

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
SEPTEMBER 30, 2013**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a joint meeting with the City Council of Elizabeth City on Monday, September 30, 2013 in the Education Center at Albemarle Hospital.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Gary G. White (*Out of Town*)
Frankie Meads

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rodney Bunch, Interim County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Sheri Small, Finance Officer
Karen Jennings, Clerk to the Board

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Mayor Joe Peel and Chairman Jeff Dixon who welcomed everyone present. Following a moment of silence Mayor Peel led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

1. REGIONAL BIKE PLAN UPDATE:

Commissioner Lloyd Griffin introduced Mr. Steven Lambert, Planning Director with Albemarle Commission, to present an update on the Regional Bike Plan. Mr. Lambert explained that he oversees the transportation planning in the 10-county region. He stated that in 2011, the Department of Transportation asked if the Albemarle region was interested in getting a regional bike plan. He said the area is well-suited and is a perfect fit for biking because of the flat land, the rural roads, and the beautiful scenery. He stated that work began on the plan last spring, and meetings began last summer to obtain public input. He said input has been received from both city and county representatives. He advised that the Department of Transportation has applied for a grant to begin implementation of portions of the plan. He called on Mr. Matt Hayes with Alta/Greenways to present the final plan document.

Mr. Hayes explained that there was a very rigorous public involvement process. He highlighted the plan and stated that the goals of the plan are to: 1) Increase the quality of bicycling throughout the region; 2) Improve health outcomes in the region; 3) Improve safety for all cyclists; 4) Increase bicycling trips by residents and visitors; and 5) Promote and encourage the growth of the tourism economy. He stated that input has been received from various cycling groups in the area.

Mr. Hayes outlined a list of action steps for implementation going forward. The City Council and the Board of Commissioners were requested to approve resolutions adopting the Regional Bicycle Plan.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Joe Winslow to approve the following resolution adopting the Albemarle Regional Bicycle Plan. The motion carried 5-0.

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING
ADOPTION OF THE ALBEMARLE REGIONAL BICYCLE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Albemarle Commission and Albemarle RPO, participating local governments, and their subcontractor Alta/Greenways, have prepared the Albemarle Regional Bicycle Plan (the Plan) and;

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Plan is to study the feasibility of establishing an interconnected network of off-road and on-road bicycle facilities throughout the entire Albemarle Region and;

WHEREAS, the proposed bicycle network includes lands located within the multiple counties and municipalities of the Albemarle Region, and;

WHEREAS, the Plan process involved public participation, and;

WHEREAS, the Plan was financed by a North Carolina Department of Transportation grant.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED by the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners that:

- a. The Plan and related materials are acceptable to Pasquotank County, and;
- b. The Plan and related materials will be used to guide future bicycle transportation development, operations, and maintenance.

ADOPTED this 30th day of September, 2013, by the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners.

2. REPORT FROM VISION 2020 DIVERSITY ACTION TEAM:

Mayor Peel recognized Dr. Hezekiah Brown to provide a report on the Vision 2020 Diversity Action Team. Dr. Brown introduced the members of the committee and explained that the committee believes Elizabeth City is small enough and smart enough to become a model for other areas. He presented the recommendations from the Championing Diversity Action Team as follows:

1. The committee recommends that the Elizabeth City-Pasquotank County Community Relations Commission assume leadership in celebrating the city's and county's diversity. To do that, the commission must directly engage the city and county leadership to determine their support of the Commission and its mission and goals.
2. If the Commission is to successfully carry out the recommendations of the Vision 2020 Diversity Action Team, it must reassess its mission and objectives to reflect that role. Working with the city/county leadership, the Commission must develop an agenda and action plan and submit a budget based on that plan.
3. The city and county must empower, fund and promote the Commission to help it achieve its goals.
4. The committee recommends that the Community Relations Commission be comprised of the following:
 - 4 African Americans
 - 4 Caucasians
 - 4 Other Nationalities
 - 3 Younger members aged 16-30
 - 1 member of the Elizabeth City Council
 - 1 member of the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners

These individuals should represent diversity with regard to gender and economic status as well. Each appointing body should work to ensure that their appointments reflect this diversity.

