Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Monday, April 6, 2026 **6:00 PM** **Agriculture and Convention Center, 1192 US Hwy 64 West Business, Pittsboro, NC 27312**

Special Session - 6:00 PM - Agriculture and Convention Center

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Robertson called the special meeting to order at 6:00pm.

BOARD PRIORITIES

26-0153 Discuss the Fiscal Year 2027 budget

- Retreat Review
- Requested Fee Changes
- General Fund Revenues
- General Fund Continuation Budget Requests
- General Fund Expansion Budget Requests
- Request Summaries by Budget Functional Area
- Solid Waste Enterprise Fund
- Other Funds
- Wrap Up

County Manager Bryan Thompson reviewed the purpose of the meeting and the anticipated outcome. Thompson explained that the session was intended to update the Board on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget development process, revisit information presented during the January budget retreat, and provide Commissioners with an opportunity to ask questions and provide additional guidance. Thompson stated that staff hoped to determine whether both the Board and staff had sufficient clarity to continue moving forward with development of the proposed budget. Thompson noted that following presentation of the Manager's Recommended Budget, the Board would conduct public hearings and a budget work session before considering adoption of the final budget.

Assistant County Manager Darrell Butts revisited assumptions discussed during the January budget retreat and provided updated information regarding revenues and expenditures. Regarding property taxes, Butts reported that natural growth in the tax base was currently estimated at approximately 2.3 to 2.5 percent, which fell within the previously projected range of 2 to 4 percent. Butts explained that the growth reflected new construction, vehicle purchases, and other additions to the County's tax base.

With respect to sales taxes, Butts reported that statewide sales tax articles were *growing at approximately 3 to 4 percent, while locally collected articles were growing at approximately 1.5 to 2 percent. Butts stated that sales tax revenues represented approximately 15 percent of the County's General Fund revenues. In response to a question regarding the percentage of total County revenues derived from sales taxes, Butts confirmed that Chatham County's percentage was somewhat lower than the statewide county average.*

Butts reviewed information previously presented by Chatham County Schools. Butts explained that the Superintendent had not yet formally presented the Fiscal Year 2027 budget request to the Board of Education, but that staff anticipated the information shared during the January retreat would serve as the starting point for budget discussions. Butts reported that the estimated increase in local funding requested by the school system was approximately $2.99 million. Butts noted that ongoing discussions regarding charter school transfers could affect the final request. Butts also explained that several components of the projected request had been identified by the school system as required expenditures and that projected increases in retirement and health insurance costs were incorporated into the estimate.

Butts reviewed several known continuation costs facing the County. Butts reported that approximately $285,000 would be needed to fully fund positions added during Fiscal Year 2026 that had only been funded for a portion of the year. Butts further reported that approximately $183,000 was needed to continue positions currently funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars. In addition, staff estimated approximately $100,000 in ARPA-enabled expenditures through the middle of the next fiscal year. Butts also discussed the Early Childhood Action Plan contract, explaining that approximately $630,000 in General Fund support would be required to continue the program after accounting for available ARPA-enabled funding.

Assistant Budget Director Will Curvin reviewed General Fund continuation expenses by functional area. Curvin reported that Culture, Education and Recreation reflected the largest increase among the County's functional areas. This category includes Chatham County Schools, Central Carolina Community College, Parks and Recreation, Cooperative Extension, and library services.

Curvin reported that Public Safety represented the next largest increase. He explained that the primary driver was the County's Emergency Medical Services contract. An additional ambulance had been added during Fiscal Year 2026, and an additional responder was anticipated for Fiscal Year 2027. In response to a question regarding the Public Safety category, Curvin explained that the category includes the Sheriff's Office, diversion and advocacy programs, Emergency Operations, Communications, EMS, and Fire Inspections. Responding to a question concerning the Sheriff's Office's Flock camera contract, staff explained that the expenditure is funded through a separate forfeiture fund rather than the General Fund and would be discussed later in the presentation.

Curvin reported that Human Services revenues and expenditures reflected a mix of increases and decreases resulting from state and federal grant funding. Natural Resource Management increases were largely attributable to sustainability-related grants and planning contracted services. General Government reflected a relatively small increase, driven primarily by increased Register of Deeds revenues and the elimination of office rental expenses for Elections following its move into the new administration building. Assistant County Manager Darrell Butts noted that the Administration category included the non-departmental budget, which accounted for much of the reported increase because organization-wide expenditures are assigned to that area.

