



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

9:00 AM

Agriculture and Conference Center

Budget Work Session

CALL TO ORDER

Present: 5 - Commissioner Mike Dasher, Commissioner Diana Hales, Vice Chair Franklin Gomez Flores, Chair Karen Howard and Commissioner Robert Logan

BOARD PRIORITIES

[22-4301](#)

Introduction

Attachments: [Work Session FY23 FINAL](#)

Chatham County's Budget Director, Darrell Butts, let the Commissioners know slides ninety and ninety-one were corrected in the electronic document and he provided hard copies of the corrections as well.

Mr. Butts reviewed what was discussed at the Board of Commissioners Retreat in January 2022.

Commissioner Hales asked about the three school gym renovations. Mr. Butts said the schools/county did not receive the grants applied to provide 85% of the funding for all three renovations. Staff will bring those projects back to the Board in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in November. For FY24 the estimate for all three gyms is \$15M (Bennett, Bonlee, Silk Hope). Those estimates were for building brand new gyms and repurposing or demolishing the current facilities. Chair Howard asked if the grant opportunity was something the County can apply for again. Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne said yes. Mr. LaMontagne said the schools and the County are not getting clear answers as to how to improve the application score and there was no rubric. Chair Howard asked what the County's typical lottery proceeds are. Mr. Butts said conservatively \$500,000 annually.

Commissioner Logan asked if there were any partnerships between VinFast, Chatham Park, and the Schools. Mr. LaMontagne said Chatham Park has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the schools for a school site but the County has not had those conversations with VinFast, yet. Chair Howard shared that Superintendent Dr. Anthony Jackson said Electrical Vehicle Technician (EVT) should be an Associate's degree through the Central Carolina Community College campuses with a starting salary of \$80,000 a year.

Commissioner Hales asked when the Board will get an update about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Mr. LaMontagne hopes to have an update in July 2022 from Chatham County's Strategic Initiatives Analyst Courtney Cooper-Lewter. The County received over 700 responses to the survey in addition to the public input at

Board of Commissioner meetings and Community meetings. Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson suggested staff schedule a one on one in July to discuss ARPA funds with the Commissioners.

22-4302

General Fund Revenue

Mr. Butts continued the presentation with general fund revenue.

Commissioner Dasher asked about the Medicaid transportation funding and what the cost was annually for those trips (\$2/person each way). Commissioner Dasher asked if it could be made free for those passengers. Assistant County Manager for Human Resources Carolyn Miller said the County will look into it.

Commissioner Dasher clarified the twenty percent increase on the permits and fees on (Page twenty-three) is a twenty percent increase in revenue and not a twenty percent increase in fees.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if the County can forgo inspection fees for residents buying an abandoned home and renovating it. Mr. LaMontagne said this could be a goal for affordable housing. Commissioner Dasher mentioned a possible partnership with the Town of Siler City and if the Town identified dilapidated structures, then the County could reimburse the Town for permitting fees. Mr. Thompson explained that he and Chatham County's Policy Analyst Stephanie Watkins-Cruz have been having conversations with Siler City Planner Jack Meadows along these lines. Staff will look into the possibilities and options.

Mr. LaMontagne said with the hotels coming, there could be some other programs that could be funded by occupancy tax. The County is currently at three percent and the State allows us to go up to six percent. Commissioner Dasher requested this be discussed at the January 2023 Board of Commissioners retreat.

Mr. LaMontagne explained that the Board will hear much more in the fall in the CIP about the County's move to Renaissance Drive.

The staff has no recommended tax increase for FY23.

22-4305

General Fund Expense

Chatham County's Budget and Management Analyst Erik Lindley continued the presentation on general fund expense.

Chatham County's Finance Officer, Roy Lynch, said the Munis software will go live in October 2022 and the County will begin work on the upgrade and transfer to the cloud in June 2022.

Commissioner Logan said he was glad to see the space feasibility study and asked what it encompasses. Mr. Butts explained all County departments that occupy County space and not outside entities who lease space from the County are included in the study. Commissioner Hales asked if it would include the department on aging and the collection centers. Mr. Butts stated it would and the collection centers were already considered part of the County facility inventory. Commissioner Hales asked who owns the Eastern Senior Center in Pittsboro. Ms. Miller explained the Council on Aging (COA) owns the building and the Central Carolina Community College owns the land. COA owns the land and building at the Western Senior Center in Siler City.

