

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA  
APRIL 1, 2024**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a regular meeting on Monday, April 1, 2024 in the Commissioners Boardroom in the Pasquotank County Courthouse.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Charles Jordan, Chairman  
Lloyd E. Griffin, III  
Sean Lavin  
Jonathan Meads  
Sam Davis  
Clifford Shaw

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Barry Overman, Vice-Chairman

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sparty Hammett, County Manager  
John Shannon, Assistant County Manager  
Mike Cox, County Attorney  
Mike Barclift, Management Fellow  
Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Charles Jordan. Commissioner Jonathan Meads gave the invocation and Commissioner Sam Davis led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Chairman Jordan welcomed those in attendance.

**1. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:**

Commissioner Lloyd Griffin requested that the agenda be amended to add the following items recommended by the Finance Committee to the Consent Agenda: 1) Approval of Request for Occupancy Tax Funds – Potato Festival; 2) Approval of Request for Occupancy Tax Funds – Arts of the Albemarle; and 3) Approval of Emergency Notification System Contract.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Sean Lavin to amend the agenda to add Items #1-3 to the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

**2. PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER INCENTIVE FOR “PROJECT WHITE EAGLE”:**

Chairman Jordan explained that the Board will hold a Public Hearing to consider a State of North Carolina Economic Development Incentive for a company known as “Project White Eagle.”

Chairman Jordan declared the meeting a Public Hearing at 6:03 PM. He asked if anyone would care to address the board regarding the incentive. At the absence of comments, the Public Hearing was closed at 6:04 PM.

Commissioner Griffin read the proposed resolution.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Sean Lavin to support and endorse the application of “Project White Eagle” and to adopt the following resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN APPLICATION ON BEHALF OF A COMPANY TO BE  
REFERRED TO AS “PROJECT WHITE EAGLE” TO THE NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
BUILDING REUSE PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, Pasquotank County is committed to advancing and promoting economic development in Pasquotank County, North Carolina;

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 158-7.1(a) authorizes the use of economic incentives for the purpose of private sector job creation;

WHEREAS, Project White Eagle has pledged to create up to 23 new full-time jobs in Pasquotank County, is eligible to apply for a Building Reuse Grant up to the amount of \$200,000

through the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and requires the sponsorship of Pasquotank County to make application; and

WHEREAS, Pasquotank County acknowledges that, if the grant is awarded, it will be required to commit a cash match of 5% of the grant amount toward the project for a total cash match of up to \$10,000;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners that it does hereby support and endorse the application of Project White Eagle to the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Building Reuse Grant Program for a grant up to the amount of \$200,000.

Adopted this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April 2024.

**3. PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER INCENTIVE FOR "PROJECT WHITE EAGLE":**

Chairman Jordan explained that the Board will hold a Public Hearing to consider a State of North Carolina Economic Development Incentive for a company known as "Project White Eagle."

Chairman Jordan declared the meeting a Public Hearing at 6:07 PM. He asked if anyone would care to address the board regarding the incentive.

Renee' Stallings asked what the project represents and what will it bring to this town. She asked if they will hire 23 local employees, or will we have people from Virginia getting our jobs.

Economic Development Director Scott Hinton stated that "Project White Eagle" was the news article in the paper this past weekend. LMFakro Industries is a Polish manufacturer of attic ladders and accessories, who will create 23 jobs, with an average salary of \$44,457 per year. He stated that College of the Albemarle is also being funded to create training programs, so that local citizens can complete the training and effectively obtain a job. Ms. Stallings asked if citizens have to go through COA. Mr. Hinton answered, not necessarily. If someone is already qualified for those manufacturing jobs they certainly could be hired. If not, then there is a path to getting a certification and diploma.

At the absence of further comments, the Public Hearing was closed at 6:09 PM.

Commissioner Lavin read the proposed resolution.

Commissioner Davis asked why we have to still call the project "Project White Eagle" on the agenda. County Manager Hammett explained that the project required notice be posted in the paper. At the time the notice was advertised staff did not know when the governor was going to announce the project.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Sam Davis to support and endorse the application of "Project White Eagle" and to adopt the following resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN APPLICATION ON BEHALF OF A COMPANY TO BE REFERRED TO AS "PROJECT WHITE EAGLE" TO THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION ONE NORTH CAROLINA FUND PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, Pasquotank County is committed to advancing and promoting economic development in Pasquotank County, North Carolina;

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 158-7.1(a) authorizes the use of economic incentives for the purpose of private sector job creation;

WHEREAS, Project White Eagle has pledged to create up to 23 new full-time jobs in Pasquotank County, is eligible to apply for a One NC Fund Grant up to the amount of \$60,000 through the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and requires the sponsorship of Pasquotank County to make application; and

WHEREAS, Pasquotank County acknowledges that, if the grant is awarded, it will be required to commit a cash match of \$1 for every \$3 of the grant amount toward the project for a total cash match of up to \$20,000;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners that it does hereby support and endorse the application of Project White Eagle to the North Carolina Department of Commerce Economic Development Division One North Carolina Fund Program for a grant up to the amount of \$60,000.

Adopted this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April 2024.

