



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

9:00 AM Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center

Capital Improvement Plan Work Session

CALL TO ORDER

Due to the lack of power at the Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center, the Board of Commissioners elected to move the meeting to the Emergency Operations Center.

A motion was made by Commissioner David Delaney, seconded by Vice Chair Katie Kenlan, to relocate the meeting to the Emergency Operations Center due to a power outage at the Conference Center. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

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BOARD PRIORITIES

[25-0588](#)

Review and discuss the FY2027-2033 Recommended Capital Improvement Plan

Attachments: [Recommended FY2027-2033 CIP](#)

Staff presented the FY 2027–2033 Recommended Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), providing updates on project status, funding sources, and anticipated timelines across multiple categories, including infrastructure, facilities, parks, and technology. The CIP was discussed as a planning document intended to guide future capital investments and priorities.

Water Infrastructure Project

Staff reported that the project has experienced delays due to complications with the initial bid process, redesign efforts, and coordination with the transition to Tri-River Utilities. The project is approaching the construction phase and will be rebid following progress on a related water tower project. Construction is expected to proceed quickly once initiated due to the limited project scope.

Siler City Center for Active Living Renovations

Staff reported that renovations remain on schedule and are primarily funded through transfers from the Council on Aging. The project scope increased by approximately two hundred thousand dollars to enclose the front outdoor area and provide additional office space. Commissioners discussed long-term space needs and noted that both the Siler City and Pittsboro senior centers will likely require expanded capacity, with the eastern

center already experiencing space limitations.

Business Campus Partnership

Commissioners inquired about a previously discussed joint facility involving Piedmont Health, the health department, and social services. Staff indicated that discussions have not progressed in recent years due to organizational changes and impacts from COVID-19. The County retains ownership of the site and remains open to future partnership opportunities.

Senior Center Planning

Staff noted that current projections indicate the western senior center may require expansion by approximately 2040, while the eastern center is already experiencing capacity constraints. Staff emphasized that growth patterns may accelerate these timelines.

Goldston Public Library Expansion

Staff reported that the project is underway and on schedule. Construction began in September and is expected to be completed within one year. Minor budget adjustments have occurred but are not expected to affect the timeline.

Capital Maintenance and Replacement Plan (CMRP)

Staff reviewed the County's CMRP, which allocates approximately five hundred thousand dollars annually to replace equipment, technology, and facilities based on lifecycle planning. This approach is intended to reduce the likelihood of large, unexpected expenditures. A significant future expense includes the replacement of communications radios.

Technology Projects

Staff reported that courtroom technology upgrades in courtrooms 2A and 3B are underway and intended to improve reliability and functionality.

Staff also provided an update on the replacement of analog camera systems at the Justice Center and Historic Courthouse with digital systems. Exterior cameras will be prioritized at the Historic Courthouse, with interior coverage considered as an alternate.

Briar Chapel Park Improvements

Staff reported ongoing improvements funded by recreation exaction fees, with remaining funds reserved for future enhancements.

District Park Dam Projects

Staff provided updates on two dam projects. The Northeast District Park dam requires full reconstruction due to structural deficiencies, and water levels are currently being managed to mitigate risk. The Northwest District Park dam, identified as a state-monitored earthen dam, will undergo rehabilitation and require ongoing maintenance.

Parker's Ridge Park

Staff reported that the 138-acre Parker's Ridge Park project in Moncure remains on schedule with no changes to scope. The project is funded through ARPA funds, coal ash settlement funds, and Article 46 funding.

Parks Funding and Municipal Collaboration

Commissioners discussed opportunities to collaborate with municipalities on park improvements, such as field lighting. Staff noted that the County provides funding

based on a per capita model of approximately five dollars per resident. These funds may be used for capital improvements and may be accumulated across multiple years. The Board expressed support for maintaining flexibility in how municipalities use these funds.

Emergency Generator Project

Staff reported completion of a backup generator at the detention center. The system provides full facility backup power, supports emergency operations, and allows for continued operations during outages.

Detention Center Expansion

Staff discussed plans to build out existing shell space to increase capacity. The project remains contingent upon updated state jail standards, which may impact design and costs.

Sheriff's Office Facilities Planning

Staff provided updates on the Sheriff's Office administrative facility and the proposed Northeast substation. The administrative building remains in planning, and site selection for the substation is ongoing after a previous site proved infeasible. Commissioners discussed potential uses of substations and emphasized the need for long-term facility planning in the northeastern portion of the County.

