**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA FEBRUARY 28, 2019**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners held a retreat on Thursday, February 28, and Friday, March 1, 2019 at Montero’s, 414 North McArthur Street, Elizabeth City.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeff Dixon, Chairman

Lloyd E. Griffin, III, Vice-Chairman

Cecil Perry

Frankie Meads

Charles Jordan

Barry Overman

Sean Lavin

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sparty Hammett, County Manager

R. Michael Cox, County Attorney

Sheri Small, Finance Officer

Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

Shelley Cox, Planning Director

Robert Boyce, VFD Coordinator

Collin Flatness, IT Director

David Smithson, Water Superintendent

Tommy Wooten, Sheriff

Daniel Fogg, Chief Deputy

William Williams, Narcotics Investigator

Dwayne Hinson, Pasquotank SWCD Technician

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM by Chairman Jeff Dixon. Chairman Dixon welcomed everyone present.

**1. COUNTY ATTORNEY:**

County Attorney Mike Cox outlined basic rules and directions involving the Board, as well as discussed public records, code of ethics, conflicts of interest, open meeting law, recent litigation, and County ordinances.

**2. FY2019-20 BUDGET & COMPENSATION STUDY:**

Finance Officer Sheri Small provided a list of outstanding debt and reviewed general fund revenues and expenditures. County Manager Hammett provided a list of budget challenges for FY2019-20, which includes:

* Local Government Retirement System increases for the next three fiscal years, (1.2% annually – approximate increase for FY2019-20 -$160,000).
* Senior Center – debt service and increased operational cost if new facility is purchased.
* Potential increases in workers compensation and general liability insurance.
* YMCA at the Pines – $50,000 funding request.
* School capital needs.
* Are Pasquotank County’s fees covering costs?
* Compensation study.

County Manager Hammett updated the Board on the ongoing compensation study. He explained that inadequate salaries alter the County’s ability to recruit and retain employees. It also affects turnover rates, productivity and performance. Pay can affect employees in many ways such as: symbolizes individual value, employee morale, commitment to the organization, greater productivity, workplace stress, and less high-performer turnover, and absenteeism. Staff is working on turnover statistics for each department. H noted that the Water Department had a 45% turnover rate in 2018. A small group is working on the study, with input from the Human Resources Team. Mr. Hammett recommends a $500 increase for all employees for F2019-20, with other Compensation Study results implemented based on funding availability with no tax increase.

Initially, the group attempted to compile information from local jurisdictions and difficulties were encountered in matching positions. Determination was made to use the 2017-18 UNC School of Government Salary Study state average with a focus on minimum/entry level pay for 54 benchmark jobs. Mr. Hammett said in general, Pasquotank County salaries are more competitive for line staff level positions; Public Safety line staff are all near or above state averages. Many supervisors and department director positions are significantly below state averages for comparable positions. He went on to say the pay separation between line staff, supervisor, and department director positions is much wider statewide versus Pasquotank County. He used Central Communications as an example. The difference in the salary of a Pasquotank County Telecommunicator and a shift supervisor is $3,951. The difference in the salary of a state average Telecommunicator and a state average shift supervisor is $9,280. He said the top three Director minimum salary differences are:

* Human Resources $19,545
* IT Director $15,388
* Tax Administrator $12,743

Mr. Hammett said staff recommends developing a phased Compensation Study Implementation Plan that would not require a tax increase to address pay discrepancies. The recommended plan would take Pasquotank County to “at or near” state averages to aid recruiting/retention. Staff also recommends lateral increases for employees using their current pay step, in order to minimize pay compression and ensure consistent implementation of increases. The highest Pasquotank County pay grade is currently Grade 43. Based on survey results and local data, the highest grade positions are typically: Sheriff, DSS Director; and Finance Officer. He said staff recommends the following changes to the top of pay structure:

* Finance Officer – Grade 43 Proposed – Grade 46
* DSS Director – Grade 40 Proposed – Grade 46
* Sheriff – Grade 40 Proposed – Grade 46

Additionally, staff recommends pay grades for other positions being aligned “at or near” the state average. He noted that in addition to the pay discrepancies, many local jurisdictions offer a 5% 401k to all employees.

Mr. Hammett asked the Board the following questions:

* Does the BOC support a review of the County’s fees to determine if the fees cover costs? *Unanimous consensus.*
* Does the BOC support directing the County Manager to propose a no tax increase budget? *Unanimous consensus.*
* Does the BOC support staff development a phased Compensation Study Implementation Plan based on state averages and lateral increases for employees using their current pay step? *Unanimous consensus.*

**3. PLANNING & INSPECTIONS**

Planning Director Shelley Cox provided the following updates/recommendations:

Family Subdivisions

* Procedures (staff review vs. BOC review) if the request meets the minimum requirements.
* Definition – from Child, Parent & Grandchild to “Immediate Family”.

