

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
JULY 30, 2012**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a special joint meeting with the City Council of Elizabeth City on Monday, July 30, 2012 at Montero's Restaurant.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lloyd E. Griffin, III, Chairman
 Jeff Dixon, Vice-Chairman
 Bill Trueblood
 Cecil Perry
 Dr. William R. Sterritt
 Gary G. White
 Joseph S. Winslow, Jr.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Randy Keaton, County Manager
 Rodney Bunch, Assistant County Manager
 Lynn Scott, Assistant Clerk to the Board
 John Gregory, Water Superintendent
 Michael Etheridge, Solid Waste Director
 Shelley Cox, Planning Director

Also present were the Mayor and City Council, the City Manager, City Clerk, Attorney, and city staff. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Lloyd Griffin and Mayor Joe Peel. After a moment of silent reflection, everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Chairman Griffin and Mayor Peel welcomed everyone.

1. UPDATE ON COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN:

Chairman Griffin recognized Mr. Mark Eatman with the N.C. Department of Transportation, Transportation Planning Branch to give an update on the Pasquotank County & Elizabeth City Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Mr. Eatman explained that the CPT is a long range transportation plan that addresses transportation needs twenty to thirty years into the future. He said it is multi-modal and addresses highways, pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation and rail. He stated that it is not fiscally constrained meaning there is no state funding tied to projects. He noted that it does not make a promise to build roads nor does it determine a pinpoint location for roads. He said that a CTP goals and objective survey has been conducted recently to find out what people think transportation should be like and they received good responses back. He stated that they have coordinated with Camden County CTP on the U.S. 158 highway corridor and developed a travel demand model and studied capacity deficiencies for Elizabeth City. He said the model looks at existing traffic counts and tries to estimate traffic to match observed data and compared volume with capacity of roads. He provided a map which showed current capacity of roads. He stated that the committee is working on recommendations for roads which are at or over capacity and they will hold public involvement sessions in the fall of 2012. He said a draft Comprehensive Transportation Plan will be available in the fall and a final plan will be available in late 2012 or early 2013 for the Board to adopt.

Mr. Eatman stated that there were 76 participants in the survey. The results concluded that most people travel within the County and some travel to Camden and Virginia, the main mode of transportation are personal vehicles, and most people spend 20-40 minutes commuting to and from work on a daily basis. He said the survey also showed that the most important transportation system goals include: service to aged population, reduced congestion, economic growth, and regional connectivity. He said people want to see improvements in bridges, intersection design, and the addition of bicycle lanes.

Mr. Eatman explained that the Strategic Highway Corridor Plan (SHC) is a statewide long range planning document that looks at key corridors and tries to outline a vision for the corridors. He said Pasquotank County has two corridors, which include U.S. 17 and U.S. 158. He explained that as laid out in the Strategic Highway Corridor Plan, U.S. 158 through Pasquotank County, Camden County and into Currituck County needs to be an expressway, which would be a four-lane divided road, without traffic signals, with limited access, and a higher speed limit. He said several options have been discussed which include: 1) widening existing U.S. 158 to expressway standards, 2) to construct the U.S 158 expressway on a new location, or 3) to request modification of the Strategic Highway Corridor Plan. He said the committee, along with

Camden County felt that a new location for the bypass would be the best option. He presented a map with various alternatives.

Councilman Stimatz stated that at least four and a half years ago their mayor went to a DOT meeting regarding the proposed Knobb's Creek Bridge replacement and indicated at that time that City staff and council would like the new bridge to have at least a 5.5' clearance above water level. City Manager Olson stated that currently the plans call for 3.5' of clearance above the mean water. He stated that the project will be awarded at the DOT meeting in August. Councilman Stimatz stated that this is a serious problem and is limiting tourism along Knobb's Creek. He suggested that both Boards send a letter to NCDOT regarding this matter. Commissioner Trueblood said he would like to endorse sending a letter to the State. The Board consented to sending a joint letter to NCDOT regarding their support in raising the height of the new Knobb's Creek Bridge to at least 5.5' above water level.

Commissioner Dixon asked if farm equipment will be able to use the expressway. Mr. Eatman stated that farm equipment is allowed on expressways.

2. UPDATE ON RFP PROCESS FOR DETERMINING THE FUTURE OF ALBEMARLE HOSPITAL:

Chairman Griffin presented a PowerPoint presentation on Albemarle Hospital's Future Options. He stated that over 80% of hospitals in North Carolina are now partnered with another health system in some way. He said there is a growing trend of chronic conditions in Pasquotank County, including heart disease, diabetes, obesity and cancer. He noted that Albemarle Health serves Congressional District I, which is one of the three unhealthiest districts in NC. He stated that the demand for primary care services in Pasquotank County exceeds the supply of physicians available, causing residents to leave the area for basic health services. He said one-third of all U.S. hospitals have a negative operating margin, spending more money to provide patients with quality care than they collect in reimbursement for that care. In addition to providing necessary medical services close to home, he said it is critical to ensure ongoing job security and growth opportunities for employees and local physicians. He added that Albemarle Hospital currently provides approximately \$25 million in charity care annually to the communities served. Commissioner Dixon stated that any non-profit is expected to give away a certain amount of charity care and write off bad debt, but the question is how much is too much and how much is not enough. He said it is coming to a point that it is affecting the hospital's bottom line. He stated that we have one of the State's highest Medicaid rates.

