



## **GUILFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS'** **BUDGET RETREAT**

**March 27, 2026**

Northeast Park Event Center  
3441 Northeast Park Drive  
Gibsonville, NC 27249

### **MINUTES**

*The Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Special Meeting – Annual Board Retreat – on March 27, 2026 at 9:00 a.m., Northeast Park Event Center, 3441 Northeast Park Drive, Gibsonville, NC 27249.*

**PRESENT:** Chairman Melvin "Skip" Alston, presiding; Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster; Commissioners Brandon Gray-Hill (in at 11:08AM), Carly Cooke, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Mary Beth Murphy, Kay Cashion, Pat Tillman, and Alan Perdue (via virtual communication).

**ABSENT:** None.

**ALSO PRESENT:** County Manager Victor Isler; Deputy County Manager Toy Beeninga; County Attorney Carolyn Thompson; Clerk to Board Robin Keller; Chief Deputy Clerk to Board Ariane Webb; Deputy Clerk to Board T'ebony Rosa; Assistant County Manager Natalie Craver; members of staff, media, and the public. Virtual participation was made available to members of the public and media partners.

### **CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

Chairman Melvin "Skip" Alston called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and expressed appreciation to staff for hosting the Budget Retreat. He recognized County Manager Victor

Isler.

## **AGENDA OVERVIEW AND RETREAT GOALS**

County Manager Victor Isler extended greetings to staff for their work in preparation for today's session. He thanked the Board for reviewing county operations and contextual issues in preparation for the FY27 budget. He thanked Toy Beeninga for maintaining a dual role as Deputy County Manager and Budget Director. He thanked Director Dwight Godwin for hosting the session at Northeast Park.

County Manager Isler began his presentation by noting upcoming budget town halls and the overall budget planning schedule. He noted that the goal of preparing a budget must come in alignment with statutory mandates and honor our values and priorities. He identified items with requested actions for clean energy, the Women and Children Recovery Center project phase 1, Parks Master Plan (passive and active services), and explored a low-income homeowners' assistance policy.

County Manager Isler announced an upcoming work session for April 16<sup>th</sup>, a May 7<sup>th</sup> public hearing, and a June 18<sup>th</sup> Board budget adoption date. He described how to lean into alignment with the community, statutory responsibility, and fiscal stewardship, along with ethics and values.

County Manager Isler introduced Baker Tilly guest speakers who will discuss market competitiveness. He reviewed a multiyear (5-year) time frame, a capital improvement plan (CIP) plan, and spoke to supporting assets in the city center with a governmental plaza, like High Point and Greensboro. He reviewed goals for technology needs, enterprise resource planning (ERP), and other strategic initiatives. He stated that with all things considered, when looking at the budget, we must lean into water/sewer and work with interlocal partners.

## **BUDGET OVERVIEW, FEDERAL/STATE REVENUE LOSS, AND MANDATED SERVICES**

County Manager Isler highlighted areas that, as a manager, he is focused on this upcoming year, and recognized Deputy County Manager Toy Beeninga.

DCM Beeninga reviewed the established budget calendar based on statutory requirements and shared budget impacts. He defined the term "natural growth" to mean how much natural property tax growth we generate if there is no revaluation. He further stated that this includes the regular cost of doing business, whether it is through inflation or the natural costs of doing business. He defined the term "enhancement" to mean updating or approving services.

DCM Beeninga highlighted the upcoming budget town halls and a description of Mandated Services, which are authorized for 100 North Carolina counties. He noted that Non-Mandated - Internal Services are not legally required but are considered critical to effective county government operation. He further noted that Non-Mandated – Strategic Services are not required by law but advance the county’s long-term goals, priorities, and community outcomes.

DCM Beeninga spoke to mandated services and some board discretion regarding cost control measures. He noted that the property tax based on the state’s calculation for natural growth was 2.9%. He noted that we are seeing a 1% growth over prior year actuals. He shared that for federal and state revenue, we traditionally see growth; however, because of HR-1, our Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) revenues will go down by about \$3M because the federal government has shifted the responsibility of 50% reimbursement down to 25%, and that mandate is now being shifted to the county governments.

DCM Beeninga noted that the federal/state component is important. He shared that we have also seen some shifts from the Governor’s Crime Commission, but we are losing funding for a position normally funded. He recognized Public Health Director Courtney McFadden.

PH Director McFadden spoke to Care Management for At-Risk Children (CMARC) and Care Management for High-Risk Pregnancies (CHMRP) policy changes, as physicians health plans (PHP) have discretion in contracting with local health departments (LHD) or other private providers, impacting the Medicaid revenue received by the County to support program staff. She shared that NC Medicaid approved a program transition extension through the first two quarters of FY27 and a significant child health development support staffing model. She spoke to a contract with each plan. She highlighted the reimbursement is unknown due to no state budget. She noted that Public Health will be freezing vacant positions and evaluating the business cases and funding needed to continue the program. She spoke to Family Connects sustainability planning and to Duke Endowment funding through December 2026, will be discussed at a future work session.

Commissioner Cooke noted the changes in the plans and questioned the number we contract.

PH Director McFadden confirmed six to seven PHPs and is actively reaching out to ascertain an exact number.

Commissioner Cooke opined on the consideration of other companies.

PH Director McFadden confirmed a Guilford County company.

Commissioner Cooke highlighted that Family Connects is a supported program for new mothers and spoke to Ready/Ready communications to continue funding this program. She requested receiving more information about these changes if we lose this funding.

Commissioner Cashion questioned whether we applied for the Duke Endowment or selected for an award.

PH Director McFadden confirmed that an application is annually submitted.

Commissioner Cashion sought clarification of guaranteed funding.

PH Director McFadden confirmed Routes to Ready (RTR) conversations regarding funding impacts.

Vice Chairwoman Foster spoke to a recent state association meeting regarding telehealth in GC schools and questioned those instances whereby the physician who prescribes medication that the family cannot afford is referred to the Public Health department, and whether the funding loss impacts that program.

PH Director McFadden confirmed that there is a self-pay pay scale and will fill prescriptions based on insurance.

Vice Chairwoman Foster further questioned payment plans for low-income patients.

