

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CRAVEN COUNTY RECONVENED ITS REGULAR SESSION OF MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021 ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021 AT 9:42 AM IN THE COMMISSIONERS' ROOM OF THE CRAVEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 406 CRAVEN STREET, NEW BERN, NC. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO CONDUCT A RE-DISTRICTING WORK SESSION.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Jason R. Jones
Vice Chairman Denny Bucher
Chairman George S. Liner
Commissioner Theron L. McCabe
Commissioner Thomas F. Mark
Commissioner Beatrice R. Smith

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Commissioner E. T. Mitchell

STAFF PRESENT:

Jack B. Veit, III, County Manager
Gene Hodges, Assistant County Manager
Craig Warren, Finance Director
Amber Parker, Human Resources Director
Arey Grady, County Attorney
Nan Holton, Clerk to the Board
Lauren Wargo, Assistant to the County Manager

FACILITIES

Courthouse Update

County Manager, Jack Veit, provided a review of the need for remediation at the Courthouse and the process of negotiations with FEMA to secure the funding. He reported that Finance Director, Craig Warren, was working directly with a staff accountant with FEMA. Mr. Veit stated that two weeks ago FEMA declined funding on the proposed elevator, which is critical to the facility as it provides mobility assistance. The project is currently at a standstill with this roadblock.

Assistant County Manager, Gene Hodges, reported to date, the courthouse has been made habitable by installing new air handlers and a new chiller. He stated the next phase is to mitigate, repair, and abandon the areas that were flooded during Hurricane Florence and those plans were submitted to FEMA. Mr. Hodges also relayed that any work done to the Courthouse will require bringing it up to code.

Mr. Warren stated that the FEMA process has become very fragmented, lacking project managers.

There was discussion regarding ADA standards, rising cost of building supplies, and the need for a public elevator in the Courthouse.

Commissioner Mark motioned that staff seek support from Craven County's legislative delegates. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Liner and approved unanimously.

Fueling Site

Mr. Hodges highlighted that the Board of Commissioners had requested staff to bring back data on establishing a County Fuel Station. He reported it would be located on Clarks Road near the Judicial Center and that the County had contracted with Vaughan and Melton for design and engineering purposes, providing the Board with diagrams. Mr. Hodges indicated the project was developed with JF Petroleum Group from Morrisville, NC because of their ability to streamline the process with all of their connections. The fueling station would be part of the Sourcewell purchasing cooperative.

Using the diagram and site plan provided Mr. Hodges reviewed the following:

- Two 12,000 gallon tanks
- Craven County averages consumption of 23,000 gallons/month
- Consists of a canopy
- Four heads with two hoses per head so that eight vehicles could be fueled at a time
- No diesel as solid waste purchases their diesel needs through Fishers Oil
- 18 wheeler friendly entrance and pad
- Financial need of \$1,119,904.11 highlighting the need for Fiber to be extended
- A 6-8 week construction timeline, such that it could be encapsulated into this fiscal year

There was discussion regarding future growth, the school system utilizing the tanks, and the ability to control the County's needs when the City of New Bern closes their pumps to the County on occasions.

Commissioner Mark motioned for staff to move forward with the project as presented. His motion was seconded by Commissioner McCabe and approved unanimously.

Pharmacy

Mr. Veit stated that during budget workshops authority was given to develop a plan. Utilizing space within the existing Health Department, Oakley Collier Architects rendered drawings to illustrate the proposed pharmacy.

Mr. Hodges walked the Board through a PowerPoint presentation. He reported on the licensure and bidding processes, aligning with an early spring opening.

A break was taken at 10:23 am.

Craven County Redistricting Plans Discussion

Caroline Mackie with Poyner Spruill and Blake Esselstyn with Mapfigure Consulting reviewed the criteria and guiding principles, the timeline, and the county population imbalance. Mr. Esselstyn explained the process of redistributing the population based upon which districts were adjacent to other districts and how split census blocks affected the process. It was emphasized that partisan/election data was not part of the re-districting criteria.

Mr. Esselstyn presented the Board with a whole county view of Option A and then individual views of each District's proposed boundaries under this proposal; followed by a whole county view of Option B, and individual views of each District's proposed boundaries. There was lengthy discussion amongst the Board members and the staff regarding these changes, the use of existing boundaries, and creating consistency within communities.

Mr. Esselstyn illustrated how the public would be able to manipulate the interactive maps that will be placed on the County's website. He also provided a comparison of population deviations of the existing districts, proposed Option A districts and proposed Option B districts.

