

AT A RETREAT OF THE GLOUCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS HELD ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2025, AT 8:30 A.M., IN THE BUILDING ONE, FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM, 6467 MAIN STREET, GLOUCESTER, VIRGINIA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Smith called the meeting to order, and Ms. Steele took roll call.

THERE WERE PRESENT: Kevin M. Smith, Chair
Ashley C. Chriscoe, Vice Chair
Phillip N. Bazzani
Christopher A. Hutson
Kenneth W. Gibson
Michael A. Nicosia
Robert J. Orth

THERE WERE ABSENT: None

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Edwin "Ted" Wilmot, County Attorney
Carol Steele, County Administrator

2. Morning Retreat Topics

a. Personnel Salary Assessment

Ms. Nunn, Director of Human Resources, stated that the presentation was previously sent to the Board in December.

Mr. Bazzani asked if the Board could choose to offer pay raises for only one segment of employees.

Ms. Nunn stated that the Board could choose to do that. She then began her presentation. She noted that internal promotions were a great practice. She reviewed that in FY24, 51 employees were promoted county-wide. She stated that most were in the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Sheriff's Department. She reviewed that in risk management in Human Resources, they wanted to consider succession planning, cross training, and incentives to retain employees with years of experience. She stated that if salaries were not competitive enough, it was an issue. She noted that the County did not have to be the number one payer in the market. She reviewed that 10% of the workforce was eligible to retire right now. She advised that the FY24 turnover rate was 12.7%. She reviewed some of the reasons, to include money/advancement, retirements, unsatisfactory performance, and job fit. She noted that money/advancement was the number one reason. She advised that the County was behind in doing an outside compensation study, noting the last time an outside firm was used was in 2014. In FY2018, an internal analysis was completed. She reviewed the localities that competed with Gloucester for hires and the localities that were used for comparison.

There was a brief discussion on social services employees.

Ms. Nunn then provided a review of a current open position. She noted that both York County and Gloucester had a recreation supervisor position open. She reviewed the comparison in salaries for the positions. She noted that she also looked at the pay ranges for several positions across localities. She noted again that she was not saying

that Gloucester had to pay the same, but she felt it was time to do a salary study to identify needed market adjustments, and to ensure competitiveness and equity. She advised that this did not mean that there would be a higher number of employees or that everyone would get a pay raise. If the County could do this on a regular basis on a timeframe that made sense, it would be helpful. She reviewed that the County had looked at a number of companies and found Bolton. There was a cooperative contract that the County could use if approved. She noted the cost and that the study would take 12-14 weeks to complete.

Mr. Bazzani asked which department had the most attrition, and whether adjustments would be made for the size and scale of the locality.

Ms. Nunn stated that Social Services and the Sheriff's Department had the highest attrition rates with DSS being the highest. She advised that size and scale would have to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that he was in support of the study. He noted that last year it was proposed to hire someone for this process and the Board chose not to do that. He stated that the adjustments made in FY18 brought the County close, but it was falling back down. He noted that it was time to get this done, but the Board needed to be ready to make adjustments based on the results.

Mr. Hutson asked where the County was off the most in salaries.

Ms. Nunn stated that it was utilities, but she did not know the percentages. She advised that it was not just a salary comparison that was needed but also job descriptions.

There was additional discussion on the comparisons needed.

After the discussion, Ms. Steele noted that if the Board approved moving forward, the results would not be ready in time for the proposed budget. She stated that she would work with the Board to hold a block of funds separate to address any compensation adjustments.

Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Mr. Hutson, to approve moving forward with the compensation study. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Bazzani, Mr. Chriscoe, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Hutson, Mr. Nicosia, Dr. Orth, and Mr. Smith - yes.

b. Transportation & Growth

Ms. Rizzio, Assistant Director of Planning, Zoning, and Environmental Programs, stated that now that the zoning ordinance update was completed, staff would be embarking on the Comp (Comprehensive) Plan update. She reviewed that the Comp Plan was a vital document for the community, and it was best for everyone to be involved in the process. The future land use map was a big component of the plan. She reviewed that the first plan was adopted in 1974. She showed the future land use map from the 1974 plan and the 2016 update. She noted the historical residential growth patterns and identified the trend in relation to the Coleman Bridge toll removal in 1978 and reimplementation in 1996.

Board members discussed the Coleman Bridge toll history and impacts.

