

Virginia: At the regular work session meeting of the Essex County Board of Supervisors held on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. in the School Board Meeting Room, at 109 S. Cross St., Tappahannock, Virginia:

Board of Supervisors Present: Ronnie G. Gill, Vice Chairman
 Edwin E. Smith, Jr., Supervisor
 Sidney N. Johnson, Supervisor
 John C. Magruder, Supervisor

County Administration Present: April Rounds, Assistant County Administrator, Deputy Clerk
 Michael Lombardo, County Administrator

Absent: Robert Akers, Jr., Chairman
 Andrew McRoberts, Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Gill called the Regular Board of Supervisors Work Session of November 15, 2022, to order.

ROLL CALL

The Deputy Clerk called out the roll for the Board of Supervisors; a quorum was met.

AGENDA

No changes.

DISCUSSION

NG 911 Grant Funding Request Discussion

Chief Tommy Hicks stated that this a grant opportunity to upgrade its 911 piece app. It is a next gen 911 and translates to a more wireless system to where dispatchers can receive video or text messages. We applied for this on a regional setting with King and Queen County which gives us the opportunity to receive up to \$200,000 in funding to upgrade our systems. This grant is 100% reimbursable from the state. The Key issues the vesta911 system handles about 60% of 911 calls across the U.S. this will be able to improve caller location, incident details, response times and help out with some of the public safety outcomes.

Supervisor Magruder asked once it is approved and equipment is ordered when would the final project be finished? Chief Hicks stated he did not have an exact date but would suggest it would be a least a solid six months. It is largely dependent or electronic resources. Supervisor Magruder also asked about the funding if we pay the bills and then get reimbursed. Chief Hicks stated that depending on who is in charge of the grant we can sometimes secure funding throughout other times it is at the end.

Supervisor Magruder asked County Administrator Lombardo as far as cash flow are we ok in doing this? County Administrator Lombardo stated that thy would coordinate with Penny to assure that there is money in there to cover.

Supervisor Johnson asked what the life of the Next Generation 911 is? Chief Hicks stated that it runs on a 5 years cycle. Supervisor Johnson stated that he asked that due to some counties that have these

projects plan for the future with it. Chief Hicks stated that other counties also look at reaching out so that we can share the resources.

Supervisor Smith since we are collaborating with King and Queen County will they be the lead or us or jointly. Chief Hicks stated that it is more jointly where we are responsible for our purchases and they are responsible for theirs.

Vice Chairman Gill asked is this contingent on King and Queen's Approval as well? Chief Hicks stated that it is on track for their approval and then will be presented together. Vice Chairman Gill asked if we had worked with King and Queen on something like this before? Chief Hicks stated we had and asked Sheriff Holmes when that relationship started. Sheriff Holmes stated it has been a 7 year relationship.

Tax Discussions with Tommy Blackwell and Penny Davis

County Administrator Lombardo stated that there were some concern in the past as to when the Board could make changes to the taxes in light of the increase of vehicle tax. It is a discussion of timing of issuance, when do you all need to make decisions by when the next bills go out.

Vice Chairman Gill stated that at the last meeting the bills went out a little earlier than what they normally do. Treasurer Davis stated they went out a week earlier. Vice Chairman stated that when we approved our budget we entertained the idea of readjusting the tax rate mid-year but we did not have the opportunity to do that. He stated that he would like to hear where we are financially as we are only a month away from starting our budget preparation.

Treasurer Davis stated for first half taxes we have received about 80%. For second half taxes we have received about 40%. Our biggest money comes in from Thanksgiving week to the first week of December. We are slightly higher in the first half taxes.

Vice Chairman Gill asked what the normal delinquency rate is. Treasurer Davis stated that it is normally about 25%. Supervisor Johnson stated that they normally come through at later time and we get more money because of penalty and interest.

Supervisor Johnson asked what is the real problem with the tax adjustment and inflation and how should we address this? Treasurer Davis stated that all localities do it differently. King William lowered their rate by a dollar to compensate for the inflation. Some localities gave rebates.

County Administrator Lombardo stated that the conversation is over the vehicle tax and we budgeted \$405,000 and collected YTD is \$215,000. Treasurer Davis stated that she is working off of booked and he is working off of budgeted. County Administrator stated that YTD collected cash is \$215,000 for Vehicle License. Treasurer Davis stated that that is just for the Vehicle License it is broken down into personal property as well. County Administrator Lombardo stated that for Personal Property we have collected \$1,800,000 against a budget of \$4,000,000 as of November 7, 2022. He is not seeing millions of dollars in additional revenue and we seem to be on track with what we budgeted. Treasurer Davis stated that she will go back and rerun the reports.

