

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

Greensboro, North Carolina
November 21, 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; Commissioners Kay Cashion, Carly Cooke, Brandon Gray-Hill, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Alan Perdue, Pat Tillman, 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; Assistant County Manager Victor Isler; Assistant County Manager Erris Dunston; Assistant County Manager Jason Jones; Special Projects Manager Abby Gostling; Chief District Court Judge Teresa H. Vincent; Animal Services Director Jorge Ortega; 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. ARPA OBLIGATION UPDATE

County Manager Michael Halford introduced the agenda item and recognized Special Projects Manager Abby Gostling.

Gostling highlighted the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) status update and recommendations. She provided an overview of the approximately \$42M in project-specific allocations and county operating expenses allocated to cover public health, economic impact, and infrastructure. She spoke to the federal program timeline and obligation deadline of December 31, 2024.

Gostling noted re-obligated funds, remaining broadband funds, and Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Funds (LATCF) of approximately \$1.3M. She shared goals of ensuring the federal obligation deadline is met along with one-time funds available for future projects.

Gostling displayed a chart outlining completed programs that were under their budgeted amounts. She shared that the pandemic recovery team scope change. She noted that the projected remainder amounts become available for re-obligation. She highlighted funding re-obligation methods. She shared the staff recommendation regarding covering the county's operating costs under the revenue replacement expenditure category. She noted spending strategies for eligible projects to include public health salaries, food security personnel, eviction mediation contracts, and county operating expenses.

Gostling shared examples of those projects that do not meet budget past the deadline. She noted federal flexibility under different circumstances. She spoke to actions needed to implement the re-obligation strategy. She reiterated end results of reallocating remaining ARPA funds.

Commissioner Cooke questioned eviction remediation.

Gostling confirmed a one-month contract extension.

Commissioner Cooke questioned the education category.

Gostling confirmed that federal funds would cover county operations prior to county dollars being used.

Commissioner Perdue questioned broadband expenditures and project flexibility for emergency services.

Gostling spoke to Board awareness of the funds being available. She noted Fire District service contracts are not fully depleted.

Commissioner Cashion questioned assignment of re-obligation funds.

Gostling confirmed no assignment until Board direction.

Commissioner Jones questioned slide 10 (Action Needed to Implement Re-Obligation Strategy) and the "Education" term used alongside County Operating Expenses for \$499K.

Gostling confirmed that the term is aligned with the general fund education budget. She shared that the approximately \$499K will be paid with federal funds rather than county dollars.

County Manager Halford spoke to slide 7 (County Operating Expenses) and explained that but for the pandemic, the county would have had \$90M additional funds in its local revenues. He shared that federal dollars helped to free up and re-allocate county funds.

Motion made by Commissioner Carly Cooke, seconded by Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster, to adopt a reallocation of ARPA funds as follows:

(1) Decrease ARPA allocation to the following projects by the following amounts:

Pandemic Recovery Team - \$823,869
Workforce Impact Analysis - \$10,000
GCSTOP - \$419.11
SW Water for Fire Service - \$650
Infant Mortality - \$0.01
Detention Center Medical - \$0.32
Reserve - \$100.07

Increase ARPA allocation to the following projects by the following amounts:

Food Security Personnel - \$335,346
County Operating Expenses (Education) - \$499,692.51

Move Public Health Salaries project from revenue replacement to public health expenditure category

(2) Amend contract 90006528 with the University of North Carolina Center for Housing and Community Studies for the Eviction Mediation Program to increase the maximum exposure amount by \$29,025.89 and extend the expiration date to December 31, 2025.

(3) Amend the ARPA Enabled Fund to decrease the appropriation to Food Security by \$335,346 and decrease Appropriated Fund Balance by \$335,346. Amend the General Fund to decrease the appropriation to Education by \$499,692.51 and increase the appropriation to General Government by \$499,692.51. Authorize moving the two positions associated with Food Security from the ARPA Enabled Fund to the Community Development Fund.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLAN FOR 2025

County Manager Michael Halford introduced the agenda item, highlighted the previous work session, and recognized Assistant County Manager for Quality Government Jason Jones.

