

GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
April 21, 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. Commissioner Mark Griffin had the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motioned by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, seconded by Commissioner Mark Griffin, and unanimously carried, Board, pulled item 10, ‘Sheriff Matters: Approval of Contract for Robert Bailess’, and approved the April 21, 2025 regular meeting agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

A. Approved Budget Amendment 15 for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

BUDGET AMENDMENT 15
April 21, 2025
Legal Document

Be it ordained, the FY 2024-2025 Annual Budget Ordinance is hereby amended as follows:

GENERAL FUND			
Expenditures	Increase	Decrease	Total
Community Services			(\$430,061)
UTG	\$ 2,619	\$ -	
21st Century - Schools	\$ -	\$ 2,143	
County Library System	\$ 7,500	\$ -	
Construction Projects	\$ -	\$ 438,037	
Education.....			\$2,316
Granville County School System	\$ 2,316	\$ -	
Vance Granville CC	\$ -	\$ -	
Area Projects and Other Appropriations			\$189,679
Non-Departmental	\$ 166,247	\$ -	
Pass Thru Funds	\$ 23,432	\$ -	
Contributions to Other Funds & Contingencies.....			\$437,561
Contributions & Transfers	\$ 438,037	\$ -	
Contingencies	\$ -	\$ 476	
	Total Expenditures		\$199,495
Revenues			
Restricted and Intergovernmental	\$176,063	\$ -	
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$23,432	\$ -	
	Total Revenues		\$199,495

B. Approved CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE: Hawley Recreation Site.

**CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE
Hawley Recreation Site**

- WHEREAS,** Granville County recognizes the need to establish and maintain public parks and recreation facilities as part of its commitment to community well-being and quality of life; and
- WHEREAS,** the Granville County Board of Commissioners desires to create recreation space on the site of the former G.C. Hawley Middle School; and
- WHEREAS,** \$2,000,000 in funding was previously set aside within the County’s General Fund for recreation needs in the southern end of the County; and
- WHEREAS,** That funding is available for appropriation to the Hawley Recreation Site project.

THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Granville County Board of Commissioners that, pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes Section 13.2 Chapter 159, the following capital project ordinance is hereby adopted:

Section 1: This ordinance is to establish a budget for the Hawley Recreation Site capital project to be funded through the Capital Reserve Fund. This project is undertaken with the goal of creating a new recreational facility that will enhance public access to safe and well-designed outdoor spaces.

Section 2: The following amounts are appropriated for the project and authorized for expenditure:

Purpose	General Ledger #	Amount
Abatement, Demolition, Planning/Design, Initial Construction Costs	21-4201-199	\$2,000,000

Section 3: The following revenues are available to complete the project:

Funding Source	General Ledger #	Amount
Transfer from the General Fund	21-3981-981	\$2,000,000

Section 4: The Finance Officer is hereby directed to maintain sufficient specific detailed accounting and other compliance records to satisfy the Local Government Commission requirements of an annual audit as mandated by North Carolina General Statute 159-34.

Section 5: The Finance Officer is hereby directed to report the financial status of the project(s) to the governing board on a quarterly basis.

Section 6: This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that any actions taken by the authorized signatories in connection with the above matters are hereby ratified and approved, this 21st day of April 2025.

C. Approved transferring \$284,125 in Economic Incentive funds retained by the County to Assigned Fund Balance – Economic Development Incentives, to be combined with the \$387,125 currently in Assigned Fund Balance, for a total of \$671,250 in support of existing incentive agreements, as follows:

- **Ontic – \$110,000**
- **CertainTeed – \$250,000**
- **Bridgestone-Bandag – \$11,250**
- **Altec – \$300,000**

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

- Refunds March 27, 2025 – April 9, 2025: \$ \$10,996.79
- Releases March 27, 2025 – April 9, 2025: \$ 5,915.67
- Write-offs March 27, 2025 – April 9, 2025: \$ 63.41

E. Approved contract with Kofile, Inc. in the amount of \$30,922 for the preservation of Deed Books A, B, and C, to be funded from the Automation Enhancement and Preservation Fund (a dedicated source within Register of Deeds offices), with no use of County general funds; furthermore, the Board authorized review of the contract by the County Manager and finalization by the County Attorney.