**4. COMMENTS BY RENEE' STALLINGS:**

Chairman Jordan called on Renee' Stallings to address the Board. Ms. Stallings said she saw on the agenda that County Manager Hammett is supposed to talk about the hospital at the end of the meeting. She doesn't think that is fair to the public. It is kind of like DOT did to them at their meeting. She thinks the Board needs to bring things like that ahead of time before the people are able to speak in case they have questions instead of just leaving them hanging for two more weeks. She said she has been looking into Certificates of Need. She said nothing has been asked for one in our town. She found that the County Commissioners could ask for it. When she looked back at last year's retreat minutes, this was already in the making.

Ms. Stallings said the Board already had their minds made up about what they were going to do with the hospital property. She asked if taxpayers will be responsible for paying DFI. She said taxpayers already have to pay the UNC School of Government. She is wondering just how much has been paid to these people since they have been consulted in 2023. It was mentioned about UNC School of Government making the decisions for us. She said you all were voted in by the citizens and you all are supposed to be working for us. She said you all picked Sparty to be your manager, but it's not up to him to be making the rules for us. That's why you were voted, because we were hoping that the Board would see our side of things. She said Mr. Davis even said with the growing population here something needs to be done with the property. With a growing population, we are going to be limited in healthcare. She said we have doctors in doctor's offices right now with Sentara that have up and left your citizens. They are hanging and they don't have any healthcare. They are having a hard time trying to find a physician. She said we have got to do something about our healthcare because it is going down the drain, and it has been going down the drain. She doesn't care if it is at that property or whatever, but we do need somebody else here.

Ms. Stallings said she is just stating her opinion and other people have told her too. She was approached and told that this is a retirement town, and like she told the Board a couple of weeks ago, old people get sick. She asked the Board how they expect older people to take off and go to Virginia when most of them don't even drive. If they are transported by an ambulance, they have a humongous bill if Medicare won't pay for it, when they could have somebody here locally to help. She said we need to find doctors that we don't have, like nephrologist and neurologist. We need help you all and that is why the citizens chose you all. It's not up to just one person to stand in front of you all.

**5. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENT TO BOARD AND COMMITTEES:**

Clerk Lynn Scott explained that at the last meeting, the Board accepted the nomination of Albert Robinson, Jr. as the STHL Alternate on the Senior Tarheel Legislature. A copy of his application has been provided to Board members. Since that time, she has not received any additional applications. She said the Board can make the appointment tonight if they chose to do so.

Motion was made by Sam Davis, seconded by Sean Lavin to appoint Albert Robinson, Jr. as the STHL Alternate on the Senior Tarheel Legislature. The motion carried unanimously.

**6. PRESENTATION BY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE (DFI) ON THE PROPOSED PRE-DEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SENTARA ALBEMARLE MEDICAL CENTER:**

County Manager Hammett stated that DFI staff will present on the proposed scope of services for the project and answer any questions from the Board. The pre-development feasibility assessment was approved initially by the Board by a 4 to 3 vote on March 18, 2024. The staff

recommendation is to place consideration of Development Finance Initiative proposal to conduct a pre-development feasibility assessment back on the April 15<sup>th</sup> Board agenda for a final vote. He stated that this would give the 30-day time period Commissioner Davis requested, which was supported by Commissioners Lavin and Meads.

Ms. Marcia Perritt, DFI Director, at the UNC School of Government introduced herself and Associate Director Eric Thomas. She stated that they presented to the Board at their retreat, and offered a proposal for a scope of services to think through. She said once the new Sentara Hospital is constructed on Halstead Boulevard the property will convert back to the County. DFI is available to help the Board think through what could be that new life for the property in partnership with the private sector, and with lots of input from the community. At the last meeting, she said their proposal was a discussion item. It was challenging for them to hear and to participate in a hybrid environment, so they wanted to come back in person. They heard some questions from the Board and it didn't feel like they were able to really engage in discussion. She thanked the Board for having them back to talk a little bit more about their proposal and answer any questions that the Board might have.

Ms. Perritt said the two questions that she heard were "why this process and why now." She said DFI is a program of UNC Chapel Hill's School of Government that advises communities in North Carolina to attract private investment for transformative projects by providing specialized real estate development and finance expertise. DFI is the largest research training advisor organization in the United States. Their particular group was created to provide support to local governments around real estate development challenges to provide them with more sustained and long term technical assistance and to help them bring ideas to fruition in partnership with the private sector.

Ms. Perritt stated that their scope is very much similar to the approach that a private developer would take in assessing a potential project for a development project, in that they do market research to understand supply and demand for different uses; they work with architects or landscape architects to help understand the constraints of the site and building and what that can support; and they do financial modeling to develop performance and financial modeling to understand whether or not a project meets private sector return expectations and if not how a public-private partnership can help make that project a reality. The difference in their work is an emphasis on public interests. They solicit feedback from the community and stakeholders to understand what they would like to see on the site and what their priorities are, and incorporating those into the project and helping the Board understand, as owners of the property and as a key partner in a public-private partnership, how you might be able to exact those private interests on a particular development project.

Ms. Perritt stated that some of the feedback that they have heard from the last meeting was "why this process." She said it sounds like there are already a couple of developers who are interested in the hospital campus currently, which is great. From their perspective and their experience in working with these types of projects if those developers are interested now, they will be interested later. What the pre-development process does is help the Board have more clarity around what they would like to see in the project in a way that is supported by the market and economic reality. That way when you are engaging with the private sector and you are going out to seek a development partner you have a lot of clarity around what you want to see, whether it is financially and market feasible, and whether or not it is something that the public and community supports. In turn, it allows the private development partner to come up with a more thoughtful and detailed proposal. When you're clear about your expectations, they then can rise to meet those expectations and hopefully provide a more enhanced or more detailed proposal than they might have in the absence of you having done that pre-development feasibility analysis up front. She said it is really about putting the Board in the driver's seat.

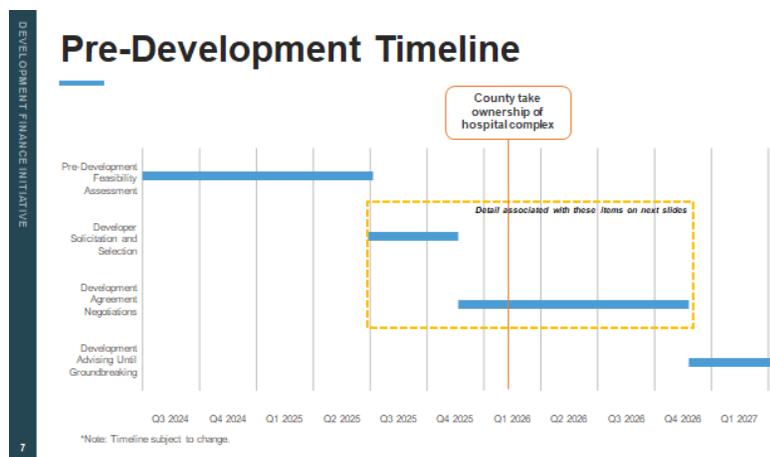
Ms. Perritt said typically when local governments are soliciting private development partners they don't have the in-house capacity to enter into deep dialogue with the private sector around development projects, so that is where they come in. DFI becomes an extension of the County's team so that when they are negotiating with developers and recruiting developers to come work on this project you are providing them with a lot of clarity about what you would like to see. Essentially, from their perspective, it is going slow to be able to move fast later on. She stated that Mr. Thomas will dive a little more deeply into how this process might also allow the Board to cast a wider net in terms of attracting more development partners. They understand that there

are developers interested today, but they think the more work that you can do in being clear about what your expectations are, what you would like to see, and the public-private partnership that you are willing to enter in can open up some possibilities of more developers who otherwise might not be interested or might not be willing to spend those many years that it can take from a private sector perspective of doing the pre-development work.

Ms. Perritt stated that another core service that they offer is what they call a third party review. They are brought in after a local government has solicited a public-private partnership and have a developer at the table to help sit at the side of the table of the local government partner to advise on the agreement as it is moving forward. She said that is why they were initially created. Through that work of doing those third party reviews and helping local governments react to request from the private sector they determined this type of pre-development service, that are more proactive and working more upstream, is a service that can be really helpful to expedite those development agreements later on by being really clear about expectations.

Mr. Thomas stated that the pre-development feasibility analysis is a 12-month scope of work. He explained that there are a lot of steps that are involved in assessing the development potential for the hospital campus site. Public interests are at the core front of all of their work. It is how they measure whether their work they are developing matches what the community is hoping to see. They also do a site analysis, market analysis, and a financial analysis.

Mr. Thomas provided the following timeline:



- Pre-Development Timeline- Solicitation, Selection and Developer Negotiations**
- Endorsement of Solicitation of Development Partners (1 month)
  - Developer Outreach (2-3 months)
  - Identification and Selection of Preferred Development Partner (2-3 months)
  - Development Agreement Negotiations (12 months)
    - Establish timelines and milestones to hold development partner accountable, to include,
      - MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)
      - Development Plan
      - Design and Construction Responsibilities
      - Land Disposition Agreement
      - Public Facilities/Infrastructure Plan
      - Lease Agreements, if public use is considered for site
      - Closing Details

Mr. Thomas stated that the County will take ownership of the hospital campus in early 2026. Their pre-development feasibility work, if they were to start in the middle of this year, will take them through the middle of next year. Then, there is a whole, lengthy process of selecting a potential development partner and negotiating with them. He said one of the things he has heard from the Board is that they would like to minimize maintenance costs that they will have to take on when they take ownership. The sooner the process is started, the potential of those costs are minimized.

Commissioner Lavin said he doesn't have any issues about getting the research done to understand what would be the best, but he does feel like there are a lot of other companies that do this work. He asked why the County isn't doing their due-diligence to go get other

competitive quotes for work like this. He agrees that there is a lot of comfort using the UNC School of Government, because we are very comfortable with them in a lot of different areas, but he doesn't feel like we are doing our jobs by just saying this is great package deal.

Ms. Perritt explained that there are not many other companies that do the type of work that they do. There are companies that will do development assistance and help with the feasibility analysis, but what she thinks is really unique about their model is their ten year engagement. They will be with the County until the development happens, without additional fees or hourly rates. She said that is what makes them really unique. They are here to advise the Board through the negotiations. She also noted that having the expertise and the nonpartisan and neutrality of the School of Government faculty around them is also an advantage.

