**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA JANUARY 11, 2021**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a regular meeting on Monday, January 11, 2021in Courtroom C in the Pasquotank County Courthouse.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lloyd E. Griffin, III, Chairman

Charles H. Jordan, Vice-Chairman

Cecil Perry

Sean Lavin

Barry Overman

William “Bill” Sterritt

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Frankie Meads

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

R. Michael Cox, County Attorney

Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Lloyd Griffin. Vice-Chairman Charles Jordan gave the invocation and Commissioner Barry Overman led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Chairman Griffin welcomed those in attendance.

**1. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:**

Chairman Griffin asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Vice-Chairman Jordan requested the agenda be amended to add the following recommendations from the Finance Committee to the Consent Agenda: 1) Approval to Execute Option to Purchase; and 2) Adoption of County Logo/Brand.

Motion was made by Charles Jordan, seconded by Cecil Perry to amend the agenda to add the two additional items to the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

**2. COMMENTS BY GEORGE HAGUE:**

Chairman Griffin recognized George Hague to address the Board. Mr. Hague thanked the Board for their service. He said he is asking for transparency in government, and requested the Board stream its meetings online.

**3. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:**

Commissioner Sterritt said he does not have any issues with the November 30, 2020 minutes, but he does have issues with the December 7, 2020 commissioner meeting minutes. He apologized for talking longer than he should have at the December 7th commissioner meeting. He said he has an addendum to go in the minutes.

Commissioner Sterritt read and handed out the following prepared statement:

*8. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS*

*Commissioner Sterritt said it is a great thing that the Board approved supporting paving Harvest Point Road. He suggested that the Board approach Elizabeth City Downtown and the Economic Development Commission to see if they will promote the neighborhood for retirees to buy land and build homes in the subdivision.*

*The above is verbatim of what I reported on phase I of my conversation to the Board of Commissioners.*

*Phase II comments were totally incomplete. They were much more than what was related in the minutes, that is, COMMISSIONER STERRITT PROVIDED A HISTORY OF HOW THE COA BOARDWALK CAME ABOUT. I am going to relate to you what I said about comments made by others and at that point I’m going to make a motion to have the minutes read about what actually occurred. Please – I do not want to be interrupted while I’m speaking.*

*There was an article in the Daily Advance referring to an $87,000 grant what was given by the Coastal Area Management Association (CAMA) to the county. I want the board to know that the trail behind COA was and is a COA project that was started in 2002 after conversation with, at the time, Dr. Sylvester McKay, the President of COA. I also worked very closely with Mr. Phil Donohue who was at the time the Executive Director of the Albemarle Hospital Foundation. At that point I was told by the Chairperson of the County Commissioners, Mr. Lloyd Griffin, that I could no longer speak. He interrupted me in a most uncordial and demeaning manner. I asked him in a calm collected voice, “Are you telling me I can no longer finish my sentence: He said, “That’s right. He said to shut up as the board already knows that STUFF you’ve been talking about. My thought was: ‘What is he referring to as STUFF? ‘You’re conversation is over with. I thought to myself, this is not good. He’s telling the Board of County Commissioners that I cannot speak about that. I felt at the time and still do today that I was assaulted. Mr. Griffin’s attitude toward me was unbecoming and at that point I said to the group, “I relinquish the floor and sat down.”*

Commissioner Sterritt said he has given hundreds and hundreds of speeches over the years to various organizations that he was either a member of or the president of. He stated that Mr. Griffin asked him one time to speak at the Juneteenth event, and he spent a long time on it. It went over real good, and Chairman Griffin even congratulated him on it, but this time there is something wrong.

He asked that his comments be included in the minutes.

Motion was made by Bill Sterritt, seconded by Cecil Perry to enter Commissioner Sterritt’s comments into the December 7, 2020 Commissioner Minutes.

Chairman Griffin said at this time Commissioner Sterritt has requested editing the December 7, 2020 meeting minutes to reflect his statement. He said he would request that the Clerk would go back and clarify the statements in which Commissioner Sterritt is stating, such as him telling Commissioner Sterritt to “shut up”. He said he does not believe that he said those words; however, he will ask the Clerk to clarify it, and bring it to the next meeting for approval of the minutes. Commissioner Sterritt said we have everyone here that was at the meeting, so he wants the Board to decide whether they are going to do this, and it’s not for Chairman Griffin to decide whether it is going to take place. Chairman Griffin said what he is asking the Board to do is to have the Clerk to make sure that Commissioner Sterritt’s translation is accurate to his statements for the record. Commissioner Sterritt said that is fine.

