

GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
May 8, 2023 - BUDGET WORK SESSION DAY 1
GRANVILLE EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTER
4185 US Highway 15 South, Oxford, North Carolina

PRESENT:

Chair Russ May

Vice Chair Timothy Karan

Commissioner Zelodis Jay

Commissioner Robert Williford

Commissioner Sue Hinman

Commissioner Tony W. Cozart

Commissioner Jimmy Gooch

County Manager Drew Cummings

Deputy County Manager Korena Weichel

County Attorney James C. Wrenn, Jr.

CALL TO ORDER

At 9:03 a.m. Chair Russ May called the meeting to order. Chair May had the invocation and Commissioner Timothy Karan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair May opened the meeting by emphasizing the importance of asking questions and challenging proposals. He highlighted the need to dig into the fund balance while still seeking opportunities to cut expenses. He reiterated the Board's commitment to avoiding a tax raise and discussed plans to address law enforcement and public safety pay. He emphasized the need for a methodical approach and ongoing efforts to improve funding in the next budget year. Chair May also mentioned upcoming meetings with the Sheriff's Office to listen and to address concerns.

WELCOME BY COUNTY MANAGER DREW CUMMINGS

County Manager Drew Cummings acknowledged the unexpected events of the weekend and expressed gratitude for the coordinated response of various agencies. He thanked the staff for their efforts in organizing the meeting. Mr. Cummings admitted to facing challenges in navigating his first budget cycle and expressed commitment to improving the efficiency of future processes. He encouraged questions and discussion, emphasizing the complexity of County government operations. He highlighted the importance of discernment in funding priorities and appreciated the efforts of staff in providing materials for discussion.

BOARD APPROVED UPDATES TO THE 2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

County Manager Cummings addressed the updates to the strategic plan, suggesting the adoption of the plan as the official one without further discussion unless there were any additional questions.

When asked for clarification from Board members about the proposed budget, County Manager Cummings emphasized that he aimed to reflect the interests expressed by the Board in his budget recommendation. He acknowledged the inevitability of negotiation in the budget process, highlighting the need to balance additions with removals due to the budget's limitations. While

there is room for adjustments in an \$82 million budget, every addition may require reallocating funds by removing other items. Commissioner Cozart reiterated Mr. Cummings' point that for each new addition, something else must be removed. County Manager Cummings agreed that was a good rule of thumb.

Chair May expressed concern about depleting the fund balance further, while County Manager Cummings highlighted the budget's various contingency measures. Chair May emphasized the importance of preparing for unexpected expenses to avoid jeopardizing the fund balance, referencing past experiences with unforeseen costs.

Motioned by Commissioner Timothy Karan, seconded by Commissioner Jimmy Gooch, and unanimously carried, the Board Approved the 2023 updates to the Granville County 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURE SUMMARIES BY DEPARTMENT

County Manager Cummings and Deputy County Manager Korena Weichel provided an overview of departmental budgets, emphasizing operational expenses and noting increases due to cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and merit pay adjustments. He highlighted the centralization of IT purchasing, resulting in a significant budget increase streamlined through the IT department. County Manager Cummings explained the transition plan for centralizing fleet management and the prioritization of vehicle replacements. Mr. Cummings also touched on operational deficits in Kerr Area Regional Transit Authority (KARTS) with potential implications for future budgets. The discussion further delved into the planning department, airport operations, and detention center. The need for proactive measures to address substance abuse issues and ensure adequate support for individuals transitioning out of detention was addressed. Challenges with staffing, audits, and administrative support within certain departments were mentioned. Overall, efforts to tighten operational budgets were acknowledged, reflecting a nearly 20% reduction in non-personnel expenses.

BREAK

At 10:16 a.m. the Board took a short break and resumed the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

REVIEW OF SERVICE EXPANSIONS:

A lengthy review and discussion ensued concerning service expansions and salary adjustments. Some topics mentioned were the Management Analyst position, pay for part-time workers, mandates of early voting hours, acrylic barriers for the Board of Elections, spay and neuter program, COLAs (cost of living adjustment), revaluation costs, 911 Emergency Communications calls, Medicaid expansion, authority and funding around Sheriff's budget, and others. There was recognition of the necessity to remain competitive in terms of salaries to attract and retain talent, especially in fields like law enforcement and IT. The complexities of budgeting were also explored, including considerations such as fund balance, revenue predictions, and tax rates. There was uncertainty surrounding the funding and expiration dates of Sheriff's Office consulting contracts, prompting consideration for future budget adjustments. Recommendations for additional school funding were outlined, with an emphasis on effective management by the School Board and potential increases in funding for School Resource Officers (SROs).

LUNCH

At 12:09 p.m. the Board took a break for lunch. The workshop resumed at 1:09 p.m.

REVIEW OF SERVICE EXPANSIONS CONTINUED

Procedural matters were taken care of after lunch. The Board consented to support the annual 4th of July fireworks at Lake Holt. An upcoming surplus property event for non-profits and others that were occurring the next two weekends was announced.