F. **Approved declaring the following vehicles as surplus, to be sold via an online auction platform or by Enterprise Fleet Management, if EFM chooses to accept the vehicles for sale:**

VIN	Year	Department	Make	Model	Mileage	Condition
1FTMF1CB1KKC24386	2019	Inspections	Ford	F-150	100,000+	End of life
1GCEK14C28Z290288	2008	Facility Maintenance	Chevrolet	Silverado	100,000+	End of life

INTRODUCTIONS, RECOGNITIONS, AND PRESENTATIONS

Board Recognized National Library Week

Commissioner Mark Griffin presented the *Proclamation Recognizing National Library Week*. Library Director Will Robinson was in attendance along with members of the Granville County Library System staff and Granville County Library Board of Trustees, including Chair Juanita Rogers. Commissioner Cozart expressed appreciation for the Granville County Library System, highlighting a recent visit to the Thornton Library where he was encouraged by the active use of the children’s area and adult resources, and he thanked the Board and library leadership for their continued innovation and investment.

Proclamation Recognizing National Library Week

WHEREAS, the Granville County Public Library has long been a cornerstone of educational enrichment and community engagement within our county; and

WHEREAS, the Library’s Early Literacy Storytime sessions provide a warm, nurturing environment where our youngest residents are encouraged to develop a lifelong love of reading and learning; and

WHEREAS, the Library recognizes the value of digital literacy and is proud to offer computer classes taught by dedicated high school interns, who impart essential digital skills to patrons of all ages, ensuring that all members of our community are prepared to navigate an increasingly digital world; and

WHEREAS, the Library’s innovative Farm to Fridge program not only connects residents with fresh, local produce but also promotes food literacy through engaging cooking classes, empowering our community with the knowledge to make healthier, sustainable food choices; and

WHEREAS, these programs together exemplify the Library’s commitment to fostering education, digital empowerment, and nutritional well-being—key elements that strengthen the fabric of our community;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Granville County Board of Commissioners does hereby recognize April 6–12, 2025, as National Library Week in Granville County and commends the Granville County Public Library for its exceptional and forward-thinking programs in early literacy, digital literacy, and food literacy. The Board extends its appreciation for the Library’s continued efforts to serve and inspire the people of Granville County.

Lonnie Cole, Sr, Presented with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine

Recognized with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine for his service to the State of North Carolina, Lonnie Cole, Sr. served 42 years and two months with the Stem Fire and EMS Department, including 32 years as fire chief and many years on the board of directors. He retired in 2019 and was named an honorary member. He also served the State for nearly 33 years at John Umstead and Central Regional Hospitals, retiring in 2020. In addition, he served as a Town of Stem commissioner for 30 consecutive years, was reappointed in 2022, and reelected in 2023. Frank Sossamon presented the award

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one came forward for public comments.

SHERIFF MATTERS

At the beginning of the meeting, Board pulled Item ten, 'Approval of Contract for Robert Bailess', from the agenda.

BUDGET MATTERS

Board Approved Budget Increase for Board of Elections to Address Mandated Ballot Reprinting and Election Costs

Board of Elections Budget Overage – Fiscal Year 2024-2025

County Manager Cummings introduced the topic and thanked the Board for the opportunity to present information regarding a significant budget overage experienced by the Board of Elections. Tonya Burnette, Elections Director, provided a detailed explanation of the contributing factors, which stemmed from circumstances beyond their control. She also introduced members of the Board of Elections and staff who were present at the meeting.

- Introduced Board Chair Shary Alvarez, Secretary Elizabeth Torres-Evans, and members Debby Butler and Theresa Gilreath.
- Staff in attendance included full-time staff Mary Anne Smith and part-time staff member Lynn Dennis.
- The Director expressed appreciation for the Board's support and acknowledged the ongoing challenges of administering elections in 2024 and 2025.

Extended Early Voting and Workload

The Director emphasized that early voting requirements, which are legislatively mandated, placed a substantial burden on the office.

- Early voting days routinely ran from 7–8 a.m. until 9:30–11:30 p.m.
- Chief Judges were responsible for delivering ballots, paperwork, and supplies late in the evening.
- Staff had to balance sites daily, process documents, mail voter postcards within two days, and secure ballots nightly.
- Absentee ballot meetings extended late into the night; one session went until midnight.
- Upcoming laws for the November election may require staff to work through the night to complete ballot counting.

Record Voter Turnout and Staffing Challenges

High voter turnout and staffing difficulties compounded the workload.

