

APPROVED 2/17/26

**MINUTES  
ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
RETREAT  
January 16, 2026  
9:00 a.m.**

The Orange County Board of Commissioners met for a retreat on Friday, January 16, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at Whitted Human Services Center in Hillsborough, NC.

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Chair Jean Hamilton, Vice-Chair Amy Fowler, and Commissioners Jamezetta Bedford, Marilyn Carter, Sally Greene, Earl McKee, and Phyllis Portie-Ascott

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** None.

**COUNTY ATTORNEYS PRESENT:** John Roberts

**COUNTY STAFF PRESENT:** County Manager Travis Myren, Deputy County Manager Caitlin Fenhagen, and Clerk to the Board Laura Jensen. (All other staff members will be identified appropriately below)

Chair Hamilton called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. All commissioners were present, except Commissioner Bedford.

**1. Welcome and Opening Comments**

Chair Hamilton welcomed everyone to the meeting. The commissioners and staff in attendance introduced themselves.

*Commissioner Bedford arrived at 9:01 a.m.*

**2. Collaborative Board Activity**

The commissioners put together a puzzle as a team. The puzzle was created from a photograph by Kayla Pendergraft called "Short Kiss of Winter." Kayla Pendergraft's photo was the 2020 Adult 2nd Place Winner in the Nature of Orange photography contest.

**3. Orange County Strategic Plan Performance Measures**

Kelly Guadalupe, Strategic Planning Manager, made the following presentation:

Slide #1



## Slide #2

## Background

- February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024: Countywide Strategic Plan adopted
- 5 year plan, FY 2024-25 through FY 2028-29
- The County Manager's Office prepares regular updates to the Board for each Strategic Goal including milestones and challenges
- The first year progress update is available on the county website



## Slide #3

## Goals

- Environmental Protection and Climate Action
- Healthy Community
- Housing for All
- Multi-modal Transportation
- Public Education/Learning Community
- Diverse and Vibrant Economy

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## Slide #4

## Early Successes



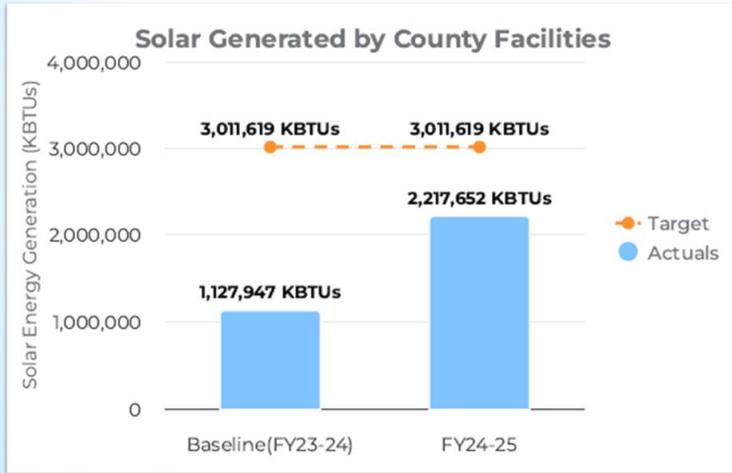
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Slide #5

## Environmental Protection and Climate Action

3. Increase the annual solar energy generated at County facilities by 167% by June 30, 2029.



In year 1, solar energy generated at County facilities increased by 97%.

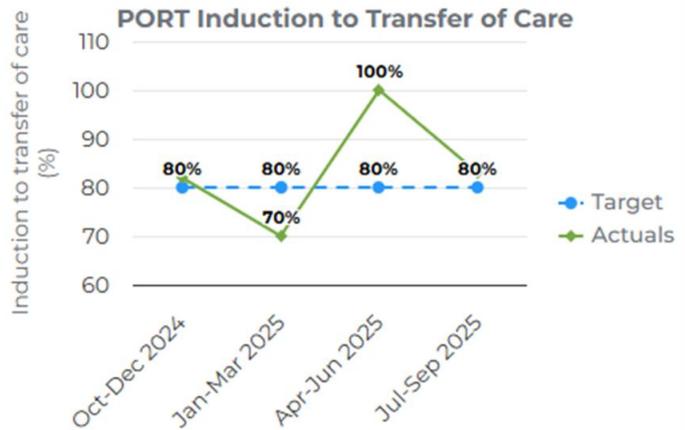


Slide #6

## Healthy Community

1.b. Implement Post Overdose Response Team (PORT): Establish and maintain an 80% induction to transfer of care and completion of medication-assisted treatment for opioid-use disorders.

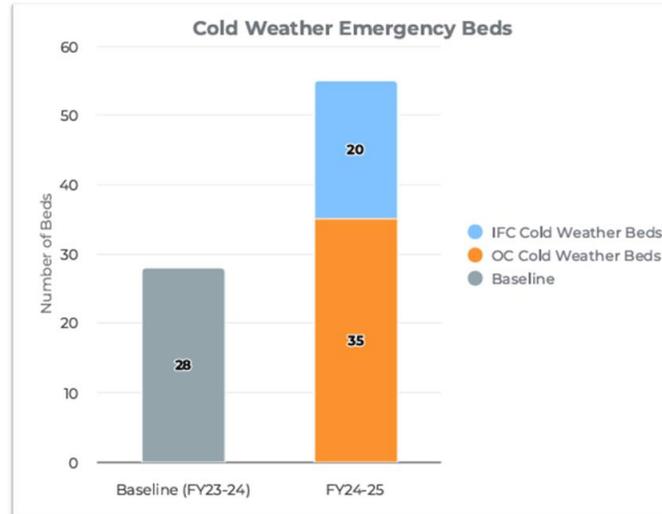
On average, 84% of patients the team treated began the initial phase of starting medication and received a warm hand-off to ongoing treatment.



Slide #7

## Housing for All

2. Increase the number of immediately accessible cold weather emergency beds available by 25% by 2026.



In the last year, the number of beds increased from the baseline of 28 to a total of 55 beds available between Orange County and the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service.

ORANGE COUNTY  
NORTH CAROLINA

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Commissioner Bedford asked if the current cold weather shelter budget is strained.

Travis Myren said currently the budget looks ok, but they will continue to monitor.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if the increase in beds includes the cold weather shelter in northern Orange County.

Kelly Guadalupe said the data in slide #7 was for the previous winter season.

Commissioner Carter asked for an update for current cold weather cot usage.

Kelly Guadalupe said there are 50 beds available in the current season.

Commissioner Carter asked about the usage of those beds.

Travis Myren said the average is 30 people in Chapel Hill. He said the beds in northern Orange County were not used at all and the program was discontinued.

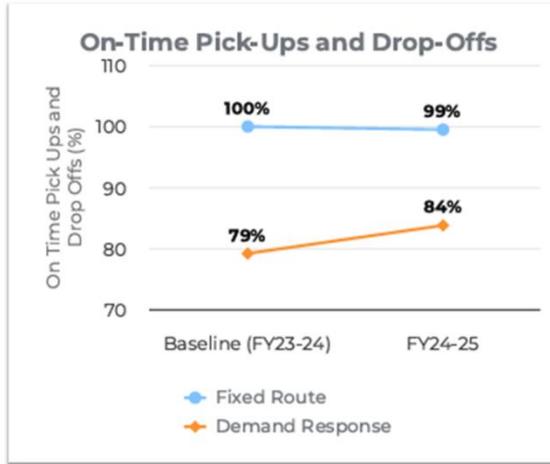
Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if North Orange beds were open for about two weeks.

Travis Myren said yes.

Slide #8

## Multi-modal Transportation

5. Increase by 1 percentage point each year the percentage of on-time pick-ups and drop-offs on fixed route, demand response, and mobility on-demand transportation services.



On-time rates are close to 100% for both Fixed Toute and Demand Response Services.



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Kelly Guadalupe said for Mobility on Demand, wait times fell from 22 minutes in FY 2023-24 to 19 minutes in FY 2024-25. She said the target is 15 minutes.

Commissioner Carter asked what the difference is for fixed routes versus demand response.

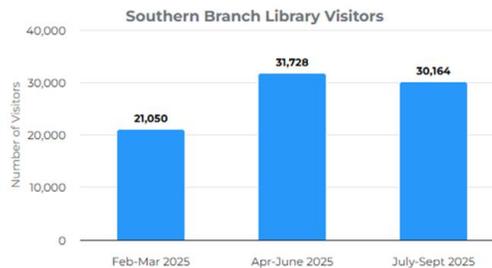
Kelly Guadalupe said fixed routes are the typical routes you might see on a map. She said that demand is most similar to a ride service that might be offered in the private sector.

Travis Myren said demand response might be for people going to dialysis treatment.

Slide #9

## Public Education/Learning Community

6. Establish a baseline and increase visitors to the Southern Branch Library by 5% annually.



The Southern Branch Library soft opening was February 3, 2025. The first five months of data show a strong start, with slightly decreased foot traffic in quarter one of FY25-26.



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## Slide #10

## Diverse and Vibrant Economy



- Established baselines to better track the outcomes of our investments in community partners producing cultural events, and the small business investment and agricultural economic development grant programs.

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## Slide #11

## Current Challenges



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## Slide #12

## Housing for All

*10. Reduce the number of individuals who are unhoused by 10% per year, prioritizing protection from displacement.*

- The January **2024** Point in Time count was **148** individuals
- Our **target** was to decrease to **133** individuals in the January **2025** Point in Time count
- The January **2025** Point in Time count was **149** individuals

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Slide #13

## Housing for All

### 10. Continued

Households experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness			
	FY23-24	FY24-25	1 <sup>st</sup> 6 months FY25-26
<b>Households who completed Coordinated Entry</b>	448 households	430 households	261 households

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Slide #14

## Housing for All

### 10. Continued

Households experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness			
	FY23-24	FY24-25	1 <sup>st</sup> 6 months FY25-26
<b>Households who completed Coordinated Entry</b>	448 households	430 households	261 households
<b>Households whose Coordinated Entry was still open, indicating unmet housing need, at end of fiscal year</b>	233 households	262 households	239 households

Commissioner Greene asked if cases that are “open,” means that the individuals are still homeless.

Kelly Guadalupe said they are still experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked about the reasons for the cases being open.

Kelly Guadalupe said her understanding is that there are not available placements for the individuals.

