**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA FEBRUARY 25, 2022**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners held a retreat on Friday, February 25, 2022 at The Pines, 1525 N. Road Street, Elizabeth City, N.C.

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

Charles Jordan, Vice-Chairman

Cecil Perry

Barry Overman

Sean Lavin

Jonathan Meads

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bill Sterritt

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

R. Michael Cox, County Attorney

Sheri Small, Finance Officer

Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

Hartley Askew, Deputy Clerk to the Board

Shelley Cox, Planning Director

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM by Chairman Lloyd Griffin. Vice-Chairman Charles Jordan gave the invocation.

**1. COUNTY ATTORNEY UPDATE:**

County Attorney Mike Cox provided an overview on 160D Conflicts of Interest - Expanded Prior Law, Quasi-Judicial hearings, and Criminal Penalties – Ordinances.

**Projects for 2022**

* Animal Control Ordinance
* Emergency Management Ordinance
* Records Retention
* Ordinances that need revision in light of reform

**2. FY2021-22 GOALS UPDATE AND 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

County Manager Sparty Hammett provided the following FY2021-22 Goals Update:

**FY2021-22 GOALS UPDATE:**

**FY21-22 Budget**

* Fund a Grants Coordinator/Writer position and aggressively pursue grant funding to address Utilities Department capital projects and other County needs.
* Status: Position was funded and finally filled after an 8-month search.

**County Manager**

* Initiate annual community meetings for staff to convey information to citizens and to answer questions.
* Status: Has not been completed.

**County Manager**

* Develop a Public Information Plan to implement strategies that enhance Pasquotank County’s public image, improve citizen and employee engagement, and promote broader access to information about Pasquotank County government.
* Status: Has not been completed.
* Complete project to establish permanent Board of Commissioners Meeting Room with state-of-the-art technology.
* Status: In progress.

**County Manager**

* Develop a formal Telework policy.
* Status: In progress – working with Kathy Ford; DSS will be a pilot program.

**County Attorney**

* Continue process of updating and codifying county ordinances.
* Status: In progress.

**County Attorney**

* Provide oversight of the Redistricting process to ensure that Pasquotank County meets all legal requirements mandated by the State of North Carolina.
* Status: Completed.

**Information Technology**

* Continue to expand the use of new technology based on cost versus benefits and funding availability.
* Status: Completed.

**Emergency Medical Services**

* Fully fund Holiday Pay for Emergency Medical Services staff to create consistency for all Public Safety departments.
* Status: Completed.
* Fund a new ambulance in the FY2021-22 Budget to keep the EMS fleet up-to-date.
* Status: Completed.
* Retain a consultant to provide Architectural and Engineering Services to begin designing the new Headquarters facility.
* Status: In progress.

**Fire Services**

* Fund two fire trucks in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget (one for the Weeksville Volunteer Fire Department and one for the Providence Volunteer Fire Department) to keep our Fire fleet up-to-date to enhance Fire Services delivery to our citizens.
* Status: Completed – trucks ordered.

**Planning and Inspections**

* Finalize street condition assessments and notify property owners/developers of their subdivision’s status and maintenance options.
* Status: This has not been completed to-date.
* Develop a Comprehensive Plan to provide a vision for the County while addressing future growth and land use.
* Status: The consultant has been selected and the Comprehensive Plan process has started.

**Sheriff’s Office**

* Begin phased strategy to improve Courthouse Security to include funding two full-time Deputies to be assigned to the Courthouse. Conduct Courthouse Security Assessment to identify additional areas of improvement needed.
* Status: Two full-time Deputies were added. We are still waiting on the Courthouse Security Assessment.

* Fund the previously approved Holiday Pay and a Night Shift Differential for Patrol Deputies in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget.
* Status: Completed.

**Utilities Department**

* Continue implementing Water and Sewer Master Plan projects as recommended by staff and approved by the Board in February 2020.
* Status: South Mills Water Association territory in Pasquotank County was purchased and other projects are moving forward.

