

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF GUILFORD COUNTY
WORK SESSION**

Greensboro, North Carolina
December 19, 2024

The Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Work Session at 3:30 p.m. in the Carolyn Q. Coleman Conference Room located on the first floor of the Old County Courthouse, 301 W. Market St., Greensboro, NC.

PRESENT: Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston, presiding; Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster (entered meeting at 4:45 p.m.); Commissioners Kay Cashion, Brandon Gray-Hill, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Alan Perdue, Pat Tillman, Carly Cooke, and Mary Beth Murphy (via virtual communication).

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: County Manager Michael Halford; County Attorney Andrea Leslie-Fite; Clerk to Board Robin Keller; Deputy Clerk to the Board Ariane Webb, Deputy Clerk to the Board T’ebony Rosa; Jason Jones, Assistant County Manager; Victor Isler, Assistant County Manager; Erris Dunston, Assistant County Manager; Jim Albright, Emergency Services Director; Dwight Godwin, Parks Director; Matthew Crawford, Inspections Director; members of staff, media, and the public. Virtual participation was made available to members of the public and media partners.

I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Alston welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. COUNTY DEPARTMENT UPDATES – EMERGENCY SERVICES, PARKS AND INSPECTIONS

County Manager Michael Halford introduced the agenda item and recognized Emergency Services Director Jim Albright.

Albright provided an overview of Emergency Services challenges and successes. He spoke to the recent Paramedic Academy graduates. He shared historical service delivery to include medical services, fire inspections, 911 coordination, and emergency transportation. He noted policy frameworks such as ambulance service, call-to-service response times, county territory square footage, rural representation, and special event overtime and fee coverage. He shared archaic systems, pandemic fatigue, and vacancy challenges.

Albright spoke to quadrant functions with relevant expenditures. He highlighted call volume at five (5) percent increase each year, which equates to twelve (12) to fifteen (15) responders per year. He noted drivers such as an aging population, medical navigation, and transport priority. He explained the priority gradation of Alpha through Echo calls for service. He explained not meeting response time goals due to the amount of territory to cover in rural areas.

Albright shared post-pandemic impacts through peer reviewed research papers to seek a different type of EMS model that is not focused on time but on appropriate resources per patient needs. He spoke to community expectations and to opportunities for service delivery. He noted moments of demand to include temporal and geospatial. He displayed a thematic map to highlight the crescent around the city that indicates population, industrialization, and health disparities.

Albright spoke to call screening criteria due to limited resources. He shared response time data, Board expectations, national accreditation standards, and redefining goals. He spoke to coordinated responses with contracted fire inspections, to include the GC School System, natural disasters, hazardous materials handling, fleet maintenance, and warehouse logistics.

Albright noted successes such as the IMPACT team, the Adult Resource Team (ART), the EMT LaunchPad, countywide fire records management, and the Greensboro Police Department and Division of Public Safety's Behavioral Health Response Team (BHRT).

Albright noted challenges such as a seven (7) percent vacancy rate, training cycles, workforce retention, succession planning, and decreased volunteerism with Rural Fire Districts. He concluded the presentation by highlighting opportunities to reduce costs with non-emergency partnerships, redefining the EMS delivery system, and transportation reimbursement advocacy on the federal level.

Commissioner Murphy questioned the rural volunteer capacity.

Albright confirmed that in 1989 there were over 1500 registered and rostered firefighters that have now decreased to approximately 150, He noted that some are volunteers in different departments.

Commissioner Murphy opined creative solutions to changing needs and to being intentional regarding trends and collaborative efforts.

Albright spoke to functioning as one emergency medical system and to an ideal long-term staffing model. He noted re-imaging a different system.

Commissioner Tillman questioned slide 14 (Emergency Services Overview) and Rural Fire District challenges. He opined long-range planning efforts regarding natural disasters.

Albright confirmed daily planning around critical infrastructure, healthcare facilities, chemical manufacturing, and active assailants. He spoke to the imperfect science of weather forecasting.

Commissioner Tillman further questioned career pathways and school system relationships.

Albright voiced concern regarding the volunteerism decreases. He spoke to public safety career progression. He noted ARPA funding successes with the Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Fire Academy. He shared the post-pandemic career pipeline developments.

Commissioner Tillman questioned public safety advocacy efforts regarding NC General Assembly funding allocation.

Albright noted limited state funding. He shared valuable federal resources, Medicaid/Medicare sources, and emergency services industry growth.

