

**April 26, 2023**

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Session for Outside Agency Presentations, on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Board Room of the Martin County Governmental Center, 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina.

## **ASSEMBLY**

Present in the Boardroom: Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond, Jr., Commissioner Emily Biggs, Commissioner David "Skip" Gurganus, County Manager U. James Bennett, Clerk to the Board Julia S. Rease, and Finance Officer Cindy Ange.

Absent: Commissioner Ayers was absent due to unforeseen circumstances

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Commissioner Biggs led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Gurganus provided the invocation.

Commissioner Smith extended a welcome.

## **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chairman Smith asked for a Motion to Approve the Revised Agenda which was an updated listing of outside agencies to make presentations.

Commissioner Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve the revised agenda, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Bond Jr. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

## **OUTER AGENCY PRESENTATIONS**

Chairman Smith stated that each department was appreciated for its services. Chairman Smith asked that the agencies refrain from giving a background as the services provided were known. Chairman Smith asked that the funding needs for the upcoming year were presented, but some agencies gave a background of programs and services provided.

### **Choanoke Areas Development Association (CADA)**

CADA Director Christopher "Chris" Moody stated that CADA became a community action agency for Martin County in 2016. CADA Director Moody gave updates for the Time Home Ownership Program Classes, Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Program, Homeownership Program, Weatherization, the Housing Appliances Repairs or Replacement (HARR), Urgent Home Repair Program, the Housing Consortium, Energy Share Program, and the Community Development Building Grant (CDBG) Program.

CADA Director Moody reported that the County usually allotted \$15,000 annually to CADA and this funding was appreciated. CADA Director Moody asked that the Board allot \$30,000 for the upcoming year, in which \$15,000 would fund program implementation (staff salaries, administration, etc.). CADA Director Moody reported that any monies used in the programs provided had to be paid directly to the client. In addition, this funding reportedly could not be used for staff salaries, administration fees, etc. It was stated that CADA leveraged other funding, in

which CSBG was good for providing funding to implement other programs. CADA Director Moody stated that CSBG took a financial hit of about \$74,000 this year and this year it would be \$64,000. These reductions totaled a \$100,000 reduction in the CADA budget.

CADA Director Moody mentioned that other agencies in other counties had to reduce staffing due to inadequate funds to pay for those positions. With Martin County providing \$25,000, CADA Director Moody reported that there was no reduction in staffing or services for Martin County. First CADA Director Moody discussed \$15,000 being used for staffing, administration fees, etc., Then CADA Director Moody discussed the additional \$15,000 of the \$30,000 requested. It was stated that \$7,500 would be used to help clients directly with client services that are geared toward helping clients remove barriers. In the CADA Budget for Martin County, it was reported that \$2,000 was allotted to their budget to help families from CSBG funding. The funding would be used to help families with obtaining job training certification, work clothes, work equipment, etc. The other \$7,500 was reportedly planned to be used in an increase of the Housing Counseling Program and the Urgent Repair Program.

Chairman Smith made comments about the services and programs provided by CADA, stating that they had done tremendous work over the years. Chairman Smith commented on the hardships of finding someone to conduct repairs.

Commissioner Gurganus asked CADA Director Moore about the kind of contractors that he was specifically having trouble finding. Commissioner Gurganus also asked if there were certain guidelines needed to work with CADA.

CADA Director Moody stated that there were guidelines and that he could provide them to Commissioner Gurganus. CADA Director Moody gave a list of the type of contractors needed to provide services through CADA and the demographics of the service areas.

CADA Director Moody was thanked for his time, and services provided by CADA, and CADA Director Moody showed his appreciation to the Board.

### **Center for Family Violence Prevention**

Outreach Associate Sandy Rhodes of the Center for Family Violence Prevention explained services provided by the agency and gave updates on services. The Center for Family Violence Prevention reportedly provided court services, assistance with protective orders, parenting classes, legal resources, anger management classes, domestic violence prevention classes and counseling, and more.

Outreach Associate Rhodes showed appreciation towards the Board for their funding to keep the Williamston office staffed as other offices had to cut job positions.

Manager Bennett asked if the County provided the agency with \$4,000 and Rhodes agreed.