It was determined that Commissioner Jones' District 2 and Commissioner Mark's District 1 were good as presented.

Chairman Jones stated for the record that two seats were added to the Board in 1990 to give minorities a stronger voice, those being represented in District 3 and District 5. Mr. Jones also reported that Ms. Mackie and Mr. Esselstyn worked to draft districts taking into the minority considerations.

Commissioner Beatrice Smith, District 3, having served on the Board of Education and taken a tour of the areas being proposed to be added to her district, opted to hold comment until later in the meeting.

Commissioner E.T. Mitchell being excused from the meeting, Mr. Veit spoke on her behalf stating that he had met with her several times and she was comfortable with the changes being proposed in either option.

She had acknowledged that Fox Chase off of Glenburnie Road, Mockingbird Lane and Hunters Lane were more consistent with District 3; and that after further study had concluded that Camden Square was more consistent with her District 4.

Commissioner McCabe, District 5, requested review of the Slocum Road area. There was discussion regarding the need to add census blocks adding up to 1,000 people, and lower density of African Americans in those areas. Commissioner McCabe expressed a preference for Option B.

Given that Commissioner Liner's District 6 required reaching down into Commissioner Bucher's District 7 to gain population, discussion of these two were consolidated. Commissioner Liner stated he could not support Option B because of his concern over the City of Havelock not having clear representation with the new boundaries and how far into the James City area his district would need to go. Mr. Liner was not supportive of either proposal. Commissioner Bucher stated he was fine with either proposal.

Mr. Esselstyn highlighted the need to take into consideration the expected growth in District 7 and the use of existing boundaries as dividing lines when creating the proposed districts.

There was much discussion over options to satisfy the concerns expressed. The consensus was, utilizing Option A, to redraw District 6 using Audrey Lane as the boundary and this would be brought back as Option C, such that the only two districts affected are Districts 6 and 7.

A break was taken at 11:50 am.

Commissioner Smith expressed her preference for Option A.

Commissioner McCabe expressed his preference for Option A

Commissioner Mark motioned to set a Public Hearing to receive comments on Redistricting Options A, B and C on Monday, November 1, 2021, at 7:00 pm. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and approved in a 6-0 roll call vote.

At 12:10 pm a 30 minute lunch break was taken.

CARTS

Mr. Hodges reviewed that the Board had directed staff to develop a plan to construct a new office for CARTS. Tim Oakley, Ann Collier and David Griffin with Oakley Collier Architects were present and provided the Board with preliminary conceptual drawings and floorplans. Mr. Oakley indicated they had replicated the concept used for the Creekside Park and Recreation building, while focusing on materials to provide continuity with the Judicial Center, where it would be located. The site is located to the right of the Judicial Center and provides 2,740 square feet to accommodate meeting space and provides two additional offices for growth. The preliminary project budget for a new CARTS site and building was stated as \$1,841,977.00.

The Commissioners had questions about the design, storage space, time frames, and canopy clearance, which Mr. Oakley addressed.

Mr. Hodges relayed that Capital Funds would be utilized to construct it, but the County would be reimbursed through grant monies, as CARTS rents the space.

Commissioner Liner motioned to authorize staff to bid out the project. Commissioner Smith seconded his motion, and it was approved unanimously.

SHERIFF ISSUES

School Resource Officers

Sheriff Chip Hughes explained that currently two schools have Sergeants as their assigned SRO's. The Sergeants should be first line supervisors for the SRO program. However, he reported their support as supervisor is limited as they are not able to leave their assigned schools.

This creates a problem when other SRO's are off at the same time due to unforeseen events such as: sick leave, vacation, childcare issues, or any other unplanned reason for their absence. Sheriff Hughes stated in those instances he has to send deputies from other units, who are also facing their own shortages, to the school to provide a law enforcement presence. Sheriff Hughes highlighted the distinction between a Deputy Sheriff working in a school and a School Resource Officer (SRO), who is selected, specially trained, and assigned to protect and serve in an education setting. He highlighted a recent incident requiring the use of a Criminal Investigator at one of the schools that was short an SRO, causing a disruption in the process of criminal case loads.

Because of this reoccurring issue, Sheriff Hughes requested approval to hire two more SRO's, which would allow the sergeants to oversee their districts and only fill in as an SRO as needed. He provided the Board with a projected cost breakdown. He stated he would like to have two so he could keep the sergeants mobile, but the proposal also provided a breakdown for just hiring one.