Curvin reported that total continuation expense increases were estimated at approximately $7.8 million. Curvin reviewed continuation budget increases by department. Chatham County Schools reflected the largest increase. Curvin explained that the County's appropriation to the school system also includes transfers to Capital Reserve for school capital projects and debt service payments related to previously financed projects.

Curvin reported that EMS increases primarily reflected contract costs, while the Non-Departmental budget increase largely consisted of transfers to the Capital Reserve Fund, Debt Reserve Fund, Housing Trust Fund, and Land Preservation Fund. He noted that increased Article 46 sales tax revenues resulted in corresponding transfers to these funds.

Curvin reported that Parks and Recreation increases included one-time expenditures. Sustainability expenditures included grant-funded energy audits through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, as well as $150,000 for development of a Climate Action Plan. Commissioners requested clarification regarding the Climate Action Plan funding. Curvin confirmed that the plan represented the largest single factor contributing to the increase in the Sustainability budget.

Curvin also reviewed increases within the County Manager's Office budget. He explained that a Veteran Services Officer position currently budgeted in Human Resources would be reassigned to the County Manager's Office because of supervisory responsibilities. In addition, $30,000 was requested to participate in the North Carolina Fellows program. Staff reported that Chatham County had been selected as a host location for a future fellow. Curvin reviewed departmental expansion requests and reported that departments had submitted 38 expansion requests totaling approximately $4 million.

Curvin explained that Human Services expansion requests appeared lower because several requested positions would be partially offset by federal revenues. Public Safety accounted for a significant share of expansion requests due to the inclusion of vehicles and equipment purchases. Curvin highlighted the highest-cost requested items, including additional sheriff's deputies, a rescue vehicle, a park crew supervisor, an HVAC maintenance technician, and an underwater remotely operated vehicle for Emergency Operations. Curvin noted that many of the highest-cost requests involved capital equipment and one-time purchases.

Curvin reviewed administrative revenues and expenditures. He reported that increased miscellaneous revenues were largely attributable to increased Ag Center rentals. Sales and service revenues reflected additional indirect cost reimbursements from the Solid Waste Fund.

Curvin reviewed expenditure changes and explained that transfers to Capital Reserve and Debt Reserve funds represented the largest increase. Employee benefit increases reflected retirement and health insurance cost increases. Curvin reported that lease subscription expenditures declined due to changes in information technology contracts. A multi-year software agreement was converted to an annual agreement, shifting costs from lease subscriptions into operating expenses. Butts explained that the County no longer realized a financial benefit from the multi-year arrangement and that the annual agreement would provide greater flexibility to seek alternative vendors if necessary.

Curvin reviewed budget changes within individual administrative departments. The Non-Departmental budget reflected the largest increase due to transfers to reserve *funds. The County Manager's Office increase reflected the reassignment of the Veteran Services Officer position and participation in the NC Fellows program. Human Resources reflected a corresponding decrease due to the position transfer.*

Information Technology expenditures included implementation of the County's transition from traditional office telephones to soft-phone technology throughout County departments.

Curvin noted that the Ag Center budget reflected a reduction due in part to declining debt service obligations as principal balances are paid down. At the request of Commissioners, staff provided an update on Ag Center operations and use. Staff reported that facility usage had exceeded original projections. Although it took time to achieve the anticipated utilization rates, external use now accounted for slightly more than half of facility reservations. Staff reported that reservation policies had been modified to allow bookings up to 18 months in advance and that demand continued to increase, particularly for weekends and business meetings. Staff further reported that revenues continued to exceed projections. Internal departments are encouraged to utilize alternative meeting spaces where possible in order to preserve the Ag Center's availability for revenue-generating activities.

Commissioners asked whether future County facilities could offset demand for internal meeting space. Staff responded that newer facilities are being designed with improved meeting accommodations and that the completion of school administrative facilities has already reduced internal reliance on the Ag Center.

Curvin reviewed expansion requests submitted by administrative departments. Facilities Maintenance requested an HVAC Maintenance Technician and two part-time custodial positions. Information Technology requested an Audio-Visual Support Technician to assist with technology systems at County facilities including the Ag Center, Historic Courthouse, and libraries.

The County Manager's Office requested funding to increase the Communications and Marketing Specialist position from three-quarter time to full time and requested media monitoring and crisis response software.

Human Resources requested funding for development of a bilingual pay program intended to compensate employees who regularly provide translation and bilingual services. Curvin reported that implementation would likely begin in January if approved. Human Resources also requested funding for consulting services to evaluate employee performance evaluations and pay-for-performance systems.

