2. Public Nuisance, Stray, Rabies, Impounding and Adoption (most are over 25 years old) (some revisions)
3. Specific Dog Regulations (License Tax Imposed) (1993) (repeal)
4. Leash Law (2005) (keep)
5. Dangerous Dogs (2005) (possibly modify)

He said if the Board is interested in making some changes, it could be reviewed by the Special Projects Committee.

### **4. ANIMAL SHELTER DISCUSSION:**

Kim Parrish provided an overview of the SPCA. She explained that the SPCA of NENC is an open admission shelter and is required to take all animals. Between June 2021 and June 2022 over 2,400 animals came through the shelter. She said this causes a lot of wear and tear on the facility, as well as personnel fatigue. Due to massive overcrowding, they are requesting additional funding and help from the County. She said if Animal Control Officers were equipped with scanners and were certified in euthanasia (for severely wounded or very sick animals) it would help tremendously.

County Manager Hammett stated that staff can do an operation study and make recommendations during the budget. The Board suggested Ms. Parrish provide the same

presentation to Camden County, as they also allocate funds for the SPCA. It was noted that the last SPCA contract was in 1993 and needs to be updated.

**5. SENTARA ALBEMARLE MEDICAL CENTER- FUTURE USE OF PROPERTY DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Hammett said that Sentara is anticipating completing construction of the new hospital at the end of 2024 or early 2025. Per the lease buyout agreement, Sentara will be out of the existing hospital at the end of 2025. There are individuals already interested in the property so he wants to start getting some direction from the Board. At next year's retreat, the Board can dig into more detail.

Planning Director Shelley Cox said when the Hospital leaves it will negatively impact the Road Street corridor. Private development of the site could help offset the loss and put the property on the tax roll. The site is 74.9 acres, with approximately 35 being developable (upland) and 40 acres of wetlands. There is approximately 3,500' of shoreline on the Pasquotank River. Sentara Albemarle Medical Center building is 338,000 SF. It is a prime location for mixed use development that would include commercial and residential. Other potential uses could include industrial, offices, or COA expansion. COA is requesting a portion of the property to meet their space needs.

The College of the Albemarle Facilities and Utilization Campus Master Plan Update completed in 2014 identified Maintenance and Information Technology space needs as high priorities.

Mr. Hammett said COAs highest priority in their master plan was a Maintenance and Receiving facility for the storage of equipment, golf carts, and janitorial supplies, as well as a small workshop and a space to receive equipment/shipments/mail. To meet these space needs, COA is requesting the Cancer Center (5,990 SF), EMS Station 50 (7,531 SF), and an easement to the exit road of the hospital. He stated that there are a lot of opportunities and potential with this property. Staff recommends looking at the highest return for the County in terms of selling the property.

Mr. Hammett said one potential resource that staff would like to tap into is the UNC School of Government and have some initial discussions with the Development Finance Initiative. They partner with local governments to attract private investment for transformative projects, which this would be, by providing specialized finance and development expertise. They work with cities and counties throughout the state.

Mr. Hammett said at this point, three-years out, he would like the Board to direct staff to begin exploring options to privately develop the property and maximize the return to create the most impactful project for the Road Street corridor, which would include consulting with DFI, and bring back some options to next year's retreat.

Commissioner Lavin said he does not want to do anything that would jeopardize future development. He thinks carving up that huge parcel for institutional use would put a nail in the coffin. He thinks we have to start exploring options across the road. There is already a parcel of land that the County owns which he believes is approximately 20 acres. The Wendy's property is for sale also. He believes their maintenance and IT departments can go anywhere. He is concerned about anything that jeopardizes an investor coming in. Mr. Hammett said he believes the previous Vicky Villa property across the street is 11-13 acres.

Commissioner Overman said he likes that the two buildings are already set up contiguous to COA's property.

**6. PROPERTY REQUEST & HEALTH SCIENCES LAB UPDATE:**

College of the Albemarle President, Dr. Jack Bagwell said College of the Albemarle is requesting land and buildings at the current Albemarle Sentara Medical Center that includes the Sentara Radiation Oncology Center and the Pasquotank-Camden EMS facility. They are also requesting access to the roadway that runs parallel to the requested property/facilities.

