

AT A MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS HELD ON
FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 2022, IN THE BOARD ROOM OF THE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE,
SALUDA, VIRGINIA:

Present: Wayne H. Jessie, Sr., Jamaica District
Don R. Harris, Saluda District
Reginald A. Williams, Sr., Harmony Village District
Lud H. Kimbrough, III, Pinetop District
John B. Koontz, Jr., Hartfield District

Matthew L. Walker, County Administrator
Betty S. Muncy, Assistant County Administrator
Ann Marie Ricardi, Assistant County Administrator
Heather W. Lewis, County Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kimbrough called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Walker asked the Board to rearrange the agenda to allow Steve Wampler, the real estate tax re-assessor, to give his presentation first as he had a personal conflict. The Board agreed to allow Mr. Wampler to present first.

REASSESSMENT UPDATE – WAMPLER-EANES APPRAISAL GROUP

Steve Wampler, Wampler-Eanes Appraisal Group, reviewed the reassessment that was performed for the County recently. He said that their hearings on reassessments had concluded on December 9, 2021, and they had heard approximately 385 appeals. He said the notices should be mailed out by the end of next week. After the appeals, 286 reassessments were changed and 99 were not. He said that 12,486 total property cards/records were examined and 385 had appealed. Mr. Wampler said that, on average, assessments went up 10-15%. Supervisor Harris said that some of his constituents had reported a 25-40% increase. Mr. Wampler said the Supervisors should encourage anyone unhappy with their assessments to contact the Board of Equalization. Chairman Kimbrough asked if properties in land use or those owned by charities or non-taxpaying institutions were appraised in the same fashion. Mr. Wampler replied that they were, saying all property records were appraised at fair market value. Supervisor Williams asked if 5-ton boats, which are treated as real estate and taxed at \$.62 like real property, were appraised. Mr. Wampler said that no boats were appraised. Mr. Walker said he would work closely with the Commissioner of the Revenue to assess the new land book to determine the most accurate revenue estimate possible.

Supervisor Koontz asked if the contract with Wampler-Eanes ends after the Board of Equalization wraps up, or if there is an ongoing contract. He thinks the County should be poised to join surrounding counties for a regional shared assessment. He believes reassessments should be done more often than every four to five years to avoid huge jumps

in value like the one being experienced this year. Mr. Walker replied that the County does have an ongoing contract with Wampler-Eanes to handle new construction and new building permits. He said there does appear to be interest in having a shared type of arrangement with surrounding counties, having a firm on permanent retainer and serving the counties on a rotational basis.

MIDDLESEX WATER AUTHORITY

Greg Chambers, Chairman, gave an update to the Board, saying that Phase 1A, the Rosegill pumping station, was complete. Phase 1B and Phase 2 are mechanically complete. Preliminary testing shows that those phases are ready to move forward but some additional samples are required by the Health Department. Requirements should be completed by the end of next week. Phase 3A, which runs to Deltaville Market, is scheduled to begin in late February. Phases 3B and 4 are expected to be done by March or April. He said the project is running ahead of schedule, it is within budget, and there is still a substantial amount of contingency money available.

Mr. Chambers said the Board would be asked to include \$257,000 in the budget as an availability fee for the Water Authority. USDA made this a condition of the loan to offset the increased costs of the system. He said that three-fourths of the operating budget is debt service. Instead of just serving residences with a four-to-six-inch pipe, the County wanted to provide fire protection, which needed a twelve-inch pipe, and the size of the pumping stations needed to be increased to provide that fire protection. He believes there will be an increasing demand for water as the sewer comes online. From an expense perspective, the Water Authority can cover its bills, but there is no source of capital or a capital plan for expansion. He said he had a great deal of loyalty to the 488 people who signed up early at the \$4,000 sign-on rate that made the system happen. The people who signed on early helped build this system and he believes the County owes them some loyalty. After the initial sign-on, the connection fee was raised to \$5,000, then to \$7,500 as it is now. The final connection fee of \$10,000 will be in place after the system is up and in production. There are \$3.4 million in connection fees that are expected to come in from people that have signed legal agreements. Those monies are now being collected and will be due by February. He stated that grants are available from RCCF that can be used to help low-to-moderate income property owners with connection fees.