- Three Early Voting sites required staffing:
 - Oxford: 10,215 voters
 - Creedmoor: 9,419 voters
 - Wilton: 5,900 voters
- Instances of poll workers failing to report without notice required others to stay longer.
- Shift scheduling was used to manage costs but was not always feasible.
- Election Specialists, the Deputy Director, and others accrued comp time and worked extended hours into December.
- Resulted in a personnel-related overage of approximately **\$43,939**, covering salaries, FICA, and retirement.

Temporary Staffing and Manual Audit Requirements

To meet operational demands, temporary staff were hired, and labor-intensive audits were performed.

- Hired two temporary full-time employees (August–December) and one part-time employee (September–December).

- Conducted a mandatory bipartisan **sample audit count**:
 - Selected sites: Oxford Early Voting and Oak Hill Precinct.
 - Counted 10,492 ballots by hand over five days, day and night.
- Completed two hand recounts:
 - Oxford Early Voting Site: 10,215 ballots (Sossamon campaign request).
 - Wilton Early Voting Site: over 9,000 ballots (NC Supreme Court Seat 6 recount).
- Conducted a machine recount of **32,221 ballots** using a high-speed scanner over two days and nights.
 - Vendor’s initial quote was \$10,000, but the Director secured assistance from the State Board of Elections, saving the County that cost.
- Contract services labor overage: **\$22,062**.

Ballot Reprinting and Court-Ordered Changes

Ballot production was disrupted by litigation and subsequent court rulings involving the “We The People” party.

- Original ballots printed and prepared for September 6 absentee deadline.
- Lawsuit filed to remove Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Nicole Shanahan from the ballot.
- NC Supreme Court ordered destruction and reprinting of ballots statewide.
- Resulted in:
 - Reprinting of ballots, absentee envelopes, and packet materials.
 - Assembling and reassembling approximately 1,000 absentee ballot packets.
 - Copying forms that changed due to court and legislative changes.
- Printing and copying overage: **\$18,680**.

Voting Equipment and Test Deck

Changes to ballots also affected equipment setup and ballot testing procedures.

- Voting machine coding and the Test Deck (mathematical ballot pattern) had to be redone.
- Logic and Accuracy testing had not yet occurred, which avoided additional costs.
- Contracted services equipment overage: **\$9,726**.

Additional Operational Challenges

Further issues added to the department’s operational and financial burden.

- New, inexperienced poll workers required additional training.
- Increased legal fees due to election challenges and protests.
- More forms and frequent changes due to legislation and court orders.
- Over 160 public records requests received; approximately 50 remain pending.
- Board member salaries were under budgeted during the initial planning phase.

Budget Overrun and Request

The total budget overage amounted to **\$94,407**, and the department requested Board approval for additional funding.

- Requested an additional **\$60,000** for FY24-25.
- Approximately **\$34,407** remains in the current budget to cover part of the overage.
- The Director assured the Board that no further spending would occur unless absolutely necessary before June 30.
- Expressed appreciation for support from County Manager Drew Cummings, Attorney Wrenn, Finance Director Jennifer Baird, and their respective teams.

The Board commended Mrs. Burnette and the Board of Elections staff for their professionalism and leadership during a challenging year, with commissioners highlighting ongoing election uncertainties and praising her reputation across counties.

When asked by Commissioner May whether the upcoming budget included reasonable increases to poll worker pay to help with recruitment, Mrs. Burnette responded that she believes the current budget covers those needs but is open to revisiting it with the County Manager. Commissioner May emphasized the importance of adequate compensation to avoid staffing shortages and encouraged ongoing attention to the issue during budget discussions.

Motioned by Commissioner Russ May, seconded by Commissioners Mark Griffin and Zelodis Jay, and unanimously carried, Board approved a \$60,000 increase to the FY 2024–2025 budget for the Board of Elections to cover a projected \$94,000 overage resulting from court-ordered and State Board-mandated reprinting of ballots and additional election-related costs, with internal savings offsetting part of the shortfall, ensuring compliance with N.C.G.S. 159-28 and uninterrupted operations.

APPOINTMENTS

Board Approved Appointment to the Vance-Granville Community College Board of Trustees

Motioned by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, Board reappointed Commissioner Russ May to the Vance-Granville Community College Board of Trustees for four-year term, July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2029.

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

County Attorney Wrenn said that he did not have any items to report.

PRESENTATIONS BY COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS

Commissioner Griffin

- Announced Town Hall Meeting April 22, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the Stem Fire Department for Deerfield subdivision residents to address concerns about community upkeep, road conditions, and safety.
 - Thanked County Manager Cummings for facilitating Planning Director Barry Baker’s attendance and Sheriff Fountain for staff support.
 - Expressed gratitude to Fire Chief Watson for allowing the use of the fire department.
 - Hoped the meeting would resolve concerns and calm residents.

Commissioner Cozart

- Expressed gratitude for the Central Children's Home and Masonic Home for Children and their commendable efforts in caring for youth.
- Mentioned the upcoming Central Children's Home Day and the Masonic Home's celebration.
- Acknowledged the recent "Timeout Tuesday" event, sponsored by Smart Start, to support childcare centers and recognized the dedication of local childcare providers who care for the youngest children in the county.

Commissioner May

- Said that Dr. Winborne informed that the South Granville High School project for the weight room will commence shortly; this includes a full renovation of the high school’s weight room and athletic facility, a joint project funded by both the County and the Board of Education.
- Briefed the Board on a meeting was held with District 5 DOT; Commissioners Williford and Jay were present, and the discussion focused on problematic intersections that need attention.

- Concerns were raised about a lack of results despite numerous requests for funding and outreach at RPO and CAMPO meetings; however, there is hope for improvements at key intersections, including Cornwall at 96, Salem Road and Highway 96 Loop, Brassfield, and Highway 56 and Grove Hill Road.
- Further discussions were planned with Secretary Hopkins of DOT; the issue is that Granville County competes for funding within a district that includes Wake and Durham counties, making it challenging for a county of Granville's size to secure resources.
- Emphasized the need for adjustments to the State Transportation Improvement Plan to better support rural counties like Granville; the current plan, for example, delays enhancements for Highway 56 until 2045.
- Explained that despite efforts, including a county study through CAMPO for Southern Granville and several highways, the anticipated improvements may not be enough without legislative changes; without these changes, Granville may face long-term challenges with its infrastructure.
- Reiterated that because the roads are state-owned and Granville County is grouped with Wake and Durham in NCDOT District 5, funding for local transportation improvements remains limited.

Commissioner Karan

- Acknowledged his absence from the April 7, 2025 meeting and thanked the Board for allowing him to miss the first meeting of the month.
- On behalf of Mayor Dover, extended congratulations to Lonnie Cole, Sr. for the prestigious recognition.
 - Shared a message from Mayor Dover of Stem, congratulating Lonnie Cole, Sr. on his award; Mayor Dover expressed regret for missing the event and mentioned that the award would be celebrated publicly.

Commissioner Williford

- Thanked Commissioner May for organizing the DOT meeting, which he said was very worthwhile; noted the challenge of competing for resources in a district with Wake and Durham counties, which dominate funding.
 - Discussed ongoing safety concerns at Salem Road and Loop Road, where frequent accidents occur, particularly involving inexperienced young drivers and shift changes at Revlon; mentioned that accidents are prioritized based on fatalities and severity of injuries, which he finds problematic.
 - Expressed frustration with the "grading" system that requires serious incidents to justify traffic safety improvements; emphasized the difficulty of telling families that their child's death is needed to prompt action.
 - Thanked Commissioner May for efforts in addressing these concerns, but acknowledged that Granville County remains at the bottom of the funding priority list; reiterated that they are working hard to improve the situation.
- Shared the sad news of the passing of local historian Royster Washington, a longtime resident of Oxford; extended condolences to his family, including his son J. Yancey Washington, the Clerk of Court, and his daughter Fairley W. Mahlum of Raleigh, NC.

Chair Gooch

- Extended condolences to the family of Royster Washington, acknowledging the community's loss.
- Reminded everyone that May is Motorcycle Awareness Month, with the slogan "Look twice and save a life," emphasizing the dangers motorcyclists face.
 - Shared personal experience as an avid motorcyclist, expressing concern about the condition of roads in Granville County, which he frequently rides for leisure.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were no other matters for open session.

CLOSED SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Tony W, Cozart seconded by Commissioner Robert Williford, and unanimously carried, the Board entered into closed session at 7:47 p.m. for attorney-client matters as allowed by G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3).

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford seconded by Commissioner Zelodis Jay, and unanimously carried, Board returned to open session at 9:23 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, and unanimously carried, Board adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board