Dr. Bagwell said the requested property would meet many current and future needs for COA. In 2014, a Maintenance and Receiving facility for the storage of equipment, golf carts, and janitorial supplies, as well as a small workshop and a space to receive equipment/shipments/mail were the highest needs for their Facilities Master Plan. They had previously spent some money

designing the facility, but they did not have money to finish it, and when they started looking at the simulation facility they knew that it needed to come first. That does not mean that the other needs went away, it just means that they reprioritized it so that they could meet the need that was the biggest bang for the buck for the region.

Dr. Bagwell said since repurposing of the current Sentara Albemarle Medical Center is under consideration at this time, it is important that they solidify the request for the property, as they will not have another opportunity to acquire contiguous property again. Regardless of what the Board decides to do with it, it is their last opportunity. He said he understands the comment that they operate other campuses in other places so it would not be hard to be across the road. Respectfully, that is the difficulty of COA. They are so spread out and need additional staff and other things that really are a weight on what they do.

Dr. Bagwell said the request would reduce the expense of new construction, enhance traffic and pedestrian safety, provide growth and expansion opportunities, and protect records and equipment. Initially, the discussion was that COA really wanted to keep the Fenwick-Hollowell Trail too. They have invested a lot of time and money on the trail. COA ultimately maintains and provides security for the trail.

Dr. Bagwell stated that the current maintenance facilities have no restrooms, limited protection for equipment, limited storage for supplies, and no shop space for working on equipment. Storage space at the College is severely limited and is currently in a location that is not conducive to storing items for future use or archive. Their Information Technology Department is currently housed in the brick home on campus. It has outgrown this space and needs a facility accommodating equipment delivery and setup. Currently, COA has two entrances, one of which does not have a traffic light. Using the roadway that parallels the requested property would provide additional access to the College with a traffic light, which would enhance traffic safety.

Commissioner Overman said the safety aspect speaks volumes to him, because one of the current entrances at COA does not have a light, and because of the amount of calls public safety receives. Dr. Bagwell said he cringes when he sees these 16, 17, and 18 year olds gunning it across Hwy 17.

Commissioner Lavin said he appreciates COA's willingness to come here, and he hopes that they can work through something that is mutually beneficial. He said the Board has always been willing to address COA's request and tackle them. He said he continues to want to push for the highest and best use of the property. In his mind this is just a temporary stop gap, which will potentially negatively impact the County's development plan. If there are other opportunities, he is certainly willing to explore them.

Dr. Bagwell said this Board has been very generous to COA and they have a facility coming up that is going to be trajectory changing for many-many people in this region. He is sure the Board will decide what is best, but it is always better to have something that you can walk to than something you have to navigate four to five lanes to get to. He knows that's not always possible, but it would be the best option for COA. He said he made a commitment to the Board to only ask for what the College needs; not what they want.

Commissioner Davis said he is a real estate guy so he understands what Commissioner Lavin is saying. He also said when he first came on the Board that it made sense to give COA the entire property, because you only get that one shot. He was advised that COA did not want the whole hospital. He said the population is going to grow rapidly here and he can foresee the College becoming double its size. It's an opportunity and the Board should give it much thought.

Dr. Bagwell said if they do not receive additional space, the pressure will be to push for programs in other counties. His commitment to the Board of Trustees is to leave things better than he found them. He said Currituck is always looking for more programs. Dare County has \$10 million and are asking what the next building needs to be. He has had some discussions in Camden County. They want a campus. Perquimans is setting up a meeting. He said he wants to serve the community, but they are already spread out so much that they are going to have to consolidate as much as they can.

Dr. Bagwell said the next academic building that he could see using is an advanced manufacturing facility. Some of the programs in Currituck really need to be replicated here

because of the industrial pool and the things going on with economic development. Currently, to do that they would need to rent space somewhere else. There is not a lot of space in Pasquotank to do some industrial training that they have a grant for. This may leak over into Perquimans. They need flex space on their campus.