Commissioner Dasher has heard that community colleges are supposed to get funding as a result of the VinFast project. Mr. LaMontagne explained the community college appropriation is specifically for the training center in Lee County. He proposed that there will probably be an increased need for class space and an increase in classes offered but the County will not be responsible for maintaining the Lee County facility. Chair Howard requested the County think about how Chatham students will be able to access the Lee County facility mainly in regards to transportation. Mr. LaMontagne explained the Lee County Moore Center will be for training VinFast employees, not necessarily students. Chair Howard said there are a lot of questions around how the County can make this opportunity accessible to Chatham students so that the County's students benefit. Mr. LaMontagne shared that there will also be a lot of job opportunities with the support industry and suppliers for VinFast.

Chair Howard said it will be critical to have early childhood education and child care in close proximity to VinFast. Commissioner Logan said central transportation to the facility from all over the county is going to be essential. Mr. LaMontagne shared that transportation is demand driven. The Small Area Plan will be important to make sure this is possible. He hopes the Small Area Plan can be completed by the Fall 2022. Lots of meetings and conversations are currently happening with North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), surrounding counties, City of Sanford, Western Wake Partners, Town of Apex, the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) consultants White and Smith, Chatham County's Planning department, and Chatham County's Economic Development Corporation. Chair Howard hopes the Chatham Transit Network will also be included on those conversations.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if the County is able to forgo the Chatham Grove Community Supervisor and the temporary workers' positions. He does not agree with these positions because the western part of the county does not have this same kind of facility. This is a prime example of why the west feels neglected. Chair Howard explained the County built this community center in collaboration with the schools. That is narrowing the thinking that one can only have access to what is right around oneself. Just because something is in the northeast does not mean it is only serving people in the northeast. There are three trailer parks in the northeast and this facility helps people in poverty. Chair Howard explained when the County builds a school in the west, it will be able to recommend this same kind of collaboration.

Commissioner Logan said there is an equity issue but things are typically funding and built based on population. He said it would be great if the County had a position that was responsible for grant writing. Chair Howard asked if Parks and Recreation is looking at equity when they are applying for grants. Mr. LaMontagne said the Parks and Recreation master plan did take that into account and the western part of the county gave input. Commissioner Dasher believes it is a lot of money for positions that will serve a very narrow population in a small part of the county, but Pittsboro does not have parks programming and that is done by the County. A lot of the County's Parks and Recreation programming will be decided by the growth in Pittsboro. Commissioner Hales expounded that Siler City has Parks and Recreation and does its own programming.

Commissioner Hales agreed a grant writing position would be beneficial. Mr. LaMontagne clarified that TJCOG provides that service for local governments and it costs the County \$22,000 a year. They investigate what is available and they do all the applications. Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if TJCOG goes beyond government being the applicant for the grants. He mentioned opportunities in the west, especially around broadband. Mr. Thompson has asked TJCOG what happens when a

community partner comes to the County asking for assistance because they do not have the capacity to go through the grant process. TJCOG has said if there is an opportunity for a joint partnership with the County and the community partner, TJCOG will help with that grant. They are also tangentially thinking about how they can help nonprofits. Nonprofits have difficulty with grant writing as they are focused on their mission. Commissioner Hales suggested this could be part of a discussion on community development.

Chair Howard said the administration of the grant is what is hard. When the grant funding ends it should not fall apart and there should be sustainability. Mr. LaMontagne explained the process. Staff comes to the Board of Commissioners when the County applies for a grant. The County would like more one time grants but some do have to come back year after year when programs and positions are involved. Mr. Thompson stated TJCOG does help with the grant administration through required tracking and measurable units. He did not know if the County would be able to find one individual to shepherd the process for every grant from beginning to end. The grants are all so different. The County is currently evaluating whether or not it wants to join TJCOG's program and if there will be a significant return on investment.

Commissioner Dasher suggested that the land where the affordable housing is going by the college in Siler City would be a great place to do a Master Plan and put a community center. Mr. Thompson said Siler City is working on some things and asked Vice Chair Gomez Flores for clarification about if he was referencing the unincorporated west or Siler City. Vice Chair Gomez Flores confirmed he meant all of the west. Commissioner Dasher suggested out of Town residents pay out of Town fees for Town recreation programming. Commissioner Hales said she disagreed. The County is not Pittsboro and it is larger. She said Pittsboro is never going to annex to Briar Chapel. Chair Howard said Chatham Partnership for Children has great programming at Briar Chapel Park and that is the only opportunity for socialization for some kids and parents. Commissioner Dasher predicts in ten years the County will not be running all the recreation programs. He thinks the towns should pick up some of the need. Vice Chair Gomez Flores said the current system is not equitable. Chair Howard shared that she has a fundamental belief in equity and the County can do it without diminishing the impact on certain communities. Commissioner Hales thinks the County will get there. Mr. LaMontagne said the County staff will look into how the County can collaborate with Siler City. If the County can collaborate and help with funding, then maybe the Town could speed up any plans it may have.

