

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments, oral or written.

CLOSED SESSION: CONSULT WITH ATTORNEY REGARDING A LEGAL MATTER & CLOSED SESSION MINUTES

Pursuant to NC General Statute 143-318.11(3), the Board will need to go into Closed Session to consult with their attorney regarding a legal matter and to approve Closed Session Minutes. On motion made by Alan Lennon, seconded by Fondella A. Leigh, the Board unanimously voted to go into Closed Session.

The Closed Session was adjourned and the Regular Meeting reconvened on motion made by Fondella A. Leigh, seconded by Charles Woodard, and unanimously approved by the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further comments or business to discuss, the Regular Meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m. on motion made by Charles Woodard, seconded by Joseph W. Hoffler.

Wallace E. Nelson, Chairman

Clerk to the Board

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WORK SESSION

July 20, 2020

7:00 p.m.

Special Notice for tonight's meeting: *The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners' **WORK SESSION** will be held on Monday, July 20, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Perquimans County Library located at 514 S. Church Street, Hertford, NC 27944. Because this is considered an essential meeting, the public will be able to attend but social distancing will be required. If you have any questions, please contact the County Manager's Office at (252) 426-8484.*

The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners met in a regular Work Session on Monday, July 20, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Perquimans County Library located at 514 S. Church Street, Hertford, NC 27944.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wallace Nelson, Chairman Fondella Leigh, Vice Chair
Joseph W. Hoffler T. Kyle Jones
Alan Lennon Charles Woodard

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Frank Heath, County Manager Mary Hunnicutt, Clerk to the Board

After the Chairman called the meeting to order, Commissioner Lennon gave the invocation and the Chairman led the Pledge of Allegiance. The following matters were discussed.

DISCUSSION ON CONFEDERATE MONUMENT

Chairman Nelson explained why this discussion came about and this will give the Commissioners the opportunity to discuss their views and opinions on the relocation of the confederate monument located on the Courthouse Lawn. He further stated that the Work Sessions were not set up for action or public comments. Mr. Nelson opened the meeting for comments and discussion from the Board:

- **Commissioner Hoffler:** Mr. Hoffler thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to discuss whether or not to move the confederate monument from the Courthouse Lawn. It is his personal opinion that the Confederate Monument should be moved for various reasons. One reason is for what it symbolizes. When he looks at the statute, he sees that it represents slavery. He feels that the monument should not be on public property and be maintained by county funds. Therefore, he feels that it needs to be moved to private property.
- **Commissioner Leigh:** Ms. Leigh agreed with Mr. Hoffler and said that the monument needed to be relocated to private property. She provided some research on the dedication of the monument. She does not know where but feels that it needed to be relocated. She also mentioned that, as a child, she remembered coming off the S-Bridge and seeing a mural on a wall with a confederate flag and a soldier saluting the flag. That offended a lot of citizens in Perquimans County but it was on private property so there was nothing that the public could do. Eventually, the mural was removed. She understands that it is history but feels that it should be relocated.
- **Commissioner Woodard:** Mr. Woodard said that he understands where they are coming from and that he had some ancestors that fought in the Civil War. He read his comments as follows: We should not destroy our history but learn from it. Slavery was wrong and no one person should own another person. The Confederate Monument represents the soldiers that fought to defend their families and homes from invaders not to keep others in slavery. We have a unique opportunity afforded to us. There are only two buffalo soldier monuments in our nation and we have one of them. Let us use these monuments as a symbol of our bond. We have learned from our past and are moving forward to be unified for the betterment of our community and for all. He proposed to move the buffalo soldier monument to the Courthouse Lawn next to the Confederate Monument. These monuments should not symbolize our hatred but to show that we have overcome our past differences. We should forge a bond together for a reunified future. We can be the community that others immitate for others to follow to make America the land of equal opportunity and continue to thrive. Are we going to squander this gift that we have been given or are we going to embrace it to use it as a vehicle to achieve reconciliations – the choice is ours. This is his opinion and thoughts on this matter. He further reviewed some history about the Civil War. Mr. Hoffler responded by saying that the monument on King Street is for colored soldiers and not buffalo soldiers and he went on to explain the difference. Mr. Hoffler further explained that this area around King Street and Hyde Park held a deep historical value to the black community. That area has been called Academy Green which held many black educational facilities. That is one reason why they do not want to move that monument from King Street. He further stated that the black Civil War monument is on private property and not public property. It has been maintained by individuals. No public funds are used to update that monument. He said that Mr. Riddick pulled out money from his pocket to renovate the monument and he appreciated that. The Civil War monument was financed by black women of Hertford not outsiders. He does not feel moving the monument would solve the problem. County Manager Heath asked Mr. Hoffler that, about a year or so ago, they had a discussion about the County being involved in the renovation of that monument by providing funding for the project. Mr. Heath wanted to verify that what Mr. Hoffler is saying tonight means that they do not want the County's assistance in renovating the monument. Mr. Hoffler said that he did not say that. Mr. Heath stated that he along with a brick mason had been working with Mr. Hoffler to repair the monument and it is his position all along that the County wanted to be involved in this project. Mr. Heath further stated that we have not spent any funds yet but the County had dedicated funds to renovate that monument. Mr. Hoffler clarified his statement to say that, up to this point, the County has paid no funds to maintain the monument and stated that they were going to upgrade the monument so that it would be part of the Civil War Trail. This would bring more visitors into Perquimans County when they visited sites along the Civil War Trail. Commissioner Woodard was looking more to bringing about unity in the community. He further stated that he had always heard it call the buffalo soldier monument. He concurred with Mr. Hoffler's correction. Mr.