Chairman Smith asked Outreach Associate Rhodes to inform him of any upcoming events. Outreach Associate Rhodes informed the Board of a fundraiser in the future.

Outreach Associate Rhodes was thanked for her time and services provided by the agency.

### **Beaufort District Drug Court**

Deputy Sheriff Drew Robinson explained the purpose of the program, services provided, and shared his personal story regarding the impact of the program from his participation in it. The program was reportedly designed to help individuals with substance abuse issues and consisted of five phases that could last up to two years. Participants reportedly had to attend therapy sessions multiple times a week. Participants also had to maintain contact with their probation officer and are regularly drug tested by treatment and probation officers every other Thursday afternoon the day before recovery court. The program's team included Chief District Court Judge Parker, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers law enforcement officers, and treatment providers. This team reportedly discussed each participant's participation, the result of their drug tests, their attitude and behavior, treatment, how they respond to their probation officer, and how they are progressing with treatment based on many different factors. The team would then decide as to whether the participant deserved a reward with a sanction is required. Resources also included transportation to therapy sessions. Deputy Sheriff Robinson stated that the program was designed to change the stigma of substance abuse while providing treatment to individuals with an understanding of what came with an addiction.

Transportation for participants was reported as a challenge, both logistically and financially due to the large geographical area covered. Deputy Sheriff Robinson stated that the agency was constantly seeking out sources of funding to continue providing the resources participants needed. With the recent Opioid Settlement, it was hoped that the Board would have the ability to provide a greater amount of funding to this program to improve the ability to provide transportation resources.

Chairman Smith asked how many people were forecasted to graduate in a year. Deputy Sheriff Robinson reported that 2 individuals graduated recently, but it depended on the substance being used and their mindset. Deputy Sheriff Robinson stated that two more individuals could graduate soon.

Commissioner Gurganus commented on the program, stating that there was no greater thing to do than to invest in a human being. Commissioner Gurganus stated that the hardest thing to do was to change someone, but he was very appreciative of the agency's efforts to help someone in need. Commissioner Gurganus stated that this was a great program amidst the social consensus to lock substance abusers up and get rid of them.

Chief District Court Judge Regina Parker invited the Board to the next program graduation. In addition, Chief District Court Judge Parker made comments about how emotionally moving the program was to see a person change for the better.

The Board thanked the agency for their time and services.

### **Bertie Hertford Martin Regional Library**

BHM Regional Library Director Karey Blanchard reported that the regional library work with three counties – Beaufort, Hyde, and Martin Counties. BHM Regional Library Director explained that funding for a regional library was more complicated than a county or municipal library. Director Blanchard stated that the funding from Martin County money stayed in Martin County, except for a small portion that paid for IT services.

Next, Director Blanchard explained some resources and services provided to the community such as proctoring services for students, public story times, local author visits, database access, community event programming and partnerships, school and or daycare visits, STEM educational programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), copying and printing services, newspapers and magazines, literacy resources for all ages and all abilities, homebound book deliveries, literacy resources, craft classes, public computer access, summer reading activities for citizens of all ages, technology assistance (phone, laptop, tablet), assistance with job applications, and more.

BHM Regional Library Director Blanchard requested \$109,042 for the 23-24 Budget year to maintain the current level of service. In addition, Director Blanchard stated that she was asking for a 2% increase from all local government funders. The State reportedly gave more funding to the library if the local government increased its funding.

Vice Chairman Bond Jr. asked if there was funding from the Towns of Robersonville and Williamston. Director Blanchard agreed.

Commissioner Biggs asked if the proctoring services were for students K-12 and Director Blanchard responded that the service was for college students. Director Blanchard added that it was a good idea to add proctoring services for k-12 students.

Chairman Smith asked if there was an observed increase in the number of people attending the library before the pandemic. Director Blanchard stated that there was an increase and the library was almost back to normal levels of people served.

BHM Regional Library Director Blanchard was thanked for her time and services.