Commissioner Dasher asked about the intergovernmental funds in 2021 for Elections. Mr. Butts said grant funding was received for some COVID-19 response and used to replace voting equipment, private voting stands, signage, additional security protocols, and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Chair Howard feels the Elections Director and Deputy Director salaries looked a little out of order. She had conversations with members of the Board of Elections (BOE) about ten percent raises in salaries for all three elections staff. Ms. Miller confirmed the Deputy Director and Elections Specialist have been approved for reclassification this year. They will get a two percent salary increase as well as the seven percent increase - meaning they would get a total nine percent increase. The director could get a seven percent raise. Mr. Butts explained the three elections employees will also see an increase in take home pay with the approved overtime during elections. Ms. Miller said the comparisons made by the BOE was not consistent. The Deputy Director of Chatham County's Department of Social Services is a very different position than the Deputy Director of Elections.

Chair Howard asked how often does the County do a pay study. Ms. Miller said the County hoped to consistently conduct pay studies at least every five years. All of the elections staff also received pay study implementation increases in January 2022. Commissioner Dasher asked if there is language that can be put in the budget ordinance that allows BOE flexibility. Mr. Thompson said the staff can structure the budget ordinance allowing the Board of Commissioners to allocate a set amount for Board of Election salaries. Mr. Butts explained the options of the BOE. Mr. LaMontagne said BOE regularly spends more funds than allocated. Mr. Thompson explained the benefits of line item allocations for salaries that cannot be spent on other things and making sure operating expenses are protected.

Commissioner Dasher shared he does not like addressing individual salaries in this way and that is why the County has pay studies. Commissioner Logan said he understands the BOE wants more control but he also understands the responsibility of the County Manager to make sure all county staff salaries are equitable. Giving the BOE control over their salaries and those positions would not be automatically included in pay studies. Mr. Butts explained they also could not borrow from any health and benefits lines. Ms. Miller is not sure the BOE understands the impact this decision would have. Accountability could be an issue. Commissioner Hales asked if a ten percent raise would be adequate for the director. Ms. Miller clarified that the director's salary would be \$79,000 along with the overtime earned during elections (recommending overtime increased to \$15/per hour). Chair Howard asked if there are other reclassifications being recommended. Ms. Miller shared that the County has eight other reclassifications being recommended from other departments and there are less this year due to the pay study implementation in January 2022.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores is not opposed to a salary increase but requests the Elections employees do more to educate the public. Mr. LaMontagne said BOE would have to direct that education process. Commissioner Dasher asked if 3.5 employees is typical for this number of voters. Ms. Miller did not know for sure. Mr. Butts said BOE added the third employee within the last five years. Ms. Miller shared the County is doing more with less in most of the County departments. Commissioner Dasher explained the situation is not unique. This Board would love to pay all county employees more but he is uncomfortable with singling out three employees. Commissioner Logan remembered one of the BOE speakers said something about a salary study. Ms. Miller shared that the BOE did their own study, largely based on the region and election district, like Wake, Durham, and Orange counties.

Commissioner Hales made a motion to increase Elections Director to \$80k annual salary and leave the Deputy Director and Elections Specialist with the recommended reclassifications and the included seven percent increase recommended for all employees who meet expectations.

Commissioner Dasher said he was not comfortable voting for an individual employee's salary and he would feel better giving them a salary allocation.

Commissioner Hales withdrew her motion.

Recessed for lunch at 12:45 pm.

Resumed meeting at 1:23 pm.

Ms. Miller answered the question raised about cost of Medicaid transportation.

Ridership brings in about \$3600 a year (two dollars/per person each way). Mr. Butts explained when the COA becomes the Department on Aging, these funds will go to Chatham Transit as the County is not eligible for the funds.

Mr. Butts explained that increasing the Elections Director from seven percent to ten percent is equivalent to \$2,793 additional over what is already recommended to provide an allocation. If it is not on the fee schedule then it is more difficult to add later. He asked how the Board wants to approach the Elections budget or if the it wants to keep it at the department level.