Commissioner Overman said his question is not relative to this, because this is between Chairman Griffin and Commissioner Sterritt. He said if we are going to establish new rules for keeping comments, then this will change that approach. He explained that minutes are for official actions done by a board or committee. They are not to be inclusive of personal comments or stories. He said if we are going to decide on this, we are going to have to give directions on how we are going to take minutes from here on out.

Commissioner Sterritt asked why Phase I was verbatim and Phase II was ten words. “Who was up to that?” Commissioner Overman said he is not referring to Commissioner Sterritt’s statements at all. He said he is saying, based on policy, more is probably put into minutes than we should, because it should just be based on actions of a board or committee.

Commissioner Sterritt stated that there is a motion and a second, and it’s for discussion. After the discussion, you can vote however you feel. Commissioner Overman said he cannot vote for it unless we change our policy. Commissioner Overman noted that a Board member can come up at each meeting and say that he wants to add to what Lynn reported for me, so I’d rather not accept the minutes unless the Board adds my addendum.

Chairman Griffin said at this time we have a motion to amend the December 7, 2020 minutes by Commissioner Sterritt, seconded by Commissioner Perry. He asked if there is any further discussion.

Vice-Chairman Jordan asked if the motion is to enter all of Commissioner Sterritt’s statements, as presented. Chairman Griffin answered yes. Vice-Chairman Jordan said he would have a difficult time with submitting the comments into the minutes as presented.

The motion failed 4 to 2, with Commissioners Griffin, Jordan, Lavin, and Overman voted against the motion.

Commissioner Sterritt asked what the result was of his motion. Chairman Griffin replied that there were two in favor and four against.

Motion was made by Charles Jordan, seconded by Barry Overman to approve the December 7, 2020 commissioner minutes as presented by the Clerk. The motion carried 4 to 2, with Commissioners Perry and Sterritt voting against the motion.

The Board considered the following consent agenda:

*a. Approval of Minutes of November 30, 2020 Commissioner Meeting*

*b. Approval to Execute Option to Purchase*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval to execute the Option to Purchase approximately 51 acres of land from Lisa Winslow at $12,000 per acre for the proposed Northern Park, with Capital Reserve Funds.

*c. Adoption of County Logo/Brand*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the County logo/brand as designed by Bizzell Design.

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

**4. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:**

Vice-Chairman Jordan stated that the Appointments Committee met today and would like to make the following recommendation:

Board of Zoning Adjustments – Reappoint Dana Cobbs to additional 3-year term.

Motion was made by Charles Jordan, seconded by Cecil Perry to approve the reappointment, as recommended by the Appointments Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

**5. SENTARA – FIRST AMENDMENT TO LEASE & ASSOCIATED ESCROW AGREEMENT:**

County Manager Hammett stated that the Board approved a Letter of Intent (LOI) to expedite the development of a new hospital by Sentara on November 16, 2020, which set the parameters of the First Amendment to Lease. What we have in the package for approval is the First Amendment to Lease, which formalizes exactly what was in the Letter of Intent. He noted that Attorney Bob Wilson is available if we need to call him to respond to any questions. He said he, Attorney Wilson, and Attorney Cox recommend approval of the First Amendment to the Lease. He added the Board also needs to authorize execution of the Escrow Agreement as well.

Motion was made by Barry Overman, seconded by Charles Jordan to approve the First Amendment to the Lease and authorize execution of the Escrow Agreement. The motion carried unanimously.

**6. COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG) DOCUMENTATION OF SUBMISSION:**

County Manager Hammett explained that this is an annual block grant application. As a formality, each CSBG recipient must submit its Community Anti-Poverty Plan (grant application) to each County Commissioner Board that it serves. The complete application has been provided by the Economic Improvement Council as notification of their intent to apply for funds.

Motion was made by Cecil Perry, seconded by Charles Jordan to certify that the application for the project period was submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for review and comment. The motion carried unanimously.

**7. PRESENTATION ON WHAT AVIATION MEANS TO OUR ECONOMY:**

Regional Airport Manager, Scott Hinton provided a PowerPoint presentation on what aviation means to our state and local economy. Mr. Hinton said he is very happy to be back in his role at the airport and appreciates the opportunity to once again address the Board.

Mr. Hinton stated that just this morning the North Carolina Division of Aviation released their “What Aviation Means to our Economy” report. This is a biannual report of economic contribution by the airports in the state of North Carolina. Up until just a couple of years ago, the report was limited to just the economic activity generated by the regional airport. They have now begun to include all of the operations inside the fence line, meaning the Coast Guard as well. It is a full snapshot of what goes on out at the Coast Guard Air Station/Airport.

