

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

Greensboro, North Carolina
February 20, 2025

In accordance with N.C.G.S. 166A-19.24 and upon the statewide Declaration of Emergency declared on February 18, 2025, by Governor Stein in [Executive Order 9](#), the Guilford County Board of Commissioners transitioned its scheduled Work Session to a fully remote meeting.

Out of an abundance of caution due to anticipated freezing temperatures and potentially hazardous travel conditions, the Guilford County Board of Commissioners held a fully virtual Work Session on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 3:30 PM.

PRESENT: Chairman Melvin “Skip” Alston, presiding; Vice Chairwoman J. Carlvena Foster; Commissioners Kay Cashion, Brandon Gray-Hill, Carly Cooke, Mary Beth Murphy, Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Pat Tillman, and Alan Perdue.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: County Manager Michael Halford; County Attorney Andrea Leslie-Fite; Clerk to Board Robin Keller; Deputy Clerk to the Board Ariane Webb, Deputy Clerk to the Board T’ebony Rosa; Jason Jones, Assistant County Manager; Victor Isler, Assistant County Manager; Erris Dunston, Assistant County Manager; Toy Beeninga, Budget and Management Director; Patrick Bowen, Bowen National Research President and NC Realtors Association; Michael Barr, Greensboro Regional Realtors Association Chief Executive Officer; members of staff, media, and the public. Virtual participation was made available to members of the public and media partners.

I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Alston welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. PRESENTATION ON CAROLINA CORE REGION HOUSING ASSESSMENT

Chairman Alston introduced the agenda item and recognized Michael Barr, CEO of the Greensboro Regional Realtors Association.

Barr provided an overview of the Carolina Core Region Housing Assessment and recognized Patrick Bowen, President of Bowen National Research.

Bowen spoke to the primary study area in North Carolina through the State Chamber of Commerce and more specifically, twenty-one (21) contiguous counties in the northcentral and central sections of North Carolina. He explained the scope of work to include demographics, economic conditions, and housing stock. He shared that over 2,000 individuals participated in providing community input and explained housing gap estimates. He noted that over 3,000 points of contact were made as part of the study.

Bowen shared demographic growth trends and noted that additional affordable housing units are needed. He spoke to renter household growth, to income earnings for homeowners, and to household data by age cohort. He shared data regarding Millennials and Baby Boomer segments.

Bowen noted monetary impacts of over 145K commuters on Guilford County and how those financials would change if they could live within the county. He explained substandard housing and older units with inadequate plumbing or kitchen facilities.

Bowen highlighted the financial burden of housing maintenance, multifamily apartment vacancies, market/tax credit/government subsidized housing percentages, and nonconventional rentals. He noted these units have considerable higher rent which is out of most individual's price point.

Bowen spoke to declining home sales due to increased interest rates. He noted climbing sales prices. He shared historical sales data and the median home price increase of approximately \$85K. He noted a lack of affordable housing inventory under \$200K.

Bowen highlighted regional and national challenges of a lack of available housing supply and insufficient inventory numbers. He shared that those in the lower income bracket are unable to enter the market. He compared fair market rental amounts and housing stock per occupation and wage earner. He shared a fair market rent (FMR) of \$1,091 and median available housing list price of \$276,633.

Bowen spoke to the overall rental housing gap totals over 14K, which is the largest rental gap of the region's twenty-one (21) counties. He shared that the county's overall for-sale housing gap totals over 18K units, representing the largest for-sale gap in the Carolina Core Region.

Bowen outlined the community input and frustration regarding cost burdens, outdated inventory, and lack of sufficient rental deposit or down payment. He spoke to housing needs, to commuter issues, and to reasons for not relocating. He shared that over 200 employers expressed difficulties regarding workforce retention and recruitment. He shared that over 140 stakeholders responded to the survey and echoed what the data revealed for renters and homeowners.

Bowen further identified the top three (3) survey responses to regarding development costs, land availability, and zoning regulations as common barriers to development. He ended his presentation with action plan recommendations to include (1) Housing plan development, (2) Goal setting, (3) Capacity building, (4) Marketing and outreach, (5) Housing resource center development, (6) Implement/modify policies, and (7) Support residential development near community services.

Chairman Alston expressed appreciation for the presentation and noted the need for additional housing inventory. **He requested sharing the presentation with staff and each Commissioner as a guidepost to address these issues.**

Commissioner Tillman sought clarification regarding tax burdens and questioned potential property tax increases during the re-evaluation phase.

Bowen noted that he does not study that aspect. He confirmed that the State Chamber of Commerce had an impact study posted on its website.

Commissioner Tillman opined that we consider these impacts as we develop and implement policy in the future.

Commissioner Cashion questioned rated areas of growth and noticed Randolph's growth considering the Megasite.

Bowen spoke to ratings data up until 2023, demographic projections up to 2028 and the possibility of investments from anticipated job growth. He confirmed the gaps are related to jobs.

Bowen reiterated there is a chapter summary specific to Guilford County with all data points for further review or for use with upcoming grant applications.

B. BUDGET PLANNING PROCESSES

County Manager Halford recognized Budget Director Toy Beeninga to continue the presentation from the previous work session.

Beeninga highlighted how departments determine operating budgets and recognized Social Services Director Sharon Barlow.

Barlow spoke to state budget estimates, to allocated positions and training, to population demographic changes, to substandard housing, to equipment replacement, and to technology.

County Manager Michael Halford requested additional information regarding programming.

Barlow confirmed administrative funding, the reimbursement process, and matching funds. She spoke to crisis intervention and to determining eligibility.

Beeninga recognized Public Health Interim Director Anita Ramachandran.

Ramachandran spoke to medical supply expenditures, to vendor selection, to population trends with communicable diseases and pregnancies, and to accommodating Medicaid recipients. She spoke to physician consultations, to immunization clinics, to medical specialists, to primary care, and to lab operations. She noted state agreement addendums, equipment replacement and repair, vaccine refrigeration, and lab supplies price increases.

Beeninga recognized Emergency Services Director Jim Albright.

Albright spoke to unique drivers regarding Emergency Services. He provided an historical overview of the creation of Guilford Metro 911, and highlighted radio frequency contracts, market increases in equipment, and expenses in operating their own fleet. He ended his presentation by noting maintenance costs. He recognized Inspections Director Matthew Crawford.

Crawford spoke to the inspector certifications, to schedule adjustments for training sessions, to equipment replacement, and to vehicular costs due to travel.

Beeninga spoke to cost savings regarding lessening printing costs for the budget and increased use of technology. He highlighted expenses methodologies for Human Services.

Barlow spoke to foster care expenses, to therapeutic care, to a post-pandemic bed decrease, and to overtime expenses. She noted collaborating with the Legal Team to navigate the court system. She noted other programs requiring county dollars to include adult daycare, utility assistance, and crisis intervention.

Beeninga continued the presentation to highlight county debt. He spoke to the school system and to Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC). He noted vehicle replacement processes, a decline in debt service supported by property tax, and increased capacity to handle deferred capital needs. He spoke to the general fund transfer, to supply chain delays, to capital purchases, and to prior debt issuances.

Beeninga highlighted professional services, contracted services, itemization processes, library services, home and community block grants, and the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council programs.

Halford noted consultants and contracted services to address a prior inquiry from Commissioner Tillman. He noted not having such a line item, so it falls under professional services. He shared a \$1.2M amount, with \$500K for the Homelessness Taskforce. He shared that for FY25, there are \$1M with \$400K for the Women and Children's Recovery Center. He noted contracted services include janitorial, landscaping, and interpreters.

Commissioner Murphy questioned consultant expenditures and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) priority projects. **She requested staff to parse out an expense amount.**

Halford reiterated consultant expenditures along with opioid strategic funding and school health nurses.

Commissioner Tillman emphasized his previous question regarding expenditures.

Halford confirmed approximately 60% in that line item. He shared additional follow up for Commissioner review.

Beeninga continued the presentation to share expenditures related to medical services. He noted contracts, juvenile justice expenses, and state medical examiner fee increases.

Beeninga spoke to supplies and materials and to the detention facilities' meal service capacity per resident. He noted price-only contracts.

Beeninga spoke to behavioral health expense methodologies. He shared prior collaboration with the former Sandhills Center and rehabilitation efforts.

Beeninga noted utilities, fuel, and telecom and their respective projected rate increases. He shared Duke Energy rate adjustments, weather patterns, and cost projections. He noted the price per gallon of fuel per utilization for public safety vehicles and other department usage. He shared over three million (3M) calls per year, data service, and connectivity.

Beeninga spoke to building/grounds/security, vehicle, and equipment maintenance. He shared line-item data and average miles per year for the Sheriff's Office, Emergency Services, and the county fleet. He shared the operational costs for janitorial, elevator maintenance, and lawn care. He shared data regarding building renovations and security detector stations.

Beeninga highlighted the fastest growing section of the budget to include software and maintenance. He shared this includes jail maintenance.

Beeninga noted economic incentive grants that are tracked regarding company investment, assessed value, and job creation. He noted the increasing number of grants.

Beeninga shared other operating budgets such as for Elections. He spoke to education and training investments for certifications, Community Based Organization (CBO) funding, and insurance and bonding in the risk management pool. He shared anticipated grant funding and the tax evaluation fund.

Halford highlighted Board priorities from the previous retreat and spoke to seeking guidance on three (3) key budget components. He spoke to approximately \$590M for education, law enforcement parks, and other departments in addition to the remaining need covered with fund balance.

Halford explained one (1) Board priority to include performance merit for employee compensation and pay plan maintenance.

Commissioner Murphy questioned FY25 inclusion of \$2M for pay plan maintenance.

Halford confirmed \$2.7M is including merit increases.

Commissioner Murphy expresses support for the pay plan maintenance and \$2M to adequately maintain our core value of 'Our People Matter'. She stated a preference for a January merit distribution instead of a March distribution.

Vice Chairwoman Foster echoed the merit and pay plan sentiment expressed by Commissioner Murphy.

Chairman Alston questioned the difference from \$33M from fund balance and an increase of \$16M to total \$49M.

Halford confirmed based on a zero-revenue budget.

Commissioner Cooke clarified that the \$2M and \$2.7M are already built into the budget. She echoed the pay plan and merit sentiments to support employees similar to Vice Chairwoman

Foster and Commissioner Murphy. She supported higher public safety workforce compensation. **She requested staff to provide current public safety compensation, vacancy rates, and community response time impacts.**

Commissioner Tillman questioned fund balance usage in case of a large-scale emergency.

Commissioner Cashion questioned the \$2.7M or \$3.9M included and the percent increase.

Halford confirmed \$2.7M and explained a merit pool calculation of 3% of salaries to be distributed in March.

Commissioner Cashion opined caution in fund balance usage while staying fair to county employees.

Chairman Alston recommended postponing any direction to the County manager due to time constraints.

There was Board consensus to postpone this discussion.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for this agenda.

IV. ADJOURN

Motion made by Commissioner Kay Cashion, seconded by Commissioner Mary Beth Murphy, to adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business the work session was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Melvin "Skip" Alston
Chairman

Robin Keller
Clerk