

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Monday, October 6, 2025

9:00 A.M. Work Session

MINUTES

Place: Commissioners' Chambers, Second Floor, Durham County Government
Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC

Present: Chair Nida Allam, Vice Chair Dr. Mike Lee, and Commissioners Michelle Burton,
Wendy Jacobs and Stephen Valentine

Presider: Chair Nida Allam

Zoom Hybrid
Participants: 4

Citizen Comments

The Board of County Commissioners provided a 30-minute comment period to allow Durham County citizens an opportunity to speak. Citizens were given the option to deliver their Citizen Comments in-person or virtually via email to the Clerk no later than Sunday, August 3rd, at 12 noon.

Antoinette Hawes, spoke regarding the increase in her property taxes and expressed dissatisfaction with the service of the County Commissioners. She also voiced concern about being dismissed from a Durham Social Services (DSS) Board meeting.

The Board of County Commissioners expressed condolences on the passing of DeWarren K. Langley, the Executive Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Foundation, Inc., and a dedicated citizen of Durham County. The Board shared that a proclamation would be honored at a future Regular Session.

Consent Agenda

The Board was requested to review the following Consent Agenda items for the October Regular Sessions.

25-0510 Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 26BCC021 Public Health to Recognize \$3,124 from the NC DHHS Division of Public Health Epidemiology/Communicable Disease Branch to Expand Disease Surveillance

Dr. Rodney Jenkins, DrPH, MHA, Public Health Director, stated adult COVID vaccines were available and currently waiting on approval from the CDC for adolescent vaccines. He continued to say, due to the government shutdown; it was less likely that DHHS would receive adolescent vaccines. Dr. Jenkins added that 90 percent of adults who received COVID vaccines went to their Primary Care Provider (PCP).

25-0513 Approve Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 26OPA002 for the Opioid Fund to Reallocate \$20,373 of Previously Approved Opioid Settlement Funds from the Syringe Project Strategy to the Naloxone Project Strategy

Dr. Jenkins clarified additional funds were needed for Naloxone due to the increase in demand. He added two (2) new Naloxone machines would be installed – one (1) at the Main Library and another location to be determined at a later date.

25-0526 Approval of Capital Project Amendment No.26CPA07 and Budget Ordinance Amendment No.26BCC022 Decreasing the Open Space & Farmland Preservation Capital Project (4730DC083) by \$80,300 and Transferring that Funding to the General Fund to Support the Purchase of a 25-Acre Conservation Easement of Tilley Farm from Wesley and Cristan Poole, as well as Recognizing \$213,000 from the Army National Guard's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to Support the Purchase of the Tilley Farm Conservation Easement for a Total Cost of \$293,300.

Celeste Burns, Open Space and Real Estate Manager, explained the REPI Program supported the protection of military installations. Durham County had a cooperative agreement with the National Guard to protect a one-mile buffer for Camp Butner.

25-0527 Approve Committing Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Rebates and Incentive Funding Toward Projects that Further the County's Renewable Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Goals

The Board requested annual reports pertaining to the County's sustainability plans and goals.

Directive:

- Staff to provide annual reports pertaining to the County's sustainability plans and goals.

25-0538 Authorization to Amend the Design Contract with RND Architects, PA for Design Development and Construction Administration Services for the Stanford L. Warren Interior Upgrades Project in the Amount of \$14,470 for a Total Revised Contract Amount of \$242,669.

Joel T. Jones, Project Manager, confirmed that this contract amendment covered remediation of a prior leak discovered before the library's reopening. The leak was caused by improper application of the waterproofing membrane leading to water seeping into the lower-level stairwell.

There were no questions regarding the items below:

25-0514 Approval to Extend the Existing Interlocal Cooperation Agreement with the City of Durham to Contract for a Joint Crisis Communication Plan to December 31, 2026

25-0516 Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 26BCC0019 Public Health to Recognize \$6,000 from the NC DHHS Division of Public Health Epidemiology Section/Communicable Disease Branch to Implement the Electronic Test Ordering and Results System

25-0521 Approve Memorandum of Agreement with Central Pines Regional Council (CPRC) in the amount of \$1,861.78 to provide planning and technical assistance for the Triangle Region Solid Waste Consortium

25-0535 Agreement – Revisions to Historic Preservation Commission's Interlocal Cooperation Agreement

Discussion Items

25-0490 Public Defender Office Organization Update

The Board received an operational update from the Durham County Public Defender's Office, which served as the primary legal advocate for individuals who could not afford private legal representation when facing criminal charges. The office's core mission centered on representing financially qualifying indigent defendants across the full spectrum of criminal cases, from minor misdemeanor offenses to the most serious felony charges. This comprehensive legal service encompassed a diverse caseload that included driving while impaired cases, drug-related offenses, assault and domestic violence matters, property crimes and theft charges, traffic violations carrying potential incarceration, and major felony prosecutions, including violent criminal cases.