Mr. Chambers said that the County gave the Water Authority a grant of \$700,000 to pay for the capital cost of the 201 fire hydrants that were purchased for the system. The fire hydrants caused the need for bigger pipe sizes and pump stations. The money paid for just the fire hydrants, not for the hydraulic capacity to operate the fire hydrants, so it did not cover the cost for the increase in the pipe size or pump stations. Supervisor Williams said it was concerning to him that if the Water Authority cannot pay its bills, then the taxpayers will end up having to pay them. Mr. Chambers said that the Water Authority borrowed approximately \$1.68 million from the County several years ago to get the project started and that loan has now been paid back from the funds received from the USDA loan. He said that in the future, the Authority may come to the Board for a loan for expansion into a neighborhood that wants water, but the Authority would make sure that the payments from the people hooking up would be enough to cover the loan before even thinking about doing

the expansion. No expansions will be made if they do not make economic sense. Mr. Chambers said that the Water Authority and the Board of Supervisors are in a partnership that is capital intensive and long-term, but it is an investment in the future, creating the capability for good things to happen for the County. He said the Authority and the Board need to function as a team and make the investment decisions for the future of the County together.

Mr. Chambers said that HRSD has stated that sewer cannot be done without water. A water meter must be connected and in service for HRSD to be able to send people a bill. He recommended that the Board hire a competent engineer on staff before moving forward on the sewer project. The engineer could help the Board navigate through the Sheriff's Office project at the Puller Center, and work with the water, sewer, and broadband projects. He said that as projects come to fruition, the Board needs to start thinking about hiring a full-time person to work for water, sewer and broadband. The Water Authority would be capable of sharing in the cost of that employee.

Mr. Chambers asked the Board to work with the Water Authority on fire protection costs. For example, he does not believe that water customers should be covering debt service to put in a road for fire trucks to reach a fire hydrant that may be in the middle of a field with no road. He does not think it is appropriate for the Water Authority to build that road on its own. He hopes the Board is willing to work as a team.

Mr. Chambers explained the contingency fund and reviewed several items that had been spent out of the contingency fund, saying that several of those items were caused by mistakes that had been made. Mr. Walker said that the County would benefit from having an in-house engineer to avoid those types of mistakes.

Mr. Walker added that low-to-moderate income individuals can apply for a grant that pays all or a portion of the connection fee. The grant is offered to customers that have already signed up and it will be offered to new customers who connect in the future.

A motion to take a ten-minute break was made by Supervisor Koontz, seconded by Supervisor Jessie, and carried by the following roll call: Supervisor Williams – Aye; Supervisor Koontz – Aye; Supervisor Harris – Aye; Supervisor Jessie – Aye; and Chairman Kimbrough – Aye.

SEWER PROJECTS

HRSD / TIMMONS GROUP – COUNTY COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Jeremiah Burford, HRSD, gave a brief overview of the different projects that HRSD currently has in Middlesex County. The environmental assessment of the Cooks Corner collection system has been delivered to DEQ, and once that is approved, the project will close out of the design phase and move into the pre-construction bid phase, which is a three-month process. Construction could begin in May 2022 with completion anticipated in 2023. He reviewed the Saluda pump station project, saying it will be located at the existing Central Middlesex Treatment Plant adjacent to the Regional Jail. The design phase will run through August 2022 and the pre-construction phase will go through November 2022.

Construction should be completed by August 2024. He said the Hartfield pump station would be located off of Wood Brothers Road and General Puller Highway and would be funded by HRSD with partial funding from Middlesex County. It will have a similar schedule as the Saluda pump station, with completion in August 2024. A 17-mile transmission force main from the Urbanna Treatment Plant to the Mathews transmission force main is another project with a similar schedule with an anticipated completion in August 2024. This project will require the acquisition of several easements and some land acquisitions as well. At the conclusion of construction of all these projects, the Central Middlesex Treatment Plant and the Urbanna Treatment Plant will be decommissioned. In another project, a force main will be constructed from the Hartfield pump station to a connector in Deltaville at Parson's Lane. The project is currently in the PER phase which should last through June 2022 and then will go into the design phase through June 2023. The pre-construction phase will go through September 2023 with construction going through September 2024. Mr. Burford reviewed the project for the Hartfield Collection System Phase One which will install a gravity sewer main from Regents Road as far east as possible on General Puller Highway with the understanding that the YMCA will connect to this gravity sewer system. Construction is expected to be completed in September 2024. The Saluda Collection System Phase One will run from an HRSD manhole in the intersection of Bowden Street and Oakes Landing Road and go down Oakes Landing Road and General Puller Highway, potentially crossing the highway. The PER was completed in December and is running concurrently with the Hartfield Collection System, with a completion date of August 2024. The total investment for improvements, including all projects, is \$51 million, which includes all HRSD costs and the cost-sharing of Middlesex County for a few of the projects.

