

The Beaufort County Board of Commissioners held a special called meeting on Thursday, July 27, 2023, at 8:00 AM, in the boardroom located at 136 W. 3rd St, Washington, NC with the following present:

Commissioners:

Chairman Frankie Waters
Vice-Chairman Jerry Langley
Commissioner Ed Booth
Commissioner Stan Deatherage
Commissioner Hood Richardson
Commissioner Randy Walker

Absent:

Commissioner John Rebholz

Staff Present:

Brain Alligood, County Manager
Katie Mosher, Clerk to the Board
David Francisco, County Attorney
Anita Radcliffe, Chief Financial Officer

Resolution Opposing Tolls on Ferry Service

Chairman Waters called the meeting to order.

Motion: Vice-Chairman Langley motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Walker seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Waters said we have items for decision, a resolution opposing tolls on the ferry service, I'll turn it over to Mr. Alligood.

Mr. Alligood said as you are aware, in the budget bill that the General Assembly is currently considering there has been language that's been added that would require tolls on all ferry routes. He said specifically this is H.B. 259, the 5th addition, and it is section 41.11CA, and in that section it reads that G.S. 139.82 shall be re-written and essentially what they're doing is where they showed original tolling, which would include the Hatteras passenger ferry, the Southpoint Ferry, Cedar Island, Ocracoke, Swan Quarter, which they normally toll, they have struck through all that and it now reads the Board of Transportation shall establish tolls on all ferry routes. He said so every ferry route that DOT is providing service on would be tolled, according to this if this bill is passed. He said that would include the Aurora to Bayview ferry, the one that is in Beaufort County that is used predominantly, or a lot of folks use that for work travel. He said you have attached a resolution opposing tolls on ferry services, specifically on the Bayview-Aurora ferry. He said we had conversations with our sister counties around us and there are resolutions coming from them as well opposing that. He said we were asked by Representative Kidwell to put forth such a resolution so you have that in front of you, I'll be glad to answer any questions the Board may have.

Chairman Waters said would anyone like for it to be read.

No one spoke.

Commissioner Deatherage said years ago, Commissioner Richardson you will remember this, I think it was before anyone else here was on this Board, I'm never going to forget the bridge. He said that was a decision that would've made a big decision, a good decision but we're never going to get a bridge across the Pamlico. He said Robert Cayton, God rest his soul, and Mark Basnight, God rest his soul, before he died, before he got out of government said he was going to get us a bridge across the Pamlico. He said that didn't happen and it's never going to happen. He said I said it wasn't going to happen then and we wanted the bridge to cross somewhere within five miles east of Washington, that was the parameters the DOT at that time gave us if we wanted, if we had a community willing to have it there we'd get it there and it would've cost no more than the bridge they put in now, maybe even less. He said what I'm alluding to is government needs to make good decisions all the

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time because when you don't it comes back to bite you on the butt. He said there were a whole bunch of people at that time that were the somewhat insiders, the elitist, the people that really run this area around here or at least run some of you Commissioners, and they wanted it to the west of Washington, some of them wanted it in Pitt County, they did, that was a whole thing. He said the fight then began for Commissioner Richardson and I, who were the only two people on this board that wanted it east of Washington, which Beaufort County is pretty much to the east of Washington, we had to fight just to get it into Beaufort County, do you remember that Commissioner Richardson.

Commissioner Richardson said uh huh.

Commissioner Deatherage said just once again Commissioners need to be smarter when they make decisions.

Commissioner Richardson said I'll follow that up with an emphasis on, it was the Beaufort County Commissioners who denied us a bridge across the Pamlico, in which case we would not have even had a ferry and we would be a whole different county today. He said it was one of the worst decisions that's ever been made in Beaufort County.

Chairman Waters said I've got a couple of points. He said when I was in high school at Bath back in the 60's and they were talking about the possibility of having a bridge we were told we could not have a bridge but we could have a ferry so early on the ferry system here from Bayview over to Aurora was a highway. He said it connected both sides, the northside and the southside. He said the bridge has come up several times in the past 50 to 60 years and we have maintained the ferry, it's an important part of our infrastructure here in Beaufort County. He said I can understand, my second point I can understand if we were building, trying to get a bridge built today and we did not have a ferry, the legislature and the DOT says well, we can put a ferry in there as one option but the local people would have to help pay for that. He said that's really where the opposition is coming from, it's coming from people in the metropolitan areas. He said when they built additional highways to connect the suburbs to the downtown area they're saying we'll do that but you'll have to pay a toll and it's being done upfront. He said it's very unfair in a rural area like us that has one of the major phosphate mines in the world and where we have employees that depend on it every day to go to work, for them to slap that tax on us locally. He said so I support it and I'll entertain if there's no other comments we'll take a vote.

Motion: Commissioner Booth motioned to approve the resolution entitled "*A Resolution Opposing the Tolls on Ferry Service Operations of the Bayview-Aurora Ferry route*". Commissioner Walker seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Motion: Commissioner Booth motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Walker seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathleen Mosher
Clerk to the Board



A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE TOLLS ON FERRY SERVICE OPERATIONS OF THE BAYVIEW-AURORA FERRY ROUTE

WHEREAS, House Bill 259, Short title 2023 State Appropriations Act, calls for tolling all ferry routes in North Carolina including the Bayview-Aurora Ferry Route; and

WHEREAS, the Bayview Ferry Terminal and the Aurora Ferry Terminal are in Beaufort County, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Beaufort County is a rural county, bisected by the Pamlico River with the only bridges crossing the Pamlico River at the most western end of the County; and

WHEREAS, the Bayview-Aurora Ferry route provides basic transportation access for residents and visitors in the eastern part of the County and without it would require a 59-mile land detour to reach the other side of the Pamlico River; and

WHEREAS, ferries are an integral part of the road systems in Eastern NC and until bridges can be built, ferries are critical to basic transportation needs; and

WHEREAS, a ferry is an extension of the highway system and such proposed addition of ferry tolls where there is none at present will constitute an unfair taxation burden upon residents of areas served by ferry service; and

WHEREAS, due to rural nature of the area, residents of Beaufort County must drive longer distances to obtain basic needs such as employment, food, and medical care; and

WHEREAS, because of driving longer distances, residents of Beaufort County pay more in fuel taxes, per capita, than most North Carolinians, thus funding the highway system at a greater per capita amount; and

WHEREAS, in Beaufort County, the Bayview-Aurora Ferry that crosses the Pamlico River, is extremely important to the local economy, providing transportation to approximately 10% of the employees of the County's largest private employer, Nutrien; and

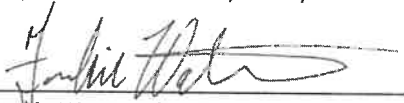
WHEREAS, there have been past attempts to put tourism-based fee policies into place that are extremely detrimental to regional workforce, educational, medical access, and industry needs; and

WHEREAS, imposition of tolls would create a significant hardship on residents of Beaufort County who use the ferry for basic transportation needs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Beaufort County Board of Commissioners strongly opposes tolls on ferry service between Bayview and Aurora, and on other ferry routes where there are no tolls at present and urges the legislature to remove Section 41.11C from House Bill 259 that authorizes tolling on all ferry routes.

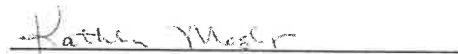
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Beaufort County Board of Commissioners join other coastal communities to urge the legislature to adequately fund the ferry system and to oppose increases on the tolls currently existing on other ferry services.

Adopted this the 27th day of July 2023.



Frankie Waters, Chairman
Beaufort County Board of Commissioners





Kathleen Mosher
Clerk to the Board