



# Chatham County, NC

## Meeting Minutes

### Board of Commissioners

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Thursday, June 9, 2022

6:00 PM

Agriculture and Conference Center

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#### Joint meeting of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners and the Town of Pittsboro Board of Commissioners

#### 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM

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

#### [22-4333](#)

Relocation Plans of County Government Facilities to Renaissance Drive and Pittsboro Town Hall plans

*Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne gave an update to the Town of Pittsboro Board of Commissioners about Chatham County's budget which includes a feasibility study for Chatham County staff to move from the Annex building in downtown Pittsboro to Renaissance Drive.*

*Chair Karen Howard suggested that having offices in a centralized location could be an asset and offer opportunities to collaborate with the Town of Pittsboro.*

*Mr. LaMontagne asked about the status of the Town Hall plans and thoughts on moving staff around to accommodate staff needs.*

*Commissioner Shipp asked about the plans for the other facilities, like the Chatham County Sheriff's department.*

*Mr. LaMontagne suggested that the Dunlap, Old Agriculture, and Annex buildings be returned to the Town and if cleared the space could be utilized for other opportunities like farmers' markets and emphasized that it is a great location in downtown Pittsboro.*

*Commissioner Dasher asked how much land on Renaissance Drive the County owned. Mr. LaMontagne said 250 acres and a spot at the end of the circle that is four acres. Chair Howard mentioned that the Renaissance Drive location is proximate to Pittsboro.*

*Commissioner Bonitz mentioned that when there is public land it can be leveraged for affordable housing. Chair Howard asked if the Dunlap, Annex, and Old Agriculture buildings in downtown Pittsboro are the best location for Affordable Housing. She mentioned the potential for public transit and the possibility of mixed use of the space (commercial and retail). Commissioner Bonitz liked the idea and mentioned that affordable housing could be a percentage of the mixed-use space.*

*Mayor Pro Tem Baldwin asked if there is an additional fire department planned and emphasized the future growth of residential and commercial buildings on U.S. Highway 64.*

*Mr. LaMontagne said he did not know what Pittsboro's plans are for a future fire department. He mentioned a package wastewater plant is in the plan and asked about the plans for the Town Hall.*

*Mr. Kennedy explained the Town's efforts to get approval from the USDA for over a year for the Town Hall. He said there are no lending options in the private market for this project. Mr. Kennedy said the Town has struggled and have continually accrued expenses in the process of applying multiple times. The Town has fatigued the banks and he thought the USDA was their best bet, but the project is on ice.*

*Chair Howard asked if the criteria had changed. Mr. Kennedy explained that it is because Chatham Park is such an abnormal project. Chair Howard asked if the Town was looking into alternatives.*

*Mr. Kennedy mentioned Chatham Mills and other opportunities and that retrofitting, building materials and contractors are hurdles.*

*Commissioner Shipp explained that the communication about timing is critical as the County does the feasibility study and the Town decides what to do with its police, fire, and other departments. Commissioner Shipp predicts more development to the west of Pittsboro and a desire to balance that.*

*Chair Howard mentioned an intergovernmental position that could aid in keeping the lines of communication open between the Town and the County.*

*Mr. Kennedy shared that because the municipality overlaps as the County seat it results in more demand for open communication.*

*Chair Howard emphasized that even if there is no intergovernmental position, the Town and County need to think this way.*

*Commissioner Bonitz thanked the County for their patience as the Town navigates through the Town Hall process.*

## **6:30 PM - 7:00 PM**

### [22-4334](#)

#### Status of MOU for Central Services Building

*Mr. LaMontagne estimates the new Chatham County Schools central services building will be completed in December 2022 and the school administration will be vacating their current location. He shared the County staffs' thoughts and discussion with the University of North Carolina's School of Government about a potential Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), developing a finance initiative, and getting graduate students to assist with these plans for transitioning staff to new County facilities. In the future if the Board of Education allows the County to receive the vacant building, the County can request developers meet certain requirements and County needs. Mr. LaMontagne speculated that the County could move its development services from the Dunlap building and the Town could lease this property for offices for staff. It could be a prime spot for affordable housing and retail space. Commissioner Bonitz asked how many years would be expected if the transfer were to take place. Mr. LaMontagne responded until the County facilities on Renaissance Drive are finished.*

