

March 19, 2014

At a special meeting of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors held in the Board Room of the Southampton County Office Center, 26022 Administration Center Drive, Courtland, Virginia on March 19, 2014 at 10:00 AM.

SUPERVISORS PRESENT

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman (Drewryville)
Glenn H. Updike (Newsoms)
Carl J. Faison (Boykins-Branchville)
Barry T. Porter (Franklin)
S. Bruce Phillips (Capron)

SUPERVISORS ABSENT

Ronald M. West, Vice Chairman (Berlin-Ivor)
Dr. Alan W. Edwards (Jerusalem)

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael W. Johnson, County Administrator (Clerk)
Lynette C. Lowe, Deputy County Administrator/Chief Financial Officer
Julien W. Johnson, Jr. Public Utilities Director
Cynthia J. Edwards, Administrative Secretary

OTHERS ABSENT

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order. He welcomed everyone here this morning. He stated that we are privileged to have Congressman Randy Forbes with us today. He turned the floor over to Congressman Forbes.

Congress Forbes said thank you Mr. Chairman. First of all let me thank all of you for doing the great jobs you do for all of your residents here. And, thank you for taking the time to allow me and my staff to come by and just listen to you this morning. I want if I can to present to you, and I know many of you have met them before, Mr. Curtis Byrd is the individual from my office who is around in this area quite a bit. So, many of you have seen him, but I wanted him to be here today so you would know that if you had any contacts that you need to make directly, that Mr. Curtis Byrd will be here. You can call him directly. He will give you, if you don't already have it, his direct number. You won't have to go through a receptionist or anything. You can get him directly. Also, I have with me today, in the back, Mrs. Dee Gilmore who is my Chief of Staff. She has been with me since the first day I was in office in the House of Delegates years ago and she has been with me the entire time. Normally, when I'm in Washington; she's in Washington. When I'm in the District; she's here. But, I wanted you to also see her. And, then the other thing that we can do is that if you have any particular issue areas that are important to you, we will give you the staff member that is working on that area. It's not that you can't get to me whenever you want to, but as you guys know sometimes our staff knows more about some of these issues than we do. And, you don't have to go through five people to get to the best person, you can go right to that person and they will tell you right where it is and this is the committee that it is taking place in. And, what I wanted to do this morning is to just come here and listen to your comments about what you thought we could do to help you more and secondly, to answer any questions that you might have about anything that you might see on the horizon. One of the toughest things for us is often times today it is difficult to know actually what is going on because you read in the papers, you only get small, little doses and you see on television one particular thing, and I know you guys have to make predictions out a good ways. And, sometimes it is good for us to just be able to walk in and say let me tell you what I think is really happening and what you might be expecting. So, with that let me throw it open to you or for anybody for any of their thoughts or comments about what you think problematically that we should be looking at and then secondly to respond to your questions. And, to all those other servants in the other capacities like Mr. Michael Johnson, and the Commonwealth Attorney, and the Clerk thank you all so much for the good work that you do. So with that Mr. Chairman I would love to answer any questions or listen to any comments.

Chairman Jones said Supervisor Phillips would you like to start.

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Supervisor Phillips said I'd like to welcome you and thank you for what you do. We'd like to tell you thank you. Since Mr. Rick Franklin retired I've made some comments to Mr. Curtis Byrd about the possibility of coming out here so we could again get the schedule started for some office hours here whether it be in Franklin or here in this building. I think that would be a big help to some local constituents if they have a need or concern.

Congressman Forbes said we would be happy to do that. You guys have always been so good in helping to coordinate that with our office and we are more than happy to do that. Mr. Curtis Byrd does that quite often in the localities, but we will set that up. He said Mr. Curtis Byrd I don't know what your schedule currently is, but if you could work with the folks here and see what a good time would be we'd be happy to do that Supervisor Phillips.

Congressman Forbes asked if there were any other thoughts or comments.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Faison.

Supervisor Faison said thank you for coming and spending some time with us this morning. I don't have anything right this minute.

Congressman Forbes said thank you Supervisor Faison.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Porter.

Supervisor Porter said he would like to thank Congressman Forbes for coming and joining us. He said he appreciated Congressman Forbes' interest in our county and our area. And, I appreciate Mr. Curtis Byrd's involvement. He stated that he hears from him occasionally. He said right now there are no pressing issues except that we wish you guys could get a budget done, and I'm sure you do too. The other thing is that we have some things that we are working on for the future. And, I did mention to Mr. Curtis Byrd is that we are working on trying to coordinate some of our regional activities with the City of Franklin. And, one of the big issues that we have in this county is looking at the possibility of coordinating our wastewater systems. And, we know that Franklin's current wastewater treatment plant is in the flood zone which has the interest of the Corps of Engineers. And, there is an indication that if we move forward and consolidate our systems if we have a state of the art system that is not in the flood plain that there may be some funds available from the Corps of Engineers because it would be moving their system out of the flood zone. So, we may be able to get some assistance with relocating that and consolidating our systems. We are not there yet; but, when we do get there we would appreciate if we can get some help from your office to encourage the Corps of Engineers to participate and help us a little with the financing.

