

Special Meeting
RETREAT
Wednesday, March 22, 2023
8:30am
Northern Chowan Community Center
2869 Virginia Road
Tyner, NC 27980

Present Chair Bob Kirby, Commissioners Ron Cummings, Larry McLaughlin, Chris Evans, Ellis Lawrence and Alex Kehayes.

North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Outreach Associates Neil Emory and Denise Stinagle were also present.

Commissioner Tray Taylor was absent.

Staff present County Manager Kevin Howard, Finance Officer Cathy Smith and Board Clerk Susanne Stallings.

Board Chair Bob Kirby welcomed everyone in attendance.

Mr. Emory welcomed the Board and thanked them for inviting him to the retreat.

Current and Future Capital Projects and Funding Update

ARPA and CARES Funds Update

Finance Officer Cathy Smith provided the Board with an update on the funds received and how they have been or have been earmarked for spending. She noted the County has received \$2.7 million in ARPA funds. \$747,462 were used for premium pay for employees. Grants were given to small businesses. \$600,000 has been designated for Broadband. An additional \$100,000 in funds will be coming. \$1,000,000 will be used for the water treatment plant study. Approximately \$1.1 million remains. Ms. Smith will provide the Board with an update on the funds at a future meeting.

Water Plant Upgrades

Mr. Howard stated the County is working with property owners on agreements for test well sites. He stated that all property owners have requested leases for 3 to 4 months. Approximately \$200,000 of water fund balance will be used for the study and leases. There is about \$5.2 million in the fund balance.

Jail

Mr. Howard stated the County is still talking with neighboring jails about joining a regional facility however nothing has been agreed to by these counties. He stated the Board approved an RFQ to do a jail needs and feasibility study. He stated he hoped to get the RFQ sent out in May.

Recreation Bond

Mr. Howard provided the Board with information on future capital proposals for recreation complexes. He stated that the projects include a proposal for a Natatorium (Swimming pool), Recreation Complex and a new Senior Center. He stated that these items will be placed on a bond referendum for the voters to decide. He stated that rough estimates for these projects estimate a \$35 million project. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023.

Hicks Field Capital

Mr. Howard provided information on capital requests for bathrooms at Hicks Field. He stated that the cost estimates are around \$150,000 total. Board members suggested looking into utilizing ARPA funds for this project. The Board discussed the use of tourism funds for this project. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023.

Swain

Board members discussed the future of the auditorium at Swain. There have been estimates gathered to replace the windows and staff is moving forward with this project to seal the building. Mr. Howard stated the goal is to do the windows this Summer. He noted that there is some evidence that water is also coming through the building at the bricks. He provided the Board with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with the projects and costs listed. About \$185,000 will be used for the window project at Swain. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023.

Jailers House and Historic Jail

Mr. Howard will be meeting with an official from the State to see if they are interested in taking ownership of the jailer's house and jail, more information on this will be forthcoming.

EMS Ambulance

Mr. Howard and EMS Director Colin Ryan provided the Board with information on a request to order an ambulance this fiscal year with the understanding that due to supply chain shortages, the ambulance will not be available for 24 months. The cost of the new ambulance will be around \$321,623. Mr. Ryan stated that the new ambulance will replace a 2011 truck, and that staff is working to request a new ambulance every two years. He provided the Board with a handout that specified the equipment that will be on the new truck if ordered. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023. This request will be on the next regular meeting agenda for a Board vote.

Courthouse Feasibility Study

Mr. Howard provided the Board with a handout of the Feasibility Study that was prepared in June of 2022. He stated that since this study was done, the newly elected Clerk of Court has discussed proposals to expand the Courthouse and add an additional courtroom. He stated that is not included in the feasibility study. He stated the renovations that are detailed in the study total about \$5,231,707. He stated he plans to bring the Clerk of Court to a future CIP Committee meeting to discuss his request. He stated he recommends proceeding with part of the CIP plan to

address the HVAC at the Courthouse. The Board discussed the use of the vault area for additional courtroom or office space and relocation of the Register of Deeds as a possible solution. It was noted that many Counties have relocated the ROD to other spaces as most of the records are now digital. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023.

The Board took a 15 minute break, afterwards Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order.

Radio Communication Issues/ Public Safety

Mr. Howard and EM Coordinator Cord Palmer discussed some communication issues with the Fire radio and pagers. The Board has approved an RFQ to perform a study to determine the needs and most feasible solutions. He stated that Perquimans County performed this type of study and were able to identify if their own system is needed. Mr. Palmer explained the compatibility issues with the system used by EMS and Law Enforcement (VIPER radio) and the radios used by the Fire Departments. The state will not approve cell phone paging for fire calls. This project is estimated to cost around \$50,000.

Fire Station Needs

Tony Bailey with the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) discussed the needs in Chowan County for additional fire substations. He discussed the formulas used to determine fire ratings for County residents to receive credits on their insurance premiums. He stated he has worked with the County GIS Coordinator and the Fire Chiefs for both Edenton and Center Hill Crossroads Fire Department (CHCRFD) and agreements with Hobbsville Volunteer Fire Department and the addition of one substation would address the need in that area. He stated more is needed for the southern portion of the County and that includes the addition of one substation. He discussed location issues to provide the most continuous coverage that would also impact the most residents and allow them to realize savings on their homeowner's insurance. He stated the County will also need to look at the feasibility of the project to justify the construction of a new substation. He discussed the state requirements for manning a substation as well as the equipment that will be needed. The Edenton Fire Chief will look into a cost benefit analysis to determine if the project is feasible. Mr. Bailey provided the Board with a handout of items for consideration when adding a substation and a map of the coverage in Chowan County. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023.

The Board took a recess for lunch. Following lunch at 1pm, Chair Kirby called the meeting back to order. Commissioner Lawrence was not present.

Planning Update

Planner Brandon Shoaf provided the Board with a PowerPoint update on the status of Timbermill Wind Permitting. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023. He noted the next items needed are bond verification and building permit issuance for 45 towers.

Solid Waste Items

Manager of Landfill Operations, Angel White provided the Board with a PowerPoint update on the PCG Landfill and Chowan Convenience sites. A copy of the handout is in the meeting file

labeled March 22, 2023. The update included information on contract renewals, and capital improvements as well as budget challenges for the upcoming fiscal year.

Grant Writing Services

Albemarle Commission Executive Director Mike Ervin provided the Board with a handout that details available grant funding sources and services available to Counties from the Albemarle Commission.

Commissioner Lawrence rejoined the meeting.

Mr. Ervin will look into the Hicks Field renovation to see if there are any grant funds available to pay for this project.

A copy of the handout is in the meeting file labeled March 22, 2023.

Opioid Funding Update

Nidhi Sachdeva with the NCACC provided the Board with a PowerPoint that explains the NC Opioid Settlements and the regulations included in the settlements on the ways in which Counties may expend the settlement funds. County Finance Officer Cathy Smith stated the County currently has \$94,000 in these funds and if the County applies for the Wave 2 funds additional monies will be coming. She stated the second wave monies will be about the same amount as the first. The Board will have the Wave 2 settlement agreement on the next meeting agenda to meet the April deadline. Board members brainstormed various treatment options and discussed how the County can best use the funds to address the opioid epidemic.

Summary

Mr. Emery summarized the discussions from the day to the Board.

At 4:00pm Chair Kirby thanked the Board members for the retreat discussion, he then declared the meeting adjourned.

Bob Kirby, Chair

Susanne Stallings, Clerk