

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA  
OCTOBER 29, 2018**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a joint meeting with the City Council of Elizabeth City on Monday, October 29, 2018 at The Carolina Center.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cecil Perry, Chairman  
Dr. William R. Sterritt, Vice-Chairman  
Jeff Dixon  
Lloyd Griffin, III  
Joseph S. Winslow, Jr.  
Frankie Meads  
Charles Jordan

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sparty Hammett, County Manager  
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney  
Sheri Small, Finance Officer  
Hartley Askew, Assistant Clerk to the Board

Also present were members of the City Council, Mayor, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Clerk, Assistant City Clerk, Senior Center Director, Parks and Recreation Director, Fire Chief, Economic Development Director, and Tourism Development Director. Chairman Perry welcomed everyone present and Mayor Parker asked the blessing on the meal.

Following dinner, the meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman Perry and Mayor Parker. Vice-Chairman Sterritt led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**1. GUEST SPEAKER RICK GRANDINETTI – UNIFYING GROUPS:**

Mr. Grandinetti discussed the best practices and the pitfalls of groups that do not unify. He challenged leaders to think differently, and discussed how groups succeed and fail.

**2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS:**

Chairman Perry called on the new Economic Development Director, Christian Lockamy to introduce himself to the Board. Mr. Lockamy said he came here from the City of Greenville, and he is originally from Hyde County. He is very excited to be here. Chairman Perry also called on the new Tourism Development Authority Director, Corrina Ferguson. She said it is her first official day. She is thrilled to be here, and looks forward to making Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County as fabulous as they can be.

**3. PASQUOTANK COUNTY NORTHERN PARK DISCUSSION:**

County Manager Sparty Hammett met with the Parks and Recreation Director, Dexter Harris and he emphasized the need for a park in the Northern part of the County. He said the need has been discussed for several years. Mr. Hammett has been directed by the Board of Commissioners to initiate the process of looking for a potential site. County staff has identified potential funding to hopefully use in conjunction with grant funding.

Assistant City Manager Angela Cole said in 2010 the City and County merged their Parks and Recreation Departments. Management and operations of Parks and Recreation are handled by the City; however the budget is decided and adopted by both organizations. The County funds this joint operation at 55% and the City at 45%. When this agreement was started in 2010, assets owned by the County remained under ownership of the County and likewise with the City. Real property is treated the same way. Planning and construction of all new facilities is done under joint discussion, and a joint plan. The agreement also allows for a Recreation Advisory Board that meets monthly, and has Commissioners, Council members, and citizens. The agreement has been renewed twice since 2010, and is under agreement until 2010.

Assistant City Manager Cole said citizens have provided over 250 signatures on a petition for a park in the Northern area. Pasquotank County citizens expressed a want for a walking trail, pavilion, multipurpose field, playground, picnic tables, horseshoe pits, and grilling stations. Survey results indicate that citizens want the park to be accessible, visible, and convenient. Under the joint master plan for Parks and Recreation, this type of park is defined as a

neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks have basic criteria. Usually they are within walking distance to the service area, and the park should feature a variety of activities. Typically they are 1 acre per 1,000 people with a minimum of five to ten acres. There are about seven to ten parking spaces. The master plan for neighborhood parks says that our demand is about three to five parks, or approximately 40 acres. This is based upon a population of 40,000 people, and our need is an additional one or two parks.

Assistant City Manager Cole said the ideas for park amenities and appearance are representative of what the citizens would like. The land would be a County asset and County funded. Though design parameters have not been determined, the cost of improvements would run from an estimated \$300,000 to \$500,000.

Assistant City Manager Cole acknowledged grant monies are possible funding sources. Two relatively reliable funding sources are Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant Program and Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Grant Program. Elizabeth City Grant Management Specialist Dawn Harris is available to write the grants on behalf of the County. Once the land has been acquired, a park planning consultant should be hired to present best layout and development options. The consultant will recommend the best overall design of the proposed park based upon the chosen plot of land and selected amenities. Once the park has been designed and installed, parks and recreation staff would become responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and upkeep of the park. The approximate timeline for completion of this project would depend – maybe a year, to year and a half following the land acquisition.

