

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
APRIL 30, 2012**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a joint meeting with the City Council of Elizabeth City on Monday, April 30, 2012 in the Education Center at Albemarle Hospital.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lloyd E. Griffin, III, Chairman
Jeff Dixon, Vice-Chairman
Bill Trueblood
Cecil Perry
Dr. William R. Sterritt
Gary G. White
Joseph S. Winslow, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Randy Keaton, County Manager
Rodney Bunch, Assistant County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Sheri Small, Finance Officer
John Gregory, Water Superintendent
Karen Jennings, Clerk to the Board

Also present were members of the City Council, the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, and several city department heads. Chairman Griffin welcomed everyone and Commissioner Cecil Perry asked the blessing on the meal.

Chairman Griffin recognized Water Superintendent John Gregory who said he would like to serve the first drink of reverse osmosis water in Pasquotank County produced by the Pasquotank County Water System. He explained that this process began in 1997 and it has taken 15 years to get to this point. He poured everyone a glass of RO water and gave a toast.

Following dinner, the meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman Griffin and Mayor Peel. Chairman Griffin gave the invocation and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**1. PRESENTATION BY THE ELIZABETH CITY-PASQUOTANK COUNTY
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION:**

Chairman Griffin called on Dr. Kurt Hunsberger to give a presentation from the Community Relations Commission. Dr. Hunsberger introduced the members of the commission who were in attendance at the meeting. He said the commission was established in 2003 by Mayor John Bell and Chairman John Kitchen to conduct activities that would foster mutual respect and understanding among all people in the community. He stated that they were asked to study problems regarding discrimination and to encourage fair treatment of all citizens. They were also charged to create an atmosphere to promote amicable relations among all citizens using various means such as education, communication and corroboration with other organizations who have the same purpose. Dr. Hunsberger explained that they promote the equal treatment of all individuals and discourage any discrimination because of factors such as race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, family status, or veteran status. He advised that the commission is made up of eight members appointed by the Mayor and seven members appointed by the Chairman who serve a term of three years or less and the commission meets monthly in the Pasquotank County Courthouse. He outlined some of the projects the commission has completed over the years.

Mr. Hezekiah Brown reported on the Mediation Training Program that was held in January which resulted in eleven individuals now being qualified to mediate disputes in the community. He stated that the Stand Up for Children Program promotes reading comprehension for children in the community. He said 38 community leaders volunteered to participate in this program. He asked the Commissioners and City Councilors to consider joining them in this endeavor to help children learn to read.

Dr. Hunsberger advised that one thing the Community Relations Commission would like to do is to follow up on the Race Relations Study that was conducted in 2007 to see if there is any change.

Commissioner Cecil Perry stated that recently the Board of Commissioners was presented with a proposal to restructure the Board so that another minority can be elected. He said he would like to get some ideas and input from the Community Relations Commission as to whether they think the Board should be restructured and the importance of doing or not doing so. Dr. Hunsberger said they will work on this.

2. PRESENTATION ON NUTRITION PROGRAM:

Chairman Griffin called on Darlene Harrell with the Albemarle Commission Senior Nutrition Program. Ms. Harrell stated that she is the Nutrition Director for ten counties and has worked for 27 years with the commission in the area of senior nutrition. She asked the Commissioners and City Councilors if they would rather pay \$1,500 per year to keep a senior in their own home, or \$70,000 per year to house that senior in a nursing home. She stated that this is where the Senior Nutrition Program steps in to make a difference for that senior and helps keep them in their home as long as possible by offering them a nutritious meal. She explained that in Pasquotank County they serve 60 to 70 people each day in the congregate meal program at two sites. The congregate program is for those seniors who are mobile enough to get to a feeding site and have lunch. She said they also serve about 65 homebound seniors through their home-delivered meals program. She said they currently have 149 volunteers who deliver the meals. She pointed out that not only are these volunteers delivering a hot meal, they are also checking on a senior who might not have anyone else check on them. She said their funding comes from the federal government which sends it down to the state. The state in turn sends the funds to the counties through a Home and Community Care Block Grant. Their program gets \$54,915 for home-delivered meals and \$50,016 for congregate meals. Ms. Harrell said this is not nearly enough with the growing needs in Pasquotank County, therefore Pasquotank County gives them \$60,000 per year to keep the program going and to be able to reach everyone they need to reach. She explained that they also have a freezer meal program; an Ensure program for the frail elderly; a pet food program; and shelf stable meals for days they are closed, for holidays, or when hurricanes, snowstorms or other disasters strike. Ms. Harrell explained that they do not place a senior on their program unless they have permission from their doctor because they do not serve therapeutic meals. She said for many of these seniors this will be the only meal they will get during the day. She stated that the meal services are put out for bids every two years and the meals are currently prepared by Canteen Services in Currituck. The meals consist of a meat, two vegetables, bread, milk, margarine, and dessert daily. She added that some of their clients contribute toward the cost of their meals. Ms. Harrell gave a video presentation showing what typically happens in a client's home when a volunteer delivers a meal.

