



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

9:00 AM

Agriculture and Conference Center

BOARD ATTENDANCE

Present: 5 - Vice Chair Karen Howard, Chair Mike Dasher, Commissioner David Delaney, Commissioner Franklin Gomez Flores and Commissioner Katie Kenlan

SPECIAL GUEST PRESENT

NC House Democratic Leader Robert Reives, NC Senator Natalie Murdock (remotely), Central Carolina Community College President Lisa Champman, Central Carolina Community College Provost Mark Hall, Sheriff Mike Roberson, Deputy Sheriff Steve Maynor, Register of Deeds Lunday Riggsbee, Chatham County Schools Superintendent Dr. Anthony Jackson, Chatham County Board of Education Chair Gary Leonard, Chatham County Board of Education Vice-Chair Del Turner, Siler City Mayor Donald Matthews, Siler City Town Manager Hank Raper, Pittsboro Mayor Kyle Shipp, Pittsboro Town Manager Jonathan Franklin, Chatham County Economic Development President Michael Smith, and Chatham County Economic Development Board Member Chreatha Alston.

County Staff Present: Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson, Assistant County Manager Carolyn Miller, Director of the Department of Social Services Jennie Kristiansen, Finance Director Roy Lynch, Intergovernmental Relations Manager Lindsay Ray, Policy Analyst Brenton Hart, and Clerk to the Board Jenifer Johnson.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mike Dasher called the meeting to order at 9am.

[24-5116](#)

Discuss Legislative Goals

Attachments: [2024 Legislative Goals \(1\)](#)
[Town of Siler City Goals \(1\)](#)
[Pittsboro Leg Priorities v3](#)
[Chatham County BOE 2024 Legislative Priorities](#)
[CCCC Legislative Goals](#)
[2023-24-STHL-HCCBG-Fact-Sheet](#)
[2023-24-STHL-LEGISLATIVE-PRIORITIES](#)
[2023-24-STHL-Senior-Center-GP-Fact-Sheet](#)

Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson shared the goal of increasing state funding and support for the upkeep and development of accessible outdoor

recreational and natural areas including trails and open spaces.

Thompson shared the goal of updating the energy building codes for an increase in home weatherization funding for heat pollution and to help with the increased energy cost for residents. The request is to combat this with additional funding to the NC Department of Environmental Quality's Weatherization program so that more Chatham residents can take advantage of this helpful program and promote sustainability.

Thompson shared the goal of continued support of the Light Detection and Ranging data with North Carolina Emergency Management as a funding partner to acquire countywide Light Detection and Ranging data as part of a larger data acquisition project across twenty North Carolina counties. This project would better help Chatham County understand the topography, landscape, and prominent features of the land within its borders. The state's Light Detection and Ranging data working group is working to develop business plans for acquiring Light Detection and Ranging data regularly. As a funding partner with North Carolina Emergency Management, Chatham County has an interest in the technology, as Light Detection and Ranging data has many conservation focused benefits, most specifically the ability to track land cover and change over time. The request includes state allocate funding regularly to fund similar Light Detection and Ranging data acquisition projects, as it would be more advantageous to all parties involved in the North Carolina Emergency Management Light Detection and Ranging data program.

Thompson shared the goal of more affordable well sampling assistance program. Private well sampling is required by state law and is administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and local health departments. These programs are important, as groundwater is an essential resource that must be monitored and protected for its quality as a water supply for future use of North Carolina residents. This sampling is used to ensure the water is healthy to drink and indicate the health of the area's environment. Despite the importance of this sampling, water analysis cost can be a barrier to residents to regularly test their wells. In Chatham County there are various levels and types of tests ranging from \$70 dollars to \$150 dollars for existing well testing. For new wells, analysis is required by state law. However, because of the cost barrier, it is impractical for lower income residents to get their wells checked regularly, and impractical for local governments to assist residents with these recurring costs. The request includes a state facilitated program to help low-income residents unable to afford regular well analysis. This would help residents ensure their safety and health, along with helping local governments understand the health of the environments/underground aquifers.

Assistant County Manager Carolyn Miller shared the goal of expanding the good samaritan law by broaden the law to expand protection to others at the scene including the person overdosing and include other drugs not currently covered in the law such as fentanyl.

Director of Social Services Jennie Kristiansen shared the goal of strengthening behavioral health services to address the growing mental health crisis in North Carolina, particularly among youth.

Kristiansen shared the goal of expanding the kinship care payments for relatives caring for children in the custody of the Department of Social Services without having to meet the requirements of a foster care license.

