

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
SEPTEMBER 15, 2016**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a joint meeting with the City Council of Elizabeth City on Thursday, September 15, 2016 in the Maguire Theater at Arts of the Albemarle.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph S. Winslow, Jr., Chairman
Cecil Perry, Vice-Chairman
Dr. William R. Sterritt
Frankie Meads
Bettie Parker

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeff Dixon
Lloyd Griffin, III

OTHERS PRESENT: Rodney Bunch, County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Sheri Small, Finance Officer
Randy Cartwright, Sheriff
Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

Also present were members of the City Council, the Mayor, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, and Bobbi White, Director Parks and Recreation. Chairman Winslow welcomed everyone present and Councilman Walton asked the blessing on the meal.

Following dinner, the meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM by Chairman Winslow and Mayor Peel. Commissioner Sterritt led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

1. PRESENTATION ON 2018-2028 STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP) LOCAL PROJECTS:

Jerry Jennings, PE, NCDOT Division One Engineer provided an update on three projects that were recently selected through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Mr. Jennings explained how Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) works. He explained that it is the mechanism for which all capital improvement funding for the transportation system in North Carolina is allocated and distributed and how the projects are selected. He stated that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a ten year-plan and it represents about \$18.5 billion statewide. Under the current process, projects are evaluated under three different tiers: 1) Statewide Mobility – represent approximately 40% of the funds, focuses on addressing significant congestion and bottlenecks, selection is based on 100% data, and projects are programmed prior to Local Input Ranking; 2) Regional Impact – represents 30% of funds, focuses on improving connectivity within regions, selection is based on 70% data and 30% local input, and funding is based on population within the region (7); and 3) Division Needs – represents 30% of funds, focuses on local needs, selection is based on 50% data and 50% local input, and funding is based on equal share for each division (14).

Mr. Jennings stated that in August the results of the regional impact process were released. In November, the division category results will be released and in January 2017, the new TIP will be released, representing projects over the next ten years. He said this is done every two years, at which time two additional years are added to the program.

Mr. Jennings said Pasquotank County is in Region A, which includes Divisions I and IV. Overall there were 22 highway projects selected within the region. Six projects were selected in Division I, three of which are in Elizabeth City. Two years ago, no regional projects were selected within the region. He said the three projects that were identified include: 1) Hughes Boulevard between Church Street and N. Road Street - widen existing four lane roadway to accommodate left turns/access management; 2) Oak Stump Road Intersection - reconfigure five leg intersection to improve traffic flow and safety; and 3) Citywide Signal System – Upgrade new cabinets and controllers at 44 intersections; 33 signal pole change outs; 16 miles of fiber optic cable; install 16 CCTV cameras; connect all devices (controllers and cameras) using Ethernet communications; and new timing plans after construction is completed.

Mr. Jennings stated that the draft STIP will be released in January 2017. At that time, schedules for each project will be included, which will allow planning and design for each project to begin.

Mr. Jennings answered questions and thanked the Boards.

2. MIGRATION TO VIPER RADIO NETWORK:

Sheriff Randy Cartwright said approximately one year ago the City and County began talking about ways to fix their outdated emergency radio communication system and to enhance operability. Pasquotank County, City of Elizabeth City, and Camden County decided to hire a consultant to study what we currently have and decide how to fix it. He said the consultant came up with three different solutions: 1) transition to the state 800 MHz VIPER system at a cost of \$3,134,414; 2) install a new 700 MHz trunk system at a cost of \$11,103,041; and 3) use a UHF conventional communication system at a cost of \$5,790,120. It was determined that enhancements to the VHF paging system would also be required at a cost of \$305,868. He said one of the best and easiest things to do is to go to the 800 MHz statewide system, which is maintained by the N.C. Highway Patrol.

Sheriff Cartwright said after testing was completed a decision was made to migrate to 800 MHz radios for all emergency personnel so that they can all communicate with each other. He said they also found that most of the surrounding counties have already switched to 800 MHz. He said they have been working very hard and moving forward. He stated that they have met with State VIPER representatives and they are putting together an estimate of how many channels we will need for three different tower sites. He estimated the results to be 30-90 days out. He said the next piece of the puzzle will be radio needs. He went on to say the City of Elizabeth City VIPER radio needs include: 74 dual band (VHF/800) mobile radios, 72 dual band (VHF/800) portable radios, and 4 dual band (VHF/800) base stations. Pasquotank County VIPER radio needs include 15 dual band (VHF/800) mobile radios, 59 dual band (VHF/800) portable radios, 64 dual band (UHF/800) portable radios, 57 dual band (UHF/800) mobile radios, 4 dual band (UHF/800) portable radios, and 4 dual band (UHF/800) mobile radios (Emergency Operations Center).

