

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

Greensboro, North Carolina  
July 15, 2021

The Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Work Session at 2:30PM in the Blue Room located on the first floor of the Old County Courthouse, 301 W. Market St., Greensboro, NC.

**PRESENT:** Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston, presiding; Vice Chair J. Carlvena Foster (in at 2:48PM); Commissioners Carly Cooke, Kay Cashion, Justin Conrad, Alan Perdue and Mary Beth Murphy (in at 2:53PM).

**ABSENT:** Commissioners Carolyn Q. Coleman and James Upchurch.

**ALSO PRESENT:** County Manager Michael Halford; County Attorney Mark Payne; Assistant County Manager Jason Jones; Clerk to Board Robin Keller; Jessica Wolf, Deputy Clerk to Board; Heather Skeens, DHHS Director; Cynthia Barnes-Phipps, MWBE Program Manager; and members of the public and media. Virtual participation was made available to the general public and media.

**I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 2:35PM.

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. CONTINUUM OF CARE (CoC) COLLABORATIVE APPLICANT STATUS**

Heather Skeens, DHHS Director, introduced Dr. Pamela Palmer, chair of the CoC Board, Cheri Neal, CoC county liaison and program manager, and Brian Hahne, CoC Administrative Agent and CEO of Partners Ending Homelessness (PEH). She noted this would be a collaborative presentation and shared that the CoC is the planning body that works together to assist individuals experiencing, or about to experience, homelessness.

Dr. Pamela Palmer, CoC Board Chair, thanked the Board for the opportunity to present and discussed the program's purpose and role. She noted the primary purpose is to promote the value of self-sufficiency and the primary role is the carry out the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) required duties for CoC's. Dr. Palmer spoke to the importance of the program's administrative role, maintenance of its member organizations, point-in-time counts of homeless individuals within the area, along with the GAPS analysis.

Vice Chair J. Carlvena Foster arrived to the meeting at 2:48PM.

Dr. Palmer reviewed the components of the CoC which include prevention/diversion, outreach, intake & assessment, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing and other supportive services.

Brian Hahne, CoC Administrative Agent & PEH CEO, presented the three (3) pillars of support for the CoC and introduced the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which collects data on the provision of housing, services to homeless individuals and families or individuals at risk of homelessness. He discussed the coordinated entry process designed to assess clients and their housing needs, and assist them with finding shelter.

Dr. Palmer reviewed the structure of the Guilford County CoC and discussed the role of the COVID-19 Homeless Response Task Force and its role in assisting individuals with housing needs during the pandemic.

Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy arrived to the meeting at 2:53PM.

Hahne reminded those present of the County's historical involvement with and support of the CoC, and thanked Commissioner Kay Cashion for her advocacy as a board member. He discussed the Hotel Partnership that was created during the COVID pandemic and noted 1,400 clients have been served through this initiative. Hahne announced the partnership would be celebrated during the PEH Annual Home Run for Homelessness event on August 21, 2021.

Skeens outlined the County's purpose and role as Collaborative Applicant (CA) and spoke to the importance of the CoC membership in service delivery and funding. She discussed the CA transition period and the administrative processes involved in the role. Skeens discussed the collaborative hiring process for the County's CoC Program Manager position.

Cheri Neal, CoC Program Manager, discussed her activities during the ninety (90) day transition period and reiterated the importance of the partnership's collaborative effort.

Vice Chair Foster questioned if the High Point City Council had a designated representative on the CoC Board.

Neal confirmed the High Point City Council does have staff representatives that serve on the board, but noted a separate committee invites the CoC team to assist them with collaboration and identify best practices.

Skeens clarified the Community Development subcommittee of the High Point City Council has invited them to participate in meetings.

Commissioner Justin Conrad thanked staff for the presentation and shared his participation in the CoC working group. He spoke to the overwhelming amount of support received from the CoC for the county to assume the CA role.

Dr. Palmer elaborated on the extensive reach of the CoC and the importance of the County's administrative role and the addition of the program manager position to assist with coordination and collaboration of services. She thanked the County for this assistance and reiterated the impact of the County's role in the CoC.

Commissioner Conrad shared the importance of collaborating with multiple organizations to ensure HUD requirements are met and services are delivered.

Commissioner Cooke thanked staff for the presentation and expressed her excitement with the County's leading role in housing issues.

Commissioner Cashion shared her admiration of Dr. Palmer's commitment and Hahne's expertise. She spoke to the journey of developing a single CoC to represent Guilford County and the benefits of having a one entity work together to assist citizens with homelessness and housing needs.

