

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
MAY 16, 2022**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a regular meeting on Monday, May 16, 2022 in Courtroom C in the Pasquotank County Courthouse.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lloyd E. Griffin, III, Chairman
Charles H. Jordan, Vice-Chairman
Cecil Perry
William “Bill” Sterritt
Barry Overman
Sean Lavin
Jonathan Meads

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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. Commissioner Barry Overman gave the invocation and Commissioner Jonathan Meads led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Chairman Griffin welcomed those in attendance.

1. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

Vice-Chairman Charles Jordan requested that the agenda be amended to add the following items recommended by the Finance Committee to the Consent Agenda: 1) Approval of request for ECPPS to Reallocate Capital Funds; 2) Approval of request for Occupancy Tax Funds for Signage; and 3) Adoption of Bear Drug Lease Resolution and Settlement Agreement, and to add the following item to Public Comments/Public Hearing: 4) Continuation of Board of Equalization and Review.

Motion was made by Charles Jordan, seconded by Barry Overman to amend the agenda to add Items #1-3 to the Consent Agenda, and Item #4 to Public Comments/Public Hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

2. VISIT ELIZABETH CITY ANNUAL REPORT:

Chairman Griffin called on Corrina Ruffieux, Executive Director of Visit Elizabeth City, to provide the Board with the Visit Elizabeth City 2021 Annual Report. Ms. Ruffieux said she is here to talk about what Visit Elizabeth City accomplished in calendar year 2021.

Ms. Ruffieux said they had a very busy year. They went into 2021 thinking COVID was going to go away. They had just come off the heels of some really amazing successes and during the winter of 2020 they were seeking new agencies to partner with. COVID did not go away, it kept surging, which completely impacted the travel industry. Then, on April 21st, there was the death of Andrew Brown, Jr. in our community, which completely put us in the national spotlight overnight. It changed the way they were able to tell the story of our community. They stopped advertising several months at the time, because it was difficult to tell a positive story when the news media was documenting the case day by day. That being said, they had a pretty amazing year.

For two and a half years, Visit Elizabeth City staff and board members worked to update and modernize the organization’s policies, procedures, and programs, leveling them up to meet rigorous standards as part of the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP). DMAP is an independent global accreditation body and the leader in defining quality and performance standards in destination management. In May 2021, Visit Elizabeth City joined the ranks of only 185 fellow global organizations, attaining a significant measure of excellence as a top DMO.

In partnership with the City, County, ECDI, Chamber, and Economic Development, they engaged a wayfinding consultant to conduct research, write a plan and design our signs and ultimately engaged a firm to manufacture and install 51 different signs and a beautiful new visitor information kiosk. The signage directs visitors and locals to points of interest around

the City and County and points out the all-important public parking. She said this collaborative project will continue to play a major role in beautification of our community and provide ongoing business support and economic impact for years to come.

Another collaboration project they completed in 2021 was the launch of the African American Experience of Northeast North Carolina. It was produced in collaboration with their five neighboring counties and tourism authorities. They all put money in the pot to build a cohesive digital trail that tells the amazing, rich black history of Northeastern North Carolina. She is super proud to share that they won a gold marketing achievement award at the 2021 NC Travel Industry Association Conference for that project.

2021 was the first ever virtual Coast Guard Marathon. It was supposed to be in person, but they had to reschedule. They had to make the hard decision to hold the event virtually. In hindsight, that was an amazingly good decision, because it got the name Elizabeth City literally in all 50 states and on four different continents, which is a first for this community. They built a database of over 11,000 participants, which allowed them to set up for success this year.

Ms. Ruffieux stated that Visit Elizabeth City also continued quite a few of their regular destination marketing campaigns that are their way of getting the word out about why people may want to come to Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County. This was their third year doing Christmas in Elizabeth City. It is a umbrella campaign that promotes the entire destination as an affordable, charming holiday experience, which provides a solid marketing platform for all their partner businesses and events. New for 2021, they launched the Hot Cocoa Crawl. In November, they launched Weddings in Elizabeth City, again as an umbrella campaign to promote those businesses and venues that can host weddings in our community. She said they also had a Summer Savings Pass, with a hyper focus on driving traffic to local businesses.

Visit Elizabeth City created a suite of new logos, which may not seem like a big deal, but over time the brand equity that they will build with a suite of logos that all look the same and feel the same will allow them to reinforce that every campaign they do is building on itself. They were able to partner again with MMGY NJF. They are an award winning public relations agency. She thanked the Board and staff. Because of their partnership in 2020, with some COVID money they were able to see how amazingly well working with them helps our community. They have now entered into an annual contract with them. The result of that contract, between the Hot Cocoa Crawl and the News Bureau, they earned 26 media placements, over 380,942,596 media impressions, and \$7,565,569 in advertising equivalency. Elizabeth City events were published in Forbes and Southern Living magazines.