Dr. Bagwell provided an update on the Health Sciences Simulation Expansion Project. They have been through several rounds of planning. Their next meeting is scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup>. Their goal is to submit to the State Construction Office during the first week in April 2023, provided all programming is complete. The State Construction Office has 15 days to review and submit questions to Clark Nexsen and COA prior to approval. This process could be delayed due to limited staffing in the state office. He said they expect approval by mid-May. He provided the latest design document. He stated that staff and faculty have visited a number of nursing/allied health simulation facilities. Once the facility is complete, there will be some additional space on campus that will need to be updated.

## **7. SOLID WASTE OPERATIONAL STUDY:**

County Manager Hammett stated that the Operational Study was initiated in late July with a scope of conducting a diagnostic analysis of overall department operations, including identification of areas where the department is providing excellent service and detailed recommendations for improvement, where warranted. Study tasks included interviewing all employees, conducting observations of all areas of operations, obtaining feedback from customers at Convenience Sites, reviewing best practices in Solid Waste (SW) service delivery, and ongoing meetings with SW management.

Overall, Solid Waste management does a good job of providing oversight to employees and running a safe, customer-friendly operation that meets all state requirements. When asked which Solid Waste department would be considered a model program for our region, a NC Department of Environmental Quality official responded it would be Pasquotank County Solid Waste. Implementing Operational Study recommendations will further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. Many of the needs that were identified have resulted from the lack of adequate revenue to address issues.

### **#1 - Increase Landfill Tip Fees to Provide Additional Funding to Address Convenience Site Needs**

- Revenue from the SW Availability Fees was being used to supplant the cost of Landfill operations.
- Approved by the BOC and implemented January 1, 2023. The revenue increase is currently tracking as projected - \$410,868.58 tip fee revenue collected from January 1 to February 14, 2023 compared to \$313,094.87 in 2022.
- Staff will come back before the Solid Waste Committee and the BOC to recommend addressing some immediate Convenience Site needs this Fiscal Year.

### **#2 - End Commercial Recycling Route and Place a Recycling Container Downtown for Businesses**

- Solid Waste has received almost no revenue from recycling for the last five years to offset the cost of operations. In contrast, it now costs more to dispose of recyclables than other waste.
- The department would need to replace a 1998 model truck at a cost of approximately \$150,000 to continue the program. We are now at the point where we cannot continue the program – we would lose approximately \$90,000 per year.
- Recommendation is a compromise solution that still meets the needs of Downtown businesses specifically – a Downtown Recycling Container on Elizabeth Street behind Colonial Café. This would be collocated with a City trash compactor.
- Other businesses outside of the Downtown Central Business District would have to take their recyclables to one of the Convenience Sites.
- Capital cost of \$20,500 - \$11,000 for the recycling container and \$9,500 for the sitework (\$19,000 split with the City of Elizabeth City).
- Sitework on the parcel involves some leveling and grading, the pouring of an approximately 13 cubic yard concrete pad, installation of an electrical line and lighting, installation of a 4” drain line, and construction of a commercial aesthetic enclosure.

### **#3 – Maintain Flex Truck Driver Position**

- Currently, running the Commercial Recycling route takes approximately 3 work-days for the Flex Truck Driver.
- If the recommendation to eliminate Commercial Recycling and to place a container Downtown is implemented, it will only require approximately 1 hour per week for the Flex Driver.
- Maintaining the Flex Truck Driver position will provide backup when drivers are out of work, provide the ability to keep containers open at each site when demand is high, and provide assistance at the Transfer Station.

### **#4 - Negotiate with American Tower Regarding Wellfield Site; If Unsuccessful, Locate Replacement Property**

- Relocating the Wellfield Site to a location that makes operational sense is going to be challenging.
- A representative from American Tower has been reaching out to the County to try to either do a lump sum lease buyout or lease modification of a tower lease they have with the County at the Utilities spray field.
- The County could possibly negotiate with American Tower to gain access to the property to do the required Corps of Engineers wetlands assessment (pending since April 2021).

