

March 28, 2019

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Called Meeting with the Bertie County Board of Commissioners, Chowan County Board of Commissioners and the Bertie-Martin Regional Jail Commission on Thursday, March 28, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the DSS Training Room, 110 Jasper Bazemore Blvd., Windsor, NC.

ASSEMBLY

Martin County Commissioners and Staff in attendance: Chairman Tommy Bowen, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond, Jr., Commissioner Elmo "Butch" Lilley, Commissioner Ronnie Smith, County Manager David Bone, Clerk to the Board Jessica Godard and Lt. Albert Roberson of the Martin County Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Joe R. Ayers was absent.

Bertie County Commissioners and Staff in attendance: Chair John Trent, Vice Chair Greg Atkins, Commissioner Ron Wesson, County Manager Scott Sauer, Finance Officer William Roberson, Assistant to the County Manager Dominique Walker and Bertie County Sheriff John Holley.

Chowan County Commissioners and Staff in attendance: Chair Patti Kersey, Vice Chair Ron Cummings, Commissioner Bob Kirby, Commissioner Don Faircloth, Commissioner Ellis Lawrence, County Manager Kevin Howard, Sheriff Dwayne Goodwin, Chief Deputy Andy Bunch, and Clerk to the Board Susanne Stallings.

BMR Jail Commission and Staff in attendance: Chair/Martin County Commissioner Dempsey Bond, Jr., Vice Chair/Bertie County Commissioner John Trent, Martin County/Director John MacDonald, Martin County/Director William Stalls, BMR Jail Administrator Terrence Whitehurst, and BMR Jail Deputy Administrator/Secretary. Bertie County/Director Dianne Bazemore was absent.

Bertie County Chair Trent, Martin County Chair Bowen, Chowan County Chair Kersey, and BMR Jail Chair Bond called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Bertie County Commissioner Wesson provided the invocation.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF MEETING

Martin County Vice-Chair/BMR Jail Commission Chair Dempsey Bond, Jr. provided a statement of the purpose of the meeting and provided the following comments:

On October 3, 2018, Chowan County Manager Kevin Howard sent a letter asking Bertie and Martin Counties if the counties are willing to consider the feasibility of Chowan County joining the Bertie-Martin Regional Jail. The managers of the three counties met on October 5, 2018 to discuss the matter. Additionally, the Bertie-Martin Regional Jail (BMRJ) Board met on October 23, 2018 and expressed a desire to consider the expansion of BMRJ to include Chowan County.

An Inter-Local Agreement was drafted to document the desire of the Boards of Commissioners of the three counties to proceed with a study to evaluate this matter.

Additionally, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) document was drafted and distributed as a means to advertise the counties' desire to procure the services of a consultant to conduct a Planning, Design and Engineering Study to consider expansion of the BMRJ facility to accommodate the addition of Chowan County Jail inmates and operations at the current BMRJ facility in Windsor, NC.

RFQ Proposals for the feasibility study were due January 15th. Two 2 proposals were received – 1 from Moseley Architects, & 1 from Hemphill Randel Associates.

The cost of the study would be negotiated by the three County Managers after a qualifications-based selection process and approved by the Boards of Commissioners of Bertie County, Martin County and Chowan County before the contract is awarded.

Chowan and Martin County passed the Inter-Local Agreement. Bertie had not yet done so. Bertie County suggested it would be helpful for all of the Boards to come together to discuss the request before moving forward with the selection of a consultant.

The goal of tonight's meeting was to get more insight into Chowan County's current situation with its jail and its desire to join the Bertie-Martin jail partnership. If everyone was comfortable with moving forward with the study, a consultant would be chosen and asked to submit a proposal. Martin County Vice-Chair/BMRJ Commission Chair Bond stated the Boards did not need to get into all of the "what-if" scenarios tonight, that those items would be identified and reviewed in the study.

BREAK FOR DINNER

Following dinner, Bertie County Chair Trent asked the Chowan County Manager Kevin Howard to provide comments and remarks regarding the current situation of the County Jail. Manager Howard stated the Chowan County Jail was at a cross roads, and was at the point where renovation, building a new facility, or joining another existing jail were the options. They felt the best decision would be to try and join BMR Jail; it was felt that the existing Chowan County Jail could not justify building a new jail.

Sheriff Dwayne Goodwin and Chief Deputy Andy Bunch were present to provide comments regarding the Chowan County Jail. Sheriff Goodwin shared the following information about the current Chowan County Jail:

- Current Detention Facility opened in 1979
- 23 total beds, but the average daily census was 31.57 males and 3.30 females (females were housed in Pasquotank County)
- One inmate escape in the past three years
- No suicides at the jail since at least 1992
- Under contract with Southern Health Partners for medical services and Correctional Behavioral Health for mental health services (a Nurse works at the jail 15 hours per week)
- Nine full time and 4 part time employees
- Meal contract with Bertie Correctional (paying \$2 for regular meals and \$2.60 for inmates with special dietary concerns)

- The operating budget for the jail for 2018-19 was \$749,171. Expenditures for 2017-18 were \$862,484 due to an overage in medical expenses.