Commissioner Cashion recalled the County's support of the Partners Ending Homelessness program and stated there will be more urgent housing needs to address soon that will require the resources and expertise of the CoC.

Chairman Alston questioned if HUD's decision regarding the CA application.

Skeens confirmed HUD certified Guilford County as the CA in March 2021. She noted the City of Greensboro has not officially submitted a CA application.

Chairman Alston questioned why the City of Greensboro is not involved in the CoC and expressed concerns with discussions he had with council members and the mayor regarding their role. He urged staff to work with the city to address concerns and potential conflicts of interest, and reiterated the One Guilford concept and the importance of moving forward with the City of Greensboro.

Skeens shared staff recognize there has been discord with the City of Greensboro and stated they have begun working on these relationships in order to move forward with deeper discussions regarding collaboration.

Vice Chair Foster echoed Commissioner Cashion's comments regarding Dr. Palmer and questioned the implications if the City of Greensboro chose to leave the Guilford County CoC.

Skeens reiterated this scenario would create a large amount of work for members involved, along with duplication of services and a deeply fractured system that would decrease funding and effectiveness when serving those in need.

Vice Chair Foster spoke to the importance of inclusivity and working together. She thanked Skeens for addressing these issues.

Commissioner Conrad reiterated the majority of the CoC membership supported the County assuming the CA role, especially service providers. He recommended the City of Greensboro may want to speak with the providers regarding their support of the County and spoke to the impact of division within the CoC.

Commissioner Cashion commented on the City of Greensboro's decision and expressed her belief they should remain with the CoC to provide seamless delivery of services.

## **B. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDING STRATEGY AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING**

Halford offered a breakdown of the overall funding plan and noted NACo and NCACC have advised counties to pause and plan due to certain unknowns at this time. He discussed the differences between obligation and expenditure timelines and noted CARES funds were designed to address immediate crises while ARPA funding will be used towards long-term recovery.

Chairman Alston requested clarification of the funding timelines.

Halford reviewed the obligation and expenditure deadlines for ARPA funds.

Commissioner Cashion clarified all funds must be obligated by 2024, but the deadline for spending is 2025.

Halford confirmed and spoke to the importance of gauging resident's ideas on the impact of the pandemic and how funds should be spent. He also spoke to various funding streams at the state, local and federal levels that could intersect County ARPA funding in the form of community initiatives and infrastructure projects, and noted Treasury funding guidance will not be final until September. Halford discussed the final governance process and the potential to include revenue-loss provisions in the County's funding plan, and reviewed the federal formula used to calculate annual revenue loss.

Halford reviewed the funding principles developed from Board priorities to guide the decision-making process and encouraged the Board to share additional principles that should be considered by staff. He reviewed three (3) proposed funding categories – Existing Projects & Community Support, Near-Term Growth & Recovery and Long-Term Growth & Recovery. Halford discussed the existing programs that are currently underway including Eviction Prevention & Diversion, Vaccine Hesitancy, GC STOP programs and research related to broadband accessibility and availability.

Halford spoke to the pandemic-related impacts upon qualified census tracts (QCTs) and shared a proposal to allocate funding for collaborative projects in these areas. He noted the bulk of funding will be directed towards long-term growth and recovery, and will center on community engagement, collaboration with city and town partners and coordination of additional state and federal funding streams.

Halford reviewed funding deployment based upon the identified categories and discussed ideas received from local cities and towns that have been submitted. He noted they fall within approximately 5-6 categories that address water & sewer, streets & parking, housing, public buildings, recreation and broadband projects and total approximately \$45 million.

Halford spoke to the items under consideration during tonight's regular meeting which would appropriate funding, approval central support and innovation staff, in addition to an engagement and investment strategy.

Commissioner Alan Perdue spoke to concerns related to upload and download speed requirements for eligible broadband projects and requested staff reach out to federal liaisons regarding potential concerns and limitations.

Assistant County Manager Jason Jones confirmed there was considerable discussion related to this issue during the NACo Annual Conference and noted the recommended addition of "middle-mile" projects to the ARPA funding guidelines that expand the scope of the eligibility requirements.

Commissioner Perdue requested staff submit comments related to broadband requirements prior to the funding guidance deadline.

County Attorney Mark Payne questioned if broadband projects that do not meet the 100 Mbps upload/download speed could still be qualified as addressing negative economic impacts.

Commissioner Perdue stated sufficient broadband service is critical to economic development, especially with an increase in employees working from home.

Jones shared the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) plans to utilize this funding to expand their ability to accurately and reliably measure broadband speeds.

Commissioner Perdue reiterated the importance of submitting a comment prior to the funding guidance deadline specifying 100 Mbps upload speed is excessive, as the average speed is 3-6 Mbps.

Halford noted there are exceptions in the guidance.

Commissioner Perdue stated the goal is to ensure accessibility for everyone.

Commissioner Cooke shared her enthusiasm for the presented framework and the importance of community engagement. She encouraged incorporating small business, non-profit and corporate partners in the process and questioned the need to include the County's long-term strategic plan in the decision-making.

Halford confirmed and noted the importance of gauging the community's voice and anticipated hearing a range of input from COVID-related impacts to other issues affecting citizens that will inform these conversations.

Cooke spoke to the importance of ensuring federal guidance should remain at the center of these discussions, despite the long-term impacts of funding.

Halford shared the original community survey will include pandemic-related and general questions. He noted the scope of the survey was purposefully expanded to include all of these questions.

Commissioner Cooke spoke to the need to advocate for small businesses with state and local partners, and referred to two (2) businesses who recently closed because they could not access funding.

Chairman Alston questioned if the eligible uses chart would be available on the website and when community meetings would be scheduled.

Halford confirmed the information would be available on the website and noted general community meetings could be scheduled at any time. He noted the potential to contract with a group to conduct outreach within communities for deeper engagement.

Chairman Alston expressed his hope that town and city mayors could share this information within their own municipalities, and then identify opportunities for partnership.

The Board discussed potential dates for community meetings. They requested staff schedule at least three (3) meetings throughout the County with a goal of receiving engagement feedback by the end of September.

Halford spoke to the importance of the enhanced engagement outreach and questioned if the will of the Board was to allow staff to conduct direct work in the QCTs to identify needs and gaps in services.

The Board discussed postponing disbursement of funding until community meetings have been conducted.

Halford shared funding has been utilized to assist with GC STOP and other programs. He noted all funding requests are presented to the Board, and they will have the opportunity to use this funding to start the process of community engagement.

### **C. MWBE DISPARITY STUDY UPDATE**

Cynthia Barnes-Phipps, MWBE Program Manager, provided an overview of disparity study phases and activities, to date. She discussed the disparity study kick-off with departmental liaisons in May 2021 and noted they are approaching deadlines for data collection and policy review. Phipps discussed the public informational meeting conducted in June 2021 and shared notices were sent by the vendor, Griffin & Strong, in addition to notices posted on the County's web page and social media platforms.

Phipps noted the disparity study web page has been delayed, but will go-live next week. She provided an update on the overall project flow, data assessment and legal review processes. Phipps shared public service announcements will be sent to media outlets soon, reviewed upcoming study activities for the next quarter and confirmed updates will continue to be provided on a quarterly basis.

Vice Chair Foster questioned the purpose of the public hearings and the type of information gathered from them.

Phipps shared the public hearings allow staff to gather information from companies that have conducted business with Guilford County and from those individuals or companies who were not chosen to conduct business. She noted the information gained could identify if the County's solicitation practices are discriminatory and stated the meetings could have a town hall or presentation format. Phipps confirmed a survey will also accompany these town halls.

Commissioner Murphy questioned if the Board would receive drafts of the disparity study legal analysis chapter drafts for review.

Phipps confirmed she would extend the feedback deadline to allow the Board time to review the drafts as the analyses are completed. She thanked the Board for its full support during the study process.

### **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Alston shared the need for the Board to enter into closed session to discuss certain items.

**Motion made by Commissioner Justin Conrad, and seconded by Vice Chair J. Carlvena Foster, to hold closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 for the purpose of consulting with the County Attorney, to discuss matters relating to potential economic development as a result of the location or expansion of industries or other businesses, and to instruct staff on a real estate matter.**

**VOTE: Motion carried 7 - 0**  
**AYES: Melvin "Skip" Alston, J. Carlvena Foster, Alan Perdue, Justin Conrad, Kay Cashion, Mary Beth Murphy, Carly Cooke**  
**NOES: None**  
**ABSENT: Carolyn Q. Coleman and James Upchurch**

The Board recessed the meeting and entered into closed session at 4:37PM.

The Board reconvened the meeting at 5:15 PM.

### **IV. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:16PM.

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Melvin "Skip" Alston, Chairman

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Robin Keller, Clerk to Board