Sheriff Cartwright reported that over the past four years there has been discussion regarding a back-up center. During this time, there has been a lack of money for the project. He said the state legislature has now mandated that we have a backup center. The date to complete has been pushed back by the state twice. He said it has been pushed back again to next July. The county has applied for grant money the past year to build the backup center. He stated that with Ronnie Barefoot's hard work they were actually awarded a little over \$1 million. He said they looked at a location at Elizabeth City State University, to build a backup center, as well as talking to other counties because it would be cheaper than building our own backup center. He explained that we can have a MOU with the county chosen and add some equipment and switches. He went on to say that this is a good option in case of a total disaster. He said they are moving forward with a county and if it works out he thinks it will save a lot of tax payer money and 911 surcharge money.

3. UPDATE ON PLAYGROUND AT FUN JUNKTION FUNDED BY THE TRILLIUM GRANT:

Chairman Winslow called on Elizabeth City Pasquotank County Parks and Recreation Director, Bobbi White to update the boards on the new playground equipment at Fun Junktion. Ms. White said she is so excited to announce that the playground is almost complete. She stated that there have been a few small changes. She provided a PowerPoint presentation of the progress.

4. DISSOLUTION OF JOINT REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:

Chairman Winslow called on Attorney Mike Cox. Mr. Cox explained that the City of Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County received an \$850,000 Community Development Block Grant to redevelopment 11.4 acres known as the Fair Grounds in the 1990's. The property is located on Hughes Boulevard adjacent to the current location of Perry Glass. In order to receive the grant a plan was adopted in 1996 to purchase the many blighted small residential lots, relocate the families, and assemble the properties for redevelopment for mixed industrial use. Attorney Mike Cox stated that the two governments created a Joint Redevelopment Commission to oversee the purchase of and redevelopment of the property. Mr. Cox stated that all the properties have been purchased and titled in the Joint Redevelopment Commission's name. Although the site has not been redeveloped, the grant's five year timeline has passed and the Joint Redevelopment

Commission is not required to develop the property according to the plan submitted. Mr. Cox said the Joint Redevelopment Commission can be dissolved. This can be done within 120 days by adopting a resolution. For some reason, both entities passed an ordinance establishing the JRC. This ordinance would have to be repealed as well. But, the governments may not want to dissolve the Joint Redevelopment Commission that quickly. If it is dissolved the property would transfer to the City and the County. Mr. Cox suggested the Joint Redevelopment Commission reconsider what the best use for the property is today. He further suggested that the restrictive covenants and permitted uses may need to be reconsidered. After comments from Commissioners and City Council regarding access to the property, a large canal for storm water drainage extending north and south through the property, lack of infrastructure, etc. the consensus was that the Joint Redevelopment Commission meet and discusses options and report back to the two governments.

5. COUNTY'S ADDITIONAL ¼ CENT LOCAL OPTION SALES AND USE TAX PROPOSAL:

Chairman Winslow said on November 8th Pasquotank County voters will make a choice about the ¼ percent sales tax. The sales tax rate is currently at 6.75%. The new tax will raise it by ¼ percent to 7%. He explained that the items that will be exempt include prescriptions, gasoline, certain agricultural supplies, motor vehicles, food, and groceries. The ¼ cent will be designated for use by the Elizabeth City Pasquotank County School System and it will be used for their future needs, which will be evolving. He said their current need is for more technology.

Chairman Winslow stated that the ¼ cent sales and use tax will raise approximately \$970,000. He said the Board is proposing the money not be set aside for any one purpose because the school's needs will change over time. He stated that when we help the school system, we help the children of Pasquotank County and the City of Elizabeth City, which is the future for our area. He explained that for every \$4 spent, there will be a total of 1 cent sales tax collected. He noted there is no sunset on the tax.

Councilman Walton stated that that City needs to adopt a similar resolution and everyone needs to be on the same page.

Councilman Stimatz voiced concerns about the timing and wording of the County's resolution. He said we must convince people that they will see an increase in the school's budget. He said he is not sure why the county does not push for the school board to have their own taxing authority.

Chairman Winslow stated that it is the Boards responsibility to look at the school system's requests and see if they are reasonable and fund them. He said we have been doing our best at doing that, but the problem comes when there is a period of time when a massive need comes about and we have to look for additional sources of revenue.

Councilman King asked who implemented students being charged a \$20 fee to utilize Wi-Fi in our public schools. Chairman Winslow stated that the Board of Commissioners did not implement the fee. He stated that perhaps the fee can be offset with the new tax.

Commissioner Meads stated that many people do not understand that the Board of Commissioners do not have anything to do with the way that the public schools spend their money. He said Pasquotank County is in the top 75% of the state in per pupil funding. He said there are areas in school maintenance where they could have saved thousands of dollars, but they chose not to. One example he said is the roof at J.C. Sawyer Elementary. He said according to the contractor it had a fifteen year wear left. He stated that it was replaced because they wanted all the rooves to look alike. He went on to say that we need to be responsible for every dollar that we spend of the taxpayers' money. He said we are paying about 30% more in taxes than people in Chesapeake. He added that their property values are more. He said we have seen the unemployment rate be higher than in surrounding counties. The majority of people in Elizabeth City rent their property instead of owning it. He said those are some of the things that we need to look at. He said we need to make people responsible in our community and we have to be competitive with the counties north and south of us and with Virginia.