Commissioner Griffin asked if he is correct that DFI has assisted in over 200 projects. Ms. Perritt stated that they have assisted in approximately 280 projects. For full pre-development, they are probably in the thirties at this point. They started doing more of those reactive contracts when they began, but they have transitioned into doing more of that proactive, pre-development work since 2016-17. She stated that they are all coming to fruition, some slowly because of COVID, but they are starting to see projects that now exist.

Commissioner Griffin asked DFI to explain the process after the pre-development phase. Mr. Thomas said all the work that they do is not intended to be hidden from the public or from potential development partners. All the work, including the market research, the site work, the potential architects or landscape architects, testing the redevelopment or test fitting potential uses within the site or within the building itself, the financial models, and showing the kind of returns that can be expected from the project is intended to inform ultimately a development strategy for the Board for the site, as well as to streamline the process for a potential development partner so they don't have to spend as much money upfront. They then have more conformation that there is a willing partner at the table. It takes a lot of risk out of the project for the developer, knowing that there is a path forward. Ultimately, all the work is put together in a solicitation package and will be presented to developers, with a lot of behind the scenes work. What they find is that more developers come to the table because of all that work being done. Ms. Perritt added that they draw enough of the box to help developers be confident in responding that they have a sense that they can be successful. DFI will establish the parameters that are acceptable to the Board.

Commissioner Griffin asked if the capacity of the site could bring more vehicular traffic than it has currently. Mr. Thomas said they will work with transportation engineers to access a traffic impact study based on a specific program that they believe is in line with the market realities. He said they will have a pretty clear picture of what kind of potential program can be supported on the site and give you a clear picture of how many people could be using the site on a daily basis.

Commissioner Meads thanked DFI for breaking down the different stages of the process, which answered some of the questions he had. He said some of his concerns were the same as Commissioner Griffins. He stated that we need to be very careful how we do this, because we want to continue the current amount of traffic if not more to support the businesses in that area.

Commissioner Davis said he would like to apologize because at the retreat he had just stepped off an airplane and driven in without any sleep. He said if DFI said they were going to charge \$97,000 at the Board Retreat, he missed it totally. He remembers talking about a 1% payment if DFI did a sale at the end, but he doesn't remember anything about the \$97,000, because he would have asked questions. He noted that he is a commercial realtor and they do not charge upfront to make a sale. They find a person to buy it and then they get paid by making that sale. He said DFI is doing it a little bit different from what he is used to seeing. He has a hard time saying yes, we need to pay \$97,000 for DFI to do a traffic study or a building study. That's what he does and doesn't expect to be paid until time for the sale.

Commissioner Davis said his other thought is we have not given anybody else an opportunity to take a look at this and we have sole sourced DFI. He said it's like we are only getting one shot. He doesn't feel like it is right for his community. He stated that we have that great big building and we have one shot to sale it and one shot to make something for our community that works. He has a problem with \$97,000 upfront. He might feel differently if they were being paid a little bit all along or if they were waiting to the end. He doesn't have a problem paying somebody for

what they do, but he feels we are putting the cart before the horse. He still doesn't agree with it today. It's certainly not that he does not like the UNC School of Government, because he does.

Mr. Perritt said she wants to be very clear that they are not brokers. The services they provide are pre-development feasibility analysis, which is very similar to the work that a private developer would do to evaluate a site, but with that extra emphasis on community engagement. Commissioner Davis asked how they would get paid at the end if they are not a broker. Ms. Perritt stated that the \$97,000 is a flat fee that they charge the local government to cover a portion of the pre-development analysis.

Ms. Perritt explained that the 1% fee she mentioned is actually paid by the developer themselves when they close on financing. DFI structures it so that they are paid, not when the property is sold, but when the developer closes on financing and when they are successful with breaking ground, turning dirt, and bringing a new building out of the ground, or redeveloping an old building. The reason they have that fee structure is because ultimately the private developer is going to benefit from this work. DFI is doing pre-development analysis, community development, and helping work with the elected Board to make decisions around the public-private partnership that the developer would be doing at risk and sometimes in a way that takes a lot longer than their pre-development timeline. For that reason, they think it is most appropriate to charge the bulk of their fee to the developer. They want to align their risks with their client and have skin in the game alongside their client. DFI is not really successful in recuperating their true cost of services until they are able to find a developer and that developer is actually successful closing on financing and the project moves forward.

Commissioner Davis asked if the 1% was mentioned at the Board Retreat. Ms. Perritt stated yes, but it was probably a shorter version. Commissioner Davis said one of his sales pitches for someone to hire him is that a professional realtor will get 25% more for your property than if they are trying to sale it on their own. Rather than this Board trying to sale it on its own, if we have a professional company that was trying to market it and sale it, you're probably going to get 25% more. He feels we are missing the boat by not going with a national firm.

