

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

Greensboro, North Carolina  
August 7, 2025

**PRESENT:** Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston, presiding; Commissioners Kay Cashion, Brandon Gray-Hill (via virtual communication), Mary Beth Murphy, Carly Cooke, Frankie T. Jones, Jr. (via virtual communication and in-person entered at 4:46 p.m.), Pat Tillman, and Alan Perdue.

**ABSENT:** Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster

**ALSO PRESENT:** County Manager Victor Isler; County Attorney Andrea Leslie-Fite; Clerk to the Board Robin Keller; Deputy Clerk to the Board Ariane Webb; Deputy Clerk to the Board T’ebony Rosa; Assistant County Manager Jason Jones; Assistant County Manager Erris Dunston; Planning and Development Director J. Leslie Bell; 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 4:05 p.m. He recognized County Manager Victor Isler.

County Manager Isler spoke to the requested action of receiving the presentation of the Guiding Guilford Moving Forward Together Comprehensive Plan and scheduling the required legislative hearing as part of the adoption consideration, and recognized Planning and Development Director J. Leslie Bell. He expressed appreciation to his team for preparing this report pursuant to NC General Statute (NCGS) Section 160D-501 that requires local governments to adopt and maintain a comprehensive plan to have zoning regulations.

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. PRESENT FINAL DRAFT OF GUIDING GUILFORD MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Director Bell introduced the agenda item and recognized Planning Board Chair Mac Sims and Vice Chair Mark Donnelly. He expressed appreciation to the department directors. He provided an overview of today’s objectives to include (1) Why do a Comprehensive Plan?, (2) Process Overview, (3) Plan Content, (4) Plan Review Comments and Updates, (5) Major Takeaways, (6) What’s Next?, and (7) Q & A.

Director Bell noted the subject matter experts in the presentation packet, process slide, the steering committee timeline, a community-wide survey, community workshops, and draft plan sharing. He highlighted de-annexation legislation (HB 909) regarding the 1000 acres in Summerfield. He explained the notification outreach efforts to include print and digital media platforms, QR Codes on Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) transit vehicles, and nine (9) workshops – one (1) in each Commissioner’s district.

Director Bell noted the plan contents to include (1) Definitions, (2) Executive Summary, (3) Introduction, (4) Process, (5) Context, (6) Future Land Use Framework, (7) Planning Themes, and (8) Appendix. He explained the summary briefs and outlined the planning themes to include (1) Community Character, (2) Attainable Housing, (3) Resilient Economy, (4) Diversified Transportation and Mobility, (5) Service Accessibility, (6) Protected Natural Environment and Greenspace, and (7) Quality and Context-Sensitive Infrastructure. He shared that there are seven (7) key planning themes, each of which has a goal statement, along with relevant policies, and specific action implementation items.

Director Bell shared the action playbook guide to include (1) Policy, (2) Action, (3) Investment, (4) Timing, and (5) Entity.

Director Bell described using books, guidelines, and manuals to establish intended character and design elements for different place types. He shared communications with the NC Cooperative Extension regarding plant recommendations. He provided an example of popular, but non-native, species such as crepe myrtles and Bradford pear trees that could pose detrimental effects. He spoke to a landscaping manual for buffering.

Director Bell highlighted challenges to attainable housing developments. He spoke to Updating the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in activity centers for RS-20 and RS-30 mixed-use, family districts, and “missing middle” housing (duplexes and triplexes) with two (2), three (3), and four (4) bedrooms.

Director Bell spoke to the 150-mile Carolina Core radius for industrial and economic development. He explained the farming community conversations on open space land and preservation, and that Guilford County contributes more than \$68B in farm markets and farm receipts for agricultural activity. He described the resilient economy samples to include (1) support rural commercial uses that are appropriately scaled, (2) provide support for small businesses to expand in Guilford County, and (3) establish a more robust farmland preservation program.

Director Bell highlighted the importance of diversified transportation and mobility when considering economic development incentives. He noted service accessibility and spoke to identifying Parks and Recreation funding needs to address any service gaps. He noted that a protected natural environment and greenspace support the retention of viable agricultural lands through the encouragement of both traditional and non-traditional farm uses.

Director Bell noted that quality and context sensitive infrastructure involves (1) Support digital connectivity throughout Guilford County by working with partners to provide reliable broadband

and cellular services, (2) Advocate for and support the provision of water and sewer services, and (3) Evaluate long-term needs for waste management, processing facilities, recycling streams, and landfill needs in Guilford County.