Councilwoman Young asked if the County has identified a location for this park. Manager Hammett said there are six possible locations at this time.

Councilman Caudle expressed concerns of only having seven to ten parking spaces in such a rural area where residents would have to drive to the park rather than walk. The Board and Council agreed.

Chairman Perry said a basketball court at this park would be very beneficial to the residents.

The Board of Commissioners made a consensus to move forward with the Northern Park, and to identify a location for it.

#### **4. FORMER ELIZABETH CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM DISCUSSION:**

County Manager Hammett said the former Elizabeth City Middle School gym was damaged by flooding related to Hurricane Matthew. The County received \$500,000 in insurance funds. The County replaced the gym floor, made electrical repairs, and completed other necessary projects to bring the gym back to operation. The annex is partially damaged and needs to be demolished, which would require façade improvements on the front. The County has \$254,000 remaining insurance funds, and the City has budgeted \$75,000 for the project. Demolition and disposal would cost approximately \$150,000 based on a quote from April 2017. The façade improvement cost would vary based upon the improvements made. The County and City have had discussions regarding potential conversion of the property to a Parks and Recreation facility after the repairs are made.

Assistant City Manager Cole said currently, the gymnasium is used for a variety of programs, including wrestling matches, dances, and basketball tournaments. The Elizabeth City-Pasquotank County Parks and Recreation Department uses the facility for youth volleyball practices, games and summer camps. Completing the renovation of the gymnasium would create additional space for recreation programming, tournaments and sports competitions. Making use of the gymnasium will allow staff to build a stronger more vibrant program, to feature indoor activities such as aerobic exercises and competitive dodgeball, soccer, pickle ball and floor hockey.

Assistant City Manager Cole said another possibility for the gymnasium and surrounding grounds is its use as a community center / rental facility. When not being used by the department, Police Athletic League or the Boys & Girls Club, the facility could be rented by other groups or entities to host meetings, reunions, dances, and other special events. Upgrading the facility lockers and restrooms for ADA compliance, parking lot resurfacing and lighting, and landscaping the grounds would make the facility more attractive to the community.

She said the services offered will be managed and operated by the City. Also in keeping with the agreement, the departmental budget, including personnel and facilities maintenance, will be set by the City in consultation with the County; cost sharing will be at a funding ratio of 45% (Elizabeth City) and 55% (Pasquotank County).

After lengthy discussion,

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Joe Winslow to hire a firm to provide Architectural and Engineering Design Services for the façade improvements with the cost to be split equally with the City of Elizabeth City.

#### **5. SENIOR CENTER DISCUSSION:**

City Manager Rich Olson said the current Senior Center was built in 1990. The center is 4,400 sq. feet and is attached to Knobbs Creek Recreation Center. The Center is 30 years old, and services approximately 74 seniors a day. There is a severe overcrowding issue. It is City staff's opinion that the Center needs 15,000-20,000 sq. feet to meet the present and future needs of our senior citizens.

He said the cost to build a new Senior Center is dependent on the method utilized to acquire it. A brand new stand-alone Senior Center will cost about \$5,000,000 to \$6,000,000 to build. An adaptive reuse of an existing building would cost \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000, depending on the size and the extent of the remodel.

Lauren Turner, Senior Center Director gave a brief overview of the day-to-day operations. She expressed the severe overcrowding issue. She said they have so many seniors they are not able to serve them at the rate they should be. She would like to implement new programs for the seniors, but is restricted because of space. Ms. Turner said Elizabeth City has been named a Retirement Community, and we need to be able to serve the incoming population.

Assistant City Manager Cole informed the members that she had the opportunity to speak with an auditor that served on the ABC Board in the past. She said she was informed that the current Senior Center was funded at 50% by ABC funds. This may be an option for the new Center.

The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was the general support for a new Senior Center with a final determination to be based on additional information on the proposed location and cost of a new Senior Center.

