

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 6, 2014**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a work session on Monday, October 6, 2014 in the Community Room at the Pasquotank County Library.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rodney Bunch, County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Sheri Small, Finance Officer
Karen Jennings, Clerk to the Board

The work session was called to order at 2:35 PM by Chairman Jeff Dixon. Chairman Dixon said the purpose of today's work session is to address some questions that were asked a couple of meetings ago.

County Manager Rodney Bunch passed out a list of topics that he had been asked to address and discussion was held on the items as follows:

1. GRANTS:

Mr. Bunch said this is something that has been mentioned at multiple meetings and it has been discussed to possibly hire someone who does grant writing. He stated that this would be an expense to the county that might not be feasible at this time because the county is not currently going after enough grants to pay someone. The Board discussed the possibility of hiring a grant writer with their fee based on a certain percentage of the grants obtained. The Board also discussed the possibility of someone in-house doing grant writing. It was noted that several county departments have been very successful at writing their own grants, such as the Solid Waste Department, Emergency Management Department, and Sheriff's Department.

Vice-Chairman Joe Winslow stated that he knows each department has people who write grants and he would not want to change that. He said he was hoping to keep grant writing within certain departments, but to also have someone on a broader scale advise the county as to grants it might be missing or might not be aware of. He stated that people who deal with grants all the time might be able to help the county in certain areas. He said if they could help obtain a grant the county would not have gotten otherwise, it would be worth the 4% or 5% fee they would be paid. It was suggested that the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners could possibly provide assistance.

Chairman Dixon noted that for many grants a local match is required and it would be necessary to determine that a project requiring a local match is critical before applying for that grant.

Vice-Chairman Winslow said it seems like a lot of other communities in the area are receiving grants and he would like to make sure that Pasquotank County is getting a fair chance at any grants available.

Mr. Bunch stated that there is nothing wrong with trying to get all available grant funds to help with county projects. He said he knows of a company that does something similar to what Vice-Chairman Winslow has mentioned and he can contact the company and see what kind of assistance they can provide. He noted that a lot of county departments are regularly writing grants and he would not want an outside grant writer the county might hire to duplicate what a county department is already doing.

Vice-Chairman Winslow stated that his intent is to do what the county is doing now, however there may be an additional amount of funding somewhere else the county might not be aware of. He said Pasquotank County is in a Tier I area and there are all kinds of federal funding for a lot of things in the Tier I area and he does not understand why Northeastern North Carolina, specifically Pasquotank County with its economic problems, is not getting more attention with regard to grants.

County Attorney Mike Cox noted that the county has received significant grants from the Rural Center in the past for projects such as the U.S. 17 sewer line. Mr. Bunch added that the county is not currently doing those types of projects so these grants are not being applied for.

Mr. Bunch stated that the Rural Center is having a conference on October 30 that he and Planning Director Shelley Cox will be attending.

Commissioner Perry pointed out that most grant writers think outside the box and also know all of the ins and outs of writing a grant.

Commissioner Sterritt said from his viewpoint the Board needs to go forward on this and find out the possibilities.

Commissioner Meads stated that the fire department coordinator writes grants for the volunteer fire departments and almost all of them have been approved and that does not need to be changed, however the county is missing some grants.

Chairman Dixon asked that staff work on this issue and bring information back to the Board.

2. WHEN TO HIRE AN ENGINEER:

County Attorney Mike Cox reviewed the statute that outlines the requirements as to when an engineer must be hired. He said the law requires an architect or engineer be hired for structural repairs or new construction when the cost is \$135,000 or above, for non-structural work \$300,000 and above, and for repair work involving life safety systems \$100,000 and above. He stated however that the county could hire an engineer anytime it wants to.

Chairman Dixon stated that a question had been asked regarding whether there should be a dollar amount on a project before the Board is required to have an engineer. He said the Sawmill Park project was mentioned and a question was asked whether the project was too small for the county to hire an engineer at a cost of \$5,000. He asked if the county should set some kind of policy regarding hiring an engineer on projects below the statute requirement.