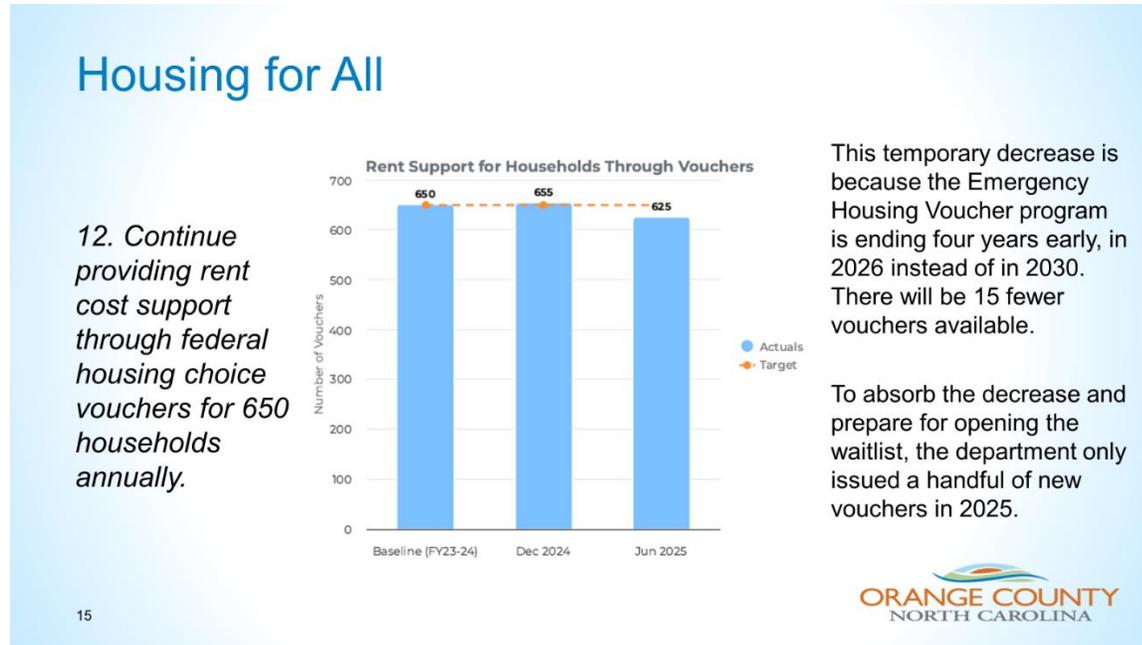
Travis Myren said another issue is the lack of rental support. He said wrap around services and case management is also important. He said there will be a focus on getting the numbers down over the next year.

Commissioner Bedford said the people living in the shelter are still considered homeless and the “open” number included them. She said that is different than the point-in-time count.

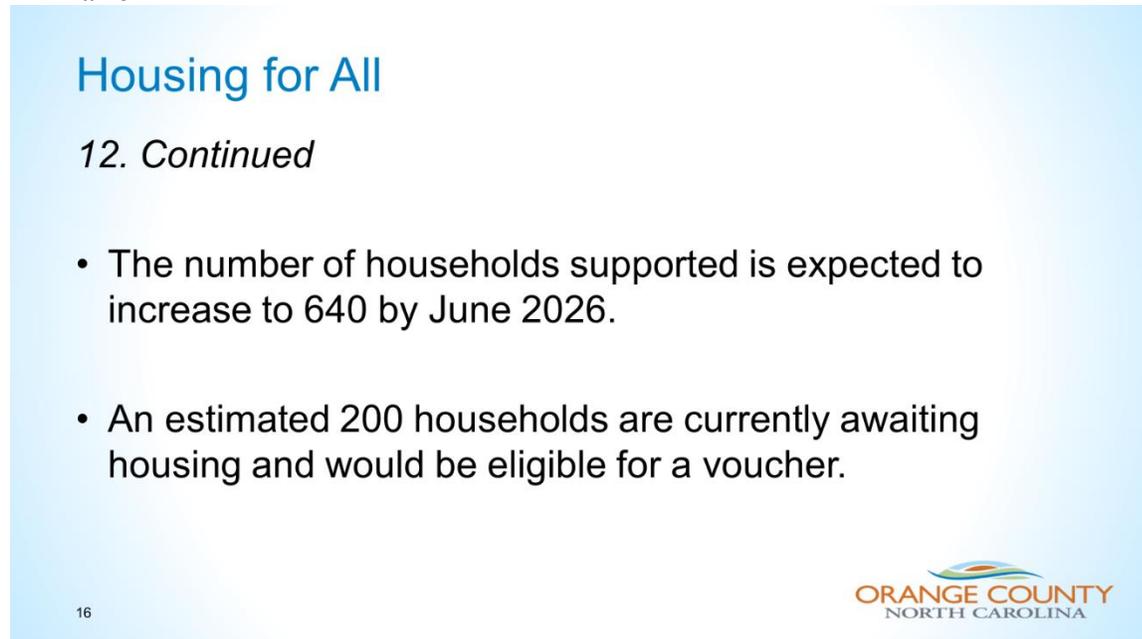
Kelly Guadalupe said yes. She said the point-in-time count is the number of people found outside of shelter on one night in January.

Chair Hamilton said this topic should be brought back to the commissioners and more detail should be shared about those experiencing homelessness and the available resources. She said the Board needs to have a good understanding of the needs in this population so they can make strategic decisions on how to address those needs.

Slide #15



Slide #16



Slide #17

## Multi-Modal Transportation

*2. County transportation information is included in 90 outreach events each year.*

- Transportation information was included in 53 outreach events in FY24-25.
- The Transportation Department is pursuing a more focused approach to outreach, prioritizing in depth outreach in areas and with groups likely to increase ridership on fixed route services.

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Kelly Guadalupe said that the transportation performance measures will be updated for the next fiscal year and shared with the Board.

Commissioner Greene said she hopes that the fare free service combined with more outreach will result in better outcomes.

Slide #18

## Public Education/Learning Community

*1. Reach residents in all 15 zip codes of the county with digital literacy workshops offered annually.*

- Residents from 11 zip codes were reached in year 1.
- The Library Services Department experienced some delays with their digital literacy program due to federal funding uncertainty but will implement the grant to expand programming in the spring of 2026.

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Kelly Guadalupe said that three of the fifteen zip codes have few residents, so the county may want to reduce the focus area to twelve.

Commissioner Bedford asked if the senior centers are offering digital literacy workshops.

Kelly Guadalupe said that the Department on Aging offers a number of those each quarter. She said those numbers are included in the performance measure.

Slide #19

## Diverse and Vibrant Economy

*4. Establish baseline and increase by 3 percentage points annually the percentage of residents enrolled in Employment Services who complete an employment or training related program and/or gain employment.*

- Department of Social Services is determining the best way to define completion of a program for this measure. Baseline data will be available later this year.

Establishing a baseline in 2025 was delayed due to Chantal recovery efforts and impacts of the federal government shutdown

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Slide #20

## Next Steps

- Continue quarterly staff strategy meetings
- Twice annual reports to Board of Commissioners
  - Mid FY 2025-26 Progress Report planned to be included on March 5<sup>th</sup> business meeting
- The Manager's Office will review performance measure targets and bring recommendations for changes to the Board

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Commissioner Carter asked about the mobile crisis response team information on page 19 of the agenda packet. She said the numbers seem to be going up with a new staff member and she looks forward to an update on that in the next quarterly report. She said she was happy to see that Carrboro was participating and is pleased with the progress.

Vice-Chair Fowler said given the issues with housing it sounded like permanent supportive housing and housing choice vouchers might be part of the issue. She asked if staff had been looking at that and creating any strategies for addressing the concerns.

Travis Myren said they will issue all housing choice vouchers that are allocated by federal funding.

Vice-Chair Fowler asked if there is anything related to permanent supportive housing.

Travis Myren said there is one county funded permanent supportive housing program at \$150,000 that IFC is administering.

Commissioner Bedford said the Partnership to End Homelessness met and the budget they approved is a continuation budget, considering the funding pressures. She said there is no new funding coming.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked about the number of people on the waitlist for housing choice vouchers and the average length of stay.

Travis Myren said people keep the voucher as long as they're eligible. He said if their income rises to a certain level and they become ineligible, the voucher becomes available for reissuance.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked how often that happens.

Travis Myren said he would get the average length of time on the waitlist, what the turnover is, and how long someone keeps a voucher.

Commissioner Greene asked if Orange County supplemented housing choice vouchers.

Travis Myren said that was through ARPA funding.

Commissioner Greene said she thought the county supported it when she first came on the Board. She said that is one option the county could pursue.

Chair Hamilton said that the Board will need to have a focused discussion on housing in the county. She said that the county will be challenged in providing services and paying for those services. She asked that commissioners review the strategic plan. She said that they may need to change performance measures to make sure that they are relevant to the community. She said that federal funding may also affect performance measures.

Commissioner Bedford another issue is that once someone does have a voucher, they must find a landlord that will accept the voucher. She said that wait can be up to three months. She said 25 new landlords have been added to the program.

Commissioner Greene said that having a good number of landlords in the program is a success.

Commissioner Bedford said one thing they should be looking at is the grant for preserving farmland and when it expires. She said they should get an update on this, and they need to know if there's a rubric and how they are recruiting. She said they have the match in the budget.

Commissioner Carter asked if that is the conservation easement.

Commissioner Bedford said she doesn't remember.

Commissioner Carter she attended an NCACC agriculture committee meeting, and they discussed a program for conservation easements. She said that it is a pilot program this year, but will expire unless the legislature acts.

Commissioner Bedford noted that the county closed on two conservation easement properties in December 2025.

Kelly Guadalupe said there is a performance measure in the environment goal to permanently protect 300 additional acres of farmland, priority natural areas, riparian buffer lands, floodplains and wildlife habitat over the next five years. She said the county is on track for that measure.

At 10:03 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Portie-Ascott, seconded by Commissioner McKee, to recess until 10:20 a.m.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

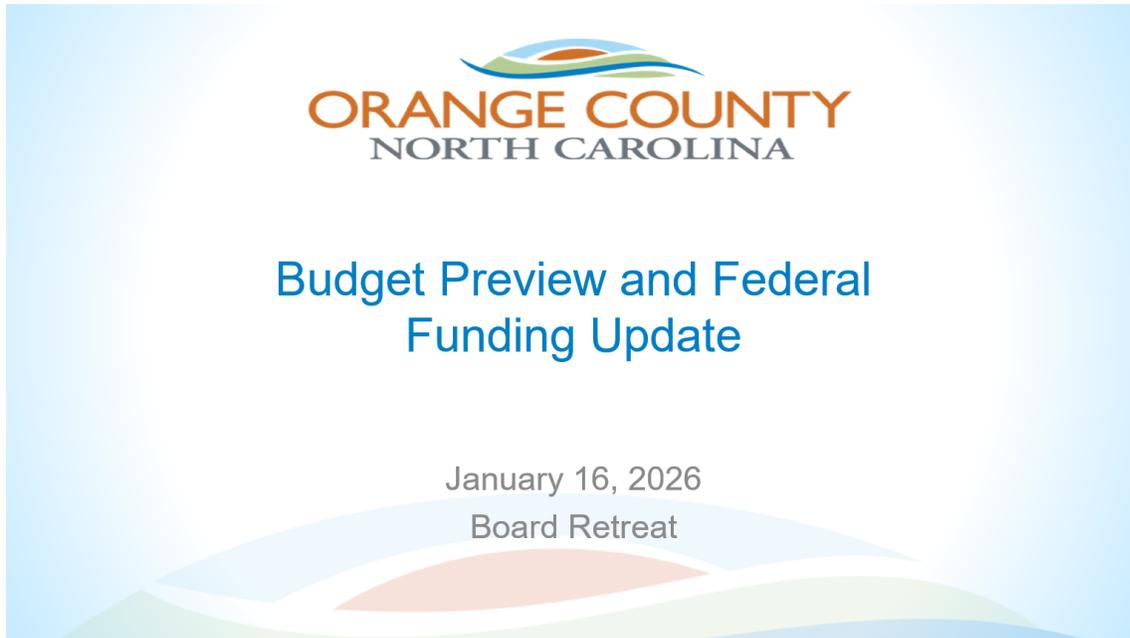
A motion was made by Vice-Chair Fowler, seconded by Commissioner Greene, to reconvene the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