*Mr. LaMontagne said it is difficult to phase floors, but the County can phase buildings.*

*When the County does its next borrowing it will have a discussion within its next Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The next County borrowing may be triggered by the need for a new school. He said the County is waiting to hear from the Schools this summer about where and when the next school will be needed and factoring in VinFast locating in Moncure. The County will not plan on using Town Hall for office space as the County is aware that the Town will have space needs too. Commissioner Hales asked if the Dunlap building would be sufficient for Pittsboro's needs. Mr. Kennedy stated that if the Town were to utilize the County's buildings (Dunlap, Annex, and Old Agriculture) specifications would determine which Town staff would utilize the office space. Mr. Kennedy explained that the Town has utilized a drive thru during COVID for some of its services.*

*Mr. Kennedy mentioned having all the planners together in one facility from the County and Town.*

*Commissioner Dasher asked if it is too early to develop a master plan for all of these space needs.*

*Mr. LaMontagne talked with Chatham County Policy Analyst Stephanie Watkins-Cruz and the proximity to the University of North Carolina campus is great. It would be a great Fall semester project for a student and Mr. Kennedy sent an application over yesterday. Mr. Kennedy confirmed that he sent prompts to attract a student to come to Pittsboro. A formal announcement was released Tuesday that Mr. Kennedy forwarded to Mr. LaMontagne. One of the intentions of a MOU is how to make this transition of County buildings to the Town feasible, especially for affordable housing to be located in the County buildings. Chair Howard asked if the Town's development needs would be more of the focus for the Master of Public Administration (MPA) student and less of what the student thought. Mr. Kennedy explained the Town's needs are targeted but multiple choice and academia is not as practical as local government.*

*Commissioner Bonitz asked how to navigate the transfer of Chatham County School property.*

## **7:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **[22-4335](#)**

#### **Water and Wastewater**

*Mr. Kennedy stated that on May 23, 2022, the Pittsboro Board of Commissioners voted to merge infrastructure with the City of Sanford. The Pittsboro Board adopted a Resolution stating their intent. The Town's CIP this year is \$28.5 million/year. The Pittsboro Board held a meeting with Sanford representatives to discuss what to implement. This will be a two-year process to incorporate because it is a full merger with infrastructure in the ground. The current estimate is 2 million gallons/day on sewer and VinFast is estimated to be 1.9million/day. The City of Sanford has capacity for both. Commissioner Logan asked what the Town would like to see as a result of this merger with the City of Sanford. Mr. Kennedy explained they would like to see greater efficiencies and the ability to spread the cost over time. Commissioner Shipp emphasized the direct effect would be on the residents when rates would continue to rise but still not high enough to cover costs from a maintenance perspective.*

*Commissioner Logan asked how would this impact Aqua's service. Mr. Kennedy explained that depends on if Sanford wants to run that plant on the Haw River. The plant in the City of Sanford is a 30million gallon/day plant and when Sanford wants to*

expand that plant is unknown currently.

Commissioner Shipp shared that the Town is eighteen months away from running out of water with projected growth.

Commissioner Hales asked how wastewater factors in. Mr. Kennedy described privately owned wastewater plants versus municipality-owned wastewater plants and the philosophical approach of Sanford running this. Mr. Kennedy projected the project to be on line July 20, 2022.

(7:17 PM) Chair Howard called for a brief recess.

(7:30 PM) The meeting reconvened.

### **7:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

#### **[22-4336](#)**

#### **Parks and Recreation**

Mr. LaMontagne asked what the Town's plans and thoughts are about parks and recreation. Mr. Kennedy projected that the Town will double its parks' acreage and will add positions like a Recreation Coordinator. Mr. Kennedy would like to see cooking classes for single moms and seniors. The Town is several years from running a T-ball program although it is in the scope of vision. Mr. Kennedy projected Town maintenance contracts to include greenways that are well lit and promoting clean parks. Mr. Kennedy projected that as revenues come in he can see a lot of the investment going into this area.