Commissioner Cooke questioned funding sources.

Halford confirmed fund balance utilization.

Commissioner Murphy sought expenditure clarification.

Jones confirmed fiscal year 2025 is approximately \$500K with a full year at approximately \$1M.

Commissioner Jones questioned plan eligibility.

Halford confirmed those employees who were hired or rehired by Guilford County on or after July 1, 2009 will not be eligible for the Medicare Advantage Plan. He shared no plan expansion.

Jones confirmed that approximately 500 retirees qualify. He shared that eligibility begins at the retirement age of 65.

Motion made by Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster, seconded by Commissioner Alan Perdue, to adopt Option 7 as presented and authorize County staff to execute an agreement with United Healthcare (UHC) to provide Medicare eligible qualified retirees with the specified Medicare Advantage plan for calendar year 2025 with a total rate of \$297.59 and the County's contribution at \$262.98 effective January 1, 2025.

The motion carried unanimously.

C. BUDGET AMENDMENT AND CAPITAL PROJECT ADOPTION: LEGAL SUPPORT CENTER

Chairman Alston introduced the agenda item and recognized Chief District Court Judge Teresa H. Vincent.

Judge Vincent provided an overview of the Guilford County Legal Support Center (GCLSC). She explained that the LSC is a resource hub for self-represented litigants that serve as a navigation assistant through the legal system. She provided an overview of the GCLSC benefits such as improving legal access, clearing the Civil District case backlog, and stress alleviation.

Judge Vincent outlined civil proceedings and how Court Support for Families (CSF) would serve as a non-profit community partner. She recognized CSF Board of Director Attorney Adam Arthur and noted that CSF was formerly known as Court Watch of North Carolina. She highlighted the benefits of a CSF partnership.

Commissioner Murphy entered the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

Judge Vincent spoke to the proposed GCLSC operations at the High Point and Greensboro locations. She further explained staff duties and responsibilities to include courthouse navigation assistance for self-represented litigants. She opined future pro bono volunteer hours from local bar association members.

Judge Vincent noted the total annual operational funding allocations. She spoke to funding options for both Greensboro and High Point locations. She displayed the timeline for proposed launch dates with a 2025 completion.

Judge Vincent compared the Wake County Legal Support Center (WCLSC) and its funding structure to include grants, donations, and the Wake County Bar Association financial support. She stated that the GCLSC will be the second in the state, aside from Charlotte's self-help center, to offer an LSC. She noted the difference is that the GCLSC will provide direct assistance.

Commissioner Jones highlighted that both courthouses are being served with this program and differentiated WCLSC and proposed GCLSC expenditures. He noted the disproportionate numbers of self-represented litigants due to the prohibitive costs of legal representation. He shared the benefits of leveraging the CSF partnership along with other organizations.

Commissioner Cashion expressed appreciation to Judge Vincent for this program as it levels the playing field for people to seek justice. She questioned the number of attorneys interested in pro bono service and whether bilingual interpreters would be onsite.

Judge Vincent confirmed pro bono awards through the Greensboro Bar Association. She shared a potential partnership with Elon Law School in addition to future opportunities. She suggested further work in the bilingual arena for in-person presence but will utilize the language hotline until then.

Attorney Arthur shared confidence in future bar association support for the GCLSC program along with potential challenges regarding language barriers that may be offset with technology.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the case backlog as compared to the WCLSC.

Judge Vincent confirmed an efficiency slowdown during the e-filing software transition. She noted that the pandemic backlog was horrible statewide, but case volume is now reasonable. She spoke to a goal of rendering justice in a timely manner.

Attorney Arthur further clarified the litigation process by describing the case process and the paperwork frustration experienced by pro se litigants.

Vice Chairwoman Foster expressed gratitude for addressing these county needs. She compared a situation between a represented client and a pro se litigant and expressed support for leveling the playing field.

Attorney Leslie-Fite re-stated the motion for the record.