Mr. LaMontagne heard the Board wants to have a compensation allocation and then operation lines would be separate. Ms. Miller suggested it be more specific than it is for regular budgeted compensation so that it protects benefits components. She proposed one way to communicate this is by stating "the County has allocated an amount to commiserate with a salary of \$80k for the Director and the recommended nine percent for the Deputy and Specialist". Commissioner Dasher advised a collective statement: "we have increased the salary allocation by x percent increase over last year with nine percent for Deputy and Specialist and an additional \$2,793 to raise the Director's salary to \$80,000". Mr. Butts advised there could be an issue with temporary salaries being shorted to increase staff salaries, creating a risk of not having enough temporary staff for elections. He suggested separating temporary salaries out so that they cannot take from temporary salaries. Chair Howard asked if staff needed to check with the County Attorney Bob Hagemann to ensure this suggestion meets the law. The Board agreed by consensus to send the memo to the BOE and verify with Mr. Hagemann.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked what the additional Personal Property Appraiser is responsible for and Mr. Butts answered that this person would perform the initial cleanup of the personal property tax roles. The County does not have a person designated for this specific project at this time.

Mr. Lindley gave the disclaimer that human services fluctuates based on grant activity.

Mr. Lindley said the County is anticipating a new nine month Medicaid program this position will likely address. Commissioner Hales asked if this was new. Mr. Butts answered this will be new for economic services and other areas of DSS. The County has someone in this position. Commissioner Hales confirmed the County is going to mitigate this cost. Mr. Thompson confirmed. Mr. LaMontagne explained that is the purpose of the position. Mr. Butts admitted he did not know how other jurisdictions are mitigating this service. Ms. Miller explained this is a very experienced caseworker position and the department knows what they are looking for in this position.

Mr. Lindley presented two on-site wastewater positions and one food and lodging position in which salaries would fluctuate similarly to the Sheriff's department positions. Commissioner Dasher asked if there is a statutory requirement for the health department to handle septic systems and wells. Mr. Butts stated yes, by environmental health.

Mr. Thompson referenced Statute 14-234.3: 'if a member of this governing body has an association with a non-profit then that individual can not participate in discussions about allocation of funds.' Commissioner Dasher admitted he is on the board for the Partnership for Children. Mr. Thompson explained that Commissioner Dasher can self report to the Clerk and recuse himself.

Chair Howard questioned where the Arts Council was referenced. Mr. Thompson said staff did not include the Arts Council because their funding is not part of the nonprofit grant process. Chair Howard asked if the staff would go through this list one-by-one. Mr. Thompson asked if Chair Howard was a board member for the Arts Council. She confirmed she is and explained her interpretation of Mr. Hagemann's input. Her understanding was that the commissioners cannot participate in funding decisions if they are a member of the nonprofit board requesting the funding. Ms. Ray reiterated that the board members could not vote if the funding is being provided by the County. Chair Howard explained it is sometimes not clear. Mr. Thompson said the staff would walk the Board through the list on the slide and ask if there are any associations with any Board members. Chair Howard shared she is on CPCA board and Commissioner Dasher is on the Partnership for Children board. Mr. Butts suggested a motion to approve except the CPCA & Partnership for Children and then have separate votes.

A motion was made by Chair Dasher, seconded by Commissioner Logan, to approve the recommended nonprofit funding allocations with the exception of CPCA and Partnership for Children allocations. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Commissioner Dasher, Commissioner Hales, Vice Chair Gomez Flores, Chair Howard and Commissioner Logan

Commissioner Hales asked what the \$65,000 request was from Salvation Army. She also wanted more information on the Chatham Homeless Shelters request. Courtney Cooper-Lewter outlined the Salvation Army's request. It was \$40,000 for educational expenses/utilities and \$20,000 for staff and salary and \$5,000 for rent. Ms. Cooper-Lewter said she was not yet sure how the \$12,000 would support the clients. Commissioner Hales confirmed that funding is needed for the entirety of the Pathways of Hope program. Mr. Butts touched on the Chatham Homeless Shelters/Love Chatham as needing food assistance, temporary housing assistance, hotel ministry, and clothing assistance. Ms. Cooper-Lewter shared they also requested money from United Way and believed they received funding from them as well. This is a new organization doing important work in the county.