Chairman Winslow said what we need to look at are the children of Pasquotank County and the City of Elizabeth City. He asked "Are you going to provide them with the quality education they will need to compete in the future?" He said it does not have anything to do with the tax rate or

these other issues. He asked are we going to pass this ¼ percent tax to help provide our grandchildren the opportunity to compete in the future.

Vice Chairman Perry said he has lived in this community for a very long time and one of the things we must look at is the amount of poverty in our county. He said there are no housing projects in Currituck or Camden counties. There are children in Pasquotank County whose families cannot afford to pay any fee to purchase technology that their children need to be successful. He said technology is going to drive the job market in the future and children will need to learn technology to be successful. He said it is the Board's responsibility to find a way to provide them ways to be successful. Young people are not responsible for their mom's and dad's activities and not having the things at home they need to succeed. He believes most of the people in attendance are able to provide for their children, but there are people in this community that cannot provide things for their children. He said if we maintained schools as they should be and we do everything we need to do to make our children successful, we would be asking for even more money. He said he is willing to support whatever tax increase is necessary to help our children be successful. He said not supporting public schools, is supporting poverty and crime. He asked that we move forward with positivity instead of all the negative things he is hearing.

Mayor Peel said he believes all members of the City Council are in favor of the ¼ cent sales tax, but wants to make sure the Board goes about it the right way and focuses on our children and what is best for them. He stated that getting the message out quickly is going to be critical.

Chairman Winslow asked that the City Council support the additional tax and adopt a resolution or proclamation themselves.

Chairman Parker said we cannot put what the additional funds will be used for on the ballot, but what we can do is adopt a resolution stating that the money collected will go towards the schools. She said we do not need to send mixed messages. We must be specific and push this diligently and expeditiously because November 8th is just around the corner. She said we have people in the community pushing it. Yesterday she attended the Pasquotank Ministers Council for Education and Andy Montero presented a handout showing how much the ¼ percent will be. One of the examples was "one cent on a \$4 coffee, two cents on an \$8 lunch, and 25 cents on a pair of \$100 shoes. She said it will not be that demanding on those who will be purchasing items. She said it is encouraging to know that it will not be on groceries, gasoline, medications, etc. She said we need to act as a family on this and make it positive.

Commissioner Meads said he never said at any time that we do not need the ¼ cent sales tax. He said the one cent sales tax is not going to answer the problem with our schools. He stated that the problem needs to be worked on at home. He went on to say unless teachers have control in their classes, it does not matter what we buy, it will not help.

Attorney Cox explained that the taxpayers are going to see the Board members in the grocery stores and other places and they will hold their feet to the fire. We live in a small community and the responsibility will fall on the commissioners.

Chairman Winslow thanked City Council for their support.

6. COMMENTS BY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND CITY COUNCILORS:

Councilman Stimatz thanked the Board and said he hopes to meet again.

Councilman Donnelly said he agrees with Councilman Stimatz's comments.

Councilwoman Hummer stated that we have a mosquito epidemic in the city. She said the federal government shot down the special funding for mosquito control. She asked if the County has a spraying program. County Manager Bunch answered, we do not. She believes the two governments need to get together and fund a program. Councilman Stimatz said the community needs to be educated on standing water and how to minimize mosquito breeding. Vice-Chairman Perry stated there are some funds available through the health department.

Vice-Chairman Perry said if anyone is interested in supporting students who are unable to pay the technology fee they can contact one of our public schools and receive information on how to do so.

County Manager Bunch said his office has received a couple calls this year regarding mosquitos and he contacted the health department and spoke with Mr. Hollowell who is in charge of the program. Mr. Hollowell informed him that there is no funding in place for us to use right now, but he did say they were doing some counts in the area to see how bad the mosquito population is. He said in past years when there were funds available through the health department, we paid the city to use their equipment to spray in heavily populated areas.

Commissioner Parker stated that she has been on the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners since December 2014 and she did not realize that the City and County Boards get together from time to time and have meetings. She is encouraged by the meeting. She looks forward to future, collaborative meetings.

Councilwoman Baker agreed that the meeting has been very productive, unlike some others we have had in the past. She hopes we continue this momentum. She invited everyone to attend the 20th Anniversary of Ghost Walk.

Councilman Walton commended the board for meeting. He said we need to utilize all our resources for the ¼ cent sales tax. He asked that the county use the city's resources because it is very important that this referendum passes.

Chairman Winslow said it is a pleasure to be here tonight and is thankful that the two boards had the opportunity to meet. He feels together we are stronger.

Commissioner Meads reported that Senator Cooke will be at the Ruritan Club on Main Street Extended on Saturday morning from 8:00 – 10:00 AM. He invited everyone to attend.

Chairman Winslow asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion was made by Frankie Meads, seconded by William Sterritt to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO THE BOARD