Mr. Walker said that the County is responsible for paying for the collection systems, to include the engineering, design, and construction costs of those systems. HRSD is responsible for the transmission force main and treatment costs. He said that the County would also be responsible for building a small section of force main in Deltaville.

Chairman Kimbrough said that the Hartfield Collection System would cost \$4.9 million, the Saluda Collection System would cost \$560,000, and the Cooks Corner Collection System would cost \$2.6 million. Mr. Walker added that there were other costs also for the County through sharing agreements made with HRSD for the Saluda pump station and the Hartfield pump station.

Mr. Burford reviewed the responsibilities for each project. The Cooks Corner Collection System will cost the County \$2.6 million and it includes the pump station and gravity sewer at Phase One. The Saluda pump station will be funded by the County and HRSD as part of the cost sharing agreement. The Hartfield pump station will also be a joint venture between the County and HRSD. The total cost for this project will \$5.3 million, but the majority of this cost will fall on HRSD. The \$33 million force main project running from Urbanna to Mathews will be funded by HRSD. The system will be installed and maintained by HRSD. The force main going from Hartfield to Parson's Lane is funded 100% by HRSD. The gravity sewer system going from Regents Road to General Puller Highway is funded by the County at 100% for approximately \$5 million. The Saluda Collection System is another County-funded project at approximately \$560,000. Mr. Walker interjected that this project could have two more phases later, one running to Hardee's and another line going to the

Food Lion shopping center, going past the high school. Mr. Burford said it appears that Middlesex County would bear the burden of approximately \$6-7 million of the \$51 million.

Mr. Walker said that the County has been approved by the Clean Water Revolving Loan Act through DEQ for the Cooks Corner and Topping systems, and after those projects come back from bid, they will go before the Board for a final decision as to whether to deploy them.

Ken Turner, Timmons Group, gave an update on the Topping and Deltaville sewer system deployment. The sewer system will be deployed where water systems have been installed. County sewer customers must have a County water meter that will be used by HRSD to generate billing for the County. The overall sewer system deployment will be coordinated with HRSD with a tentative deployment completion scheduled for June 2024 for Topping and Deltaville. The Timmons Group design will include tracer wire. The Topping project has had the PER completed and a meeting with DEQ has been set to discuss the Clean Water Revolving Loan fund. DEQ has approved loan funds for about \$2.55 million. The final dollar value of the loan will be determined when construction is complete, and the County will not make payments until then. The County will begin making debt service payments in 2024. The County will be responsible for design and construction. The County is responsible for constructing the terminal pump station and two miles of force main from that terminal pump station. After completion, HRSD will take over ownership of the pump station and the force main. The County will own and operate the collection system and the property owners will own E-1 grinder pumps to convey the flow into the system. A metering facility will be in place to monitor the flow from the campground. The design of the gravity system is now being worked on. The pump station will be located right off of Greys Point Road in a wide VDOT right-of-way. The pipe will be installed on County-owned property. The Deltaville service area is in the final stages of the PER. The system is being designed to serve 690 customers with the potential for connection for future development as well. HRSD will own and operate the pump station and connecting force main. A recommendation will be made to standardizing the grinder pump selection to be an E-1 with a specific alarm and control panel that monitors flow and pressure to help optimize the operation of the system. He reviewed the different phases and which areas they would cover. The low-pressure system deployment in Deltaville is 100% County-funded and the plan is to pursue the Clean Water Revolving Loan fund proceeds.

Mr. Walker added that the County is still proposing a non-mandatory connection policy, saying it is a completely voluntary system where someone could connect to it voluntarily at their convenience.

Mr. Turner informed the Board that the low-pressure system is a water-tight, closed system that would withstand flooding in low-lying areas.

Chairman Kimbrough reported that he had been asked a question during the break about whether Wampler-Eanes uses GIS information to validate the lot sizes that are used in reassessments. Wampler-Eanes responded that they do not use GIS information as GIS lines are not always correct. They use acreage on file in the County records. If acreage is in question, the property owner needs to have the property surveyed and the survey or plat

needs to be recorded with the Circuit Court Clerk's office. At that point, the Commissioner of the Revenue's office will receive the information and make any necessary changes.

BAY AGING WORKFORCE HOUSING

Kathy Vesley, President and CEO of Bay Aging, said Bay Aging is a nonprofit organization known for aging services, meals, in-home care, public transportation, and housing. The organization builds and manages housing for people of all ages. Bay Aging had been asked by Middlesex Foundation and Virginia Housing to take over the Raleigh Park project. She reviewed the site plans and elevation plans for the Board. She said that Workforce Housing was for teachers, emergency responders, County employees and others that need to have some help with affordable housing in the community.

