

GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
February 19, 2024 RETREAT DAY 1
GRANVILLE EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTER
4185 US Highway 15 South, Oxford, North Carolina

PRESENT:

Chair Timothy Karan
Vice Chair Jimmy Gooch
Commissioner Zelodis Jay
Commissioner Robert Williford
Commissioner Sue Hinman
Commissioner Tony W. Cozart
Commissioner Russ May

County Manager Drew Cummings
Assistant County Manager Korena Weichel
County Attorney James C. Wrenn, Jr.

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m. Chair Timothy Karan called the meeting to order. Commissioner Jimmy Gooch had the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

WELCOME AND COMMENTS BY CHAIR TIMOTHY KARAN

Chair Karan thanked Vice Chairman Gooch for the invocation and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted the packed agenda and emphasized the importance of open dialogue and discussions. He mentioned upcoming guests, including the North Carolina legislative team, fire departments, and municipal representatives. He acknowledged Representative Winslow's absence due to travel commitments.

COMMENTS BY COUNTY MANAGER DREW CUMMINGS

County Manager Drew Cummings thanked Chair Karan and welcomed attendees. He acknowledged the efforts of staff in organizing the event and expressed gratitude to those providing updates. Mr. Cummings highlighted the following County achievements:

- Significant improvements in compensation for public safety, staff, and departments like Social Services and Animal Control.
- Bidding out landfill operations.
- Revaluation of property values.
- Finalizing details of fire protection funding with the new fire protection district.
- Development of the county's first-ever 10-year capital improvement program.
- Successful execution of a changeover in the entire fleet management system.
- Management of turnover in multiple key department head positions.
- Execution of the sale of a quarter of the acres in the Triangle North Business Park, despite the Economic Development Department being empty.
- Continuation of operations across 27 county departments, with appreciation for the dedication of the workers behind them.

FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE BY DAVENPORT REPRESENTATIVES

County Manager Cummings welcomed colleagues from Davenport & Company LLC, the County's financial advisors, who have been instrumental in developing a draft ten-year capital improvement plan. He highlighted the ongoing collaboration with Commissioners in refining the plan to address infrastructure needs for a growing and evolving population, including considerations for demographic shifts such as an aging population and rapid growth in the southern part of the county.

Ted Cole, Senior Vice President, spoke from PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet. Mr. Cole mentioned Davenport's longstanding partnership with the County, primarily focusing on capital planning and debt issuance for projects. He provided an overview of their collaboration with the County in developing a multi-year capital plan. He emphasized that the presentation was solely for informational purposes and not seeking immediate action.

Mr. Cole discussed the County's bond ratings, highlighting the potential for improvement and its impact on borrowing costs. He outlined the methodology used by rating agencies and emphasized the County's strong financial performance, including revenue outperforming expenses and growing reserves. Additionally, Mr. Cole discussed the county's debt policies and capacity for additional debt issuance while remaining compliant. He presented a list of potential capital projects and funding options, noting the importance of community feedback in refining the list. Mr. Cole concluded by discussing the county's debt profile and affordability, highlighting the flexibility in funding projects with existing resources and the potential need for additional revenue commitments in the future.

County Manager Cummings highlighted the potential for increased revenue generation without a tax rate increase due to higher revenue from each penny of the tax rate.

Commissioner May inquired about school funding within the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). County Manager Cummings clarified that the state grant for a new Hawley Middle School was not funded by the State and noted that he anticipated some smaller projects in the future.

Mr. Cole further explained that the CIP includes around \$25-30 million for school capital, funded by cash resources rather than debt. Additionally, there was discussion about the flexibility of the 10-year CIP and the importance of community input in the planning process. County Manager Cummings emphasized the need for strategic planning for infrastructure projects, given the county's financial constraints. Chair Karan reiterated that the presented plans are for reference and subject to change.

GRANVILLE HEALTH SYSTEM AND EMS UPDATE

Granville Health Systems CEO Adam McConnell provided highlights of Granville Health System (GHS) operations, including its services, facilities, and performance.

Mr McConnell spoke from the PowerPoint and key points included:

- Granville Health System employs approximately 600 staff and has 240 medical staff members.
- The system includes a 62-bed hospital, three operating suites, 14 emergency beds, and an 80-bed skilled nursing facility.
- Services provided include primary care, specialty clinics, surgical services, imaging studies, and behavioral health services.
- The hospital received a four-star rating from CMS.

- Annual statistics showed over 24,000 emergency room visits, 4,500 visits in various specialties, and 36,000 imaging studies.
- Financially, the hospital reported revenues of nearly \$90 million with an operating margin of 1.57%.
- Capital expenditures totaled \$2.4 million, with ongoing projects focused on increasing access to care, improving facilities, and engaging with the community.
- The Granville Health System Foundation aims to support the system's dedication to delivering high-quality healthcare.
- The presentation concluded with recognition of staff achievements and an invitation to participate in the upcoming fundraiser, the 10th annual ambulance chase.

Emergency Services Director Jonathan Pernell spoke from a PowerPoint Presentation included in the agenda packet. Mr. Pernell provided an overview of Granville EMS operations and key statistics, including:

- Budgeted for 44 full-time staff and utilizing part-time staff for coverage.
- Staffing hierarchy includes an EMS director, logistics officer, and paramedics/EMTs.
- Utilizes a 24/72 scheduling type for EMS operations.
- Resources are strategically located across the county, with a mix of ambulances and Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs).
- Utilizes both static and dynamic deployment of resources based on call volume patterns.
- Operates four ambulances 24/7, a peak-time truck, and two QRVs.
- Implemented measures to reduce fleet mileage, resulting in increased reliability.
- Presented capital improvement projects for the fiscal year.
- Compared EMS budget, per capita spending, and call volume trends with surrounding rural counties.
- Analyzed call locations, outcomes, and response metrics, including unit hour utilization (UHU) as a performance indicator.

During the discussion on coverage area gaps, Commissioner Williford inquired about the determination for needing another EMS station, particularly concerning the areas west of the Oxford area. Mr. Pernell explained that there is no State mandate regarding response time, and EMS systems use various approaches to mitigate risks and improve response times. The eight-mile radius depicted on the map represents the coverage area around each EMS base, and resources such as Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs) are utilized to enhance response capabilities in areas without established EMS stations. Commissioner Jay expressed concern about the reliance on QRVs instead of ambulances in certain areas, particularly in communities with elderly populations. The discussion also touched upon the challenges of funding additional EMS stations and units, as well as the frequency of mutual aid assistance provided to other counties. The conversation highlighted the importance of addressing coverage area gaps and ensuring adequate funding for EMS services to meet the needs of all communities within Granville County.

Further discussion ensued on the following topics:

- Mr. Pernell discussed the proposed service expansion involving the addition of EMS ambulance resources to the system. He highlighted the need for further studies to determine how to allocate these resources efficiently based on call volumes and population centers.
- Commissioner Williford inquired about the possibility of obtaining grants for funding, to which Mr. Pernell mentioned minimal grant availability and the recent ARPA funds.
- County Manager Cummings clarified the fiscal year misalignment regarding budget requests and highlighted the need for a comprehensive long-term plan for operational and capital needs.

- Commissioner Gooch asked about mutual aid calls, and Mr. Pernell explained that EMS does not track that data, which is managed by the 911 dispatch center.
- Commissioner Cozart raised a logistical question about simultaneous dispatch of QRVs and ambulances, and Mr. Pernell explained the simulcast dispatch process.
- County Manager Cummings emphasized the importance of optimizing EMS resources for different acuity levels of calls.
- Chair Karan expressed appreciation for the EMS system and the data provided, emphasizing the need for metrics in decision-making.

LEGISLATIVE GOALS UPDATE – AMBER HARRIS, NCACC DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

County Manager Cummings introduced Amber Harris of NCACC by expressing gratitude for her presence at the retreat and highlighting the role of NCACC as the eyes, ears, and mouthpiece of county governments in North Carolina. Ms. Harris presented the following key points and takeaways from a PowerPoint presentation:

- Began with a review of recent legislative activities, noting the trend of longer sessions and fewer bills passed. The session was characterized by controversy and high-profile legislation.
- Discussed the \$30 billion state budget and highlighted key priorities such as Medicaid expansion, infrastructure funding, tax cuts, and raises for state employees.
- Outlined significant investments in areas like child welfare and behavioral health, emphasizing the importance of addressing challenges in these areas.
- Addressed the challenges in the foster care system, including the lack of specialized services and the need for policy changes and funding to improve the situation.
- Discussed the difficulties counties face in filling vacancies across departments and emphasized the importance of competitive salaries to attract and retain employees.
- Explained NCACC's process for setting legislative goals, highlighting the inclusive nature of the process and the importance of consensus-building among counties.
- Encouraged counties to come up with fresh ideas for legislative goals rather than relying on old ones.
- Recommended UNC's Advanced Leadership Core training, praising its benefits.
- Acknowledged the concerns Commissioner Gooch raised about property tax issues for seniors and stressed the importance of finding equitable solutions.

FIRE DEPARTMENT GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

County Manager Cummings mentioned the presence of Emergency Management Director Jason Reavis and proposed addressing an action item while he was present. The Board moved the item up on the agenda.

Emergency Management Director Reavis then presented a recommendation from the Fire Commission, proposing to allocate up to \$40,000 in local funding to support the State 50/50 fire grant. He explained that this allocation would serve as the local match, enabling departments to access up to \$80,000 in equipment. He emphasized the urgency of the March 1st deadline for submitting applications and the subsequent steps required for grant approval and equipment procurement.

Commissioner Cozart sought clarification on the March 1st deadline, which Mr. Reavis confirmed as a state-set requirement. Commissioner Gooch inquired about the budget allocation for the

item, which Mr. Reavis confirmed to be part of the 23-24 fiscal year budget, although it might extend into the next fiscal year due to equipment procurement timelines.

BOARD APPROVED FUNDING FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

County Manager Cummings provided additional context, explaining the rationale behind the recommendation and highlighting the surplus in the fire tax fund balance, which made the allocation feasible.

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Russ May, and unanimously carried, the Board approved providing each of the 12 Volunteer Departments up to \$40,000 in funding if awarded the State 50/50 Fire Grant.

Funding will come from the current fiscal year fire budget and from the fire tax fund balance if the maximum amount is awarded to all of the departments.

DINNER

At this point, there was a recess for dinner. The retreat resumed at 6:10 p.m.

RETREAT RESUMED

Chair Karan announced that Representative Matt Winslow was not in attendance due to an unexpected death in the family. He acknowledged the presence of Representative Frank Sossamon and Senator Mary Wills Bode.

Representative Frank Sossamon

Representative Sossamon expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve Granville County and highlighted recent appropriations for various projects.

- Mentioned the progress at Triangle North Granville and the positive impact of received funds from Vance Granville Community College.
- Acknowledged resistance to change but emphasized the importance of growth and expansion for the county's future.
- Noted significant State budget allocations for water and sewer projects, as well as a raise for teachers.
- Highlighted his efforts in organizing and hosting informative forums on various topics, such as broadband, transportation, mental health, and daycare.
- Mentioned working with Dr. Cozart on daycare initiatives and addressing workforce development.
- Discussed the need for education and awareness forums, particularly on topics like mental health and cancer.
- Mentioned the success of task forces in Vance County and plans to replicate them in Granville County, focusing on areas like education, health, and economic development.
- Discussed his involvement in a litter campaign and efforts to engage the prison system for assistance.
- Emphasized the importance of accessing available grants and scholarships and his commitment to assisting constituents with their needs.
- Expressed willingness to collaborate and address any questions or concerns from the community.

Senator Mary Wills Bode

Senator Bode expressed gratitude for the opportunity to represent Granville County in the North Carolina State Senate and emphasized bipartisan collaboration among legislative delegates.

She spoke from a PowerPoint presentation not included in the agenda packet. Key points and takeaways include:

- Discussed the implementation of Medicaid expansion, highlighting its impact on providing affordable healthcare access to thousands of residents in Granville County.
- Provided updates on the Raleigh to Richmond high-speed rail project (S line), mentioning significant federal funding allocation and the potential for a spur line to connect Granville County.
- Touched upon the possibility of passing Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) legislation in the upcoming legislative short session, outlining potential benefits and concerns associated with their operation.
- Invited further discussion and questions from the audience, emphasizing the importance of transparency and communication regarding legislative matters.
- Senator Bode highlighted ongoing efforts to address community needs, including water management, childcare, and opioid treatment initiatives, seeking collaboration and support from local stakeholders.

During the VLT discussion, Senator Bode and Representative Sossamon emphasized that the legislative session would likely focus on video lottery terminals (VLTs) rather than brick-and-mortar casinos, citing previous opposition and logistical challenges. Concerns were voiced about the potential impact of VLTs on communities, including increased crime rates and negative effects on local businesses. Participants also discussed the need for clear legislation and regulations to mitigate potential negative consequences, with suggestions for stricter regulations and limitations on VLT locations. Additional discussions touched on the need for adequate staffing and resources to manage Medicaid expansion, as well as concerns about the impact of VLTs on law enforcement and community safety.

UPDATES FROM MUNICIPALITIES

Creedmoor

Mayor Bobby Wheeler presented based on the PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet.

Key points and takeaways from Mayor Wheeler's presentation include:

- **Introduction of Commissioners:** Mayor Wheeler introduced the commissioners of the city of Creedmoor, highlighting their roles within the community.
- **Completed Projects:** Several projects were completed in FY 2023 through 2024, including the purchase and strategic placement of LED message boards, completion of the R 5707L project for landscaping, and disposal of surplus properties.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Renovations were made to the BC Roberts Multipurpose field, repairs were conducted on Elm and West Westline Street in partnership with NCDOT and the Creedmoor Volunteer Fire Department, and a new Harris Park signage was installed.
- **Veterans Memorial Project:** Plans for a Veterans Memorial Plaza and the purchase of a Veterans Memorial were discussed, with fundraising efforts underway through hero banners and veterans bricks.

- **City Hall Renovation Project:** A \$250,000 state grant was secured for the City Hall Renovation Project, and utility relocation on Ough Street is set to begin in March.
- **Future Projects and Development:** Creedmoor is exploring various long-term projects, including stormwater fee rate studies, city/county grant writer, wayfinding signs, evaluation of Hawley School annex for an athletic complex, and downtown revitalization efforts.
- **Population Growth and Housing Developments:** Mayor Wheeler highlighted upcoming housing developments in the city, which are expected to increase the population significantly in the next five to ten years.
- **Community Events and Policing Initiatives:** Various community events organized by the city, such as MLK Unity Breakfast, Creedmoor Music Festival, and National Night Out, were discussed. The Creedmoor Police Department's community outreach efforts, including Coffee with a Cop and Back to School events, were also highlighted.
- **Appreciation and Conclusion:** Mayor Wheeler expressed gratitude for the community's support and involvement in Creedmoor's initiatives and events, concluding the presentation on a positive note.

Stem

Mayor Casey Dover presented based on the PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet.

Key points and takeaways from Mayor Dover's presentation include:

- **Community Partnerships:** Stem has had a successful year in 2023, with a focus on building partnerships within the community. Events such as the Easter egg hunt and Veterans-Christmas Day Parade were organized in collaboration with the Stem Ruritan Club.
- **Property Acquisition and Development:** Stem completed property acquisitions in downtown Stem, paving the way for construction and development. The town is now debt-free with regard to these properties, demonstrating fiscal responsibility.
- **Partnership with NC Department of Congress Rural Development Group:** Stem partnered with this group to visualize and plan the development of downtown Stem. Community involvement is crucial in this process, and the town is excited to see the results.
- **Housing and Population Growth:** Stem has several housing projects underway, including Magnums Farms Phase 2, 75 West, and Kennedy's Crossing. These projects will significantly increase the town's population in the next few years.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** The town paved all the roads in Mangum Farms Phase 1 and made significant upgrades to Jack Day Park, enhancing the quality of life for residents and attracting visitors.
- **ETJ (Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction):** Mayor Dover briefly touched on the subject of ETJ, emphasizing the need for collaboration and planning between Granville County's southern-end municipalities to manage growth effectively.
- **Town Administration and Upgrades:** Stem has made improvements to its administrative processes, including upgrading its banking system, implementing a P-Card program, and hiring new town employees. The town is also considering transitioning to a mayor-manager form of government to accommodate its growth.
- **Technological Upgrades:** Stem is upgrading its website, exploring SMS notifications for residents, and planning to stream meetings to increase transparency and communication with the community.
- **Future Plans:** Stem is in the process of selecting a site and conducting a feasibility study for a new town hall, demonstrating its commitment to continued growth and development.

Butner

Mayor Dr. Linda Jordon presented based on the PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet.

Key points and takeaways from Mayor Jordan's presentation for the town of Butner include:

- **Introduction of New Members:** Mayor Jordan introduced new members of the governing board, including council members and key personnel such as the town manager and planning director.
- **Population and Budget Growth:** Butner is experiencing slow but steady population growth, with a current population of 8,577. The town's budget has also grown significantly, indicating potential for further development and expansion.
- **Economic Development and Land Availability:** There are over 2,500 acres of underutilized property in Butner, with significant potential for development. However, the main challenge is the availability of sewer capacity, which is crucial for further growth.
- **Business Growth and Expansion:** Butner has seen developments such as the expansion of Altec, a significant investment of \$50 million, and the approval of the Meritage subdivision, which plans to build 783 single-family homes.
- **Town Projects and Initiatives:** Butner is undertaking various projects and initiatives to enhance the community, including the construction of a performance stage, demolition of the Umstead Correctional Center, sidewalk construction, long-range planning for transportation corridors, and community-building events.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Mayor Jordon highlighted various partnership opportunities, including collaborations with Granville County Schools, funding grants for town projects, economic development support, county services, advocacy for infrastructure improvements, and litter control efforts.
- **Community Engagement:** Butner is actively engaging with its community through events and initiatives such as workshops, Easter egg hunts, festivals, and beautification days, fostering a sense of community and pride among residents.
- **Future Planning and Advocacy:** Butner is focused on long-term planning, advocating for infrastructure improvements, economic development, and the release of underutilized state properties to support future growth and development.

Stovall

Representatives from Stovall were not in attendance.

Oxford

Mayor Guillermo Nurse provided a PowerPoint presentation on this date as it was not included in the agenda packet.

Mayor Nurse highlighted the homelessness problem in Oxford, expressing urgency in addressing the issue and mentioning ongoing efforts with community leaders and representatives.

Key points and takeaways from Oxford City Manager Brent Taylor's presentation for the City of Oxford include:

- **Infrastructure Preparedness for Development:** The city is preparing for potential development with nearly 2,500 acres earmarked for potential projects, focusing on infrastructure improvements such as water and sewer line rehab and expanding the sewer treatment plant capacity.
- **Street Improvements and Public Safety:** Plans for street resurfacing, including Hillsboro Street, and construction of a roundabout to improve traffic flow. Investment in public safety includes increased salaries for personnel, purchase of patrol cars, and upgrading fire department apparatuses.

- **Future Infrastructure Needs:** Anticipated need for a new substation, police station, and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as the population grows. Plans to partner with the hospital system to provide ambulance services.
- **Economic Development and Downtown Revitalization:** Collaborations with Downtown Economic Development Corporation for downtown revitalization efforts, including branding projects and beautification initiatives. Focus on economic development includes speeding up development processes and improving communications.
- **Recreation and Culture Initiatives:** Revitalization of the theater at Oxford City Hall with new light and sound systems. Plans for improvements to Lake Devin and acquisition of open space for trails and recreation centers. Elevating the Hot Sauce festival to a regional or national event.
- **Balancing Growth with Small Town Atmosphere:** Commitment to measured growth while maintaining the small-town atmosphere where "everybody knows your name." Emphasis on partnerships and collaboration for the overall strength of the city and county.

COMMENTS AFTER PRESENTATIONS

Commissioner May expressed support for the cooperation between municipalities and School Resource Officers (SROs) coming from within the community. He also hoped for shared costs and mentioned the county's goal of placing an SRO in every school. He acknowledged the positive changes over the years and emphasized the importance of considering rural character in development plans. There were discussions about potential partnerships in emergency medical services (EMS) to optimize resources and improve service coverage.

Commissioner Cozart expressed anticipation for the upcoming budget and emphasized the importance of thorough planning.

Commissioner Hinman commended the growth projections presented and stressed the importance of infrastructure development to support the growing population.

Commissioner Williford emphasized the importance of controlled growth to maintain the county's rural character and small-town feel.

Commissioner Jay praised the forward-thinking approach of municipalities and thanked them for their efforts in planning for future growth.

Commissioner Gooch thanked the presenters and highlighted the support received from legislative representatives for funding and resources.

County Manager Cummings praised the community's pride and sense of cooperation, emphasizing the need to balance growth with preserving community values.

There was a suggestion to coordinate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. events and schedules to avoid overlaps and increase participation.

RECESS

The Board recessed at 7:57 p.m. The retreat was scheduled to resume on Friday, February 23, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

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