

GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
March 17, 2025
GRANVILLE EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTER
4185 US Highway 15 South, Oxford, North Carolina

PRESENT:

Chair Jimmy Gooch
Vice-Chair Zelodis Jay
Commissioner Robert Williford
Commissioner Mark Griffin
Commissioner Tony W. Cozart
Commissioner Russ May
Commissioner Timothy Karan

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

CALL TO ORDER

At 7:00 p.m., Chair Jimmy Gooch called the meeting to order. Vice-Chair Zelodis Jay had the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Chair Gooch stated there was one adjustment to the agenda: Item 10, Aerial Imagery Contract Term Approval, was removed to finalize contract details and would be addressed at a later meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motioned by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, Board approved the consent agenda as follows:

A. Approved Budget Amendment 13 for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

B. Approved the following tax refunds, releases, and write-offs:

- | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Refunds | February 18, 2025 - March 5, 2025: | \$ 855.99 |
| • Releases | February 18, 2025 - March 5, 2025: | \$ 0.00 |

- Write-offs February 18, 2025 - March 5, 2025: \$ 39.44
(\$2 and less)

- C. **Approved hiring a consultant to develop and conduct a hazardous materials exercise series (tabletop and full-scale) using FY 2024 Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant funds and awarded the project to On Target Preparedness in the amount of \$18,990.**
- D. **Approved engagement with VC3, Granville County's technology consultant vendor, in the amount of \$36,000 to conduct a comprehensive IT assessment in accordance with the terms of the Master Services Agreement once finalized by the County Attorney.**
- E. **Approved the Resolution Authorizing Electronic Payments as Defined by G.S. §159-28.**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS
AS DEFINED BY G.S. §159-28**

WHEREAS, the North Carolina General Statutes § 159-28(d) allows local governments to establish procedures for paying vendors and contractors through methods other than traditional checks, such as Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) including Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments; and

WHEREAS, the County of Granville desires to streamline its payment processes, enhance efficiency, reduce costs associated with printing and mailing paper checks, and facilitate faster payment to vendors and contractors; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the Finance Officer to adopt a written policy outlining procedures for pre-auditing obligations that will be incurred by electronic payments as required by NC Administrative Code 20 NCAC 03 .0409; and

WHEREAS, it is the further responsibility of the Finance Officer to adopt a written policy outlining procedures for disbursing public funds by electronic transaction as required by NC Administrative Code 20 NCAC 03 .0410.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the County of Granville, as follows:

1. Authorization of Electronic Payments: The County of Granville is hereby authorized to make payments to vendors and contractors via ACH as an alternative to traditional paper checks, subject to the requirements and limitations of North Carolina General Statutes §159-28(d) and other applicable laws.
2. Pre-Audit: The Finance Director or their designee is authorized to adopt and implement a written policy outlining procedures for pre-auditing obligations that will be incurred by electronic payments as required by the NC Administrative Code 20 NCAC 03 .0409;
3. Disbursements: The Finance Director or their designee is authorized to adopt and

implement a written policy outlining procedures for disbursing public funds by electronic transaction as required by the NC Administrative Code 20 NCAC 03 .0410; and

4. Board Approval and Effective Date: This resolution is subject to approval by the Board of Commissioners of the County of Granville and shall take effect immediately upon adoption by the Board.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that any actions taken by the authorized signatories in connection with the above matters are hereby ratified and approved.

F. Approved the reclassification of the Economic Development Specialist position from Grade 80 to Grade 74 in the 2024-2025 Granville County Pay and Classification Plan.

G. Approved minutes:

- **February 3, 2025 Regular Meeting**
- **March 3, 2025 Regular Meeting**

INTRODUCTIONS, RECOGNITIONS, AND PRESENTATIONS

Board Received Presentation from the Granville County Soil & Water Conservation Board

Ronnie Burnette, Chair of the Granville County Soil and Water Conservation Board, presented on behalf of the advisory board. Soil and Water Conservationist Byron Currin was also in attendance. Burnette presented based on the slide deck presentation included in the agenda packet. Key points included.

- **Board Structure & Roles**
 - Burnette explained that the Soil & Water Conservation Board consists of three elected officials and two appointed officials.
 - Elections occur in cycles, with Burnette running during presidential election years.
 - Appointed officials are nominated locally and approved by the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission in Raleigh.
- **Operations & Budget**
 - The office is managed by Byron Currin, the conservationist.
 - The County funds two employees: one full-time Conservationist and one part-time administrative assistant.
 - The Board of Supervisors follows state regulations in decision-making.
- **Conservation Efforts & Assistance**
 - Provides technical assistance, advice, and funding opportunities to farmers.

- Focuses conservation efforts on erosion control, water quality, and sustainable farming practices.
- Assists both farmers and non-farmers when possible.
- **Programs & Equipment**
 - Operates two no-till drills available for rental, initially funded by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund.
 - Assists in lagoon closures, ensuring compliance with state regulations.
 - Initiated a new drone program to enhance project monitoring and mapping, with Currin obtaining licensing for drone operation.
- **Goals for the Year**
 - Currin is working toward job approval for ecological design, including terrace installation and lagoon closures.
 - Coordinating with Raleigh officials to facilitate compliance in lagoon closures.
 - Partnering with agencies to promote farmland preservation.
 - Sponsoring students for summer conservation workshops at NC State.
- **General Observations**
 - The department historically collaborated across local, state, and federal conservation goals.
 - The advisory board remains committed to supporting soil and water conservation while navigating regulatory requirements.

Commissioner Williford inquired about the number and types of active and inactive waste lagoons in Granville County. Currin responded that the county has one active dairy lagoon, one recently closed inactive dairy lagoon, and another slated for closure. The county's only hog operation ceased activity in December, leaving two lagoons that may require funding for closure due to ongoing regulatory requirements.

Further discussion confirmed the location of the hog lagoon in the northern part of the county and referenced previous lagoon closures. It was noted that the closure process involves multiple state agencies, particularly the Division of Water Resources.

County Manager Cummings acknowledged the efforts of those involved and highlighted Byron Currin's role in showcasing best management practices (BMPs) in the county. Ronnie Burnette expressed appreciation for the Board's support and collaboration with the department.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one came forward for public comments.

PURCHASING

At the beginning of the meeting, Board pulled item nine, Aerial Imagery Contract Term Approval, to be addressed at a future meeting.

APPOINTMENTS

Board approved appointment to the Granville County ABC Board.

Motioned by Commissioner Timothy Karan, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and carried 6-1, Board appointed Steve Owens to the Granville County ABC Board.

When asked by Commissioner Jay, Commissioner Williford stated that the ABC Board is consulting with the County Attorney, who also serves as the ABC Board attorney, on the process of expanding from a three-member to a five-member board.

Board Approved Appointment to the Granville County Board of Adjustment

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Timothy Karan, and unanimously carried, Board appointed Victoria Bradsher to the Granville County Board of Adjustment District 2 seat.

This appointment left one alternate seat vacant. When asked, County Attorney Wrenn said he would review the bylaws to determine if the vacant alternate seats need to be from a particular area.

Board Approved Appointment to the Granville Health System Board of Trustees

Motioned by Commissioner Timothy Karan, seconded by Commissioners Tony W. Cozart and Zeloids Jay, and unanimously carried, Board appointed Jacob Rogers, District 6, to the Granville Health System Board of Trustees.

Board Approved Appointment to the Granville County Library Board of Trustees

Motioned by Commissioner Mark Griffin, seconded by Commissioners Zelodis Jay and Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, Board appointed Michelle Willis to the Granville County Library Board of Trustees District 3 seat.

Board Approved Appointments to the Granville County Veterans Affairs Committee

Motioned by Commissioner Russ May, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, Board reappointed Lynnette Breisacher to the Granville County Veterans Affairs Committee Spouse of a Veteran Seat and Board reappointed Anne Williams to one of two At-Large seats.

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Mark Griffin, and unanimously carried, Board appointed Bradley Allen Oldenburg to one of two Granville County Veterans Affairs Committee At-Large seats.

Board held the District 7 seat.

Commissioner Karan noted that the meeting time of the Moses S. Cash American Legion Post 161 in Creedmoor conflicts with the Veterans Affairs Committee meeting, which may be causing difficulty in finding a representative for the committee.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

County Manager's Report

County Manager Cummings said that he did not have any items to report.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Board Approved Order Granting Major Special Use Permit (Jones Road)

County Attorney Wrenn stated that the Board had two orders granting Major Special Use Permits on the agenda. The first was the Jones Road matter, which came before the Board on February 3rd. At that time, the commissioners held an evidentiary hearing for a Major Special Use Permit submitted by TowerCo 2013 LLC to construct a 300-foot guyed wireless telecommunication tower on Jones Road. The proposed tower, with Verizon as a tenant at the top, would include a fenced equipment compound and be located on property owned by Thomas Jameson, which was zoned AR-40. After holding the hearing, the Board approved the Major Special Use Permit. The attached Order Granting Major Special Use Permit formally documented this decision for final approval as required by statute. He requested that the Board approve the order if they found it acceptable.