**Countywide Drainage**

* Continue to work through the Drainage Advisory Committee to address countywide drainage and water quality issues.
* Status: Countywide Drainage Committee meets bi-monthly and projects are in process throughout the County.

**Lobbyist/Legislative**

* Follow-up monthly with our Lobbyist to ensure support of both the NCACC’s legislative goals and Pasquotank County’s local goals.
* Status: Completed to-date.
* Schedule two Board presentations for our Lobbyist to provide legislative updates and updates on their efforts in pursuing the County’s legislative goals.
* Status: Retreat is first meeting.

**Economic Development**

* Engage with speculative builders to promote the Pasquotank County Commerce Park for a potential shell building partnership.
* Status: No progress to-date.
* Gain site control of all, or a portion of the Tanglewood Megasite through a public-private partnership to promote the site for economic development purposes.
* Status: No progress to-date.

**2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Countywide – Purchase of Pasquotank County Territory of South Mills Water Association**

* Pasquotank County had discussed purchasing the Newland territory of the South Mills Water Association for over 25-years.
* The purchase was finalized on December 1st and the valve was cut on to start delivering water to our new customers on December 2nd to allow South Mills the opportunity to finish reading meters.
* Staff worked on this purchase for almost two years.
* There are approximately 1,000 customers in the Newland area, which brought the total number of water customers to approximately 9,000.

**Countywide – Northern (Newland) Park**

* Pasquotank County had discussed developing a Northern Park for 20-years.
* We were awarded a $289,000 Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant for Northern Park Land Purchase on September 24th.
* We received the PARTF contract in November, the land survey was completed in December, and we closed on the property on January 31st.
* Benesch is currently conducting the Master Plan, which will be completed in time to submit a PARTF grant for construction costs.

**Countywide – Former Elizabeth City Middle School Project**

* The Board accepted an offer of $420,000 from J.D. Lewis Construction Management, Inc. for the former Elizabeth City Middle School (ECMS) property and the upset bid process cleared in November of 2020. All aspects of the deal were completed in 2021 and the sale closed on January 31, 2022.
* This project will be a big **Win** for both the City and the County:
  + - Having the former ECMS privately owned makes it taxable, whereas there is currently no tax revenue generated.
    - JDL’s plan to renovate the site into 84 apartments will increase the downtown population, meaning more spending and more sales tax revenue.
    - The actual construction cost will be in the millions, which has a multiplier effect for the local economy – job creation, economic spending, etc.

**Central Communications – Grant Funding Received**

* Applied and received a grant through the North Carolina Department of Public Safety Homeland Security Grant Program to outfit 7 of 13 counties that make up our DPR region with one new radio consolette. A second grant has been submitted for FY23 to obtain the other 6 to complete the project.
* Applied and received a grant through the NC911 Board to upgrade our dispatch radio consoles, radio core, 2 alternative frequencies separate from the VIPER system as backup, and the fiber connection required to connect to the VIPER system in Farmville, NC directly.

**County Attorney’s Office – Updating and Codifying Ordinances**

* The County Attorney’s Office is working on updating and codifying county ordinances.
* Provided assistance with all major County projects. The purchase of the South Mills Water System territory and the former Elizabeth City Middle School project had significant legal hurdles that had to be addressed.

**Pasquotank Board of Elections – Voting Equipment Purchased & Addressed Operational Obstacles**

* Following law and procedure set out by the North Carolina General Statutes, the Board of Elections procured new voting equipment, which will serve the county safely and securely for years to come.
* The Board of Elections navigated the ever-changing landscape of elections after having the date of our election moved not once, but twice.

Despite the limitations on gatherings due to COVID-19, Elections continued community education efforts in partnership with community organizations to inform Pasquotank voters of their options on how to vote, when to vote, and where to vote.

