

MONDAY - 6:00 P.M.

MARCH 29, 2004

JOINT CITY/COUNTY

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City held a Joint City/County Meeting with the Pasquotank County Commissioners on the above date and time in the Albemarle Hospital Education Room with Mayor J. H. Bell, Jr. presiding. Council members present were: C. C. Austin, J. M. Baker, L. A. Hummer, R. E. King, E. K. Rivers, D. K. Stallings, Sr. and J. B. Walton. W. A. Lehmann arriving at 6:15 p.m. Others attending were: City Manager R. C. Olson, City Clerk D. S. Pierce, Fire Chief G. R. Baccus and Public Works Director C. Grant, III. Pasquotank County officials attending were: Commissioners B. Trueblood, Chairman, L. E. Griffin, III, M. Stevenson, H. Krebs, J. Kitchen and M. Wood, County Manager R. Keaton, County Clerk K. Jennings, County Attorney M. Cox, Assistant County Manager R. Bunch and Sheriff R. Cartwright.

Mayor J. H. Bell, Jr. opened the meeting by welcoming those attending. He called upon Councilman R. E. King for the invocation after which Commissioner H. Krebs led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Chairman of the Pasquotank County Commissioners, B. Trueblood brought greetings from the Commissioners and Pasquotank County. He encouraged the City and County to continue working together to make the two units of government more compatible.

Mayor Bell emphasized that we have items presently on the table that the two units of government have never approached together as a joint body. He feels that together we can work out a solution on items that interest both units of local government.

Commissioner Trueblood asked to say that we should be thinking about Camden County's Manager, Randell Woodruff who is suffering from some serious health problems. He asked that we keep Mr. Woodruff in our prayers.

Commissioner L. Griffin also added the family of Sam Davis, Jr. Mr. Davis passed away this morning.

After dinner the meeting continued.

Mayor Bell advised that the first item of business would be the discussion of hurricane shelters. He recognized Councilwoman J. M. Baker for discussion.

Councilwoman Baker stated she had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. She informed members present that she has spoken with a lot of people following Hurricane Isabel regarding the K. E. White Center and hurricane shelters in general. She provided a list of problems that were experienced by those who sought shelter as well as those who staffed the shelters. It was her suggestion that these items be addressed before we have another disaster.

City Manager R. C. Olson explained that electricity was one of the main problems and even though there are load management generators on the ECSU campus they are not on the same circuit as the Center. He did note that during Isabel, a small temporary generator and lights were set up at the K. E. White Center, however; only a small portion of the building was lighted due to the capacity constraints of the generator used. He further stated that he has investigated bringing in a portable 250KW generator to provide additional power but the cost of the emergency generator with the necessary equipment would cost between \$81,000 to \$90,000. Even with this type of generator it would power almost everything except the air conditioning units.

County Manager R. Keaton stated that the County has had discussions with the Center regarding the possibility of rewiring the facility in order that a generator could be used there. The K. E. White Center is a Red Cross certified shelter and has been the only one until recently when Northside Elementary School was retrofitted as a second shelter with funds received from a Hazard Mitigation Grant. Mr. Keaton expressed concern over the issue of staffing needs. Already staffing is a problem and with two shelters additional health department, police, EMS and Social Services staff would be required. He further explained that at the present time Dare, Currituck and Camden Counties do not have any shelters available. Therefore, Elizabeth City is the closest shelter to the residents that choose to evacuate. Our shelters are not usually opened until residents of these counties have already passed through the area.

Following further discussion, it was suggested that ECSU, the Red Cross, Emergency Management and Social Services meet with the City and the County officials to determine how the problems that occurred in the past can be addressed.

Mayor Bell stated that the next item for discussion was the tax collection percentage. The City's tax collection is done solely by Pasquotank County.

County Manager Keaton talked about the difference in collection percentages for the county taxes versus the city taxes. The overall collection percentage for the County is 78% higher than the collection percentage for the City. He stated that the motor vehicle collection rate contains the

largest discrepancy. The City's rate is 72% while the County's rate is 79%. He described the different methods used to collect vehicle taxes. Taxes are more difficult to collect on vehicles because citizens move from the area or trade vehicles. He believes the explanation revolves around the lower per capita income within the City.

City Manager R. C. Olson spoke about his concerns regarding the County's collection fee for the City. It is higher than most counties charge while the collection rate is much lower. City staff would like to see our collection fee lowered to 2.0% for real and personal property taxes and a 1% fee for motor vehicles. The amount of City taxes not collected in 2003 was \$249,882. Additional effort needs to be undertaken by the County in the collection of City taxes.

Councilman W. A. Lehmann stated that he feels if we could increase the collection percentages that he sees that as a way to increase the City's revenues. The City, with the budget process coming up, is looking for ways to increase their revenues while decreasing expenses. He continued by asking if it would be feasible to conduct property revaluations every four years instead of the eight-year revaluation that is currently being used. He said that property values have increased tremendously in the last four to eight years and will continue to increase even more in the years to come.

Councilman H. Krebs advised that the County has already hired someone to conduct the 2006 revaluation and they had requested cost factors for conducting another revaluation in four years.

