



# Chatham County, NC

## Meeting Minutes

### Board of Commissioners

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Wednesday, December 9, 2020

9:00 AM

Agriculture & Conference Center

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#### CIP Work Session

**Present:** 5 - Chair Mike Dasher, Vice Chair Diana Hales, Commissioner Jim Crawford, Commissioner Franklin Gomez Flores and Commissioner Karen Howard

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

*Chair Mike Dasher called the meeting to order.*

#### **BOARD PRIORITIES**

*The Board of Commissioners review of board priorities and the Capital Improvement Plan process. The FY 2022-2028 Recommended Capital Improvement Plan was presented on November 2, made available to the Board of Commissioners and the public on November 6, and public input was received on November 16. The goal of the work session was to review and discuss the plan in preparation for adoption of a revised plan on December 21.*

*Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson provided a high-level overview of the day's agenda, including a review of the Capital Improvement Plan process, funding sources and strategies, operating effects on the budget, completed projects, school projects, general fund and enterprise projects, and future projects.*

*Thompson reminded the Board of Commissioner that the Capital Improvement Plan is a plan, not a budget, and that contributions to the debt reserve will continue. No new debt-funded projects were recommended.*

*Thompson stated that the updates for Chatham County Schools included a budget increase of \$3,857,945 for the Central Services Building and a shift in funding for mobile classrooms. County projects included three new initiatives: Detention Center Cell Blocks, Athletic Field Lights, and the County Maintenance & Repair program. The EOC expansion received a budget increase of \$3,873,651, and two new future projects were introduced: the Sheriff Boat Storage Facility and the Northeast Substation.*

*Budget Director Darrell Butts reviewed the project statuses, with categories including completed, substantially complete, recommended, approved contracts let (full or partial), and approved with no contracts signed. Funding sources and strategy were discussed, emphasizing that large projects would be funded with debt—school debt repaid from impact fees, lottery proceeds, and the debt reserve, and other debt repaid from 9.2 cents of the tax rate dedicated to the debt reserve. Smaller projects would be*

*funded through pay-go capital reserves, and grants would be leveraged whenever possible. Factors outside county control could impact construction costs, potentially affecting both the debt model and capital reserve. Parks and Recreation fees must be used within the districts where they were collected, with the Western District collecting \$548, the Eastern District \$510,226, and Briar Chapel \$261,132 in FY 2020. Water system development fees totaled \$1,094,328 in FY 2020.*

*Thompson shared the operating effect of the Capital Improvement Plan, noting the impacts on debt service and the county's contribution to the capital reserve.*

*Butts reviewed the completed projects included the school roof replacements, technology upgrades such as body cameras, and increased data storage capacity.*

*The Board of Commissioners discussed the Specific school projects in detail. The new Central Services Building received a budget increase of \$3,857,945 due to the inclusion of warehouse space in the final design and updated construction estimates. The design for the 38,000 square-foot one-story facility, including an 8,000 square-foot warehouse, is underway on Renaissance Drive, with borrowing scheduled for July 2021 and estimated completion in December 2022. A bid alternate for a solar panel system will be considered. Funding for mobile classrooms will shift by one year with no spending with the anticipated project completion is in FY 2026. Chatham Grove Elementary School, which opened in 2020, is substantially complete with some final spending occurring this year. Locker room renovations at Jordan-Matthews, Chatham Central, Moncure, JS Waters, and Northwood High School are underway, with Northwood's design in progress and construction to begin in June 2021. Modular classrooms will address overcrowding at Siler City Elementary, Northwood High, and other schools, with no spending in FY 2022 and completion in FY 2026. Track resurfacing at county high schools is underway, with Northwood completed except for the high jump/pole vault runway, and Jordan-Matthews delayed due to COVID-19. Seaforth High School, a new 209,000 square-foot facility in the northeast quadrant, is under construction and on schedule to open in August 2021. Finally, the wastewater system replacement at Silk Hope Elementary School is being evaluated for connection to the system and has been moved to FY 2024.*

*Thompson provided updates on the Central Carolina Business Campus project, noting progress on the traffic signal, which is now fully operational, and ongoing work on the traffic circle. A land issue remains at the corner where a driveway connection is planned, but the property owner is willing to grant right-of-way if driveway access approval from North Carolina Department of Transportation can be secured. Staff are in discussions with North Carolina Department of Transportation and believe the agency may be receptive. The proposed plan includes connecting Murphy Road to Progress Boulevard, improving access to multiple properties. The connector road would link the private Murphy Road with the public Progress Boulevard, with the goal of eventual North Carolina Department of Transportation maintenance, pending bridge work, pavement restoration, and intersection settlement. A consultant has been hired to coordinate required repairs. North Carolina Department of Transportation is unlikely to assume maintenance in the coming fiscal year due to needed repairs, though snow and ice removal will continue under current agreements. Certain structures, such as segmented block retaining walls, may require stabilization work. Original covenants for the campus restricted building types and uses, but staff are working on revisions to allow more flexibility, including affordable housing. Commissioners discussed constructing a speculative shell building with basic utilities to attract businesses, addressing the shortage of ready-to-use industrial space. Traffic safety concerns were noted at the Murphy Road/Progress Boulevard intersection, and staff will request North*