**Emergency Management – COVID Vaccinations, EM Executive Committee, & Advanced Planning Program**

* Successfully planned and setup numerous vaccination clinics in partnership with ARHS.
* Brian Parnell named to the NC Emergency Management Association Executive Committee.
* Assistant Emergency Management Director Josh Wyse completed the Advanced Planning Practitioner pilot program at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

**Emergency Medical Services – Reconfigured Responses**

Reconfigured response modalities in order to better utilize staff.  A severe Paramedic shortage hit the state and nation in 2021, and PCEMS needed to figure out how to provide continual coverage without compromising service.  As 2/3 of the PCEMS call volume is Basic Life Support, EMS management re-engineered staff so that EMTs and Advanced EMTs would be primarily staffing front-line ambulances.  Paramedics would then be used in “chase cars” to come behind these lower-level units when Emergency Medical Dispatch criteria deemed necessary.  The results have been highly successful, as we have been able to continue to maintain proficient response times and deliver Paramedic care to those in need.

**Finance Office** **– Certificate of Achievement for Excellence & Unmodified Audit Opinion**

* The Finance Office received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the year ended June 30, 2020.
* The June 30, 2021 audit received an unmodified opinion from the auditors.  The unmodified opinion is expressed when the auditor concludes that the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

**Fire Departments – Fire Trucks Ordered & Grants Received**

* Completed the build and initiated the purchase of three new fire apparatus: Nixonton:   Rosenbauer Pumper/Tanker (projected delivery date 3-23); Providence:  Spartan/Smeal 75ft Aerial  (projected delivery 1-23); and Weeksville: Spartan/Smeal Pumper/Tanker (projected delivery 12-22).
* Secured grant funding through two sources for our departments:
  + - * NC Volunteer Fire Department Fund 50/50 grant ($30,000 with a $30,000 match) - used to purchase air packs, fire hose, radios, pagers and other needed equipment to serve our communities.
      * NC Forest Service Volunteer Fire Assistance Program 50/50 grant.  ($10,000 with $10,000 match) - used to purchase chainsaws, protective equipment, and hand tools to aid in wildland fire responses.

**GIS Department – Redistricting**

* Julie Stamper served as the Project Manager for the Redistricting process.

**Human Resources Department – Safety Program**

* Human Resources have had several meetings with Michelle Harris (NCACC Risk Control Specialist) to discuss implementation of a Safety Program.
* One of my Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget priorities is to fund a Safety Officer/Risk Manager position.

**Information Technology – Technology Upgrades**

* Upgraded the switches in the Courthouse and Public Safety Building – a total of 6 switches.
* Upgraded video in Courtroom C with wireless HDMI, new monitors, and a new projector.
* Upgraded Public Safety Training Room for video conferencing – removed projector and installed new monitor, microphones, and a camera.

**Pasquotank Library – New Program & Partnerships**

* Started the “Read Down Your Fines” program to help reduce the financial impact that can restrict a youth’s access to the Library and increase literacy. For every 30 minutes of reading, the Library waives $1.00 of their fines.
* Established new partnerships and an internship program with Northeast Academy for Aerospace and Advanced Technologies (NEAAAT).
* Began a new collaboration with the Albemarle Alliance for Children and Families. They had an overstock of inventory of toys and educational materials and compiled kits that the Library will circulate to patrons.

**Maintenance Department – Remodeling Projects**

* In addition to handling all the ongoing maintenance projects, the department completed the following in-house renovations:
  + - * Soundneck Fire – EMS station;
      * Human Resources Office – moved to first floor of Courthouse and completely remodeled space; and
      * Security Room and Mailroom areas at the Department of Social Services.

**Planning & Inspections – Ordinance Update, Inspection Activity, & Staffing**

* Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances were updated (in house) to incorporate the State’s major overhaul of the Chapter 160D enabling legislation within NC General Statutes; adopted in June.
* Building inspection activity remained strong - 1,018 permits were issued during 2021. Permits for single family, site-built homes increased from 54 in 2020 to 63 in 2021. Estimated cost per home increased from $199,911 in 2020 to $233,910 in 2021.
* Experienced a 50% changeover in full-time staff with the retirement of the Planning Clerk and Fire Marshal. The department was able to provide service at a continuous level, despite being short staffed and having to train new employees.