Butts reminded the Board that all expansion items remained requests only and that County management was still evaluating each proposal. Butts emphasized that no recommendations had yet been made and that staff was presenting all submitted requests to provide the Board with a complete understanding of departmental needs.

Curvin reviewed the Culture, Education, and Recreation functional area, which includes Chatham County Schools, Central Carolina Community College, Parks and Recreation, Cooperative Extension, and library services. Curvin reported that revenue increases were primarily attributable to additional state funding for library services, increased Parks and Recreation facility rental revenues, and a small increase in Cooperative Extension program revenues. On the expenditure side, allocation and program increases reflected funding requests from Chatham County Schools and Central Carolina Community College. Transfers to Capital Reserve for school projects increased by approximately $535,000. Debt service expenditures declined as principal balances continue to be reduced. Curvin reviewed departmental *budget changes. Chatham County Schools reflected the largest increase. Parks and Recreation increases reflected equipment purchases and additional Article 46 revenues transferred to Capital Reserve for future projects. Central Carolina Community College requested modest increases for salary and benefit adjustments as well as capital expenditures. Library Services and Cooperative Extension requested relatively small operating budget increases.*

Commissioners observed that departments appeared to be exercising restraint in their requests. Staff agreed and noted that departments understood the Board's previously stated goal of avoiding a tax increase, resulting in more tempered budget requests.

Curvin reviewed proposed expansion requests within this functional area. Parks and Recreation requested a Park Crew Supervisor position, including a vehicle, and a Park Technician position for Parker's Ridge Park. Staff noted that the technician position would likely be funded only if the park becomes operational during the fiscal year.

Library Services requested one-time funding for furniture replacement and audio-visual upgrades at the Perry Harrison Holmes Meeting Room.

Curvin reviewed the General Government functional area, which includes Elections, Tax Administration, Register of Deeds, and the Governing Board. Curvin reported that excise tax revenues were projected to increase by approximately $200,000. Sales and service revenues were expected to increase due to tax collection fees, while Register of Deeds revenues were projected to increase by approximately $40,000. Curvin explained that expenditure increases were driven primarily by software subscriptions within Tax Administration and Elections. Curvin also noted that Elections no longer incurs office rental expenses following its relocation to County-owned facilities. Curvin reviewed department-level budget changes. Tax Administration reflected increases associated with software subscriptions, benefits, and vehicle purchases. Governing Board expenditures included benefit adjustments and travel-related costs. Register of Deeds revenues continued to exceed expenditures, making it the only County department that generates more revenue than its operating costs.

Commissioners asked about reduced temporary staffing expenditures in Elections despite an upcoming election cycle. Staff explained that actual expenditures in recent years have consistently fallen below budgeted amounts due to staffing challenges and vacancy issues. Adjustments were also made to election worker compensation and training.

Curvin reviewed expansion requests in the General Government functional area. Requested positions included a Deputy Clerk to the Board, an Elections Program Coordinator to assist with absentee ballot administration, a Land Records Specialist in Tax Administration, and a part-time Elections Assistant position.

Curvin reviewed the Human Services functional area, which includes Social Services, Public Health, Aging Services, Chatham Transit, Chatham Trades, and nonprofit allocations. Curvin reported that grant-related revenues, including intergovernmental and miscellaneous revenues, were projected to decrease modestly. Expenditure increases reflected nonprofit allocations, Partnership for Children funding, employee benefits, and salary adjustments. Curvin reported that approximately $300,000 was included to continue support for the Partnership for Children contract, replacing funding previously available through ARPA-enabled resources. Health Department expenditures decreased due in part to the completion of a one-time appropriation for *the Adult Day Center in the previous fiscal year. Curvin reported that nonprofit allocations reflected the largest increase, including Partnership for Children funding and increased nonprofit support. Chatham Transit requested approximately $160,000 in additional funding, while Aging Services requested approximately $134,000.*

Commissioners asked whether the Chatham Transit increase related to the microtransit initiative. Staff explained that the request included components related to transit technology enhancements and additional state and federal transit grant opportunities. Staff noted that increased grant revenues would require additional local matching funds.

Curvin reviewed the competitive nonprofit funding process. Curvin reported that 15 returning organizations submitted applications. Organizations that received approximately $397,000 in awards during Fiscal Year 2026 had submitted requests totaling approximately $781,000 for Fiscal Year 2027. The funding pool available for competitive allocations was budgeted at $575,000.