Commissioner J. Kitchen expressed that their Board would like to see all property appraised at 100% of fair market value.

Mayor Bell called for discussion of the Whitehurst Lane Water Intake. The County is requesting that the City abandon this water intake.

Public Works Director C. Grant, III explained that the intake structure on Whitehurst Lane was put on-line in mid-1970 as a supplemental surface raw water source. Elizabeth City, at that time, relied solely on shallow wells for sources of raw water and due to raw water quality issues, such as high chlorides, iron, color issues and hardness, the preferred method of ozone treatment proved to be cost prohibitive. Surface withdrawal was briefly suspended from 1984 to 1986 and was permanently suspended in 1991. He stated that there are several key issues to keep in mind if there is to be any reconsideration regarding surface water as a raw water source. They are as follows:

*Surface water requires separate treatment; therefore two treatment processes will be required to operate the facility

- *Operators will be required by the State to obtain surface water licensure.
- *The Ozone system cannot be brought back on line in its present state, if at all.

If surface water is to be used, the City will immediately fall under the Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule. We have already been advised by the State that without major changes to the water treatment facility, the City could not comply with this rule. Upon being taken off-line, a section of the twenty-inch primary raw water transmission main was disconnected, plugged and capped at the water treatment plant and at Whitehurst Lane. Currently, this twenty-inch finished water main serves several properties along US 17 North.

Commissioner H. Krebs asked if the City could abandoned this water intake since it now serves as a finished water line.

Councilman W. A. Lehmann stated that he could not see the City giving up this water source when water is so precious. He said that once the City abandons this intake this possible water source would be lost forever.

Mayor J. H. Bell stated that he certainly understands the County's concerns but he feels that the protection of Pasquotank River is another legitimate reason for not abandoning the intake.

Commission M. Wood questioned whether this position is scientifically supported, as there are other methods that could be used to protect the river instead of keeping a water source open with no intention to use it.

Assistant Manager/Planning Director R. Bunch explained that there has not been any development denied because of the provision that allows 10% of the watershed area to have 70% impervious coverage, but he felt that this could be an issue when additional development takes place.

Mayor Bell called for discussion of several sewer issues. He called upon City Manager R. C. Olson for a brief explanation.

City Manager Olson presented an update on the US 17 North sewer line project. The County is presently going forward with the construction of the sewer line that was agreed upon in the 1999 Joint Sewer Agreement. The City provides the County with 500,000 gallons per day sewer capacity. There was also a provision that the City would oversize the line at a cost of approximately \$400,000. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$2.1 million. The City will be applying for a Rural Center Grant in November to help defray the costs. He stated that he feels that the 1999 Sewer Agreement with the County is not in the City's best interest and it is his suggestion that this agreement be renegotiated.

Commissioner J. Kitchen stated that the County officials had already met with the City officials in March of 2003 and there were some recommendations made at that time that would be beneficial to both units of government.

Public Works Director C. Grant advised that these modifications to the 1999 Agreement were sent to Interim City Manager Tommy Combs who after reviewing the agreement and the suggested modifications felt that the entire agreement should be revisited and subsequently hired the Wooten Company to conduct a review of the Sewer Agreement. The Wooten Company agreed that the City needed to reopen negotiation of the 1999 Sewer Agreement.

Commissioner M. Wood stated that he felt that the Wooten report was biased and if the City had any intention of not allowing the County to have the 500,000 gallons of sewer capacity that they would appreciate being told upfront in order that they might look at other means to provide sewer to their Industrial Park.

Councilman W. A. Lehmann suggested that if the County wanted to challenge the Wooten Company's report then they should prepare a list of its concerns and allow the Wooten Company to respond to their concerns. He added that he thinks the 1999 Agreement was a one-way agreement and he really cannot believe the City even entered into the 1999 Agreement.

It was agreed that a joint committee be formed to meet and come up with a plan to work together to regionalize water and sewer in the area that would bring in new developments.

The final item for discussion was the Opticom System. The Commissioners have made a proposal to prorate the capital costs of the Opticom System so that the City's Fire Department could utilize the system. The County based on usage developed a formula. It is anticipated that the City would utilize the Opticom System about 18% of the time. The City's capital cost for the system, based on 18% would be \$16,430. The County agreed to enter into an interlocal agreement that would allow the City four years to pay the \$16,430 which amounts to \$4,107.50 per year. In addition, the City would have to purchase seven emitters at a cost of \$1,100.00 each. It was proposed that the repayment for the capital costs would begin in next fiscal year's budget.

Councilwoman J. M. Baker asked County Manager R. Keaton how much of the capital outlay was from grant money?

County Manager Keaton replied that zero dollars in grant monies. He added that the Albemarle Hospital reimbursed the total costs of the opticom system to the County so the actual capital outlay to the County was zero.

Following comments from the County Commissioners and the City Council Members, a motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem D. K. Stallings, Sr., seconded by Councilman W. A. Lehmann to adjourn the meeting. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Stallings, Lehmann, Austin, Baker, Hummer, King, Rivers and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

Mayor J. H. Bell, Jr. adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Dianne S. Pierce, MMC
City Clerk

John H. Bell, Jr.
Mayor