**Register of Deeds – Technology Improvements**

* Implemented the new NCDAVR and EBRS-Electronic Systems; North Carolina Database Application for Vital Events (NCDAVE); and Electronic Birth Registration System (EBRS).
* Starting on March 1, 2022, the Register of Deeds Office will be going paperless.

**Sheriff’s Office –** Grants Received

* Applied and received a $24,495 JAG Grant to acquire:
  + - * 15 - Complete Crowd Control Suits
      * 15 - Air Purifying Masks
      * 21 - Wooden Batons
      * 50 - Individual Belt Warn Tourniquets
      * 25 - Individual First Aid Kits for Vehicles

* Applied and received a $25,464 Firehouse Subs Grant to acquire 25 Defibtech Lifeline AEDs & Accessories with 25 Pediatric Electrodes.

**Department of Social Services – Child Care Waiting List and Co-Responder Project**

* PCDSS (the Family Support Services Unit) cleared the Child Care Waiting List entirely in 2021. This was the first time in over 5 years that DSS has not had a wait list in place due to the inability to fund a family’s childcare needs to support employment, education, etc.
* The Co-Responder Demo Project funded by Trillium was initiated. The CROS/Co-Responder Outreach Specialist with Integrated Family Services is embedded in DSS, starting with APS/CPS.  We are hopeful this will help DSS, law enforcement, and other partners as we respond to families and individuals who need rapid access to behavioral health services.  The next step is to embed the CROS into either or both law enforcement agencies in our community and initiate the Steering Committee.

**Solid Waste Department** – Opened New Landfill Cell & Grant Funds Approved

* Secured all operating permits to open and expand a new 1.79-acre cell labeled “6B” in the Construction and Demolition (C&D) Landfill. We anticipate between two to five more years of waste capacity within this portion of the site.
* All grant funds the department applied for were funded.

**Tax Department** – Revaluation Process

* During 2021, the Pasquotank Tax Department continued the revaluation process, under North Carolina law, which states each county must conduct a countywide revaluation of all real property (land, buildings, and other improvements) within the county at least every eight years for tax assessment determination. The purpose of revaluation is to re-establish equity among properties that may have appreciated or depreciated in value at different rates since the county's last revaluation.

**Utilities Department – Major Projects Completed or in Process**

* Purchased the South Mills Water Association territory in northern Pasquotank County.
* Completed the Well Head Protection Plan - this plan has to be renewed every five years.
* Started the Weeksville and Reverse Osmosis Well Field Studies.

**3. FY2022-23 BUDGET:**

Finance Officer Sheri Small provided a list of outstanding debt and reviewed general fund revenues and expenditures.

County Manager budget priorities for FY2022-23:

**Employee Compensation and Benefits**

* **Cost of Living Increase (% To Be Determined)**
  + In FY21-22, we transitioned away from set dollar amount increases to stay competitive and avoid salary compression.
* **Internal Compensation Study - Update**
  + Enterprise Funds – Solid Waste and Utilities.
  + Pasquotank-Camden Emergency Medical Services.
* **Employee Health Insurance**
  + Approximately $300,000 Annual Cost Increase.
* **Employee Retirement**
  + Approximately $120,000 Annual Cost Increase.

**Public Safety**

* **Two Full-time Deputies – Courthouse Security**
  + - * This will be the second, and final, phase of a plan to enhance Courthouse Security staffing.
* **Volunteer Fire Departments**
  + - * Annual Volunteer Banquet - allocate $1,000 to each of the four Pasquotank VFD’s towards their annual banquet.

