

VIRGINIA:

At a recessed meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Northampton, Virginia, held in the Workforce Development Center of the Eastern Shore Community College, 29300 Lankford Highway, Melfa, Virginia, on the 15th day of April, 2014, at 8:00 a.m.

Present:

Larry LeMond, Chairman

Richard L. Hubbard, Vice Chairman

Laurence J. Trala

Granville F. Hogg, Jr.

Absent:

Oliver H. Bennett

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman who noted that the purpose of the meeting was to participate in the “State of the Shore” event, sponsored by the Northampton County, Eastern Shore and Chincoteague Chambers of Commerce and the Eastern Shore Community College. Featured speakers included Accomack County Board Chairman Jack Gray, Governor Terry McAuliffe, Senator Lynwood Lewis, and Delegate Rob Bloxom.

Chairman LeMond made the following remarks:

Good Morning. Before I begin I would like to introduce other members of the Northampton County Board of Supervisors that are here this morning.

I was invited here this morning to give you an update of what’s happening in Northampton County.

Good news for our citizens, last week the Board voted to send our budget to a public hearing and although our revenues are not growing as we would like, we have a proposed budget which contains NO tax increase.

Next, let’s talk zoning. We currently have a zoning code that combines the codes from years 2000 and 2009 – over 400 pages. It is very difficult to navigate and stifles growth. For the average citizen who wants to build a house; or a business that wants to expand; or a new business that wants to locate in our County it is simply put – a nightmare!! But to the “NO GROWTH AND

NOT IN MY BACKYARD” people the current code is great and they don’t want to change it. But, with our declining population and tax base, along with high unemployment, this Board took action and asked for a simpler, easier to use zoning code that would be workable and user-friendly for ALL the citizens of Northampton County.

We now have a new proposed zoning code of about 150 pages that has been through several public information sessions; a public hearing; and is now being reviewed by the Planning Commission. But, this change has not come without some controversy. Some say that we have gone too far, or that we need to slow down. I say to those detractors ---- Let’s give this new zoning code a chance because what we have now is not working for everyone!!

This summer the Board will address any recommended changes to the proposal and we expect to adopt this new ordinance that will be beneficial for the environment; all the people who live and work here; and the overall health of the County.

Now, I would like to talk about jobs. We have made some improvement in terms of adding jobs. The January unemployment numbers for Northampton dropped 1.7 percentage points from a year ago. It is now down to 9% according to the Virginia Employment Commission. In no way is this good enough, but again better than last year.

There is a more troubling figure in our employment data. Typically, unemployment fluctuates between 11% in the winter and 7% in the summer, a 4% swing. Even though last summer saw the lowest unemployment rate in years, 6.6%, we still fail to maintain jobs for people year round. Last July we employed about 6,300. But, this January the number dropped to 5,400. There are about 900 seasonal jobs that go away between July and January.

Some of this is the effect of agriculture and tourism which hires people primarily during summer months. Most of these workers migrate, but about 100 workers live here year round without winter work. We must diversify our economy so that jobs are available for those who want them year round. We also must provide job opportunities for our young people to allow them to stay on the Shore instead of leaving and not coming back until they retire.

To that end, we have seen a very successful and on-going expansion at Bayshore Concrete Products. Between Bayshore Concrete, the Town of Cape Charles, Northampton County and the Commonwealth, we all pooled our resources to help make this happen.

In less than a year, Bayshore Concrete has tripled its year round employment with good paying jobs. The company now has about 165 employees and that number will continue to grow. In addition, the Cape Charles Harbor Economic Area is showing progress. Along with Bayshore Concrete, we have the Cape Charles Yacht Center with their 75-ton boat lift nearing completion and should be in operation very soon with more jobs.

And, as a result of work on the Cape Charles Yacht Center, there are two other companies eyeing the Harbor area. These are high-tech companies which would fit well into our maritime history and one will benefit from our re-designation last year as a HUB Zone by the Federal government.

And, the Harbor Access Road, which will bring all of this together, and make everyone along the Harbor more efficient is well into the design phase by VDOT.

Yet, we have another challenge ahead. Our joint Enterprise Zone shared between Accomack and Northampton counties expires at the end of this year. We now must compete with some 15 other Virginia locations to retain it. Working with our partners in Accomack, we hope to retain this very valuable tool for economic development.

In summary, the Northampton County is in a much better state of affairs this year than a year ago, and I look forward to continue working with the County Board and staff in maintaining this momentum and bringing much-needed jobs and growth to our County.

Thank you.

* * * * *

At the conclusion of Mr. LeMond's comments, a question was entertained from Mr. Ken Duffy of Exmore, who asked the Board to consider slowing down the process for the revised zoning ordinance and to provide the Planning Commission with additional time (and expertise) in order to develop its recommendations. Mr. LeMond responded that the Board has been waiting for the past 2 ½ years and is not willing to wait further; in fact, the County cannot wait. He stated that the Board needs to move forward – not stand still.

At the conclusion of comments from the state representatives, Supervisor Hogg questioned the status of natural gas and oil exploration off-shore. Senator Lewis responded that the state's huge aquaculture and tourism industries are of concern with any off-shore exploration as well as interference with rocket launches at Wallops Island should something unforeseen occur.

There was an approximate one-hour delay in the proceedings, awaiting the arrival of Governor McAuliffe. Supervisor Hogg left at this time.

Recess

Motion was made by Mr. Hubbard, seconded by Mr. Trala, that the meeting be recessed until 5:00 p.m., Monday, April 28, 2014, in the Board Room of the County Administration Building, 16404 Courthouse Road, Eastville, Virginia, to conduct the regular work session. All members were present with the exceptions of Mr. Bennett and Mr. Hogg voted “yes.” The motion was unanimously passed.

The meeting was recessed.

_____CHAIRMAN

_____ COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR