

GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
February 24, 2023 – RETREAT DAY 2
CREEDMOOR COMMUNITY CENTER
108 East Wilton Avenue, Creedmoor, 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
Assistant County Manager Korena Weichel
County Attorney James C. Wrenn, Jr. (arrived at 9:07 a.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

At 9:00 a.m. Chair Russ May called the meeting to order and went over housekeeping rules regarding timekeeping for the meeting. He then recognized Reverend David Herman of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church who had the invocation. Commissioner Timothy Karan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSENT AGENDA

County Manager Cummings reviewed the consent agenda.

Motioned by Commissioner Jimmy Gooch, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the consent agenda as follows:

- (a) Approved the fiscal year 2021-2022 annual financial audit as presented by Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams and Co. at the February 6, 2023 regular board meeting.
- (b) Approved awarding a service contract to Builder Services, Inc. of NC for flood damage remediation in the amount of \$149,160.10 with funding provided through NCACC claim reimbursement for Granville-Vance District Public Health.
- (c) Approved awarding a fixed-price service contract to Paul Williford Builder, LLC for repairing the wall and ceiling damage for an amount not to exceed \$43,600.00 with funding provided through NCACC claim reimbursement for Granville-Vance District Public Health.
- (d) Approved awarding a fixed-price service contract to A.B. Hair Carpet, Inc. for replacing damaged luxury vinyl tile (LVT) floor covering for an amount not to exceed \$39,976.38 with funding provided through NCACC claim reimbursement for Granville-Vance District Public Health.
- (e) Approved awarding a fixed-price purchasing and installation contract to Interior Wood Specialties, Inc. for replacing damaged base-cabinets and counters for an amount not to exceed \$22,453.00 with funding provided

through NCACC claim reimbursement for Granville-Vance District Public Health.

- (f) Approved renewing the cleaning contract for one year with Tidy Lady's Cleaning Service for cleaning the Stovall and Berea Libraries at the cost of \$1,000 per month.

Approved awarding the cleaning contract for one year to Keeps Clean LLC for cleaning the R. H. Thornton Library at the cost of \$2,393.00 per month.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Chair May asked if any Board members would like to make comments.

Commissioner Gooch noted that there are limited funds to be distributed throughout the county and asked departments to be mindful of any substantial budget increases. He asked if substantial budget requests are made, to note what funds may be identified. Commissioner Hinman said she liked that idea.

No other board members made comments.

COMMENTS BY SENATOR MARY WILLS BODE

North Carolina Senator Mary Wills Bode expressed for additional State funding for employee pay and benefits, including a 401(k) match, and stressed the importance of addressing societal issues like youth violence. She emphasized decisive action to support the County's growth and manage associated challenges and opportunities.

Senator Bode discussed potential Medicaid expansion in North Carolina, which could bring significant employment and revenue benefits to Granville County. She updated on ongoing collaborations regarding budget requests, highlighting Governor Cooper's proposals and her commitment to advocating for the county's needs through various avenues.

She also offered assistance with leveraging resources from the Governor's office and other agencies for Granville County, encouraging the commissioners to keep her informed about grant requests and other support needs.

Commissioner Hinman addressed the decrease in food stamps for seniors, underscoring the impact on this vulnerable group. Senator Bode expressed her willingness to explore better support mechanisms.

Commissioner Jay mentioned the rising cost of essentials like milk and cereal, prompting further discussion on finding solutions.

Commissioner Cozart noted upcoming opportunities to align with the state's legislative agenda through the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

CLARIFICATION ABOUT DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUESTS

County Manager Drew Cummings noted that department heads are drafting 5% budget cuts in their budgets to identify what could possibly be stopped or cut back on. He clarified that the identified cuts should be within their own departments.

Commissioner Gooch clarified that he was not talking about needs, but of wants when he commented earlier.