Commissioner Jones accepted the restatement and incorporated the language into his motion.

Moved by Commissioner Frankie T. Jones, Jr., seconded by Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster, to adopt the following:

- (1) Amend the ARPA Enabled Fund to increase the appropriation to Legal Support Center by \$270,000 and increase Appropriated Fund Balance in the ARPA Enabled Fund by \$270,000.**
- (2) Adopt capital project ordinance for Legal Support Center Capital Improvements in the amount of \$274,000 with \$274,000 in Transfers from Other Funds (General Fund).**
- (3) Authorizes staff to take any and all necessary actions including but not limited to execution of necessary contracts and any necessary budget or fund transfers/amendments to launch the project.**

The motion carried unanimously.

D. ARPA ENABLED FUNDING FOR THE SERVANT CENTER

Chairman Alston introduced the agenda item and recognized Commissioner Tillman.

Commissioner Tillman recognized The Servant Center Executive Director Shanna Reece.

Reece spoke to the recent Holden Heights purchase and to a veteran service expansion of an additional twenty-two (22) medical respite beds. She spoke to tests and medical procedures. She shared an anticipated April 2025 move-in date for staff, veterans, and equipment. She requested county support.

Commissioner Tillman voiced support for the funding allocation, noted the ongoing need, and provided Servant Center re-integration statistics.

Moved by Commissioner Pat Tillman, seconded by Commissioner Alan Perdue, to authorize staff to take any and all necessary actions including, but not to limited to execution of contracts and associated budget or fund-related amendments in the approval of utilizing ARPA enabled funding, to award \$500,000 to the Servant Center for the purposes of expanding services for disabled veterans experiencing homelessness.

Commissioner Cooke questioned the current building status and future service delivery.

Reece confirmed that the building's fate is Board determined as the organization owns the current center. She noted that operations will cease after transitioning to the new facility.

Commissioner Murphy noted a lack of communication regarding a future county building purchase. She voiced concern regarding the agenda item's limited notice along with awareness of the remaining ARPA funding. She requested additional time to consider a comprehensive approach to funding allocation scope and needs. She further requested Commissioner Tillman to withdraw the main motion with the purpose of revisiting the item on a future agenda.

Chairman Alston clarified a meeting was held with Commissioner Tillman and Executive Director Reece and The Servant Center board regarding the building and potential budget for other Board priorities.

Commissioner Perdue recalled a previous \$1M funding request with the hopes of securing a grant.

Reece confirmed the original \$1.5M request. She shared receipt of \$1M for the purchase with the remaining \$500K for renovation. She noted the City of Greensboro matched funding of \$1.5M and renovations have started.

Commissioner Cooke echoed support for The Servant Center's work with vulnerable populations. She voiced concern regarding competing ARPA-funded priorities. She urged additional time to consider funding commitments.

Vice Chairwoman Foster questioned the matched funds. She further questioned building utilization once the transition to the new facility is complete.

Reece confirmed a conversation of potential matched county funds where Greensboro approved its \$1.5M portion. She noted that any sale proceeds will go towards the medical respite program operations to leverage upfront costs while waiting for Medicaid waivers to be state approved. Commissioner Tillman questioned the impact of tabling the motion to the December 19, 2024 Board meeting.

Reece spoke to limited fund commitments up to June 2025 for project support.

Commissioner Tillman highlighted this project is not utilizing general funds.

Chairman Alston requested Board support to table this item to allot additional time to consider the funding request.

Substitute motion made by Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy, seconded by Commissioner Pat Tillman, to table this item to receive and consider additional information, and direct staff to provide ARPA-enabled project parameters to determine funding options under consideration.

The motion carried unanimously.

E. COUNTY DEPARTMENT UPDATES – EMERGENCY SERVICES AND ANIMAL SERVICES

Taking a point of personal privilege, County Manager Halford introduced the agenda item and elected to review the Animal Services Department in lieu of the Emergency Services Department due to time constraints.