#### **6. HOMELESSNESS AND SHELTER DISCUSSION:**

City Manager Olson said homelessness in Pasquotank County can be hard to determine. The last count was from 2015 with 26 homeless people. In order to address homelessness, the City of Elizabeth City opened a homeless shelter located at 709 Herrington Road. This shelter was limited to seven homeless individuals and a resident manager. The shelter remained full while in operation. It should be noted that the residents of the shelter were from Maryland and Virginia. Due to building related issues, the City closed the shelter in August 2018. The City Council has requested City staff to identify another location for a shelter.

He said the City has identified the former Pasquotank County Health Department located at the corner of Harney and Cedar Street. The building consists of 10,923 sq. feet. Over the years, the building has been modified to meet the needs of our community. The original structure was built in 1960 and consisted of the west side of the existing building. The second section was added to the original structure in the 1970's and lastly, a third section was added by tying into the structure a double wide modular building. The building has been vacant for three years and housed the home health division of the Health Department. The existing building has a strong structure, but is in need of major cosmetic improvements.

In his opinion, the building layout is very segmented and not suited for commercial use; however, it could be utilized as a homeless shelter. The building does not have a set of building plans, although there is a set of fire escape plans, which are not up to scale. Contingent on the building configuration, there should be no problem in creating up to eight bedrooms and a suite for the resident manager. At almost 11,000 sq. foot, this building is too large to only be used for a homeless shelter.

City Manager Olson said there is a possibility that the SOULS feeding program could be relocated to this location. Staff has not placed a dollar amount on the cost to meet the needs of a homeless shelter. However, staff estimates the cost to modify this building would be \$100,000.

The City believes the building has potential, and envisions this agreement to consist of the County leasing the building to the City for a period of 10 years at \$1.00 per year. In addition, the City would request that the County consider a one-time payment to assist with the cost of remodeling the facility. The City would cover all operating expenses going forward.

Councilwoman Hummer expressed concerns over the location of the old Health Department and its proximity to homes, the school, and tennis courts. She doesn't believe there is funding in the budget for this project.

Councilwoman Young stated that a new shelter would be problematic for a few reasons. She said not everyone who says they are homeless is actually without a home. She said there are always people who try to take advantage of these kinds of programs. Currently, the City has vouchers for food and hotels to give to homeless people to get them out of the elements. She said this is a problem that needs to be addressed, but we need to be careful because this could become Pandora's Box.

Dr. Sterritt likes the idea of the SOULS Ministry being a part of the new shelter.

Chairman Perry said regardless of the problems homeless people present, it is our responsibility as human beings to try to help them.

Commissioner Meads said there is a mission in Durham, North Carolina called Durham Rescue Mission that has done an excellent job of eradicating homelessness there. He thinks we should look into what they are doing.

No consensus was made on this item, as additional discussion will be required by City Council.

## **7. COMMENTS BY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND CITY COUNCILORS:**

Commissioner Griffin was concerned when the speaker tonight said the County and the City do not have a vision. He thinks the City and County should meet more often. We want to be the hub of Northeastern North Carolina, and to do that we have to participate.

Chairman Perry said the County hopes to identify a vision and mission at the retreat in January.

Dr. Sterritt said he is very pleased with the efforts of the County and City tonight.

Councilwoman Young would like to see the two Boards meet more often. Tonight has given us a lot of great perspective.

Councilman Walton said we are all in a big circle, and all the little circles need to work together. He enjoyed tonight, and thinks everyone now looks at each other differently.

Councilwoman Hummer said tonight was a great meeting, possibly the best one we have ever had.

Mayor Parker said tonight's meeting was productive. She thinks everyone is leaving with something new. We need to always communicate. As elected officials, we are interested in what happens in our area. In order to be the hub of Northeastern North Carolina, we have to stay in touch with what this community wants.

Chairman Perry asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion was made by Lloyd Griffin, seconded by Joe Winslow to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

---

CHAIRMAN

---

ASSISTANT CLERK TO THE BOARD