Ms. Rizzio then reviewed the types of housing units being built in the County. She showed the projected growth rate using the historical census data and annual projected growth rate. She showed the current residential capacity of the County using the build out analysis from the last retreat updated with the new multi-family units in the B-2 district. She then discussed land use. She advised that 49% of the acreage in the County was in the land use program. She reviewed that the land use parcels receive a tax deferment.

There was a brief discussion on the fees for removing property from land use and on data centers.

Ms. Rizzio reviewed the potential residential growth if all parcels were taken out of land use. She noted that there was capacity for growth but asked how much growth was desired or practical. She noted that the Comp Plan was a 20 year plan. On the recent Zencity survey, 51% of the respondents felt residential growth in the County was too fast, 39% said it was about right, and 10% said it was too slow. The current Comp Plan encouraged growth.

There was additional discussion on growth.

Ms. Steele stated that information was put together to help estimate the value of new developments by calculating the average number of household members and school aged children per household. She reviewed the information and noted the additional variable costs for fire and rescue, law enforcement, and community service per thousands of new residents. She advised that she was trying to refine a template that the Board could use for analysis. She provided an example using a previously submitted draft plan for a planned unit development.

There was discussion on the results and how the Board could use the information provided with the template.

Ms. Steele discussed housing growth. She noted that the Board would need to think about manageable growth, and she reviewed some of the issues. She discussed possible Department of Housing and Community Development revitalization projects. She noted that if there was an interest during Comp Plan development to look at affordable housing, that may be an avenue.

Ms. Ducey-Ortiz, Director of Planning, Zoning, & Environmental Programs, advised that the State required affordable housing to be addressed in the Comp Plan, there was additional discussion on that matter.

Ms. Rizzio noted that the Comp Plan supported special districts which could aid desired growth. She reviewed that the 2016 Comp Plan discussed enhancement of the downtown historic district, preservation of working waterfronts, and enhancement of the village development areas.

Ms. Ducey-Ortiz stated that the department would be getting an intern to help write the working waterfront ordinance. The intern would be paid through the National Working Waterfront Network and there would be no cost to the County. She noted that

the Planning District Commission had done a great deal of work already. The goal was to create a district that would work for the current and future watermen.

Ms. Rizzio stated that there was interest in forming a historic, arts and cultural district from the current historic district. It would be another way to promote and encourage tourism.

Ms. Steele asked if the Board was ready to have a proposal for this matter. She noted this would not be a typical district with a tax incentive, but a marketing concept. She noted other features and stated that if there was interest, she would like to bring a proposed ordinance change for consideration.

There was some discussion on the T. C. Walker House.

Ms. Rizzio discussed business improvement districts and a technology overlay district. She stated that the Planning Commission was currently working on the technology overlay. She advised that the idea of the Comp Plan was that once the vision was established, there would also be concrete steps to achieve that vision.

There was additional discussion on data centers and some issues of concern.

Ms. Rizzio then discussed transportation. She noted that Route 17 was considered a corridor of statewide significance. She showed the average annual daily weekday traffic on Route 17 based on data from 2016. She advised that based on that data, Route 17 was nearing or over capacity from the Coleman Bridge to Main Street South. She reviewed the transportation patterns, noting the high percentage of the work force that commuted out of the County. She advised that Route 17 was not built out yet, so more development was coming. She showed the Route 17 widening plan from Farmwood Road to Tidemill Road. She stated that the cost to widen farther would be high and there was limited right of way available.

There was additional discussion on Route 17 traffic and alternate transportation routes from the 2016 Comp Plan.

Ms. Rizzio stated that the Board would want to consider the alternate routes that were in the 2016 plan and whether they should be kept in the update. She noted the community input on transportation from the Zencity survey was that the biggest issue with the Route 17 corridor was traffic congestion. She stated in summary that Gloucester had capacity for both residential and commercial growth based on the current zoning ordinance. The public had mixed feelings about development. The Comp Plan update would help provide guidance. She reviewed the next steps for the Comp Plan update.

Mr. Smith called for a brief recess.

c. Crime Statistics

After the recess, Sheriff Warren provided some data to the Board members. He reviewed the calls for service from November 1 - October 31 for each of the last three years. He reviewed the types of calls that were received. He advised that he had provided the categories for law enforcement calls only and the number did not include animal control or fire and rescue calls.

Dr. Orth asked questions on response calls and what type of danger the responding deputies may face.

Sheriff Warren reviewed types of calls that would result in one deputy responding and those that would require two deputies or multiple responses. He discussed hospital calls.

There was a brief discussion on the calls and the possible impact if the tolls were removed from the Coleman Bridge.

