

Hard to go, ex-official says

Powhatan's county administrator resigned under pressure

BY KRISTEN GREEN
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Former Powhatan County Administrator Carolyn Bishop, who resigned under pressure from members of the Board of Supervisors, said it was difficult to leave a job that she loves.

Bishop, 46, had worked for the county since 1999. She tendered her resignation Thursday and, on Monday, the board voted 3-2 to accept it.

"I am proud of all the accomplishments that all my staff and I have made," Bishop said Tuesday. "I am just really happy to have had the opportunity to work for such a great county."

She declined to answer questions about why she was asked to resign by three board members — the board's new Republican majority. Bishop said she

was provided a \$129,385 severance package in accordance with her employment contract.

Dozens of Powhatan residents praised her work in board meetings Thursday and Monday, while others expressed concern about the process of letting her go. Finance Director Jerry Whitaker was named acting county administrator.

William B. Melton, vice chairman of the board and one of two dissenters in the vote to accept Bishop's resignation, said he received many calls from residents who wanted Bishop to stay. "I'm not supporting the resignation because I don't think it's in the best interest of the county," he said.

Melton also criticized the process, in which the Republican supervisors — David Williams, Jason Moore and Barry Hodge — met privately with Bishop and asked her to resign before Hodge's and William's terms of office had started. Melton and Supervisor Carson Tucker, who are



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independents, were not invited to the meeting, they said.

"For Mr. Tucker and I to be excluded was not acceptable," Melton said.

However, Melton added, "it's done and we need to move on as a county at this point, as hard as it

is." Tucker said that he and Hodge were meeting Tuesday to discuss how to move forward.

"Whether we see eye-to-eye ... or not is irrelevant," he said. "We are at a juncture where we have to figure out how to make this work. We've got major, major budget issues facing us. We can't use our energy and our intelligence and our diligence in any way except to stay focused on the job of doing the people's business in the county."

Tucker said he and Hodge would be meeting with county employees this week to give them the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their feelings about Bishop's resignation.

Moore, who said he wanted to replace Bishop because the county needs a change, said he wants someone who can evaluate how each department is operating and reconsider staffing needs. He said Bishop's allegiance to the employees, most of whom she had hired, made the virtually impossible.

"They have loyalty to her, and she has loyalty to them. That makes it difficult to evaluate people," Moore said.

The board plans to appoint an interim administrator who could fill the county administrator position for several months, but the board intends to hire a permanent replacement by June.

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