

PERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

JANUARY 19, 2021
OTHERS PRESENT

Gordon Powell
Kyle W. Puryear
C. Derrick Sims
Charlie Palmer
Patricia Gentry

Heidi York, County Manager
Brenda B. Reaves, Clerk to the Board
C. Ronald Aycock, County Attorney

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Person, North Carolina, met in regular session on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 9:00am in the Person County Office Building Auditorium.

Chairman Powell called the meeting to order. Commissioner Sims offered an invocation and Vice Chairman Puryear led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

County Attorney, Ron Aycock attended the meeting remotely.

DISCUSSION/ADJUSTMENT/APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Puryear and **carried 5-0** to approve the agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING:

REQUEST TO ADD PINE LN, A PRIVATE ROADWAY, TO THE DATABASE OF ROADWAY NAMES USED FOR E-911 DISPATCHING:

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Sims and **carried 5-0** to open the duly advertised public hearing for a request to add Pine Ln, a private roadway, to the database of roadway names used for E-911 dispatching.

Sallie Vaughn, GIS Manager presented a request to the Board to add Pine Ln, a private roadway, to the database of roadway names used for E-911 dispatching. Ms. Vaughn stated one residence was planned to be added along a private driveway that serves two occupied and three unoccupied residences, which necessitates the naming of the driveway.

Ms. Vaughn noted that two private residences (1199 and 1201 Allensville Rd) are currently located on a private driveway next to 1189 Allensville Rd. There are also three unoccupied and not-addressed residences on the same driveway. An additional private residence is being added to this driveway and in accordance with Article IV, Section 402 H of the “Ordinance Regulating Addresses and Road Naming in Person County,” the driveway must be named. The addition of this road will require occupants of the existing residences to change their addresses to reflect the new roadway name.

North Carolina General Statute 153A-239.1(A) required a public hearing be held on the matter and public notice be provided at least 10 days prior in the newspaper. The required public notice was published in the January 7, 2020 edition of the Roxboro Courier-Times. A sign advertising the public hearing was placed at the proposed roadway location on the same date.

Ms. Vaughn further noted that the adjacent property owners were contacted via certified and regular mail at the time permits were obtained for the new residence. Two parties involved agreed upon a single road name, Pine Tree Ln, which is compliant with all naming regulations in the Ordinance. The owners of the unoccupied residences, along with the owners of 1201, did not respond to multiple correspondence.

Ms. Vaughn requested a motion to approve the recommended roadway name.

There were no individuals appearing before the Board to speak in favor of or in opposition to the request to add Pine Ln, a private roadway, to the database of roadway names used for E-911 dispatching.

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Puryear and **carried 5-0** to close the public hearing for a request to add Pine Ln, a private roadway, to the database of roadway names used for E-911 dispatching.

CONSIDERATION TO GRANT OR DENY REQUEST TO ADD PINE LN, A PRIVATE ROADWAY, TO THE DATABASE OF ROADWAY NAMES USED FOR E-911 DISPATCHING:

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Puryear and **carried 5-0** to approve the request to add Pine Ln, a private roadway, to the database of roadway names used for E-911 dispatching.

INFORMAL COMMENTS:

Chairman Powell noted with five individuals signing up in the ten-minute public comments period; each person would have two-minutes to address the Board.

The following individuals appeared before the Board to make informal comments:

Ms. Elizabeth Bradsher of 976 Estate Road, Semora, and a member of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) stated her comments reflect the research she has done on Person County on economic matters and not meant to be received negatively but to inform. Ms. Bradsher stated Person County has lost 400 jobs in the last ten years with no growth. She noted that losing jobs while located in a state with such dynamic development was a concern. Ms. Bradsher said that in 2020, EDC meetings were cancelled due to a lack of activity or action items to report. She opined that no activity to report in a state representing such growth suggests the need to look at what was being done and not done as well as the organizational structure for purposes of effectiveness and influence within the state economic marketplace. Despite COVID Ms. Bradsher further noted there has been a tremendous amount of announcements in surrounding communities. Since the EDC was established in 1981, Ms. Bradsher said a number of amendments were made to the bylaws affecting the effectiveness of the organization. In 2020, Person County had a number of businesses showing interests in this county, yet there has been little public information on such interests. She added general information was considered public information and not confidential. Ms. Bradsher said a lack of public transparency results in limited accountability, limited public awareness and limited trust; she said this was an organizational issue. Looking at other counties, Ms. Bradsher stated many types of economic development offices reinventing themselves with balanced good government and partnership providing economic strength and county sustainability; they provide tax dollars and offer collaborative relationships with regional business interests. Ms. Bradsher said the Board all ran on economic growth, innovation and creativity in which should be fostered and not silenced. Ms. Bradsher stated support of Commissioner Gentry's discussion to at least have the ability to explore structural alternatives as the county's sustainability was in jeopardy.

Mr. Chris Weaver of 342 Satterfield Farm Road, Timberlake yielded his two-minutes to Ms. Elizabeth Bradsher.

Mr. John Seepe of 277 Barefoot Landing Lane, Semora stated the EDC could be the most important topic before the Board this year for an assessment for a solid plan to be executed and to analyze the results for improvements. Mr. Seepe stated support of Commissioner Gentry's task force to understand the economic structure (and maybe for other boards and committees) for the betterment of the community. He added it would be nice to have this done prior to the retreat where funding would be determined. Mr. Seepe asked the Board what happened with the 2005/2006 Strategic Plan.

Mr. Paul Lynch of 395 Union Grove Church Road, Hurdle Mills stated support of Commissioner Gentry's initiative to revitalize and reorganize the EDC. Mr. Lynch said the citizens of Person County prioritize by way of development. He reminded the Board of an online survey done last year with the number one priority, by significant margin, was expanding employment opportunities in the county with next two requests were to preserve working farms and open space. Mr. Lynch noted at the bottom of the list, by significant margin, was expanding housing supply. Mr. Lynch stated the right kind of development, carefully considered was needed. He further noted a plan was needed for when the largest taxpayer shuts down, i.e. the power plants on the lakes, which was inevitable.

Mr. Leigh Woodall of 200 Reade Drive, Roxboro stated the need to recruit new industry, new jobs for this county. He said success was dependent upon innovations. He added for the Board's deliberations for the upcoming budget keeping economic development in the forefront and devoting enough resources to make progress in that area.

DISCUSSION/ADJUSTMENT/APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Puryear and **carried 5-0** to approve the Consent Agenda with the following items:

- A. Approval of Minutes of January 4, 2020,
- B. Budget Amendment #9,
- C. Request for the Sheriff's Office to apply for Grants (Governor's Crime Commission, Wal-Mart, and the Bulletproof Vest Partnership), and a
- D. Resolution Appointing Review Officers

NEW BUSINESS:

PROPOSED SPECULATIVE BUILDING UPDATE:

Economic Development Director, Sherry Wilborn appeared before the Board to provide an update on the proposed Speculative Building. Ms. Wilborn noted that on January 4, 2021, the Board received a memo from her stating that the County Attorney and she anticipated bringing on this date for the next round of requested approvals that would be needed by the Board to advertise a Request for Proposals (RFP) and Qualifications to enter into a public-private partnership to construct a 60,000sf expandable Speculative Building at the county-owned North Park site on North Park Dr. in Roxboro. She further noted on that memo that a meeting was planned with the Local Government Commission which also led to a discussion with the School of Government. Ms. Wilborn stated the outcome of those two discussions was a more straightforward approach whereby approvals are not required from the Board prior to releasing the solicitation for interest. Ms. Wilborn said the necessary fee appraisal was performed on the site and the due diligence steps that were already in process have continued. Ms. Wilborn added the solicitation was ready to be advertised with a deadline to submit proposals by February 28, 2021; she anticipated

review of proposals as well as financial modeling would take place in the month of March with an update to the Board on April 5, 2021.

Commissioner Gentry and Chairman Powell both voiced their approval of the plan.

Chairman Powell asked if this same process for a public-private partnership could be considered for any additional hangars that may be proposed for future expansion at the Raleigh Regional Airport at Person County. County Manager, Heidi York suggested the Airport Commission may want to follow the same path as Ms. Wilborn to pursue the public-private partnership. Chairman Powell stated he had already had support of the Airport Commission and he would talk with the Airport Commission Chair.

Ms. Wilborn added in her RFP, the approved hangar construction was referenced as well as in the booklet that will be sent out to site selectors, a page is dedicated to the hangar construction.

REVIEW OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:

Commissioner Gentry requested Board consideration to review the structure of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) and to consider establishing a task force to review what is working in other places to bring back to the Board.

Commissioner Gentry said she has been watching the county's economic development for ten years and that she and all members of the Board ran with economic development as a priority to make the county better and stronger. She added that there have been a lot of conjecture around her request to review the EDC structure noting she understood but felt there should be no anxiety around this subject and the fact that the subject creates fear proves her point that the EDC was on unstable ground. Commissioner Gentry stated her intent was not to cause anxiety but to find solutions; she said she wanted to make the EDC structure stronger with solid, dependable funding.

Commissioner Gentry highlighted briefly the EDC's history from the time it was established in 1981 whereby the EDC hired the Director and the Board had veto power. She noted from 1981 until 2012, there were no changes to the EDC's bylaws. In 2012, the EDC and PCBIC (Person County Business Industrial Center) were reorganized, updated its bylaws with the then EDC members dismantled. Commissioner Gentry said the PCBIC is the executive committee of the EDC. In 2010, Commissioner Gentry said the Board put the Economic Director under the County Manager and hired an Assistant County Manager to assist with the development of the EDC. Commissioner Gentry reminded the group of previous studies and the many PowerPoint presentations through the years outlining economic recommendations, strengths, weaknesses, visions, priorities and for unified strategies. She further noted Chatham County was used as a model for public-private partnerships. To date, Commissioner Gentry said there has been eight amendments to the EDC's membership. Between 2013 and 2017, Commissioner Gentry noted six

amendments, all regarding the EDC's membership, which only took energy away from what the EDC was supposed to be doing.

Commissioner Gentry said in ten years, eight PowerPoint presentations, there was no designated funding solely for economic development in 2015-2019. Years without adequate funding all the while neighboring counties that utilize corporate partnerships to assist in funding economic development had announcements.

Commissioner Gentry said there are great people on the EDC but the commissioners have not given them all the tools necessary – the major tool in that being funding. If the county cannot or does not fund it to the capacity to make it meaningful, then it needs other mechanisms to do so or we need to stop wasting everybody's time.

Commissioner Gentry stated the Economic Development Director has not been given the proper tools either, to aggressively run after business, and was focusing more on administrative tasks. She suggested that the Assistant County Manager to assist with these duties to allow the Director to recruit business.

Commissioner Gentry stated the Board of Commissioners in place currently had the ability to make a difference with funding and progress in economic development; she asked the Board to look at options to restructure for private funding sources as well as county funds; alternatively, the option would be to raise taxes, which would be unpopular.

Commissioner Gentry recommended the Board to create a five-member task force with business backgrounds and for each county commissioner put forward a nomination for Board approval; the task force would review four to five potential partnership structures and report back to the Board in six weeks for Board implementation with the EDC promoting for the buy-in from corporate partners.

Vice Chairman Puryear commended Commissioner Gentry for her impressive presentation noting her proposal has merit. He noted they are all passionate for economic development for the county. He clarified the role of the task force was to review other counties' structures for funding. Vice Chairman Puryear stated he did not want to lose good people on the EDC. Before the Board took action, he suggested to place this item on the Board's next meeting agenda to allow time for the EDC members to hear her proposal.

Chairman Powell thanked Commissioner Gentry for her presentation noting she made good points. He stated his full support of the current EDC members and urged that the proposed task force to fully consider the analysis completed in 2018 that was adopted by the Board that revealed a lack of vision, lack of public funding, loss of population, and partisan politics. Chairman Powell stated as this plan was on the shelf for a while, it was planned to be brought back and then in 2020 came the pandemic, the cyber hacking incident and challenges within the Board that put it behind. Because of the hard work that went into that analysis, he advocated for it to be considered. Chairman Powell confirmed his

priorities have been and will be economic development and education and agreed that without funding there was not progress.