Chair Howard suggested the board be mindful about organizations that may be doing great work but not given the same amount of respect as many other organizations. She loves new groups but some of these established nonprofits are not getting the same level of financial support and commitment.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if staff looked into the non-profit El Futuro and if the organization is open to the public. Ms. Cooper-Lewter said El Futuro has not been able to reopen yet and is struggling to hire positions. Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if the Board was interested in giving funding to a program that is not open to the public. He said El Futuro was a recipient through the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) and it is hard to access. Commissioner Hales does not want this money to go to El Futuro in Durham, only to the Chatham location. Mr. Butts explained the County partners with El Futuro through Vaya Health and the County's data is based on Chatham data only. Mr. LaMontagne said this funding is for next fiscal year and the County hopes it will be put to good use. Mr. Butts mentioned the County can provide support other than funding. El Futuro said it would be helpful for the county to provide feedback on the perception of the organization in the community. Chair Howard asked if El Futuro is a provider through Chatham County Schools. Mr. Butts said El Futuro gives a mid-year report and the data must show the funds are spent in Chatham. Commissioner Dasher suggested the Board trust the nonprofit process as this organization has gone through that process that is run by a committee. Mr. LaMontagne said too many people are operating in the same space over time and the

funding sources are being diluted. Ms. Cooper-Lewter said the County provides applicants a space to look into partnerships with other organizations in Chatham.

Commissioner Hales asked about Habitat for Humanity and home buyer education and if it is for folks who want to be considered for a Habitat home or general population education. Ms. Cooper-Lewter advised some funding is for marketing materials and some is for a mortgage management course and conflict resolution training.

Chair Howard asked if the Kidscope outreach is a program and she mentioned the Kalediscope plan, learn, elevating early education program. She asked if there is anyone on the nonprofit panels or if there is any conversation around the continuum of the education spectrum and the fact that our lowest performing students are historically not in quality early learning environments. By the time the students get to third grade the impact is apparent and the County is investing more at the Chatham County Schools level where it could be investing earlier and have a better outcome. Ms. Cooper-Lewter knows some of those conversations have been happening with Chatham Education Foundation but it was not specifically discussed in conversations about the applications. Commissioner Dasher knows the Partnership for Children and the state have been working on local data. Ms. Cooper-Lewter indicated Kidscope is a new program that caters to kids ages 0-5. Chair Howard expressed more money is needed in the nonprofit overall allocation.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked about TJCOG. Mr. Thompson explained if the county were engaging in a project and affiliating with a nonprofit to do that said project, then the county could go through TJCOG for assistance. TJCOG would assist with applying for a grant and administering and tracking that grant. Vice Chair Gomez Flores reiterated that was his intention with suggesting a grant position. Nonprofits need grant help even if a local government is not involved. Mr. LaMontagne expounded it would be very messy to have a county employee be liable for deliverables out of their control. TJCOG is looking at possibly helping nonprofits without a local government partnership requirement. Mr. Thompson clarified the County has invited TJCOG to come to the county's monthly meetings with our community partners. Ms. Cooper-Lewter said if folks cannot attend the meetings, she sends out notes after the meetings.

Commissioner Logan asked how long the allocation has been attached to a tax increase. Mr. Butts estimated about five months.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores stated he is still uncomfortable with El Futuro. Commissioner Dasher said a lot of mental health services are now provided with telehealth service and he is not worried about the doors of El Futuro being closed. Mr. Butts said El Futuro can provide services to undocumented residents and no other organization is allowed to do that. Vice Chair Gomez Flores stated he no longer has concerns after the discussion.

Commissioner Dasher recused himself to allow the Board to vote on the recommended funding for the Chatham Partnership for Children.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Hales, seconded by Commissioner Gomez Flores, to approve the recommended nonprofit funding to the Chatham Partnership for Children. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Commissioner Hales, Vice Chair Gomez Flores, Chair Howard and Commissioner Logan

Recuse: 1 - Commissioner Dasher

Commissioner Dasher returned to the meeting.

Chair Howard recused herself to allow the Board to vote on the recommended nonprofit funding for Central Piedmont Community Action.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Hales, seconded by Commissioner Logan, to approve the recommended nonprofit funding to Central Piedmont Community Action. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Commissioner Dasher, Commissioner Hales, Vice Chair Gomez Flores and Commissioner Logan

Recuse: 1 - Chair Howard

Chair Howard returned to the meeting.

Chair Howard asked if anyone asked what the PASS program is. Commissioner Hales said no, but she would like to know. Central Piedmont Community Action does a lot, but she did not know specifically what the PASS program does. She said they do the block grant every year and it helps reduce poverty.