He encouraged Board members to ask questions or if time is tight, to send them to him.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES UPDATE

Development Services Director Scott Phillips provided an update on the growth in Granville County. The presentation highlighted the increase in new construction permit values over the past four years, with significant growth in certain areas of the County. The impact of this growth on revenue sources, such as property tax and sales tax, was also discussed. The presentation emphasized the positive economic activity in the County and the potential for additional revenue in the future.

Mr. Phillips provided an overview of Inspections Department activities and achievements, highlighting the dedication and public engagement of the staff, and noting the transition with the addition of new inspectors. He shared statistics indicating a decrease in residential permits issued, likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic factors, though there was an increase in remodels and additions to existing homes. Despite fewer new constructions, revenue was slightly above the previous year, attributed to the larger size of homes being built, with the workload slightly reduced, reflecting a current market anomaly.

Notable accomplishments included the implementation of the iPlan integrated digital plan review system and the promotion of Stacey Carey to Chief Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Phillips also noted the future impact of expected commercial and industrial projects like the CertainTeed plant expansion and the Altec project, with ongoing discussions with developers and design firms about various projects across the county.

Looking forward, Mr. Phillips emphasized the need for a fee increase to cover departmental costs, adjust for inflation, and prepare for future expansions. He also discussed plans to maintain quick turnaround times for inspections and permit applications despite the increasing workload.

Commissioner Williford inquired about the development on Landis Road/Hunt property, and Mr. Phillips clarified that they are active sites being developed, particularly in the city of Oxford, with road construction underway.

Commissioner Karan asked about complaint investigations handled by the Inspection Department. Mr. Phillips discussed the steady flow of complaint investigations, emphasizing their case-by-case approach. He also mentioned the potential for condemnation but highlighted the preference for resolution without extreme measures.

Commissioner Karan questioned the compliance of citizens with requests and the process for resolving issues. Mr. Phillips mentioned citizens' varying levels of cooperation and discussed plans to create informational pages on the department's website to educate citizens about permit processing.

Commissioner Jay raised concerns about unkempt properties and living conditions. Mr. Phillips discussed the regulations around junk accumulation and addressed challenges when people live in substandard conditions. He emphasized the department's effort to work with occupants and avoid extreme measures like condemnation.

Mr. Phillips provided an overview of ongoing and upcoming capital projects, including DSS (Department of Social Services) relocation site renovations, MSW landfill expansion, Northern

Granville Senior Center project, Granville-Vance Health Department flood damage repairs, walking trail replacements, Cooperative Extension teaching kitchen, and Triangle North Water Infrastructure. He answered questions from Board members.

Mr. Phillips outlined potential future projects categorized into 2-5 years, 5-8 years, and 8-10 years. Key projects include a new building for development services, demolition of certain structures, a new solid waste site in southern Granville, and future considerations for the courthouse, government office expansion, and DSS building in Creedmoor.

County Manager Cummings briefly introduced a preliminary version of a long-term financing plan being developed by the County to address the funding of future projects, considering the use of debt financing for larger and longer-term projects.

SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE

Department of Social Services Director Adonica Hampton discussed various aspects of the Department of Social Services, including the programs and services they provide, the challenges they face, and the opportunities for the future. She mentioned the turnover rate in employees and the efforts to utilize retirees on a part-time basis for training. She also talked about the need for more staff in light of Medicaid expansion and the increasing number of cases they handle. Additionally, she highlighted the issue of children living at the DSS office and the importance of foster families in providing care for these children.

Commissioner Gooch inquired about efforts to utilize retirees part-time for training due to the high turnover rate. Ms. Hampton explained the challenges and discussed previous attempts to address staffing gaps.

Commissioner Hinman expressed concerns about children in custody, emphasizing the challenges of finding appropriate placements and the impact on both children and staff. Ms. Hampton and the Commissioners discussed potential solutions, including additional financial support for foster families.

Chair May shared a personal story regarding a child needing services and commended Ms. Hampton's efforts in addressing the issue. The discussion highlighted the challenges faced by children with developmental disabilities and the need for collaboration with private entities.

BREAK

At 10:36 a.m. the Board took a short break. The meeting resumed at 10:42 a.m.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE UPDATE

Sheriff Fountain detailed the recent reorganization of the Granville County Sheriff's Office, emphasizing the restructuring of the organizational chart to reduce top-heaviness and realign positions for better efficiency. He restructured the Chief Deputy position, transitioning the role to supervise the Special Operations Intelligence Division, overseeing Narcotic jurisdiction and the newly formed Special Operations Response Team.

He mentioned collaborations with HR Director Angela Miles for assistance in aligning hiring processes with professional standards and noted that the office successfully passed two audits, with an upcoming FBI audit scheduled for their records management system. The detention

services received a 100% rating from State jail detention services, and there are ongoing efforts to enhance courthouse security by restructuring entrance protocols.

Sheriff Fountain also discussed operational changes in field operations, including utilizing off-duty personnel for courthouse and road duties and enforcing training standards requiring personnel to commit to eight hours a month to maintain their certification.

Discussion ensued on the following topics:

- Staff retention challenges due to competitive salaries offered by nearby jurisdictions, particularly Oxford, which has raised its starting salary significantly.
- Restructuring within the Sheriff's Office aimed at improving efficiency by redistributing responsibilities and eliminating the chief deputy position.
- Upcoming changes to training standards affecting recruitment practices, requiring new hires to be certified before attending Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET).
- Sheriff Fountain's proactive recruitment strategy to adapt to the new BLET standards and the competition for qualified candidates.
- Inquiries about the organizational structure, particularly the clarification of sworn positions and the impact of new training standards.
- Concerns about the clarity of pay scales and position counts within the department, leading to a request for a detailed breakdown to assess financial implications.
- Discussions about the potential of the detention center becoming a revenue-producing entity and the strategies to manage patrol vehicle fleets efficiently.
- The introduction of a new School Resource Officer (SRO) to enhance school safety and the systematic approach to handling student altercations in collaboration with local schools and juvenile justice systems.
- The need for additional funding for SRO positions and the participation of law enforcement in Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) meetings.
- The initiation of recruitment efforts for an animal control position and discussions on resource allocation across departments.
- The Sheriff's vehicle policy.
- The lack of a dedicated Public Information Officer (PIO) and the approach to handling public and media inquiries.
- The Sheriff's perspective on the importance of law enforcement in ensuring community safety compared to other departmental needs, and the remainder of the county's limited funds during budget discussions.

NC ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' PRESENTATION

Kevin Leonard, the Executive Director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC), addressed provided a handout and spoke about several key issues affecting counties during his presentation. He focused on the legislative landscape, the challenges and opportunities facing county governments, and the critical roles that county commissioners play. Mr. Leonard highlighted the need for collaboration and education among county officials to navigate the complexities of county governance. He discussed balancing legislative constraints, budget limitations, and community needs. Mr. Leonard also touched on strategic initiatives such as broadband expansion and the effective use of funding, emphasizing the NCACC's role in enhancing public services through legislative advocacy and supporting counties in their service delivery efforts.

Key areas of focus included:

- **Medicaid Expansion:** Mr. Leonard highlighted the importance of Medicaid expansion and its timing, noting the potential financial benefits for counties if implemented sooner rather than later.
- **Broadband Access:** A significant focus was placed on the need for expanded broadband access in rural areas. Mr. Leonard discussed funding opportunities and strategic initiatives like the CAB program to improve broadband infrastructure.
- **Housing and Property Taxes:** The conversation included the impact of property taxes on housing affordability and the legislative discussions aimed at capping or freezing property taxes for certain demographics.
- **Education and Public Services:** He addressed the need for funding in education, particularly for maintaining and upgrading school facilities, rather than just new construction.

Board members asked questions and made comments. Mr. Leonard provided his business card and encouraged Board members to reach out to him with any questions or concerns.

LUNCH BREAK

At 12:30 p.m., the Board took a break for lunch. The meeting resumed at 1:03 p.m.

FIRE COMMISSION PROGRESS UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Chief Cottrell, standing in for Andy Culbreth, discussed the evolution of fire service funding in Granville County, noting the shift from general funds to a dedicated 6% fire tax. This change aims to better meet growth and operational needs, with the Fire Commission overseeing allocations. He detailed ongoing contract negotiations to ensure transparency and fairness due to the new funding model's broader responsibilities and protections. Financial discussions included the distribution of 2022-2023 base funding and a proposed 4% increase for 2023-2024. The Fire Commission is also considering financial audits for accountability despite their rising costs.

Chief Cottrell emphasized the importance of data in evaluating fire service effectiveness, such as response times and resource deployment, which informs strategic decisions about station locations and resource allocation. He highlighted the implementation of daytime staffing funded by the fire tax to maintain responsiveness during critical hours.

Looking ahead, he stressed the need to adapt to growth and changing community needs, which may require adjustments in staffing, station locations, and the funding model to ensure efficient and equitable fire protection services. Key points included:

- **Funding Stability and Equity:** Efforts were acknowledged to ensure all fire departments received the same funding as the previous year, highlighting a commitment to not reduce services. Discussions touched on the allocation of \$1.87 million in funds, emphasizing the importance of equitable distribution based on operational costs and the need for capital funding due to the aging fleet of fire trucks.
- **Special Funding Concerns:** A specific issue was raised regarding the Virgilina Fire Department, which is located near the state line and receives partial funding. This led to a broader debate about the fairness and methodology of funding departments that cover areas both inside and outside the county.
- **Operational Enhancements and Challenges:** Board discussed the necessity of enhancing fire services by putting more firefighters on trucks and addressing startup costs such as equipping fire stations with necessary facilities like showers and proper gear. The costs

associated with equipping a firefighter were noted to be substantial, highlighting the financial challenges of maintaining a well-equipped fire service.

- **Data and Accountability:** There was a focus on the importance of accurate data from the CAD system to ensure funds are allocated fairly and effectively. The need for detailed reporting and possibly revising the audit and review processes to ensure financial accountability was also discussed.
- **Proposal and Future Planning:** The discussion concluded with the acknowledgment that the proposals presented were preliminary and subject to further review and adjustment. There was a collective understanding of the need to revisit and possibly revamp the funding models and operational strategies to better serve the community and ensure the fire departments are adequately funded and equipped.

Board members thanked the firefighters for their service and dedication to Granville County.

EXPO AUDIOVISUAL UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

IT Director Chris Brame presented a comprehensive plan to modernize the audio-visual systems. The existing technology was highlighted as significantly dated, prompting the need for upgrades. The proposed enhancements include speaker replacements, audio rack repositioning, digital mixer installations, and improved video displays. The Board expressed interest in exploring the possibility of livestreaming meetings and considering additional improvements such as LED lighting.

Key areas included:

- **Audio System Upgrade:**
 - Replacing speakers in the gallery area for better sound.
 - Moving the audio rack to the back room for security.
 - Upgrading analog mixers, amps, and connections to digital variants.
 - Upgrading microphones at the commissioner's desk for wider speaking angles.
- **Video System Upgrade:**
 - Upgrading all video displays in the gallery area.
 - Increasing the number of monitors at the commissioner's desk.
 - Upgrading connections from analog VGA to digital HDMI.
 - Adding live streaming capabilities, including installing a camera at the back of the auditorium.
- **Meeting Room Upgrade:**
 - Moving and upgrading the audio-visual rack in the meeting room.
 - Adding a digital mixer with remote control capabilities.
 - Upgrading in-house speakers and projectors.
 - Installing a large display in the back meeting room with wireless capabilities.
- **Additional Considerations:**
 - Issuing an RFP for cost estimates.
 - Exploring LED lighting improvements.
 - Discussing the possibility of livestreaming board meetings.

When asked, Mr. Brame said that the clerk's existing software will work with a new system; the budget for the upgrades could range from \$20,000 to \$80,000, noting that a more detailed cost analysis would be conducted through the RFP process; noted that Board meetings would have the capability to be live streamed and the Board would make that decision; and upgrades would

include options like desktop speakers and earbuds to enhance sound clarity. County Manager Cummings clarified that lightning in the Convention and Expo Center would also be evaluated.

GRANVILLE HEALTH SYSTEM AND EMS UPDATE

Adam McConnell, Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Granville Health System (GHS), spoke from a presentation and outlined GHS's mission of promoting well-being, celebrating healing, and inspiring hope. He highlighted GHS's century-long history and its significant healthcare role, with around 650 employees, a \$36 million payroll, and over \$86 million in net operating revenues.

GHS operates from multiple locations, including the main hospital in Oxford and a south campus, providing services like primary and specialty care, behavioral health, EMS, and skilled nursing. Key statistics include 23,000 ER patients, over 4,000 surgical visits, and 66,000 physician office visits annually, along with 236 births and an average of 50 patients in skilled nursing daily.

Ongoing projects include replacing aging imaging equipment and establishing a new ambulatory surgery facility in Oxford. Additionally, GHS is remodeling a property at 1018 Park Drive for future physician offices, funded by capital and grants.

Chair May requested a snapshot of projects funded through the ARPA funding from the State, seeking information for the public record. Mr. McConnell responded that several projects are still in progress. The health system is expecting three ambulances, purchased with ARPA funds, to arrive in April. Other projects include parking lot repaving, contingent on the completion of city work in Oxford, and HVAC replacements across the health system. The anticipated arrival of the ambulances coincides with the ongoing projects.

Jonathan Pernell, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Director, spoke from a presentation including the following and other topics:

- Provided EMS Highlights
- EMS Staffing Profile
- EMS Schedule Types
- EMS Base Locations – Oxford, Wilton, Stovall, Butner & Oak Hill
- Daily Transport Ambulance Coverage
- EMS Call Volume by County Comparison
- EMS 2022/2023 Budget Comparison with Surrounding Counties
- EMS Fleet and Mileage
- Dispatched Call Data and Call Turnaround Time

Board members made comments and asked questions including about a QRV (Quick Response Vehicle) in Oak Hill, the availability of ambulances when calls are received, tracking of emergency versus non-emergency calls, call volume data, the EMS budget, and ambulance replacement.

COUNTY MANAGER UPDATES

County Manager Cummings discussed the current budget, highlighting budget allocations, including substantial funding for schools and other County services, salary challenges and retention, and mentioned initiatives to manage healthcare costs effectively. He detailed mid-year financial adjustments, with expenditures and contributions affecting the unassigned fund balance, which he found challenging due to the integration of COVID-related federal funds. Mr. Cummings expressed a need for a clearer understanding of fund balance movements, especially with large expenditures like landfill operations, which have become unexpectedly costly due to

regulatory requirements and operational changes. Mr. Cummings also outlined the challenges with the landfill contract, noting the urgency of finding a sustainable operational plan due to the current operator nearing the end of his career and potential cost increases. He stressed the need for strategic planning in handling the county's solid waste management, considering both operational and environmental impacts. Mr. Cummings emphasized the importance of transparency, careful financial management, and proactive planning to navigate the county's fiscal challenges and ensure stability and continuity in services.

Chair May mentioned concerns about providing staffing without justification and that a policy is needed if the county implements fleet vehicle management.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSIONS FROM RETREAT ITEMS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

Commissioner Jay expressed appreciation for the informative retreat, highlighting presentations by the South Granville Water and Sewer Authority (SGWASA) about water system expansions and the school board's report on needing more SROs. He noted that Granville County is growing and emphasized the necessity for departmental expansion to accommodate this growth and provide services. He discussed the challenge of finding funds to support such expansion and stressed that growth requires adaptation and continued provision of excellent services to the community.

Commissioner Williford shared his educational experience during his first budget retreat and expressed gratitude towards the board for their support and patience. He thanked the County Manager and staff for a dedicated budget session that greatly enhanced his understanding of county budget operations. He acknowledged the hard work of department heads and expressed hope to bring value to the Board.

Commissioner Hinman thanked DSS Director Hampton for her update and acknowledged the challenges in Social Services. She expressed concerns about the School Board's decisions regarding closing schools and the mentioned Sheriff's adjustments as a newly elected official. She appreciated the Board's ability to work well together and thanked all staff for their hard work.

Commissioner Cozart reflected on the societal challenges affecting the community, noting their impact on public safety, education, and social services. He expressed concern about youth violence in his district and discussed the role of local government in addressing these societal issues. He highlighted the importance of leveraging resources effectively to address community needs and praised the efforts of everyone involved in the retreat.

Commissioner Gooch welcomed Commissioner Williford and discussed the blessing of having dedicated County staff. He emphasized the importance of staying informed on County operations and budget matters. He advocated for improving employee benefits, particularly the 401(k) program, to enhance recruitment and retention, reflecting on the potential long-term benefits of such investments.

Commissioner Karan described the retreat as a unique experience and applauded a recent grant acquisition by SGWASA. He mentioned concerns with the School Board for its indecision, highlighting the consequences of inaction. He appreciated the hard work of County staff and emphasized the importance of timely decision-making to avoid missing opportunities, especially in budget matters and community services.

Chair May expressed gratitude for the support during his tenure as chair and acknowledged the efforts of county staff and commissioners in handling county matters effectively. He discussed focusing on employee salaries and exploring benefits beyond salary to enhance employee

satisfaction and retention, emphasizing the need to balance budget considerations with employee compensation.

Board Approved Funding for Area Congregations in Ministry (ACIM)

Chair May said he had two matters for consideration.

Chair May said that Commissioner Hinman would recuse herself from this matter. He then recommended allocating \$40,000 from the ARPA funding that went to fund balance to ACIM for food replenishment.

Motioned by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried by a vote of 6-0 (Commissioner Hinman was recused), the Board approved funding in the amount of \$40,000 from fund balance for food replenishment at the Area Congregations in Ministry (ACIM).

Board Approved Funding for Projects at South Granville High School and J.F. Webb High School with Contingency

Chair May proposed allocating \$250,000 for school projects, including \$125,000 to renovate or reconstitute the South Granville High School weight room and any remaining surplus funds to be used for fencing for the girls' softball facility; and \$125,000 for J.F. Webb High School to renovate the concession stand and bathrooms and any remaining funds be used for the electrical panel repair. He noted this would be contingent upon a match by Granville County Public Schools for the same purposes. If Granville County Public Schools does not match, the County will reevaluate the projects.

A motion was made by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart to approve the two projects.

Commissioner Jay asked about the source of the funds and clarification was sought about work on the tracks at both schools. J.F. Webb High School track has been repaired, but the South Granville High School track is a costly repair due to the extent of work needed.

Commissioner Zelodis Jay seconded the motion.

Commissioner Karan sought budgetary pre-clearance. Commissioner Gooch wanted to hold the matter until clarification about the funding.

Chair May proceeded with the vote as funds had been set aside previously. He called for a vote on the motion, it was as follows:

Motioned by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, seconded by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, and unanimously carried, the Board approved a total of \$250,000 for the following projects contingent upon a match by Granville County Public Schools for the same purposes:

- \$125,000 to renovate or reconstitute the South Granville High School weight room and if funds are left, to be used for fencing needs for the girls' softball facility.
- \$125,000 to renovate J.F. Webb High School concession stand and bathrooms and if funds are left, to be used for the electrical panel repair.

ADJOURNMENT AND CLOSED SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Sue Hinman, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, the Board adjourned the retreat and went into closed session as allowed by North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) for attorney-client matters at 4:52 p.m.

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