GRANVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 9, 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
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 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.

Planning Department Updates on Land Development Policies
Planning Director Barry Baker presented several potential amendments to the Land Development Ordinance based on recent feedback from the Board and the Planning Board. Key proposals included increasing streetscape buffer requirements to 50 feet to better preserve the county's rural character; amending the active recreation requirement for major subdivisions from 10% active to a blend of 5% active and 5% passive (e.g., trails) to encourage more usable and connected amenities; establishing standards for subdivision mail kiosks to require safe, off-road parking; and making the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) threshold stricter by lowering the trigger from 80 dwelling units to 50. Planning Director Baker also discussed exploring requirements for shared driveways in minor subdivisions to improve safety and the possibility of requiring new major subdivisions to provide their own solid waste dumpsters to alleviate pressure on county convenience centers.

Board Discussion Highlights:

- There was strong consensus for increasing streetscape buffers, establishing standards for mail kiosks, and lowering the TIA threshold to 50 units, with commissioners citing the need to proactively manage growth and safety.
- The proposal to create a blended active/passive recreation requirement generated significant discussion. Commissioner Griffin expressed concern about making development easier and wanted to ensure developers fully provide high-quality amenities. Other commissioners and County Manager Drew Cummings argued that a blended approach could result in more functional and desirable open space, preventing developers from designating unusable land to meet the requirement.
- The Board discussed the concept of requiring shared driveways in minor subdivisions to reduce access points on high-speed roads.
- Commissioners expressed interest in the idea of requiring subdivisions to handle their own solid waste collection via dumpsters, seeing it as a way to extend the life of county facilities.

- Commissioner Tim Karan requested that staff research potential requirements for overflow parking in new subdivisions to address issues in communities with small lots.

Sheriff's Office Update on Southern Health Partners Agreement

Sheriff Fountain reported on a proposed amendment to the Southern Health Partners contract to support the Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program at the detention center. He explained that the amendment would use $60,000 in opioid settlement funds to add a part-time nurse position. This position is essential for data collection, coordinating with medical staff, and administering the program. Sheriff Fountain noted the funding was reallocated from a previously approved but unfilled position, avoiding a new budget request. He also stated that his office is working with UNC Health to embed Narcan training on inmate tablets as part of its harm reduction efforts.

Board Discussion Highlights:

- County Manager Drew Cummings clarified that two items would come to the Board for formal action in October: a budget amendment to reallocate the opioid funds and the contract amendment with Southern Health Partners.
- The discussion shifted to the separate contract with the Harm Reduction Coalition. Commissioner May and others voiced strong concerns about the organization's public messaging, which they felt was inconsistent with community values.
- Sheriff Fountain explicitly stated that his office's harm reduction program is limited to Narcan training and is separate from the activities of the Harm Reduction Coalition.
- County Manager Cummings confirmed that staff had already communicated the Board's concerns about public messaging to the health department, which manages the social media accounts involved. The Board requested that the future contract for the Harm Reduction Coalition include clearer parameters on outreach methods and locations.

Discussion on the Future of the Orange Street Community Center

Commissioner Dr. Cozart initiated a discussion regarding the future of the county-owned Orange Street Community Center. He proposed that the County proceed with the planned roof replacement and then transfer ownership of the building to the 501(c)(3) organization that currently operates it. He suggested the County could retain board appointment authority and provide a small annual stipend to ensure the facility remains well-managed.

Board Discussion Highlights:

- County Attorney Jim Wrenn advised that retaining appointment authority could legally classify the organization as a component unit of the County, which would complicate the goal of severing financial ties and could have implications for the County's financial audits.
- Commissioner May argued for a "clean break," stating that the current arrangement is inequitable as no other community in the county receives similar support. He suggested that after the roof is replaced, the County should transfer the property and all future responsibilities, proposing that the City of Oxford might be a logical recipient, given the facility's location and user base.
- Commissioner Griffin and other Board members agreed with the goal of transferring ownership to ensure the building's long-term viability without ongoing County expense, acknowledging that the County cannot control the property's fate indefinitely.
- The consensus of the Board was to direct the County Attorney and County Manager to research legal options for transferring the property to another entity—either the current non-profit or the City of Oxford—with deed restrictions to ensure continued public use while fully terminating the County's financial responsibility.

CLOSED SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Robert Williford, seconded by Commissioner Tony W. Cozart, and unanimously carried, Board went into closed session at 12:26 p.m. for Economic Development matters.

CLOSED SESSION

Motioned by Commissioner Mark Griffin and seconded by Commissioner Rob Williford, and unanimously carried, Board adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

ATTEST:

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Jimmy Gooch, Chair