Ms. Perritt said she thinks something worth mentioning is from their perspective, the decision to hire them is the easiest decision that they will ask the Board to make in terms of all of the decisions that they will work on together, from approving public interest, to understanding the market information, to endorsing a public-private partnership, to selecting a partner. She said the decisions only get harder with them from here. That is why they wanted to come back and make sure the Board understands who they are and what they are providing, so the Board can feel comfortable and they can be confident that we all can work together and make decisions moving forward. She informed Commissioner Davis that she hears him and she totally respects him. Commissioner Davis stated that he is "comfortable with her, but just not comfortable with us" making a decision without talking it through. That's the reason he wants thirty more days to allow for open discussion and talk about what the right thing to do is. He thinks the Board jumped into it too quickly.

Commissioner Meads said if the Board does decide to go in this direction, would DFI be giving the Board update on a regular basis. Mr. Thomas said typically there will be a point of contact, usually the Manager, where they will have regular check-in meetings and reporting progress on the scope of services that they are working on. They tailor it to how the community likes to work. They would work with commissioners with large scale delivery of materials to make sure they have a feasible strategy about different scenarios. All along the way, they would have check points to make sure the Board is well informed about what they are working on and to receive the Board's feedback as input to make their strategies and work much stronger and more reflective of what the community is hoping to see.

Ms. Perritt said they don't want to surprise with Board with big decisions. They want to be building the Board's capacity along the way, so when it's time to make a big decision, the Board is knowledgeable about the inputs that got them there. In the beginning, the cadence is probably every few months, but it could change depending on the Board's desire and their appetite to dig in. They have also been in situations where there could be a smaller committee or maybe representatives from the Board who are reviewing the information along with staff. They can adapt it to the Board's preference, but their goal is to not surprise the Board with giant decisions,

but to bring them along in the journey as much as they are willing. Mr. Thomas stated that their process relies on endorsement of information and findings from the Board.

Commissioner Shaw said his questions have pretty much been answered. Based on the information provided at the Retreat, as well as tonight, he has a better understanding.

Attorney Cox said he is assuming DFI will be following the economic development general statutes. Ms. Perritt stated that it depends on the statutory authority. She said she wants to be clear that they are not brokers or attorneys, although they work closely with attorneys. Typically, the local government uses their own attorneys that they have on board or often, they are also engaging outside council who have specific experience in whatever project we are contemplating in addition to the in-house attorney. She said they are at the table on every call advising in those key deal points of what a developer needs to keep moving forward, even in the development agreement process and what milestones must they meet in order for the Board to dispose of the property to them. She said they are also relying on the School of Government attorneys and faculty experts to make sure that they are doing this the right way and protecting the Board as much as possible.

Chairman Jordan thanked DFI for coming back and providing additional information as the Board decides exactly that they are going to do.

**7. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:**

The Board considered the following consent agenda:

a. *Approval of Minutes of March 18, 2024 Commissioner Meeting*

b. *Approval of Tax Releases and Refunds*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the following tax releases and refunds:

**Tax Releases**

	Taxpayer	County	City
1.	CW Weeks, Jr.	350.92	
2.	CW Weeks, Jr.	350.92	

**Tax Refunds**

	Taxpayer	County	City
1.	Elizabeth Janae Albrecht	218.44	244.92
2.	Bertha Investments LLC	375.10	
3.	Lindale Deward Brothers	116.20	
4.	Amanda Paige Purcell	139.36	
5.	Joseph Ryan Smart	151.91	159.56
6.	Joseph Ryan Smart	371.38	371.92

**Solid Waste Fee Releases**

	Owner's Name	Parcel ID #	Reason for Release
1.	Donald P & Patricia Butts	10-A-15	Vacant
2.	Donald P & Patricia Butts	10-A-14	Vacant
3.	Mary Foskey	61-A-13-16	Vacant
4.	Mary Foskey	29-C-17	Vacant
5.	Mary Foskey	45-E-2	Vacant
6.	Ruth Williams Jacobs & Greer Jacobs	P111-65	Vacant
7.	Bell Taylor Heirs	26-D-1	Vacant

c. *Approval of Budget Amendments*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the following budget amendments:

**Newland Park**

Decrease	010.6900.5991.00	Contingency	51,330.00
Increase	010.6130.5500.00	Capital Outlay	51,330.00

Cooperative Extension

Increase	010.0991.4991.00	Fund Balance Appropriated	60,000.00
Increase	010.4950.5500.00	Ag Ext Capital Outlay	60,000.00

*d. Approval of Revenue Reduction Plan and Use of Sentara Lease Buy-out Funds*

The Finance Committee has recommended the following 15-year revenue reduction plan for the Sentara Lease Buy-out Funds, as well as using the unallocated funding to address renovation of space for the Board of Elections, new EMS Headquarters, and Courthouse Renovation.

Fiscal Year	Reduction - \$119,267
2025-26	\$1,669,733
2026-27	\$1,550,466
2027-28	\$1,431,199
2028-29	\$1,311,932
2029-30	\$1,192,665
2030-31	\$1,073,398
2031-32	\$954,131
2032-33	\$834,864
2033-34	\$715,597
2034-35	\$596,330
2035-36	\$477,063
2036-37	\$357,796
2037-38	\$238,529
2038-39	\$119,262
2039-40	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,522,965</b>

*e. Approval of Request to Retire Duty Weapon and Badge for Retired Sheriff's Office Employee*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval to retire the badge and duty weapon, and award them to Captain Brent McKecuen who is retiring from the Sheriff's Office, and to allow him to keep his County issued cellphone and number (at no cost to the County).