PH Director McFadden confirmed that payments are based on a sliding scale for clinical diagnoses.

Chairman Alston requested revisiting the timeline and questioned the June 1<sup>st</sup> date versus the May 21<sup>st</sup> date.

County Manager Isler clarified that he will present a recommended budget on May 21<sup>st</sup>, as state law requires presentation by June 1<sup>st</sup>. He confirmed that we are still on schedule.

Commissioner Cooke sought clarification on how expanding funds allocated to GCS is mandated.

DCM Beeninga confirmed that the tables listed in the back of the packet outline mandated services. He shared that any money the County gives to GCS becomes our new baseline, and the County can back down from that baseline. He noted that there is a mediation process for dispute resolution from GCS as to what the County should be paying.

County Manager Isler added some context to the public health items, as our goal when these RFPs are released is to respond, as this is a part of our services. He noted that one of our strengths is in service, dependability, and quality of service. He stated that at the end of the day, if those awards leave the county, then we want to make sure that we have continuity and quality of service. He noted that our goal is to apply the RFPs for those organizations. He provided further context to the CMARC and CHMRP child health service continuum and competitive process, while considering a community-based organization (CBO) pulse check.

Commissioner Tillman referred to Slide 19 (Impact to DSS – HR1 (Medicaid & FNS)). He noted that, as the Board was in Washington, we asked for additional time in Congress and additional funding. He shared that Guilford County is one of 11 states in the country where we administer these services, and we are working diligently to advocate in DC.

Commissioner Jones noted that it may be helpful if there is a one-page summary table that lists all the items where we are losing funding, plus there are several areas that are being impacted. He suggested that it would be helpful to identify the program, the department, and the amount that is being cut. He shared that the final total will better help us to understand where we are operating.

DSS Director Sharon Barlow provided a high-level overview of HR-1 and its impacts. She noted the policy shifts from annual to semi-annual renewals. She shared that HR-1 requires eligibility redetermination every 6 months for many Medicaid expansion adults (ages 19-64) instead of every 12 months. She noted that this affects the expansion population and changes the immigrant eligibility rules. She stated that she is working with the NC General Assembly for investments in full-time employee (FTE) administrative staffing for SNAP and Medicaid. She highlighted a short-term surge in processing and modernization of eligibility systems due to NCFAS upgrades. She requested mobile-friendly client portals. She also highlighted multilingual data sharing and asked the NC General Assembly to enforce some clean-line policy changes so that we do not have to go back to find old policy directives. She also requested the state to implement federal delays. She asked for a temporary hold harmless for our error rates as we get the North Carolina up to policy, and we are currently working as one of 8 states to reduce our error rates.

Commissioner Cashion noted that we are asking the state for a number of things and questioned the protocols of working through our representatives or the state association.

DSS Director Barlow confirmed that the State Directors' Association serves as an advocate and works directly with the NC General Assembly.

Commissioner Cashion asked if we have engaged our local representatives.

DSS Director Barlow confirmed for Guilford and other counties that the association is taking the lead on those conversations and would be happy to meet with our local delegation.

Chairman Alston requested a legislative delegation meeting breakfast.

County Manager Isler confirmed revisiting this, as the short session begins on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioner Cooke suggested a smaller breakfast meeting.

Chairman Alston voiced agreement to do this before they go into session.

Commissioner Tillman questioned whether we are actively interviewing lobbyists.

County Manager Isler noted that we do have funding in the County Attorney's budget and are working on a framework. He noted that we would like to recommend an ongoing relationship to make sure that on a federal and state level, they are bringing information back to us. He shared that we want someone to brief us at least bi-weekly. He shared that there is a component related to our interests, such as our strategic interests. He opined on how we make sure these relationships are in place so that when we have challenges, we are evaluating the costs. He suggested scheduling a work session.

Chairman Alston noted that we have a list of things to advocate for and must hold our elected local delegation accountable, as they represent Guilford County.

County Manager Isler confirmed bringing back proposals and different budget allocations.

Commissioner Murphy voiced support for a lobbyist framework and issue-specific advocacy rather than ad hoc as we have items. She highlighted the ongoing support with the NC General Assembly and Washington. She spoke to the value of establishing long-term relationships and having a trustworthy person. She emphasized accommodating those two things for the County to have a better reach. She noted the open lines of communication during both legislative sessions. She requested a proposal for this effort, especially given the significant federal revenue loss.

Commissioner Cooke voiced support for immediate issue-specific advocacy, along with ongoing legislative support, as we are behind on some conversations regarding property tax reform. She encouraged more two-way conversations with our delegates.

Commissioner Cashion shared that we also need to solidify our relationships with our representatives, as we are simply not earning enough from them. She also shared that we do need to be building relationships regionally as we discuss water and sewer.

Chairman Alston stressed accountability from our elected officials in the state and federal governments. He opined the expenditures and a cost-benefit analysis.

County Manager Isler clarified (1) creating some meeting space for our delegates to bring updates to us, and (2) bring back a proposal for legislative lobbyists with a multi-prong service delivery framework.

Commissioner Cashion shared that a 25% revenue loss is tremendous, and our state/fed representatives must understand we need additional funding.

Commissioner Tillman voiced support for a legislative lobbyist, as other states have government affairs personnel. He stated that we are competitively behind. He stressed that there is not a lack of issues, but a lack of priorities. He shared that Guilford County was left out of the supplement that could have alleviated some pressure from the property tax discussion.

Commissioner Jones noted that we have varying levels of participation for these legislative breakfasts and suggested an option to personally travel to Raleigh to meet those outside of the delegation.

Commissioner Cooke spoke to the Guilford County impacts in Washington, and noted the materials provided to the delegation, but emphasized that one conversation is not enough.

DCM Beeninga continued the presentation by noting that our revenue diversification is different than other counties as many others have an Article 46 sales tax. He noted that Senator Berger issued a moratorium on reappraisals, but we have not seen follow-up on that yet and are monitoring to see how that will impact our budget.

DCM Beeninga noted natural growth in expenses and the GCS K-12 education funding supports the strategic plan by preparing students to become productive citizens. He stated that the investment that the Board is making does have an impact. He included (1) \$847.3M General Fund Budget, (2) 53% of net County funds are flexible dollars (property and sales tax), and (3) County operations – personnel, equipment, and economic development.