Congressman Forbes said Supervisor Porter we would be more than happy to do that. I think that it is a good thing for you guys to be pursuing because it is so good for your economic development and everything else. It is a huge concern for the City of Franklin as it is for you. Yesterday we spent quite a bit of time with Emporia and Greenville County who have similar concerns that they are trying to put together. And, we are trying to meet with them. It takes a while for both the local entities to reach a cum by ya on that and agree. But, then we can come in and try to bring people to the table to have these discussions. And, yesterday morning we met with the Corps of Engineers; and, we do this on a regular basis to look at all these projects that are a concern to all of the localities and try to keep focused on how we can help them move forward. So, we are happy at any time when you think it is appropriate to come in and sit down. We have had several meetings on the waste water situation as you know already. And, we will continue to do that because that is a huge issue for you guys not just now but ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road. Thank you for what you are doing with that; and, we remain on call to help anyway that we can.

Supervisor Porter said thank you.

Congressman Forbes said thank you Supervisor Porter.

Chairman Jones called on Supervisor Updike.

Supervisor Updike said he is always out in left field and I'm still in left field. But, we wish we had three hundred more representatives like you...

Congressman Forbes said thank you.

Supervisor Updike said to push for responsible government. The biggest thing that you and these people getting elected have got to do and that is to stop spending money. Every six months you are raising the national debt. Our future generations are counting on there to be a place to live and a society that is not tax burdened to death. The second thing is to cut cost. It bugs the life out of me that we are meddling in every country's business. Then we turn around and are fighting and then send out troops, and the money up in the billions of dollars in the mid-east to pay for it and we get no results, absolutely none. Our soldiers come back dead in body bags or wounded and everything else. This policy has got to cease. We can't constantly send billions of dollars to foreign countries. Look what we did in Egypt. That was elected by the people. We didn't elect the government, but we went in there and turned it over to the military. Then we sent two million dollars to back them up. We can't afford to pay and rule the world. We have got to stop this; we just can't afford it.

Congressman Forbes said Supervisor Updike your comments are well taken. If you will let me catch you up and respond. And there may be something that Supervisor Porter said about the budget. One of the difficulties that we have sometimes on these budgets is that we all know the time you spend on predictability of those. It is the same situation you are seeing with the State right now which puts you in an incredibly difficult situation I know. One of our concerns is that we are constantly looking at the importance of having a budget versus the concerns that you just raised versus how much debt that is going to put on the country wherever we are. There are three things that I think government can't fail on, at least from my perspective. One is the defending of the United States of America. If we do that none of the rest of it matters. The second one is that we cannot pass on a greater debt to our children and grandchildren than we inherited. It's just like passing on a piece of legislation that takes their rights away. When you impose that debt on them, you have taken their freedoms away. So, you have a decision that you have to make. And, there are three ways that we do that. One of them is very obvious. We borrow on money on bonds or whatever that they have to pay back. We know that one. The second one though is that we pass programs that block us into feed payments for twenty years down the road just as sure as if we borrowed money. And, we can do that just as bad. And the third one though quite honestly is when we let our infrastructure go down because if we let our infrastructure go down and another generation comes behind us and they have a huge gap that they have to spend to fix it all up that is a debt put on them as well. So, we are constantly looking at that. As for the first one though on National Defense, your statement is well taken. We cannot control the world. We cannot police the world. Here is what our National Defense should be doing though. We should be trying to mitigate risk around the world before it becomes a greater risk to the United States. We forget sometimes that today, if any of you go to a Sam's Club, a Wal-Mart, or a Target, eighty five percent of all the goods that they have got there came over oceans. And, the only thing in the world that protects that is the United States Navy. When we look at all of our financial transactions 95% of all of our international transactions take place not by satellite, but by underwater cable. Every day the Russians and Chinese are trying to get at those cables and impact them. And, the only thing in the world that protects us is the United States Navy. So, when we look at some of these hot spots in the world, we think that is all that we are focused on. We have got a pretty big gamut to have to look at and control. What worries me today in these huge reductions we are seeing in National Defense is that it is going to have huge effects on Virginia economically. But, forget that. Let's look at the National Security. I worry because based on what we are doing now, we will have the smallest Army we have had since World War II. We will have the smallest Air Force that we have had since the Air Force was created. Our Navy will be down to about 250 ships and according to the Pacific Commander, we can't be a super power with 250 ships. We just can't do it. And, when you start looking at those things, at some point in time, we just have to put it on the table and say how do we balance the importance of defending the country with that very real concern that you made about not passing on future debt to future generations. And, it comes down to picking your priorities. And, you have to pick those priorities very carefully. We don't do a very good job as the Federal Government in doing it. And sometimes that is why we end up with these water heads of not being able to bring on the budgets to do it. So, it is a challenge for us. Hopefully, we will do a better job as we move down the road, but it is not an easy task.