Minor/Expedited Subdivisions – General Statute Change

* Three lots out of five or more acres
* Requires a permanent means of ingress /egress (easement)
* Plat review by staff

Subdivision Roads Pending NCDOT Acceptance

* Street maintenance bonds no longer allowed under State Statute:
* 22 Cash bonds ($1,875 - $51,452.70)
* 6 Letters of Credit ($14,316 - $56,010)
* Statute allows performance bonds (completion only) limited to 125% of costs – must be releases after improvement is complete.
* Bonds for maintenance of stormwater facilities are allowed by Statute

Recommendations

* Ordinance Amendment requiring annual inspection report of unadopted roads to be submitted by the engineer representing the developer.
* Adopt Ordinance text requiring developers to initiate NCDOT acceptance within 12 months of the subdivision reaching NCDOT minimum occupancy requirements.
* Require maintenance bonds for stormwater facilities
* Update Ordinance to reflect requirements within NCGS 153A-331.
* Require establishment of a HOA.
* Street inventory and assessment by County staff of subdivision streets that have not been accepted by NCDOT for maintenance.
* Provide notification to developers and/or homeowners about the status of the roads and options for addressing.
* Special assessment district requires approval by 75% of property owners.

Code Enforcement

* Condemnation proceedings have begun for unsafe houses.
* Many complaints do not meet the threshold for condemnation.
* Staff recommends adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to assist in addressing nuisance related complaints
* Unsafe structures
* Grass
* Junk vehicles
* Unsafe pools
* Debris/Rubbish

Mr. Hammett asked the Board the following questions:

* Does the BOC support moving forward with the following subdivision ordinance amendments? *Unanimous consensus*
* Family subdivision definition and procedure
* Expedited subdivision standards
* Street and stormwater bonding requirements
* Does the BOC support staff conducting street assessment and notifying property owners/developers of their subdivision’s status and maintenance options? *Unanimous consensus*
* Does he BOC support moving forward with the adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code to address nuisance complaints? *Unanimous consensus*

**4. FIRE SERVICES:**

Mr. Hammett discussed the future direction of fire marshal services. He stated that from 2000 to 2010, the County contract with Elizabeth City to provide Fire Marshal Services. Currently, the Fire Marshal function is split between Pasquotank Planning and Inspections, the Pasquotank Sheriff’s Office, Volunteer Fire Coordinator, and a contract with an Elizabeth City Firefighter, who conducts inspections on a part-time basis. The current means of Fire Marshal service delivery has been impacted by the primary Investigator’s promotion to Chief Deputy and does not fully address all needed functions. He explained that the County has a vacant Building Inspectors position, which could be reclassified as a Fire Marshal. The new Fire Marshal’s position would be responsible for, but not limited to the following duties:

* Fire Inspections
* Fire Investigations
* Plan Reviews
* Public Education – Mandated – Nursing Homes, Foster Homes, and Group Homes (additional Public Education needed)

County Fire Services are currently provided through five Volunteer Fire Departments and a contract with the City of Elizabeth City. The County has maintained a contract for Provision of Fire Protection Services with Elizabeth City since 2000. The current agreement was made on December 13, 2017. The agreement covers Fiscal Years 2018-19 ($421,833), 2019-20 ($434,488), and 2020-21 ($447,523). If the County desires coverage after June 30, 2021, the County is required to submit notice to the City no later than December 31, 2020 to begin contract negotiations. Under the agreement, the city provides fire protection service to all property within the Pasquotank County Central Fire District.

Mr. Hammett explained that rural Volunteer Fire Departments are facing problems throughout the country. In May of 2017, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) held the first Rural Fire and Life Safety Symposium with 60 members of rural departments throughout the country. Recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighter is a critical challenge. Pasquotank County is facing similar problems, particularly in staffing stations during the work week, while many volunteers are working. Pasquotank-Providence has requested funding for paid firefighters during the last two budget years. In analyzing call responses, staff determined that we can delay changing service delivery for one budget year. For Fiscal Year 2020-21, a hybrid system using part-time paid Firefighters may be needed.

Fleet Management

Mr. Hammett said in many instances, Volunteer Fire Departments have retained old trucks/vehicles after the County has funded new fire apparatus. This causes increases in long-term maintenance and can unnecessarily grow the size of the County Fleet. Currently the County’s fire trucks are replaced every 20 years. This replacement plan was created when fire trucks had gasoline motors, steel water tanks, and hydraulic brakes. As the trucks get older, the motors would lose horsepower, the steel tanks began to leak due to oxidation and the brakes would fail due to the water weight and shift of the water in non-baffled water tanks. Today, the County only purchases fire trucks with diesel motors, polypropylene tanks and air breaks. With the updates in technology and material, the County is afforded better longevity with our fleet. He said staff is proposing eliminating the 20-year replacement plan and transitioning to a case needed basis. This plan would utilize a cost benefit analysis, while ensuring that the fire trucks adhere to the yearly mandated fire pump service test, performed by a third party vendor.