### **#5 – Short-term Priority Needs at Convenience Sites**

- Developed list of short-term (18-month) priority needs at each of the seven Convenience Sites.
- Needs identified included: compactors, pads under some of the compactors, containers, fences, entrance/exit road paving/repairs, and sitework. (Note: Some of the more costly items such as road paving and pad repairs may extend beyond the short-term due to costs.)
- The additional revenue from increased tip fees for the last 6 months of FY2022-23 and the full year for FY2023-24 will be used to address the short-term needs.

### **#6 – Fund Maintenance Position in Fiscal Year 2023-24 to Address Upkeep at Convenience Sites**

- Daily upkeep such as cleaning and painting at sites was a concern identified during visits to Convenience Sites.
- Maintaining the condition of the Convenience Sites and miscellaneous maintenance concerns is an ongoing need.
- Establishing a Maintenance position will help ensure that the sites are maintained after addressing the short-term needs. In addition, the position could assist with upkeep at the Landfill. Alternatively, using three skilled part-time Site Attendants on Thursdays could potentially meet this need more cost effectively.

### **#7 – Implement Career Ladder for Site Attendants**

- Currently, there is no career ladder for Convenience Site Attendants.
- By establishing two levels of Site Attendants (I and II), each site could have a lead attendant that would have additional responsibilities.
- Additional responsibilities for Site Attendant II's could include: assisting with training of new Site Attendants; communicating site needs to the Recycling Coordinator; and monitoring container levels and communicating with Truck Drivers.

### **#8 – Implement Construction and Demolition (C&D) Waste Restrictions at Convenience Sites**

- Some counties do not accept C&D waste at Convenience Sites (Perquimans, Chowan, Gates, Halifax).
- Counties that do accept C&D typically have restrictions to prevent commercial dumping and clear signage. We will develop some restrictions to be approved by the SW Committee and BOC.

- Examples: **Durham County** - No dual wheeled vehicles or trailers. No box trucks, enclosed trailers, or commercial vehicles. Trailers may not be longer than 8 feet with side rails no higher than 4 feet. **Wake County** - Residents using a box truck, dual-axle or enclosed trailer to dispose of their trash at Convenience Centers will require a trash pass.

#### **#9 – Convenience Site Customer Feedback**

- We finished Customer Surveys this week. Overall feedback has been very positive.
- The following questions are being asked:
  1. How often do you use this facility?
  2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best rating possible, how satisfied are you with the services provided by staff at this facility?
  3. If there was one thing you could improve with this facility what would it be?
  4. Do the hours and days of operation of this facility meet your needs?
  5. Is there anything else that you would like to add concerning this facility?

#### **#10 – Strengthen Public Information Efforts and Enforcement of Littering**

- Pasquotank County roads look horrible due to littering, and a large part of the litter occurs from loads that are not secured.
- North Carolina taxpayers spend millions of dollars every year to remove trash that blows from truck beds. Transporting unsecured loads is unsafe and illegal.
- NCGS – 14-399 – Littering - When litter is blown, scattered, spilled, thrown or placed from a vehicle or watercraft, the operator thereof shall be presumed to have committed the offense.
- Researching – Would having a local ordinance in place requiring loads to be secured aid law enforcement?

Management Fellow Mike Barclift said the following recommendations came about after staff conversations and public surveys:

#### **Other Recommendations**

**Finding:** A typical finding in an Operational Study is the need to have more of a management presence, which is clearly not a concern for the SW Department. “Management by Walking Around” is an effective strategy to gain information on issues, routines, and workflows. Almost all Solid Waste employees indicated that the Solid Waste Director and Recycling Coordinator are very visible and accessible.

**Recommendation:** The continued strong presence of Solid Waste management will aid in implementing the Operational Study recommendations, further improving efficiency and effectiveness.

**Finding:** The department does not conduct group meetings with employees and some employees identified communications/information flow as a concern.