DCM Beeninga spoke to the budget enhancement requests for Guilford County, GC Schools, and Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC).

DCM Beeninga highlighted methods to control costs, such as controlling Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management Services overtime expenses and right sizing FY25 actuals with an inflation factor to reduce \$3M expense reductions without negatively impacting service delivery.

DCM Beeninga reviewed the growth of operational expansions, and the full-year impacts for merit increases and the continuation of a performance merit plan. He noted expenses such as our foster care and janitorial contracts, increases in jail medical services, as well as fuel and utilities. He spoke to planning for large equipment needs, such as our radio replacement financing. He noted that our Natural Expense Growth is around \$12M, or 2.5%, which places constraints on what we can fund with those natural growth revenues. He noted that departments submitted requests for 86 new positions. He shared that we are working on technology replacements, major equipment, deferred capital, and strategic initiatives. He shared that we are seeking control costs and working on right sizing department budgets.

County Manager Isler thanked the Budget Team for reviewing actuals and evaluating cost controls as an ongoing strategy, recognizing foster care expenses, as the number of children typically increases. He thanked the County Attorney and Child Support Services for having conversations with the judiciary to reduce the number of children in care. He shared that these measures reduce room/board and overtime expenses for 750 children, increase quality of life indicators, and creates positive budget impacts.

Chairman Alston requested looking at budgeted and actuals on a quarterly basis instead

of an annual basis.

County Manager Isler confirmed, noting that Q1 and Q2 factor in contracts and invoices. He shared that the data may be unclear, as actual expenditures are revealed in Q3 and Q4.

Commissioner Cooke expressed support for cost control measures and strategies regarding actual spending protocols.

DCM Beeninga noted the growth indicator tables in the back of the Board packet.

Commissioner Tillman requested updates on school funding models.

County Manager Isler noted having traction from GCS Superintendent Dr. Oakley regarding different funding models, like Dare County, where there is incremental budget space to forego large requests. He noted an upcoming work session to address that request.

DCM Beeninga shared that the Dare County model de-aggregation for teacher supplements and merits provides an impact of 3% funding in addition to operational expenses. He shared that this precise methodology is planned out with predictability. He recognized Budget Manager Haley Matthews.

Budget Manager Matthews shared closing out the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and ARPA-enabled funding. She spoke to 20 active projects that have met obligated funds and those that are available for appropriation. She noted that in 2022, the County was allocated \$104.3M in Federal ARPA funding, which expires December 31, 2026. She shared that there were 13 positions that were adopted with funding and three positions are being recommended to discontinue after December 31, 2026.

Budget Manager Matthews noted an anticipated \$100,000 in savings from the EMT and paramedic academy expansion. She shared that \$1.5M in the Emergency Therapeutic Transitional Foster Care Program could be reappropriated. She noted that with broadband initiatives, the ~\$283K allocation can be reappropriated.

Commissioner Tillman questioned allocation amounts and requested a more detailed update as to where these funds have been expended.

The Board noted that Commissioner Tillman recommended releasing the \$1M for the Center for Hope and Healing.

Budget Manager Matthews confirmed that there are 8 positions that will be expiring in December that are DSS positions within the Family Justice Center and 2 full-time positions in our Food Security Team. She noted the federally mandated dashboard.

Chairman Alston opined the ARPA funds transfer to the general fund due to the expiration date.

County Manager Isler spoke to the federal formulas regarding the allocations and guidelines.

Budget Manager Matthews explained the difference between ARPA expiring funds and transferred ARPA-enabled funds.

Commissioner Cashion inquired into whether \$1.5M was available to transfer to the Women and Children Recovery Center.

County Manager Isler confirmed methods of closing out this funding stream, considering some staffing impacts with the Family Justice Center (FJC), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and food insecurity to offset county dollars. He shared some capital planning for additional revenues.

Vice Chairwoman Foster highlighted the Center for Hope and Healing.

County Manager Isler confirmed funding allocations.

Budget Manager Matthews continued the presentation by explaining staffing adjustments to the FJC, DSS, and the Food Security Team. She highlighted next steps, and noted that in addition to the table, we have benefits accruing interest and have earned \$5.6M in interest earnings for our ARPA funding. She shared that we could potentially use those funds for permanent positions in the general fund.

## **BREAK**

The Board took a recess from 10:38 a.m. to 10:56 a.m.

## **COUNTY MARKET COMPETITIVENESS AND WORKFORCE UPDATES**

County Manager Isler noted a request for market competitiveness with our first responders that is fiscally sound. He recognized Baker Tilly representatives Patrick McCoy and Sarah Towne.

McCoy shared the objectives of the Board's market study and classification update for positions. He noted that since FY2021, the Board has maintained the compensation plan, and implemented competitive benefits, including 401K contributions at 5%, and reinstated longevity total rewards. He shared that the Deputy Sheriffs and Detention Officers were moved to the 60th percentile as a market rate.

McCoy shared that the investments made in our workforce have resulted in state and national awards for the County. He reviewed the county's current vacancies. He noted departments that are starting to trend with higher vacancy rates.

Commissioner Gray-Hill entered the retreat at 11:08 a.m.

McCoy shared the recommendation to continue to 3% merit pool effective the first full pay period in March 2027, with an estimated cost of \$2.8M, of which \$2.4M are county funds. He noted that in the last few years, the budget has included \$2.0M for market-based pay adjustments. He shared that this amount is being evaluated to determine if it is sufficient to remain at the 50th percentile of the market.

McCoy explained that the current trend rate for claims is a 7.9% annual increase, which continues to increase year over year. He spoke to exploring benefit adjustments for the upcoming benefit year to include adjusting the employer/employee cost share and alternative plan options. He spoke to a goal of maintaining the compensation plan, to a performance-based merit program, and to market-based pay adjustments. He recognized Sarah Towne.

Towne reviewed the market study for Animal Services, Emergency Services, and Firefighters. She shared a market assessment and spoke to a project overview regarding data collection, pay plan development, and project completion. She explained the assessment methodology and noted 72 benchmarked positions, 14 peer organizations identified in the study, cost of labor differentials, research data points, and percentages where Guilford County is above average with midpoints.