5. The committee recommends that the leadership in Elizabeth City/Pasquotank County participate in training to build better understanding of our individual and cultural differences. Participants should include the following: the Elizabeth City Council, the Pasquotank County Commissioners, the Board of Education, and the Chamber of Commerce board and staff. The committee additionally recommends that community resources be utilized to achieve this goal.
6. The committee recommends that the Community Relations Commission organize two new events annually that celebrate the diversity of our community. The focus or theme of these events could be sports, music, arts, food, etc. or other cultural activities around which a diverse population can come together to learn about one another, share and celebrate their history and lifestyles.
7. The Community Relations Commission should be the body that oversees and ensures that these recommendations are reviewed and acted upon. They should work to ensure that government appointments to all Elizabeth City and Pasquotank

community boards are comprised of a diverse group of people that reflect the cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, age and economic diversity within our community. They should work to ensure that all organizing committees for community events, such as the Art Walk, Potato Festival, Ghost Walk, etc. reflect the diversity within our community.

8. The Community Relations Commission should be empowered, funded and promoted to allow it to be a resource within the educational community, in order to provide advocacy and education to teachers and administrators, on issues of diversity such as managing conflict and understanding our cultural and individual differences.

Commissioner Cecil Perry thanked Dr. Brown for bringing this information forward because he said the diversity in the community affects the way people see one another. He said getting people to talk about it is sometimes difficult, but in order to address diversity it must be talked about. Dr. Brown agreed that a dialogue needs to be developed.

Commissioner William Sterritt said at the end of the agenda there is an opportunity for County Commissioners and City Councilors to make comments. He stated that he would like to make his comment now because it involves diversity. He commented that everyone should be appreciative of the efforts of Mayor Peel and Chairman Dixon in promoting a STEM school in the area. He said this can be a wonderful opportunity for the Community Relations Commission to insure that the faculty, the students and other factors are diverse in nature. He said the county, the city, and the Board of Education do not need to miss this opportunity because it will be great for the community. Councilor Johnnie Walton stated that a STEM school could be good, but maybe not for this community.

Miss Jannety Mosley, a member of the Community Relations Commission, said she recently graduated from Penn State and she believes if opportunities are made available to minorities and those from low-income and different socio-economic statuses and they are given the chance to thrive, the options are limitless.

Dr. Brown requested that the Board of Commissioners and City Council review the document provided by the Community Relations Commission and communicate with each other. He added that the city and county have each provided \$500 annually in funding for the Community Relations Commission, however if the Commission is going to implement some of the things being proposed, it will need much more than \$500.

3. OVERVIEW OF PASQUOTANK COUNTY'S 2014 REVALUATION:

Mr. Robert Ezell with Pearson Appraisal explained that counties are mandated by North Carolina state law to reappraise property every four to eight years to make sure it is assessed at its fair market value and Pasquotank County chooses to do it every eight years. He explained that in conducting the 2014 county revaluation Pearson Appraisal has found that certain areas of the county increased in value, some decreased in value and some decreased quite a bit. He said the areas where the values increased were valued too low, and the areas where the values decreased the most were the areas where the sales have really fallen off. Mr. Ezell stated that they are not instructed when they do a reappraisal to raise values, and they only have one job which is to assess the property for what the market is showing that individual piece of property or similar property is selling for on the open market. He said it must be a good sale with a willing buyer and a willing seller. It cannot be a bad sale which is a family sale, a foreclosure, or a short sale. He explained that there are certain neighborhoods where there have been no sales and in those cases they try to find a similar neighborhood where the houses were built around the same time and are the same quality and roughly the same size. He said they try to not use any sales outside of the county. He stated that when appraising property, they use an average selling price and will be checking sales right up until the revaluation notices are printed.

Mr. Ezell presented maps of various neighborhoods in the county and pointed out the decreases or increases in valuation. He explained that most of the neighborhoods decreased in value which has been the standard in every county in which they have worked for the past five years. He noted that commercial property values decreased an average of about 20%. He pointed out that generally when property values decrease, the property tax rate has to increase. He added that the projection is that property values will slowly begin to increase.

Mr. Ezell said once the revaluation notices are received, if property owners disagree with their valuation they can request an informal hearing with Pearson Appraisal to discuss their valuation. By law the property owner would have to prove that the appraisal is incorrect. Mr. Ezell reminded everyone that the values are apt to change until the revaluation notices are mailed out as more sales data becomes available.

The Chairman and the Mayor thanked Mr. Ezell for his presentation.

4. INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR COLLECTION OF PROPERTY TAXES:

County Attorney Mike Cox explained that at a previous joint meeting a discussion was held regarding the tax collection agreement between the city and the county and how to address tax foreclosures within the city limits. He stated that the city and the county in 1989 entered into an interlocal agreement whereby the county collects city taxes and city special assessments. The agreement has been amended three times, the last time to amend the city's collection rate. He explained that previously when tax foreclosure sales were held for properties within the city limits, the Tax Department would notify the city and city staff would bid on the property. He said in recent years this procedure has stopped and needs to resume.