Halford spoke to the demolition of the old animal shelter location on Wendover Avenue and requested Board action on disposition of the surplus property. He shared a tax value of approximately \$1.1M for 6.35 acres.

Attorney Leslie-Fite clarified the motion language.

Moved by Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster, seconded by Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy, to declare the one (1) Wendover Avenue Animal Services parcel owned by Guilford County as surplus and to direct staff to present appropriate property disposition options per statutory requirements.

Commissioner Jones questioned the third-party consent issue and who has a right-of-first refusal.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed there is no right-of-first refusal with this agreement and advised of further municipal conversations to determine interest as the joint ownership is held as tenants-in-common.

Commissioner Perdue questioned the parking lot deed restrictions. He opined the challenges.

Attorney Leslie-Fite advised of co-owner conversations.

Friendly amendment made by Commissioner Alan Perdue to direct staff to engage in co-owner conversations regarding removing the neighboring property deed restrictions.

Friendly amended made by Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston to direct staff to engage in municipal conversations with Greensboro and High Point regarding negotiating a property purchase plan.

Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster accepted the friendly amendments.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed that such negotiations are allowed under Article 12 of North Carolina General Statute §160A. She shared that a full title search will be conducted to determine all restrictions.

The motion carried unanimously.

Halford quelled rumors and misinformation recently circulated regarding Animal Services deliverables to the community. He highlighted the new facility and scope of service best practices. He recognized Animal Services Director Jorge Ortega.

Ortega noted celebrating three (3) years in the new facility. He provided an operational timeline from several years ago along with a statistical overview and national gold standard recognitions. He shared potential intake challenges such as compassion fatigue and staff/volunteer burnout.

Ortega spoke to quarantine protocols, community partnerships, and future collaborations. He shared long-term care strategies and resource allocations.

Ortega provided an historic overview of Animal Services, spoke to the admission policy framework, and to a live release goal rate of over 90%.

Halford spoke to a resource structure that matches Board expectations, and to mandated and non-mandated service quadrants.

Ortega compared service level data between average monthly intake versus average live release rate for cats and dogs. He spoke to animal population and building capacity.

Halford addressed donation protocols, spoke to intake processes, and to state statute alignment regarding inventory while maintaining good stewardship standards.

Attorney Leslie-Fite spoke to the county disposition of donations. She noted the various designated categories of incoming donations. She urged the importance of logging items. She advised adherence to the emoluments clause and public purpose meaning according to the state constitution.

Vice Chairwoman Foster questioned impacts of donation receipt and staff workload of sorting and categorizing items.

Halford confirmed this was not a new policy but long-awaited compliance with established guidelines. He explained there were no new donation intake protocols other than Board delegation to the County Manager to guide Department Directors. He noted department thresholds and conflicts of interest situations.

Ortega shared donation intake challenges to include a transition from hardcopy to electronic reporting and storage capacity. He continued the presentation to highlight average monthly adoption, average monthly euthanasia, and average length of stay for cats and dogs. He spoke to the average monthly calls for service and response time.

Ortega highlighted key successes such as the new Animal Resource Center, partnerships, the spay and neuter voucher program, and community engagement. He concluded the presentation with an overview of opportunities and challenges.

Commissioner Cashion questioned staffing levels.

Ortega confirmed staffing level challenges and to working on a solution.

Halford spoke to a unique operational structure and incorporating part-time staff. He noted an opportunity to discuss policy regarding future positions.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the Dogs Day Out event.

Ortega confirmed the program continuation.

Commissioner Tillman questioned future donations.

Halford confirmed aligning the processes within the ordinance and partnership delegation.

Commissioner Murphy questioned the operational strain created by backyard breeding practices. She spoke to addressing root causes of problems.

Commissioner Murphy requested Animal Services Director Jorge Ortega to return to a future work session to present policy around mitigating solutions to address problem root causes and improve Animal Resource Center operations.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for this agenda.

IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned by Board consensus at 5:25 p.m.

Melvin "Skip" Alston
Chairman

Robin Keller
Clerk