**Other Priorities**

* **Soil and Water – Drainage Projects – Increase to $120,000**
  + - * We have drainage concerns throughout the County.  This will continue the trend of increased drainage funding (FY18-19 - $25,000; FY19-20 - $40,000; FY20-21 - $60,000; FY21-22 - $100,000).
* **New Position – Human Resources - Safety Officer/Risk Manager**
* **New Position – Assistant County Manager** 
  + - * NCACC Management Fellow approved for FY2021-22.
      * Will place request on March 7th Finance agenda for consideration. Based on the current job market, this position could take a lengthy period of time to fill.

**4. PLANNING & INSPECTIONS:**

Planning Director Shelley Cox provided updates on Cryptocurrency Mining, Rural Home Occupations, WSIV Watershed, and the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

**CRYPTOCURRENCY MINING:**

* Cryptocurrency Mining is the operation of specialized computer equipment for the purpose of mining one or more blockchain-based cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin.
* Size would be limited to between 2 and 10 acres.
* Shipping containers or other accessory type structures would not be allowed.
* Only permitted with a Major Special Use Permit from the BOC in the I-1 and I-2 Industrial Zones.

**RURAL HOME OCCUPATIONS:**

***Current Ordinance allows home occupations in all residential and agricultural districts with the following limitations:***

* + Business must be conducted entirely within the home (garages and other accessory structures cannot be used).
  + Not over 25% of the total floor area or 500 square feet of the residence can be used.
  + No outside employees are permitted.
  + Limited to offices for physician, artist, contractor, musician, insurance agent, lawyer, real estate broker, teacher, or other like professional.
* Proposed Ordinance would expand the use for residents in rural areas of the County (A-1 and A-2 districts).
* Rural Home Occupations would require a Minor Special Use Permit from the Planning Board.
* Only permitted on lots 43,000 square feet or larger, which is the current minimum lot size in the County.
* Business could be conducted in an accessory structure (garage, etc.) but could not exceed 2,500 square feet.
* Up to three employees outside of the home allowed.
* A 30’ setback would be required for parking and storage relating to the business.
* Outside storage of goods and materials associated with the business shall be screened from view.
* Products could be prepared on the property and sold off-site or over the internet.

**WSIV WATERSHED:**

* The WSIV Water Supply Watershed Program is mandated by the State due to Elizabeth City’s non-functional water intake facility.
* The intake facility is located at the end of Whitehurst Street.
* Residential and Non-Residential development in the watershed is limited to 24% built upon area.



* Due to Pasquotank County’s brackish water, the City will not be able to use the intake facility as a water source.
* Staff recommends requesting that the City officially abandon the intakeso the watershed can be reclassified by the State Environmental Management Commission.

**COMPENSATION PLAN UPDATE:**

* A contract has been executed with Stewart to develop the Comprehensive Plan for $75,000.
* The Plan will be compliant with CAMA Land Use Plan standards and replace our current Land Use Plan.
* The planning process will take approximately 12 months.
* Staff is currently providing documents and data to assist with the development of the plan.
* Kick-off meetings and a local tour have been scheduled with the consultant on March 24th. .Plan standards

**5**. **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:**

Jackson Stancil, the County’s lobbyist, provided a legislative update. He asked Board members what kind of issues they would like legislative assistance with. Members requested help with drainage funds, College of the Albemarle Simulation Lab funds, Courthouse Renovation funds, Sales Tax Local Bill, and Citizen Advocacy Local Bill.

**6. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDS:**

Mr. Hammett provided the following information regarding American Rescue Plan Funds:

**Background**

* On March 11, 2021, the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) became law.
* Local government ARP funding will be released in two tranches; half to be provided shortly after enactment of the law, and half to be provided 12 months following first payment.
* Pasquotank County was allocated $7,735,345. On June 16, 2021, we received the first payment from the Department of Treasury in the amount of $3,867,672.50.
* The funds have to be obligated by 12-31-24 and spent by 12-31-26.
* A local government has specific authority to accept ARP funds but must spend the monies consistent with federal requirements and within the contours of state law authority.
* Once grant proceeds are received by a local government, they are public funds and subject to the same budgeting, fiscal management, expenditure control, and accounting rules as all other local government monies.
* As previously discussed, we were advised to hold off finalizing any plans for the use of the funds in order to maximize the benefit as potential match funds for State and Federal programs and to allow all the rules to be finalized.