### **Martin County Arts Council**

Arts Council Executive Director Glenda Fox stated that the Council operated on a very low budget. Funding was reportedly received from the Town of Williamston and Martin County and the funding from Martin County made up the majority of the Council's budget. Memberships were added as another source of income (\$25 a year for singles and 35 for families). Executive Director stated that there were issues with memberships due to the younger generation not being involved and the older generations passing away. Programs and events were listed as yearly performances to children in school settings, a Summer Arts and Crafts camp, art shows and sales, and more. Executive Director Fox reported that the Arts Council stated recently an African American dance group from Durham, NC was invited to perform for a school and the children enjoyed being exposed to the performance.

Executive Director Fox reported that the Arts Council began meeting in a church, assembly rooms, and homes of the members. The Iron Building in Williamston was reportedly given to the Arts Council and Golden Leaf Grant monies were used to renovate it. Executive Director Fox added that the building was given to the Arts Council, but bills to maintain it had to be paid (water, insurance, lights, etc.). Insurance reportedly doubled the cost last year and a fundraiser was conducted to pay for the increase. As far as payroll, Executive Director Fox stated that she and her assistant were paid \$20,000 in total for services. Executive Director Fox requested an increase in county funding from \$8,500 to \$10,000.

Lastly, Executive Director Fox stated reported on other funding sources. It was mentioned that the Arts Council was an approved and designated county partner for Grassroots funds. The funds had to be spent within the parameters of the North Carolina Arts Council. The Arts Council depended on the generosity of council members, local businesses, and local governments. Executive Director Fox added that there was a small uptick in rentals of the Flat Iron Building and a successful fundraiser. Music and Drama Classes as well as a Drama Camp was reported to be a goal for the future with adequate funding.

### **Wright Flight Program**

Deputy Sheriff Drew Robinson gave a description of the Wright Flight Program and the services provided. Wright Flight was a program for sixth graders in Martin County to learn about aviation at the Martin County Airport. Each sixth grader was reportedly provided a manual that had a curriculum of aviation history and aviation training. Deputy Sheriff Robinson stated that the program lasted about 4 weeks and every year there was a field day. The Wright Flight Field Day allowed sixth graders to visit the airport to learn about aviation hands-on. Students would learn from volunteers, some state agencies, and contracted providers that provided airplanes, pilots, and drones. Elizabeth City State's Aviation and Drone Program was reported to be a very good resource for drone education and displays. This program required the participating students to pass a module test, have good behavior and attitude, and bring one of their lowest grades up to pass the Wright Flight Program. Those students who passed the program would be able to fly on an airplane with a guardian. A Flight School, D2 Aviation, was contracted to perform the airplane rides and insure the passengers. Funding reportedly derived from the County and donors. The program was stated to be quite expensive, especially with the increase in insurance and fuel fees.

Manager Bennett mentioned that Deputy Sheriff Robinson attended an Airport Association Conference with him and Deputy Sheriff Robinson discussed the program with others. Manager Bennett added that individuals from other counties were intrigued by the program and hoped to install a program similar in their count. Manager Bennett added that the county funding for Wright Flight last year was \$6,000. Manager Bennett asked how many students were served this year and Deputy Sheriff Robinson responded 260, 6th graders. Last year the cost of flights was reportedly \$7,000.

Vice Chairman Bond Jr. asked if the \$7,000 included insurance and Deputy Sheriff Robinson stated that the flight school had their insurance that was not included in the \$7,000. Deputy Sheriff Robinson was thanked for his time and services.

### **Martin- Tyrell- Washington (MTW) Health Department**

MTW Health Director Wes Gray discussed services provided, highlights, and then funding for the year. MTW Health Director Gray reported that the MTW Health Department served Martin, Tyrell, and Washington Counties since 1972. Of the population served, 60 % were from Martin County, 30% from Washington County, and about 10% from Tyrrell County. Services offered included home health, communicable disease control, vital records, adult health, environmental health, recruiting lodging and restaurant inspections, dental health, public health care management for at-risk children and high-risk pregnancies, childcare, health consulting, child health, family planning and laboratory in all three counties.