4. **Budget Preview and Federal Funding Update**

Travis Myren, County Manager, made the following presentation:

Slide #1



Slide #2



Slide #3

## Strategic Plan Priorities

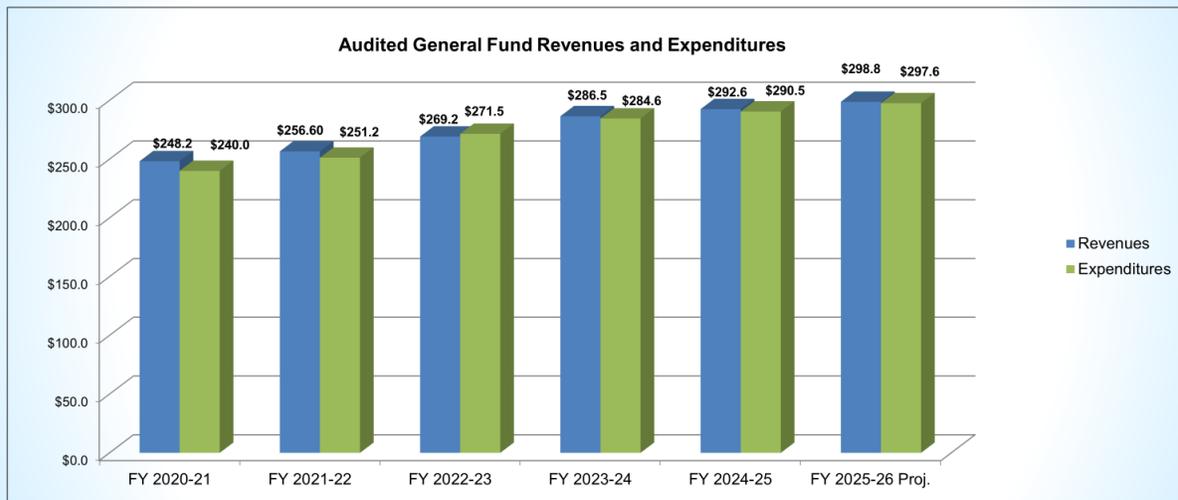
<b>Environmental Protection and Climate Action</b>	Promote sustainability and resiliency across the County and collaborate with our partners to activate our community, protect and preserve our natural resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
<b>Healthy Community</b>	Increase equitable access to care and social safety net programming to promote the physical, social, and mental well-being of our community.
<b>Housing for All</b>	Promote equitable and accessible housing and address housing disparities through policies, partnerships, and collaboration to create a thriving community.
<b>Multi-modal Transportation</b>	Collaborate with our regional partners to expand, integrate/connect, and provide accessible public transportation options.
<b>Public Education/ Learning Community</b>	Enhance and maintain quality school operations and infrastructure and cultivate lifelong learning.
<b>Diverse and Vibrant Economy</b>	Foster an environment that attracts and retains sustainable and diverse businesses and visitors, employment opportunities, and diversifies our tax base.

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Slide #4

## Countywide Financial Performance

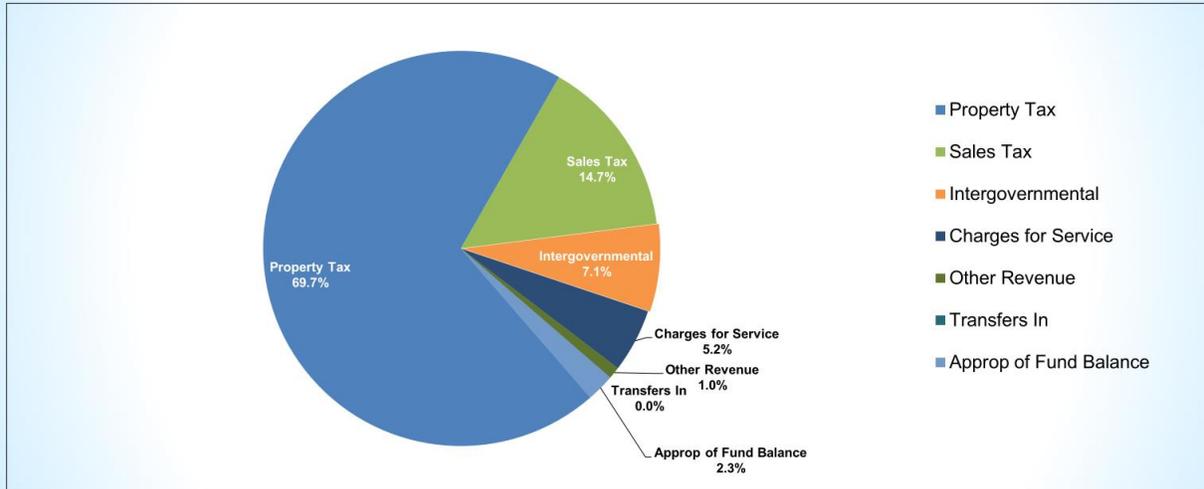


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## Slide #5

## County Revenue Sources



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## Slide #6

## FY 2026-27 Revenue Assumptions

### FY 2026-27 Property Tax Assumptions

- Value of One Penny ~ \$3.37 million based on \$33.9 billion tax base
  - Still finalizing FY 2026's tax base through the appeal process
  - If tax base is reduced by less than 3%, budgeted revenue can be increased - each 1% yields ~ \$2 million
  - Final Board of Equalization and Review meeting scheduled for January 22
- 2% Natural Growth = \$4.3 Million
- No Change in collection rates - 99.2% for Property Tax, 99.6% for Motor Vehicles.
- **Total Property Tax Increase = \$4.3 Million**

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Chair Hamilton asked if the \$33.9 billion tax base includes 2025 growth. Travis Myren said yes, and that for next year they are projecting an additional 2%. Chair Hamilton asked what the growth was for the current year. Kirk Vaughn, Budget Director, said they don't track growth in the same way in revaluation years. He said instead you use the prior three years' growth. He said they had higher than 2%

over the three years prior to last year. He said that motor vehicle growth was higher. He said that the prior three-year average was 2.45% growth, but that is not the long-term projection.

Commissioner McKee asked what the percentage breakdown is between residential and commercial.

Travis Myren said that it is 80% residential, 20% commercial.

Slide #7

## FY 2026-27 Revenue Assumptions

- FY 2026-27 Sales Tax Assumptions
  - Projecting \$1.7 M increase (3.85%) from FY2025-26 Budget with significant uncertainty.

Sales Tax Article	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget	FY 2027 Model	
<b>ARTICLE 39 (point of delivery)</b>	\$ 17,381,317	\$ 17,718,846	\$ 18,339,006	
		2.06%	1.94%	3.50%
	Percent Change			
<b>ARTICLE 40 (per capita)</b>	\$ 12,310,617	\$ 12,429,442	\$ 12,988,767	
		3.05%	0.97%	4.50%
	Percent Change			
<b>ARTICLE 42 (point of delivery)</b>	\$ 8,624,367	\$ 8,877,023	\$ 9,187,719	
		1.08%	2.93%	3.50%
	Percent Change			
<b>ARTICLE 44</b>	\$ 317,099	\$ 320,092	\$ 331,295	
		3.07%	0.94%	3.50%
	Percent Change			
<b>HOLD HARMLESS ARTICLE 44</b>	\$ 5,083,984	\$ 4,800,000	\$ 5,000,000	
		5.34%	-5.59%	4.17%
	Percent Change			
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 43,717,383	\$ 44,145,403	\$ 45,846,787	
		2.52%	0.98%	3.85%
	Percent Change			

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Commissioner Greene asked the County Manager if he thinks sales tax will level out and the pandemic increases were just a blip.

Travis Myren said yes, he thinks it was an anomaly.

Commissioner Bedford asked how Tropical Storm Chantal impacted sales tax collections.

Kirk Vaughn said the first three months of FY2026 were above expectations. He said the impact of Tropical Storm Chantal was not evident in sales tax collection.

## Slide #8

## FY 2026-27 Revenue Assumptions

### Impact of Federal Budget Reconciliation

- Federal funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will decrease from 50% to 25% of county administrative costs effective October 1, 2026
- Assuming no additional state support, county will lose \$680,000 next fiscal year to support the same number of staff (\$900,000 annually)
- December 31, 2026 - Medicaid work requirements and more frequent recertifications
  - May require additional staff
- More changes in future years
  - October 1, 2027      SNAP benefit cost sharing with States
  - October 1, 2028      Medicaid benefit cost sharing with States

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## Slide #9

## State Impacts due to Medicaid Changes

### Impact of Federal Budget Reconciliation on State of North Carolina – Medicaid

- North Carolina Medicaid estimates that additional administrative funding will be needed to implement and support work requirements and six-month redeterminations
  - \$6.5 million in one-time costs needed this fiscal year
  - \$7.8 million per quarter (\$31.2 million annually) to support county eligibility determination functions
  - \$3.3M per quarter (\$13.2M per year) for ongoing state administrative costs
- State law fixes the amount of funding that can be used to fund Medicaid Expansion administration
  - Funding limits would need to be adjusted to account for increased costs of work requirements and more frequent redeterminations and preserve Medicaid expansion

Source: NC Medicaid Presentation to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid – January 13, 2026  
<https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/104990>

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Slide #10

# State Impacts due to SNAP Changes

## Impact of Federal Budget Reconciliation on State of North Carolina SNAP Benefit Cost Sharing Effective October 1, 2027

- State benefit cost share based on Statewide error rates

Benefit Cost Share	Payment Error Rate	State & National Error Rates for FFY24
0% Cost Share	Less than 6%	8 states
5% Cost Share	Between 6% and 8%	6 states
10% Cost Share	Between 8% and 10%	16 states
15% Cost Share	Over 10%*	20 states; <b>NC rate is 10.21%</b> (National average is 10.93%)

- State administrative cost share will increase by an estimated \$16 annually beginning Oct 2026.
- State benefit cost share would be an estimated **\$420+ million** per year based on 10.21% error rate and benefits of over \$2.8 billion

Source: NC DHHS Presentation to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services – January 13, 2026  
<https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/104981>



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Commissioner Carter asked what the county-level error rate is for Orange County.

Travis Myren said they are tracking a little above 6%

Chair Hamilton asked for the definition of an error rate.

Travis Myren said it's anything that affects the benefit amount. He said it could be an overpayment or an underpayment, or someone ineligible for receiving a benefit. He said it is anything makes that final benefit amount different than what it should be.

Commissioner McKee asked how that is addressed locally.

Travis Myren said it is based on a sample from each county. He said only about eight cases are pulled for Orange County. He said the way to drive down error rates is to have employees with a reasonable caseload that are well-trained. He said one issue is that as the county picks up more SNAP administrative costs, it probably can't afford additional staff.

Commissioner McKee asked how they determine the breaking point between the cost of additional staff versus the cost of the error rate. He said the error rate would not be perfect, but that county would be well-served to keep this as low as possible.

Travis Myren said that's reasonable.

Commissioner Bedford clarified that it is based on statewide rates.

Commissioner Carter added that's the case unless the legislature changes it.

Chair Hamilton clarified that the with the error rate, the cost is currently borne by the state.

Travis Myren said yes. He said if the state fails to fund the cost share, the SNAP benefit goes away. He said the benefit is an entitlement and levels are set by the federal government. He said if you can't pay for the benefit as required, you can't run the program.

Vice-Chair Fowler asked if it is legal to pull the whole program if it is an entitlement.

Travis Myren said it is a state decision to provide the benefit. He said if they choose to not fund the cost share, they can't run the program.

Commissioner Bedford asked that this be part of the legislative breakfast agenda.

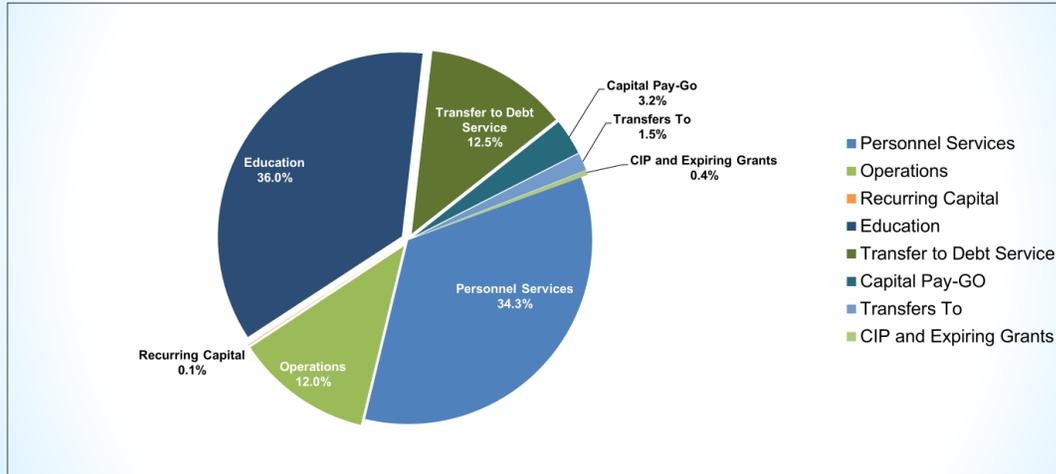
Commissioner Carter said the state budget process is frozen. She asked what the risk timeline is to the program if the budget process isn't resolved.

Travis Myren said this is a FY 2027-28 fiscal year budget issue. He said he wanted to flag this as a risk that should be discussed.

Commissioner Carter said that she is confident this will be discussed by NCACC and that she and Commissioner Portie-Ascott would represent Orange County in those discussions and will provide an update to the Board.

Slide #11

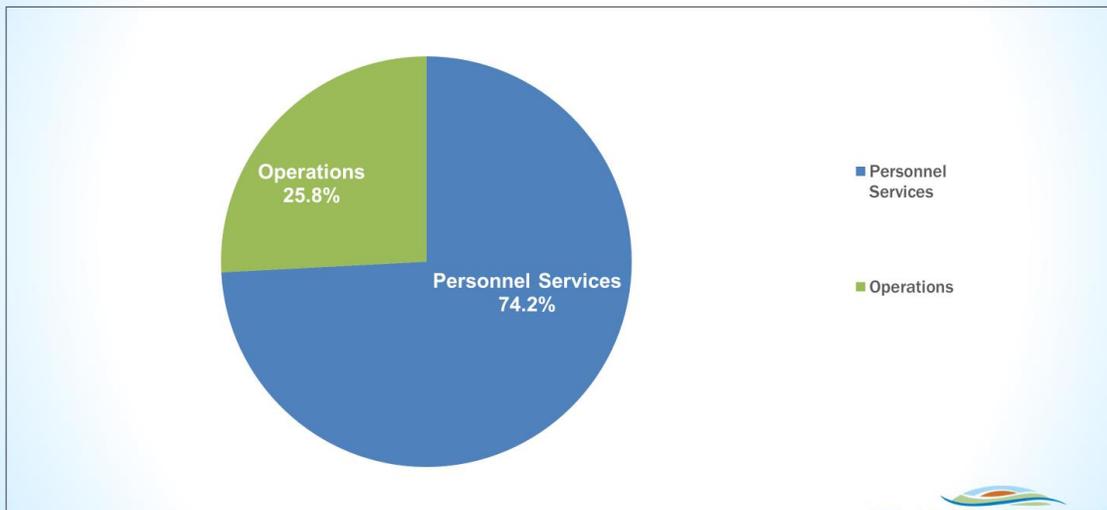
## FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget



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Slide #12

## FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget – Excluding Education



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Slide #13

# FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget

## Personnel Related Cost Assumptions

- Wage Adjustment - \$930,000 for each 1%
- Merit Performance Awards – \$455,000
- Increase of Employer Health Insurance Contribution - 13% or \$1.7 million
- Increase of Employer Retirement Contribution Rate - 6% per LGERS rate stabilization program - \$1 million
- Increase to Retiree Health - 9% at \$400,000
- Increase to Sheriff Separation Allowance - \$250,000

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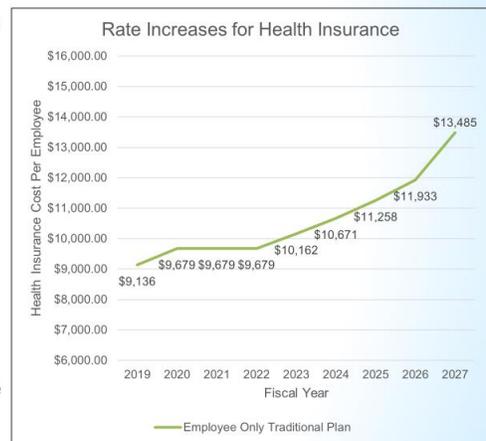
Vice-Chair Fowler asked what the Sheriff’s separation allowance is.  
 Travis Myren said it is based on years of service and salary up to age 62. He said it is a state requirement.  
 Vice-Chair Fowler asked if it is only for the Sheriff.  
 Travis Myren said it is for all Sheriff’s Office employees.

Slide #14

# FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget

## Health Insurance Cost Drivers

- Consecutive years of 5%+ cost increases with no change in benefits or costs to employees – premiums, deductibles, co-pays
- Cost drivers for **medical** benefits
  - Cancer treatment cost increasing 34%-50% based on new treatments being put into use and aging population
  - Musculoskeletal surgery cost increasing 11%
  - Psychiatry costs increasing 12% - specialist utilization above industry standard
- Cost drivers for **pharmacy** benefits
  - Pharmacy costs up 41%
  - Use of GLP-1’s for weight loss has increased by 5 times – coverage adds \$1.1 million to the cost of the health plan
  - Other employers that cover GLP-1’s have also required a “catch-up” adjustment due to high demand



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Travis Myren reviewed some of the methods for reducing health insurance costs, including a direct-to-consumer pharmacy benefit.

Vice-Chair Fowler said that the state health plan stopped covering GLP-1 drugs. She said a middle ground option could be considered by the county.

Travis Myren said, in theory, they will reduce the county's overall health costs. He said there is also an indication that GLP-1's can affect sleep apnea.

Vice-Chair Fowler said it is difficult to stop GLP-1s once you begin taking them.

Chair Hamilton asked if the county would put all drugs in the direct-to-consumer plan.

Travis Myren said they would start with GLP-1s and then see if other drugs would be a good fit.

Chair Hamilton asked for the tradeoffs for changing co-pays and other health benefit parameters.

Travis Myren said the county is in the NC Health Insurance pool, and Gallagher is the administrator. He said they give the county data on the possible disruptions that changes would cause.

Commissioner Carter asked if there are other counties that are doing direct-to-consumer.

Travis Myren said there are other employers using the direct-to-consumer pharmacy card, but he wasn't sure about counties.

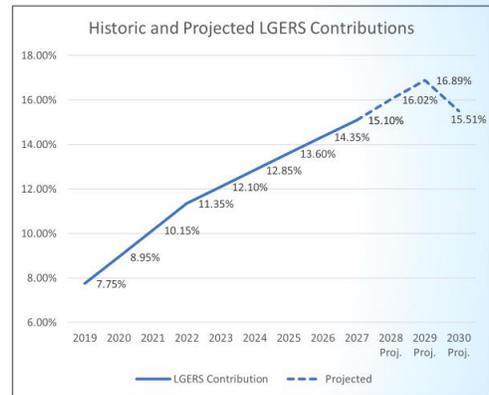
Commissioner Bedford said she was glad that the psychiatry costs are up because it indicates that employees are using the benefit.

Slide #15

## FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget

### Local Government Employee Retirement System

- Both the employee and the employer contributes a percentage of salary
  - Employee contribution is fixed at 6%
  - County rate is set each year by the LGERS Board
  
- County percentage has nearly doubled since 2019
  - FY2026- 27 Budget would need \$5.5 million less if contributions were at the 2019 rates.
  
- Most recent actuarial estimates project that county contribution will continue to increase through FY 2029



Commissioner Greene asked what is expected to happen in 2030 that will make the contribution increase go down.

Travis Myren said this is based on actuarial studies. He said there is likely something that changes the pool at that time that will make the increase lower.

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## FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget

### Modeled New Costs

- Increased Software as a Service Cost - \$525,000
  - SQL Licenses + New Programs
  
- Maintain FY2025-26 support for Longtime Homeowner Assistance program at 25% County tax relief
  
- Crisis Diversion Facility start up and operating costs - \$800,000
  - Currently planned to open in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of FY2026-27
  - \$3,000,000 estimated annualized cost
  - Model includes one quarter of expenses
  
- Debt Service – pending sizing of 2026 spring borrowing, could be as high as \$9.5 million increase
  - Large 2025 spring financing
  - Borrowing for the Crisis Diversion Facility and the Durham Tech Community College expansion

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Slide #17

## Projected Future Debt Impact

- Represents project timing as currently scheduled in the Capital Investment Plan
- Actual size and timing will be based on project tempo

Year	Debt to AV	DS to GF Revenues	Tax Rate Equivalent
2027	1.58%	13.13%	2.53¢
2028	1.86%	14.40%	1.68¢
2029	1.80%	17.10%	3.30¢
2030	1.61%	18.18%	1.34¢
2031	1.62%	17.86%	-
2032	1.76%	17.60%	-
2033	1.65%	18.50%	-
2034	1.42%	18.82%	0.89¢
2035	1.30%	17.67%	-
<b>Total Impact</b>			<b>9.73¢</b>

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Commissioner Carter asked if the increased debt service is due to the amount of debt in service as opposed to an increased cost of debt service.

Travis Myren said debt service is like paying off the principal and interest for a mortgage payment.