**Recommendation:** Prior to COVID, SW conducted an annual employee breakfast meeting, which should be reinstated. Conduct monthly meetings with smaller groups of employees, for example, Landfill staff and Convenience Site Operator II’s to improve communications.

**Finding:** Employee interviews indicated that safety training is not conducted on an ongoing basis.

**Recommendation:** Schedule and conduct an annual safety stand-down.

**Finding:** Employee interviews indicated that most employees were not aware of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

**Recommendation:** Employees are given a copy of SOPs when they are hired. Reference and discuss SOPs during employee meetings.

**Finding:** Convenience site signage needs improvement to clearly inform citizens.

**Recommendation:** As convenience sites are improved, develop consistent signage and a coded color scheme that is customer friendly.

**Finding:** Solid Waste's website has less information in comparison to some other counties.

**Recommendation:** Enhance website after upgrading Convenience Sites and improve signage to include clear language that no commercial dumping is allowed at the sites.

**Finding:** There is no onsite solicitation of customer feedback at Convenience Sites.

**Recommendation:** Place signage with a QR code or email address/website for feedback at each Convenience Site. This would provide a means to solicit good and bad feedback. Responses could be anonymous or allow the ability for email or phone callback.

**Finding:** The Department does not have enough refuse transfer trailers, at times all the trailers are in use.

**Recommendation:** Purchase one additional transfer trailer.

## **8. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:**

Jackson Stancil, the County's lobbyist, provided a legislative update. He said he has been told that there is supposedly a large pot of money for water and sewer projects. He asked Board members and staff to supply him with some shovel ready projects they would like legislative assistance with.

Mr. Hammett and the Board suggested the following Projects:

- Expansion of RO Plant - \$5.4 million
- COA Simulation Lab - \$12.5 million
- Bridge #41 - \$1.2 million

## **9. LIBRARY-EARL CONTRACT & RECOMMENDED CHANGES:**

Jonathan Wark, East Albemarle Regional Library System (EARL) Director said the state did a study in the last 50s and saw that what was then rural areas were not provided the same level of library service as better populated areas. They incentivized the joining together of adjoining counties to form regional library systems. They did so with some added financial incentive. The stated formula gives more funding to a regional library system than a county system. They had a period of time in the early to mid-late 60s where regional library systems formed all across our state; mostly what was then the rural east and the rural west. The current local EARL system was formed in 1964.

Mr. Wark said everyone took their agreements and put them away in a file cabinet and never looked at them again. Right after the turn of the century, a region in the western part of the state decided they no longer wanted to be a region. No one had ever done that in 45 years. It was such a difficult process because no one had ever done it before. The state library went through the administrative rules process and essentially declared everyone's regional library agreement null and void as of a certain date.

About twelve years ago, they started on the process of getting a new regional library agreement, as did all other regional library systems. He said we are Camden, Currituck, Dare, and Pasquotank. They came up with a new regional library agreement and it lays out in very broad terms the roles and responsibilities of the board of trustees. There is a section about assets, which for us is very easy because almost all of the assets in our libraries are property of the member county. Some regions operate differently, where everything is centralized. The Witherspoon Library furnishings, materials, and staff are all paid for by the County, so we would not have an issue with how we would have to come to terms with property. EARLs ownership is their carrier vehicles, their employees, and most of their, but not all, technology. He said their agreement expires this June 30<sup>th</sup>. It is his recommendation, and he believes he speaks for the Regional Library Board as well, that we do a short-term agreement for several reasons, one being their funding.

The regional library system funding from the state in 2023 is less than it was in 1999. He said that's not less when adjusted for inflation. When it is adjusted for inflation, it is a lot less. When you think about their fixed costs and what the librarian's salary was in 1999, and what health insurance costs in 1999, it is kind of ridiculous to think they can manage with that same level of funding. They have over the last fifteen years gone from seven employees to four. Every time they cut an employee at the regional level it puts more work onto the back of the local staff. They received, as did all public libraries in the state, ARPA money, which puts them in a much better financial situation for the next three years, but when that money is gone in 2027, are they going to be able to have this administrative structure with 1999 funding.