Commissioner Hales made a motion to work with Arts Council to find legal and appropriate use for additional \$20,000 and earmark contingency, funding of additional \$20,000 contingent upon successful work/resolution with Arts Council. Chair Howard seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Dasher disclosed his familial relationship with staff on the Arts Council. He thinks the arts in schools residencies should be a request from the schools. Commissioner Hales thinks the County should be thinking of arts more as a whole, not just in terms of the Arts Council.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked about the arts for theater and music in the schools. He asked how the County can partner with the schools to advertise the arts from the schools to the entire community. Commissioner Logan confirmed the schools can definitely be a catalyst. He reiterated all of that programming is financed through the school budgets through the state. He asked how other communities are funding the arts and/or supporting the arts. Mr. LaMontagne suggested the County look into that and cautioned that Mr. Hagemann thought there are legal issues with paying individuals. Commissioner Hales highlighted the arts incubator is bringing back a lot of opportunities post COVID-19 and suggested adding a staff person to the Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Chair Howard suggested the County look at this topic at the budget retreat to address the arts community as a whole and not only provide funding exclusively to the arts council.

Commissioner Dasher asked if the topic could be broached with the arts council to approach the schools next year, prior to getting to the budget retreat in January.

Chair Howard discussed the benefits of the arts in residence program.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Hales, seconded by Commissioner Howard, to work with Arts Council to find legal and appropriate use for additional \$20,000 and earmark contingency, funding of additional \$20,000 contingent upon successful work/resolution with Arts Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Commissioner Dasher, Commissioner Hales, Vice Chair Gomez Flores, Chair Howard and Commissioner Logan

Mr. Lindley said staff is recommending five additional staff to meet the workload demands for the Central Permitting department. Three new building inspectors, a Commercial Plan Reviewer, and an Inspection Supervisor. They have a larger than anticipated workload coming up. Mr. Butts added the Inspection Supervisor position is a working supervisor role in which they will also be engaging in inspections as well.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if the staff received information about the inspection failures and the way the inspectors do not do re-inspections. His family is remodeling a home in Siler City, but they overlooked something simple in a bathroom. He asked if there is a visual document available to reduce the number of inspections. Mr. LaMontagne explained that the county does not receive reports about the types of re-inspections and was unsure staff could do tracking without getting into the notes of it. He said in a meeting with the Home Inspection Association and the Department of Insurance the importance of building by code and to check your individual work was discussed. County staff is already behind and to come back out and re-inspect something for home renovation projects is difficult to do and unclear where to stop. There are so many things the County would have to do, and it is a daunting task. It is already done by the State. A cheat sheet would be huge and re-inspections kill efficiency. Commissioner Dasher said people rely on inspectors to make their punch list for them and that is not the intent.

Commissioner Hales asked if fire inspections were under the Fire Marshall. Mr. Lindley confirmed yes. He said building inspections, fire inspections, and central permitting are all connected under David Camp. Commissioner Hales asked if the Fire Marshall has four employees now. Mr. Lindley explained that the four employees does include the Fire Marshall.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked what the County's obligation is to provide the services. Mr. LaMontagne said if the towns do not provide the services, the County also has to do it for the towns in addition to the County. Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked what the requirement is for an inspection. Mr. LaMontagne said the requirement is two business days.

Mr. LaMontagne explained the County hired three inspectors from Apex and the County's inspectors are working four to ten hours/day, and DOI is also helping at no charge. This is part of DOI's program to train inspectors and also a part of disaster recovery training. It is just building inspections, not electrical/plumbing, etc.

Commissioner Dasher asked what the County is doing with vehicle purchases for employees. Mr. Butts said the ideal employee vehicle would be a hybrid Escape or crossover of some type. David Camp wants to hybridize his fleet as much as possible. The County cannot keep adding electric vehicles until the County gets charging stations.

The Chatham Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is a nonprofit, not a county department. There are different models in other parts of North Carolina. The EDC asked for an additional position who was to be the VinFast point person. It was poorly justified and not well explained. At the EDC board retreat they discussed funding a business retention position through the capital campaign funds and then have further discussion with the County about the VinFast position. A position is needed but could be accomplished with a contracted position. Chair Howard asked if the County will

need another position when something lands at CAM. She mentioned the possibility of an intergovernmental liaison position. The County really lost something when Debra Henzey left. The County needs someone that focuses on those relationships and conversations. Chair Howard used New Hanover County as an example. Staff will start looking at the Association of County Commissioners for people we can employ for an intergovernmental position.