Commissioners discussed a nonprofit pharmacy organization that failed to submit an application before the deadline. Butts explained that the Board could provide direction regarding funding outside of the formal competitive process should it determine that an essential community service would otherwise be jeopardized. Commissioners expressed support for exploring options to provide funding for the pharmacy while avoiding actions that could undermine the integrity of the competitive application process. Staff agreed to evaluate options and return with recommendations during later budget discussions.

The Board also discussed conflict-of-interest requirements related to nonprofit funding. Clerk to the Board Jenifer Johnson reminded Commissioners that annual disclosure forms would be provided and that separate votes could be conducted where required by state law.

Curvin further reported that six new nonprofit applicants or programs had submitted requests totaling approximately $185,000. Combined with returning applicants, requested funding exceeded available funds by roughly $400,000. Staff also reviewed organizations receiving non-competitive allocations, including the Chatham Arts Council and El Futuro. Butts explained that certain allocations are funded outside the competitive process due to statutory funding mechanisms, specialized services provided, or historical Board direction. Commissioners discussed whether certain nonprofit organizations providing critical services should be considered for funding outside the annual competitive process. Butts explained that the Board could choose either to modify funding recommendations each year through the budget process or establish separate recurring appropriations for specific organizations if it deemed such services essential. Staff indicated that additional information regarding requested increases from the Chatham Arts Council would be provided before presentation of the Manager's Recommended Budget.

Assistant Budget Director Will Curvin reviewed expansion requests within the Human Services functional area. Curvin reported that the Public Health Department requested funding for a Deputy Health Director position. Curvin explained that the position had been discussed during the previous budget cycle but was deferred in favor of prioritizing funding for the Adult Day Center. The department was requesting the position again for Fiscal Year 2027. Curvin reported that the Department of Social Services requested a Family Services Continuous Quality Improvement position to assist with implementation of Path NC, the State's new child welfare information system, and to support staff onboarding and related technology transitions. Curvin reported that Aging Services requested a part-time Nutrition Site Coordinator *position. Curvin explained that renovations at the Siler City Center for Active Living could allow meal preparation to be brought in-house. The proposed position would manage operations at the Pittsboro kitchen location, allowing the Kitchen Manager to remain assigned full-time to the Siler City facility.*

Curvin reviewed the Natural Resource Management functional area, which includes Permitting and Inspections, Economic Development, the Chatham County Visitors Bureau (CVB), Watershed Protection, Planning, Sustainability, and Soil and Water Conservation. Curvin reported that intergovernmental revenues were projected to increase by approximately $250,000, primarily due to a federal sustainability grant for energy audits. Additional revenues were expected from proposed fee adjustments, building inspection fees, and occupancy tax revenues. On the expenditure side, Curvin reported that allocation and program increases were largely attributable to the federal sustainability grant and the proposed $150,000 Climate Action Plan. Operating expenditures were also projected to increase due to Planning Department contracted services, including work associated with Move Chatham, the Conservation Working Group, conservation dashboard development, and Node and Hub Planning initiatives. Curvin noted that salary and benefit costs reflected normal increases, while debt service and capital expenditures declined as one-time costs from Fiscal Year 2026 were removed.

Curvin reviewed budget changes by department. Planning reflected increases associated with ongoing planning initiatives and Unified Development Ordinance implementation efforts. Sustainability reflected grant-funded expenditures. Soil and Water Conservation showed only a minimal increase, while the Visitors Bureau was projected to generate revenues exceeding expenditures due to anticipated occupancy tax growth.

Curvin reported that Economic Development increases reflected incentive-related expenditures and a small increase requested by the Economic Development Corporation for staff salary and benefit adjustments. Permitting and Inspections and Watershed Protection budgets reflected the effects of proposed fee changes, resulting in additional revenues and lower net County support.

Commissioners asked whether the Planning budget reflected the department's total budget and requested clarification regarding the 11 percent increase. Curvin explained that major cost drivers included Unified Development Ordinance implementation and revision activities, Move Chatham planning efforts, Node and Hub Planning initiatives, conservation planning projects, and related contracted services. Butts explained that current Unified Development Ordinance implementation efforts are intended to advance revision and implementation work currently underway and could position the County for future planning activities should additional legislative authority become available. He noted that substantial implementation work is anticipated to continue into Fiscal Year 2028.