The Sheriff's Office has a policy in place that allows sworn law enforcement officers to receive their badges at no cost and to receive their service side arms, at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners, based on the following price schedule:

Retiring member with 5-10 years of service	\$75.00
Retiring member with 10-20 years of service	\$50.00
Retiring member with more than 20 years of service	\$ 0.00

Captain McKecuen will retire with 28 years of service. The policy also requires that the officer obtain a gun permit, or without one, the weapon will be rendered incapable of being fired.

*f. Approval of Dissolving East Albemarle Regional Library System (EARL) and Forming Independent/Standalone Pasquotank County Library*

The Finance Committee has recommended dissolving EARL, forming an independent/standalone Pasquotank County Library, and transitioning to the NC Cardinal Integrated Library System.

*g. Approval of Request for Occupancy Tax Funds*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval to submit a letter of support to the Tourism Development Authority for Elizabeth City Downtown's application for \$7,500 from County tourism funds for the 2024 Potato Festival.

*h. Approval of Request for Occupancy Tax Funds*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval to submit a letter of support to the Tourism Development Authority for Arts of the Albemarle's application for \$17,500 from County tourism funds.

i. Approval of Emergency Notification System Contract

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of a three-year contract with ReGroup at a total cost of \$14,500, paid annually at \$4,800 using grant funding.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Sam Davis to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**8. RURAL HEALTHCARE INITIATIVE:**

Chairman Jordan called on Attorney Bob Wilson to provide a presentation, via Zoom, on the Rural Health Care Sustainability Project.

Attorney Wilson stated that last year we had unprecedented funding for healthcare, with Medicaid Expansion and a number of projects that are specific to mental health and the delivery of healthcare in rural communities. It has been his privilege in the past to assist Pasquotank County on certain healthcare matters and he is very happy to be back with the Board this evening with an opportunity that is funded by the North Carolina General Assembly to undertake a brand new, independent plan for rural communities in our state to address needs in counties for healthcare.

A couple of years ago he cofounded a nonprofit corporation called Rural Healthcare Initiative, Inc., and last year the nonprofit was tasked by the general assembly to independently assess rural healthcare needs and build a statewide plan for sustainable rural healthcare that would be delivered to the legislature. They are hoping that at least the preliminary portion of that plan will be ready this summer. He explained that the planning project is different from the other planning projects that the Board may have heard of from the 2023-24 budget that tasked UNC Health and ECU Health to accomplish several initiatives surrounding rural healthcare and mental healthcare in eastern North Carolina initially and then in western North Carolina later. Obviously, that was funded in the current budget as well. What distinguishes the effort that they are undertaking is a grassroots planning process coming directly to counties like yours and asking your citizens what they need to improve local access to healthcare services in Pasquotank County.

Attorney Wilson stated that the planning process that they are initiating includes expertise from members of his organization, each of whom are skilled and experienced in healthcare industry skillsets, with their own special background and experience. The effort is backed by strong data, as well as, local insight from communities like yours all across the state. They plan to address issues that impact every aspect of rural healthcare, meaning access to services, community partnerships, gaps that may exist in available transportation and technology just to name a few. He said their local approach really begins here tonight with the Board, as they begin conducting listening sessions both in-person and virtually all around the state, with their goal being to meet with community leaders in order to ensure that their findings and recommendations are going to reflect solutions that will meet the true needs of communities like Pasquotank, as well as others around the state.

Attorney Wilson said the reason he asked to be on the agenda tonight is to introduce the Board to this, for him, very exciting new project and asked for the Board's help in identifying community leaders that might be interested in attending the listening sessions that they plan to conduct, so that they can determine what the elements of an appropriate access to healthcare plan might look like overall in the Pasquotank County area, and ultimately assist in the implementation of that plan. He mentioned that their planning process is not hospital centric; it is not specific to any one hospital or to any one healthcare system. The idea that he had was to talk to representatives of the business community, faith based organizations, and really any interested citizens who might have an interest in access to healthcare and getting healthcare locally.

Attorney Wilson said what they plan to do, based on his experience in working in and around Pasquotank County, is to coordinate these listening sessions with the Board's help. He hopes that the Board will be supportive of these efforts and give them some assistance in contacting people who the Board believes would be interested in participating in the listening sessions, including the Board. If board members are interested in meeting and providing input into their healthcare planning efforts, he would love for them to participate. He hopes that the listening sessions can be launched in April or May at the latest. He thinks it will be an exciting opportunity for communities such as Pasquotank to obtain a model healthcare delivery system plan that can be studied and implemented, but is not necessarily hospital centric. It's important

that people understand 21<sup>st</sup> century healthcare is not necessarily health system centric, but it means adequate transportation, adequate technology, broadband access, ambulance access, reducing the time that it takes to get patients to and from an existing healthcare facility, and other things of a similar nature. He said he is happy to answer any questions about the project, but he is even happier to be back, at least virtually, in Pasquotank County and providing this opportunity for advancing healthcare needs in your community.