Mr. LaMontagne said the County would love to collaborate with the Town. Mr. Kennedy compared a regional park versus two pocket parks. Chair Howard asked if there is any coordination amongst the municipalities and the County. Mr. Kennedy confirmed that the Haw River Trail has been a collaboration with County staff including Chatham County Recreation Program Supervisor Mallory Peterson. Mr. Kennedy emphasized the Town wants to be a good partner.

Vice Chair Gomez Flores asked if Town staff are traveling to different areas of the County to involve more residents of the County. Commissioner Bonitz asked whether Vice Chair Gomez Flores meant land-use or programming. Vice Chair Gomez Flores confirmed he meant programming. Commissioner Shipp mentioned that transportation can be an issue for residents.

Mr. LaMontagne highlighted that facilities are needed for these programs.

Commissioner Hales asked about planning for the Haw River Trail. Mr. Kennedy described the Haw River Trail Initiative and the Hillsboro Street Project that will be a multiuse trail that will run up to Powell Place subdivision and spur off to other trails.

Commissioner Hales asked about the North Carolina Department of Transportation project and that she thought they were widening the road. Mr. Kennedy confirmed the multiuse trail is a part of that project.

Commissioner Bonitz shared the Town has forty acres on Pittsboro Goldston Road that they are working on to include pickleball, walking trail, picnic tables, and more. He is excited about the energy.

Mr. LaMontagne shared a position for Chatham County Trail Coordinator will start January 2023. He asked about the NCDOT time frame. Mr. Kennedy said the project will be completed in 2027 and the right-of-way should be completed in Spring 2023.

Commissioner Hales stated that sewer is affecting all of the Town's development. Mr. Kennedy agreed. She asked about Chatham Park's plans for sewer. Mr. Kennedy reassured Commissioner Hales that Chatham Park will have their own septic system and Pittsboro's sewer system.

## **8:00 PM - 8:30 PM**

[22-4337](#)

### Economic Development Coordination

Mr. LaMontagne stated the Town suggested a discussion on Economic Development. Mr. Kennedy projected that VinFast impacts all 100 of the North Carolina counties. Toyota will be the first domino to come and there will be more behind that. Chair Howard reiterated that the intergovernmental communication will be important. Knowledge of the Town's vision will aid in how the County can support that vision. Chair Howard suspects that there are constraints on the Town's vision with water. She shared the County Commissioners feel they are on the sidelines and find out about things when it is brought to their attention by others.

Mr. Kennedy discussed that Central Carolina Community College will be involved with hiring, and training, and also working on the foundational layers for when there is an abundance of residents so that we are ready for the demand. Chair Howard emphasized the importance of educating the County's workforce and the importance of jobs that pay a great living wage. Both of these are currently lacking in the County. Mr. LaMontagne communicated that there are things that can be done with zoning for those businesses and emphasized Chatham Park is a big selling point for businesses. Mr. LaMontagne stated vibrant towns attract industries to the area. He said that the County's next goal is for Siler City to land an industry.

Chair Howard expressed that the pandemic showed the resiliency of locally owned businesses and good quality childcare was mostly nonexistent in Chatham County. She said there is potential to do things differently. Chair Howard warned that we will not succeed with VinFast if we do not provide good quality childcare for our future workforce. She asked how the County and Town can incentivize corporations to invest in things like good quality childcare.

Commissioner Dasher expressed that the elephant in the room is what Pittsboro looks like after Chatham Park is the only place one can build a house and open a business. It is hard for him to wrap his head around and he is concerned.

Chair Howard explained that VinFast does not tax our dollar in the same way. She stated that Briar Chapel subdivision had commercial use and that balanced out. Mr. Kennedy explained Mosaic is part of that mixed use design by containing village centers and other commercial projects. He explained infrastructure is needed like sewer, water, and roads. The Town has started from scratch with a lot of that work.