**Standard Allowance for Revenue Loss**

* On January 6, 2022, the US Treasury issued the Final Rule for ARP/Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (437 pages). The provisions of the Final Rule go into effect on April 1, 2022. There were a few big changes, as well as several clarifications, and a few new limitations.
* One of the big highlights was the new ability for local governments to elect a standard allowance for revenue loss of $10 million, instead of having to prove lost revenue growth through a formula. For most local governments, this means that you can use **ALL** of the ARP monies for general government services. Of course, it is not quite that simple. There are detailed reporting requirements and all of the Uniform Guidance (UG) compliance obligations still apply to these funds.
* We all pay income tax. One way to look at the Standard Allowance for Revenue loss option is like the standard deduction with the IRS. As long as our tax deductions are less than the standard deduction, we do not have to provide documentation. The NCACC has strongly encouraged counties to take advantage of the Standard Allowance for Revenue Loss when possible.

**Uniform Guidance – Compliance Guidelines**

* February 14, 2022, email from Kara Millonzi, UNC School of Government ARP Lead:

“We learned this week that US Treasury is planning on putting out additional compliance guidance within the next month or so, focusing on procurement and potentially other Uniform Guidance issues. We continue to work on sample UG policies and will publish a few more by the end of February, but we will likely wait on the forthcoming Treasury guidance to finalize some of the sample policies.”

**Recommended Use of ARP Funds**

* Making investments in infrastructure represents one of the most likely paths to a lasting funding legacy. **Thus, the NC Municipal League encourages municipalities to consider investing ARP funds into water and wastewater infrastructure.** This recommendation is not made lightly. It is offered understanding both the constraints of the ARP and the realities of North Carolina’s existing infrastructure challenges.
* The best use of ARP funds for small to mid-size cities and counties - investments in projects that have long-term impacts on residents’ quality of life, create economic opportunity, and help solve infrastructure challenges.
* As previously discussed with the Board, staff’s primary recommendation for the ARP funds will be water projects and broadband.

**Next Steps**

* Continue to work with the Albemarle Commission and other resources to determine the most efficient and effective ways to use funding for Broadband.
* Pasquotank County’s first report on ARP expenditures is due on April 30, 2022.
* The report should indicate that we are using the standard allowance to the extent possible.
* Hold on spending any ARP funds and finalizing ARP Funding Plan until US Treasury’s guidance on compliance is issued and the UNC School of Government completes sample policies.

**7.**  **RESTRUCTURING THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:**

The County Attorney discussed ways Boards of Commissioners are generally restructured, and how Pasquotank County is the exception to the general rule. The County was sued in the mid 1980’s and as a result of the lawsuit, there is a Federal Consent Order. In addition, there was a Local Act of the General Assembly passed to establish the number of commissioners and districts. As a result, a minority majority district was formed. If the Board has a plan that fits into one of the statutory structures, the Board will need to adopt a resolution. To modify the structure of the Board, the Federal Consent Order will need to be amended. If the proposed plan does not fit the statutory structure, a local act would be needed.

Attorney Cox stated that Attorney Deborah Stagner, who specializes in election related issues, is participating via Zoom to answer any questions the Board may have. He noted that Attorney Stagner has helped the County in the last three redistricting processes.

Attorney Cox provided the following slide of current County Commissioner structures across North Carolina:

1. Commissioners nominated (in the primary) and elected at-large (pure at-large – no districts) – 39
2. Residence in district required, but typically nominated and elected at-large. (the whole county votes for each seat in the primary as well as the general) – 24
3. Combination of pure district and pure at-large seats – 16 (Pasquotank County)

4. Commissioners nominated (in the primary) and elected by district (pure district – single member) - 14

1. Limited voting plan (voters limited to casting fewer votes than the number of open seats for a given position) – 3
2. Combination of pure at-large seats and district-at-large seats (residency districts, elected at-large) – 2
3. Combination of limited voting and at-large seats – 1
4. Mixed – 1

Attorney Stagner stated that the Local Act sets the structure, so a change would be required to the Local Act through referendum, or potentially another Local Act.