Library Planning

Staff discussed future library needs driven by population growth. Options include constructing a new library in a high-growth area and expanding access through book lockers and kiosks. Participation in the NC Cardinal consortium was also discussed as a way to expand access to materials.

Land and Property Management Strategy

Staff outlined efforts to improve management of County-owned properties, including development of a comprehensive inventory, categorization of properties, and identification of opportunities for partnerships or disposition. Staff emphasized the importance of proactive land acquisition to support affordable housing, conservation, and public facility needs.

The Board of Commissioners recessed for lunch following completion of morning agenda items.

Land Acquisition and Open Space Discussion (Continued)

Following the recess, staff continued discussion regarding land acquisition strategies. Staff presented the concept of limited delegation of authority to allow staff to act on time-sensitive acquisition opportunities, such as trail easements. Staff emphasized that any delegated authority would remain within Board-defined parameters.

Commissioners expressed interest in exploring this option, particularly for conservation efforts, and noted that authority could be structured narrowly or broadly based on Board preference.

Staff also referenced a prior acquisition effort near Bynum that did not move forward due to concerns from the property owner regarding potential future use. Staff emphasized the importance of clearly communicating possible uses of property during acquisition discussions.

Natural Areas and Trails Planning

Commissioners discussed the importance of clearly distinguishing between developed parks and natural or passive recreation areas. Several Commissioners expressed interest in preserving land for low-impact uses such as hiking and nature observation.

Staff indicated that updates to the CIP language would be made to better reflect distinctions between:

- Developed parks with amenities;
- Trail systems; and
- Natural areas or preserves intended for passive recreation.

Commissioners also inquired about geographic distribution of projects, noting concentration in eastern Chatham. Staff explained that project distribution reflects available funding, particularly recreation exaction fees, which have been significantly higher in eastern portions of the County. Staff noted that projects in western Chatham may increase as development occurs.

CIP Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Staff indicated that only minor revisions to the CIP are expected based on Board feedback. A revised document will be presented at a future meeting for consideration.

Staff reiterated that the CIP is a planning tool rather than a budget and that projects remain subject to change based on Board priorities and future funding decisions.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

[25-0596](#)

Receive a presentation on General Obligation Bonds

Attachments: [GO Bond Presentation](#)
[Draft GO Referendum Schedule - November 2026 - Sample \(using regular meetings\)](#)

General Obligation Bonds (GO Bonds) Presentation

Staff provided an overview of general obligation bonds (GO bonds) and their role as a potential financing tool for capital projects. Staff explained that GO bonds require voter approval through a referendum and are backed by the full faith and credit of the County, allowing for the potential increase of property taxes to repay the debt. Due to this security, GO bonds typically offer the lowest available interest rates.

Staff contrasted GO bonds with the County's typical use of limited obligation bonds, which do not require voter approval and are secured by specific assets. While limited obligation bonds generally carry slightly higher interest rates, staff noted that the difference is minimal given the County's strong credit rating.

Risks and Limitations of GO Bonds

Staff outlined several key considerations associated with GO bonds. If a referendum fails, the County may be restricted from pursuing alternative borrowing for the same or similar project types for one to two years. Staff emphasized the importance of clearly defining projects and ensuring readiness prior to placing a referendum on the ballot.

Strategic Considerations for Referendum

Staff and Commissioners discussed factors that contribute to successful bond referenda, including geographic distribution of benefits, clear definition of projects or project categories, and public understanding of the value of proposed investments.

Commissioners discussed the need to balance specificity and flexibility in drafting

ballot questions, noting that overly broad questions may limit the County's ability to pursue similar projects if a referendum fails.

Appropriate Use of GO Bonds

Staff advised that GO bonds are generally best suited for discretionary projects rather than mandated services.

Commissioners discussed potential uses such as parks, conservation, and affordable housing, while recognizing that mandated services, particularly certain school-related projects, may not be appropriate for referendum due to statutory obligations.

Process Overview and Timeline

Staff outlined the process for pursuing a GO bond referendum, noting that the Board must first identify and define projects and priorities, followed by development of cost estimates and timelines. Staff emphasized that referenda must be placed on general election ballots and require advance planning, with preliminary work needing to begin several months prior to the election year.

The Board of Commissioners expressed interest in continuing to explore GO bonds, particularly as a potential funding mechanism for affordable housing, land conservation, and parks and recreation projects.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of careful consideration of tax implications, especially following recent property revaluation and tax adjustments.