Mr. Cox pointed out two proposed changes to the interlocal agreement. Due to the Department of Motor Vehicles now collecting motor vehicle taxes on behalf of the county, the county will agree to forward all payments for city vehicle taxes to the city without an associated fee to the county. The second proposed revision provides that when a property is being foreclosed within the city limits the county shall notify the city at least thirty days prior to the sale so the city can bid on the foreclosed property. If the city desires to not bid on the property because of an environmental issue or liability, it shall notify the county at least seven days prior to the sale. In the event the city fails to bid on the property or notify the county that it does not desire to bid on the property, the county may act as the city's agent and purchase the property at sale for an amount no higher than the taxes and liens owed. The property would be titled in the city's name and the city will pay the county the county's share of the taxes owed.

Mr. Cox explained that the county does not want to own property in the city limits because it would have to be the landlord and would have to mow the grass and deal with dilapidated houses, etc. He suggested that this interlocal agreement be sent to both governing boards for consideration.

In response to City Council members' questions and concerns, City Manager Rich Olson explained that there is a period of 10 years where either the property is sold or the taxes sunset. He said the city does not really want to own other people's property, but if the property is not being maintained, it becomes a burden on the neighborhood and the city has to end up mowing the grass and assessing more code enforcement liens and the amount of taxes and special assessments keep running up.

5. COMMENTS FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND CITY COUNCILORS:

Mayor Peel suggested that tonight's agenda be amended to place comments from County Commissioners and City Councilors before the Closed Session.

Motion was made by Cecil Perry, seconded by Joe Winslow to amend the agenda to move comments from County Commissioners and City Councilors before the Closed Session. The motion carried.

City Councilor Jean Baker reminded everyone that the 17th Annual Ghost Walk will be held October 11th and 12th.

Councilman Johnnie Walton said even though he lives in the city he pays county taxes and he is concerned that Pasquotank County funds would be used to help fund the construction of a proposed STEM school according to a recent article in the newspaper.

Councilman Michael Brooks stated that if kids leave the public school system to go to a STEM school, the money follows them. He said this must be considered in the discussions regarding a STEM school.

Councilman Ray Donnelly stated that to piggyback on Ghost Walk, Elizabeth City Downtown is going to have a speakeasy set up in the old Chesson store that will take place on both Friday and

Saturday nights. He said there will be entertainment, beverages and refreshments supplied by local restaurants.

Commissioner Lloyd Griffin said he would like to commend the Mayor and the Chairman for taking a proactive stance on trying to improve the quality of education in our region. He said this is one of the things that continues to hinder economic development and cast a shadow on Northeastern North Carolina. He stated that this will give the students an opportunity to enter into a workforce environment and be productive and support the local economy. He said it will also allow the area to be competitive with countries that do support STEM technology in education.

Vice-Chairman Joe Winslow said Ms. Mosley who spoke earlier tonight is an outstanding young lady. He stated that she saw the STEM school as an avenue for someone who is poor or underprivileged to have an opportunity to get the best education possible. He said he believes this resource should be made available to anyone regardless of color or financial status and will give them the opportunity to advance.

Chairman Dixon advised that the recent article in the newspaper that stated the county would provide funds for construction of a STEM school is incorrect.

Chairman Dixon reported that the Boys Club closed on the sale of the property on the other corner of the former Boys Club site to Family Dollar. He said they plan to begin construction very soon.

6. CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATED TO THE LOCATION OR EXPANSION OF INDUSTRIES OR OTHER BUSINESSES IN THE AREA:

Chairman Dixon asked for a motion that the Board enter Closed Session to discuss matters related to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area.

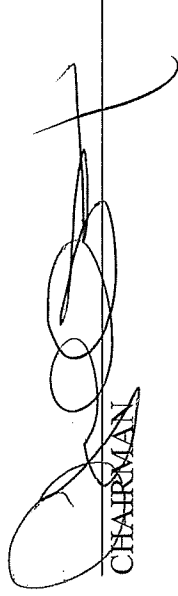
Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Joe Winslow that the Board enter Closed Session per NCGS §143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters related to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area. The motion carried.

Upon the end of Closed Session;

Motion was made by Joe Winslow, seconded by Lloyd Griffin that the Board return to Regular Session. The motion carried.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Cecil Perry to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.


CLERK TO THE BOARD


CHAIRMAN