Towne explained compensation best practices and the differences between market rate and midpoint with the compensation philosophy. She reviewed the analysis of comparable counties and Market rate versus Midpoint rates. She noted that the compensation philosophy now uses percentiles. She noted adjustments to the compensation philosophy to use the Midpoint of a range to define the market value for a position; the calculation is based on external market data, representing the calculated midpoint of the peer salaries. She shared that the County can still have a compensation philosophy that matches or leads the market by a set percentage.

Towne noted pay plan development and spoke to designing an effective compensation structure, along with Baker Tilly's recommendations to include (1) Clearly define the County's market position to ensure alignment with recruitment and retention goals, (2) conduct a cost analysis for implementing adjustments to the 13 positions that are currently lagging the market in terms of competitiveness, (3) Communicate the County's stated compensation philosophy and socialize it throughout the organization, (4) Routinely review positions, job descriptions, and market conditions, (5) Adjust pay structures and salaries annually to keep pace with the market, and (6) Commit to advancing employees through their assigned pay ranges based on the County's policies.

McCoy spoke to the County Manager's considerations to include (1) Need additional time to evaluate methodology adjustments and funding impacts, (2) Anticipate minimal new position additions as part of the recommended budget, and (3) FY27 Position Request Worksheet.

County Manager Isler reiterated new positions and upcoming critical pain points regarding attorney coverage for departments, responsiveness to housing and new builds, Adult Protection Services coverage, and Medicaid eligibility requirements. He reviewed that he needs additional time to evaluate methodology adjustments and funding impacts. He noted the anticipation of new positions as part of the recommended budget. He noted additional legal support for the attorneys and paralegals is needed, as well as responsiveness to the development of EH well, soil, pool, and food inspections. He highlighted mandated performance for Medicaid SA/LTC Adult protection and guardianship, and operational support for HR, IT, and Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Murphy referred to the FY27 green bar on the chart for Slide 33 (Manager Considerations). She sought clarification for the 30 additional positions.

County Manager Isler confirmed.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the number of positions added over the past 5 years.

County Manager Isler confirmed a scheduled work session for departments to review their expansion request needs.

## **COUNTY TECHNOLOGY AND ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (ERP) NEEDS**

### **ERP SYTEM**

County Manager Isler recognized Deputy Chief Information Officer Partha Momidi and Finance Director Don Warn.

Deputy CIO Momidi highlighted objectives to include (1) provide a greater understanding on what an ERP is and the importance to county operations, (2) Outline opportunities to streamline services, increase efficiency, and achieve long-term cost savings, while addressing hard deadlines for end-of-life software platforms, and (3) Review next steps to select a journey partner.

Deputy CIO Momidi defined the ERP system as the central software platform that helps a government manage finances, HR, payroll, purchasing, assets, and other operations in one connected system so departments can work together efficiently. He explained why the system matters to encompass financial transparency, improved efficiency, better decision-making, stronger accountability, and long-term cost savings.

Deputy CIO Momidi provided a snapshot of the operational impact slide 5 and the number of currently-used systems.

Deputy CIO Momidi spoke to two options to include: Option 1 – Identify one software system to integrate each of these functions to create connected platform and analyze options within a multi-year funding plan. He noted Option 2 – Continue to identify the best product for each function and integrate systems and ensure data sharing. He explained the pros and cons with each.

Deputy CIO Momidi shared peer county implementations, ERP project planning to include lessons learned, committee framework, and County Manager considerations, such as (1) Issue an RFP to identify and engage a journey partner to develop a comprehensive implementation plan and (2) \$3M recurring revenue source to create a multi-year ERP funding plan.

Commissioner Cooke questioned the vulnerability of having one system (e.g., a single source of truth) or is there any benefit to having multiple sources to compare and confirm information across multiple sources.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed no vulnerabilities with a single source, as it is easier to address data integration issues.

Commissioner Cooke further questioned the ability to detect errors.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed lower rates of errors due to a single source of truth.

Commissioner Cooke questioned the cost reductions if we reduce the number of FTEs doing this duplicative work.

DCM Beeninga confirmed \$5,625 in annual FTE expenses.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed a lower percentage due to system consolidation.

Commissioner Cooke opined staffing impacts.

County Manager Isler confirmed recruiting to efficiency and emphasized data consistency. He noted that we would gain some efficiency in the level of rigor in completing this work. He noted the other component to this is data accuracy. He shared that as we go through this RFP process, there is not a sole vendor, and it is important that we have consistency in the data to mitigate errors.

Commissioner Murphy questioned the system's life expectancy. She opined that in the first two years, whether we are carrying the actual costs in addition to the new capital improvements, or using a staggered approach.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed a 10–15-year life expectancy as these systems typically take 3 years to implement. He noted a 24–26-month timeframe or phased approach to stagger the process based on the RFP.

Commissioner Murphy questioned the life expectancy of a new system, considering the

investment.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed that most contracts are approximately 10-year minimums, while a fully integrated one is 15 years. He urged securing a vendor with an excellent track record.

Commissioner Murphy urged consideration for system upgrades and maintenance extensions.

Commissioner Jones spoke to integrated system functionality and possible customization.

County Manager Isler highlighted that one of the concerns is HR and managing the benefits requests from changes from employees to processing to payroll for 3000+ employees with changes and connectivity.

Commissioner Jones questioned whether there are any specific areas where an integrated system would not be able to provide the full functionality. He stated that software platforms have peer-to-peer user groups and unified system upgrades.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed that there are some compromises between the departments to incorporate integration. He noted that we work to mitigate these issues and confirmed reviewing all these factors in the RFP. He shared that with some software platforms, there are user groups that are being formed to provide benefits for unified upgrades to systems, which do not end up costing the individual user.

Commissioner Cashion questioned the vulnerability of one system compared to operational impacts due to a potential shutdown, and whether there are multiple providers of a single system.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed that a single source is ideal to minimize the systems countywide. He stated that the functions are seamless now, and issues arise when multiple systems talk to each other regularly. He confirmed multiple vendors.