MTW Health Director Gray stated that funding was received from a Community Health Grant (\$150,000), the Office of Rural Health (\$100 per visit for uninsured patients), a \$70,000 grant from

Vital Strategies to help leverage some Opioid Settlement Funding, \$29,000 from the North Carolina Office of Rural Health to support medication assistance programming, and a \$200,000 grant we received early last year to train Health Department DSS; local medical staff; Substance Abuse and patient trauma. MTW Health Director Gray gave an extensive report on all programs provided by this funding. The home health program was considered to be one of the most costly programs.

Since 2019, it was reported that Martin County provided \$370,733. Last year, a 10% increase was requested for home health program losses. The program was reportedly hard to manage financially without looking for additional funding. MTW Health Department Director Gray requested the 10% increase, totaling the county allotment to \$416,606.

Manager Bennett asked if Home Health could be discontinued due to the financial hardships of managing the program. MTW Health Department Director Gray responded that he hoped the program would not be discontinued because it was a much-needed program. MTW Health Director Gray mentioned a list of counties that cut their health department.

Manager Bennett stated he asked the question due to the home health program being a reason for the increase of the county's allocation to the health department. MTW Health Department Director Gray stated this was a needed program.

MTW Health Department Director Gray was asked to discuss the issue of hiring a dentist and Director Gray stated that the salary for a dentist was very high (175.00/hour). Director Gray stated that the job advertisement for the health department was posted at least 2 years. Manager Bennett and Director Gray discussed scholarship opportunities for those in dental school.

MTW Health Director Wes Gray was thanked for his service and his time.

### **Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC)**

Chief General Counselor James Ward informed the Board of programs monitored by the Council. It was stated that JCPC received \$134,418 from the Division of Juvenile Justice. The County was requested to match 20% of that funding received from the Department of Juvenile Justice, totaling the County allotment to \$26,503.

Educational Support was reportedly housed in the school system and provided services for children involved with the court, on probation, had a high report level or had a diversion plan. The Friends and Families Program conducted restitution (court-ordered) and community service. Children could pay up to \$100 in restitution and pay it back to their victim(s). Teen Court was reported to be an important program as it allowed youth to sentence their peers. Summer Adventures, Smithwick Chapel Year-Round Enrichment, and Riverside Youth Intervention were listed as programs monitored by JCPC as well.

### **Chamber of Commerce**

Chamber of Commerce Director, Rebecca Harned, gave background information and reported on the Chamber of Commerce programs. The Chamber of Commerce was created by Martin County boosters in 19 and Washington County was being served as of this year. The County reportedly provided % 10 of the Chamber's budget. Other funding came from a membership base of

individuals, nonprofits, home-based businesses, churches, private or public entities, local government agencies, and more.

In 2022, 60 new members were added to the Chamber. A third of the members were reportedly minority and women-owned businesses. A weekly newsletter was sent out by the Chamber of Commerce to keep the public informed of services and events. The Chamber of Commerce reportedly provided assistance and resources to businesses that were struggling in any aspect, entertainment at the downtown community stage, conducting open-air markets where home-based businesses could make money, ribbon cuttings, grand openings, scholarships through the Chambers' sponsorship program, hosting of community events, conducting networking opportunities, annual fundraisers such as the Annual Banquet and Awards Ceremony, educational opportunities partnering with Martin Community College, Gift Certificates paired with 90 businesses within the county, and the Chamber of Commerce Foundation was reportedly being organized. The Chamber of Commerce Foundation was described to provide grant writing services and to provide things needed for employment (Transportation, clothing equipment).

Chamber of Commerce Director Harned stated that a grant from the T-Mobile Hometown Grant program was received last year. The grant was being utilized towards the construction of a new stage in Robersonville that was underway. Chamber of Commerce Director Harned stated that there would also be an expansion of the recreational park behind the old hospital. A new software program was implemented at the Chamber of Commerce to increase productivity for businesses. Ms. Rebecca Harned, Chamber of Commerce Director expressed her appreciation for the support and funding provided by the County.

The Board was thankful for the services provided and Director Harned was thanked for presenting the Chamber of Commerce budget allotment request.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:11 p.m., Vice Chairman Bond made the **Motion** to Adjourn the meeting, with a **Second** by Commissioner Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

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Ronnie Smith, Chairman

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Julia S. Rease,  
Deputy Clerk to the Board