Ms. Harrell thanked the Board for allowing her to report on the nutrition programs. She said they need volunteers and she asked that anyone who is interested in volunteering get in touch with her.

3. PRESENTATION ON ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF NORTH CAROLINA AIRPORTS:

Mr. Scott Hinton, Manager of the Elizabeth City Regional Airport, presented the results of the 2012 Airport Economic Contributions Survey. He stated that this study was authored by the Institute for Transportation Research and Education at North Carolina State University at the request of the NC Department of Transportation, Division of Aviation. He said similar studies were completed in 1996 and 2006. He stated that the Airport Authority appreciates what it receives from both the city and the county annually and has always said it is an investment. He said to measure the contributions of the airports to the economy, four metrics were used: output or gross revenue of the airport; number of payroll employees and self-employed workers; employee compensation; and tax receipts of state and local governments. He pointed out that the total economic impact of the 72 public-owned airports in North Carolina is approximately \$25.8 billion and supports over 108,000 jobs. He said that 6% of the gross domestic product for the State of North Carolina is driven by airport activity. He reported that local property taxes accounted for \$276 million in revenue; business sales tax collections accounted for \$370 million; and corporate and personal taxes totaled \$114 million. Mr. Hinton provided a chart showing the employment contribution of the Elizabeth City Regional Airport at a total of 510, including direct, indirect, and induced employment. He provided comparative figures for the Elizabeth

City Regional Airport for 2006 as well as for the Dare County Regional Airport, the Currituck County Regional Airport, and the Northeastern Regional Airport. He referred to another chart showing income contributions totaling \$22,000,000 for the Elizabeth City Regional Airport compared to \$745,110 in 2006. By comparison, Dare County Regional Airport had a total income contribution of \$1,940,000; Currituck Regional Airport, \$2,160,000; and Northeastern Regional Airport, \$20,000. The tax contribution of the Elizabeth City Regional Airport, including business sales tax; local property tax; state, corporate and personal tax; and based aircraft property tax totaled \$2,025,000 in the 2012 study. The total annual economic output of the airport totaled \$144,010,000 in the local community compared to \$17,405,300 in 2006 before the airport expansion. Mr. Hinton noted that from 2006 to 2012 there was a 700% increase in the economic output at the Elizabeth City Regional Airport which was the greatest increase of any airport in the state.

4. DISCUSSION REGARDING OVER-WIDTH FARM EQUIPMENT BEING DRIVEN ON CONTROLLED ACCESS HIGHWAYS:

Chairman Griffin explained that the General Assembly in 2008 passed legislation that increased the allowable width of farm equipment on North Carolina roads from 18 feet to 25 feet. The legislation also prohibited the farm equipment from fully controlled access highways. Chairman Griffin introduced Al Wood, Agricultural Extension Agent, to discuss the restrictions on the movement of large farm equipment along the U.S. 17 Bypass and the problems it is causing for farmers when transporting large farm equipment from one area of the county to another. He said Chowan County has passed a resolution requesting that the General Assembly allow over-width farm equipment on controlled access highways.

Mr. Wood said the legislation prohibits large farm equipment from fully controlled access highways which in Pasquotank County is the U.S. 17 Bypass. He explained that as many as 15 growers are affected by this legislation which has been in place for awhile, but has only recently been enforced. He said some of these growers are from the Weeksville area who also farm in another part of the county, and some are from the Newland area who also farm in the southern area of the county. He stated as these farmers go about their tasks to take care of their crops they make a number of trips on the highways. These farmers who use the bypass could make as many as seven to nine trips a season. Mr. Wood said if they cannot use the bypass, they will have to use other roads which are much more congested than the bypass. He presented a map of the county showing the U.S. 17 Bypass and the routes that farmers have been taking to move their equipment by way of the bypass. If they are not allowed to travel on the bypass, they will have to use Hughes Boulevard which has curbing. If there are breakdowns or if the farm equipment travels the highway during busy traffic times, it will result in traffic backups because the equipment will not be able to pull over and allow traffic to pass. Chairman Griffin said with the Camden County bridge construction and the future Knobbs Creek bridge replacement, it will only compound traffic congestion if there is slow moving farm equipment in these areas.

Commissioner Bill Trueblood stated that it is hoped the law can be relaxed. He asked that the Board of Commissioners agree to adopt a resolution to be forwarded to legislators requesting that the law be repealed so this equipment can be allowed on the bypass. He noted that if several pieces of farm equipment are moving from the southern area of the county to South Mills at 7:00 AM along Hughes Boulevard crossing Knobbs Creek Drive going toward the west side of Elizabeth City, the effect on traffic will be unimaginable.