Josh Gemerek, Vice President of the Housing division, gave an update on the project. He said Virginia Housing had asked him to update the plan that had first been submitted by Middlesex Foundation and approved for a \$250,000 Community Improvement Grant (CIG) so the grant could be transferred to Bay Aging. The walking trail is a separate plan of the County that is in the works. The revision has been submitted to Virginia Housing and is awaiting approval. He said the revision included \$27,000 for water connection fees. As soon as the revision is approved, Bay Aging plans on making those connection fee payments. A ground lease was approved several years ago for Middlesex Foundation, and it has been revised to show Bay Aging as the entity replacing the Foundation. He is waiting for Virginia Housing to approve that. Mr. Gemerek said there was an issue with cost, with a \$1.8 million shortfall from the initial bidding. However, Virginia Housing expressed a lot of enthusiasm for trying to work through that cost shortfall and had some creative ideas on how to do that. He said that Bay Aging already has a number of rental housing properties being operated. Ten properties are already in place with an 11th being built in Gloucester. Bay Aging is also working to acquire ownership of Mercer Place in Lancaster County which is a very similar project to Raleigh Park. The Raleigh Park plan calls for 24 two-bedroom apartments.

The Board took a ten-minute break.

VISIONS/STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Supervisor Jessie reviewed two of his major goals for the upcoming year.

- Internet access for the upper end of the County. He said that having internet is becoming as necessary as having electricity in a home or business. Internet is needed for education, working, and everyday living.
- Upgrading County financial software programs so information can be accessed online and found easily to see how things are running in the County at all times.

Supervisor Harris listed his goals for the year as follows:

- He believes every Board meeting should have updates on Water, Sewer and Broadband to keep the community more informed and educated on what is happening with those projects. It will dispel any rumors that the Board is not transparent and talking about the issues in the County. It would also allow the Board to make more informed decisions regarding certain projects.
- He believes a financial software upgrade for the County is very important going forward.

Supervisor Koontz stated he had five goals for the upcoming year.

- The most important goal on his list is mental health. A significant mental health toll has affected everyone on the planet, not just Middlesex. The County needs to respond to this important issue. On January 26, 2022, at St. Clare Walker Middle School, a seminar is being held regarding suicide and mental health for anyone and everyone that would like to attend.
- Supervisor Koontz said number two on his list is the schools. It is the largest part of the County budget and should be the biggest focus. He feels that wages are still behind where they should be. The Middlesex High School renovation has been past due for years. He believes the Workforce Housing project would help to bring even more excellent teachers to the community.
- The third item is equality. One of the things that can be done, in addition to taking down statues, is to put body cams on police officers that will be regulated. Given the reality of the country right now, body cams are a necessity. He also feels public beach access is an equality issue. There is really no place for low-to-middle income people, who do not live on the water, to go to access the water. The County is surrounded on three sides by water, and it does not make sense that there is no place for most people to access it. The boat ramp at Mill Creek is also an equality issue. The project needs to be completed so watermen, tourists, and all Middlesex citizens have access to that water.
- The fourth item is efficiency. He believes that financial software upgrades are long overdue. He thinks that having an engineer on staff would actually save time and money. He believes the County Attorney has been worked to the limit, stretched well beyond the normal day-to-day operations of a small, rural County Attorney's office. He does not know if all Board members agree on shared regional assessments, but it is hard to explain and for citizens to understand why their assessments jumped an enormous amount, because it had been five years since the last assessment, and everything went up. He believes it is critical to have a better understanding of what properties are worth to make a more informed decision on what the tax rates should be.
- Supervisor Koontz said his last item is just for the County to stay the course. There are several things coming, like water, sewer, and broadband, and the high school

needs to be renovated. The Sheriff's Office needs to be moved and there are ideas on how to do that efficiently. The County has engaged in very large projects, and the staff has responded brilliantly, but it has resulted in many, many hours of work and he does not want staff to burn out.

Supervisor Williams revealed his list of goals for the coming year.

- Number one on his list of priorities would be a financial software upgrade. He believes it is important for transparency. Board members should be able to see financial and accounting information at the touch of a button for the County, schools, and Sheriff's Office. The financial software should be simple and easy to understand.
- Broadband is a necessity for the upper end of the County and essential for education.
- The County needs to find a way to work through red tape on projects or even for something as simple as lowering a speed limit on a county road. When a priority is established, it needs to be completed. No project that is really needed should be on the CIP for 10 years; it should be done.
- A walking/biking trail should be added to General Puller Highway where the road has been expanded. It would not cost the state much money to put a line on the outside of the highway.
- He agrees with Supervisor Koontz on the mental health issues and believes everyone should be more accountable for what they are doing.
- Do more with less to keep the taxpayers' tax rates down. Citizens need to be educated more on what the County and the Board is doing with tax money.