Commissioner Hales asked if the Soil and Water Conservation District expends any funds. She knows the district does best management practices. She asked if the district ever purchases any land. Mr. Lindley mentioned the district provides educational and technical assistance to landowners/users.

Commissioner Hales asked what the sustainability goals are. Mr. Lindley noted Environmental Quality Director Kevin Lindley is the only person working on sustainability for the County. He is working on solar power with TJCOG, the Keep America Beautiful program, and he is also involved with SSDN. Department heads go through him when they are looking to add to their fleet.

Commissioner Dasher asked questions about watershed protection and the request for three new people. Staff said the county does erosion control for Pittsboro as well as the county. Ms. Ray shared statistics from Watershed Protection Director Rachael Thorn at the last department head meeting.

Commissioner Hales stated Parks and Recreation had requested a trails position. It was not in the manager's recommended budget. She suggested bringing the trails position on mid-year and do not delay two years. She requested to amend the budget mid-year (full time/half year). Mr. Thompson observed the grant is not for a trail coordinator and Alamance County already has that position. The Board gave consensus for staff to move forward with that recommendation.

Mr. Thompson noted the Board had added a lot of expenses and the staff will need to figure out how to pay for those requests.

The Board recessed for the day at 5:00pm.

The Meeting resumed on May 25, 2022 at 9:00am.

The EOC building will hopefully be ready in Spring of 2023.

Commissioner Dasher questioned how the animal shelter is doing with operations and opening to the public. He has heard from residents that the shelter is not open to the public. Mr. Thompson feels the goal of the Sheriff's Office is to get animal services in good working order so that they can be more outwardly facing and open to the public. Ms. Miller maintained that ongoing conversations are occurring about the Sheriff's staffing plan. They are currently in phase one. CCSO right now is focusing on management of what is coming in and then will focus on the program coordinator to help get pets adopted and fostered out. Commissioner Hales understood from the Sheriff they want to be a no kill facility. Commissioner Dasher suspected it is a tough department to run. The intent of the new facility was to have a public adoption center.

Commissioner Dasher wanted to know about fuel for county vehicles. Mr. Butts disclosed that staff highly encourage employees to go to the bus garage for cheaper fuel. The county has fuel cards with pins for all employees for regular gas stations.

Commissioner Hales wanted to know if collection center employees would have a new uniform. Mr. Butts confirmed with yes.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores inquired if town residents can purchase a county decal. Mr. Butts clarified that yes, residents can purchase a county decal for the collection centers for \$125 at the Solid Waste main office. Vice Chair Gomez Flores wanted to know if it were more efficient for the County to have residents use collection centers rather than truck pick up. Mr. Butts said yes. Budget staff plans to look this summer at whether to get rid of the flat \$125 fee. Mr. LaMontagne described how to incentivize recycling and less waste by doing color bags for recycling and charge more for bags of trash. Chair Howard illustrated it would be great to reward those who reduce waste and recycle more but not penalize those that do not. Mr. LaMontagne explained the Keep America Beautiful program came to a halt during COVID and staff is going to have to mostly start from scratch but he hopes the program gets momentum, again.

Commissioner Hales asked if coal ash funds include money for monitoring next fiscal year. Mr. Butts clarified the county may not use the funds allocated for the monitoring and hold them because it will be utilizing ARPA funds before the deadline expires. Article 46 is really helping keep a healthy balance in the Housing Trust Fund and that will continue to grow.

[22-4303](#)

Other Funds

Staff continued the presentation.

[22-4304](#)

Discussion

The Board of Commissioners discussed salaries for the County Manager, the Register of Deeds, and the Sheriff, which they must set by statute. They also need to give guidance on how to handle the commissioners' salaries.

The Board agreed by consensus to give the County Manager, the Register of Deeds, the Sheriff, and the county commissioners the same recommended 7% increase for all county employees that meet expectations.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores inquired about the County's total debt. Mr. Butts stated the first debt payment for Emergency Operations Center and Chatham County School's Central Services buildings will be in FY23.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores suggested the County be more aggressive. Mr. Thompson said the County can position itself to get the best rate on the market, which the County has done very well with its current strategy. Mr. Butts acknowledged the County will have the largest debt issuance ever in five to seven years. Both Mr. Thompson and Mr. LaMontagne illustrated the County will have a better estimate of when that borrowing will happen over the next year. Chair Howard projected demand for debt will grow as the County's population grows. Mr. Thompson explained the County is also putting away to County capital reserve for its pay-go projects, smaller financial projects that it can do without borrowing. Chair Howard clarified the County's obligation is to spend the people's money on the people. Mr. LaMontagne disclosed the County had a great debt model and the BOC has been consistent with contributing to that model and demonstrated good fiscal stewardship of putting money away for future debt.