Kristiansen shared the goal of additional funding for early learning childcare to facilitate

meeting the needs of families of young children.

Kristiansen shared the goal of increasing funding for adult protective services.

Kristiansen shared the goal of strengthening reentry services and increased funding to ensure that reentry residents are connected to the support they need to be successful.

Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson shared the goal of increased funding for digital equity programs to assist local governments in providing digital equity classes and incentivizing digital resources.

Miller shared the goal of legislation which seeks to reduce the minimum acreage requirements for the present use value program for both horticulture and agricultural producers so that small, niche, high-production farms can participate in present use value programs as well.

Miller shared the goal of increased state financial support of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension to help it meet needs and priorities identified in its recently released strategic plan, allowing Extension to be impactful in its mission to increase prosperity across North Carolina, including Chatham County, for the next several years within the fields of agriculture, natural resources, health/wellness, nutrition, and positive youth development (4-H). The increased financial support of North Carolina Cooperative Extension to meet shortfalls in operational costs (North Carolina State Extension has recurring expenses of \$4.7M alone), to ensure that critical programming continues in all one hundred county centers and can reduce the financial burden placed on many local county governments to support/fund this much needed community work.

Thompson shared the goal of removing rural broadband barriers that prevent counties from initiating and/or providing assistance for projects and services that would deliver broadband services to citizens, which includes: removing barriers that prevent counties from obtaining funds for broadband projects, removing restrictions that prevent providers from entering markets that are poorly covered by other providers, increasing state funding, grants, and loans for programs such as Growing Rural Economic with Access to Technology Grant program, Completing Access to Broadband program, and Stop-Gap Solutions program to ensure all that inadequately served and unserved rural areas are targeted for broadband service, and allow local governments, if willing, to lease county assets to broadband providers or to provide public broadband services themselves when necessary.

Thompson shared the goal of amending competing access to broadband program by reducing the county match requirement for counties receiving \$8 million or more in American Rescue Plan Act funding to facilitate increased participation in the Competing Access to Broadband Program.

Thompson shared the goal to support affordable housing efforts by including the creation of a state housing tax credit and the financial support for the implementation of innovative affordable workforce housing programs on the local level, offering support for innovation on a local level can help communities model successful programs for the affordable housing, which can be adopted and adapted by other communities struggling with similar issues and ensure that rural areas can benefit from the state housing tax credit, by establishing a funding source to support innovative initiatives through affordable workforce rental programming.

Thompson shared the goal of developing legislation that provides local government authority to facilitate the creation preservation, or support of affordable housing within development agreements by leveraging various funding sources and aligning private interest with public goals.

Thompson shared the goal of supporting bike and pedestrian infrastructure funding by repealing the bicycle-pedestrian funding limitation imposed by the NC Strategic Transportation Law and the restoration of the funding opportunities removed with the Strategic Transportation Law passing in 2013.

Miller shared the goal of increased funding for senior center general purpose funds by increasing Senior Center General Purpose funding by \$1,265,316 in recurring funds and distribute \$500,000 evenly amongst all 100 counties to help offset increased administrative costs, allocate the remaining \$765,316 for the Division of Aging and Adult Services certification program to increase the allocation each center receives.

Miller shared the goal of allocating an additional \$8M in recurring funds to align Home and Community Care Block Grant funding with the aging population growth, provide crucial services at lesser expense to the state, to help address the 10,000+ waiting list. These grants fund community-based services such as home-delivered meals, adult day care, transportation, senior centers, in-home aide, and many others, to help older adults remain in their homes as long as possible. These supports help to prevent more costly interventions, such as assisted living or nursing home facilities. These services are not provided through Medicaid or Medicare.

Town of Siler City Town Manager Hank Raper shared the following legislative goals that the Town of Siler City supports.

1. Modify the current usage of the state's economic development tier system for distribution of non-economic development funds or replace it with a system that recognizes the vast wealth disparities within counties. The recommendation includes the creation of an exception rule for municipalities significantly located within low-income census tracts, the adoption of new indicators of economic distress, the redesign of the tier system to operate as a census tract-based index updated every five years, and the release of multiple indices of economic distress.