Mr. Hammett said it is not only Mr. Wark's recommendation, but it is also staffs' that we sign a 3-year contract extension to allow expenditure of the \$230,000 in ARPA funds. In three years we can look at other options.

Assistant County Manager John Shannon said when the previous director resigned, he was asked to take over the administrative part of the library and Camden County Librarian Kim Perry has helped us with other library activities. He said they have implemented some changes, but they have others they would like to implement. Camden County is not receptive to sharing a librarian, which he understands why.

Mr. Wark said between the great resignation and the high cost of housing, they have not been able to attract a candidate for the Currituck Librarian position. The position has been vacant for seven months, and he has not, in 40 years of hiring, seen so few applicants. He asked even if it is a competitive salary, who can afford to move from across the state and buy a house anywhere in our four county region right now. They are now advertising the position at \$56,000.

Mr. Shannon explained that EARL pays for the librarian position. They have discussed the possibility of the County providing a supplement to the salary to make sure that we can get some candidates and be competitive with other openings out there. Mr. Wark said when they previously posted the Currituck Librarian position it was in the low 50s. When he looked at other county librarian positions in the state, it was well above two in this part of the state. It was about equal to one out in the western part of the state. But, again, if it is a \$54,000 a year job, are you going to be able to afford to move here. He said one reason their salaries have not kept up is simply the level state aid. Mr. Shannon and Mr. Wark both said they feel a \$10,000 supplement would help tremendously.

Ms. Perry explained that weeding is the process of permanently removing an item from a library's collection. Overcrowded shelves and worn-out material can make a library feel cluttered. But, more important than aesthetics is currency of information. Patrons rely on their libraries to give them relevant data in their nonfiction and reference sections especially. She said it appears that the Pasquotank County Library has not been weeded for an extended period of time. Staff is currently working on looking at every item in the collections and making sure that the data base looks like it should and the physical item that is in the library has the correct spine labeling on it, and it's in the correct location. She noted that this is a huge project. There are approximately 60,000 items in the library. She noted that the library staff has been fabulous.

Ms. Perry said once the inventory is done, and they have established that the things are in the library that are supposed to be there, then they will go back through the collection and start evaluating, and seeing what is old, in horrible condition, outdated, or just utterly irrelevant. As these items are pulled out, what's left is going to look better. The County will have to purchase some new items to create a nice, tight, core collection for the community that is useable and can be turned over and can be refreshed in a reasonable manner. She noted that there are different approaches to librarianship. One is you are an archivist and you want to save everything, but a public library should have relevant, current information in her opinion. The collection needs to be fresh and clean. It needs to be a place that the public is proud to visit and they feel welcomed. She said she would argue that the Pasquotank Library is in many ways not that, but it certainly can be with a lot of work and a good bit of financial investment. She estimated it would be a five-year project.

Ms. Perry said something that is immediately apparent as you walk into the Library is the computer library upstairs. It is a lot of real estate and a lot of computers that are going unused right now. People are still coming in and they need to use computers, but they no longer need the 28-30 that are in that room. Mr. Wark said everyone used to be envious of that computer lab and there use to be waiting list, but in the last ten years, everybody has a computer in their pocket. They essentially now need those computers just for people that can't afford a computer or smart phone or for people who maybe need the Microsoft productivity software. Ms. Perry said the computers need to be put in the common area, and the space could be used for programming space, which is really important in libraries now.

Mr. Shannon said once the weeding takes place, there needs to be a bit of a redesign. Some of the shelves need to come out and be replaced with tables and reading areas. The computer room

needs to be utilized for other activities. It needs to have the feel of a community center/community hub to it.

Mr. Shannon stated that they have also discussed changing the hours of operation for the Library. Most other libraries are open for nine hours a day, while ours is open for 10 hours. Some of them are open later one night a week. They would like to shift the current hours to 9AM to 6PM. It would help greatly with their staffing issues. They believe that it would cut down on the need to rely on part-time help as much as they do currently. If the Board approves the change, they could go ahead and start advertising it, and begin the new hours after Easter. Mr. Hammett stated that this will actually save the County money because they are going to be able to reduce the number of part-time employees.