Commissioner Cashion opined whether there is a cost savings after the transition period.

Deputy CIO Momidi confirmed a 20-30% expense decrease.

County Manager Isler noted the end-of-life costs for Lawson. He shared that at this point, something must be done in regards to this system, and securing that level of data management for a minimum expense. He requested a Board budget recommendation for data management, with 3 years to fully implement.

## COUNTY TECHNOLOGY

County Manager Isler recognized Chief Information Officer Peter Purcell, Chief Technology Officer James Kurfees, and Sheriff's Office Captain Matt Suits.

CIO Purcell highlighted objectives to include (1) the County has not had a multi-year replacement schedule for core IT infrastructure, resulting in spikes during some budget cycles, (2) the County purchased a large number of computers at the beginning of the pandemic, which is creating a spike in replacements based on age of equipment, (3) the Sheriff's Office body cameras are reaching end of life and the Sheriff's Office has developed a plan to upgrade to a newer version of cameras, and (4) Departments have submitted additional funding request which are being evaluated. Most requests will be passed in over budget cycles to control for cost.

CIO Purcell reviewed the upcoming network switch replacement needs. He identified two options for computer replacement schedules to total ~\$4.7M.

CIO Purcell spoke to a server replacement schedule along with best practices to include (1) Server replacements are necessary every 5 years, (2) Annual/routine server maintenance, and (3) Evaluating a ~\$0.2M annual allocation to address which replacements.

Commissioner Murphy evaluated the type of device that best serves employees in their roles.

CIO Purcell confirmed a limited variety in vendor brands to align with personnel capacity.

Chairman Alston questioned the life span of the device and who makes the determination.

CIO Purcell confirmed that the priority considerations are security and safety, followed by whether the devices are performing per departmental-level needs.

Commissioner Murphy questioned preference versus need that influences the replacement schedule.

CIO Purcell confirmed the expenses for laptops, desktops, and noted flexibility due to safety concerns and mobility needs.

Chairman Alston sought clarification regarding who or what determines device life span (e.g., ~5 years).

CIO Purcell confirmed end-user performance, capabilities, and vendor support. He shared that the City of Greensboro replaces devices on a 3-year basis.

County Manager Isler requested an explanation of shelf life regarding software versions and compatibility issues.

CIO Purcell spoke to no support of Windows 10, which forced a switch to Windows 11, due to public safety concerns and industry expectations.

Captain Suits continued the presentation by explaining the end-of-life for the body worn camera program and enhancement funding due to advanced AI technology offering translation, transcription services, and nationwide data integration, which enhances Real Time Crime Center operations and enables real-time livestreaming. He noted that this will also ensure all deputies and detention officers have functioning body worn cameras that activate automatically. He noted that initial cost projections over a 10-year term can range between \$10-13.5M.

County Manager Isler spoke to a range of costs, recognized vendors, and projected a cost analysis.

Commissioner Cooke questioned all the technology discussions, as we are trending towards a constant replacement cycle. She sought exploration of built-in lease options.

CIO Purcell confirmed that lease/financing options over 5 years added \$500K to costs due to interest rates.

DCM Beeninga confirmed that we continue to observe replacement trends with peer jurisdictions and expenses regarding lease versus financing.

Captain Suits confirmed built-in leasing options.

DCM Beeninga confirmed 3-year maintenance costs.

CIO Purcell stated that we track over 5 years across multiple fiscal years.

Commissioner Cashion questioned the auto-activating cameras.

Captain Suits confirmed auto-activating cameras while on-scene, along with dash cams, and when a taser or weapon is activated.

The Board discussed lease program options versus purchase/financing options, or state contracts.

DCM Beeninga noted that the benefits of implementing this financing model included a refresh of body worn cameras every 30 months and in-car cameras in year five.

Vice Chairwoman Foster questioned the network switches.

DCM Beeninga confirmed built-in 3-year leases. He explained the purchase with a maintenance/warranty agreement.

CIO Purcell concluded the presentation by highlighting recommendations from other departments to include (1) County Attorney Legal Software Solution (\$100K annual service) and (2) Tyler – EPL – Decision Engine (\$30K annual service).

County Manager Isler shared an upcoming work session will address departmental-level

needs.

## **BREAK AND WORKING LUNCH**

The Board took a recess from 12:31 p.m. to 12:39 p.m. and continued the retreat through a working lunch.

## **SUSTAINABILITY, RESILIENCE, AND CLEAN ENERGY**

County Manager Isler recognized Special Projects Manager Heather Schaffer.

SP Manager Schaffer identified objectives to include (1) Develop an understanding of the clean and renewable energy concept in the context of local government, (2) Review how other county governments and municipalities are incorporating this into their operations, and (3) Explore how Guilford County can advance this work through a lens of environmental and fiscal stewardship.

SP Manager Schaffer defined clean energy to include energy sources that produce little or no greenhouse gases, are not based on fossil fuels, and are compatible with a net-zero energy system (e.g., clean energy includes nuclear, renewable energy does not).

SP Manager Schaffer shared that the state's goal of reducing greenhouse gases by 50% by 2030 and net zero by 2050. She spoke to climate change, to GC impacts, to community and fiscal benefits of reduced greenhouse gases, and to benchmarking goals.

Staff recommended a staffing position to help manage this work. Staff reviewed staffing appropriations with peer counties.

County Manager Isler provided day-to-day context regarding the position, including heavy partnering with the Facilities Department and construction packages, clean renewable air, vehicle replacement/charge stations/battery life, and analyze operational capacity.

SP Manager Schaffer spoke to spheres of influence and to timing matters. She noted key lessons from peer organizations that are starting with a clear baseline of current conditions, distinguishing what we control versus influence versus monitoring. She noted balancing upfront costs with long-term operational savings and taking a phased, focused approach. She included having at least an annual assessment.

SP Manager Schaffer explained an implementation approach to include (1) a baseline energy audit, (2) understand the energy environment, (3) set data-informed targets, (4) define performance measures, (5) evaluate annually, and (6) adjust and refine.