Commissioner Shaw asked how the initiative would compare to a community care clinic. Attorney Wilson said he thinks that it would be broader than a community care plan in that they are going to try to create a multiple level of resources, to provide answers to a wide range of topics in relation to healthcare delivery. He thinks that the planning methods that they are using are cutting edge and to some degree have not been deployed in North Carolina. They are excited to try to look at a very detailed and very specific planning strategy that uses the best data and the best input from local citizens.

Commissioner Davis said he is for the initiative and he would like to be a part of it. Attorney Wilson noted that this project is very close to his heart because he sees the impact of keeping healthcare local. He said he was interested in the presentation just before him relating to the redevelopment of the old hospital campus. It brought back a lot of fond memories and a lot of “good work” that was done to improve the status of healthcare in Pasquotank County. He thinks this initiative layers on top of that as a great additional added value.

Attorney Wilson thanked Mr. Hammett and Mr. Cox for allowing him to be on the agenda this evening. He said he would very much like it if the Board would allow Mr. Hammett and Mr. Cox to help him assemble some interested citizens to conduct one or more of these listening sessions.

Commissioner Griffin asked Attorney Wilson if he is looking at breaking down the actual healthcare in the community and how it serves the population. Attorney Wilson said yes in part. They are also going to look at it as if there was nothing here and see what works and what is sustainable in particular and what should work in the future to add to what the existing delivery system does, but also reimagine the existing system so that maybe they can provide some new ideas and ways to reach people who are not as easily reachable.

Commissioner Griffin noted that we currently have a \$450 million project underway. He asked how this initiative can expand on that. Attorney Wilson stated that the initiative that Commissioner Griffin referred to is the one he was eluding to earlier in his presentation. He has a great deal of respect for UNC Health and ECU Health and they do wonderful work. They are institutionally based and he thinks the planning was, to some degree, “baked in the cake” with the budget bill. The legislature saw fit to fund his project as well, with the idea that an independent, non-institutionally based plan might be relevant to the issues of rural healthcare delivery. The independence of the project and the lack of an institutional focus means that they will have a bit of a different approach. He said we may come up with some simpler solutions, but he thinks that you can guarantee that the approach will be grassroots based and community focused.

Commissioner Griffin said Attorney Wilson was there when the County made the tough decision between the three systems running the hospital. At that time, one of the members worked very hard to push us into the Sentara direction. He said Duke Life Point was more diversified across North Carolina, Vidant was a local rural community, and Sentara was expanding into North Carolina and provided additional services. He said when you look at Sentara it is one of the largest systems in the eastern part of the region and they are investing significantly in our community. Attorney Wilson stated that they are a great system and they are doing a great job. His hope is that we can build on that.

Commissioner Lavin said he thinks the new Sentara facility is great, noting that it is a big and very visible project. He doesn't think that we can stop there. He thinks this project is one that a lot of people can get behind, because we are tired of driving down the road for services or not being able to find the services we need. He thinks there is a big push within the local population to go find these services, bring them in house, and give our citizens access to them. He came from Greenville, where half the city has some type of medical facility on every corner of the street. Whether it is medical services, diagnostics, behavioral health, or substance abuse we need

some help. He said he can certainly get behind it.

Commissioner Meads asked what the makeup of the groups will look like. Attorney Wilson said the meetings can be held via Zoom or they can be done in person. The idea is to try to get help from the Board to take a cross section of people who are interested in these issues and get their thoughts. He said he has people helping him with these groups so that he does not have to listen and other people can take notes. Together, they will find out what is on the people's minds and formulate their planning around that and around the data, which will show what is sustainable in the community.

Chairman Jordan thanked Attorney Wilson and stated that the Board is very interested in improving healthcare for our citizens in Pasquotank County and there is a great need for what he is doing. He said the Board will certainly support him in any way that they can.

Motion was made by Sam Davis, seconded by Sean Lavin to support the Rural Health Care Initiative. The motion carried unanimously.

**9. DISTRIBUTION OF HOSPITALS IN NORTH CAROLINA:**

County Manager Hammett said he would like to provide some information that will address the issue of whether or not another hospital is a viable option on the Sentara Albemarle Medical Center site once it is vacated.

Mr. Hammett said there are a total of 113 hospitals in the state of North Carolina. According to the NC Department of Health & Human Services, a total of 83% of North Carolina counties have one or less hospitals. Twenty counties have zero hospitals and 63 counties have one hospital. The number of hospitals increases proportionally with population. The average population for counties with two hospitals is 139,883. Facility populations are determined by how many people are admitted and how long they stay. According to the American Hospital Association, total US population increased by 31.6% from 1980 to 2020, while US hospital admissions decreased by 6.8%. From 1980 to 2019, the average length of stay in US hospitals decreased by 38%. The average length of stay in 1980 was 10 days. In 2019, it has reduced to 6.2 days.

Mr. Hammett said the number of hospital beds per 1,000 population in the United States, as a whole, declined from 4.5 in 1980 to 2.4 in 2019, which is an approximately 47% decrease. In North Carolina, it actually dropped from 4.2% to 2.1%, which is a 50% decrease. Pasquotank County's estimated 2023 population is 41,444. Sentara Albemarle Medical Center's new 90-bed facility, which has flex space for future expansion, will have 2.2 beds/1,000 population, which is slightly higher than the North Carolina average.