Motion was made by Bill Trueblood, seconded by Joe Winslow to adopt a resolution requesting the General Assembly to allow over-width farm equipment to be safely driven on controlled access highways. The motion carried unanimously and the following resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CHANGING THE GENERAL STATUTES TO ALLOW OVER-WIDTH FARM EQUIPMENT TO BE SAFELY DRIVEN ON CONTROLLED ACCESS HIGHWAYS

WHEREAS, in 2008, the General Assembly of North Carolina passed Senate Bill 1965 (Session Law 2008-211); and

WHEREAS, this bill increased the allowable width of farm equipment on North Carolina roads from 18 to 25 feet; and

WHEREAS, along with the width increase, an additional restriction was enacted that prohibited this farm equipment from fully controlled access highways; and

WHEREAS, this additional restriction placed an unforeseen hardship on farmers who need to move equipment from one farm to another; and

WHEREAS, farmers are running out of viable options to move equipment; and

WHEREAS, this restriction will lead to increased over-width traffic on U.S. 17 Business alternate through the City of Elizabeth City and other roads including North Road Street where curb and gutters will prevent this equipment from allowing traffic to pass; and

WHEREAS, U.S. 17 Bypass will allow such equipment to be safely moved through our county in the safest manner possible without increased safety concerns to county citizens; and

WHEREAS, farm organizations in the state are working with the N.C. Department of Agriculture to develop language that would allow farmers to drive their equipment on controlled access highways in the safest manner possible; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners hereby encourages our North Carolina General Assembly to allow over-width farm equipment to be safely driven on fully controlled access highways.

APPROVED this 30th day of April, 2012.

County Manager Randy Keaton explained that one of the concerns regarding the over-width farm equipment on the bypass is that the speed limit is 70 miles per hour. He stated that Chowan County has proposed that if the equipment is allowed on the bypass that it be required to have a vehicle in front or behind it. Farmer Kevin Brickhouse said this is in the law as it currently stands. He said the main concern is getting the farm equipment traffic out of town. Mr. Wood stated that requiring an escort vehicle might be a compromise.

Mayor Peel said the City Council will put this resolution on the agenda for its next meeting.

5. APPROVAL OF INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

The two governing bodies considered the final drafts of interlocal agreements for Central Communications and Emergency Management proposed by a joint city-county committee. Councilman Tony Stimatz explained that the 911 Communications Agreement and Emergency Management Agreement clarify exactly what services are being provided and what exactly is being paid for by each party to the agreement. He said overall it is a workable document.

Motion was made by Joe Winslow, seconded by Bill Trueblood to approve the Interlocal Agreement for 9-1-1 Communications and Dispatch Services. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Bill Trueblood, seconded by Cecil Perry to approve the Interlocal Agreement for Emergency Management Coordination Services. The motion carried unanimously.

The City Council also unanimously approved the two interlocal agreements.

6. CRIMINAL JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM:

Chairman Griffin asked the County Manager to explain an issue regarding the Criminal Justice Partnership Program that will have a big impact on the county and the city. Mr. Keaton explained that the Criminal Justice Partnership Program is a state grant that is funneled through the county. Locally it is called Offender Referral Services and serves seven counties. Mr. Keaton stated that the program provides substance abuse counseling and other counseling services. He said if someone is sentenced to jail they can have their sentence suspended as long as they complete a program through Offender Referral Services. If the individual completes the program, they do not have to go to prison, so it keeps a lot of low level offenders out of the

correctional system which saves money for everyone. The program has been operating for the last fifteen years or more and in the past the county had to actually apply for the grant. Michael Furey has been operating the program for almost the entire time and originally the program was a certified program. Mr. Keaton stated that about five years ago the state told Mr. Furey the program did not need to be certified because it was a county operated program. He said this year the grant process was changed to an RFP and it now requires certification. He stated that there is not enough time for the Offender Referral Services to get recertified so they can submit their RFP. He noted that there are a lot of counties in this same situation. He said if the program cannot get recertified and no one steps forward to run the program, it will have to fold and a lot of its clients will end up going to jail. Mr. Keaton stated that he has been working through this process the last couple of weeks and has sent information to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. He said this is a statewide problem and the RFP process was not handled very well. He stated that he does not believe anyone in the state has submitted an RFP. He said a large area of the state will be unserved if a change is not made.

7. COMMENTS FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND CITY COUNCILORS:

Chairman Griffin asked for comments from County Commissioners and City Councilors. Councilman Ray Donnelly reminded everyone that the Potato Festival will be held on May 19 and he invited Commissioners to volunteer to help and to participate in the Potato Peeling Contest.

Councilman Johnnie Walton stated that he hopes the Community Relations Commission can bring back some more options for restructuring the Board of Commissioners to enable more than one minority to be elected to the Board.

Mayor Peel thanked the Board of Commissioners for hosting tonight's meeting. He stated that he saw in the newspaper that the county plans to move ahead with the 1/4¢ sales tax and the City Council would like to support the Board in its endeavor. He said now that the interlocal agreements have been finalized, maybe a topic of conversation at one of the next joint meetings could be the sales tax distribution formula.

Chairman Griffin stated that tonight everyone has seen how their tax dollars are working. He said the grant application for renovations to the former Elizabeth City Middle School has not been discussed and hopefully there will be an update on the status of that grant at the next joint meeting. City Manager Rich Olson noted that the grant application was submitted last Friday. Chairman Griffin thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting.

Motion was made by Bill Trueblood, seconded by Jeff Dixon to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.

CHAIRMAN

Karen J. [Signature]
CLERK TO THE BOARD