There was discussion about consolidation of schools, the supervisory roles of the sergeants, and the continued growth of his department, and why this was not taken into consideration during budget sessions.

Commissioner McCabe motioned to approve the hiring of two SRO's and approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$191,431.00 as requested. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Bucher and carried 4-2 (Liner, Mark = nays) in a roll call vote.

Sheriff's Office

REVENUES	AMOUNT	EXPENDITURES	AMOUNT
1010000-39901	\$191,431.00	1014314-43502	\$ 2,360.00
Current Year Fund Balance		SRO Uniforms	
		1014314-47301	\$ 93,065.00
		Capital Outlay over \$5,000	
		1014314-47321	\$ 21,214.00
		Capital Outlay \$500-\$4,999	
		1014314-43233	\$ 300.00
		Ammunition	
		1014314-42500	\$ 4,000.00
		Training	
		1014314-42200	\$ 624.00
		Telephone	
		1014314-43101	\$ 12.00
		Vehicle Expense/Fuel	
		1014314-41002	\$ 48,528.00
		Full Time Salaries	
		1014314-41106	\$ 7,300.00
		Health Insurance	
		1014314-41107	\$ 540.00
		Dental Insurance	
		1014314-41108	\$ 22.00
		Life Insurance	
		1014314-41109	\$ 38.00
		Disability Insurance	
		1014314-41105	\$ 2,428.00
		Prudential 401K (LEO)	
		1014314-41102	\$ 5,844.00
		NC Retirement	
		1014314-41101	\$ 3,714.00
		FICA & Medicare	
		1014314-41104	\$ 1,442.00
		Workers Comp (LEO)	

TOTAL	\$191,431.00	TOTAL	\$191,431.00
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Canine

Sheriff Hughes introduced Corporal Wiekkel with canine Kai, and Sergeant Hopper with the K-9 program. He stated that addressing the opioid epidemic has been a number one priority of his office and when it has proven successful in curtailing activity, he is looking to grow it. He would like to add two (2) Patrol K-9s to provide the agency with 24/7 coverage and as a result, not have to rely on waiting for New Bern Police Department to respond. Sheriff Hughes explained that currently they only have one K-9 for the day shift on each side of the house, leaving the two-night shifts short a K-9. He highlighted that K-9 Sgt. Hopper has covered the gap in hours when off-duty to provide coverage when possible.

Sgt. Hopper presented the Board with information about the five dogs they have serving the K-9 program now and how they are utilized in the program: Bear, Viper (patrol), Kai (patrol), Nibbles (narcotics) and a blood hound for missing persons, suspects, and trekking. She explained the administrative duties associated with using the K-9's, and all the various community events they participate in, as well as the other agencies that utilize their K-9 resources.

Because of the establishment of the Friends of Craven County Sheriff's Office Non-Profit Organization in the community, the K-9 program has over \$16,651.00 available; plus \$34,457.17 still in this FY budget. Sgt. Hopper stated they would not be requesting any additional funds until the new budget year and then it would not be above what they have requested this fiscal year.

Commissioner McCabe motioned to support the addition of two K-9's. Chairman Jones redirected for discussion.

Commissioner Liner, requesting on behalf of the public knowing, "where are we going with this." He inquired about their previous budget requests, information about other agencies using K-9 resources, and sought asset forfeiture amounts.

Commissioner Mark requested information about the number of K-9's operating in other comparable counties. Mr. Mark highlighted the K-9 program being a direct result from the recommendations output by the Opioid Task Force. He stated he believes Craven County has set itself apart from other counties because of their aggressive approach.

Mr. Liner commented on the need to change the K-9 policy first, and his disdain that it was not brought before the Board during budget work sessions. He commented this happens every year and he didn't approve of it being discussed without a full Board sitting.

Chairman Jones took offense and suggested it be brought up at the next meeting. Vice Chairman Bucher respectfully disagreed, and because of flared emotions, stated he would take over the meeting. He commented that Commissioner McCabe had initiated a motion earlier and inquired if he wished to continue with it.

Commissioner McCabe motioned to add two Patrol K-9's as requested; his motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and approved in a 5-1 (Jones = nay) roll call vote.

At 2:13 pm Commissioner McCabe motioned to adjourn. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and approved unanimously.

Chairman Jason R. Jones
Craven County Board of Commissioners

Nan Holton
Clerk to the Board