

Bertie

Ledger-Advance

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WEDNESDAY • JANUARY 16, 2019



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Commissioners exercise eminent domain

Board will force sale of property as part of Tall Glass of Water Project

THADD WHITE

Bertie Ledger-Advance

WINDSOR – The Bertie County Commissioners have served notice they intend to use their powers of eminent domain.

At the Jan. 7 meeting of

the board, the commissioners unanimously adopted a motion to secure a 10.35-acre tract on the Albemarle Sound as part of its “Tall Glass of Water” Project.

Bertie County initially tried to purchase the property, which is described as

a “beach path” in 2016, according to a press release. The attempt failed.

At the same time, the commissioners sought grant funding from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management to cover the costs of land acquisition and improving the

beach path access.

The 10.35-acre tract contains freshwater forested wetlands and an estimated 56 percent cleared area. It is approximately 140 feet of waterfront and is accessible by a recorded 60-foot easement from Bal-Gra Road.

During the work toward purchasing the property, it was discovered there were two sets of deed restrictions – one in 1998 and the other in 2015 – which were deemed in conflict with one

See **DOMAIN**, 5

One caught, one at large



Town adopts

Domain

From 1

another. After review, Smith determined resolving the deed restriction issue could be most efficiently achieved through acquiring the adjoining property – the 10.35 acres – known as the Bell Heirs Tract.

During the final meeting of 2018, Commissioner Ernestine Bazemore encouraged board members to continue to follow their priorities, specifically citing the completion of EMS Station One, finishing the Blue Jay Recreation Center and opening the public access for the Tall Glass of Water Project.

Last week, the board discussed the matter with County Attorney Lloyd Smith in closed session before returning to open session and adopting a resolution authorizing the use of eminent domain. Eminent Domain allows a governing body, in this case the Bertie County Board of Commissioners, to take private property when it is deemed necessary for public use.

Last week, Commission Chairman John Trent made a motion to adopt a Resolution Authorizing Exercise of the Power of Eminent Domain, which provides a legal description of the property, outlines procedures for giving notice to current property owners and declares “Just compensation and fair market value of \$120,000.”

“The board’s decision to acquire the adjoining 10.35-acre tract on the Albemarle Sound is critically important for eliminating the restrictive easement requirements, and is a necessary step in order to capitalize on the county’s investment,” Trent said. “With each step, the board is changing the future of Bertie County and creating new opportunities for our children and families in years to come.”

Following Trent’s motion, Commissioner Ronald D. Wesson offered a second. Commissioners Tammy Lee, Greg Atkins and Bazemore joined them in their support for the motion. The resolution gives until Feb. 28 for



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The future public access to the Albemarle Sound as part of the Tall Glass of Water Project.

the sale to be completed before court papers are filed March 1 as the first step in securing the property.

The board of commissioners appropriated \$250,000 in the current fiscal year budget for the Tall Glass of Water Project, and the funding

for purchasing the property will come from those funds. The remainder will be used to begin the first phase of accessibility improvements.

The action by the commissioners came days after the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation announced the

1,000 acres along Salmon Creek have been conveyed to the division and will be known as the Salmon Creek State Natural Area.

Thadd White can be reached via email at twhite@ncweeklies.com.

Plan

From 1

and offering it to flooding businesses,” he said. “Obviously, we have to work out

they’ve got nothing,” he said. “There’s a lot going on with homeowners, but there’s

“This would not be for businesses that get five or six feet of

one.

Commissioner

Randy

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