Commissioner Cooke questioned fire district impacts.

Commissioner Perdue confirmed a revenue projection shortfall that negatively impacted budgets over a three-year period. He predicted layoffs and/or restricting equipment purchases. **He recommended additional discussions.**

Halford opined rural district tax values and expressed concern regarding the three-year period. **He recommended a future presentation from Tax Director Ben Chavis.**

Halford continued the presentation and recognized Parks Director Dwight Godwin.

Godwin provided an historical overview of the parks system, current service delivery, and its footprint that covers over 4500 acres. He spoke to the policy framework that includes municipal partnerships, fee philosophy, and fee structure. He explained approximately \$4.3M county net funds, staffing considerations with increased territories, and the National Parks & Recreation Association (NRPA) park classifications. He highlighted core staffing challenges, limited resources, and customer satisfaction.

Godwin described regional park performance measures pre- and post-pandemic service delivery. He spoke to land acquisition impacts, and to associated park system costs such as land upkeep, maintenance sustainability, and capital improvements. He highlighted the connectivity generated during the pandemic that allowed individuals to enjoy the parks and trails.

Godwin spoke to the Parks Master Plan, to data tracking software implementation, to increasing event attendance, and to partnership expansion. He noted the park system is a community asset. He concluded his presentation with an overview of opportunities and challenges to include goal achievement and potential future threats.

Commissioner Tillman questioned slide 21 (Parks – Service Levels), the sports economy revenue generation model, and fee structures.

Godwin confirmed a slide display of participation numbers and not revenue. He noted special event fees.

Commissioner Tillman questioned publicity for upcoming tournaments and the revenue generated for hotels and restaurants.

Godwin confirmed policy decisions to rent out facilities for tournaments and noted the importance of having adequate staff.

Halford spoke to the difference between a passive versus active approach to revenue generation.

Commissioner Tillman requested a parks revenue breakdown of slide 21.

Godwin confirmed.

Commissioner Murphy spoke to the Parks Master Plan adoption, to new policies under a fresh direction, to public swimming teams, and to program demands. She encouraged future dialogue.

Commissioner Cashion echoed Commissioner Tillman's comment and requested a revenue breakdown of the golf driving range. She spoke to the passive versus active approach. She cautioned scheduling too many special events that impede free activities.

Commissioner Perdue questioned park equipment life span. **He requested tracking park equipment life cycles for future budgets.**

Commissioner Jones spoke to special event revenue generation and to the reasonableness of the fees as compared to other venues.

Chairman Alston reminded the Board of time limitations. The Inspections Department presentation was preempted due to time constraints.

Halford shared the upcoming Board Retreat and spoke to meeting expectations.

B. 2025 ANNUAL RETREAT TOPICS DISCUSSION

Halford introduced the item and provided an overview of survey results.

Chairman Alston spoke to a consensus of topics.

Halford reviewed the survey topic list that received the highest votes. He shared departmental overviews to be presented during the Board Retreat.

Chairman Alston noted the Board Retreat will be held January 23-24, 2025.

Suggested Board Retreat topics included the following:

- **Manager Halford – Rural Fire District Study**
- **Commissioner Jones – Mental Health and Homelessness; Special Projects Update; Intra-county wealth disparities along census tracks**
- **Commissioner Murphy – Parks Master Plan**
- **Commissioner Cooke – Comprehensive Plan results; Transportation updates and pilot program contracts; Triad Real Estate and Building Industry Coalition (TREBIC); Wealth/Poverty peer jurisdiction long-term impacts**
- **Chairman Alston – Water & Sewer**

Halford shared a Strategic Plan draft included in the Board materials and requested Board direction.

Commissioners Murphy and Cooke voiced concern regarding the January versus March Board Retreat dates and creating opportunities for partners to share their reports.

Assistant County Manager Victor Isler confirmed the January Homelessness Taskforce meeting date.

Chairman Alston suggested information sharing to those not involved with the taskforce.

Commissioner Cooke requested a Work Session on January 9, 2025 to discuss the Carolina Core housing study.

Chairman Alston requested staff to prepare for upcoming Budget Town Halls and suggested community surveys.

Commissioner Murphy highlighted the positive feedback received as a result of County Services being present at last year's Budget Town Halls.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for this agenda.

IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned with unanimous consent at 5:23 p.m.

Melvin "Skip" Alston
Chairman

Robin Keller
Clerk