

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

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.
Finance Director Jennifer Baird

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:10 p.m. Chair Jimmy Gooch called the meeting to order. Commissioner Karan had the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

WELCOME AND COMMENTS BY CHAIR JIMMY GOOCH

Chair Gooch acknowledged the length of the agenda and then turned the meeting over to County Manager Drew Cummings for comments.

COMMENTS BY COUNTY MANAGER CUMMINGS

County Manager Drew Cummings welcomed the Commissioners and thanked staff for preparing the retreat. He explained that the staff's goal was to make the planning retreat meaningful and productive in two ways: through providing updates from various stakeholders (including North Carolina Association of County Commissioners representatives, legislators, and municipal partners) and through exercises designed to understand Commissioners' budget preferences for the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget.

County Manager Cummings addressed questions about zero-based budgeting, noting that although they did not formally refer to their process by that name, the County had been applying significant line-item scrutiny to department budgets for three years. He emphasized the importance of having a strategic plan to guide budget priorities, noting that they were in year five of their current five-year plan and would develop a new strategic planning process next fiscal year.

BUDGET PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE

County Manager Cummings introduced the exercise regarding budget priorities, presenting ten potential areas that might need additional funding from the limited resources available through natural growth in property tax and departmental budget-

cutting exercises. He indicated that Commissioners would work through these priorities in detail during day two of the retreat on Friday.

GRANVILLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS UPDATE – SUPERINTENDENT STAN WINBORNE

Dr. Stan Winborne, Superintendent of Granville County Public Schools, presented to the Commissioners with the following key points:

Fiscal Responsibility Initiatives

- GCPS implemented zero-based budgeting for the second year, saving over \$1 million
- School consolidation (reducing from three to two high schools and three to two middle schools) will create \$3 million in recurring annual savings
- The district was exploring energy performance contracting to address facility needs without additional tax burden
- GCPS received increased School Resource Officer (SRO) grant funding (doubled) for two school years

Budget Priorities Requested

1. **Continuation Funds:** Maintaining current funding levels
2. **Safety and SROs:** Continued support for SROs
3. **Local Teacher Supplement:** Maintaining the 12% supplement (currently 10% county-funded plus 2% from state supplemental funds)
4. **Facilities and Capital Outlay:** Two requests:
 - Continuation of existing CIP support
 - Consideration of one-time allocation for critical needs at JF Webb and South Granville High Schools

High School Facility Needs

- Dr. Winborn presented a menu of potential high school projects (estimated at approximately \$17 million total)
- Projects ranged from roof repairs to athletic facilities improvements, including tracks that were in "desperate need"
- The Superintendent acknowledged the past and committed to timelier implementation if new funding was approved

Financial Context

- Vickie Hines, Chief Finance Officer, provided an overview of the district's \$105 million budget
- 69% of the budget goes to salaries and benefits
- The district had been using \$4.1 million in fund balance but anticipated reducing that need with consolidation savings

NCACC UPDATES – AMY BASON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND GENERAL COUNSEL & DENISE STINGALE, OUTREACH ASSOCIATE

Amy Bason (Deputy Director and General Counsel) and Denise Stinagle (Regional Representative for Community Outreach Services) from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) provided an update to the Board. They were joined by Quanisha Tabron, a new Government Relations Manager who has local ties to Granville County.

NCACC Resources Highlighted

- The presenters emphasized that NCACC serves all 100 counties in North Carolina
- Resources available to Granville County included:
 - Debt set-off program
 - Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Medicaid recovery program
 - Advocacy services
 - Risk pools for workers' compensation and liability/property insurance
 - Employment law helpline

Helene Recovery Efforts

The NCACC representatives detailed their work coordinating Hurricane Helene recovery efforts:

- Three relief packages had been implemented totaling over \$1.3 billion
- The association convened meetings between state, federal, and local leaders to address needs
- While Granville County was not directly impacted, the NCACC stands ready to assist during any future disasters

Legislative Update

Tabron provided information on current legislative matters affecting counties:

- Changes to ballot counting procedures that condensed the counting period to three days (noted as an unfunded mandate)
- Down-zoning restrictions that would limit local government planning authority
- Proposed Elder/Disabled Property Tax Exclusion bill
- School calendar flexibility legislation
- Revisions to voluntary agricultural district laws

Additional Notes

- The legislative landscape has changed with Republicans holding a veto-proof majority in the Senate but being one vote shy in the House
- The NCACC has a strong presence of former County Commissioners (34) in the General Assembly
- The "Heroic Hands" presidential initiative will celebrate county government employees

DINNER

Board had a dinner break at 5:33 p.m. and returned to the agenda at 6:35 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – SENATOR TERENCE EVERITT, DISTRICT 18 & REPRESENTATIVE BRYAN COHN, DISTRICT 32

Introductions and legislative updates from Senator Terrance Everett (District 18) and Representative Bryan Cohn (District 32) were scheduled; however, both representatives were unable to attend and sent their regrets. Consequently, Chair Gooch moved the meeting directly into the municipal presentations.

UPDATES FROM MUNICIPALITIES

City of Oxford

Mayor Guillermo Nurse and City Manager Brent Taylor presented the following updates from the City of Oxford:

Budget & Administration:

- Oxford has 110 approved positions across departments: 31 in Police, 14 in Fire, 20 in Public Works, 21 in Water/Sewer/Billing, 19 in Administration, and 6 in Parks & Recreation
- General fund breakdown: Public Safety (42%), Public Works (24%), Cultural/Recreation (10%), Planning (7%), Administration (15%), Other (2%)

Public Safety Highlights:

- Fire Department performed 516 inspections, hosted 1,823 participants in fire prevention programs, completed 3,970 training hours, and installed 67 smoke detectors
- Oxford Police Department responded to 12,975 calls for service, issued 1,056 traffic citations, made 657 arrests, and responded to 293 accidents
- Major crime categories decreased from 2023
- Plans to construct a public safety center including a fire substation, police headquarters, and emergency operations center (with potential for Emergency Management System inclusion)

Economic Development:

- Engaged in new economic development strategies and business recruitment plans
- Affiliated with the Main Street program for downtown rehabilitation
- Implemented community-wide branding and expanded Hot Sauce Festival to a two-day event

Parks & Recreation:

- Program participation increased by 10% from the previous year
- Revitalized the theater at City Hall for concerts, plays, and events
- Improved Lake Devin Recreation Park with floating dock, bridge replacement, and trail construction
- Reopened Granville Street Park after being closed for decades
- Planning to construct a new recreation center and obtain more open space

Infrastructure Projects:

- 6,000+ housing units under construction or review
- Completed Hillsborough Street resurfacing
- Working on College Street improvements and roundabout projects
- Water system expansion through Kerr Lake Regional Water System will increase capacity from two to four million gallons per day
- Advanced meter infrastructure installation began with 900 units to be installed this year

Mayor Nurse concluded by expressing interest in holding joint sessions between the City of Oxford and the County to establish a shared vision and goals.

City of Creedmoor

Mayor Bobby Wheeler and City Manager Mike Turner presented the following updates from the City of Creedmoor:

Recent Accomplishments:

- **New Veterans Memorial Monument:** Dedicated in 2024, located in front of the gym as the cornerstone of their Veterans Memorial Park

- **Hometown Hero Banners:** Available for purchase to recognize veterans, displayed during holidays
- **2024 Creedmoor Music Festival:** Drew a very large crowd (described as "a little less than 40,000 people")
- **New Wayfinding Signs:** Installed throughout Creedmoor to help visitors locate businesses on side streets
- **New K-9 Officer:** Added a canine named Luck, trained in drug detection

Infrastructure Development:

- **New City Hall and Police Department:** Currently renovating/building new facilities
 - Police Department will have its own building with twice the space
 - Will create an Administrative Campus with all city facilities closer together
 - Considering solar panels for the roof

Planning for Growth:

- **Current population:** Approximately 5,200 people
- **Projected growth:** Expected to double to over 10,000 in the next five years once sewer infrastructure is completed
- **Proactive planning initiatives:**
 - Five-year capital improvement projects
 - Emergency operations plan development
 - 10-year parks and recreation comprehensive master plan
 - Legislative annexation efforts (to incorporate orange areas that are within city limits but not jurisdiction)

Upcoming Developments:

- **New Fast-Paced Urgent Care Center:** Being built on Highway 56/Wilton Avenue
- **New Parking Lot:** Creating additional parking on Main Street
- **Residential Developments:**
 - Brame's Crossing: 170 homes (has allocation, already started clearing)
 - Creedmoor Village: 700 homes (pending)
 - Yorkshire: 500 homes (pending)
 - Marry Lane: 800 homes on Sage Road/56 (pending)
- **Lake Rogers Water Feature:** Planning a water fountain with lights for special occasions

The City of Creedmoor is actively preparing its infrastructure to handle the significant growth expected once the SGWASA sewer upgrades are completed.

Town of Stem

Mayor Casey Dover presented the following updates from the Town of Stem:

Current Structure:

- **Small administration:** Part-time Clerk, Part-time Zoning Administrator, Mayor and five commissioners
- Mayor Dover mentioned this is his 8th time giving this presentation

Recent Accomplishments (2024):

- **Developed vision statement** with NC Main Street Rural Planning Office
- **Adopted Community Economic Development Assessment Plan** (April 2024)
- **Selected for Rural Community Capacity Program** (May 2024)
 - Mayor Pro Tem Susan Cope completed economic development classes at Appalachian State

- Town became eligible for grant funding
- **Updated website**
 - ADA compliant with new features:
 - Email/text notifications
 - Emergency alerts
 - Built-in ticketing system for citizen concerns

Current/Upcoming Developments (2025):

- **Rapid residential growth:** Three new developments with 291 homes will nearly double the town's population in 24-36 months
- **Downtown master plan:** Received \$45,000 in funding for design work
- **Proposed Stem Town Center** (24 acres) including:
 - 65,000 sq ft of retail, office and restaurant space
 - 15,000 sq ft pharmacy
 - 8,000 sq ft bank
 - 25,000 sq ft grocery store
 - 8,000 sq ft daycare
 - Multiple parks and trails

Administrative Improvements

- Deploying new accounting software
- Adding radar signs to address speeding concerns
- Updating police equipment
- Hiring a Part-time Town Administrator
- Added another Part-time Zoning Administrator
- Acquired property and selected architectural firm for a new town hall building

The Town of Stem's vision describes Stem as "At the crossroads of Southern Granville County," that "connects big city convenience to small town living." while preserving its culture, history, and natural beauty.

Town of Stovall

Commissioner Jeff Stovall (who is also the Mayor Pro Tem presented the following updates from the Town of Stovall:

Town Profile

- **Population:** 374-390 residents
- **Size:** 1 square mile
- **Residences:** Approximately 165
- **Tax rate:** 0.275 per hundred

Key Community Assets

- **North Granville Senior Center:** Served over 7,196 meals in 2024, hired a new program coordinator, and hosts numerous programs and events
- **Stovall Community Park:** Rated as Granville County's only 5-Star Park, hosts numerous community events
- **Stovall Branch Library:** Offers diverse services including social services meetings, Red Cross blood drives, and children's programs
- **Stovall-Shaw Elementary School:** One of the most desirable schools in the county, meets/exceeds state testing levels
- **Stovall Volunteer Fire Department:** Recently built a state-of-the-art live burn training facility
- **Stovall Police Department:** Works closely with Granville County Sheriff's Office
- **Granville County EMS Station:** Located in a town-owned building

- **Stovall Medical Center:** Two practicing physicians covering five specialty areas

Recent Accomplishments

- Secured \$10 million in water grants including \$7.8 million for a new distribution tank
- Passed a balanced budget with no tax increase
- Hosted record numbers of community events
- Refined zoning ordinances
- Established a civic committee for beautification and downtown revival

2025 Priorities

- Implementing a tax increase (amount yet to be determined)
- Adopting visual blight ordinances and hiring a code enforcement officer
- Modernizing town operations
- Expanding the Police Department
- Determining use of town-owned properties after senior center relocates

The Town of Stovall faces several challenges, including an upcoming election with three of the five commissioner seats up for grabs and the ongoing difficulty of recruiting new public servants in a small community.

Town of Butner

Mayor Linda Jordan and Town Manager Jordan McMillan presented the following updates from the Town of Butner:

Strategic Planning

- **First Strategic Plan** was created in 2024 and formally adopted in January 2025
- **Mission:** Provide a helpful and supportive environment through their services in an evolving, diverse town
- **Vision:** To be a thriving town with small-town charm, diverse culture, and rich history
- **First Capital Improvement Plan** was also adopted

Key Focus Areas

- 1. Economic Development**
 - Develop Umstead property as a town center
 - Develop Butner gateway and surrounding infrastructure
 - Increase walkability
 - Develop retail base and amenities
 - Evaluate selling Old Town Hall and G Street properties
- 2. Organizational Excellence**
 - Financial stability
 - Planning for future staffing and facilities
- 3. Safe, Vibrant, and Healthy Community**
 - Increase collaboration with County agencies (Department of Social Services, Crime Stoppers, Public Health)
 - Advocacy with state agencies
- 4. Parks and Recreation**
 - Expand recreational opportunities for all ages
 - Land acquisition and facility development

Major Accomplishments

- New performance stage (nearly \$750,000 project with \$70,000 from TDA)

- Demolition of former Umstead Correction Center (\$1.1 million project with \$825,000 in grant money)
- Rebuilt Greenway Bridge that had collapsed (\$220,000 project)

Upcoming Projects

- DOT intersection realignment at West Lyon Station and Highway 56
- \$2.5 million roundabout project (with \$2 million in grant funding)
- Traffic corridor study from I-85 to Gate Two Road
- Sports arena parking lot expansion
- Potential recreation department and director
- SGWASA sewer project (75 million, will impact growth)

Growth Potential

- Potential for 7,000 additional residents from planned residential developments
- Industrial interest in parcels designated for that purpose
- Butner Gateway development in planning stages

Partnership Opportunities with County

- Butner-Stem Elementary School
- Recreational facilities and greenways
- Highway 56 advocacy through the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Advocacy for the release of underutilized state property
- County services at the southern end of the county
- Economic development support, especially for retail and amenities

RECESS

Board recessed at 7:48 p.m. until Friday, February 21, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board