Commissioner Perry said when he looks at the population in Pasquotank County (40% African American) he feels there should be more opportunities for African Americans to get elected. He understands that Mr. Jordan, Mr. Hugh Cale, and Ms. Bettie Parker got elected, but there is only one district out of seven where you have opportunity of choice for minorities. He would like to see another district created that would give at least two African Americans an opportunity. He said it is very difficult for the community to function when you can only have one African American elected.

Commissioner Overman said if the majority of voters that voted for Mr. Jordan, Mr. Cale, and Ms. Bettie were not African American then apparently they were voted on for their integrity and not their skin color. He said he certainly understands Commissioner Perry’s concerns of not having more African Americans at the table, but that does not discount the opportunity. When he ran against Mr. Jordan for their at-large seats, Mr. Jordan was the top vote getter and he was second. Granted, he had a lot of African Americans vote for him, as Mr. Jordan obviously had a lot of whites that voted for him. He looks at it different, because he taught his children that you vote for people of integrity, not for their color. He would not want someone to vote for him because he is white. This past year he voted with his heart, and he has had people of his own race ask him what his problem is. He said his response was I am a Christian and I vote ethically and morally. He stated that he votes for what is best for our community.

Commissioner Perry said there have only been four African Americans elected in the history of this county. Commissioner Overman asked how many have run. Commissioner Perry said there is a reason they do not run. Commissioner Overman said the ones that have run, did get elected by the whole county. Commissioner Perry stated that Ms. Una Green and Ms. Lenora Jarvis Mackey ran and were not elected. He feels it is very unfortunate that the Board does not create another district. Prior to the consent order there were only five commissioners on the Board. That was changed to seven. He asked why three at-large positions were created. He stated that they were created because there are more whites in the county than blacks. He said they were created to make sure there was a white majority. He feels if we are going to have an affective government, we need some of everybody at the table.

Commissioner Lavin thinks this is an interesting subject. He has run at-large as a white male and he did not win. He feels he did not win less based on his race, but based more on his political affiliation. Historically, those at-large positions have been dominated by wins on the Democratic ticket. He doesn’t believe redistricting to create an additional majority minority district can be done. He thinks it’s the wrong solution to that problem. He believes the problem is the engagement piece. Encouraging participation has merit. The City did a boot camp/training program. Anything we can do to engage people in government is a good thing. We can talk about the reasons why people don’t sign up to run, but again, he thinks redistricting to the point of trying to carve out another district is not in the people’s best interest, because it does not do anything to make it fair.

Commissioner Perry said all you have to do is add one district in Elizabeth City and eliminate one of the at-large positions. This will give another minority a better chance at winning.

Commissioner Meads said if that is done, the Board will have three representatives from the city. Commissioner Perry said yes. There would be three seats inside the city and four outside. It would create one additional majority minority district.

Vice-Chairman Jordan said he has mixed feelings about the whole thing. He thinks it would be great if another person of color is on the Board which is good and qualified. He isn’t clear how that would be done. He said he became a commissioner to represent all of the people of Pasquotank County. He has never been, and as a Christian, he will never be concerned about the color of someone’s skin. He wants to serve everyone. When it comes to the point that he can’t serve everyone and someone else wins the election, he will go home and watch the Cowboys and Gun Smoke. He has not been convinced on how it should be done.

Commissioner Perry said it is not his intent to say anything about race. He has a lot of white friends. He just wants it to be fair. He knows that involvement of all people brings about a better organization. He said he stayed here for twelve years being the only African American in the room. He said it is the Board’s responsibility to make sure it is different. Sometimes we forget that there are different options on things in our community.