Commissioners requested additional information, including examples from other counties, potential funding scenarios, and comparative analysis of financing options. Staff indicated that further coordination with planning, housing, and other departments would be needed to identify viable project scopes.

Commissioners continued discussion on the potential use of GO bonds to support affordable housing initiatives. Commissioners considered whether a future bond should apply to unincorporated areas only or include municipalities. Staff indicated that both approaches could be viable, noting that affordable housing demand is typically highest in areas with access to services, employment, and transportation.

Staff highlighted the seven-year expenditure window associated with GO bonds and emphasized the need to have projects sufficiently developed to ensure timely implementation. Commissioners expressed concern about pursuing a referendum without a defined implementation plan, noting the risk of securing funding without the ability to deploy it effectively.

Commissioners discussed the importance of understanding how other jurisdictions have approached bond-funded projects, including the level of planning completed prior to voter approval and the degree to which projects were defined in advance. Commissioners expressed interest in benchmarking Chatham County's readiness against comparable counties.

Commissioners emphasized the need to balance thorough planning with timing considerations to avoid missing potential opportunities to pursue a referendum.

Commissioners acknowledged the need to clearly communicate both project benefits and repayment strategies to the public. Staff reiterated that GO bonds represent a long-term financial obligation supported through the County's operating revenues and must be integrated into long-term financial planning.

Staff also clarified that ballot language must include state-required estimates provided by the North Carolina Local Government Commission, which may differ from local projections due to standardized assumptions.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of understanding:

- The anticipated impact on property taxes;
- Constraints on future budget decisions; and
- Tradeoffs associated with prioritizing certain investments.

Commissioners discussed a range of potential approaches to addressing affordable housing needs, including leveraging County-owned land, public-private partnerships, collaboration with educational institutions, and potential direct involvement in development.

Staff noted that some of these strategies are already under consideration but emphasized the need to fully understand legal, operational, and financial implications before pursuing new approaches.

Commissioners recommended that the Board first receive structured input from subject-matter experts before advancing specific strategies. Commissioners agreed that additional guidance from external experts, including the School of Government, would help inform decision-making and ensure alignment with statutory limitations and best practices.

The Board of Commissioners indicated consensus to continue exploring general obligation bonds as a potential financing tool and to gather additional information to inform future decisions. Commissioners emphasized the need for comprehensive planning, clear project definition, and thorough evaluation of financial impacts prior to pursuing any referendum.

This Agenda Item was received and filed.

[25-0597](#)

Receive a presentation on Budget Retreat preparation

Attachments: [Budget Retreat Discussion](#)
[2027 Agenda - DRAFT](#)

The Board discussed how to structure future conversations related to affordable housing and associated policy considerations. Commissioners expressed interest in continuing these discussions but generally agreed that a more comprehensive and focused exploration of affordable housing would be better suited for a dedicated work session or future retreat rather than being fully incorporated into the upcoming budget retreat.

Commissioners discussed the value of incorporating input from subject-matter experts, advisory boards, planning staff, and external partners to help inform policy direction. It was noted that a structured, collaborative approach, similar to the County's recent climate change retreat, would provide a beneficial format for in-depth discussion and strategic planning.

Commissioners expressed interest in:

- Conducting structured educational sessions on affordable housing tools and strategies;
 - Incorporating perspectives from advisory boards, County staff, and outside experts;
- and

- Creating opportunities for collaborative discussion of innovative approaches and policy options following foundational presentations.

Budget Retreat Planning Discussion

Staff presented a preliminary overview of the January budget retreat, including:

- A recap of feedback and action items from the prior year's retreat;
- Updates on progress made toward previously identified Board priorities; and
- A draft agenda outlining standard presentations and potential new topics for discussion.

Staff noted that several recurring annual topics will be included in the retreat agenda, while a limited number of additional time slots are available for new topics based on Board priorities and interests.

The Board reached general consensus to:

- Prioritize key topics for the January budget retreat while recognizing time constraints;
- Defer more in-depth affordable housing discussions to a future dedicated session or retreat; and
- Continue exploring opportunities to incorporate expert guidance and collaborative formats into future planning efforts.

Staff indicated that Board feedback would be incorporated into refinement of the retreat agenda and scheduling of future work sessions.

The discussion concluded with agreement on a focused approach to the January budget retreat, with additional subject areas, particularly affordable housing, identified for more comprehensive treatment in future meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Franklin Gomez Flores, seconded by Vice Chair Katie Kenlan, that the was adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:

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