**GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**
**August 12, 2025**
**GRANVILLE EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTER**
**4185 US Highway 15 South, Oxford, North Carolina**
**Regular Work Session**

**PRESENT:**
Chair Jimmy Gooch
Vice-Chair Zelodis Jay
Commissioner Robert Williford
Commissioner Mark Griffin *left at 12:05*
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 9:05 a.m. Chair Jimmy Gooch called the work session to order. Commissioner Tony W. Cozart had the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Presentation on the Proposed Pay and Classification Study

Matt Reese of the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) presented a proposal to conduct a county-wide pay and classification study. Reese explained the study's purpose was to perform routine maintenance on the County's compensation system to improve recruitment and retention. He emphasized the study focuses on the objective analysis of positions and their required work, not the performance of the individuals in those roles. The process would involve employees and supervisors completing Position Description Questionnaires (PDQs), followed by job analysis and interviews conducted by PTRC. The study would use eight factors for classification: working conditions, nature and significance of public contacts, variety and complexity of work, decision making, consequence of error, supervision given, supervision received, and knowledge/skills/abilities. PTRC would then present implementation options to the Board based on a market comparison of 16 peer local governments and the County's desired competitive philosophy. If the six-month study were to start in September, the proposed timeline would conclude with a final presentation to the Board in March of 2026.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- Commissioners asked clarifying questions about the process, including how to handle disagreements between employees and supervisors on job duties, how to compare Granville County to larger peer counties with different workloads, and how the study would address positions found to be significantly over or underpaid.
- Reese explained that the PDQ allows for separate comments from the employee and supervisor, and interviews help clarify roles. He noted that for overpaid positions, the common practice is to "red line" them (freeze pay) rather than cut salaries, and for underpaid positions, multi-year implementation plans are an option. Deputy County Manager Korena Weichel added that County policy prohibits salary decreases due to reclassification.

- Regarding market comparisons, Reese stated they look for a 70% match in job scope and use internal comparisons for unique, non-benchmark jobs. Entry-level positions are used as the primary anchors for building the pay structure.
- There was discussion about the frequency of such studies. Reese recommended a review every five to seven years but noted that the recent volatile market might warrant more frequent updates.
- County Manager Drew Cummings provided context on the competitive regional labor market, acknowledging that while the County cannot match the highest-paying jurisdictions, it is critical to understand the market to inform retention strategies.
- Commissioners expressed concern about the potential budget impact of salary increases and the need to balance competitive pay for employees with the tax burden on citizens.

**<u>Presentation on Article 46 Sales Tax Referendum</u>**

County intern Meg McFadden presented on strategies for a potential Article 46 quarter-cent sales tax referendum. She stressed that a strong, clearly defined use of funds is essential for gaining voter trust and approval. The proposed tax, which would exclude essentials like groceries, gas, and medicine, is estimated to raise $1.6 million in its first year and cost the average adult about $20 per year. McFadden cited Forsyth County's success in passing the tax only after dedicating the revenue specifically to teacher supplements.

The staff recommendation was to publicly commit roughly 50% of the revenue to county school teacher supplements and 50% to emergency services, with messaging that includes focus on improving emergency response times and enhancing services.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- Board supported dropping the third option presented, a general "County Capital Projects" message, in favor of the more specific education and emergency services focus.
- Commissioner Williford recommended engaging community business leaders to help advocate for the referendum.
- There was strong support for dedicating funds to education. Commissioner Karan noted the importance of accounting for charter school supplements, while Commissioner May stated the additional funds would significantly help with teacher retention by raising the total local supplement.
- County Manager Cummings noted that a 50/50 split offered both messaging clarity and future flexibility, allowing the Board to adjust allocations based on emerging needs. Several commissioners agreed that including emergency services would broaden the base of support.
- Chair Gooch and Commissioner Williford emphasized that the referendum's success would depend entirely on clear, consistent, and factual messaging to the public about how the money would be used.

**<u>Update on School Resource Officer (SRO) Staffing</u>**

Management Analyst David Schexnayder provided an update on the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. Following the funding of two additional positions in the Sheriff's Office, the law enforcement agencies within the County now have 15 funded positions across 13 public school campuses, with the goal of having one SRO at every school and two at the traditional high schools. The officers are provided by four agencies, with the Sheriff's Office providing ten. Schexnayder noted the County receives approximately half of a $308,000 state grant for the program and that of the 11.5 locally funded SROs, the County pays for 9.5.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- Commissioner Jay expressed concern that there was not an SRO at every campus on the first day of school, as was the Board's goal.
- Management Analyst Schexnayder and County Manager Cummings explained that hiring challenges and high turnover rates for SROs are persistent issues. Cummings noted the Sheriff is working to get more deputies SRO-trained to serve as backups and connected the retention issue to the need for a competitive pay scale.
- Commissioner May advocated for working with state legislators to secure more grant funding for the SRO program.
- Commissioner Karan highlighted that if there were to be a staff shortage at the Sheriff's Office it could leave a traditional public school without an officer before the contractually-obligated SRO at Oxford Preparatory School.
- It was confirmed that SROs provided to charter schools are still employees of the respective law enforcement agency and are paid under the same system, with the charter school reimbursing the full cost.

## BREAK

The Board took a break at 10:30 a.m.

## WORK SESSION RESUMED

The work session resumed at 10:47 a.m.

### Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Financial Update and Loan Repayment Plan

Finance Director Jennifer Baird presented a financial update on the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, reporting that it is on a trajectory to be self-sufficient. For FY25, the convenience sites (Fund 59) and the landfill (Fund 60) are projected to have a combined net income of over $800,000. The fund's cash position is estimated at $6.2 million, which is sufficient to cover operational needs and the upcoming construction of a new landfill cell.

Two administrative changes were proposed: first, to redirect the $50,000 annual GFL franchise fee from the General Fund to the Solid Waste fund; and second, to charge the fund a new $12,940 annual administrative fee to cover support from County departments. Finance Director Baird recommended a 15-year repayment plan for the $4.6 million loan the County made to the fund in 2023, which would result in an annual payment of approximately $330,000 back to the General Fund.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- Board was supportive of the administrative changes and the repayment plan.
- County Manager Cummings noted that moving the franchise fee into the enterprise fund would help mitigate future fee increases.
- Solid Waste Director Jason Falls confirmed that the department plans to adjust tipping fees annually to remain competitive and maintain the fund's financial health.
- In response to a question from Commissioner Jay about services for disabled residents, Falls confirmed that Green for Life Environmental (GFL) offers a backyard pickup service, which typically requires a doctor's note.
- Board and County Attorney Jim Wrenn discussed the need for a formal agreement or resolution to document the 15-year loan repayment term, with the understanding that the Board could review and adjust it annually.

**Review of Recreation Funding Allocations and Mini-Grant Program**

Deputy County Manager Weichel led a discussion on the County's recreation funding programs. The conversation was prompted by a desire to reallocate funds toward pressing needs at county-owned facilities, such as the estimated $100,000 cost to replace aging playground equipment at the Granville Athletic Park (GAP) and the development of the new Hawley Recreation Park.

The two funding programs under review were the annual municipal allocations, which are based on a per-capita formula and total approximately $80,000 per year, and the recreation mini-grant program, which has a $50,000 annual budget. The Deputy County Manager requested direction on the mini-grant program, as the application cycle for FY27 was scheduled to open in December.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- There was a consensus among the Board to pause the $50,000 mini-grant program for fiscal year 2027 to free up funds for county facilities.
- A broader discussion occurred regarding the $80,000 in annual municipal allocations. Some commissioners advocated for pausing this funding as well for one year, arguing that county facilities serving all residents should be the priority.
- Other commissioners were hesitant to eliminate the municipal allocations entirely, noting that those municipal parks are heavily used by all county residents. They suggested a reduction in the per-capita amount might be more appropriate.
- Board directed staff to bring back a consent agenda item for the September meeting to formally suspend the mini-grant program indefinitely, with a plan to review it for FY28. The Board will continue to discuss the future of the municipal allocations during the FY27 budget process.

**Discussion of a New County Strategic Plan**

Management Analyst Schexnayder and Warren Miller of Fountainworks Consulting presented a proposal to facilitate the creation of a new five-year strategic plan, as the current one expires this year. Miller explained the process would help the County establish a clear vision, set actionable priorities, and develop performance metrics. The proposed cost was approximately $70,000, which would include extensive community and staff engagement.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- Commissioner Cozart questioned the cost and asked if a more limited scope was possible; County Manager Cummings responded that while staff could produce a document, the value of an external facilitator lies in guiding the county toward a truly strategic plan that drives change, rather than one that simply describes current operations.
- Several commissioners expressed strong reluctance to approve a significant, unbudgeted expenditure, particularly after the preceding discussion where the Board considered cutting $130,000 in recreation funding to address other needs. They felt the timing was poor and the expense would be perceived negatively by the citizenry.
- The consensus of the Board was to decline moving forward with the proposal at this time and to revisit the need for a new strategic plan during the next budget cycle for FY28.

**Discussion of Butner-Stem Elementary School Reuse Plan**

County Manager Drew Cummings led a discussion on the potential reuse of the Butner-Stem Elementary School property, which the school system is expected to offer to the County to satisfy the County's right of first refusal. He has held preliminary discussions with numerous potential partners to gauge interest in using portions of the 80,000-square-foot facility and its surrounding 20-30 acres.

Potential partners and uses include the Butner Food Pantry; South Granville Water and Sewer Authority (SGWASA) for office space; Senior Services for a southern-end senior center; Cooperative Extension for a teaching kitchen; the Butner Community Association for a community center; and South Granville Athletic Association (SGAA) for managing sports fields.

**Board Discussion Highlights:**

- The primary concern for the Board was the significant unknown cost of taking on the property. An initial assessment estimated a $2.2 million roof replacement for the two older buildings would be needed within three years.
- Development Services Director Scott Phillips advised that any change of use for the buildings would trigger requirements to meet current building codes, likely representing a multi-million dollar renovation cost. He noted, however, that the newest building (Building 3) is in much better condition and would require less work.
- County Attorney Jim Wrenn advised on the legal processes for potentially selling or leasing portions of the property, noting that transfers to other governmental entities like SGWASA are simpler than sales to private developers.
- Despite the costs, several commissioners saw the potential for the property to become a major asset for the southern end of the county by providing needed space for critical services.
- Board was generally supportive of the County Manager's recommendation to form a steering committee to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the costs, benefits, and feasibility of the various reuse options before the County makes a final decision on whether to accept the property.

## ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, and unanimously carried, Board adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board