Mr. Hammett asked the following questions:

* Does the BOC support reclassifying a vacant Building Inspector position to serve as Pasquotank County Fire Marshal? *Unanimous consensus.*
* Does the BOC support directing staff to identify a recommended means of Fire Services deliver for the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget? *Unanimous consensus.*
* Does the BOC support Fire Fleet Management changes to require the sale of replaced fire trucks and eliminating the 20-year fire truck replacement policy? *Unanimous consensus* to support Fire Fleet Management changes, but decided to *revisit a 20-year firetruck replacement policy in the future.*

**5. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:**

Mr. Hammett provided an overview of technology currently being implemented.

* Network Upgrades – upgrades completed to bring network to current IT standards.
* Point of Service Credit Card Payments – contract is pending – Water Department – pilot department.
* GPS Tracking – installed in Solid Waste and Water Department Vehicles. Recommend expanding.
* Cybersecurity Upgrades – upgrades were completed; Soundside is completing an assessment of software vulnerabilities.

Future Technology

* An online building inspection and permitting system would provide a more business/citizen friendly means of providing development services.
* A citizen request/complaint tracking system would be more citizen friendly, enable tracking/ monitoring to ensure request are addressed, and help allocate resources.
* The current Courthouse phone system (ViCom Avaya) was purchased in 2005; current technology could improve efficiency and potentially reduce ongoing maintenance costs.

Mr. Hammett asked the following questions:

* Does the BOC support identifying funding in the FY2019-20 Budget to expand GPS tracking for non-Public Safety vehicles? *Unanimous consensus.*
* Does the BOC support continued expansion of technology based on cost versus benefits and funding availability? *Unanimous consensus.*

**6. WATER DEPARTMENT:**

RO Wellfield Update

Bill Diel, PE, Diel & Phillips PA, updated the Board on RO Well Field challenges the County is currently facing.

He noted that the wellfields are already at the projected 2032 water levels. Equipment has been installed to constantly monitor the wellfield levels. They are in the process of designing/installing Variable Frequency Drives (VFD’s) on all our well fields to increase efficiency and to handle lower water levels. The Water Department is also in the process of looking for two future well sites for the wellfield expansion. He noted that the RO Plant will need an additional RO train.

Uncontracted Water

David Smithson informed the Board that currently there is not a written contract with the City of Elizabeth City for water service at Peartree North, Fairways Estates, or Perkins Estates, as well as a few homes around Mill Street. The rate is $4.55/thousand, which is below the County’s cost. The City is taking an average of 400,000 gallon/month. He said there are 20-25 homes on Parsonage Street that the County buys water from the City to sell to our customers. He said the County sells the City a lot more water, at a lower rate, than we buy from them.

Future Direction of Water Department

* The Water Department has a need to provide water to the Northern part of Pasquotank County for the purpose of future residential growth.
* In addition, the County has a need to be in a position to meet the needs of future industry/businesses
* A Water and Sewer Master Plan could provide a systematic, overall strategic direction for the Water Department to meet future needs.
* A Water and Sewer Master Plan would provide an assessment of the current situation and, in the light of known and assumed conditions, provide a framework for future actions.
* The Master Plan process affords an opportunity for all those involved to take a broad view of how to address future needs.
* The ultimate purpose of a Water & Sewer Master Plan would be to further the health and welfare of citizens residing or working in Pasquotank County through the orderly development and expansion of adequate water and sewer systems.

Mr. Hammett asked the following questions:

* Does the Board of Commissioner support moving forward with the plan to address the wellfield issues? *Unanimous consensus*
* Does the BOC support increasing water rates from $4.55 to $6.00/thousand to address rate consistency? *Unanimous consensus*
* Does the BOC support developing a Request for Proposal to conduct a Water and Sewer Master Plan? *Unanimous consensus*

**7. SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT:**

Sheriff Tommy Wooten, Chief Deputy Daniel Fogg, and Investigator William Williams reviewed future plans and projects for the Sheriff’s Department. Investigator Williams presented a PowerPoint on Drug awareness. He said the Drug Task Force needs three additional detectives and two drug dogs.

Future Plans and Projects

* School Resource Officers at every school
* ECPPS Grant Money for (1) position (rotate elementary schools)
* Police Athletic League Funding
* Courthouse Security (Security Analysis)
* Funding for summer youth program
* Volunteer Program
* Plans for funding for Jail/Prison Investigator
* Continue growth of Sheriff’s Office
* Civic Unit (currently in operation – 12 deputies signed up for volunteer programs)
* Advance Technology (Mobile MDT’s and Body Cameras)
* Administrative Assistant

**8. COUNTYWIDE DRAINAGE ISSUES**

Dwayne Hinson, Pasquotank SWCD Technician, discussed countywide drainage issues.

Mr. Hammett asked the Board the following questions:

* Does the BOC support establishing a Drainage Advisory Committee to address countywide drainage and water quality issues? *Unanimous consensus*
* Does the BOC support identifying funding in the FY2019-20 budget to conduct a pilot project for addressing public drainage concerns? *Unanimous consensus.*

The retreat was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CHAIRMAN

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CLERK TO THE BOARD