Commissioner Sims noted the importance of funding for the EDC. As he understood it, the task force would be looking at funding structures, He noted he was on the EDC when it was reorganized and eventually put back on. Commissioner Sims noted the terms of the EDC members were set at five years for stability; the current members have a year or so left on their terms. Commissioner Sims stated support of freedom of speech but had seen negatives on social media and asked for all to come together. He noted his concerns on how long it may take for agreement on members of a task force. Commissioner Sims stated support of the current EDC members and communication with the EDC on the proposal as well as getting their feedback.

Commissioner Palmer commended Commissioner Gentry on her studies and stated his displeasure with inadequate funding of the EDC. He said our county was facing many obstacles to return to the status that was once afforded. Commissioner Palmer stated our county currently lacks in the infrastructure which prevents manufacturers to locate here and bring jobs and revenue for growth. He added there was a need for restructuring and he backed the EDC and was appalled that they do not have the money to operate.

Chairman Powell referenced the number of 400 jobs lost in the last ten years and looked to the County Manager for confirmation. County Manager, Heidi York stated she had a report with data for job gains and losses if the Board was interested. Chairman Powell told the group that 100 jobs with potential of 120 jobs were potentially lost due to a breach of confidentiality and wondered if those job lost were included in that total lost. He added that that corporations made decisions and do not ask the Board or the citizens.

Commissioner Gentry summarized by saying they all have the information, it has been studied repeatedly, and the county even paid a consultant to assess. Commissioner Gentry said she was fine with placing Board action on this at the next meeting to give everyone more time to be comfortable. She implored the Board for a simple task force with a limited lifespan with one function and that is help with the funding structures.

A **motion** was made by Vice Chairman Puryear and **carried 5-0** to include this item on the Board's next meeting agenda and asked the EDC Board Chairman and Economic Director to request the EDC members to look at Commissioner Gentry's presentation. The EDC Chairman, Philip Allen, present in the audience, confirmed the EDC members will be made aware to see the presentation.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Powell reported he had a productive meeting with US Congressman Ted Budd's Field Representative, Sam Shumate as he requested support of economic development. Chairman Powell said other priorities of US House of Representatives Budd

for Person County included broadband connectivity; they discussed the four-land project of US501 north to Virginia, and the 501 Bypass Extension project to alleviate traffic on Madison Blvd. Chairman Powell said he asked for support of the airport for future planning including the runway extension. Citizens are urged to contact Representative Budd's office with issues related to Social Security, Medicaid, Passports, Veteran Affairs or any other issue.

MANAGER'S REPORT:

County Manager, Heidi York asked the Public Health Director, Janet Clayton to provide an update regarding vaccine clinics. Ms. Clayton stated the Health Department team vaccinated over 1,400 individuals 75 years of age and older at the recent two-day drive through clinics last week. She noted from week to week, they do not know the vaccine allocation they will receive until the shipment arrives. Ms. Clayton announced a clinic for this week on January 20-22, 2021 for individuals 65 years and older will take place at 134 Weeks Drive at Xtra Storage; she further noted this week's clinic would be by appointment only and that the Health Department would open an online portal that afternoon. The public may call the Health Department to request an appointment or with questions.

COMMISSIONER REPORT/COMMENTS:

Commissioner Sims reported he attended a recent meeting to discuss the coverage of the fire district of the decertified Woodsdale Volunteer Fire Department to which an agreement will be forthcoming to the Board for Triple Springs and the City of Roxboro to redistrict its coverage area for some coverage in the Woodsdale community. Triple Springs and the WVFD has agreed that Triple Springs will have access one of the Woodsdale fire trucks.

There was no report or comments from Vice Chairman Puryear nor Commissioners Gentry and Palmer.

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Sims and **carried 5-0** to adjourn the meeting at 10:17am.

Brenda B. Reaves
Clerk to the Board

Gordon Powell
Chairman

January 19, 2021