Chairman Griffin said that despite these economic challenges, Albemarle Hospital remains a strong, high quality healthcare facility. The County and the Hospital leadership believe it is prudent to explore options now. He said to successfully navigate the changes brought on by healthcare reform and provide the best possible care to the people we serve, the County Commissioners and the Hospital Authority have embarked on a non-binding request for proposal process to solicit options for affiliation or partnership with other health systems. He explained that a jointly appointed committee comprised of three members each from the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners and Albemarle Hospital Authority Board of Commissioners has been created to lead this process and develop recommendations based on data review and input from all stakeholders.

Commissioner Griffin stated that the joint task force had its first meeting on July 10th and its second meeting on July 23rd. He said they will be meeting again on August 13th with representatives from Dixon Hughes, Certified Public Accounts, to provide financial perspective of the hospital and would like to invite all members of the Albemarle Hospital and Pasquotank County Boards. The first public hearing is scheduled for August 27th. The final RFP will be released in September, 2012 and a 2nd public hearing is estimated to be in November 2012.

Commissioner Griffin explained that by joining another organization we will have better access to capital, better leverage with vendors and payors, better care and outcomes, risk sharing opportunities, and cost savings. He stated that the need for inpatient care has declined significantly since 2000. At that time, we needed a 120 bed hospital, but now we are utilizing only 60 beds. He noted the hospital outpatient visits have increased annually and 135,000 patients were served last year.

Commissioner Griffin said we need to explore options now, because a strong regional healthcare system is an attractor for recruiting physicians, businesses, and retirees. He went on to say we need to ensure ongoing job security for our employees and local physicians. Currently, we do not have a sufficient number of primary care physicians or orthopedic specialists. He said Albemarle Hospital employees contribute an estimated \$25 million a year to the local economy and hospital vendors spend \$640,000 a year on non-medical services. He stated that for every \$1 million in payroll, Albemarle Hospital generates \$10,000 to \$12,000 in sales tax revenue for our community.

Councilman Walton asked if the hospital plans to bring in more physicians. Vice-Chairman Dixon said one of the problems the hospital has is that patients are using the hospital as an outpatient facility only. He said the hospital needs more specialized physicians and equipment. He noted that patients are going to Sentara and Vidant for their major operations or not having them at all due to the economy. Commissioner Perry said the purpose of exploring our future options is to bring about better healthcare services for the community and the region and to encourage more physicians to join the hospital staff. Chairman Griffin stated that the current arrangement the hospital has with Vidant is a managing partner only and because of anti-trust laws they cannot provide equipment.

3. DISCUSSION ON AMENDMENT TO DOG ORDINANCE AND RELATED PROCEDURES:

City Manager Olson stated that on March 26, 2012 the City Council approved a new section of the City Code addressing dangerous dogs. He said Pasquotank County did the same in 2005. He said the City utilized the County's model with some minor changes. He stated that Sheriff Cartwright and representatives from the Police Department have been meeting to discuss some changes that need to be made to both jurisdictions' Dangerous Dog Ordinances.

Lieutenant John Young said one of the first things the committee noticed was problems with the registration process. He said currently it is written that the City and County take care of their own registrations and inspections. He stated that he and Sheriff Cartwright both recommend that the Animal Control Department should keep all of the permits to ensure consistency since they will be enforcing both ordinances. The second item the committee discussed was the need to have a mandatory notification clause in both ordinances that addresses what happens if a dog is declared dangerous in one-jurisdiction and the owner moves to the other jurisdiction.

Commissioner Perry asked when a dog is declared dangerous. Lieutenant Young said once they receive a complaint the animal control officer will investigate and the dog will be impounded for at least ten days and the Sheriff reviews the report and makes a determination of whether the dog is potentially dangerous, dangerous, or vicious. At that point, a letter is sent to the owner explaining the classification, as well as given a copy of the City or County Ordinance. The owner has five days to appeal the process.

City Manager Olson stated that the City contracts with the County for animal control services. He said the City spends about \$112,000 a year for the services. He said the majority of the animal control issues are within the corporate limits of the City. Councilman Stimatz said it is his understanding that the City still does not have a Memorandum of Understanding or Inter-local Agreement with the Sheriff's Department for animal control. He questioned the wording of the jurisdiction clause.