2. Recognize and oppose additional legislation imposing state control over local governments. Over the years, substantial legislation has been introduced and passed that has eroded local control. The Chatham County Board of Commissioners previously submitted the following goals relating to local control to the NC Association of County Commissioners:

a. Support legislation allowing counties flexibility in holding remote board meetings, allowing contemporaneous, virtual public hearings, to expeditiously conduct county business during emergencies.

b. Oppose efforts to divert to the state fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams with unfunded mandates.

c. Seek legislation that will allow the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission an option to delegate portions of its authority under the Sedimentation and Pollution Control Act to local County programs for all private, State and Federal projects, at the request of the county.

d. Seek legislation to restore county authority over solid waste management and

oppose any further shift of authority away from local governments.

e. Support efforts to provide greater flexibility to local governments in expenditure of 911 surcharge funds and ensure adequate funding for next-gen technology.

f. Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdictions to all counties.

g. Support legislation that considers the voice of local voters in determining what their community looks like, its environmental projections and how it is managed.

h. Oppose legislation forcing unfunded mandates on localities in terms of increased staffing, inefficient processes, and software costs.

i. Preserve local public health authority to respond to public health threats. This authority allows local public health departments to respond to communicable diseases outbreaks, including COVID-19, among many other diseases.

Town of Pittsboro Mayor Kyle Shipp shared the following legislative goals that the Town of Pittsboro supports:

1. Placement of the Town of Pittsboro on the satellite annexation size waiver list of exempted jurisdictions from the ten percent noncontiguous cap under North Carolina General Statute §160A-58.1(b)(5).

2. Financial support for local governments and utility providers in responding to the treatment and removal of unregulated contaminants from drinking water.

Superintendent Dr. Anthony Jackson shared the legislative priorities for Chatham County Board of Education, which included:

1. Retaining TOP- Talent & Improving Working Conditions: Address the shortage of full-time teachers by providing competitive salaries, prioritizing experienced teachers, and investing in initiatives to enhance teacher retention.

2. School Safety: Enhance safety in schools by securing funding to support enhanced security features in our schools, to include upgrading cameras and other preventive measures, school resource officer (SRO) in every school and improving and increasing access to mental health support personnel.

3. Accountability System Reform: Improve the school grading formula to better reflect overall school quality and student performance, along with modifying the definition of low-performing schools.

4. Student-Centered Calendar: Allow more local authority for school districts to create calendars that align with community colleges and universities, improving opportunities for students.

5. Enhancing Employee Compensation and Benefits: Improve compensation and benefits for all school employees, with targeted increases for critical shortage areas and reforms to the principal pay plan.

6. Adequate & Equitable Resources: Ensure equitable distribution of resources,

focusing on key allotments for student learning and providing additional state support for children with disabilities.

7. Student Health & Well- Being: Strengthen student mental health support through improved staff ratios and permanent funding for the School Safety Grant Program.

8. Infrastructure and Funding Support for Population Growth: Address the impact of population growth resulting from recent business announcements (VinFast, Wolfspeed, Toyota, FedEx, Coca Cola) and housing expansion in Chatham Park and other proposed residential growth in the next 3-5 years. This will impact school enrollment growth, necessitating additional new school facilities, as well as maintenance of existing school facilities.

Central Carolina Community College President Dr. Lisa Campman presented the legislative goals for Central Carolina Community College which included:

1. Support for a \$40 million allocation to complete the Moore Center Request. The hard work and advocacy for the first \$10.8M investment was so appreciated and it was critical to our ability to begin Phase One of the renovation of the Main Building. We understand that securing the rest of the funding quickly is important to maintain the timeline necessary to meet the unprecedented workforce demands and to ensure that the cost of construction does not rise to unmanageable levels.

2. Support for special legislation for Central Carolina Community College's Multi Campus Center Funding. We are asking that the full time employees earned at Central Carolina Community College's Health Science Centers in Harnett (<3 miles) and Chatham Counties (< 9 miles) shall be included in the full time employees calculation for the Harnett Main and Chatham Main multi campus centers, respectively, as approved by the State Board of Community Colleges. The Health Sciences Centers are part of the operations of the Main Campuses and share programmatic and administrative support staff and services. Without such legislation, Central Carolina Community College will continue to be at risk in the future of losing \$1.2M in funding because of the unique nature of our service area.

3. Support for the NC Propel Community College Budget Formula. In this North Carolina Community College System -wide proposal, Central Carolina Community College would receive \$2.1M more based on the training we are already providing. This additional funding would have saved us from our current budget shortage. If we are able to add back cut positions in a strategic way, Central Carolina Community College will be stronger than ever and serve your communities in the impactful way.

The Board of Commissioners discussed the goals and House Minority Leader Reives stated that he would continue to try and move the goals forward for Chatham County and its residents.

The Board of Commissioners thanked all those that attended the legislative breakfast.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice Chair Karen Howard, seconded by Commissioner Katie Kenlan, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Vice Chair Howard, Chair Dasher, Commissioner Delaney, Commissioner Gomez Flores and Commissioner Kenlan