Commissioner Carter said it reflects that the county added to the debt.

Travis Myren said that was correct.

Vice-Chair Fowler said that in the past fiscal year, the Board chose not to do \$10 million in pay-go funds, but did \$500,000. She said in the original analysis for the bond funding, the debt service to general fund ratio was 19%. She noted that the ratio in slide #17 does not go that high and wanted to understand why.

Kirk Vaughn said they are still projecting that they will use the \$10 million in the CIP. He said it's not gone, but the revenues are projected to increase 3% each year and so the denominator is higher.

Vice-Chair Fowler said the modeling is still assuming a pay-go contribution of \$10 million.

Kirk Vaughn said yes, it will be phased in.

Vice-Chair Fowler said if the county doesn't do that then the numbers would look different.

Kirk Vaughn said that was correct.

#### Slide #18

## FY 2026-27 Expenditure Budget

### Education Spending

- Modeling a 3% increase in current expense - \$3.3 million
- Debt service will increase based on increased borrowing in FY2025-26 - \$3.3 million
- Pay-Go phase-in contemplated in Board amendment CIP-B14 that limited Pay-Go to \$500,000 in FY2025-26
  - \$5.5 million increase in FY2026-27 - 1.6 cent equivalent on tax rate
  - \$4 million increase in FY2027-28

Slide #19

### FY2026-27 Education Projections

Education	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27 Mod.	Difference	
Current Expense	\$111,328,011	\$114,667,851	3.00%	Local funding for operating expenses
Health and Safety + Enrollment Projection Contract	\$4,160,806	\$4,285,630	3.00%	One School Nurse per Facility One Safety Officer for Middle and High Schools
Capital Pay-Go	\$3,621,200	\$9,183,624	153.61%	Recurring Capital + New PayGo
Debt Service	\$20,840,115	\$24,105,872	15.67%	Principal and interest payments on school debt
<b>Total K-12 Funding</b>	<b>\$139,950,132</b>	<b>\$152,248,106</b>	<b>8.79%</b>	

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Slide #20

### Per Pupil Allocation

Per Pupil Allocation - Modeled			
Total Current Expense Budget		\$114,667,851	
Total Countywide Budgeted Students		18,420	
<b>Per Pupil Amount</b>		<b>\$6,225</b>	
<b>Each budgeted student funded at the same per pupil amount</b>			
District	Budgeted Students*	Countywide Per Pupil	District Allocation
CHCCS	10,677	\$6,225	<b>\$66,469,240</b>
OCS	7,743	\$6,225	<b>\$48,203,740</b>

\*Assumes no changes in out of district or charter school enrollment

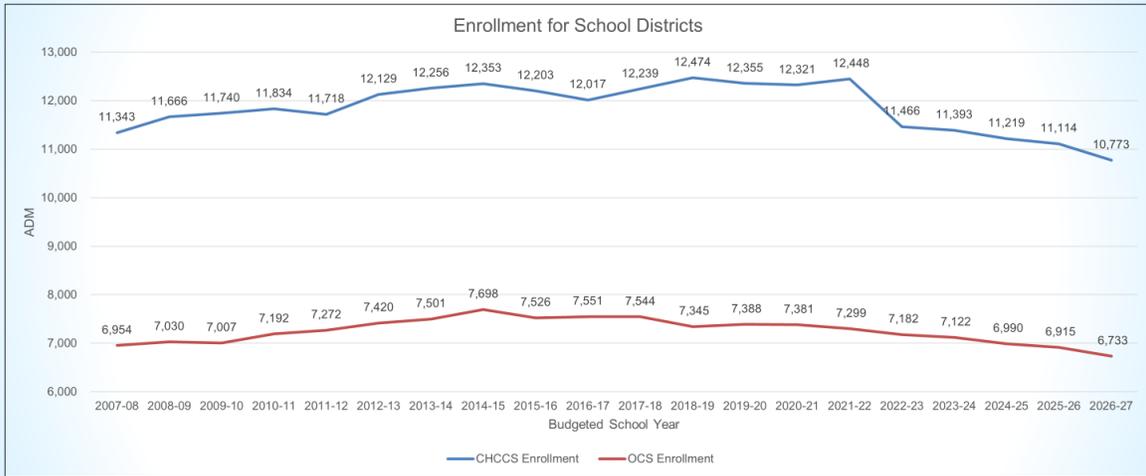
20



Travis Myren said that the current student population is split, with 58% in Chapel Hill Carrboro City School and 42% in Orange County Schools

Slide #21

## Student Enrollment Over Time



- Budgeted ADM for FY2026-27 is based on best of 20-day and 40-day enrollment in School Year 2026
- Budgeted ADM will decrease by 523 or 3% in FY2026-27



Vice-Chair Fowler asked where most of the declines are in the student population. She asked if that was in the elementary schools.

Travis Myren said the most significant factor is that the school age population in the county is going down.

Commissioner Bedford said that Dr. Trice said it is evident in kindergarten enrollment. She said once a student is enrolled, they stay in the district. She said CHCCS is putting together a study group to discuss closing an elementary school.

Commissioner Greene asked if it is due to homeschooling.

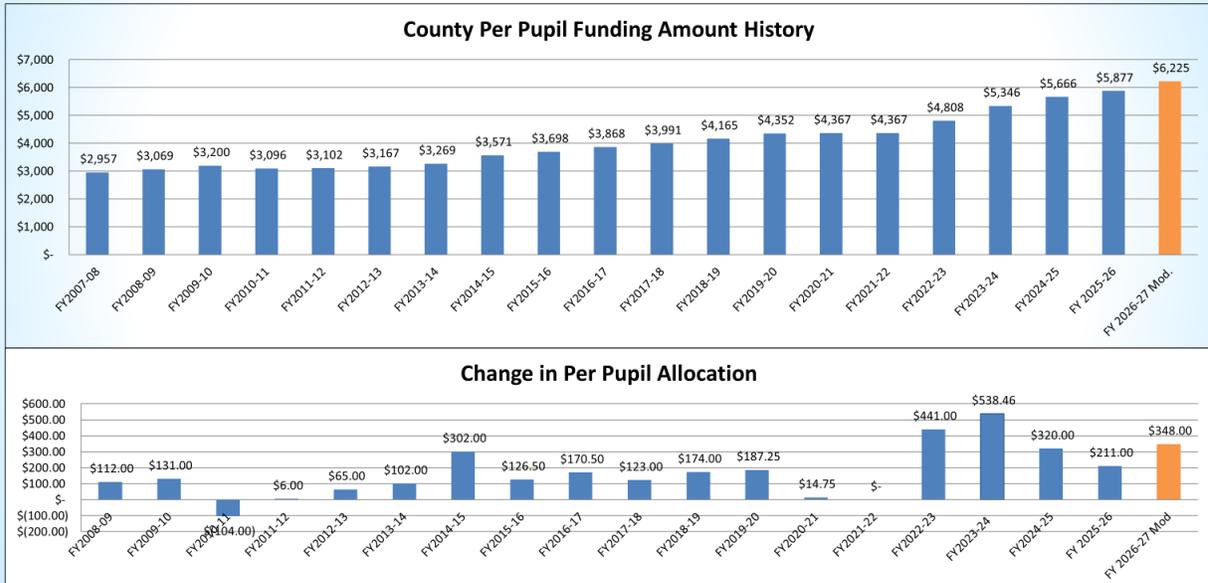
Commissioner Bedford said it is due to birth rates; the children don't exist in the district.

Commissioner Carter said they are hearing a lot about housing gaps, and folks not being able to live in the districts. She said they should keep that in mind when discussing the land use plan.

Commissioner Bedford said CHCCS does not lose too many children to charter schools, but OCS does.

Slide #22

## Per Pupil Allocation Over Time



Slide #23

## County Funding Practices

### County funding practices have not changed amid declining enrollment

- Currently, continuation estimates are created by taking the amount of funding in the current year and increasing it by an inflationary factor and accounting for state driven cost increases for personnel
  - As current expense grows and enrollment declines, the per pupil amount increases at a faster rate than total current expenses

School Year	County-wide Budgeted Enrollment	% Change Enrollment	Per-Pupil Funding	\$ Change Per-Pupil	% Change Per-Pupil
2020-21	19,702	0%	\$ 4,367	\$ 15	0.34%
2021-22	19,747	0%	\$ 4,367	\$ -	0.00%
2022-23	18,648	-6%	\$ 4,808	\$ 441	10.10%
2023-24	18,515	-1%	\$ 5,346	\$ 538	11.19%
2024-25	18,209	-2%	\$ 5,666	\$ 320	5.99%
2025-26	18,029	-1%	\$ 5,877	\$ 211	3.72%
2026-27 Mod.	17,506	-3%	\$ 6,225	\$ 348	5.92%

5.22% average

- Budgeted enrollment has decreased by 2,196 students Countywide since school year 2020-21
- Early projections from Carolina Demography indicate that declining enrollment will continue over the next 10 years
- Since Covid, the per-pupil amount has increased an average of 5.22% annually



Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if the per pupil amount is going up because the county has never cut expenses.

Travis Myren said the county has never decreased education funding. He said there are years when they had flat funding.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if the same number of staff are needed even if there are less students.

Travis Myren said that's a question for the districts.

Commissioner Bedford said that's what Dr. Trice is looking at.

Commissioner McKee said it was decreased in the past due to economic conditions.

Commissioner Bedford said a decreasing student population is new to commissioners, and changing the funding method is a different idea to consider.

Chair Hamilton said in an environment of declining enrollment, does the county want to change its funding practices. She said even with declining students, the schools may not have declining expenses. She said they would want the schools to address how they've right sized their staff to match enrollment, and to express the needs they still have after that process.

Vice-Chair Fowler agreed and wanted the schools to show their actual needs in their continuation budget. She said it may not mean giving them an increase of 3% as shown on the slide.

Kirk Vaughn said staff have had preliminary conversations with school staff. He said there are fixed costs for operating a school. He said much of this will come down to communication about the actual needs for the student, not for their expenditure base.