Supervisor Johnson asked what the real problem and how to address the problem. County Administrator Lombardo stated that they are required to tax based on the book value of the vehicle. Because of the market the price of used vehicles is going higher and we are locked into the formula. As the market starts to improve the cost of the used vehicles will come back down but the problem is how do you budget against the anomaly. If there is a surplus that can be used for future projects. Treasurer Davis

stated she has been approached by tax payers who know that other localities are giving back and although we did give back a quarter they feel as though we should give back more. To give a rebate would be a lot of manual work for their office with over 12,000 vehicles. Commissioner Blackwell stated that the software that we are using is not conducive to doing a mass rebate. Treasurer Davis stated that she spoke with Edmunds and there is a way to do it but it does come at a cost and is messy and not recommended. She stated that if we were going to do something as a give back than it should be done at budget time with a rate or by doing away with the Vehicle License Tax.

Supervisor Johnson asked that if she has had enough citizens approach her on this than we need to address it. Treasurer Davis stated it is not just our citizens but because of other localities and what they have done for their citizens. Supervisor Johnson asked how soon we could know how much extra income we are receiving beyond budget? Treasurer Davis stated that we won't finish collecting the second half is December 5th and then we continue to collect for the first and second half through June 30, 2023. We could estimate but won't know a definite figure.

Supervisor Johnson asked if there is anything they could get from Chuck to do what they would need to do? Treasurer Davis stated that it is within Edmunds.

Supervisor Smith asking that the only problem we have is giving it back to citizens. Treasurer Davis stated we booked \$1,200,000 more than we did last year. Administrator Lombardo state that based off of what he is seeing we are on track for budget. We budgeted based off of what we thought not inflation. Supervisor Smith stated that we cut our rate by \$0.25 this year and maybe we can look at it at a later date. Treasurer Davis stated that if we did something it would make it easier on her office to do it at budget time and reduce the rate as opposed to trying to do a rebate.

Supervisor Magruder stated that when we have a better handle on the revenue coming in we can look at more options. One county stated that they lowered their tax rate from \$2.95 to \$2.30 but as they look at it they will have to raise it up again next year. Since we already took it down \$0.25 if we took it down another \$0.25 to ease into would look better. Car values are beginning to drop. Some groups also played around with the PPTR number which I don't believe that is a good idea either. The question for the supervisors is if there is a flush of money than we could look at it in January. Supervisor Magruder also asked Commissioner Blackwell would it be better to reduce the rate or play with the PPTR number. Commissioner Blackwell stated that priority would be to get rid of the VLT, second would be to reduce the rate and then play with the PPTR.

Vice Chairman Gill stated that he is a proponent of eliminating the Vehicle License Tax and if we go that direction it is a more structured approach and would need to go to a public hearing.

Supervisor Johnson asked what the tax payers are saying. Commissioner Blackwell stated he is still receiving written appeals. People are going online and looking at other book values and stating that we are over asking.

Supervisor Magruder stated that there are costs that we are going to have to account for and will need additional revenue.

Supervisor Johnson asked Administrator Lombardo how Treasurer Davis and Commissioner Blackwell should handle the citizens as they bring their concerns. Administrator Lombardo stated that some areas have higher priced vehicles and people are reacting to what they see. The instructions should be to wait and see what comes in after December and see if what are doing is working.

Treasurer Davis stated that she has told people that it would most likely be addressed during the budget sessions.

Supervisor Magruder stated that at the Middle Peninsula Planning District Committee last month for information. Gloucester has an in house assessor to assess properties as they come and we are currently on a 4 year cycle according to Commissioner Blackwell. It may be something that we could talk about that idea for Essex. Administrator Lombardo stated that we cannot justify having our own in house assessor but could be something that we should look at regionally.

Supervisor Magruder also stated that for municipal sewer there was some funding available if Essex County wanted to apply the MPPD could do the application for us. It is a grant for a study to look at the low lying areas for future infrastructure.

ADJOURN

Having no further discussion, Vice Chairman Gill adjourned the Work Session meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman

Clerk of the Board