Curvin reviewed expansion requests within the Natural Resource Management functional area. Planning requested software to host and manage the updated Unified Development Ordinance. Watershed Protection requested a Stormwater Specialist position focused on stormwater control measures.

The Economic Development Corporation requested funding for a part-time Office Manager position. Building Inspections requested a part-time Permit Technician position, and the Visitors Bureau requested funding for temporary staffing support.

Curvin reviewed the Public Safety functional area, which includes Emergency Medical Services, the Sheriff's Office and its divisions, Emergency Operations, Court

Diversion and Advocacy Programs, and Fire Inspections. Curvin reported that revenue increases were primarily related to fire inspection fees, while intergovernmental revenues were projected to decline due to the expiration of a grant supporting Emergency Management activities. Curvin stated that operating expense increases were largely driven by the Emergency Medical Services contract and other departmental operating costs. Salary and benefit increases reflected the full-year cost of positions added during the current fiscal year, including positions and vehicles added within the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Operations.

Curvin noted that debt service and capital expenditures were projected to decline due to reduced debt obligations and fewer one-time expenditures than were included in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

Curvin reviewed budget changes by department. Emergency Medical Services reflected the largest increase, followed by the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Operations. Court Diversion and Advocacy Programs reflected increases associated with the expiration of the Drug Treatment Court grant. Fire Inspections reflected increases supported by inspection fee revenues. Curvin reviewed proposed expansion requests within Public Safety. Emergency Operations requested funding for an underwater remotely operated vehicle.

Court Diversion and Advocacy Programs requested funding for a Peer Support Specialist, a Visitation Supervisor, and a Driver's License Restoration Clinic. Curvin explained that the restoration clinic would contract with legal services to assist individuals seeking reinstatement of revoked driver's licenses, thereby improving access to employment, transportation, and community services.

Curvin also reviewed expansion requests submitted by the Sheriff's Office. Requested items included six deputy positions, a rescue vehicle, an Information Security Manager, an Evidence Manager, a contracted part-time veterinary surgeon for Animal Resources, a Veterinary Technician position, an Administrative II position, a drone, a camera system, automated external defibrillators, and CPR equipment.

Curvin reviewed a preliminary summary of projected Fiscal Year 2027 revenues and expenditures. Curvin reported that continuation requests totaled approximately $7.8 million and expansion requests totaled approximately $4 million, resulting in approximately $11.7 million in requested expenditure increases. Expected revenue growth was estimated at approximately $5.5 million, leaving a preliminary budget gap of approximately $6 million. Curvin noted that these figures did not include any general employee salary adjustment and reflected only continuation costs and requested expansions. Curvin emphasized that staff continued to evaluate requests and that the projected gap would likely change as the budget development process progressed. He also noted that one-time expenditures could potentially be funded through appropriated fund balance consistent with County financial policies. Butts stated that staff was actively reviewing departmental requests and exploring options to reduce the projected budget gap prior to presentation of the Manager's Recommended Budget.

Curvin reviewed the Solid Waste and Recycling Fund, noting that no fee changes or expansion requests had been submitted. Curvin reported that revenues were projected to increase approximately 2.4 percent while overall expenditures were expected to decrease slightly. One-time expenditures included vehicle and equipment purchases, improvements at collection centers, maintenance work at existing facilities, increased transfer station tipping fees, and increased household hazardous waste disposal costs. Curvin explained that some costs would be offset by reduced landfill maintenance expenditures and increased fee revenues. Curvin *reported that staff expected to appropriate approximately $586,000 of available fund balance to support one-time expenditures and capital needs within the Solid Waste Fund. Staff also anticipated using less fund balance than originally budgeted during the current fiscal year.*

Assistant County Manager Darrell Butts reviewed preliminary information regarding fire district budgets. Butts explained that fire districts receive revenue projections from the County before finalizing their budget requests and therefore submit budget information later in the process. Fire district budget requests were scheduled to be submitted by the end of the week. Butts reviewed projected Fiscal Year 2027 revenues assuming current fire district tax rates remain unchanged. In response to a question from a Commissioner, Butts explained that North Carolina law limits fire district tax rates to 15 cents per $100 valuation and reported that the County's highest fire district rate was currently 13.75 cents. Butts noted that final revenue projections could vary depending on each district's requested tax rate and service needs. He also discussed the Parkwood Fire District, which receives service through an agreement with the City of Durham and is subject to annual contractual adjustments tied to the Consumer Price Index.