Director Bell noted that on the future land use map, the guiding principles include (1) areas to preserve, (2) areas to enhance, and (3) areas to transform. He shared that future land use place types and management controls include (1) rural stewardship principles, (2) planning area buffers, and (3) targeted investment areas. He provided a visual depiction of the varied intensity and density of land use place types via a photographic display.

Director Bell explained the quadrant approach to include Liberty Road/Woody Mill Road, nine (9) Area Plans, the Heart of the Triad Airport Plan, and multijurisdictional areas. He shared that approximately 4600 acres have been annexed into either the City of Greensboro or the City of High Point since 2006. He noted that they are eliminating the Area Plans and replacing them with a quadrant approach to include Southeast, Northeast, Northwest, and Southwest.

Director Bell shared crosswalk inclusion and explained how the chart corresponds to the new plan as a guide. He noted place type examples to include (1) Parks and Recreation, (2) Working Farms and Agricultural Land, (3) Rural Living, and (4) Multifamily Residential.

Director Bell explained activity center types, such as along Liberty Road/Woody Mill Road, to include (1) Rural Crossroads, (2) Neighborhood Center, (3) Major Mixed-Use Center, and (4) Regional Employment Center.

Director Bell shared community feedback metrics of over 250 public comment responses, which included (1) 80% expressed support for the plan direction, (2) Most commonly expressed sentiment was excitement the plan provides direction to preserve rural character, agricultural heritage, and environmental spaces, (3) Most commonly expressed concern was around the development of rural areas, and (4) Online and in-person participants and comments suggested a need for additional information and clarification on planning themes that already address many of the concerns around growth, development and character.

Director Bell provided an overview of plan revisions and updates to include (1) Added summary of Phase 4 engagement to the Process Chapter, (2) Clarified approach to rural character preservation in the land use framework and economy planning theme, (3) Standalone Planning Themes Summary Document was created and added to the executive summary of the plan to help clarify and highlight the goals and near-term actions, (4) Updated FLUM Map series to reflect change in Summerfield annexation, (5) Addressed and updated minor text, grammar, and formatting changes. He shared that the plan was presented during a special meeting with the Planning Board in April 2023. He continued the presentation to note (6) Updated FLUM Map and SE Future Land Use Designations for eight (8) parcels from Rural Living to Residential (Planning Board), and (7) Reviewed and updated language in accordance with Federal Guidelines (Planning Board).

Director Bell noted major takeaways to include (1) Transitions from Area Plans to four (4) Quadrant (Regional) Plans. He shared that the regional definition is subjective as there is a

Carolina Core Regional Plan. He continued the presentation to note (2) Incorporates southeastern portion of Guilford County (previously not covered in an Area Plan) into the SE Quadrant Plan, (3) Maintains Liberty Road/Woody Mill Road Small Area Plan (recommends update), (4) Prioritizes agricultural sector/uses as a strategic economic development initiative (and issued a request for the Board to consider a Farmland Preservation Program), (5) Begins to differentiate Working Farms from Rural Residential Living, and (6) Encourages more housing development flexibility by incorporating “missing middle” housing (e.g., duplexes, triplexes) in Traditional Single-Family Residential Districts. He emphasized that the photos really mean something with existing Guilford County developments where there is mixed-use development but aesthetically look similar in their architecture.

Director Bell shared how the Guiding Guilford Comprehensive Plan changes current protocols. He explained that plan adoption requires a notice and legislative hearing. He advised that there is no requirement in the NC General Statutes (NCGS) to have a plan every few years, but as a living document, it does require that the plan be reasonably maintained. He shared that Guilford County has a fifteen (15) to twenty (20) year plan, the City of High Point’s plan goes out to 2045, and the City of Greensboro goes out to 2040. He spoke to the Comprehensive Plan amendments having the same notice and legislative hearing process. He noted that a change in land use designation due to a rezoning proceed in accordance with NCGS and Session Law 1985-485 and House Bill 651, delegating authority to the Planning Board for rezonings and following procedures per the UDO.

Director Bell concluded his presentation and opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Perdue thanked staff and expressed excitement for farmland preservation. He shared that creating a program where families hold onto property is helpful for our significant farming community. He noted digital connectivity and broadband access in rural environments consider buried wires, cellular lines, microcell towers, and small load structures. He questioned the approval process regarding connectivity. He further questioned trees in parking lot islands that eventually lose a parking space due to tree growth. He expressed hope that future landscape plans consider this.

Director Bell confirmed looking at best practices to incorporate cell towers and digital accessibility. He spoke to reviewing the landscaping plans regarding overhead power lines and trimming canopy trees.

Commissioner Cashion highlighted the major takeaways section of the presentation and questioned a separate set aside for Liberty Road. She expressed concerns regarding Pleasant Garden.

Director Bell confirmed not changing the plan but generating interest in the SE organized group to update the plan to consider the Greensboro-Randolph Megasite. He noted that previous uses were not considered, and now that there is something better, the Small Area Plan needs re-evaluating.

Commissioner Cooke thanked staff for this work. She expressed appreciation regarding layout changes and quadrant segments. She requested additional information regarding goal areas, the UDO, and the administrative path.

Director Bell confirmed raising the number of subdivision lots from four (4) to five (5). He explained that this allows the Department of Transportation (DOT) to take the lot for a road. He also suggested AG versus RS-40 for onsite septic.

Commissioner Cooke spoke to tonight's public hearing case and requested future dialogue regarding rezoning cases.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the donated Bryan Park land. He opined leveraging land for the sports/tourism economy.

Director Bell highlighted Parks & Recreation (P&R) collaborations regarding parallel efforts with its Master Plan and deferred that conversation to P&R Director Dwight Godwin.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the Piedmont Triad Regional Water Authority (PTRWA), the Nissan plant in Tennessee, and the Alabama economic development with the Mercedes plant that spurred 10% population growth within a three (3) year period. He opined the future of the 421 Corridor, along with the regional water discussion.

Director Bell confirmed that PTRWA Executive Director Greg Flory is also a steering committee member who met two (2) months ago to discuss a preliminary Master Plan to include a layout on water service, which dovetails the regional approach regarding Highways 62/421, and potentially a mixed-use center.

Commissioner Tillman questioned the waste management study.

Director Bell confirmed that funding is secured and ready to upload tomorrow. He shared that water and sewer allow for vertical growth and density while preserving surrounding areas.

Commissioner Tillman stated that he was impressed with \$68B in agricultural investments.

Commissioner Jones entered the meeting at 4:46 p.m.

Commissioner Perdue questioned urban sprawl that creates issues with doughnut holes and encourages backfilling

Director Bell confirmed infill developments in unincorporated areas. He shared that both High Point and Greensboro have different growth-tier strategies. He spoke to voluntary annexation for water and sewer and to city encroachment. He shared that the City of High Point's strategy is to build a green belt around the fringes due to potential trail connectors.

Commissioner Jones spoke to coordinating with other cities since multiple municipalities have similar plans, like 421 Corridor interest. He encouraged any opportunities to coordinate this.

Director Bell confirmed dialogue with the City of Greensboro to overlay a map. He shared that an effective coordination example is the Publix Distribution Center, a 2.2M square-foot facility

that had joint Technical Review Committees reviewing annexation protocols. He noted that the process can be formalized.

Commissioner Jones requested that the Board be made aware of when there is a conflict to mitigate.

Director Bell thanked the Board for its leadership.

Chairman Alston expressed appreciation to staff.

County Manager Isler advised that the Comprehensive Plan should close by the end of September. He suggested by the second Board meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Murphy questioned the public hearing process.

Director Bell confirmed there are potential adjustments brought forth at the public hearing, as this area is evolving.

County Manager Isler expressed that staff were amenable to September 4<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Murphy suggested holding the public hearing on September 4<sup>th</sup> with an adoption date on September 18<sup>th</sup> to allow opportunities for any plan adjustments.

The Board concurred.

**Chairman Alston confirmed the Board would hold a legislative hearing on September 4<sup>th</sup> with plan adoption slated for September 18<sup>th</sup>.**

### **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

In the interest of time, Commissioner Perdue requested that the closed session be moved prior to the regular meeting.

County Attorney Andrea Leslie-Fite advised the Board to transition to the closed session conference room.

**Motion made by Commissioner Alan Perdue, seconded by Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy, to adjourn the work session and enter into closed session.**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

### **IV. ADJOURN**

**There being no further business, the work session was adjourned by unanimous consent, and entered into a closed session prior to the start of the 5:30PM Regular August 7, 2025 meeting.**

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Melvin "Skip" Alston  
Chairman

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Robin Keller  
Clerk