The Board discussed the possibilities for the future county campus on Renaissance Drive. The BOC would like a sign now that says "Chatham County Government

Campus" due to the number of county facilities already on Renaissance Drive.

Commissioner Hales also thinks it is time for condemnation for the land to build a sign on Progress Boulevard and that corner needs to be under County control. Mr. LaMontagne stated there have been a lot of changes at the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The property owner had someone contact Mr. LaMontagne because they want to develop on that corner. He will follow back up with them.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked for an update on a master plan for Progress Blvd. Mr. LaMontagne said the Chatham County Economic Development Corporation is looking at this right now to appraise the land. The County is working on getting the covenants improved.

Mr. LaMontagne shared that Central Carolina Community College is looking at expansion on Progress Blvd. for the Early College. The Piedmont Health facilities have stalled on the Piedmont side of things. There have been some small area planning happening, especially with the additional affordable housing going locating there.

Mr. Butts reviewed the requests from the BOC from Tuesday's budget work session. The changes will be reflected in the final budget document and the changes do not affect the overall budget and tax rate.

Staff will ask the Board to adopt the budget at the June 21, 2022 BOC meeting.

Mr. LaMontagne thanked the budget team for their hard work.

Mr. LaMontagne shared the action items he heard during the retreat:

- The County will look at Occupancy Tax and look into a Siler City Community Center and/or possibilities at Southwest park*
- Look at Arts and Cultural Resources and what surrounding communities are doing to fund the arts*
- Look at how we have connection to school arts programs and general arts support, not just funding the Arts Council but arts as a whole and bring all of this information back to the BOC at the January retreat*
- Look into Intergovernmental liaison position and look at New Hanover County for an example*

Ms. Ray gave an update with reminders.

Mr. LaMontagne reviewed possible agenda items with joint meeting with Pittsboro on Thursday, June 9th at 6pm at the Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center:

- update on Town Hall*
- update on where they are with water and sewer*
- update on any affordable housing plans*
- what are plans for parks and parks/rec programming*

Commissioner Dasher asked if the County could ask about re-purposing the current Central Services Building when Chatham County Schools moves to Renaissance Drive. Mr. LaMontagne described a plan to come together when the schools vacate the building per the Memorandum of Understanding. Mr. LaMontagne will be prepared to bring up the MOU at the Joint meeting with the County and Town of Pittsboro Commissioners to get it on the Town's radar.

Mr. LaMontagne talked about the future water treatment plant and that it may be a partnership with Durham, Sanford and Chatham, not Durham, Pittsboro and Chatham.

The County will also be adding Pittsboro to its OpenGov permitting software.

Chair Howard asked when the board could have a joint meeting with all the municipalities and the schools. Ms. Ray will work with Chair Howard and Mr. LaMontagne to reach out to Superintendent Dr. Jackson and the new Siler City Manager after the Town's elections. Mr. LaMontagne suggested having a joint meeting with just Siler City staff to meet their new board and manager and do all the entities together at a later date. He does not think ORED is going to have any updated data this summer in relation to Siler City's population. Chair Howard thinks it is important for Siler City to hear from the Board of Education and school administration to know about opportunities with the schools and for town residents. She believes Goldston should be hearing that information as well. Everyone should be at the same meeting so the Board does not seem to be leaning one way more than the other.

Chair Howard asked how the BOC can be better ambassadors for the entire community, unincorporated and incorporated. Commissioner Hales and Commissioner Dasher think Siler City should be a separate meeting with just the town board and staff. Commissioner Hales thinks this should happen in the next six weeks or so. Mr. Thompson said the Siler City Board will have to appoint a commissioner to fill Chip Post's seat as he rises to the office of Mayor and that could take until August. Commissioner Dasher will reach out to the new town manager and ask him to talk with his board and come back to the County staff when they are ready. Perhaps a meeting with all the elected boards could happen in December.

Chair Howard suggested getting regularity around when to have these joint meetings so it is not so hard to coordinate.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Dasher, seconded by Commissioner Logan, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Commissioner Dasher, Commissioner Hales, Vice Chair Gomez Flores, Chair Howard and Commissioner Logan