County Manager Cummings talked about a KARTS funding request that will be on the next agenda and the request for a service expansion and discussion ensued. Other items mentioned were cleaning services for the Expo Center and other county buildings, cell phones for deputies, VGCC (Vance-Granville Community College) request for capital outlay funding, and shared Grant Officer. Balancing competing needs and the desire to provide competitive salaries while being fiscally responsible was acknowledged as a challenge. Commissioners emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in budget spending, highlighting the need to balance necessary funds with departmental autonomy.

EDUCATION REVIEW

County Manager Cummings discussed the uncertainty surrounding teacher raises in the State budget and the potential impact on the County's education funding. Despite the likelihood of minimal increases, they acknowledged the unpredictability of State decisions in time for the County's budgeting process. Regarding teacher compensation, they speculated on the possibility of a 4% raise, considering both government and school sector perspectives. They also mentioned the potential for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for teachers and the possibility of State funding for an advanced manufacturing center, which could involve collaboration with neighboring counties. The discussion highlighted the importance of aligning high school and community college courses, particularly in fields like welding, to facilitate student transitions. Overall, the conversation reflected cautious optimism amid uncertainties about state funding and future collaborative initiatives in education.

REVIEW OF FEE MANUAL CHANGES

Deputy County Manager Weichel led the discussion on proposed fee manual changes, noting that most changes were straightforward and thoroughly reviewed at the staff level. Notable adjustments included amendments to fees for EMS services, reflecting outdated practices from when the County managed EMS services directly. There was also discussion about franchise application fees for ambulance services, considering the evolving landscape of ambulance transportation and the need to streamline administrative processes. County Manager Cummings emphasized the statutory requirement to charge fees that adequately cover inspection expenses and highlighted the challenges of recruiting and retaining skilled inspectors in a growing county. The proposed adjustments aimed to simplify fee structures and maintain parity with industry standards, facilitating effective resource allocation and service delivery. Attention was drawn to the recreational fee for communities, generating dialogue about its intended purpose and implications for local development projects. Overall, the discussion reflected a strategic approach to fee adjustments, balancing the County's financial sustainability with the need to support community development and service provision. A review of the changes to the fee manual continued.

REVIEW OF NON-PROFIT FUNDING

A review and discussion on nonprofit funding focused on reviewing special appropriations requests received during the year. A question was asked about Franklin-Vance-Warren Opportunity and why Granville is not in the name. It was noted that Granville is included in the funding and the name has a historical background. A question was also asked about SROs and funding.

Discussion delved into the specifics of each nonprofit's funding request, with considerations about their impact on the community and alignment with County objectives. There was also mention of developing clearer service contracts with funded nonprofits to ensure transparency and accountability in funding utilization. Mr. Cummings highlighted the importance of understanding the public goods received in exchange for County funding. He discussed efforts to establish clearer relationships with funded nonprofits and articulate the benefits provided to the community. Overall, the conversation reflected a strategic approach to nonprofit funding, aiming to ensure effective resource allocation while supporting community organizations and addressing public needs.

BREAK

At 2:28 p.m., the Board took a short break. The meeting resumed at 2:41 p.m.

SOLID WASTE OPERATION REVIEW

County Manager Cummings initiated a review of solid waste management operations and funding. The focal point of discussion centered around a proposed fee increase for landfill waste, raising it from \$38 to \$45 per ton. Concerns about potential repercussions on market competitiveness and the financial burden on residential waste disposal were voiced.

Environmental Services Director Jason Falls provided an overview of current landfill operations, highlighting ongoing infrastructure enhancements and outlining future plans, including evaluating landfill contracts and examining proposals for optimizing landfill operations.

Discussion ensued regarding fee structures, customer feedback, the efficacy of recycling initiatives, and agreements for ancillary services like scrap metal removal and tire disposal. An essential point of consideration emerged regarding the competitive landscape of waste management services compared to municipal utilities like water and sewer. Overall, the discussion highlighted the necessity of a strategic approach to ensure operational efficiency and financial viability in the face of market competition.

FIRE COMMISSION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Emergency Management Director Jason Reavis gave an overview of the Fire Commission and Emergency Management department. The discussion covered resource allocation for fire departments, coordination among emergency response agencies, and strategies to improve the county's emergency response capabilities. Budgetary allocations and funding mechanisms for fire services were examined including fundraisers and private donations, along with the role of volunteer fire departments in bolstering firefighting capabilities across different areas. Additionally, there were discussions on specific initiatives to improve public safety, such as community outreach programs and disaster preparedness campaigns. Overall, the dialogue

provided a detailed exploration of the County's fire and emergency management landscape, highlighting both current strengths and areas for potential improvement.

RECESS

There was a mention of a closed session, but it was decided it could be held on Thursday if needed. County Manager Cummings announced that the budget public hearing will be held on May 15, 2023, and possible adoption of the budget in June.

Commissioner May reported that Creedmoor took action on a matter and will be sending a notification to the Board of Commissioners.

Motioned by Sue Hinman, seconded by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, and unanimously carried, the Board recessed at 5:03 p.m. until Thursday, May 11, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Debra A. Weary, NCMCC, CMC
Clerk to the Board