Slide #24

## County Funding Practices

- In order to capture enrollment trends, the continuation budget could be calculated based on an increase to the per pupil amount instead of the prior year current expense

Current Practice		Per Pupil Approach	
Prior Year Current Expense	\$111,328,011	Prior Year Per Pupil	\$5,877
3% Increase	\$114,667,851	3% Increase	\$6,053
Total Budgeted Students	18,420	Total Budgeted Students	18,420
<b>Total Per Pupil Amount</b>	<b>\$6,225</b>	<b>Total Current Expense</b>	<b>\$111,496,260</b>

- Changing the calculation does not have to change the amount that the county funds
- The model currently assumes that the budget will include a 5.92% per-pupil cost increase for the school districts

Slide #25

## Long Range Financial Model

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY FORECAST					
	Actual 2024-25	Original 2025-26	Projected 2026-27	Projected 2027-28	Projected 2028-29
(\$ in Thousands)					
Property Tax	205,344	212,897	217,198	221,634	226,163
Sales Tax	43,717	44,145	45,847	47,406	49,026
Intergovernmental	21,184	22,314	22,286	22,718	23,383
Charges for Service	15,594	15,970	16,249	16,535	16,830
Other Revenue	5,579	2,989	2,966	2,974	2,982
Transfers In	1,150	666	114	117	121
Approp of Fund Balance	-	7,056	7,056	7,268	7,486
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>292,568</b>	<b>306,037</b>	<b>311,716</b>	<b>318,873</b>	<b>326,217</b>
Personnel Services	101,973	108,603	114,350	118,628	123,081
Operations	36,327	36,541	37,471	38,397	39,351
Recurring Capital	1,417	184	188	192	195
Education	109,118	116,502	119,999	123,597	127,303
Contribs. to Other Agencies	2,256	2,331	2,352	2,374	2,396
Transfers To (Including Debt)	39,020	41,877	57,458	68,786	82,100
O&M Impact from CIP	-	0	1,347	4,319	5,161
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>291,420</b>	<b>306,037</b>	<b>333,166</b>	<b>356,293</b>	<b>379,587</b>
Net Annual Rev (Exp)	1,148	(0)	(21,450)	(37,640)	(53,596)
<b>Gap to Close</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>21,450</b>	<b>37,640</b>	<b>53,596</b>

Initial Model expects a \$21.5 million gap to solve for the FY2026-27 budget.

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Commissioner McKee asked if the cost of closing the gap is 7 cents.

Travis Myren said yes.

Commissioner McKee said there may a need for across-the-board reductions.

Travis Myren said the county will need to balance the benefits of non-mandated services with mandated services.

Slide #26

## Other Funds

### Funds to watch outside of the General Fund

- Community Development Fund
  - \$900,000 gap in unreimbursed HOME expenses from prior fiscal years
- Solid Waste
  - Draws on fund balance following reduction of program fee
  - Fee reduction may need to be reversed
- Visitor's Bureau
  - \$300,000 lost revenue from Town of Chapel Hill in FY2025-26
  - Reduce use of fund balance in operating budget
  - Flattening occupancy tax revenue growth

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Vice-Chair Fowler asked if the Town of Chapel Hill still contributes to the Visitors Bureau. Kirk Vaughn said the base contribution is \$200,000.

Vice-Chair Fowler asked if restoring the solid waste fee to \$146 would cover the need.

Kirk Vaughn said the fee doesn't grow as quickly as inflation, but they will have to balance the fee against costs. He said that the solid waste fund has a healthy cash balance. He said it's a capital-intensive program, and part of the use of fund balance is making sure that they are not borrowing as much so there isn't as much debt service in the solid waste funds.

Commissioner Bedford said they've bought a lot of heavy equipment in the past year.

Kirk Vaughn said it is an expensive enterprise to manage.

Commissioner Carter asked if it is possible to share some of the cost impacts of changes to SNAP and Medicaid with the municipalities.

Kirk Vaughn said in general towns can't give funds to the county for a service that towns aren't allowed to do.

Travis Myren said staff would research the question.

Commissioner Greene asked about the unreimbursed HOME expenses.

Kirk Vaughn said it is a balance over 30 years. He said over 30 years they have not been filing correctly with HUD to the tune of about \$30,000 a year. He said there is a period that can't get reimbursed for anymore, and that is a loss of \$600,000. He said there are more recent years that Housing can still file reimbursement for and that's about \$300,000.

Commissioner McKee asked how this was allowed to happen and what we are going to do to prevent it in the future.

Travis Myren said losses precede the current staff and that the Budget Director is aware and paying attention.

Kirk Vaughn said Housing staff said that HUD said the county has smaller staff support for the HOME program than other similarly sized programs. He said if they add staff, they may be able to include, but it would be an additional county cost.

Commissioner Bedford asked if closing capital funds that have been sitting on the books is still in process.

Kirk Vaughn said they were doing this for multiple funds, and they identified a surplus of \$300,000 in the county capital fund.

Commissioner Bedford asked if the CIP document will have fewer funds.

Kirk Vaughn said they identified that they could close them, but an action must be taken in the ERP so that the report does not include those.

## Slide #27

### Orange County FY 2026-27 Budget Guidelines

- Alignment with Strategic Plan priorities and performance measures
- Additional expenditure requests will require reallocation of existing funds or new revenues
- Analyze current service levels, cost recovery, and staff alignment
- Continue Long-Term Financial Planning Department Reviews
- Continue Interdepartmental and Intergovernmental collaboration initiatives

Commissioner McKee requested staff review the FY 2010-11 budget to determine what strategies staff used to balance the budget gap during that fiscal year.

Kirk Vaughn said one strategy they used at that time was to focus on mandated services.

Commissioner Bedford noted that reducing library hours does not save much money.

Chair Hamilton said she would like to see the breakdown of personnel by department, and mandated versus non-mandated services.

Travis Myren said some of the non-mandated services include much of the services provided by DEAPR, the library, and the Department on Aging. He said some of what Housing does is non-mandated.

Vice-Chair Fowler asked what the assumed wage increase affecting the \$21 million gap.

Travis Myren said 2%.

Slide #28

### FY 2026-27 Calendar of Events

FY 2026-27 BUDGET TIMELINE	DATE
Department Director Guidelines Presentation	January 8
Operating Budget Kickoff meetings	January 8-9
FY2026-27 Budget Submission Deadline	February 20
Meeting w/Outside Agencies and Related Department Directors	Mid to Late-March
County Manager Meeting w/Department Directors	Mid-March to Early April
County Manager Meeting w/Fire Districts	Early April
BOCC Joint Meeting w/Boards of Education	April 30
County Manager presents FY2026-27 Recommended Budget	May 5



Slide #29

### FY 2026-27 Calendar of Events

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARINGS	DATE
Budget and Capital Investment Plan (CIP)	May 12 & May 28
BUDGET WORK SESSION SCHEDULE	DATE
Schools and Outside Agencies	May 14
Fire District, Public Safety, and Human Services	May 21
Support Services, General Government, Community Services, and Durham Tech	May 26
Budget Amendments and Resolution of Intent to Adopt	June 4
BOCC REGULAR MEETING	DATE
FY2026-27 Operating and CIP Budget Adoption	June 16



At 11:32 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner McKee, seconded by Vice-Chair Fowler, to recess until 11:37 a.m.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bedford, seconded by Vice-Chair Fowler, to reconvene the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

**5. Board Functioning**

a. Petition Process

- Public Petitions

Chair Hamilton introduced the item and referred to the BOCC Rules of Procedures on page 14. She read the following statement from the Rules of Procedure:

“Petitions/Resolutions/Proclamations and other similar requests submitted by the public will not be acted upon by the Board of Commissioners at the time presented. All such requests will be referred for Chair/Vice-Chair/Manager review and for recommendations to the full board at a later date regarding a) consideration of the request at a future business meeting; or b) receipt of the request as information only. Submittal of information to the board or receipt of information by the board does not constitute approval, endorsement, or consent.”

Vice-Chair Fowler asked if anyone responds to the public petitioner with information on any actions or follow-up.

Chair Hamilton said it's not clear. She said the definition of a “petition” is not clear.

Vice-Chair Fowler said if a member of the public is asking for specific actions or discussions that would be a clear petition.

Commissioner Bedford said for resolutions or proclamations they do get back to the petitioner.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott gave an example of a member of the public who invited the Board to visit her neighborhood. She asked if that is a petition.

Commissioner McKee said that was a request of individual board members. He said he didn't know how one would determine if someone speaking was a comment or request or a petition. He said he is leery of trying to interpret any implied request as a petition as it would take up an enormous amount of staff time. He said sometimes people are just speaking their minds or venting.

Commissioner Greene said she doesn't think it's very complicated. She said the language comes from the First Amendment, which states, everyone has the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances, and she takes that very broadly. She thinks that's why historically government boards have used that word because it's a fundamental right. She said perhaps the Chair could say, “I'm going to take that as a petition and ask staff for follow-up.” She asked if this has been a problem for staff.

Commissioner Bedford said the reason it's being discussed is due to Board petitions.

Chair Hamilton said public petitions don't automatically mean for the staff to do anything. She said they come to the Chair and Vice-Chair to determine what happens with it. She said she wanted to consider staff time and the other things they are working on. She said it is appropriate for the Chair, Vice-Chair, and County Manager to review for follow-up. She said if something is critical, then it should be assigned for staff to follow-up on and then come back to the Board as either as an information item or as an agenda item. She said Commissioner Greene was correct that they want to give the public the opportunity to address the governing body. She said Vice-Chair Fowler's question about following up is a good point to consider.

Commissioner Bedford said a resident came several times to request changes in communication with the public, which was also petitioned for by two commissioners. She described how the management team reviewed the request, then developed next steps.

Vice-Chair Fowler said the most important thing with a public petition is that the Board doesn't always hear the result.

Travis Myren the language is likely antiquated and was written before email.

Commissioner Bedford said emails always get an answer.

Commissioner Carter asked if email responses are practice or policy.

Commissioner Bedford said she did not know.

Travis Myren said it's not documented, but it's not been a problem. He said staff and the chair always respond.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott noted that when commenters come to a meeting, the Board tells them that they won't receive a response that night.

Commissioner Bedford said that the response depends on the subject of the comment or petition that is made at a meeting.

Chair Hamilton asked that the Board pay attention to the kind of requests or petitions that come at a meeting and how those are handled either through staff or on future agendas. She asked that Greg keep track of requests.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if she was suggesting that the Board respond to a public comment with a request by getting back to them at another meeting rather than by email.

Commissioner Bedford said sometimes its appropriate for staff to respond to them directly by email or telephone.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott said her interest is what the formal process should be for acknowledging public requests.

Chair Hamilton agreed that is something the Board needed to think about.

Laura Jensen said that public commenters sign in at the beginning of the meeting to make comments, and they are asked to put their contact information. She said many do not do so, even if encouraged. She asked the Board to emphasize that if a commenter would like a response, they should provide an email address or phone number for staff to follow-up with them.

Commissioner Carter said that was a good point.

Vice-Chair Fowler said the Board should formalize what the procedure is at a future meeting.

- Board Member Petitions

Chair Hamilton reviewed the language on page 13 of the Board of Commissioners' Rules of Procedure. She read the following statement in part A:

"Any board member may petition the board to have an item placed on the agenda."

She read a statement farther down page 13 in Part C:

"The board may, by approval of a majority of its members, i.e. an affirmative vote equal to a quorum, add an item at the meeting that is not on the agenda."

Commissioner McKee said that the Board follows that policy.

Chair Hamilton said that latter sentence is what the Board does at meetings. She said they also have a comment and petition time for Board members. She said it's not petitioning to add it at that meeting, but for a future meeting. She said the question is the process afterward and how they want to handle Board member petitions.

Commissioner McKee said he's never considered a petition as a guarantee, but as a proposal for consideration by the Chair and Vice-Chair. He described the process for adding an item to the agenda by a motion and a second if a petition is not added by the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Greene concurred with Commissioner McKee. She referred to part A on page 13. She said that it should be decided by the Chair and the Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Bedford said it refers to the "Board," and asked if it should really be the Chair and the Vice-Chair deciding. She related some instances when she was Chair and needed to decide if a commissioner petition was going on the agenda or could be addressed by staff or if it wasn't going any further.