Chairman Griffin said the actual census population is 35% African American and 10% other. He noted that over the last eight years, Bettie Parker and Charles Jordan both got elected at-large. He asked what the process would be to change the voting districts as they are today. Attorney Stagner said it would start with a resolution of the commissioners. It would need to go to a referendum, unless the County were to get a change passed through a local legislation by the General Assembly. The option of a referendum would require a notice and potentially approval of the court to change the consent order. In fact, local legislation would also likely require notice to the court and potential change to the consent order. She noted that it will be a multistep process either through a referendum or the General Assembly and the courts. She noted that the first step would be for the commissioners to adopt a resolution to start the process.

County Manager Hammett said if the Board wishes to look at restructuring, they need to direct staff to explore alternative board structures. Then, the Board will know what alternative structures could look like. Chairman Griffin said the Board can discuss this item further at the March 21st meeting.

**8. FY2022-23 GOALS:**

Mr. Hammett stated that staff will develop Goals from the Retreat sessions based on the information presented, and feedback from Commissioners during the presentations. He noted that some of the FY21-22 Goals were multi-year goals, and they will be continued for FY22-23. The draft FY22-23 Goals will be presented for discussion at the March 21st Finance Committee meeting. He asked each Commissioner what they would like for the County to accomplish in FY22-23.

Commissioner Meads noted that the Sheriff’s Office is in need of additional staff. Mr. Hammett stated that two deputies were added with COPS grants, two were added for courthouse security this year, and staff is requesting two additional deputes for courthouse security next year. He said he has had a good discussion with Sheriff Wooten, Chief Deputy Fogg, and Major Wallio regarding their needs. Next fiscal year, they would like to add an additional shift (four deputies).

He noted that staff is trying to add another Animal Control Officer as well for FY2022-23.

Commissioner Lavin said a lot of his goals in the past are moving forward such as utilities upgrades, purchase of the Pasquotank County portion of the South Mills Water Association, and the Northern/Newland Park. He said he shares Commissioners Meads’ concern with Sheriff’s Department staffing. He would like staff to look ahead at the hospital property once it is abandoned. Long term, he wants to make sure our staff is retained. Cost of living raises need to be looked at each year. He said we need to look ahead and be prepared for upcoming transitions. He thanked staff for considering the VFDs in the budget. Lastly, he wants to see the new COA Simulation Lab move forward.

Commissioner Jordan said he would like the momentum with the Drainage Committee to continue. He wants the County to continue to work with our lobbyist to find opportunities available in Raleigh that can help us out locally.

Commissioner Overman stated that he would like to see a long-term plan for school buildings and grounds. He agrees that public safety needs to be adequately staffed and compensated.

Commissioner Perry said he would like to find a way for more citizens/students to learn about local government, and the Board can learn what the needs of our community are. He believes that our schools are the best place to start. County Manager Hammett said one of the things we don’t do a good enough job of is informing citizens. Public information will be one of the roles of the new Assistant County Manager. Once that individual gets on board, he wants to do something that a lot of our larger counties do, which is to hold County 101 forums. Citizens that want to be informed can sign up. Key department directors will come in and tell them what they actually do, and give them information about the services that Pasquotank County provides. At our meetings, a lot of citizens ask, “can you do this or can you do that”, because they don’t realize it may be the City’s responsibility or DOTs responsibility. It is a good way to inform citizens. It’s also a good way to get people more engaged so they will apply for some of our boards and committees. Maybe they will become future City Council and Board of Commissioner members.

Commissioner Perry noted that a lot of jurisdictions have board members go into their local schools and educate them on what boards do and give them an opportunity to participate. He stated that a lot of citizens don’t participate because they think you have to have degrees to run for office. If they knew more, it would be very helpful.

Vice-Chairman Jordan recommended having a town hall meeting once a year.

The retreat was adjourned at 2:57 PM.

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CHAIRMAN

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CLERK TO THE BOARD