Sherriff Warren stated that he felt the toll was a deterrent. He noted that was his gut instinct as he did not have information for that as the toll was still in place.

In response to a question, he stated Gloucester was absolutely a safe county.

Dr. Orth asked about the salary scales.

Sherriff Warren noted that they were almost crippled in corrections. He noted that two deputies left the jail for other locations due to pay. He stated that if Northern Neck Regional Jail were closer, he would close the jail. He advised that in the last study across comparison localities, jailors were paid less than law enforcement so that was Gloucester's practice. However, when he looked at other localities like New Kent, there was no distinction between the deputies in law enforcement and corrections.

There was additional discussion on the status of the School Resource Officer positions, reasons for staffing shortages, and the challenges caused by mental health situations.

Sheriff Warren then briefly discussed the personnel request he submitted for FY26 for a needed digital forensic investigator.

d. Media Contact During Emergencies

Mr. Sheppard, Director of Community Engagement & Public Information, noted that no one wanted an emergency to happen. He stated that many times during an emergency the media would contact the public information office, but elected officials had the right to speak to the media at any time. He noted that the local media were big supporters of the County and were good about printing positive things. Often the only time that media from across the river showed up was when something bad happened or there was a weather event. He reviewed that media coverage could shape perception of what was happening in the County. He stated that most outlets would provide notice if they were coming to the County and wanted to talk to someone. He reviewed the different types of media. He then noted that there were ways to prepare for interviews to include researching the outlet and reporter, defining key messages, and practicing responses. He recommended staying simple and direct when answering. He recommended remaining consistent across platforms and highlighting positive impacts. He reviewed some tactics to handling difficult questions. In times of crisis, he noted that it was important to respond quickly and transparently. He reviewed steps to building long-term positive relationships with the media, and methods to navigate social media.

3. Working Lunch**4. Afternoon Retreat Topics****a. Goals/Objectives - Strategic Priorities**

Mr. Bains, Deputy County Administrator, stated that staff wanted to ensure that the strategic priorities were the items that the Board wanted to have as the focus. He noted that the first priority was a diverse, thriving economy. He noted that there were several operational themes and goals. He stated that one would be to attract new businesses. He reviewed that staff needed direction on what types of businesses the Board envisioned. He reviewed several categories of businesses and asked for the Board's input. A second goal for this priority would be to enhance infrastructure to drive business growth. Did the Board want to expand utilities or provide County funds for infrastructure improvements? A third goal would be to support and retain local businesses. Were there steps that the Board wanted staff to pursue beyond the local grant program?

After a brief discussion, Mr. Bains stated that the second priority was high quality education. One of the goals may be cooperative capital programs to enhance or maintain schools. For instance, the County and School Division collaborated on the new transportation facility that allowed utilities to move to the old facility.

There was discussion on the high school renovation and a capacity study for the schools. One question was if the elementary school population increased, would it be best to build a new school or reopen T. C. Walker as a school? It was the consensus of the Board to reopen T. C. Walker.

Mr. Bains stated that the next priority was reliable, efficient, infrastructure and broadband. He noted one of the operational goals would be to update the transportation element of the Comp Plan.

Mr. Gibson noted in relation to broadband that the BEAD (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment) program provided billions of dollars in grant funding and Gloucester could not get homes connected. He suggested that the Delegates and Senator could put some pressure on Cox for faster connection.

There was a brief discussion on issues with broadband.

Ms. Steele noted that it may be best to end this discussion early and ask the Board to review and provide feedback, as the utilities discussion may take some time.

b. Public Comment Instructions & Submission Methods

Mr. Hutson stated that when he attended a Mayors and Chairs meeting, Hampton's mayor brought up issues that they had with public comment. The City of Hampton now has citizens sign in ahead of time and the clerk reads a statement at the start of their citizen comment period. He noted that given the issues that sometimes happen with comment periods, he wondered if this was something the Board wanted to evaluate or change.

Ms. Ducey-Ortiz noted also that since COVID the option had been given for citizens to write in comments and the clerk reads the comments during the meeting. She reviewed the recent issues during Planning Commission meeting. She asked if that still needed to be the practice.

Mr. Wilmot noted that the primary impetus for allowing submitted comments to be read during the meeting was COVID, and it was a good thing at the time. It had been problematic. He reviewed the previous issue with the form letters and noted the fix for that. He also noted the issue with hearing the recorded phone calls.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that the submission methods could still be the same, but the comments could be sent directly to the Board rather than read during the meeting.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to stop having the comments read during the meeting but to have them submitted to the Board instead.