SP Manager Schaffer explained that an initial assessment of areas identified with the highest potential for immediate impact includes HVAC/boilers for facilities, lighting, and fleet vehicles. She spoke to FY27 budget alignment to (1) identify an energy audit firm, (2) incorporate concepts into CIP work, and (3) two additional FTE positions to support implementation and partner with facilities to review project designs and bids to support

alignment, develop goals, and annual reporting.

Commissioner Tillman questioned policies and procedures and the methods by which peer counties are collecting data. He noted that the City of Greensboro has ten employees and further questioned if we could leverage some of those resources.

SP Manager Shaffer noted that there is some data on reduced facility costs and reduction of greenhouse gases, and some significant cost savings around baseline energy assessments. She confirmed developing a one-pager with peer data.

County Manager Isler confirmed staffing limitations but is leveraging partners and maintaining City of Greensboro dialogue.

Chairman Alston voiced support for moving forward to begin working on addressing these concerns. He urged staff to proceed due to fuel prices and long-term savings. He shared his support for a resolution that Commissioner Jones alluded to.

Commissioner Jones referred to Slide 9 (Benchmarking: staffing) and noted that Greensboro has dedicated staff who focus on public transit and waste management.

County Manager Isler confirmed a cross-functional team for street lighting and wastewater treatment plants.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the cost feasibility. He noted that we need to move forward with the intent; however, to hold off on the FTE positions to ensure that we have more time to discuss.

**Motion was made by Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster, seconded by Commissioner Carly Cooke, to direct staff to:**

- (1) develop a resolution supporting sustainability and the use of clean energy, where feasible, in county operations**
- (2) to prepare a strategic energy plan that includes a baseline energy assessment, measurable targets, and a reporting framework**
- (3) to include staffing recommendations for this work in the FY27 Manager's Recommended Budget.**

**VOTE: Motion carried 7 - 1**

**AYES: Melvin "Skip" Alston, J. Carlvena Foster, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Kay Cashion, Carly Cooke, Mary Beth Murphy, Brandon Gray-Hill**

**NOES: Pat Tillman**

## **WOMEN AND CHILDREN RESIDENTIAL RECOVERY PROJECT UPDATE**

County Manager Isler recognized Special Projects Manager Abby Gostling.

SP Manager Gostling acknowledged the Volunteers of America partners and highlighted

the objectives to include (1) project background – review need for services and project progress to date, (2) program update and Phase 1 Substance Abuse Intensive Outpatient Program (SAIOP) – understand the program delivery model and discuss request for SAIOP start-up funding, and (3) facility update – review the facility upfit needs cost projections, and timeline.

SP Manager Gostling noted the background for the program and the need for services. She noted that the Board set aside \$3M for ARPA-enabled funds allocated. She reviewed the program designed with a family-focused recovery model. She reviewed Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the program, which involve recovery, stability, parental bonding, and education, followed by a step-down program, which offers off-site substance abuse and intensive outpatient support, followed by Phase 3 of up to two years of ongoing support for recovery success.

SP Manager Gostling explained major milestones from 2022 to the present. She provided a program overview, program design (family-focused recovery model – three phases), residential treatment, SAIOP, Continuum of Care, and program success.

SP Manager Gostling explained an implementation framework and a budget model requesting \$187,432 in Opioid Settlement funds to open the Phase 2: Intensive Outpatient portion of the Family-Focused Recovery (FFR) program while the Gibson Park facility is under construction.

Commissioner Jones opined in terms of future fiscal years, whether there is a potential for future opioid settlements that could result in additional dollars to support this facility's operational costs.

County Manager Isler confirmed ongoing settlements and a potential for additional funding.

Commissioner Murphy referred to Slide 15 (Full FFR Program Budget Model) and questioned the residential treatment program's associated expenses.

SP Manager Gostling spoke to a Volunteers of America contract for two positions to develop wraparound stakeholder partnerships and agreements. She shared that the new program licensure requires staff hires before full operations, and those were factored into the budget to launch in 2028.

**Motion made by Commissioner Frankie T. Jones, Jr., and seconded by Commissioner Carly Cooke, to adopt an Opioid Settlement Spending Resolution for the use of Opioid Settlement funds to fund this work under Exhibit A, Strategy 3, Recovery Support Services, in the total amount of \$186,432, to be effective from April 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027.**

**VOTE: Motion carried 8 - 0**

**AYES: Melvin "Skip" Alston, J. Carlvena Foster, Alan Perdue, Pat Tillman, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Kay Cashion, Carly Cooke, Mary Beth Murphy,**

**Brandon Gray-Hill**

**NOES:None.**

Commissioner Cashion voiced support for this project. She noted that this Board has supported this program and its intent from day one, and is really serving a population that has been overlooked. She spoke specifically to our foster children whose mothers need to be in recovery and simply need additional resources. She emphasized that the goal of this program is to keep families intact whenever possible. She added that this is an intangible value added by this program.

Chairman Alston expressed support for the committee's work with an anticipated opening.

SP Manager Gostling provided a facility update, an overview of the Gibson Park location, and the CPL design team. She reviewed the modifications needed for the property, such as kid play areas and fencing for safety. She noted the need for generator replacement, tamper-resistant outlets for children, security cameras, and some additional plumbing upfits. She noted that the property requires approximately \$10.9M in renovation costs in addition to the \$3M already allocated.

Commissioner Murphy questioned the 28-bed capacity for mothers with children.

SP Manager Gostling confirmed the licensure terminology, as one woman per bedroom, which is altered depending on the number of children.

Commissioner Cooke shared her support of the program, spoke to transformational impacts, and questioned ongoing funding.

County Manager Isler confirmed that we are working with the state. He noted that we do plan on reviewing the long-term strategic capital improvement plan, and there is a plan to support these costs.

Commissioner Perdue left the meeting at 1:40 p.m.

Chairman Alston noted that the \$10M is a projection, as we have not gone out to bid yet.

Commissioner Tillman clarified that there is a request with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to help cover the capital cost through federal and state appropriations.

County Manager Isler confirmed DHHS conversations and spoke to reaching out to managed-care networks and government liaisons.

Commissioner Murphy noted that for these one-time capital investments, have we looked at grant opportunities, community foundations, or organizations interested in lending support.

County Manager Isler confirmed that we are working to encourage Volunteers of America

to support their fundraising work.