After discussion, it was agreed that both attorneys will continue to work with the committee and prepare a draft to be forwarded to both Boards for review at their 2nd meetings in August.

City Council made the same consensus.

4. DISCUSSION ON AMENDMENT TO PARKS AND RECREATION INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT:

City Manager Olson stated that one of the issues that has come up periodically between the governing bodies is when hard numbers need to be available for budgets. He said City and County staff are recommending an amendment to the Parks & Recreation Inter-local Agreement that is consistent with the proposed Inter-local Agreements for Central Communications and Emergency Management. The amendment states that each governing body will take official action on the proposed budget for the Parks & Recreation Department by June 1st of each year

and if the governing bodies fail to approve the budget a meeting will be held within seven days to address and resolve any outstanding issues.

Motion was made by Jeff Dixon, seconded by Bill Trueblood to adopt the 2nd Amendment to the Parks & Recreation Inter-local Agreement which states that each respective governing body shall take official action on the proposed budget for the combined Parks & Recreation Department by June 1st of each year and should a governing body fail to approve the budget by June 1st of a particular year, the County Manager, City Manager, Board of Commissioners Chairperson and Mayor shall meet within seven days to address and resolve any outstanding issues. The motion carried.

The City Council adopted the same amendment.

5. UPDATE ON STATUS OF PASQUOTANK COUNTY RO WATER

Mr. John Gregory reported that the Pasquotank County Reverse Osmosis Plant went into business May 1, 2012. The plant is running ten hours a day and producing approximately 900,000 GPD. He said our interconnections with the City will be at Forest Park Road and on Weeksville Road and they should be completed by the end of August. He stated that RO water cannot be used in the downtown area due to the quality of the water and the way it is treated. The aggressive water will damage the pipes. He noted that the increased lead problem that was reported in the paper was not a problem with the water, but the older pipes were leaching. He said anyone who believes they may have lead in their water should run their facet for a few moments prior to using.

6. UPDATE ON SOLID WASTE:

Mr. Michael Etheridge provided an update on upcoming changes to the landfill contract and operating expenses for the landfill. He stated that earlier this year the Board of Commissioners approved a proposal that the Solid Waste Department presented in order to save approximately \$74,000 a year. He said they will contract out the C&D and LCID operations and the County operate the transfer station.

Mr. Etheridge stated that the Solid Waste Department received a grant this year to install a building and a concrete pad in order to start a program for recycling carpet and shingles. He said their electronic recycling project has been in operation for approximately two years and is going very well. He said they are filling about a tractor trailer load every four weeks. Councilman Stimatz said he is concerned about the City's waste that is going to the landfill. He said he feels they exceed the amount of allowable recyclables going to the landfill.

Chairman Griffin thanked Mr. Etheridge for his work over the past twenty years and said he has been very successful. He said not only has he been able to cleanup six major tire sites, but he has also implemented the glass crushing program, the steel recycling program, and the electronic recycling program. He said Mr. Etheridge has received almost \$2 million in grant funds during his employment with the County which is saving tax payers a significant amount of money.

7. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS AND CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Chairman Griffin thanked Mayor Peel for hosting tonight's meeting. He asked if any members of the Boards would like to make comments.

Commissioner Sterritt reminded the Board that several months ago they agreed to have a series of public meeting for the public to come before the Board and give their opinion on whether or not they are in favor of changing the structure of the Board of Commissioners. He said the members of the SPCA are very appreciative of the financial contributions from the City and County. He also thanked the individuals who volunteer for the SPCA.

Commissioner Trueblood said he would like to follow up on the earlier motion to send a letter to NCDOT concerning the Knobb's Creek Bridge. He stated that the letter needs to show unison support of the two Boards.

Chairman Griffin noted that the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners recently took action to move forward a resolution calling for a special advisory referendum on levying a ¼ cent county sales and use tax. He said it will appear on the November ballot. He stated that he

attended a Black Elected Municipal Officials event over the weekend that was held in Elizabeth City.

Councilman Walton said that black elected officials came from all parts of the State of North Carolina to meet in Elizabeth City this week for three days to discuss issues that are important to communities. He commended the County for putting together a budget this fiscal year that did not raise property taxes.

Councilman Spence thanked Mr. Etheridge for the work he is doing. He said unfortunately there have been negative articles in the paper recently and it is nice to hear all the good things that are happening in the solid waste department. He noted that when Mr. Etheridge saves the County money it is also saving the City money.

Councilwoman Baker reminded everyone of the Coast Guard Week activities that are going on this week.

Councilman Stimatz thanked everyone for their presentations and noted that they were very informative.

Mayor Peel thanked everyone for attending.

At the absence of further business, Chairman Griffin asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion was made by Gary White, seconded by Bill Trueblood to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 PM.



CHAIRMAN



ASSISTANT CLERK