Ms. Cronin noted that public hearing notices with the current submission instructions had been advertised for the Board and Planning Commission's February meetings and so the change would have to take effect after those dates.

c. Utilities Update Discussion

Ms. Legg, Director of Utilities, stated that she was going to provide an overall update and reviewed the topics that she would cover. She began with permit updates. She advised that the operating and maintenance certificate for the dam was successfully renewed conditionally through October 2026. She noted that there were scheduled action items that needed to be completed with the goal to renew with a permanent certificate by July 2026 and to remove the conditional. She stated that the groundwater withdrawal permit was a ten year permit expiring in March 2026. The renewal application was due in July. She noted that the application forms and process had changed and there were no resources to use as guides to navigate the new process. She then provided an update on the VPDES (Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit. She reminded the Board that the permit expired in November 2024 but was administratively continued. The draft renewal permit was received from DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) on January 17th. She reviewed the timeline of the current permit. She advised that the official notice of violation had been received in May 2024. She noted the conversations with DEQ and the draft action plans that were developed and sent to DEQ. She stated that the official draft consent order was received from DEQ on January 22, 2025. She advised that the order included civil penalties of just under \$8,400. She noted that the schedule of compliance would begin when the order was fully executed. As she noted to the Board in her November update, DEQ would not tell the County how to solve the problem. She reviewed the action steps that would be required based on the third draft action plan developed by the department. In response to a question, she noted that the surface water treatment plant was operating 16 hours a day. Right now, they produce 1-1.25 million gallons a day. The long term goal, if the plant was expanded, was to go to 4 million gallons a day. She stated that finally having the consent order, she felt the

draft action plan was a good starting point depending on what the Board decided on capital.

Ms. Legg then began with an FY25 expense outlook updated as of January 24th. She advised that \$11 million was budgeted for expenses in FY25 and the expenses were projected to be \$9.9 million. She reviewed the status of the expenditure lines. She noted the large savings on capital projects was because she had stopped all capital projects due to the projected revenue shortfalls. She reviewed the FY25 revenue projection. She advised that the application and development fees were based on 80 new homes in the Reserve and those had not come to fruition.

There was a brief discussion on the AMI (Automated Metering Infrastructure) project.

Ms. Legg continued her review of the FY25 revenue outlook. She advised that the FY25 budget had planned \$1.3 million use of unassigned fund balance, and it was projected that an additional \$238,000 would be used. She reviewed the capital projects that were paused. She then moved to fund balance. She noted that there were two - the unrestricted fund balance and the development fund balance. She stated that the balance of the unrestricted fund balance at the start of FY25 was \$1.6 million and noted that was funded with excess revenue. She noted the development fund was funded with development fees only.

Mr. Chriscoe asked if there was information on how the development fund could be used.

Ms. Legg stated that it was in the County's code and reviewed that information.

There was discussion on the history of the use of the fund, the tight budget, and potential issues.

Ms. Legg stated that the ten year capital plan had been updated. She noted that as staff found issues that needed to be addressed, she was updating the plan. She showed the updated plan and noted that the Board had seen many of the items before. She reviewed updates to the plan to include additional funding in FY29 and FY30 for pump station upgrades, pump station generators, and force main expansion north along the Route 17 bypass.

After a brief discussion on the projects, Ms. Legg then stated that the funding options to accomplish the plan were cash only or debt. She reviewed the rate increase history, noting that rates have remained flat since 2014. She stated that she had pulled the FY25 consumption and billing history for every single account and explored abnormalities to ensure the accuracy of the data. She noted the number of accounts and stated that the average consumption was 5,000 gallons. However, she stated that half of the customers use between 0-2,000 gallons. She showed the monthly bill for an average of 5,000 gallons for water and then sewer.

She stated that for the ten year plan to be cash funded only, the rates would need to be raised by 60% in FY26 and an additional 50% in FY27. Rate increases would also need to happen annually. She showed the impact to a customer for FY26.

She noted that the reason for the higher increase in the initial two years was to front load the funds. She then looked at debt funding. She advised that rate increases would still need to happen annually with a 20% increase in FY26 and 10% in FY27. She showed the bill impact in FY26.

There was additional discussion on the capital plan, possible non-user service district, and need to act.

It was the consensus to have additional discussion at the next work session to determine which option to consider for a public hearing.

5. Adjournment

Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Dr. Orth, to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m. by a unanimous voice vote.

Kevin M. Smith, Chair

Carol E. Steele, County Administrator