Ms. Ruffieux said everything they do ultimately goes to VisitElizabethCity.com. That is a website that they host and manage every day. It is their way of measuring if they are doing a good job and if they are driving more visitors to the site. More visitors to the website will ultimately translate to more visitors coming to the destination. Total visits to the website increase by 54% to 235,353. Page views increased 176.12% to 834,683. The fact that more people are consuming more content on their site is a good thing. North Carolina and Virginia are by far the biggest state of origin. There is also steady growth in the total of unique website visits.

Social media continues to be a large part of their overall marketing efforts. To reach their various audiences with targeting messages; they manage a Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for Visit Elizabeth City's travel and leisure audience, as well as a Facebook and Instagram for the Coast Guard Marathon fans, and a Facebook page geared towards Elizabeth City business owners and community partners. In 2021, they grew those channels by over 26,061 followers.

In 2020, even with COVID, visitors spent over \$56,200,000 in Elizabeth City. They are anticipating the 2021 numbers this fall. \$21.8 million was spent on food and beverage, \$12 million was spent on lodging, \$10.8 million was spent on transportation, \$6 million was spent on recreation, and \$5.7 million was spent on retail. What that means from a county perspective is 507 jobs annually, tax relief of \$120 per household, local taxes of \$2.1 million, and \$2.7 million in state taxes. She noted that all of that is funded by visitors.

Visit Elizabeth City is funded solely by occupancy tax collections paid for by visitors who spend the night in one of our lodging properties, whether hotel, B&B or short-term rental. When a visitor spends the night in one of our lodging properties they pay a 6% tax and that is what goes into the Visit Elizabeth City fund. 2021 was a record breaking year for occupancy

tax. A lot of that is due to the fact that we are small community and people like coming to small communities. The majority of our occupancy tax comes from hotels and motels; however, it's worth noting the steady growth in B&B and short-term rentals expanded significantly this year showing 194% growth from 2020 to 2021. This growth shows the importance of alternative accommodations to the destination, and attests to our visitors' desires for more flexibility in lodging selections.

Ms. Ruffieux stated that 2020 and 2021 will undoubtedly be years we will never forget. After what was essentially a two-year pause in traditional destination management and marketing, they are beginning to ramp back up. Looking ahead for 2022, they recommend moving forward on the following important projects:

- Prioritize their important diversity, equity and inclusion work with Melissa Majors Consulting and weave inclusion into everything they do.
- Invest the time required to implement a full evaluation of the Tourism 2019 Strategic Plan, acknowledging accomplishments and making revisions to adapt and adopt a new, 2022 Strategic Plan.
- Continue to build on and expand successful campaigns including Christmas in Elizabeth City, Weddings in Elizabeth City and "What's New" content.
- Leverage all available research in addition to experience offered by the teams of their agency partners, capitalizing marketing campaigns for maximum return on investment.
- Working in collaboration with the City, County, and other community partners, considering additional destination development projects so they can continue to offer new and diverse experiences to visitors and locals.

Commissioner Overman said to look at the things that Ms. Ruffieux and her staff do every month is amazing. The Coast Guard event alone was a very big deal. He can't wait to see what that event does next year. He noted that their staff is very creative and professional.

Commissioners Sterritt and Meads thanked Ms. Ruffieux for her excellent report.

Commissioner Perry said when he first met Ms. Ruffieux he told her that his cousin is the Tourism Director in Hampton, Virginia. His cousin contacted him in the past to tell him that we should be doing some of the things that they are doing there. He is very proud of the work Ms. Ruffieux has done for our community, including inclusion. He is excited to send the brochure to his cousin to show her what we are doing in Elizabeth City now.

Commissioner Lavin said he appreciates the job that Ms. Ruffieux is doing for our community. Her work and passion comes through.

Chairman Griffin and Vice-Chairman Jordan thanked her for all her hard work and her excellent presentation.

3. BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW:

The Clerk swore in the members of the Board of Commissioners to serve as the Board of Equalization and Review for 2022. Chairman Griffin reconvened the Board of Equalization and Review for 2022 and asked if there were any appeals to be heard. Tax Administrator Patrice Stewart stated that there are no appeals to be heard at this time; however, they do have some unresolved appeals. She asked that the Board of E&R recess until June 6th and reconvene at that time. If there are no appeals at that time, the Board of E&R can adjourn for the year.