Butts reviewed the County's Special Revenue Funds. He explained that several funds showed little or no change because activity levels remained limited and appropriations are maintained only as needed. Butts discussed the Coal Ash Fund and reported that expenditures for Parker's Ridge Park would initially rely on ARPA-enabled funding, with coal ash funding being utilized later in the project schedule. As a result, no budget increase was anticipated for the upcoming fiscal year. Butts reported that the Emergency Telephone System Fund reflected increased revenues due to allocations received from the State 911 Board. The Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and Capital Improvements Reserve Fund continued to represent the County's largest special revenue funds. Butts explained that increasing contributions were necessary to support future pay-as-you-go capital projects identified in the County's long-range Capital Improvements Program.

Butts reported that the Internal Health Fund was projected to increase approximately $400,000, or roughly 3.7 percent, to address employee health insurance costs.

Butts also reviewed proposed increases to the Housing Trust Fund and Land Preservation Fund. He explained that funding would be increased to support continuation of the Emergency Housing Assistance Program after available ARPA-enabled funding is exhausted. Additional allocations to Land Preservation were tied to anticipated growth in Article 46 revenues.

Butts reported that the Library Foundation Fund would be eliminated following recent Board action dissolving the foundation.

Butts reviewed the Sheriff Property Seizure Fund and reported an anticipated increase of approximately $30,000. Chair Robertson asked questions regarding expenditures from the fund, including the Flock camera system contract. Robertson expressed interest in discussing technologies that collect and share public data and suggested the Board consider broader discussions regarding data privacy, public transparency, and emerging technologies. Butts explained that the Sheriff Property Seizure Fund is a legally authorized special revenue fund used for law enforcement purposes. He further noted that appropriations from the fund remain subject to Board approval as part of the annual budget adoption process. Commissioners discussed whether future conversations regarding data collection technologies, contract approvals, and public information security should occur. Staff noted that any revisions to contract approval authority or signature requirements would require careful review *because of the large number of technology and service contracts executed annually. County Manager Bryan Thompson advised that staff could prepare information to support an initial Board discussion regarding technology contracts, data-sharing practices, emerging technologies, and related policy considerations. The Board expressed general interest in scheduling a future discussion regarding these topics.*

Butts reviewed the remaining budget development schedule. The Manager's Recommended Budget would be presented on May 4. Public hearings were scheduled for May 18 and May 19, with the May 19 hearing taking place in Siler City. Budget work sessions were scheduled for May 21, May 22, and May 27. Butts noted that additional work sessions could be utilized if needed. The Board must adopt a final budget no later than June 30. Butts reiterated that the information presented reflected departmental requests rather than final recommendations and noted that significant analysis and refinement remained underway. Outstanding information included final insurance projections and continued evaluation of departmental requests.

Commissioners discussed long-term revenue strategies, facility utilization, economic development, and capital funding priorities. In response to questions about generating additional non-tax revenues, staff described ongoing efforts to maximize utilization of County facilities, including the Ag Center. Staff reported that weekend rentals remain strong and that partnerships with local hotels and tourism organizations continue to promote use of County facilities for conferences and events.

Commissioners also discussed the Capital Improvements Program and whether delaying projects could provide budget relief. Staff explained that project delays remain an option in some circumstances but noted that postponing projects can increase future costs due to inflation and construction cost escalation. Butts reported that the County's strong financial position could provide additional flexibility through future transfers to reserve funds and that staff would evaluate those options during budget development. County Manager Bryan Thompson emphasized that the projected budget gap represented a preliminary estimate that would be reduced through continued review of requests, evaluation of one-time expenditures, and development of management recommendations.

Commissioners discussed what it means to maintain current service levels while addressing community needs and continued population growth. Several Commissioners expressed a desire to minimize any potential tax increase while preserving essential services and supporting programs that address community needs.

Additional discussion occurred regarding long-term economic development strategies and implementation of goals identified through prior planning efforts. Commissioners noted differing perspectives regarding the relationship between economic development, commercial growth, land use planning, and County policy priorities.

Commissioners discussed whether an additional budget meeting should be scheduled before presentation of the Manager's Recommended Budget. Several Commissioners expressed interest in receiving additional budget scenarios and more refined financial information, while others preferred to continue using the traditional budget work session process following presentation of the recommended budget. After discussion, the Board generally agreed to proceed with the established budget calendar and use the scheduled May work sessions to make any desired modifications to the Manager's Recommended Budget. Staff agreed to continue refining budget projections and recommendations before returning to the Board on May 4.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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