Mr. Cox said this may be something the Board would want to do on a case by case basis. Mr. Bunch pointed out that for the Sawmill Park project drawings were required in order for the Building Inspector to issue a building permit and inspect the work. He explained that the Recreation Advisory Committee had already begun this project when it was turned over to the county.

Commissioner Sterritt stated that in his viewpoint the biggest thing that needs to be considered in doing these types of projects is safety and liability.

Mr. Bunch said when a project is being considered before moving forward staff will report to the Board that the project is getting started and how it is proposed to be handled.

3. SERVICE CONTRACTS:

Mr. Cox explained that the law breaks down the requirements for bidding types of contracts. He stated that purchase of apparatus, supplies, materials, and equipment requires formal bids if the estimated cost is \$90,000 or above. Formal bids are required for construction and repair contracts if the estimated cost is \$500,000 or above. Informal bids are required for construction or repair contracts estimated at \$30,000 to \$500,000, and for purchase of apparatus, supplies, materials, and equipment estimated at \$30,000 to \$90,000. Mr. Cox stated that service contracts are normally distinguished from purchase contracts in that they call for a personal performance of work rather than delivery of a tangible item. Examples of service contracts include contracts for legal services, banking services, auditors, and recycling and solid waste collection and disposal. Mr. Cox stated that service contracts are not specifically defined in the law and there is no formal or informal limit. He noted that the county typically does requests for proposals for some things that are not required by law, such as grass-cutting and banking.

Commissioner Meads said he would like for the county to have a policy on the amount of a service contract before it is offered to ensure it is offered to more than one individual.

Vice-Chairman Winslow suggested that the county obtain informal bids every chance it has, even when it is not required.

Mr. Bunch explained that there are times when it would be difficult to obtain more than one bid for a project due to limited expertise. He provided an example of testing for methane gas at the landfill. Mr. Cox added that sometimes a project is time-sensitive and it would not be feasible to obtain bids.

After further discussion, the Board suggested that staff research this issue and come back with a recommendation.

4. TRUCK LOGS:

Chairman Dixon stated that there has been some conversation about the use of truck logs either by tracking mileage or through the use of GPS. Mr. Bunch reviewed a sheet outlining how county departments with a large number of vehicles maintain records of service and repairs. He noted that the departments do not keep mileage logs.

Commissioner Meads asked if the transfer trucks do not have any mileage, time or fuel logs. He said he understands that the garages that perform the service can keep a log of the vehicles. Mr. Bunch said the garages do have a record of the service and the invoice includes the vehicle mileage. He stated that fuel for the trucks and for EMS vehicles is obtained at the county's biodiesel facility. If the vehicles are out of town a credit card is used to purchase fuel. Drivers of vehicles who use the biodiesel fuel have to log in with a personal ID number, but they do not have to input the mileage. Ms. Small advised that there is a record of how many gallons each vehicle uses and the Finance Office reviews the invoices and would notice if there were a spike in usage for any vehicles. Members of the Board noted that gas mileage can vary greatly depending on the size of the load and other variables, such as idling time. Commissioner Meads stated that he believes the Board needs to look at tighter controls with regard to the fuel.

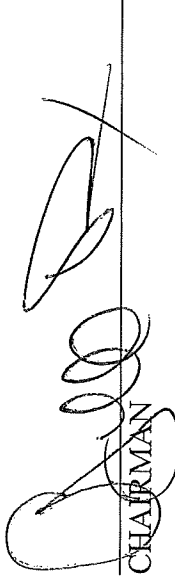
The Board suggested that staff meet with the heavy fuel users to see what can be done to ensure better security on fuel purchases.

5. PURCHASE OF VEHICLES:

Mr. Bunch said it has been asked who determines when vehicles are purchased. He explained that normally if a committee is in place for a department, such as EMS or Solid Waste, it will review and help decide on the purchase of a vehicle before it is carried forward. He said: whenever there is a purchase of a new vehicle, it is always included in the budget request that comes to the Board at budget time.

Chairman Dixon asked for a motion to adjourn the work session.

Motion was made by Gary White, seconded by Lloyd Griffin to adjourn the work session. The motion carried and the work session was adjourned at 3:45 PM.


CHAIRMAN


CLERK TO THE BOARD