Mr. Hinton said there are 72 public use airports in North Carolina. Ten are commercial service airports and 62 are general aviation airports. 94% of North Carolina’s population lives within a 30-minute drive of a public airport. Based on 2019 airport data, the statewide economic contribution is: $61 billion in economic impact; 373,000 jobs; $15 billion in personal income; and $2.5 billion in tax revenue. The annual economic impact contribution of the Elizabeth City Coast Guard Air Station/Regional Airport is: $479,780,000 in economic output; 2,790 jobs; $124,860,000 in personal income from workers in those jobs; and $9,293,000 in state and local tax revenues.

Mr. Hinton said he has a much longer presentation that can be done at some point if the Board is interested. He noted that North Carolina has the 8th fastest growing aerospace economy. Elizabeth City State University is the only university in the state with a four-year UAS or drone program, which is exploding nationwide. College of the Albemarle has an Airframe & Power Plant program. It all comes together to create almost a half a billion dollars in local economic impact in our community.

Mr. Hinton thanked the Board for their support of aviation in North Carolina and the Elizabeth City Reginal Airport. Chairman Griffin recognized Airport Authority Chairman Johnnie Houston and thanked him for attending.

**8. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Perry said he has not attended any new meetings this month. He emphasized that the Board needs to learn how to work together as a group. He said he has been on the Board a very long time and has seen many things. He stated that all of the Board’s information should not come from the Manager, but they need to have ideas themselves, and they need to hold themselves responsible for what is happening in Pasquotank County. He asked that the Board learn to love and work together, and do what is best for Pasquotank County.

Commissioner Overman attended the monthly DSS meeting. He noted that they are dealing with COVID very impressively. For them to maintain the integrity of their program pre-COVID is hard enough, but they have been able to keep it going through all this. It’s amazing what the staff has been able to do. They have only had three or four employees with COVID issues, which is tremendous with such a large staff.

Commissioner Overman said he sends his prayers and concerns to Commissioner Meads and his family during this time, as well as those fighting COVID.

Commissioner Lavin echoed Commissioner Overman’s comments regarding Commissioner Meads. He said he did not have much in the way of meetings over the Christmas break. Last week, the Workforce Development Board met. They are making plans on forging a partnership with ECSU to be on campus there a couple days a week. They are doing all they can, especially with COVID to try to help meet the needs of the people in our area that are struggling and having a hard time making ends meet.

Commissioner Sterritt – No comments.

Vice-Chairman Jordan attended the Jail Board meeting, as well as the Drainage Committee meeting. He is happy that the Board will be looking into the issue of hunting dogs, because it is very important. When he came on the Board, it was just one person that was talking about the issue, and now there are several more. He hopes that the homeowners and the hunters can somehow work together.

Chairman Griffin stated that earlier this afternoon he passed around a sympathy card to be sent to Representative Marc Basnight’s family. He requested a card be sent to the County’s Water Superintendent’s family as well, as he recently lost his father.

Chairman Griffin said at the last meeting we heard a presentation from our lobby group. The McClees’ have partnered with Jack Stancil. Mr. Stancil has been forwarding out an email every week called “The Jones Street Journal”. He asked if the Board has been receiving it. Some commissioners noted that they have not. He asked the Clerk to make sure Mr. Stancil has everyone’s correct e-mail information.

Commissioner Perry said he does not quite understand how the contract with McClees Consulting has been passed on to another lobbyist without Board approval. Mr. Hammett explained that the contract has not changed hands. Henri McClees retired at the end of December, and Mr. Stancil is working in conjunction with McLees Consulting.

Chairman Griffin stated that the Drainage Committee questioned how the group is meeting and what their priorities are in the budget. Mr. Hammett stated that the Drainage Committee is meeting on a bimonthly basis. They had $60,000 in funding that is being used based on complaints across the county. The Drainage Advisory Committee is sitting and reviewing the complaints and making some recommendations on how to allocate the funding. Every time somebody calls with a drainage issue or concern, it is put on a list, and they are trying to work through the list. They will go as far as the funding allows each year. He said he has talked with Finance Director Small, and that $60,000 recommendation is going to increase to $100,000 next fiscal year.

Chairman Griffin said staff has been receiving calls regarding how COVID vaccines were distributed. He said the vaccines are the Health Department’s responsibility, not commissioners. Mr. Hammett explained that the Health Department does not know what they will receive until the state gets their allocation each week. Every Monday, the Health Department will know what they are receiving and can work from there. He noted that there probably will not be more than a three or four day notice on any of the clinics.

Commissioner Jordan said he and his wife have had the first vaccine and were told by the Health Department today they need to call two days before the date the next vaccine is due to get an appointment. Commissioner Perry said he sits on the Health Board and he believes you will find most of the information in the newspaper from this point forward.

Motion was made by Charles Jordan, seconded by Sean Lavin to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:37 PM.

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CHAIRMAN

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CLERK TO THE BOARD