Commissioner Cashion spoke to sponsorships and other funding possibilities, and shared that she will continue being a supporter after her term ends. She thanked the Board for their ongoing support of the project.

Vice Chairwoman Foster thanked Commissioner Cashion for her leadership on this project.

## **Parks Master Plan Follow-Up**

County Manager Isler recognized Parks and Recreation Director Dwight Godwin.

P&R Director Goodwin highlighted objectives to include (1) Review follow-up from October 2025 meeting, (2) Present a phased funding and sustainability plan, and (3) Department Name Change. He explained and reviewed the definitions of passive and active park systems.

P&R Director Goodwin noted the current staffing model, county growth, minimizing service gaps, funding mechanisms, strengthening interlocal park partnerships, and a three-phase CIP and personnel support, along with a recommendation to add positions over the next several years. He provided updates on the growth projections for our community and reviewed the county's greenway systems. He offered his appreciation to the Board for its adoption of the Master Plan back in October.

P&R Director Goodwin noted that the County still only staffs a passive parks model, even though it implements a hybrid model with very limited resources. He noted that we need to consider right sizing our staffing.

Chairman Alston left the meeting at 1:50 p.m.

P&R Director Goodwin noted that they are anticipating an additional \$17.2M to address our current facilities and staffing needs. He shared that they are recommending expanding greenways with \$1M for Phase 1. He explained that future phases could include additional expansion opportunities for a total of \$18.2M in capital investment over 5 years. He aligned the park upgrades to having a livable community.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy, seconded by Commissioner Kay Cashion, to designate the Guilford County Parks System as an active system to align with the adoption of the Parks Master Plan.**

**VOTE: Motion carried 7 - 0**

**AYES: Melvin "Skip" Alston, J. Carlvena Foster, Pat Tillman, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Kay Cashion, Carly Cooke, Mary Beth Murphy, Brandon Gray-Hill**

**NOES:None.**

Commissioner Murphy shared that, as the liaison, this was also approved as a unanimous decision to support from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

Commissioner Tillman questioned whether this action impacts the Manager's Recommended Budget and opined on the Manager's forecasting for large requests.

County Manager Isler confirmed that large-scale requests required multi-year budgeting to allow for spikes and understand maneuverability to better manage these needs.

## **COUNTY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND SERVICE OPTIMIZATION**

County Manager Isler spoke about moving towards the best space utilization in High Point and Greensboro. He noted that we are looking to reduce our city center footprint to bring value and create economic opportunities. He shared the guiding principles to include (1) Prioritize essential building repairs that protect safety, accessibility, and reliability of public services, such as elevators, HVAC, roofs, and ADA improvements, while addressing deferred maintenance before costs grow more expensive, (2) Improve operational efficiency by identifying opportunities to centralize services where appropriate, to promote accessibility and efficiency for residents and staff, (3) Reduce long-term costs by limited reliance on leased space for county services and investing in county facilities when it is more cost-effective over time, (4) Phased investments responsibly by aligning capital projects with the county's capacity to complete improvements and limiting the need for additional financing, (5) Target strategic expansions where needed to service a growing population and ensure residents can continue to access essential county services effectively, and (6) Reduce city-center footprint to strengthen tax base. He recognized Facilities Director Eric Hilton.

Facilities Director Hilton noted that we have completed a lot in the last five years. He described projects such as the Law Enforcement Administration building, Behavioral Health Center, Animal Shelter, EMS Maintenance and Logistics, Truist and Plaza Parking Deck repairs, Greensboro Jail and Courthouse waterproofing, High Point Jail and Tunnel waterproofing, and Greensboro/High Point Courthouses elevator upgrades. He noted best practices for developing and managing a CIP.

DCM Beeninga noted that as the County has funding, there are debt services for that work. He noted that the percentage of those payments runs around 2%. He noted that our current existing debt service is beginning to fall off. He explained that as the County's debt begins to drop off over the next five years, maintaining the current level of General Fund contribution at 2% growth, the County would have ~\$23.2M to address current needs over the next five years. He shared that the County could also use that fall off in debt service to finance additional debt.

County Manager Isler noted that, as it relates to deferred capital, it is his recommendation that we look at the county jail in High Point with the kitchen expansion and make sure that we are offering those core services. He noted the following project for a phased

approach: County Jail – upfits for High Point, Independence Center – relocate Probation and Parole Services, Updates to the Old Courthouse, Parks – deferred capital needs, Public Health in High Point, and Ongoing Elevation Renovations.

County Manager Isler shared adding new items such as the Greenways, the facility at Gibson Park, a Greensboro Central Campus, and a High Point Central Campus. He noted that what is pending for the Board is looking at a relocation plan for Probation and Parole.

Commissioner Tillman noted the costs for the High Point Jail and questioned whether there has been consideration of jail consolidation.

County Manager Isler noted that we do not have a formal report on what it looks like to consolidate the detention centers, and we would need a partnership on data needs with the Sheriff.

Commissioner Cooke questioned the fund plan if the Board was to move forward.

Commissioner Murphy noted that the review should also consider a careful consideration of service impacts to the residents.

## **BREAK**

The Board took a recess from 2:31 p.m. to 2:40 p.m.

## **COORDINATING STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE HOMELESS SERVICE DELIVERY**

Assistant County Manager Natalie Craver recognized Continuum of Care (CoC) Service Director Debbi Rabalais.

ACM Craver highlighted the objectives to include (1) Introduce staff and establish a shared understanding of the history and goals of the GC Homelessness Taskforce, (2) Provide an overview of recent events and discuss the opportunity of a pooled funding alignment strategy to support homeless services needs across Guilford County, and (3) Discuss priority needs to support the unhoused across the County and alignment with FY27 budget priorities.

ACM Craver spoke to the GC homeless services stakeholders and shared that Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designed the CoC structure to be collaborative and grounded in community voice. She provided an overview of the Homeless Taskforce's intent and key milestones with a goal to establish interlocal collaboration to address the system of care needs for the unhoused.

CoC Service Director Rabalais spoke to the NC 504 Strategic Plan's six goals to include (1) Governance, (2) Partnerships, (3) Performance, (4) Culture and Communication, (5) Programs and Initiatives, and (6) Funding.