Commissioner McKee asked if a petition that didn't move forward if it was brought up again.

Commissioner Bedford said if they weren't sure they put it on a work session. She gave examples of different scenarios during her time as Chair.

Commissioner McKee said he wasn't sure this was at the level to require adding language to the Rules of Procedure. He said if a commissioner makes a petition that is not put on an agenda, the commissioner could potentially get it addressed by getting four votes to add it.

Commissioner Greene said Rule 8.a could be more explicit, but she agreed with Commissioner McKee. She said any four commissioners have the ability to add something through the agenda.

Commissioner Carter said she agrees with Commissioner McKee and Commissioner Greene and that the current process provides flexibility. She said if a petition is brought up and the Chair believes it is not the right time to address the issue, the Chair and Vice-Chair can bring it up during agenda review. She said if a commissioner feels strong and has the votes, it can be addressed at that time.

Chair Hamilton said one consideration is staff capacity. She said she would want to know if there is support on the Board for a petition before staff begins working on the topic.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if her petitions should have included getting other commissioners to support her request prior to making them. She said that wasn't clear to her. She asked how the Chair and Vice-Chair let commissioners know that their petitions weren't going to be addressed.

Commissioner Bedford said that the Chair and Vice-Chair get back to commissioners. She said sometimes they've considered petitions at work sessions if they are unsure of Board member support.

Commissioner Greene said there was a time when she was told ahead of time that a planned petition would not be put on an agenda, unless she found the additional votes to add it, which she did.

Commissioner Bedford said she didn't consider that a formal petition at the time, which is why it was not put on a work session.

Commissioner Greene said she didn't understand what the problem is.

Commissioner Bedford said it isn't a big problem, but they are trying to be better at communicators.

Chair Hamilton suggested that if Board members petition at the formal time during a business meeting, it will go to the Chair and Vice-Chair at agenda review. She said if it is not going to be put on an agenda, they will let that commissioner know. She said then, if that commissioner wants to bring it back to the Board, they can, and the Board will vote on whether to pursue the petition. She said at that point, staff will be assigned to research and the topic will need to be put on a future agenda.

Commissioner McKee said he thought that was the current process.

Vice-Chair Fowler said she thinks that Board members were not all sure of the process.

Commissioner McKee said he doesn't see a difference between what the current process is and what Chair Hamilton described. He said he feels like he can get his petitions addressed one way or another

Chair Hamilton said when she first started as a commissioner, it was not clear to her. She said it is not clear in the Rules of Procedure. She said having this discussion will help her and future Chairs.

Commissioner Carter said the current language is maximally flexible.

Commissioner McKee said he would prefer not formalizing it to the point that it is inflexible. He said this Board is cooperative, but it could be a problem in the future.

Chair Hamilton said this Board gets a long pretty well. She said the goal is to put down what they are already doing.

Commissioner Greene said with previous Boards, there were several requests from individual commissioners to staff. She said her memory is that they agreed that if it took a staff member more than an hour on the request, then it would need to go to the full Board for a vote.

Commissioner McKee said she was correct in her memory.

Commissioner Bedford also agreed with Commissioner Greene's recollection. She said Greg Wilder keeps track of all petitions for commissioners to review.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if she needs to make a motion to add something to the agenda if she should do it during commissioner comment time.

Commissioner McKee said she could do it at any time, and there is no prohibition. He said the most collegial way is to do so during commissioner comment time.

Commissioner Bedford said it would be best to do it at that time and not in the middle of another agenda item, although technically they could.

Commissioner Greene said in the Suggested Rules of Procedure for Boards of County Commissioners published by UNC School of Government, motions do not require a second for small boards. She said she did not want to suggest changing the rule for Orange County, but it was something to think about.

Vice-Chair Fowler said she thought a second was required for discussion.

Commissioner Greene said not according to the document from the School of Government.

John Roberts clarified in the Orange County Board of Commissioners Rules of Procedures, rule 14 requires a second for motions.

Vice-Chair Fowler stated that if a local board has rules, they must follow them.

John Roberts said that was correct.

Commissioner Greene said that she was pointing out that they don't have to have that rule. She noted that commissioners can also be compelled to attend meetings, and that a Sheriff can take an absent member into custody.

Commissioner McKee observed that an absence could be used strategically.

Chair Hamilton said she plans to formalize the petition process in the Rules of Procedure because it is important for commissioners to know what happens once they've made a petition. She said that the Chair will make sure the petitioner receives a response in a timely fashion.

Commissioner Carter said petitions appear in the agenda packets.

Commissioner Bedford said there is a live document that shows the result of past petitions and that she emailed the link to the Board.

At 12:19 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Carter, seconded by Commissioner McKee, to recess for lunch until 1:15 p.m.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Fowler, seconded by Commissioner Carter, to reconvene the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

- b. Discussion on Advisory Board Policy
- Volunteer Board Service, Engagement, Absences, and Removal Protocol

Tara May, Deputy Clerk to the Board, presented on volunteer board service, engagement, absences, and removal protocol. She reminded the Board that there was a memo from her included in the agenda packet for the retreat, and shared that a few slides were prepared to help facilitate the conversation.

Slide #1



Slide #2

[Advisory Board Policy \(last revised May 6, 2025\)](#)

Section III(H)(3)

3. "...the Orange County Board of Commissioners may remove any member of an advisory board for neglect of duty or nonparticipation that becomes problematic to the advisory board's functioning and purpose. Neglect of duty and nonparticipation are defined as follows:

- a. Missing three (3) consecutive meetings; or
- b. Missing twenty-five percent (25%) of meetings within any twelve (12) month period.

4. The advisory board Chair or staff liaison shall notify a member if the member is at risk of being removed pursuant to section III(H)(3).

5. The advisory board Chair or staff liaison shall notify the Clerk to the Board of Orange County Commissioners if a member has violated section III(H)(3)."



Tara May explained that the current policy requires removal for missing 25% of meetings within a 12-month period and suggested changing this to "across 12 meetings" rather than 12 months to accommodate boards meeting less frequently than monthly.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott sought clarification about counting cancelled meetings. She shared that she is aware of concerns from Planning Board members who worried that cancelled meetings would count against them if they'd already missed meetings.

Tara May explained the suggested change would base calculations on meetings actually held.

Chair Hamilton noted the policy language that states the Board "may remove" members for "neglect of duty or non-participation that becomes problematic to the advisory board's functioning and purpose." She questioned whether the board wanted hard rules or to maintain the qualifying language about problematic impact.

Commissioner Bedford said she raised the issue about attendance after noticing Planning Board members with poor attendance during important votes. She said she then requested attendance records for the Planning Board and saw multiple violations of the current policy. She argued against discretionary removal to avoid perceptions of favoritism. She said that in cases where members have a temporary issue, they are always able to reapply, citing an example of a member who resigned due to health issues and then successfully reapplied when he was able.

Tara May explained staff's current practice when attendance violations are noticed. She said that staff reach out to members who have not had satisfactory attendance to identify any potential barriers and offer solutions like virtual attendance options, transportation, etc. She said in most cases, when a member is unable to improve attendance with a county-offered solution, they accept the opportunity to resign instead of being removed. She sought clarity on whether the Board preferred automatic removal or continued flexibility.

Discussion revealed split opinions on "may" versus "will" remove, with some preferring flexibility and others wanting consistency.

Commissioner Carter suggested formalizing a grace period process where staff engage members at risk of removal, offering an opportunity to comply before removal.

Tara May said that she would be happy to suggest some wording to capture that suggestion if the Board agreed.

The board reached consensus on changing "may remove" to "will remove," removing the qualifier, "that becomes problematic to the advisory board's functioning and purpose," modifying the attendance requirement to 25% of meetings held over a 12-meeting period (excluding cancelled meetings), and formalizing staff engagement when members are at risk with a grace period before removal.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott raised whether the Board cared only about members' attendance or also engagement when present.

Commissioners McKee, Fowler, and Greene agreed that engagement was too subjective to define or enforce, with people having different styles of participation.

The Board concluded that attendance and voting constituted sufficient engagement, and identified reappointment decisions as the appropriate time to consider broader participation through recommendation letters and review of meeting minutes.

Slide #3

## Points for Clarification

1. Should an opportunity be given to members who have violated the attendance requirements in the Advisory Board Policy to continue, or should the Clerk's Office simply inform them they will be removed?
2. Should provisions be added to the Advisory Board Policy that speak to the expected engagement of members as a requirement for continued service in addition to the attendance expectations?
3. Should there be language added to the Advisory Board Policy that defines and allows for excused absences that would not count against a member?



Tara May said points 1 and 2 on the slide above were addressed. She asked if there should be a provision for excused absences. She noted that previous versions of the policy included excused versus unexcused absences but did not define the distinction.

Commissioner Bedford strongly opposed differentiating between excused vs. unexcused absences. She felt the reasons behind absences were irrelevant because members' presence is still needed to do the work.

Others agreed, and the board decided against distinguishing excused and unexcused absences.

### **6. Discussion on Housing Advisory Boards**

Blake Rosser, Housing Director, made the following presentation:

Slide #1



## Overview of Housing Advisory Boards

January 16, 2026

- Affordable Housing Advisory Board
- Local Government Affordable Housing Collaborative
- Orange County Housing Authority Board
- Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness Leadership Team
- Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness Executive Team

Blake Rosser reviewed the names of the five Housing “advisory boards,” noting that only one is truly advisory while the others serve different functions.

Slide #2

## Affordable Housing Advisory Board

- Established in 2001 by OC BOCC, after recommendation by Affordable Housing Task Force in 2000
- 15 members representing county demographics, appointed by BOCC
- Purpose is “to investigate, analyze and prioritize affordable housing needs and strategies” for recommendation to BOCC
- Comments on Bond/CIP staff scores, for recommendation to BOCC
- Not mandated

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Blake Rosser indicated that the Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB) is truly an advisory board to the Board of County Commissioners. He said the board has been working on a comprehensive report on affordable housing, reviewing HOME fund investments since the 1990s.

Commissioner Greene asked about the scope of the upcoming report.

Blake Rosser clarified that it surveys all HOME fund spending historically, tracking investments, changes over time, and the status of the projects now.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if other boards have input on the spending of the HOME Funds.

Blake Rosser said the Local Government Affordable Housing Collaborative (the Collaborative) is the federally mandated board, made up of elected officials from the county and each municipality in the county, that reviews and recommends the Annual Action Plan (report to HUD) and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if this board is also working on what the county can do to create the conditions so that affordable housing can be developed here, like zoning regulations, for example.

Blake Rosser said the Land Use Plan touches on that more in describing what land will be available and what parts of the county will be available for development. He said the AHAB touches on broader strategies through the CAPER, which informs what the county's priorities are, and includes feedback from the public. He said the Collaborative also touches on broader county strategy, mostly through funding emphasis, not zoning changes.

Commissioner Carter asked if there is any collaboration between the AHAB and the Collaborative.