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioners May and Jay, and unanimously carried, Board approved Order Granting Major Special Use Permit (Jones Road).

Board Approved Order Granting Major Special Use Permit (Lucy Averette Road and Enon Road)

County Attorney Wrenn stated that this was another Major Special Use Permit approved on February 3rd. The Board held an evidentiary hearing for a Major Special Use Permit application submitted by TowerCo IV-B LLC to construct a 190-foot monopole wireless telecommunication

tower on property owned by Alan Daniel Jr. and Carol Daniel. The property, which has frontage on Lucy Avert Road and Enon Road, was zoned AR-40. The Board voted to approve the order, and the documentation of that order was attached. He stated that he was happy to answer any questions.

Motioned by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, Board approved Order Granting Major Special Use Permit (Lucy Averette Road and Enon Road).

County Attorney's Report

County Attorney Wrenn said that he did have two economic development matters for closed session.

PRESENTATIONS BY COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS

Commissioner Griffin:

Agriculture Extension Meeting – He praised the work of Selena McKoy and the extension office staff, highlighting the Master Gardener program led by Johnny Coley and Wendy Tatum's Farm to Fridge initiative, which provides food to local libraries. He also commended efforts to support the Oxford Farmers Market, particularly for underprivileged and elderly residents.

Granville Hospital Board Onboarding – He expressed pride in the hospital's advancements under Adam McConnell's leadership, including plans for new imaging equipment and a much-needed maternity ward waiting area. He encouraged residents to visit and see the improvements firsthand.

Sheriff's Ride-Along – He recounted an eye-opening late-night experience with the sheriff's office, where he gained a new appreciation for law enforcement's work. He specifically noted the role of the K-9 unit and a drug-related traffic stop, emphasizing the dedication of deputies who keep the community safe.

Commissioner Cozart:

Sheriff's Ride-Along – He humorously noted that he would wait to see how Commissioner Griffin's experience went before considering a ride-along himself.

Cooperative Extension's Digital Program for Seniors – He was surprised by the high level of participation in the program and found it gratifying to learn how widely it is being accessed.

State Association Committee Meetings – He attended discussions on homelessness, where one idea was repurposing unused hotels to help address the issue.

Public Education Committee – He was pleased to hear about the proposed \$50,000 starting salary for teachers and proud that the local school board and commissioners supported the initiative, which gained traction at the state level.

Commissioner May:

Teacher Salary Initiative – Commissioner May clarified that Granville County Board of Education member Danielle Hayes from District 5, along with the school board, initiated the letter advocating for a \$50,000 starting teacher salary. The effort has gained momentum across school boards and counties.

Litter Program – He mentioned that the litter program is gaining momentum, with plans for a campaign slogan and signage. Law enforcement and municipal agencies are fully involved in supporting the initiative.

Sheriff's Ride-Along – He participated in a ride-along with Deputy Parrott, praising his professionalism. He also highlighted the Board's commitment to equipping sheriff's vehicles with cameras and updating body cams for officers.

Commissioner May expressed concerns regarding a recent zoning issue in the City of Oxford, which was the subject of a March 13, 2025, *Oxford Public Ledger* article titled **"Sparks Fly as County Reveals City is Illegally Rezoning Properties for Development"**.

Commissioner May addressed the Board and the County Manager regarding concerns related to the March 13, 2025, *Oxford Public Ledger* article. He expressed dismay over the reported discussion that took place in the Oxford City Council chambers and its potential implications for the County, particularly concerning the airport.

Commissioner May noted that Commissioner Williford had been actively working with the offices of Congressman Knott, Senator Tillis, and Senator Budd to secure funding for the airport to support additional facilities and hangars. He raised concerns about potential encroachment on the airport and the possibility of a financial impact of approximately \$15.3 million to the community if the airport's operations were hindered.

He further expressed concern that the developers of the proposed project were unaware of the proximity of the airport and the requirement to complete specific forms related to development near such facilities. Additionally, Commissioner May cited statements from the Oxford City Council meeting, wherein the County's legal representation was questioned about zoning and annexation procedures. He referenced comments made by Attorney Koinis, who clarified that rezoning cannot legally occur before annexation. The Commissioner found it discouraging that the County was seemingly being blamed for procedural errors that were not within its jurisdiction.

Commissioner May then directed his questions to County Attorney Wrenn, seeking clarity on what steps were being taken to protect the airport from encroaching development and to ensure that investments in Triangle North were safeguarded. He emphasized the significance of the airport in the County's future economic growth.