Chairman Kimbrough gave a PowerPoint presentation listing ways for counties to be successful. He said that Middlesex County has the advantage of the Chesapeake Bay along with a two-river access, so it is a destination for all things water. There are many amenities and community aesthetics that draw tourists to the County and make the County a wonderful place to live. He reviewed his priorities for 2022.

- His first and foremost priority is attracting, enabling, and supporting local businesses. Businesses have declined because of COVID. The Board needs to help them build back and create a foundation for growth. Tourism and visitor attractions are some of the greatest assets that need to be promoted. The EDA's expertise and resources should be leveraged.
- Deltaville needs to have a trailer boat launching site.
- The boat penalty keeps people from leaving their boats here and the penalty should be eliminated, but at no net revenue loss. He has some ideas on how to achieve that.

- It is critically important that services for citizens, such as schools, fire, rescue, law enforcement, and all emergency services are supported. The County is fortunate to have excellent fire and rescue teams; they need to be supported and celebrated.
- The County needs to continue building infrastructure but be careful with how it is done. The beauty and culture of the County needs to be preserved while allowing development. Central water and sewer are essential for growth and expansion.
- Chairman Kimbrough discussed attracting tourists, mentioning museums and historical sites. He believes the Historic Courthouse and grounds should be used as an educational tool. He would like to have a committee that is devoted to developing context and adding to what is already in the building and courtyard to make the courthouse an educational destination that is attractive to all citizens and tourists.
- He would like to see progress made with the chronic trash problem. He would like to see the volunteer Litter Committee become more active and productive. Maintaining beauty in the County would serve many purposes and please the citizens and tourists.
- The state legislature will again offer to counties like Middlesex a 1.5% sales tax increase, which would be earmarked for school construction. It would be a wonderful solution that would help with the construction of a new high school. It is a very important initiative that needs to be pushed through in Richmond.
- The schools need to attract, retain, and support their outstanding teachers, and workforce housing is a part of that.
- An upgrade to the Sheriff's Office is desperately needed. They are not currently certified because they do not have sufficient infrastructure. There is no adequate Emergency Operations Center. A project is underway to solve those issues and it is extremely important.
- He would like to see an upgrade to the County's financial software.

BOARD AND COMMISSION ASSIGNMENTS:

Mr. Walker suggested adding two committees that the Board may want to consider making assignments to. One would be a joint committee made up of School Board members, school staff, County staff and a Board member to brainstorm with the architect hired to design the high school renovation project. The other committee would be the one mentioned by Chairman Kimbrough for the County courthouse historic committee.

Chairman Kimbrough appointed Supervisor Williams to serve on the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC), Airport Committee, Recreation Committee, Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT), and the Planning Commission.

Supervisor Harris was appointed to serve on the Museum Board, the Rappahannock River Basin Commission, and the Sewer Study Committee.

Supervisor Jessie was appointed to serve as the VACo Legislative Liaison and the Director of Emergency Services, and to serve on the Sports Complex Commission, Oyster Festival Foundation, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC), Emergency Services Committee, and the High School Renovation Project Committee.

Supervisor Koontz was appointed to serve on the Joint Finance Committee, Middlesex Foundation, Middle Peninsula Regional Security Center (Jail Authority), Middlesex Broadband Authority, Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority, Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority as an Alternate, and the Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Community Services Board as an Alternate.

Chairman Kimbrough will serve on the Middlesex Water Authority, Joint Finance Committee, Historic Courthouse Committee, Sewer Study Committee, and the Middle Peninsula Economic Development Resource Organization/Middle Peninsula Alliance.

Mr. Walker will serve on the Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT), Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission, Rappahannock Community College, DSS Advisory Board, Economic Development Authority, and the Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority as an Alternate.

Ms. Muncy will serve as an Alternate on the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority, Middle Peninsula Regional Security Center (Jail Authority), Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission, and the DSS Advisory Board.

Ms. Ricardi will serve on the Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority (VPPSA).

Mr. Dave Kretz, Planning and Zoning Director, will serve on the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District and the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority as an Alternate.

Mr. Mike Hurd, Commonwealth's Attorney, will continue serving on the Middle Peninsula Community Criminal Justice Board. An additional person will be selected to serve on this Board at a later date, most likely someone from law enforcement.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned until the budget work session kick-off meeting on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.

Lud H. Kimbrough, III, Chairman
Board of Supervisors