

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 19, 2020**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a regular meeting on Monday, October 19, 2020 in Courtroom C in the Pasquotank County Courthouse.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeff Dixon, Chairman
Lloyd E. Griffin, III, Vice-Chairman
Cecil Perry
Frankie Meads
Charles H. Jordan
Sean Lavin
Barry Overman

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Sparty Hammett, County Manager
Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board
Mike Cox, County Attorney

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Jeff Dixon. He welcomed those in attendance. Commissioner Overman gave the invocation and Frankie Meads led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

1. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

Chairman Dixon asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Griffin requested the agenda be amended to add the following items recommended by the Finance Committee today: 1) Approval of 97th Civil Affairs Battalion Special Operations Request; 2) Approval of Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Technology Upgrades; and 3) Approval of Senior Center Crosswalk.

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. ECSU PRESENTATION – CHANCELLOR DIXON:

Chairman Dixon stated that tonight we have two special guests, Chancellor Dixon and Mr. Carson Rich. He said they have made some definite differences in our community, and it is always an honor to have them come before the Board.

Chancellor Dixon thanked the Board for inviting her to speak in regards to Elizabeth City State University and some of the things that they have done in preparation for welcoming their students back in the fall. She clarified that the university never closed. They pivoted to online learning. What was unique about ECSU is that when the pandemic started they were a week before spring break, which made their situation unique and beneficial, because they were able to use that week to work with their faculty to pivot over to online instruction. Instead of only having two days like some of the other campuses did back in the spring, they actually had a week to prepare. They were able to do it quite successfully. Their faculty was amazing with their patience and willingness to move to online learning very quickly. They were able to finish the semester. They did not have graduation in May. It was actually postponed until August, with a drive thru type graduation.

Over the summer, they focused on responding and preparing the campus based on CDC guidelines that were prepared for them, as well as conversations with the general assembly, working closely with their interim president at the time, Bill Roper. One thing that was beneficial to ECSU is, because they are a member of the University of North Carolina, they approached it as a system in deciding how they were going to prepare their campuses for students to return in the fall. Over the summer, the chancellors met weekly with the president. They were briefed by the CDC, the legislature, the Department of Health and Human Services, (Dr. Mandy Cohen and others), and the Governor weekly on what was happening with COVID-19 across the state of North Carolina.

Chancellor Dixon said at the end of the summer, a decision was made to open the campuses, so they began to prepare what it would possibly look like. She noted that it was a very expensive process. When they pivoted to online instruction in the spring, they actually had to reimburse students for housing and dining. It was a significant cost to the university. They spent about

\$1.5 million in reimbursements. They were able to recoup the money based on the CARES Act from the federal government. It was a blessing to ECSU and to other universities that had to do the same. It helped them financially to be able to supplement what they had to pay out in their dining and housing. Over the summer, they used additional funding from the federal government to buy PPE and other materials that were needed to keep the campus safe, as well as for signage, social distancing, restructuring their academic classrooms, and to make sure that they had everything in place that would help their students. They had to restructure their dining hall, as well as make sure takeout was an option for their students. There were a lot of logistical things they had to do to make sure the campus was prepared for students to come back in the fall.

Chancellor Dixon said another thing they saw that was quite interesting is as they were approaching returning to school, they had about 25% of their faculty that requested accommodations to remain online. That rapidly changed when Pasquotank County School District decided not to go in person, but to stay remote. The 25% actually jumped to about 40%, which is where they are now. They anticipated this, because people have children, and with remote learning they needed to stay home. About 40% of their faculty is still teaching online. About 60% of their students are on campus, in person and hybrid. She stated that she is very proud to say that they only have four weeks left. ECSU, unlike some of their other system institutions, has been able to continue to move forward with their in-person instruction.

Chancellor Dixon stated that their students have done a phenomenal job in holding each other accountable. ECSU held virtual town hall meetings over the summer with faculty, staff, families, and students. The purpose of the meetings was to make everyone understand that they needed to build a culture of expectation that they hold each other accountable for doing the right thing, and to get through the pandemic safely. She is very pleased that their students are holding each other accountable. Peer-to-peer means a lot when it comes to doing something like this. Since July 1st, they have had 32 cases of COVID-19. They were required to report three times a week their COVID cases on their website. They created a website that is specific for COVID-19 at ECSU. They titled it Viking Compass. It shows which direction they are going with their number of cases. On the website, you will see that their student cases says 32, but since July 1st, every case that was reported to them, even students that never came to campus, were counted. Actually, only about half of those students were actually on the campus. The others decided to stay home, but they disclosed the fact that they were positive with COVID-19 and chose to stay online. As of today, they have two active cases on campus in quarantine.

Chancellor Dixon noted that the university has 37 quarantine spaces for quarantine and isolation on campus. When they started the semester, they identified 20, but due to students choosing to stay online, they were able to expand the 20 to 37. The most active cases they have had at one time is six. She explained that they do put students in quarantine who were a part of a contact tracing. Comparatively, they have done exceptionally well. She is hoping and praying that these next four weeks will continue to go quite well. They adjusted the academic calendar because they did not want students to leave and come back. They eliminated Labor Day and fall break. She said they cannot lock them in their room. She stated that is a part of that whole “culture of expectation,” with them holding each other accountable. If your roommate is saying they are going to leave and go to the beach this weekend, the roommate should have a conversation with them to help keep them accountable. She said it has worked very well. The narrative and the energy around doing the right thing have proven to really result quite well at ECSU and they are very happy about that.