Blake Rosser said there is minimal collaboration between the two groups.

Commissioner Carter asked about the AHAB's intended role.

Blake Rosser answered that it was meant to create a community voice for Orange County residents to guide County Commissioners on affordable housing needs.

Commissioner Carter asked which board examines housing gaps over time.

Blake Rosser said none of the boards do currently, though the AHAB could if directed.

Commissioner Bedford asked which boards looked at the \$5 million CIP funds for affordable housing.

Blake Rosser said the CAPER mentions the CIP funds because they are an available community resource. He explained that the purpose of the CAPER is to summarize all the information about all the resources available in order to strategically decide where HOME Funds should be invested.

Slide #3

## Local Government Affordable Housing Collaborative

- Local name for HOME Consortium
- Made up of one elected official from each HOME Consortium municipality (4 total)
- Oversees federal HOME program planning, spending and reporting
- Recommends Annual Action Plans (AAPs) and 5-year Consolidated Plan to BOCC
- Mandated by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

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Community Development Manager  
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Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if this group could include people who are not elected officials.

Blake Rosser said that 4 elected officials are required per the Interlocal Agreement that created this board.

Commissioner Greene provided historical context, explaining the elected official composition exists because HOME funding goes to the county but can be distributed to municipalities, requiring representation from each government. She distinguished this from CDBG money going only to municipalities.

Slide #4

## OC Housing Authority Board

- Established in 2009 so that BOCC would not have to continue serving as Housing Authority Board
- Consists of seven (7) OC residents, including at least one HCV participant, appointed by BOCC
- Oversees the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV/Section 8) program, funded by HUD
- Monitors all HCV processes and approves major policy changes and updates
- Mandated by HUD

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Blake Rosser explained that most housing authorities are standalone entities, but Orange County's operates within county government. Previously, the BOCC itself served as the housing authority board, adjourning regular meetings to convene as the housing authority. In 2009, they established a separate seven-member board, including at least one Section 8 participant, all appointed by the BOCC.

Slide #5

## OCPEH Leadership Team

- Established in 2007 by Interlocal agreement with the four municipalities of Orange County
- Made up of 15 community-appointed members (under advisement from HUD Technical Assistance, governance structure currently in transition)
- Develops and implements policy to prevent and end homelessness in Orange County
- Mandated by HUD for receipt of Continuum of Care (CoC) funding (HUD CoC Program interim rule (24 CFR Part 578))

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OCPEH Manager  
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Blake Rosser reviewed the information on the slide above and noted that this board is being restructured and will soon have 19 members for HUD Compliance.

Chair Hamilton asked if there were other changes that were necessary to comply with HUD requirements.

Blake Rosser explained they're out of compliance primarily because they lack the required broader continuum of care (COC) membership of dozens or hundreds of community members; the leadership team currently serves both functions. He said a September town hall attempted to reinitiate membership discussions.

Commissioner Greene provided historical context, explaining that the Partnership predated becoming the COC, originally created by a large collective to develop the first 10-year Plan to End Homelessness. The group filling the room decided the membership structure with no initial concept of being the COC, which was combined later. The steering committee was renamed "leadership team" by a previous Partnership Coordinator. She questioned whether partnerships typically serve as COCs in this state.

Blake Rosser said there is a decent chance of the name of this group changing.

Slide #6

## OCPEH Executive Team

- Established in 2015 by MOU between OC, Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough
- Made up of one elected official from each municipality
- Oversees hiring and performance of OCPEH Manager, as well as execution of OCPEH 10-year/Strategic Plan
- Mandated by Interlocal MOU

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Blake Rosser reviewed the information on the slide above.

Vice-Chair Fowler pointed out that "Leadership" and "Executive" sound similar.

Blake Rosser said that is part of the issue that will likely lead to the names of the groups changing.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked how much staff time each board takes up.

Blake Rosser estimated that the Affordable Housing Advisory Board and Collaborative each require 3-4 hours monthly; Housing Authority 5-6 hours; Leadership Team 12 hours (most time-intensive with four staff attending); Executive Team about 30 minutes monthly, given quarterly meetings.

## Slide #7

	AHAB	LGAHC (HOME)	OCHA	OCPEH LT	OCPEH ET
<b>Established</b>	2001	1992	2009	2007	2015
<b>Membership</b>	15 resident volunteers	4 elected officials	7 resident volunteers (at least 1 participant)	15 resident volunteers (in transition)	4 elected officials
<b>Work</b>	Advise BOCC on Affordable Housing priorities and strategies	Administer HOME Investment Partnership federal grant program	Administer HUD Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher program	Administer Continuum of Care, develop and oversee homelessness strategic plan	Supervise OCPEH manager and monitor progress toward homelessness strategic plan
<b>Mandated?</b>	No	Yes (HUD)	Yes (HUD)	Yes (HUD, Interlocal)	Yes (Interlocal)



Commissioner Portie-Ascott asked if the mandated boards must remain separate or if any could be consolidated.

Blake Rosser indicated that the Housing Authority must remain separate. He said the Executive Team could potentially combine with the Collaborative given similar composition, though he expressed concern about mixing affordable housing and homelessness missions.

Commissioner Bedford noted practical challenges if combined, requiring the same person to attend Partnership meetings.

Vice-Chair Fowler asked about Mebane's involvement, as they are a naturally occurring option for affordable housing.

Blake Rosser acknowledged they've operated independently with limited substantive engagement, though initial conversations have occurred regarding certain developments and planning issues. He agreed there seemed to be opportunities for greater incorporation.

Commissioner Bedford asked for clarity on the purpose of this presentation at the retreat and questioned the next steps for this conversation.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott said she asked for this presentation to understand what groups are working on housing issues in the face of an affordable housing crisis, and how they are advising the Board on what needs to change.

Blake Rosser said the inherent limitation is that the boards that would most logically be able to advise the Board are the Collaborative and the AHAB, but they are made up of people who are not experts in this topic. He explained that it leaves staff to inform them, however, staff are busy operating programs without time for thorough research, literature reviews, or data

compilation. This capacity issue often leads to hiring outside consultants or relying on work from groups, raising questions about which experts to trust.

Commissioner Greene said the Collaborative used to have a broader mission but was grafted onto serving as the HOME Consortium based on a former Chapel Hill Town Manager's suggestion. She said the Collaborative was meant to foster an understanding of what each jurisdiction is doing to work on affordable housing. She recalled unsuccessful attempts to fund a consultant for a "strategic housing plan" that would have created a coordinated vision.

Blake said that staff can do a better job of bringing that perspective when preparing the meeting agendas. He acknowledged there is an opportunity for more collaboration and conversation between municipalities in these meetings.

Commissioner Carter said, given the need to understand the various efforts and plans happening in each municipality and the county, and how each is addressing the continuum of housing needs and identifying where the gaps are, the Board should take another look at the purpose of the AHAB and reorient it around the mission Commissioner Greene articulated. She asked if the Board thinks it is the right time to do that and if it would be valuable.

Commissioner Bedford pointed out that the members of the AHAB don't have the expertise needed to start or complete that work.

Commissioner Carter said part of the reorientation could be looking at the skill sets that are needed.

Chair Hamilton said she'd like the Board to look at the AHAB's mandate and decide what to do differently. She agreed with Commissioner Bedford that having non-experts do the work would not be successful, and she pointed out that staff have already done a lot of work on affordable housing issues that could be leveraged. She agreed with looking at how to use the AHAB and the other boards most effectively, acknowledging that other elected bodies would have to weigh in on changing the structure of the other boards. She asked if other board members were interested in exploring other options.

Commissioner Greene said she is not in favor of combining the Executive Team with the Collaborative because the purposes of each group are distinct and important. She said the Executive Team was created as a "watchdog" over the larger Partnership to End Homelessness project, and the elected officials who make up that body represent the four funders of the project.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott said she understands that point somewhat but is supportive of looking at how things are done and why they are still done the same way, and if there are better ways to do it.

Commissioner Bedford said the Board needs to have a systems-level discussion about housing in Orange County, and even regionally. She suggested thinking bigger picture about integrated approaches, like the behavioral health task force model, and asked staff to explore that. She said right now, the approach to affordable housing is piecemeal.

Commissioner Portie-Ascott said part of what she hoped to learn from this presentation was which board could move forward with the work identified by James Bryan, staff attorney in the County Attorney's Office, which would allow affordable housing to happen here. She said this information was shared by the County Attorney, John Roberts, with the Board in an email.

Blake said the AHAB could do some of that work if given specific instructions. He said there are other ways to do this work, but he warned that experts can be found to confirm any point of view.

Chair Hamilton said there are economists and urban planners who go back and forth on this issue. She said she hopes the person who is scheduled to come to the half-day retreat on Planning will talk about housing and will be able to answer some of the Board's big questions. She reiterated her concern about tasking general advisory boards with questions requiring expertise, suggesting the board itself needs sufficient understanding to provide direction.

Commissioner Carter emphasized needing both short-term answers for land use planning and ongoing information about housing production, programs, and gaps across all jurisdictions, including Mebane.

Chair Hamilton reiterated the need to review the charge of the AHAB and modify it.

Commissioner Greene said that if the AHAB is going to be the body that addresses the broad mission on affordable housing, it needs to have designated representatives from different municipalities and fields to ensure collaboration between jurisdictions and the needed expertise.

Commissioner Bedford acknowledged that this work is important but may not be worth doing without money to fund affordable housing.

Commissioner Greene said that she would like to see a plan even if there's no money.

Commissioner Bedford said some elected members of various jurisdictions feel this is the purview of the county and are not inclined to work together on this issue.

Vice-Chair Fowler said the Towns are doing housing-related work. She said she doesn't want to duplicate efforts, but doesn't think work on affordable housing can ever be overdone. She mentioned that there was a gaps analysis done within the past few years, and there were gaps in every part of the continuum of housing needs, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't try to fix them. She expressed appreciation for this conversation and thoughts about how to make the AHAB more useful.

The conversation concluded with recognition that the boards need clear direction from commissioners, structures may need modification for effectiveness and efficiency, and ongoing discussion would continue as the board addresses housing as a strategic priority.

Slide #8

## Orange County Housing Department

300 W. Tryon Street  
Hillsborough

and

2501 Homestead Road  
Chapel Hill

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## 7. Final Comments/Wrap-Up

Commissioner Carter expressed appreciation for the puzzle activity.

Chair Hamilton thanked staff for their support in making the retreat happen, and members of the public who attended. She thanked commissioners for their valuable input throughout the day and observed that she had heard cooperation, collegiality, collaboration, and community demonstrated throughout their discussions. She wished everyone a good weekend and meaningful celebration of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday on Monday, sharing a quote she had used in a WCHL interview: "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same

boat now." Chair Hamilton reminded commissioners that the next board meeting would be on Tuesday.

**Adjournment**

A motion was made by Commissioner Fowler, seconded by Commissioner Greene, to adjourn the meeting at 2:50 pm.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS**

Jean Hamilton, Chair

Recorded by Laura Jensen, Clerk to the Board, and Tara May, Deputy Clerk to the Board

Submitted for approval by Laura Jensen, Clerk to the Board