

PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
MARCH 4, 2015

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a special meeting on Wednesday, March 4, 2015 with the Albemarle Soil & Water Conservation District supervisors and staff at The Pineapple Café.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joseph S. Winslow, Jr., Chairman
Dr. William R. Sterritt
Frankie Meads
Bettie J. Parker

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Cecil Perry, Vice-Chairman
Jeff Dixon
Lloyd E. Griffin, III

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rodney Bunch, County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Karen Jennings, Clerk to the Board
Steve Harris, Pasquotank Soil & Water Supervisor
Maurice Berry, Pasquotank Soil & Water Supervisor
Dwane Hinson, Pasquotank Soil & Water Technician
Dianne Watts, Pasquotank Soil & Water Secretary
Brian Lannon, Camden Soil & Water Technician

Soil & Water Supervisor Steve Harris welcomed everyone and gave thanks for the meal. Following lunch Dwane Hinson, Soil & Water Technician, gave a presentation to the Board.

Mr. Hinson stated that the county now has pretty good control of any new development. He said where there are a lot of issues are the older developments and the old single dwelling areas in the county. He said there is still a lack of a mechanism to deal with some of these issues. He stated that they have been encouraging the development of water management districts because it gives the public a lot of input and provides a source of funding. He asked that the Board give some consideration as to how another district might be formed. He said there are some land owners in critical areas that are willing to participate. He provided a map of the county showing various canals and large ditches that drain thousands of acres of land. He said there is no mechanism to protect these ditches from encroachment by major developments. He pointed out that the concern around the U.S. 17 Bypass area is that there are three or four main drains which are currently maintained by farmers. As a development encroaches, there will be a lot of issues with regard to who will maintain the integrity of the drainageways. Mr. Hinson said if these drains are ever compromised there will be serious issues that will cost thousands of dollars to correct versus setting up a mechanism now to protect them. He advised that there are several land owners who would like to try to set up a type of special use district and start looking at trying to maintain the integrity of these main drains. He requested assistance from the county to get this project moving forward. He said they are at a point where they cannot go any further until this issue is resolved.

Mr. Hinson also updated the Board on the Little River project. He said many areas bordering the Little River have had timber cut and are significantly disturbed. He stated that there is concern that the buffer is being destroyed and the effect it is having on the ability of the river to maintain itself with regard to water quality. He said it takes years for the river to heal itself. As part of this project they would like to set up a 300 foot buffer on properties along the river from Halls Creek up to Parkville. Participation in the program would be strictly voluntary and he believes there would be about 90% to 95% participation from the property owners. The buffer would not encroach on any farmland or usable land. Through this process the property owners would sign agreements to be stewards and get a slight tax break for leaving a 300 foot undisturbed area along the river. It would not cost the property owners anything and they could get out of the agreement at any time. Mr. Hinson said the educational value is what the Soil Conservation Service is interested in and it will also give them some leverage for grants to help with vegetation to stabilize and filter the waters. He explained that the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners has voted to implement this project for the Perquimans side of the river and he would like to get it going in Pasquotank County. Mr. Hinson asked for direction from the Board

as to whether to proceed with the project. He stated that letters to the property owners have been prepared and are ready to be mailed once the Board gives its approval.

Chairman Winslow asked who would improve the buffers and whether cutover timberland would just sit there or whether trees would be planted by the county or by Soil & Water Conservation Service. Mr. Hinson said hopefully the land owners would get involved in some buffer programs initiated through the Soil & Water Conservation Service to restore the land. Mr. Harris added that they hope to get grant money to pay for some of the restoration that would include planting vegetation to help stabilize the buffer and help filter the water that goes to the river.

County Attorney Mike Cox advised that a sample agreement has been drafted and he would suggest that this issue be placed on an agenda, that actual dollar amounts be determined and that the agreements be brought to the Board for consideration.

Mr. Hinson updated the Board on grants that have been received for clearing and snagging and removal of trash and tires from the river. He stated that the county needs to begin looking at some creek management for the entire county and some of it may require county funding. He said last year the county allocated \$25,000 in its budget to participate in some of these efforts. He stated that none of this money has been used because they were trying to use it as a match for some grants that have not come through yet. He asked for input from the Board on the efforts it would like to put into some of these areas including Halls Creek and Charles Creek. He suggested doing some clearing and snagging and addressing some of these issues outside of the city limits and he asked if the Board would be willing to appropriate some funds for clearing and snagging if grants cannot be obtained. He said for comparison \$30,000 was spent for clearing and snagging six miles of the Little River. He added that it is just a matter of whether to do preventative maintenance or to try to make repairs once these areas clog up.

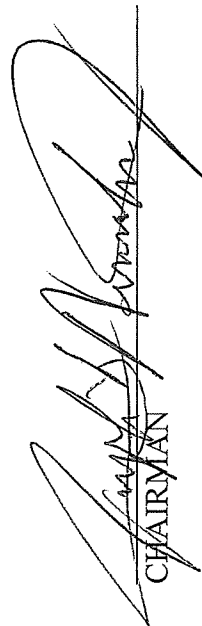
Chairman Winslow stated that clearing and snagging is expensive but is apparently very effective. It was requested that Mr. Hinson make a formal presentation including specific projects and dollar amounts needed at budget time.

Mr. Hinson stated that hydrilla and alligator weed continue to impact many waterways and these areas are going to need some kind of treatment. He said the county will probably be requested to participate. He stated that some funds have been received from the Aquatic Weed Control Program, but they would like to utilize some funding from the county as seed money to assist with this type of program.

Chairman Winslow said he understands that alligator weed and other invasive plants are a major issue for Eastern North Carolina and many counties are taking their concerns to the Legislature. He stated that he is hoping more grants will become available on a state level to help treat these invasive species of plants in all of Eastern North Carolina. Mr. Hinson added that even after treatment it will be necessary to maintain these areas.

Discussion was briefly held on other issues including drainage districts, maintenance of ditches throughout the county, and the increase in the beaver population.

Chairman Winslow thanked the Soil & Water Conservation supervisors and staff for their update and for the lunch that was provided. The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.


CHAIRMAN


CLERK TO THE BOARD