*Carolina Department of Transportation review traffic incident data. Action items include continuing negotiations with North Carolina Department of Transportation, finalizing repair scope for Progress Boulevard, revising covenants, considering a spec building, and requesting traffic review from North Carolina Department of Transportation.*

*The Board of Commissioners discussed the Detention Center generator project, which has been moved to FY 2024 with no other changes. Staff also provided an update on the new Health Science Building at Central Carolina Community College, a 40,000-square-foot facility that reached substantial completion in the prior fiscal year and opened for programming in January. A photo of the completed building was mentioned for future presentation. The Pittsboro Campus Roof Replacement project remains scheduled for FY 2023, with commissioners suggesting the addition of solar panels. Phase 1 of the Central Carolina Community College trails project, an ADA-compliant walking trail has been completed, while the Phase 2 hiking trail connecting the Agriculture Center Building 42 and the campus is planned. The trail passes through wooded areas with floodplains, wetlands, and stream crossings, presenting construction challenges. COVID-19 has delayed coordination, but the project remains on track. Bridge access issues require significant maintenance or new construction, with additional costs and responsibilities. Action items include confirming the feasibility of solar panels and continuing coordination on Phase 2 trail planning.*

*Butts provided an update on the Animal Shelter expansion and renovation, noting construction is on schedule and expected to be completed in May–June of the current fiscal year. Phase 1 involves constructing a new building, after which operations will move from the existing facility. Phase 2 includes renovation of the existing building. The expansion will add two full-time Animal Care Technician positions, and a grand opening may be held if public health conditions allow.*

*The Board of Commissioners reviewed a proposed future project to complete the final cell block at the Detention Center. Originally built with two unfinished cell blocks, the project addresses potential population growth, although Chatham County currently has the lowest per-capita detainee rate in the state. The project is listed as a Year 7 capital project, with fiscal preparations beginning now to avoid large-scale immediate funding. The Board of Commissioners emphasized the need to evaluate alternatives to incarceration, including diversion programs, treatment, and bail reform. Input from the Judicial Task Force, judges, public defenders, and the County's equity group will guide decisions. Grant funding for a Family Drug Treatment Court initiative aims to reduce jail population pressure, potentially delaying or eliminating the need for the new cell block. Action items include continuing fiscal planning, coordinating with the Judicial Task Force and equity group, and monitoring outcomes of the treatment court program.*

*Butts shared updates on county building projects included the Emergency Operations Center expansion, with a budget increase of \$3,873,651 due to the inclusion of 12,000 square feet of warehouse space. Borrowing is scheduled for July 2021. The warehouse is designed to meet Emergency Operations needs and would provide additional storage for other departments, though it is not suitable for school warehouse operations. Design considerations include large open ceilings, potential mezzanine areas, and flexibility for future uses. Solar panels are not feasible, but solar hot water heating will be incorporated. Action items include confirming warehouse specifications, incorporating solar hot water, and evaluating future flexibility for mezzanine or second-floor storage.*

*Butts reviewed the new EMS base on US 15-501 near Fearington Village and Briar*

*Chapel remains on track for completion in FY 2022 despite site development challenges. County staff are coordinating with developers regarding wastewater easements and potential cross-bound trade lighting.*

*Butts stated that the County Capital Maintenance & Replacement Program consolidates ongoing capital maintenance needs, including technology replacements, facilities maintenance, and radio replacement. AV system replacements are planned for several county facilities, with server replacement phased in future years. Radio replacement includes \$2.4 million in Year 7 for upgraded equipment, with ongoing replacement based on usage and lifespan. Staff intend to discuss integrating some school facility repairs into a similar program.*

*Butts shared the Emergency communications updates included replacement of the current radio system with a P25 system. Tower construction is in progress, with concrete footings expected soon at Moncure and Goldston sites. The system go-live in late spring or early summer, weather permitting. Towers are being constructed to allow co-location for improved cell coverage, with potential partnerships with internet service providers under discussion.*

*Butts stated that the Parks projects included athletic field lighting at Northeast District Park to extend usable hours and reduce wear on Briar Chapel fields. Briar Chapel Park improvements use remaining PARTF grant funds to construct a dog park and additional parking, with lighting installation funded by recreation fees. Commissioners discussed equity considerations related to recreation fee distribution between districts and potential policy adjustments. The County has joined the Triangle Trails Initiative to connect regional trails and enhance tourism and recreation.*

*Butts reviewed the Technology updates included replacement of county tax software, delayed due to the county cyber incident but planned for implementation within the current fiscal year. The software will improve functionality for staff and the public. Voting equipment replacement is substantially complete, with final spending occurring in the current fiscal year and equipment expected to last 10–15 years. Staff will confirm lifespan for future planning.*