Motion was made by Barry Overman, seconded by Sean Lavin to recess the Board of Equalization and Review for 2022 until Monday, June 6, 2022 at 6:00 PM. The motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

The Board considered the following consent agenda:

a. *Approval of Minutes of May 2, 2022 Commissioner Meeting*

b. *Approval of Budget Amendments*

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the following budget amendments:

Retirement

Decrease	010.4195.5182.00	Retirement	52,550.00
Increase	010.4120.5182.00	Retirement-Manager's Office	3,000.00
Increase	010.4125.5182.00	Retirement-Personnel	1,300.00
Increase	010.4130.5182.00	Retirement-Finance	2,500.00
Increase	010.4135.5182.00	Retirement-IT	2,500.00
Increase	010.4140.5182.00	Retirement-Tax	1,900.00
Increase	010.4150.5182.00	Retirement-Attorney's Office	3,500.00
Increase	010.4170.5182.00	Retirement-Elections	2,300.00
Increase	010.4180.5182.00	Retirement-Register of Deeds	1,400.00
Increase	010.4190.5182.00	Retirement-Maintenance	8,800.00
Increase	010.4192.5182.00	Retirement-DSS/ARHS	150.00
Increase	010.4325.5182.00	Retirement-Central	18,000.00
Increase	010.4380.5182.00	Retirement-Animal Control	400.00
Increase	010.4910.5182.00	Retirement-Planning	3,600.00
Increase	010.4915.5182.00	Retirement-GIS	4,300.00

Health Insurance

Decrease	010.4195.5182.00	Retirement	40,900.00
Increase	010.4125.5183.00	Health Insurance-Personnel	900.00
Increase	010.4135.5183.00	Health Insurance-IT	900.00
Increase	010.4140.5183.00	Health Insurance-Tax	4,000.00
Increase	010.4150.5183.00	Health Insurance-Co Attorney	900.00
Increase	010.4170.5183.00	Health Insurance-Elections	8,100.00
Increase	010.4180.5183.00	Health Insurance-RODs	1,800.00
Increase	010.4190.5183.00	Health Insurance-Maintenance	2,500.00
Increase	010.4192.5183.00	Health Insurance-DSS/ARHS	900.00
Increase	010.4310.5183.00	Health Insurance-Sheriff's Office	3,000.00
Increase	010.4325.5183.00	Health Insurance-Central	10,300.00
Increase	010.4330.5183.00	Health Insurance-EM	900.00
Increase	010.4350.5183.00	Health Insurance-Inspections	900.00
Increase	010.4380.5183.00	Health Insurance-Animal Control	900.00
Increase	010.4910.5183.00	Health Insurance-Planning	500.00
Increase	010.4915.5183.00	Health Insurance-GIS	900.00
Increase	010.4950.5183.00	Health Insurance-Ag Ext	3,000.00
Increase	010.4960.5183.00	Health Insurance-Soil & Water	500.00

Juvenile Services

Decrease	010.4195.5182.00	Retirement	100,000.00
Increase	010.4320.5362.00	Juvenile Services	100,000.00

c. Approval to Donate EMS Equipment to College of the Albemarle

The Finance Committee has recommended approval to donate the following items to the College of the Albemarle:

- Power-Pro Stretcher (07054017)
- Power-Pro Stretcher (060540046)

d. Approval of Request for ECPPS to Reallocate Capital Funds

The Finance Committee has recommended approval of a request from ECPPS to reallocate a total of \$266,161.21 of ECPPS Capital Funds to use for Parking Lot Paving Projects.

e. Approval of Request for Occupancy Tax Funds for Signage

The Finance Committee has recommended approval for Parks and Recreation to request \$2,750 from Occupancy Tax Funds to install four additional signs at Dog Corner Park, Charles Creek Park, Coast Guard Park, and Moth Boat Park which would link all of the waterfront parks to the Wayfinding Plan. The TDA has already approved \$2,750 of funding from the City's Tourism Funds. If approved, the application requires a letter of support from the County.

f. Adoption of Bear Drug Lease Resolution and Settlement Agreement

When the "Kitty Hawk" property was released from the lease with Sentara, there was an existing sublease between Sentara and Bear Drugs that could have extended the lease for a number of years (until May 31, 2030). The County and Bear Drugs have reached an agreement

whereby Bear will remain in possession of a portion of the property for up to 18 months after approval of a new lease. The basic terms of the agreement provide Bear with a credit of \$100,000 in lease payments and then a monthly rent and maintenance fee after the credit has been used. The Finance Committee has recommended approval of the Settlement Agreement and the following Lease Resolution:

**RESOLUTION APPROVING LEASE
WITH BEAR DRUGS, INC.**

WHEREAS, Pasquotank County (“County”) owns a parcel commonly referred to as the “Regional Medical Center Building” located at 5200 North Croatan Highway, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Bear Drugs, Inc. wishes to lease Tenant Suites 10 and 11 of the Regional Medical Services Building; and

WHEREAS, the County has determined the property will not be needed during the term of the lease; and

WHEREAS, the County and Bear Drugs, Inc. have agreed to enter into a lease beginning June 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023 or, thirty (30) days after the certificate of occupancy is issued for a new structure that is to be constructed by Essay, LLC upon Lot 2, Section C, Kitty Hawk Beach Subdivision whichever occurs first. If the structure is to be built upon Lot 2, Section C, Kitty Hawk Beach Subdivision, has not received a certificate of occupancy by October 31, 2023, then effective as of December 1, 2023, this Lease shall become a month to month Lease, which either party shall have the right to terminate upon thirty (30) days’ written notice.

WHEREAS, in exchange for the promises and covenants contained in the lease the rent shall be as follows: Bear Drugs’ first month’s rental payment shall be \$11,898.27 and thereafter \$5,827.74. In addition to the monthly rent, tenant shall pay \$794.45 monthly for its proportional share of maintenance expenses; and

WHEREAS, NCGS §160A-272 authorizes the County to enter into leases after following the necessary requirements;

**THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF PASQUOTANK COUNTY
RESOLVES THAT:**

The Board of Commissioners hereby approves the Lease with Bear Drugs, Inc. as described hereinabove and on terms as described in the lease and directs the Chairman to execute any instruments necessary to secure the lease.

ADOPTED this 16th day of May, 2022.

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

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Sterritt reported that the Dangerous Dog Committee met this past Friday. There was one case before the committee. He met with the Community Relations Commission. The members are very anxious for the conversion to the start. Mr. Hammett said he spoke with Mr. Troy the beginning of last week. He is reviewing the bylaws of the CRC, and is supposed to get back to him by the end of this month to start setting up an orientation and training for the new Human Relations Commission members. Commissioner Sterritt said the CRC will be holding their annual Witherspoon Harris Awards Ceremony on Friday night at 6:00 PM.

Commissioner Sterritt attended the monthly SPCA meeting. He noted that they have some new, younger people serving on the Board. Their most recent fundraiser event was the Paws for Cause, which raised \$8,500. They have a good board and they continue to work hard.

Commissioner Meads stated that he has not had any meetings during the past two weeks, but looks forward to some he has coming up.

Commissioner Perry attended the Jail Board meeting. He said they will not be asking for additional funding during the budget process, as was previously thought. They are several employees short. He also attended the Health Board meeting. The Health Department is doing well as far as COVID cases, which sounds very promising.

Commissioner Overman said he has not attended any meeting since the Board's last meeting.

Commissioner Lavin said he has no committee reports at this time.

Vice-Chairman Jordan attended the NCACC District meeting for County Commissioners in Chowan County. A couple state legislators were in attendance. He was able to network with other Commissioners, and attended a dinner with Representative Steinburg.

Vice-Chairman Jordan said the newly created Parks and Recreation Board is moving along nicely and it is working out very well. He attended the Northern Regional Advisory Board and the Governing Board meetings for Trillium. They discussed who handles foster care. Currently, it is handled by Trillium and various organizations like Trillium, but the state is looking at having one entity handling all the foster care. Trillium is very concerned. He said there may be a resolution for the Board's consideration forthcoming. Additionally, he attended the Jail Board meeting.

Chairman Griffin said it has been a very busy month. The budget is complete and the revenue neutral tax rate has been lowered from .77¢ to .62¢, which is very positive.

Commissioner Overman asked the Board to keep Austin Simpson, who is the officer in charge of security at the courthouse, in their prayers as he and his family navigates his recent cancer diagnosis.

Vice-Chairman Jordan said we also need to remember Doug Lane's family. Mr. Lane recently passed. He stated that whether you are in agreement with Mr. Lane or not, he was very dedicated about his feeling on hunting with dogs.

There being nothing further to come before the Board;

Motion was made by Jonathan Meads, seconded by Sean Lavin to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 PM.

CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO THE BOARD