County Attorney Wrenn responded by confirming that the *Oxford Ledger* article was generally accurate, with the exception of the claim that the County had communicated with three attorneys regarding the matter. He clarified that he had directly communicated with City Attorney Thomas Burnette, City Planning Director Cheryl Hart,

and City Manager Brent Taylor on March 5, 2025. He further explained that his concerns about the annexation process were brought to their attention to avoid a situation where property was improperly rezoned, potentially leading to confusion for developers and property buyers.

Attorney Wrenn elaborated that proper zoning jurisdiction requires either extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) or annexation. He indicated that while a portion of the Hunt Farm property was within the city's ETJ, the majority of it, along with the Perry Farm, was not. He reiterated that the annexation process had not been completed before the zoning change, which created legal uncertainties. The County's goal in addressing this issue was to ensure that developments proceeded within the bounds of legal jurisdiction.

Regarding airport concerns, Attorney Wrenn stated that he had been engaged by the airport to address the lack of airport height restriction ordinances in the City of Oxford. In a letter presented to the mayor and city commissioners, both the County and the Airport Authority requested that height restrictions be established before legally rezoning the properties in question. He explained that, while standard residential structures might not present an immediate legal issue, developments such as water towers, cell towers, or construction cranes could pose significant risks if not properly regulated. He further noted that increasing residential development near an airport can lead to political pressure for its closure due to noise complaints.

Commissioner May sought further clarification on whether the properties in question were within the City of Oxford's ETJ. Attorney Wrenn confirmed that they were not. Commissioner May then asked whether the County should take legislative action to impose zoning restrictions in the affected area. Attorney Wrenn assured the Board that the County already had an airport height ordinance in place and that it remained in effect as long as the land remained under County jurisdiction. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that, should annexation occur, appropriate airport-related zoning restrictions be implemented by the City to maintain compliance and prevent encroachment.

Commissioner May concluded by expressing appreciation for the work done by Attorney Koinis in bringing these issues to light. He also acknowledged Commissioner Williford's continued efforts to secure funding for additional hangars and infrastructure improvements at the airport. However, he reiterated his disappointment in the way the County's legal representation had been addressed during the Oxford City Council meeting and the implication that the County was responsible for procedural missteps. He emphasized the need for continued diligence to protect the County's investment in Triangle North and to ensure that proper legal and zoning protocols were followed moving forward.

Attorney Wrenn added that he had taken steps to handle the matter in an honorable and transparent manner, ensuring that the City of Oxford was fully informed of the County's concerns in advance. He expressed his discontent with the way the situation had been portrayed and reaffirmed the County's position that it was acting in the best interests of residents and stakeholders by clarifying zoning authority and advocating for necessary regulations to protect the airport.

Commissioner May closed the discussion by underscoring the importance of preserving the County's economic investments and maintaining appropriate zoning oversight to support long-term growth and development in the region.

Commissioner Karan:

Hospital and Community Events – He echoed Commissioner Griffin's appreciation of the local hospital, noting the high quality of services provided. He also highlighted the success of the 11th annual Ambulance Chase event, with nearly 500 participants, and encouraged everyone to attend next year's event.

National Association of Counties Legislative Days – He attended the conference in Washington, D.C., where a major focus was on upcoming PFAS regulations affecting water authorities. He shared concerns about unspent federal funds and the potential for clawbacks if funds weren't used wisely.

Legislative Meetings and Networking – He mentioned meeting with the governor's office and state legislators, particularly highlighting Amber Harris, Governor Stein's legislative aide, who inquired about fellow commissioners.

Congressman Brad Knott's District Office Assistance – He informed the Board that Congressman Knott's office now has staff available in the district to assist with issues like Social Security or veterans' claims. These staff members are focused on providing actionable assistance, not just holding town hall-style meetings.

Chair Gooch:

Ambulance Chase Event – He congratulated Liz Karan for winning her age group in the 10K during the Ambulance Chase, joking about her smile after completing the race.

Airport Annexation and Rezoning – He raised the issue of annexation and rezoning near the airport, asking whether a buffer zone for future expansion should be established. He suggested that the County and airport representatives conduct further research and engage with the airport's engineering firm to explore potential recommendations regarding height restrictions and buffer zones.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were no other matters for open session.

CLOSED SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Mark Griffin, and unanimously carried, the Board entered into closed session at 8:07 p.m. for economic development matters as allowed by G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4).

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford seconded by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, and unanimously carried, Board returned to open session at 9:15 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, and unanimously carried, Board adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board