The drop in inpatient hospitalization is attributed primarily to an increase in ambulatory or same-day surgery, made possible over the past 20 years with new surgical techniques and less invasive procedures. Treatment advances, including new drug therapies, have also contributed to fewer and shorter hospital stays, as have cost-management controls and alternative forms of healthcare organization and payment. He said Pasquotank County is blessed to have a \$255 million state-of-the-art hospital being constructed to replace a 60-year-old facility while many hospitals in rural communities are closing or struggling to stay open.

Mr. Hammett stated that when the hospital relocates, 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 acres being developable (upland) and 40 acres of wetlands. There is approximately 3,500 feet of shoreline on the Pasquotank River. The Sentara Albemarle Medical Center building itself is 338,000 SF. The site is a prime location for mixed use development that would include commercial and residential or other uses that would provide a positive impact to the Road Street Corridor.

Mr. Hammett said in summary, it is important for staff to provide comprehensive information to Commissioners to make informed decisions. Redevelopment of the Sentara Albemarle site is a tremendous opportunity for Pasquotank County. Bringing in another hospital system is not a viable or needed option for the site, as clearly documented in the data. Mr. Hammett noted that the intent of this presentation was to inform both the public and the Board.

Commissioner Meads asked if there has been any interest from another hospital regarding the building. Mr. Hammett said not that he is aware of.

**10. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Lavin attended the Workforce Development Board meeting. The state made a request for them to close the Edenton office. He attended the Economic Development Commission meeting. Hopefully, in the next couple of months more businesses will be coming forward. As a part of the Workforce Development Board meeting, he spoke with a Dare County Commissioner about their Recovery Court and found that the program is very successful. He said it may be something we want to learn more about to help work on some of the addiction issues. He said he is excited to help with the Coast Guard Marathon this weekend. He reported that ECSU's Entrepreneurship Week starts next week. It is a program that he has participated in the last several years where he has met a lot of good students and a lot of up and coming business folks.

Commissioner Griffin attended the Economic Development Authority meeting. They are starting to see some activity in the County. At the last Albemarle Commission meeting he was informed that the cost of Meals on Wheels has gone up drastically because of food costs. They may be coming to the counties for support. There is a lot of activity at the Airport. The military is starting to do more training, which puts more heads-in-beds.

Commissioner Meads attended the Albemarle Regional Health Board meeting. He met Congressman Don Davis at the recent check presentation for utilities upgrades. He attended the Albemarle Pregnancy Resource Center Gala. They received a great presentation from Dr. William Lyle from Pensacola, Florida on surgeries on unborn babies. The video showed how they did a heart surgery, a spinal surgery, and a brain surgery on unborn babies. In the video, it showed an IV that the anesthesiologist performed during one of the surgeries where the actual patient/baby was holding the anesthesiologist's hand while the baby was still in the womb. He, as well as other physicians at the event, had no idea we were that far advanced in healthcare. He said they have had very good success with operations in the womb, even more so than waiting until babies are born.

Commissioner Davis attended the Solid Waste/Landfill Committee meeting. He also attended the Tourism Development Authority meeting where the new Tourism Director was introduced. He also attended the Human Relations Commission and Department of Social Services meetings.

Commissioner Shaw attended the Ribbon Cutting for the new Tourism Director on March 20<sup>th</sup>. On March 21, he attended the Tourism Development Authority Visitor's Experience. On March 21, he attended the Jail Board meeting. On March 22, he attended SOULS Ministry Feeding Program, where Forest Park Church supplied the meal. Two nurses were there who screened participants for blood pressure and diabetes. They also provided flu shots. On March 22, he spoke with Ray Scaffa from Mid Atlantic Christian University and learned the many things they do in our community. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, he attended the SOULS Ministry Feeding Program, where the Methodist Church supplied the meal. On March 26, he met with Congressman Don Davis for the check presentation for utilities upgrades. On March 27, he attended the JCPC meeting. Lastly, on March 28<sup>th</sup> he attended the Tourism Development Authority meeting.

Chairman Jordan attended the Chamber of Commerce meeting. He noted that there is a lot going on in our community that they are involved in. He attended a Ribbon Cutting at ABNB Credit Union. He attended a chartering ceremony at ECSU where the Coast Guard and ECSU are partnering to give the students opportunities to move forward with the Coast Guard. He attended the Economic Development Authority meeting, the Solid Waste/Landfill Committee meeting, a Ribbon Cutting for Ryan Homes, and the Albemarle District Jail Meeting. He participated in the March for Meals feeding program. They delivered meals to six families. He attended Congressman Davis' check presentation for utilities upgrades. He attended a Trillium Governing Board meeting. They continue to work on combining the LMOs. Lastly, he attended the Tourism Development Authority meeting where they welcomed the new Tourism Director.

Commissioner Meads said he would like to thank the Weeksville and Nixon Volunteer Fire Departments who responded very quickly to a house fire recently.

There being nothing further business to come before the Board;

Motion was made by Sam Davis, seconded by Sean Lavin to adjourn the meeting.  
The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:33.

---

CHAIRMAN

---

CLERK TO THE BOARD