

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

Greensboro, North Carolina
April 17, 2025

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Carly Cooke.

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; Victor Isler, Assistant County Manager; Jason Jones, Assistant County Manager; Erris Dunston, Assistant County Manager; Don Warn, Finance Director; 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 3:41 p.m.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. COMMUNITY PRESENTATION

Chairman Alston introduced the agenda item and recognized those in opposition to the Transco pipeline. He noted that the corporate representatives will be contacted to schedule a presentation at a later date.

Caroline Hansley, Sierra Club representative, provided an overview of the proposed Transco Southeast Supply Enhancement Project (SSEP). She voiced concern regarding methane gas emissions, fuel transports, and explained the fracked gas cycle.

Hansley urged the Board to present a resolution in opposition to the pipeline project. She noted fossil fuels and existing aged pipelines throughout the state and nation. She shared the blast zones throughout Oak Ridge, co-location safety issues, and Transco’s prior accidents.

Hansley shared Duke Energy’s potential customer price increases, data center demands, a need for renewable energy usage, limited tax revenue, decreased property values, and foreign supply chain impacts. She noted incompatibility with the state’s equity and climate goals.

Hansley urged the Board to protect landowners and reiterated project opposition.

Chairman Alston recognized County Attorney Andrea Leslie-Fite for updates.

Attorney Leslie-Fite provided a status update of Transco's application and provided an overview of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), permit project tracking, and compression facilities. She noted that the FERC is charged by Congress with evaluating whether interstate natural gas pipeline projects proposed by private companies should be approved.

Attorney Leslie-Fite spoke to environmental assessments, to potential safety concerns, to an upcoming November 7th deadline, and to a decision-making timeline. She shared that the FERC public outreach opportunities are listed on its website. She shared the project description of 24.1 miles of 42-inch diameter of pipeline loop in Guilford, Forsyth, and Davidson Counties. She explained the process for natural gas certificates.

Attorney Leslie-Fite emphasized that Transco encourages substantive feedback in the form of scientific support along with a review of public comments. She noted that the decision will be released in November.

Commissioner Murphy questioned project opposition in Alamance County and whether there was any weight in Guilford County issuing a statement.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed reviewing the procedural nature of that jurisdiction. She shared that there was no statutory reference but mostly fact-specific such as relevant data. She shared the Transco rebuttal and defensible information. She spoke to checking on the Alamance County decision.

Hansley confirmed that the Alamance County project was five (5) times smaller. She shared that this was brand new pipe from Chatham and Virginia several years ago. She noted that speaking out showed there was public concern and peer jurisdictions took opposition. She spoke to FERC permit denials and other comparisons.

Attorney Leslie-Fite noted FERC jurisdiction regarding the Certificate of Appropriateness. She noted several permitting layers and federal and state review levels. She explained that FERC determines the appropriateness standard.

Commissioner Murphy clarified that with FERC approval, there is still an opportunity for permitting agencies to deny requests that could shift the project.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed mitigating concerns and constituents lobbying the correct bodies.

Hansley confirmed that the water permit was denied.

Commissioner Tillman thanked the constituents for their information sharing in District 3. He looks forward to hearing from Transco Pipeline representatives at a future work session.

Commissioner Jones questioned FERC proceeding with an environment assessment (EA) instead of an environment impact (EI).

Hansley confirmed the environmental agencies involved that have a limited document review time.

Commissioner Jones clarified project scope.

Hansley confirmed providing a list of recent decisions.

Commissioner Jones questioned the physical location of the pipeline and impacts to other potential county areas.

Hansley spoke to three (3) Greensboro reservoirs, to pipe coating, to water quality violations, and to a reduced thirty (30) day review for the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) instead of one (1) year in the previous administration. She noted Oak Ridge residents on well water.

Attorney Leslie-Fite highlighted the Public Health staff to answer questions. She noted the difference between the impact studies. She shared that FERC decides the type of study based on relevant data and factual basis.

Commissioner Cashion opined that comments from public bodies do not carry much weight.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed no precedence between public bodies and the general public.

Commissioner Cashion confirmed that comments should be personal at this point.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed that the written comments are uploaded to the website along with feedback.

Chairman Alston expressed appreciation for the community presentation and reiterated a Transco Pipeline representative presentation. He questioned Guilford County property ownership.

Attorney Leslie-Fite confirmed that Triad Park is co-owned by Forsyth and Guilford Counties with an opportunity for the Board to review placement.