Supervisor Updike asked will you follow up?

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Congressman Forbes said sure.

Supervisor Updike said I'm concerned about the government's ability. Every conversation, every communication, and everything else they talk about are against the citizens. I'm an old head around here; I believe in freedom. I'm completely scared to death of government taking control of communication. We have gotten more towards a dictatorship when they can do what they want to do.

Congressman Forbes said Supervisor Updike I think all of us are worried about those privacy concerns. When I was a boy, and I know by the color of most of you guys hair that you were a boy when I was a boy, but one of the things I used to love to do when I was 12, 13, and 14 years old. I would literally get on my horse and ride out into this field, and I loved to just get off and listen to the quiet. And, I thought I'm alone. Well, today you are never alone. Let me just assure you that you are never alone. There is somebody that could be monitoring you or looking at you. The irony is that we can look at everything, but we can't find out where this doggone airplane is. We have got people around the world trying to do it. But, I'm with you Supervisor Updike. I sit on the judiciary committee and we are doing everything that we can to limit those concerns. But, it is a big concern for all of us. Then it will be not just what our government monitors, but what other governments monitor as well.

Chairman Jones said thank you Congressman Forbes for what you do. We have our hands full trying to run the County.

Congressman Forbes said yes they are Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Jones said and you are doing an excellent, excellent, job. And you are right here for us whenever we need you; you are here. I can't thank you enough. I just want to let you know that we are in your corner whenever you need something from us. We are here and ready to do it. Our hands are full taking care of our own citizens; and, that is why we appointed you up there to take care of what is going on in the rest of the world.

Chairman Jones asked Mr. Michael Johnson if he had anything.

Mr. Michael Johnson said the only question that he would ask, Congressman, is you know the outlying land field was a big issue back five or six years ago. Given the Department of Defense cuts and the impacts that they have on the fleet in Hampton Roads, do you foresee that issue coming back up on the table.

Congressman Forbes said in the near future I don't see it. I don't see any real discussions of that right now. It seems like, just like the Chairman said and you rightfully stated that, we all see the fact that even people who are retired feel like they are carrying so much on their plate that it is about all they can do to kind of get to the next day. I know guys feel like that right now. Well, the Navy right now feels like that. I will have lunch on Monday with the Secretary of the Navy to look over things. We do that on a regular basis and I can tell you what he is worried about right now is his aircraft carriers and how many he is going to have, and these cruisers as to where they are going to be and if they are going to have them. I think that outlying field, right now, has kind of really been pushed off in to the distance. So, anything up there can change overnight, but right now we don't hear any bubbling of discussions about that at all. Again, as Supervisor Updike said they are worried about these big cuts because they are very real and very, very frightening for the people at the Pentagon. So, that is what they are focused on more than any other issues.

Chairman Jones asked if any of the Constitutional Officers out there have any questions or anybody in the audience.

Mr. David Britt, Treasurer, said six years ago...

Congressman Forbes said I'm sorry for turning my back on you.

Chairman Jones said that is alright. It's alright.

Mr. David Britt said Frank O'Leary, who is the Treasurer in Arlington County, had his Congressman to introduce a bill concerning a federal set off debt program like we have here in the

Commonwealth. Can you give me an update as to where that bill is now?

Congressman Forbes said I have no idea where it is. Let me tell you a couple of things though about Washington versus Richmond. I don't mean to act like you don't know. It is just that my Chief of Staff is always telling me, Randy, you need to explain to them how some of this works because I don't always know the intricacies of how your local government would work behind the scenes. And, a lot of people don't know in Congress. But, in Richmond when you put a bill in to the General Assembly that bill will always get a vote. It will get a vote in a sub-committee or a committee. Now, it might get killed, it is still going to get a vote. But, if it passes the committee, it will have to get a vote on the floor. It may be rejected or not, but it is always going to get a vote. In Washington that is not true at all. You can have a million bills filed. The only bill that will ever get a vote is if the chairman of that committee says he wants that bill up for a vote. So, you could file 50 bills, and we have people sometime say I filed this bill, and this bill, and this bill, and everybody is applauding them. And, I'm listening and thinking that means nothing. What means something is that you have the relationship with the chairman of that committee to get that bill up for a vote. Then, once it is voted out of a committee it means nothing unless it is scheduled for a vote on the floor. Now, one of the advantages that we now have is from the armed services committee. I am the chairman of everything related to the Navy or the Marine Corp. or Air Corp. on their big planes. So, I get to determine which of those bills come up. Mr. Bob Goodlack is from Virginia and is Chairman of the Judiciary Committee; he gets to control that. Mr. Eric Canner is the floor leader who controls the stuff on the floor. But, as for that particular bill, to my knowledge, it has never ever come up for a vote in a committee. And, I have no information that it is scheduled to any time in the near future.

Mr. David Britt said well that is something that I would like for you to support. I think Mrs. Karroway down in your area would also because that is another tool that the Treasurers here could use. We have a number of people that leave our jurisdiction in the Commonwealth and we have no way for us to reach. So, that would be a good tool for the Treasurers throughout the Commonwealth to help collect delinquent taxes.

Congressman Forbes said one of the things that I would like to do if it is okay is have either Mr. Curtis Byrd or Mrs. Dee Gilmore give you the direct dial number for a lady by the name of Mrs. Sara Sykes. Mrs. Sara Sykes works in my office. She is the Legislative Director. She is an attorney, but she monitors all the legislation. She is like the quarterback; she determines everything that is going on in our office as far as legislation. If you don't mind, I will either have Mrs. Sara Sykes call you directly or you can call her about that bill so we can at least get it on our radar screen. Then she could tell you pretty much specifically whether she is seeing any opportunity of that coming up or not, if that would be of help.

Mr. David Britt said that sounds great. Thank you.

Congressman Forbes said you will enjoy working with her. She is a very, very good person to work with. He asked if anybody else had anything.

Mr. Rick Francis, Clerk of Court, thanked Congressman Forbes for coming down. He stated that our Board finds itself, I think, in a potential dilemma between some security upgrades at our courthouse, which is an older courthouse in the Commonwealth, is expected to make. Our Chief Judge has those expectations and the purse strings of the county don't quite jive at least at this point. One of the puzzles that it may come to is that the Judge may require a private entrance to his chambers. This may require going around our courthouse structure and the Nottoway River. If that is chosen to be a potential alternative we may need some assistance or at least some support from your office with the Army Corp. of Engineers if we need to bulkhead 150 yards of the river front to secure that little passageway for our judge. I think that maybe something that would help to take the financial pressure of some other options off the Board of Supervisors, and still make the judge happy, but hopefully can do it on the cheap.

Congressman Forbes said we will be happy to. Colonel Olsen will meet with us whenever we ask him. Sometimes what we will do is have Mr. Curtis Byrd to talk on a staff level, but if that doesn't work well then we have to bring in the Colonel and sit down with whoever from the county wants to talk with him so we can see if we can move that forward. We will be happy to do that. The other thing that I will tell you, and we heard this at Greenville and Emporia had the same thing, so my suspicion is that one of the things that is killing us right now is all these regulations

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that we have got. Nobody wants to do anything to pollute the Nottoway River or pollute anything else, but sometimes these regulations just have no balance to them. So, we find situations like the waste water situation that is raising our cost through the roof and nobody sees the nexus of what we are trying to accomplish. So, part of what we try to do with the Corp. of Engineers is sit down at the table and work through those regulations. The other thing quite honestly that we are trying to do is to get a little bit of balance in Washington and stopping the imposing of these regulations on our localities and these business people when they really don't make any sense. So, we are happy to work with you on that.

Mr. Rick Francis said it may not be at the top of the plan at this stage, but it may be an alternative. We are trying to keep him happy.

Congressman Forbes said when the Judge wants it; everybody needs to keep our eyeball on it. I understand; thank you Mr. Rick Francis. Just let us know and we will be there to help you out with this. He asked if anybody else had any comments or questions or things that you suggest that we can do different. Well, if not, thank you Mr. Chairman again for letting us be here. We are just a phone call away. So, you guys feel free to call us if we can help at any time. I just thank you all for taking time out of your schedule to meet with us today.

Chairman Jones said thank you for coming by this little bitty chamber to talk with us. You are welcome at any time. We are glad to have you at any time.

Congressman Forbes said thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Jones said any time that you want to come, just let us know you will be here and we will be here waiting on you.

Congressman Forbes said you all have always been great partners. Thank you so much.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Dallas O. Jones, Chairman

Michael W. Johnson, Clerk

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