Mr. Shannon said there also needs to be some reorganization and cross-training of staff, as well as updating job descriptions. After this is done, they would like to get training for staff in supervisory positions at the UNC School of Government. He thinks this would help tremendously.

Mr. Wark stated that each of their other locations have a paraprofessional, with a non-master's degree in library science, branch manager. This individual handles daily scheduling and low level customer complaints or concerns. It frees up the time of the County Librarian for more strategic things. Pasquotank Library doesn't really have a branch manager and they think there really needs to be one. It would really be a much more efficient and affective structure. Camden created that position last year, and it has been an amazing difference in the way the library operates since then. Mr. Shannon said there is currently an employee on staff that they would like to reclassify for the position.

#### **EARL and Staff Recommendations:**

- Execute a three-year extension of the current EARL agreement.
- EARL recently received \$230,000 in ARPA funds. These funds significantly improved EARL's short-term financial position.
- However, when these funds are gone, EARL will be right back to where we are now, and it will be pointless in 2027 to maintain a State-authorized structure with 1999-level State funding.
- We believe a shorter term Regional Library agreement gives EARL and Pasquotank County time to consider the best organizational structure to deliver library service to our citizens in the decades ahead.

**Finding:** After the resignation of the previous Library Director, the County Manager recommended that Assistant County Manager John Shannon serve as the Interim Library Director with technical support from Camden County Library Director Kim Perry. This recommendation was made to provide time to assess operations and determine how to best move the Pasquotank County Library forward.

**Recommendation:** Begin implementing changes at the Library and post the Library Director position. Offer a County salary supplement in addition to the EARL salary for exceptionally qualified candidates.

**Finding:** On May 14, 2007, the Library moved into its current location at 100 East Colonial Avenue. At that time, the Library was state-of-the-art; however, the way that libraries are configured to best meet the needs of the public has changed.

**Recommendation:** Take steps to modernize the Library through opening up space and refreshing the collection to transform it into more of a community hub.

**Finding:** Weeding is the process of permanently removing an item from a library's collection. Overcrowded shelves and worn-out material can make a library feel cluttered. But more important than aesthetics is currency of information (for example, tax, medical, and legal). Patrons rely on their libraries to give them relevant data in their nonfiction and reference sections especially. It appears that the Pasquotank County Library has not been weeded for an extended period of time.

**Recommendation:** Weed the Library's collection and increase the funding for materials to begin replacing some of the obsolete and damaged materials. Reduce the amount of shelving to free space and make the Library less cluttered and more inviting to patrons.

**Finding:** The second floor Computer Room is too large and gets minimal usage. Modern libraries typically have computer workstations in an open area.

**Recommendation:** Move some computers outside of the Computer Room. Convert the Computer Room into a programming room for adults and children that could also be used as a community meeting room.

**Finding:** The Library's 10-hour operation schedule Monday through Friday (8:30 am – 6:30 pm) causes staffing difficulties.

**Recommendation:** Reduce the Monday through Friday hours of operation to 9:00 am to 6:00pm. The schedule change will aid staffing efficiency and have minimal impact on Library patrons (only 3.6 patrons on average during the first and last 30-minutes currently).

**Finding:** The organizational structure has inherent inefficiencies and creates a division of staff – first floor and second floor.

**Recommendation:** Flatten the organizational structure and cross-train all staff. Typically, there is more cross-training and less specificity in the job tasks that each position performs.

**Finding:** The Pasquotank County Library job descriptions do not accurately represent the work that is performed.

**Recommendation:** Use the Dare County Library job descriptions as a base to rewrite all job descriptions in conjunction with the new organizational structure.

**Finding:** Supervisory issues were identified during employee interviews.

**Recommendation:** After reorganizing the Library, require all supervisors to attend the NC School of Government's one-week supervisory training class as quickly as possible.

**Finding:** The other EARL Libraries have a Branch Manager who assumes responsibility for many of the day-to-day administrative functions and serves as an Assistant Library Director.