Sheriff Goodwin and Chief Deputy Bunch stated they wanted to provide some answers for a few questions that had already been asked, and were happy to answer any further questions.

Bertie County Commissioner Bazemore stated she thought the purpose of the meeting was to vote whether or not the Boards wanted to proceed with a feasibility study. BMR Jail Chairman Bond stated that was the intention, and explained the feasibility study would answer further questions. Bertie County Commissioner Bazemore then stated she wanted to make a **MOTION** to move forward with the feasibility study.

Bertie County Commissioner Atkins asked prior to proceeding with the study what the cost would be. Bertie County Manager Sauer stated the RFQs had already been received, and the next step would be examining the proposals and interviewing the two firms. After selecting the possible firm to engage, the cost would be negotiated regarding the study. All three counties along with BMR Jail Commission would have to come to an agreement. Chowan and Martin Counties have pledged by resolution to move forward with the study and share in the cost.

Bertie County Commissioner Wesson asked if the cost of the feasibility study would be a three-way split, and Bertie County Manager Sauer stated that was what had been suggested thus far. Manager Sauer stated there would be benefits for all three parties involved as the study would help analyze long-term needs of BMR Jail, even if it was decided to not go through with the expansion project. However, it would be the decision of the three Boards of Commissioners, as well as the BMR Jail Commission, as to whether or not to proceed with the expansion.

Bertie County Commissioner Wesson stated going forward with the feasibility study may be a great resource for extra funding should the expansion occur. Bertie County Manager Sauer referenced Albemarle Regional Health and the process they went through during the merger as a reference.

Martin County Commissioner Smith stated the feasibility study would answer questions not yet asked by the three Boards of Commissioners yet. Commissioner Smith stated the ultimate purpose of this meeting was to determine whether all three Boards are in support (or not) of a feasibility study. Commissioner Smith stated regionalization is more widely accepted, and there are funds available for certain regionalization projects, noting there were only three regional jails in the state of North Carolina. He added this would be a great time for a merger.

Bertie County Vice Chairman Atkins stated he would be comfortable with a ball-park figure relating to cost before making a decision. Bertie County Manager Sauer stated there would have to be another decision point prior to the actual study taking place. Martin County Manager Bone stated the last part of the proposed Inter-Local Agreement stated, "The cost of the study will be negotiated by the three County Managers after qualifications-based selection process and must be approved by the Boards of Commissioners of Bertie County, Martin County and Chowan County before the contract is awarded". There was no commitment financially until a price was given and each Board approved.

Bertie County Commissioner Wesson made a **SECOND** to proceed with the feasibility study. Motion **PASSED**.

Chowan County Sheriff Goodwin stated he wasn't sure what information would have been needed tonight, but reiterated the cross roads Chowan County jail was currently at and the need to either renovate the current facility or join in a partnership with BMR Jail.

Martin County Chair Bowen stated Martin County and Bertie County have had a great relationship, and felt would have the same partnership with Chowan County, as well.

Chowan County Commissioner Kirby clarified the qualifications that were received and the next steps after passing the resolution, and it was stated the information provided thus far was more of a portfolio type submission.

Bertie County Chair Trent stated the meeting tonight was to meet the Chowan County Board and staff in order to be able to work together and decide what was best for each county. Chair Trent stated there would likely be many obstacles in the process.

Martin County Manager Bone stated the BMR Jail Commission would be interviewing the two consultants and review their proposals, along with two members from Chowan County to be included in the process.

Chowan County Chair Kersey stated Chowan County Commissioners Greg Bonner and Larry McLaughlin had previously been selected to participate in the interview process.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Martin County Commissioner Lilley made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting at 6:53 p.m., with a **SECOND** by Martin County Commissioner Smith. The Board **APPROVED** the motion unanimously.

Bertie County Chairman Trent made the **MOTION** to adjourn, with a **SECOND** by Bertie County Commissioner/Vice Chair Wesson. The Board **APPROVED** the motion unanimously.

Chowan County Chair Kersey moved to adjourn the meeting for Chowan County, no objections.

BMR Jail Director MacDonald made the **MOTION** to adjourn, with a **SECOND** by BMR Jail Director/Vice-Chair Trent. The Board **APPROVED** the motion unanimously.

Tommy Bowen, Chairman

Jessica Godard
Clerk to the Board