Hoffler understands where his heart is because he feels that every time he goes into Mr. Woodard's store and his daughter's pharmacy.

- **Commissioner Lennon:** Mr. Lennon asked if we had an estimated cost to move the monument. At this time, County Manager Heath said that the County does not have a cost associated with relocating this monument. Mr. Lennon said that he does not have any strong feelings either way other than both monuments discussed tonight have historic value and they were placed there for one reason or another. He explained that the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) applied for an African American Cultural Heritage Fund from National Trust & Preservation sometime at the beginning of this year. The amount of the funds that they hope to receive was \$60,000 for the colored monument. He quoted from the grant application about the owner of the property which stated, "the monument was adopted by Perquimans County in 2019 as a Civil War Trail site and is currently maintained by County resources." At this time, the County has not spent any funds to maintain the monument but has expressed a desire to assist in getting the funding to renovate it to make it part of the Civil War Trail. Until this weekend, he had not even paid attention to the monument on the Courthouse Lawn but that is because it did not affect him like it did others on the Board. He then visited the King Street Monument and read the inscription there and noticed that someone had scribbled graffiti on the bottom of the statue. To him, that is disrespectful. He did notice that it would have looked much nicer should it be on the Courthouse Lawn next to the monument there where the tree used to be and have it made taller and on a marble slab. This will conserve history from both sides. He did not feel that the Civil War was all about slavery from what he had read in history. How do we pick and choose which monument to remove or not to remove. We need to stop looking at people at the color of their skin and it is not limited to the African American. It includes Mexican, Asian, etc.
- **Commissioner Jones:** Mr. Jones discussed the historical nature of the monument. He talked about the song that was sung, Old Folks At Home. He talked about the person that spoke who was a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a Confederate soldier. The Daughters of the Confederacy raised the money but he does not know of there was any outside money contributed to the monument. It costs \$2,000 and the County paid \$200 and gave them permission to install it on the Courthouse Lawn which does change things since it isn't private property which Mr. Hoffler alluded to in his comments. He stated that our current Board, except for Commissioner Lennon, consists of individuals that were born and raised in Perquimans County. So this is significant to this decision. He stated that this is a complex issue and he commends the Board for their doing research to know about these monuments and what they stand for. He has several questions. If this monument is relocated, will it make the people more prideful in their community or their country? Where do we draw the line. He said that, even though he was born and raised in Perquimans County, he honestly did know anything about the monument until about four years ago. If we remove all the monuments and documents of our history, will that stop racism? He differentiates between battle markers and monuments in that they are two different things. Mr. Hoffler stated the he does not mind individuals that had ancestors fight in the Civil War. What concerns him is the fact that it is on public property and does not feel it should be there.
- **Commissioner Lennon:** Mr. Lennon asked how much money the County has spent in maintaining the monument. Mr. Heath stated that they had not touched the monument. About four or five years ago, the County put bricks around it like they did for the Veteran's Monument so that they would look consistent. That cost about \$1,500. Mr. Heath stated that they have noticed that it is beginning to lean but, at this point, the County has spent no funds on the upkeep of the monument.
- **Chairman Nelson:** Mr. Nelson shared his comments to the Board. He talked about an episode of 60 Minutes that aired about a couple of weeks ago. In that episode, Anderson Cooper was interview and African American History Professor from the University of Richmond. Mr. Cooper asked the professor if he felt that the monuments should be removed along Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. The professor said that he did not want to see the monuments and statues removed but rather he would like to see them framed in a different context. The professor said that he would like to see the story told as to why the statue or monument was erected. He would like to have the opportunity to talk about the issue and come to an understanding.
- **Commissioner Leigh:** Ms. Leigh added that she was glad that we have opened up the conversation and that we will have other discussions and finally come up with a decision that would unify the community. She was pleased that we were able to have a conversation without arguing and understanding that we are leaders and we need to act accordingly. What works in DC may not work in Perquimans County. We need to work through this together in unity and one purpose. Tonight was the beginning by opening up the discussion. Mr. Lennon concurred that the Board has acted honorably tonight.
- **Commissioner Hoffler:** Stated that we are a good Board and we have discussed the issue. They were elected to represent the people and make the hard, complex decisions. This is the beginning of the process. He talked about the mural on Hertford Hardware where there was a Confederate Flag. It was on private property so nothing could have been done about it. He is now thankful that it is not gone. Commissioner Woodard stated that he agreed with some of the items on that mural could have been offensive but there were other items on that mural that was not. He talked about Catfish Hunter getting up on the scaffolding and signing the baseball. That was removed and cannot be replaced. He felt that was a little thoughtless by covering all the items on the mural. Mr. Hunter was a Perquimans County son and hates that part of history is gone. Perquimans County was proud of him but not proud enough to paint over his signed baseball and picture.

Chairman Nelson thanked the Board for all their comments and feels that it was the consensus of the Board to continue their discussion on this matter.

CHOWAN COUNTY WIND FARM ORDINANCE

Commissioner Lennon stated that he did not get Mary Hunnicutt to add this to the Agenda tonight but he just wanted to mention something about the Chowan County Wind Ordinance. He had read in the paper that Chowan County had revised their Wind Ordinance and was wondering if Perquimans County needed to compare our ordinance to their ordinance to see if there are some things that we may need to change. County Manager Heath will be requesting a copy of the revised ordinance and we will add it for discussion at another Work Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Wallace E. Nelson, Chairman

Clerk to the Board

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