Commissioner Dasher explained that when one landowner like Chatham Park controls what businesses that open it is concerning and there is no sewer available anywhere else. Mr. Kennedy emphasized a gallon of sewer is more precious than lithium and gold and the merger with Sanford infrastructure will help with the Town's sewer problem.

*Mr. LaMontagne explained rooftops are needed to attract the businesses and Root Cellar and other businesses took a big chance opening their businesses in Chatham Park. Mr. Kennedy agreed that incentive packages will help if one has a couple of lean years.*

*Commissioner Shipp explained that more Town and County collaboration will make it is easier for developers versus developers attending two separate Board meetings to talk to the Town and County Commissioners directly. Vice Chair Gomez Flores emphasized the importance of establishing relationships and connections. Mr. Kennedy stated that Town residents are County residents from a revenue standpoint.*

*Commissioner Bonitz explained that with two mega sites there will need to be transportation between them. He said that the widening of NC Highway 87 was dropped by NCDOT. Chair Howard asked who the Town's representative in communication with NCDOT. Mayor Pro Tem Baldwin said the representative was Pittsboro Commissioner James Vose. Commissioner Bonitz suggested to put a pin in it and get it back on the list. Commissioner Shipp said the project was dropped last month. Commissioner Vose said communication he received from NCDOT was a statement and the Town was told the money was not there. Mayor Perry explained when it was first added the Town knew it was going to be expensive and the budget is not available. Chair Howard asked if it is known why it was pushed back. Commissioner Vose explained it had been pushed back but the funding is not there. Mayor Perry explained the Town has become competition with Chatham Park. Commissioner Hales stated that Commissioner Dasher is the representative on the Triangle Area Rural Planning Organization (TARPO). Chair Howard suggested reaching out to our local Legislative delegation.*

*Commissioner Bonitz suggested to circle back and mentioned some items that did not make it on the agenda. He presented the idea of an electric shuttle that could run from Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center to other facilities in the Town like the Chatham Beverage District and Mosaic development and it could be a demonstration of Chatham County's brand toward alternative energy sources like solar and clean energy. He asked what leverage the County Commissioners have over Chatham Transit. Chair Howard shared that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) went to Florida to look at their shuttles and light rail and the essentialness of coordination. She does not know Chatham Transit's long-term plans. She stated that the County is looking into how much of their fleet they can electrify. Chair Howard expressed that she supports alternative energy sources but wanted to reach out to Chatham Park so they do not think decisions are made in a room without them. Mr. LaMontagne stated he did not know that the ridership is there now, but it is something to plan for and if it is not Chatham Transit then maybe something else.*

*Mr. LaMontagne added that another item not on the Agenda for today's meeting was that the County has found it easier to coordinate smaller meetings because it is difficult with scheduling. Commissioner Shipp felt that meeting together once a year is important. Chair Howard agreed that there needed to be a better schedule for meeting in the future.*

*Commissioner Bonitz expressed concerns about the efforts to eliminate herbicide use in Pittsboro. He shared that the Town has an integrated pest management system in place and asked if there was interest in a joint statement with the County about herbicide use along roadways, especially by Duke Energy and NCDOT. He said the herbicide use has impacts on the watershed and perhaps the Town can share their*

*policy with the County and together present a unified approach. Mayor Perry agreed that it is a health issue to have exposure to the herbicides and she thinks about that when she walks her dog. Commissioner Hales asked if the Town has an ordinance for herbicide use in Pittsboro. Commissioner Bonitz confirmed the Town does have such an ordinance. Mr. LaMontagne explained that the County does not maintain these roadway spaces and the County does not have widespread use of herbicides. He expressed an ordinance on herbicide use could impact agriculture. Commissioner Bonitz said the herbicide use ordinance is internal for the Town. Mr. LaMontagne asked if it was an ordinance or a policy the Town had. Chair Howard said it is a statement. Commissioner Bonitz said that Duke Energy uses defoliants. Mr. LaMontagne said the Town can suggest that Duke Energy not impact specific areas and believed that Duke Energy would respect that. Commissioner Hales suggested the Town share their information with County and maybe the Town could create a resolution.*