*The Chatham County Board of Commissioners reviewed Enterprise Fund projects as part of the Capital Improvement Plan work session. Staff provided an update on the Haywood Water Main Replacement project, which involves replacing the existing four-inch water main under the railroad tracks on Haywood Road with a six-inch main. The project is part of the Water Fund and Utility Fund. Bid documents are currently being prepared, with construction scheduled to begin in late Winter 2020 and estimated completion by Spring 2021, contingent upon weather conditions, railroad approvals, and other construction factors. Railroad permission is required before construction can proceed, and the timeline may be adjusted based on state requirements or unforeseen conditions.*

*County Manager Dan LaMontagne provided an update on the planning for the Western Intake and Water Treatment Plant on the west side of Jordan Lake. The project budget increased to accommodate the approval of a firm to oversee the initial planning phases under a three-year contract approved by the Triangle Water Supply Partnership, with HDR awarded the contract. The project remains in the planning phase, with feasibility and initial design studies ongoing. Initial demand projections have been refined, showing higher short-term demand than previously expected, though long-term demand is lower and further out. The project is a long-term infrastructure initiative focused on future water demand, system redundancy, and regional*

coordination. Partners involved include Orange County, Durham, and Pittsboro, and discussions are ongoing with other allies regarding shared system connections. Coordination with Sanford may provide additional water supply to areas such as Asbury and potentially South Pittsboro, though flow capacity is limited. Potential future connections to nearby are being evaluated but are considered largely separate projects due to logistical and infrastructure differences.

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners discussed future projects as part of the Capital Improvement Plan work session. Staff presented the potential future installation of a second generator at the County Detention Center to provide emergency backup power for office spaces and training rooms. The existing generator currently powers cell blocks, monitoring equipment, kitchen operations, and some cold-water showers, but does not supply administrative areas, hot water outside the kitchen, or electricity for staff working outside locked areas. Battery-powered lights are currently relied upon in administrative areas during outages. The Board of Commissioners discussed solar or battery storage options for the second generator, noting concerns regarding battery lifespan and cost comparisons with traditional generators. Staff will explore the feasibility, lifespan, and reliability of solar and battery options while considering maintaining traditional backup for critical administrative areas.

The Board of Commissioners reviewed plans for a Career and Technical Education Building at the Chatham Main Campus to meet workforce needs in skilled trades. The project remains in the planning stage, with current operations conducted in temporary or repurposed spaces due to COVID-related limitations. Staff will continue monitoring enrollment and program demand to guide the timing and scope of construction and evaluate space utilization in the interim.

Discussion continued on the CA&CC Phase II Conference Center expansion, which would add a multi-purpose event arena, outdoor classroom space, farmers market venue, office space, demonstration plots, and storage buildings. Funding for a feasibility study is included in the current operating budget, and an RFP for the study is scheduled for FY2022, with results to guide Phase II design and implementation. The County Complex Master Plan was presented to address long-term space needs for county buildings at the Government Annex campus. The plan will assess phased development and potential relocation of county offices, while coordinating with the Town of Pittsboro to support downtown redevelopment. Considerations include wastewater capacity, potential alternative uses for vacant parcels, and collaboration with partners such as UNC. Feasibility study results will inform future Capital Improvement Plan planning and debt modeling, with an initial horizon of seven years.

The Board of Commissioners discussed a new Sheriff's Office facility to optimize operations and accommodate staff, as well as a future Northeast Library branch. Both projects remain in the planning stage with no changes from the prior year. A future Sheriff's Boat Storage Facility near Jordan Lake was proposed to provide rapid response capabilities, as current storage in North Chatham may eventually be needed for additional apparatus. Staff will monitor available storage and explore leasing or construction options.

The Board of Commissioners discussed a possible future Northeast Chatham County Sheriff's Substation was presented to serve the growing population and law enforcement demand. Staff are evaluating lease versus new construction options, including potential sites in the Newland Development or near existing county properties. The substation would supplement the main Sheriff's Office while accommodating administrative functions locally.

*A future Sheriff's Office warehouse was discussed as a potential 7,000-square-foot facility for equipment storage, with consideration for shared space with the new Emergency Operations Center. Staff will monitor Emergency Operation Center operations to assess the necessity of a standalone warehouse.*

*Butts stated that Parks planning includes new facilities, trails, and renovations across all regions, including a new park in Montgomery. Staff will continue implementing development and renovation projects and monitor progress across regional parks. Athletic field lighting upgrades at CCS are planned to meet NCHSAA requirements and allow hosting of playoff games, with grant funding prioritized for improvements. HVAC and lighting repairs in Chatham County Schools will focus on high-priority systems, with ongoing monitoring to address future needs.*

*Future school construction projects include a new elementary school at Chatham Park to accommodate population growth, additional new schools or capacity expansions, paving repairs, and gymnasium replacements at Bennett, Silk Hope, and Bonlee Schools. Staff will continue to monitor enrollment, population trends, and facility needs to guide planning and budgeting, coordinating with the school board for design and joint-use opportunities where feasible.*

*Finally, the Board of Commissioners reviewed the long-standing future project to expand county broadband. The initiative has been delayed by statutory limitations and a recent cyber incident but remains a priority once normal IT operations resume. Staff will continue planning and monitoring opportunities for broadband expansion, with no immediate funding identified.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Karen Howard, seconded by Vice Chair Diana Hales, that the meeting was adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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