**Recommendation:** Reclassify an existing position as Branch Manager.

**Finding:** Equipment concerns were identified as a major issue during employee interviews.

**Recommendation:** Replace the public copiers and begin leasing printers. Change the payment process for copies.

The Board thanked Ms. Perry for her help over the past few months.

## **10. FY2023-24 GOALS:**

Mr. Hammett stated that staff will develop Goals from the Retreat sessions based on the information presented, and feedback from Commissioners during the presentations. He noted that some of the FY22-23 Goals were multi-year goals, and they will be continued for FY23-24. The draft FY23-24 Goals will be presented for discussion at an upcoming Finance Committee meeting. He asked each Commissioner what they would like for the County to accomplish in FY22-23.

Commissioner Griffin said he would like to see land use around the County's corridors to be addressed. Mr. Hammett noted that the new Land Use Plan addresses many of those issues. Commissioner Griffin said he would also like to see continued communications with NC DOT, and to have a regular cycle/schedule for maintaining ditches/culverts throughout the County.

Commissioner Davis said he does not have any goals in mind. He said we tend to focus on going to Raleigh to get things done, but we are closer to Virginia than we are Raleigh. He thinks the Board needs to pay almost as much attention to what is going on in Virginia for the simple reason that there are a lot of projects that he is aware of on the Virginia side that have a lot of effect on the North Carolina side. If we lobby a little more in Virginia, we can probably find somebody who would locate in the Commerce Park. Mr. Hammett said maybe we can focus some of Economic Development's focus in Virginia.

Vice-Chairman Overman said he would like staff to contact the prison to see if they ever plan to resume their litter pickup program throughout the County or if it can be done through community service. He would also like staff to explore the delivery of fire services.

Commissioner Meads said he thinks it would save the County money in the long run if we do annual maintenance on the courthouse. He said it needs to be done right, so it will last for years

to come. He would like to see the needed courthouse repairs completed by the end of this year. He said we need to stay on top of maintenance needs in the Solid Waste Department as well. Many of the buildings have been neglected for several years.

Commissioner Lavin said we currently have a lot of big projects in the works that take a lot of resources. He said he thinks the next project is the future use of the hospital property. The impact to the County and City is significant. He feels like there is enough going on. We need to take a look at some of the operational issues that we have. The maintenance issues have come to the forefront. He knows that there are some economic development initiatives pulling in some new employers helping out the expansion of existing businesses. He is dealing with finding employees to fill those positions. He just went on a fieldtrip with NEEAT where they talked about some of the apprenticeship programs. They got to see a very successful one in the state. He isn't sure that NEEAT is ready to replicate that here, but if we were able to get the right cooperation, it would be a big deal for us.

Commissioner Lavin said to Commissioner Davis' point earlier about partnering with the Tidewater area, the Workforce Development Board was just awarded a grant jointly with Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board to prep for maritime light manufacturing.

Commissioner Lavin said it hit a nerve today when he saw that public safety had inched above education as the biggest expense in the County. He said we really need to take a look at that. Commissioner Meads noted that the County has three private schools and a charter school. Commissioner Lavin said with the school system having their instability at the leadership level over the last almost decade now, they have taken their eye off the ball of certain initiatives and they are doing all they can to just keep operating. He said we have to help them out, because every year there are hundreds of kids coming out of those doors that we are missing an opportunity to reach. He hates to see another year slip by where we are massing all these huge funds in the bank because they are not able to spend the money or they don't have an initiative planned. We are stock piling money for an eventual thing that god only knows when it will happen.

Mr. Hammett said part of the distortion of why Public Safety is going above education is because of not spending the capital money. If they were spending the capital funds that have been allocated then that would not be the case. Ms. Small noted that number that was used for education did not include the debt service side of what is spent on education either. Mr. Hammett said he has had a lot of interaction with Dr. Parker and he thinks he is going to do a really good job, because he is focused on a lot more than keeping above water.

The retreat was adjourned at 3:08 PM.

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CHAIRMAN

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CLERK TO THE BOARD