Chairman Alston noted that the Board will have future easement discussions.

Attorney Leslie-Fite noted that after the FERC certification, and then subsequent negotiations similar to NCDOT, regarding fair compensation dialogue and rights-of-way discussions.

Commissioner Tillman clarified the Carolina Field of Honor location.

Commissioner Cashion identified a resident with a personal account.

Hansley confirmed providing additional information to the Board.

The resident spoke to the safety factors as an Oak Ridge property owner and not being informed about the pipeline on her horse farm. She voiced concern regarding Transco removing forty (40) foot trees, taking sixty (60) feet of road frontage, and cutting the driveway. She noted the company will add a fourth pipe. She stated that as a result of Transco, she can no longer build a home for her son. She noted a nearby affected school.

The board thanked the community representatives for their presentation, as it was informative. Chairman Alston shared that he would like to extend an offer to Transco pipeline to here their information as well in order to better inform the board as to the project.

B. FY 2025-26 BUDGET DISCUSSION

County Manager Michael Halford introduced the item and provided an overview of prior budget discussions. He noted recommended budget guidelines to include shoring up county functions, no personnel reductions, accommodating charter school growth, capital allocation for Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC), department operational needs, and tax revaluation fund.

Halford spoke to a FY26 option summary. He noted GC School funding to include operating, annual capital, debt service, and honor school capital.

Commissioner Murphy questioned debt service payment increases.

Halford confirmed \$10M in bond funds.

Commissioner Jones questioned impacts regarding the \$34.5M in the Budget in Brief document presented at the Budget Town Halls.

Halford confirmed making the debt payment and it is not considered a decrease.

Halford continued the presentation to note \$10.8M capital outlay funds and Board feedback on options.

Chairman Alston noted that at the Retreat, staff totals were an additional \$49M.

Halford confirmed \$21-22M of departmental requests if no fund balance. He shared that the \$49M is for all the expenses, recurring revenue, and to balance the budget.

Chairman Alston questioned the accumulated asks.

Halford confirmed \$49M.

Chairman Alston requested a line-item breakdown of the \$49M.

Halford noted a mathematical allocation and not a line-item breakdown per department.

Commissioner Tillman questioned departmental enhancements and positions from a previous presentation with an approximate \$21M total.

Halford confirmed blending revenue sources.

Commissioner Tillman noted efficiencies in position selection and an uncertain nationwide economy.

Chairman Alston reiterated the \$49M itemized list.

Halford confirmed resending January and February data to the Board.

Halford continued the presentation and requested the Board review each line item on slide 19 (Board Feedback on Options).

There was Board consensus to review the document and provide feedback on the line items.

Halford shared that he does not prefer individual requests.

Commissioner Perdue requested the Manager to present a recommended budget to review instead of the Board determining line items.

Chairman Alston echoed the same sentiment.

Halford confirmed providing digital GC School Board information to the Board.

Halford recognized Finance Director Don Warn, who introduced his presentation.

Warn provided an overview of fund balance definitions and fluctuations throughout the year. He spoke to state statutory requirements, to deferred revenue, and to Local Government Commission (LGC) calculations. He shared assigned and unassigned projections.

Halford noted that all assets are not considered cash amounts.

Warn shared the variety of funds that comprise the fund balance. He noted deficits, enabled projects, and bonds. He explained the formula calculation. He provided the legal definition of available fund balance for appropriation. He spoke to the LGC peer jurisdiction comparisons.

Warn explained that the total general fund balance includes non-spendable, restricted, committed, assigned, and unrestricted categories.

Halford noted emergency expenditures from the committed fund include honor school capital and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) enabled funds of approximately \$144M.

Warn continued the presentation to explain the general fund and rating agencies that critique trends. He shared that FY25 estimates fall below the 8% threshold which would create concern.

Halford shared that the 8% threshold was based on historical policy. He noted an approach based on Board priorities.

Warn noted that fund balance is a point-in-time measurement. He described monthly operational flows of revenues and expenditures.

Commissioner Jones questioned slide 10 (Fund Balance) and the misinformation surrounding committed versus unassigned funds. **He requested staff to provide a yearly percentage increase of all contributions to the fund balance to coincide with the graph.**

Warn confirmed providing the information.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for this agenda.

IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:25 p.m.

Melvin “Skip” Alston
Chairman

Robin Keller
Clerk