ACM Craver noted the ongoing monitoring of federal funding for homelessness services.

CoC Service Director Rabalais summarized federal and local investments and HUD direct awards (formula-based grants). She noted that in total, there is ~\$13M in funding between Guilford County, City of Greensboro, City of High Point, and the NC 504.

ACM Craver noted the sixth goal of developing a consistent funding strategy with support from municipalities, the county, and partners. She noted that supportive housing is at risk for loss of federal funding, and staff are working with the City of Greensboro and High Point to work towards a shared investment strategy to better align our resources for sustainability.

CoC Service Director Rabalais shared priority needs, goal alignment, strategy, and action items.

ACM Craver noted the next steps and FY27 budget alignment with Greensboro and High Point. She shared that the County staff have been presented in the Homelessness Taskforce update and related information to both Greensboro and High Point City Councils over the past 60 days. She explained that these briefings have set the stage for the future pooled and/or aligned funding strategies to meet the needs of the unhoused and broader goals of the NC 504 CoC strategic Plan.

Commissioner Jones requested clarity as to who is working with these cities, as it may be helpful to hear from each city as to their perspectives.

ACM Craver confirmed that she, CoC Service Director Rabalais, and the respective Assistant Managers have been meeting monthly.

Commissioner Jones questioned the municipal staff who can share their perspectives, as the County Commissioners need to hear from the municipalities.

ACM Craver confirmed a monthly interlocal committee meeting.

Commissioner Jones questioned whether the cities have updated their membership on the taskforce.

County Manager Isler noted that, in recognition of local dollars and where to designate funding, when you look at the funding award cycles, we have ~\$50K for street outreach, which is a large funding gap. He explained that there is no space in the current funding of the federal allocation to strengthen a team concept.

Commissioner Cooke expressed gratitude to CoC Service Director Rabalais for her work to coordinate with our partners and build relationships. She highlighted alignment of

street outreach in the downtown area and providing County assistance.

## **HOMEOWNERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

County Manager Isler recognized Special Projects Manager Abby Gostling.

SP Manager Gostling spoke to the objectives to include (1) Program Design – present program design for Guilford County as previously directed by the Board to create with modification options, (2) Application and Budget Estimates – discuss expected utilization of the program, and (3) Resident Experience – understand how residents will access the program.

SP Manager Gostling reviewed the eligibility elements of a proposed homeowners' assistance program. She noted that in 2024, the Board directed staff to direct a grant program similar to the City of Greensboro's low-income homeowners' assistance program and allocated up to \$500K for the implementation program. She explained the program design and highlighted home value, income limits, and the grant award amount that is reassessed each year. She discussed the income limits strategy.

SP Manager Gostling noted that seniors are a program population focus. She shared that the current program requirements cater towards a senior population. She explained that we can reserve the first 30 days of the application for seniors only and then open it to any other population thereafter.

SP Manager Gostling noted the estimates for anticipated rates of applications in comparison with those received by the City of Greensboro. She noted that they anticipate receiving somewhere around 700 applications and the ability to fund over 400 applications. She noted that the Department of Social Services (DSS) eligibility services staff would review and process the applications. She noted that most people will receive grants between \$300-\$500. She added for context that the City of Greensboro allocates \$60,000 per year for grant awards.

Commissioner Jones appreciated the details provided and thanked staff, as this program is timely. He questioned whether there were options to coordinate with the City of Greensboro for those who apply so that they do not have to submit two applications. He opined on Greensboro's program and methods of coordinating the application process.

Commissioner Tillman echoed Commissioner Jones' comments regarding the timeliness of this program. He emphasized a strong communication strategy for this program.

SP Manager Gostling opined a separate County application due to deadlines and confirmed exploring options.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the adjusted home value limits.

SP Manager Gostling confirmed that the program operates one year delayed, and future adjustments are expected.

Commissioner Tillman spoke to the communications element to educate the public regarding the city/county applications.

County Manager Isler spoke to a similar vendor product used during the pandemic, data sharing protocols, and checking eligibility.

Commissioner Tillman suggested reporting out during the budget town halls.

County Manager confirmed that progress hinders on the requested action.

Commissioner Cooke voiced program support and questioned slide 7 (Application and Budget Estimates).

SP Manager Gostling confirmed variables and Census data estimates to determine eligibility.

Commissioner Cashion questioned whether the application route was to the Tax Department or DSS.

SP Manager Gostling confirmed a DSS program, as the Tax Department verifies eligibility. She reiterated that this is a grant program that must be separated as Neighborhood Solutions support.

County Manager Isler clarified that as a County, this is not a tax support program based on income.

DSS Director Sharon Barlow confirmed that the Emergency Rental Assistance team provides support, and there are procedures established to work with senior populations. She noted that the leadership that runs our rental assistance program will manage this program and will run it similarly to our Low Income Energy Programs. She emphasized that it is important that this is an income support program.

Motion was made by Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy, seconded by Commissioner Carly Cooke, to adopt the program design as presented for the Low-Income Homeowners Assistance Program for Guilford County to include a 30-day senior priority period and begin in July 2026.

**VOTE: Motion carried 7 - 0**

**AYES: Melvin "Skip" Alston, J. Carlvena Foster, Pat Tillman, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Kay Cashion, Carly Cooke, Mary Beth Murphy, Brandon Gray-Hill**

**NOES:None.**

## **CLOSING COMMENTS AND WRAP UP**

County Manager Isler appreciated the dialogue in forming the FY27 budget. He spoke to a path forward, to alignment, to calibration efforts, and to reasonableness/measurement/ethics and values. He shared that on Wednesday, there

will be a huddle to work through this plan. He thanked the Board for the conversations and recognized the alignment and feedback offered to staff today. He announced upcoming work sessions on April 16 and May 7.

Vice Chairwoman Foster lifted up the outstanding staff at Guilford County.

Commissioner Cashion lifted up staff for staying late the night before for setup, and being here early in the morning.

## **ADJOURN**

**The Board unanimously consented to adjourn the Budget Retreat at 3:26 p.m.**

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Melvin "Skip" Alston  
Chairman

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Robin Keller  
Clerk