Chancellor Dixon said she has very exciting news. ECSU has exceeded 2,000 students this year. They are growing back into their campus and back into this community. It was a very diverse group of students coming to ECSU, both traditional age and nontraditional age. They are excited about the energy at ECSU, because the enrollment number actually exceeded their goal in their strategic plan for year two. The number of hits they get on their website has not been seen in a long time. This is good for both ECSU, Elizabeth City, Pasquotank County, Northeastern North Carolina, and for the region. She said she is doing all she can to leverage our visibility both in Washington DC, as well as across the state, to let everyone know that they have a story to tell that ECSU is a jewel in northeastern North Carolina. She is so happy to lead this great institution and to work with the Board to make sure that it is successful. She thanked the Board for their support and advocacy that they play in moving the institution towards the future, with a sound foundation so that it will be here for a long time. She can't image what it will look like if this great institution was not here. She does not even want to think about it. She just wants to think about the future, the economic impact, the stability of the great institution and its growth. She believes they will grow again this year, based on the numbers they are already seeing from their enrollment numbers.

Chancellor Dixon stated that this week is Free Application Week for students to apply across North Carolina. She said they are already trending 100% higher than they were this time last year. Students are excited about ECSU. She said she loves the relationship ECSU has with College of the Albemarle. She cannot speak any louder about how important it is to work with Jack Bagwell, with COA. The relationship and partnership is strong, which is how it should be. They also have a great relationship with MACU. She said they should be working together as institutions of higher education in Elizabeth City. She is so grateful to have such great colleagues at COA and MACU working with ECSU.

Chancellor Dixon updated the Board on current renovations on the campus.

Chancellor Dixon thanked the Board for all they have done for ECSU and the new direction that they are moving into. She provided a short youtube video which shows what they have done with signage and other efforts to keep their students safe. Mr. Rich presented the Board and staff with ECSU facemasks.

When asked when the walking track will reopen, Chancellor Dixon said it will reopen very soon. They are in the process of resurfacing it at this time. It will be a state-of-the-art track when it is complete.

The Board thanked Chancellor Dixon for the impact she has made on the campus and in the community. Chancellor Dixon informed the Board that ECSU would like to host a County Commissioner meeting on campus in the future.

3. APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

Commissioner Jordan, Chairman of the Appointments Committee, stated that the Appointments Committee met this afternoon and has made the following recommendations:

- a) East Albemarle Regional Library Board – Appoint Treva Johnson to fill the unexpired term of Phyllis Phillips, which expires on 09-30-22.
- b) Pasquotank County Library Board – Appoint Aresta Johnson to a 4-year term.

Commissioner Jordon noted that since both appointments are new, they must lie over for two weeks to allow for additional applications.

Motion was made by Charles Jordan, seconded by Cecil Perry to appoint Treva Johnson to the East Albemarle Regional Library Board and Aresta Johnson to the Pasquotank County Library Board. Both appointments will lie over for two weeks to allow for additional applications. The motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

The Board considered the following consent agenda:

- a. Approval of Minutes of October 5, 2020 Commissioner Meetings
- b. Approval of Tax Releases and Refunds

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the following tax releases, tax refunds, solid waste fee releases, and solid waste fee refund:

Tax Releases

		County	City
1.	Katrina Meads Bateman	1,014.87	
2.	Michael Crider	711.48	

Tax Refunds

		County	City
1.	Darryl Griffin	133.06	
2.	Charles Patrick Bowman	231.37	211.80
3.	Henry Raymond Goode	604.45	

Solid Waste Fee Releases

		Parcel ID #	Reason for Release
1.	Carrie J. Bernard	P132A-222	Vacant
2.	Jean Bush & Flossy Overton	P130-14	Vacant
3.	George O. Halstead	P95-46	Vacant
4.	Margery Coulson Clank	51-C-22B-23-24	Vacant
5.	Florence Evans ETAL	P126-32	Vacant
6.	Toxie Lee & Maggie Diane Gallop	P80-45A	Vacant
7.	Mary Phyllis W. White	P77-2	Vacant
8.	Basilio Perez	P119-37	Vacant
9.	Basilio Perez	P119A-5,6	Vacant

Solid Waste Fee Refund

		Parcel ID #	Reason for Refund
1.	Stephen Clements	26-G-1	House burned 7/20/2019

c. Approval of Late Property Tax Exemption/Exclusion Applications

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the following late property tax exemption/exclusion applications:

Taxpayer	Reason	Date Requested	Amount
Maurice W. Delk	Elderly Exclusion	09-11-2020	\$1,125.64
Johnny L. Garcia	Disabled Veterans Exclusion	09-01-2020	\$710.25

d. Approval of Budget Amendments:

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

DSS

Increase	011.0240.4380.23	COVID-19	32,930.00
Increase	011.5400.5999.01	COVID-19	32,930.00

Reappraisal Reserve

Increase	025.0991.4991.00	Fund Balance Appropriated	260,000.00
Increase	025.4141.5440.25	Reappraisal	260,000.00

Non-Departmental

Decrease	010.0230.4370.00	State Grants	84,482.00
Increase	010.4195.5600.14	COA/Hospital Boardwalk	84,482.00

e. Approval of 97th Civil Affairs Battalion Special Operations Request

We received a request from SFC Bryan Johnson, the training NCOIC for the 97th Civil Affairs Battalion (Special Operations) (Airborne) located in Fayetteville on Fort Bragg. He requested approval and cooperation for the 97th Civil Affairs Battalion (Special Operations) (Airborne) to utilize Pasquotank County to conduct their units' Biannual Pre-deployment Readiness Evaluation training. This training is tentatively scheduled to be conducted in March 2021 and August 2021, upon receipt of the County's approval. The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the request to allow the 97th Civil Affairs Battalion to conduct their Biannual Pre-deployment Readiness Evaluation Training in Pasquotank County.

f. Approval of Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Technology Upgrade

Technology upgrades are an allowable use of Coronavirus Relief Funds. The existing technology within the EOC has not been updated since the Public Safety Building opened in 2007. We received three bids for the EOC technology upgrade: The Soundside Group, Inc. - \$31,794; Integrated Audio Video, LLC - \$75,803.40; and Vicom - \$77,166.39. The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the EOC technology upgrade to the low bidder - Soundside Group at a cost of \$31,794 using Coronavirus Relief Funds. The cost will be split with Camden County (\$15,897 each).

g. Approval of Senior Center Crosswalk

The Board approved the Senior Center Crosswalk plan presented by City of Elizabeth City Public Utilities Director, Amanda Boone. The City bid the project, and ultimately received one bid on October 5, 2020. The bid was from Barnhill Contracting Company in the amount of \$109,212.

Per the terms of the Senior Center Interlocal Agreement, the Senior Center Crosswalk is a joint expense, which would be split 50-50 with the City, with the resulting County cost being \$54,606. County Manager Hammett requested information on any cost savings or other funding available in the FY2020-21 Senior Center budget due to COVID-19 delayed opening. A total of \$35,726 would be available, reducing the total net cost to \$73,486, resulting in a County cost of \$36,743. The Finance Committee has recommended approval of \$36,743 for the County's portion of the Senior Center Crosswalk using Capital Reserve funds.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Barry Overman to approve the Consent Agenda, as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Overman reported that the North Carolina Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshall Mike Causey was at the Providence Fire Department today at 3:00 PM today delivering grant checks to four of our volunteer fire departments. He explained that if you pay fire insurance, 1/5 of that fire insurance goes back to our community in the form of a grant. Each department has the ability to do a 50% match, up to \$30,000 to buy equipment. All of the local fire departments were able to receive a grant today. Providence, Newland and Weeksville received \$30,000 and Nixonton received \$27,241. Intercounty also received \$24,175. Over \$140,000 was received in grant funding over all.

Commissioner Lavin stated that the EDC will be meeting on Wednesday morning. He reported that T-Com is currently hiring. They have about 20 positions that they are trying to fill by December.

Commissioner Jordan stated that the Jail Board meeting this month was canceled due to lack of a quorum. He attended a mixer for the new Parks and Recreation Director.

Commissioner Meads noted that the EMS Board met. He said Commissioner Causey has done a great job with the Code Council over the years and with the Department of Insurance.

Commissioner Perry attended the COA Board meeting, as well as participated in a virtual, four-day national conference. Additionally, he said COA formed a board to help make sure that the COA Board is more diverse. The Special Projects Committee met today to discuss the next steps for moving the Confederate Monument from the Courthouse lawn. County Manager Hammett said the Committee directed staff to send a letter out to the North Carolina Division of Daughters of the Confederacy. They responded back that they thought the monument was Pasquotank's property, and they wanted to leave it here at the courthouse. Mr. Hammett said after reviewing minutes, they actually reflect that it was not given to the county as a gift, it was just placed here. The Committee instructed staff to respond back to the Daughters of the Confederacy and inform them that our minutes reflect that the monument is their property, and ask if they would like some input as to what to do with it. If staff does not get a response back in the affirmative, then staff will solicit to private individuals or organizations that may want to place it somewhere else.

Commissioner Griffin attended a virtual meeting for the Albemarle Commission. They are trying to work through how to best assist citizens. The Meals on Wheels program has received COVID funds to assist more individuals who are homebound.

The Clerk to the Board reminded Commissioners that the deadline for donating to the United Way Campaign is October 30, 2020. She thanked County Manger Hammett for his generous donation of four Downtown Digs raffle tickets, which were monumental in the County almost reaching its goal of \$8,500 in the first day of the campaign.

Chairman Dixon asked if there was any further business to come before the Board. There being no further business;

Motion was made by Cecil Perry, seconded by Frankie Meads to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO THE BOARD