Questions were raised regarding how families were impacted by the time required to be reunited with their loved ones. Dawn Baxton, Public Defender, shared that reunification often took so long due to heavy dockets and limited court sessions. She highlighted the “Safe Babies Court” program, which assisted in the reunification by providing parents with necessary resources. Ms. Baxton also noted that the Family Drug Treatment Court previously improved family reunification timelines but was defunded.

The family drug treatment court was designed for families or mothers who utilized drugs and/or homelessness and lost their children to Child Protection Services.

The Board requested calculations on how much longer reunification took since the program’s closure, and to have conversations pertaining to the cost of reopening family justice courts. County Manager Hager stated staff would investigate historical costs associated with family justice courts.

Ms. Baxton shared that in FY 2024–25, the court disposed of 8,408 cases, compared to 10,000–15,000 pre-COVID, and operated with about 25 attorneys—fewer than Wake County’s 30. County Manager Hager stated that a courthouse assessment may be needed to determine whether office reconfiguration could accommodate additional staff.

There was discussion regarding the role of public defenders pertaining to involuntary commitments. They were to represent people who were in custody and entitled to a hearing and had no formal role in requesting those individuals being placed at a recovery response center. The judges assigned to the involuntary committed cases could honor those requests.

Ms. Baxton shared that public defenders lacked dedicated physical storage space for files and shared facilities with District Attorneys. She added that juvenile, abuse and neglect, and murder files must be retained permanently, while other files must be kept for five (5) to seven (7) years.

Directive:

- **Staff to provide calculations on family reunification timelines since the Family Drug Treatment Court ended.**
- **Staff to provide historical cost data associated with family justice courts.**

25-0533 Durham-To-Roxboro Rail Trail Presentation

The Board received a presentation on the Durham-to-Roxboro Rail Trail Plan to convert an 18-mile segment of inactive rail corridor within Durham County into a multi-use trail. Combined with approximately 8 miles of additional trail in Person County, the project would create a continuous 26-mile network linking downtown Durham to the City of Roxboro. The trail would support recreation, biking and walking for transportation, tourism, and economic development - while also celebrating the corridor's cultural and natural history.

The planning process included a study of the existing conditions along the corridor, community and stakeholder engagement, coordination with local and regional partners, evaluation of trail design ideas, and analysis of funding and implementation options to support the project's long-term success.

Caroline Stahlschmidt, Senior Project Manager, Destination by Design, answered questions regarding how funding was calculated for different sections of the corridor. She stated there would be a detailed preliminary budget presented in the final plan with documentation of the different sections, including if the trail heads and the connections in the segments would impact on the cost.

Ellen Beckmann, AICP, Transportation Director, shared they were working with the NCDOT acquisition schedule in mid-November and stated a draft funding agreement would need to be reviewed before being brought back to the Board for adoption. She added the transportation department was also working with the State Park Department for (2) grants.

Ms. Stahlschmidt clarified the asset map would be more detailed in the written plan to show the areas (schools, public greenways, etc.) with the supported maps.

25-0536 Informational – Consolidated Annexation – Hamlin Reserve (Z2400046A/BDG2400020)

The Board was requested to review and provide comments on the proposed annexation located outside of the Urban Growth Boundary. The comments received from the Board of County Commissioners would be included in the agenda item presented for City Council public hearing consideration.

Andrew Lester, Principal Planner, shared a Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) was conducted for all annexations; regarding how police could serve, the fire department, solid waste, and transportation. He added the FIA could be shared to showcase those numbers.

Mr. Lester stated that even though the annexation was outside of the Urban Growth Boundary, each annexation zoning was handled on a case-by-case basis. Applications could be received and reviewed through the County; however, it was the City Council's discretion of approval.

The Board emphasized the staff report stated that the rezoning was not consistent with the comprehensive land use plan nor future place type map, with three (3) out of seven (7) inconsistencies within the comprehensive land use policies. The Board also requested the cost benefit analysis.

Andrew Lester, Principal Planner, clarified staff had preliminary conversations with EMS, however they were not included in the cost benefit analysis. The Board suggested the County facilitates a meeting with EMS and the planning staff to be included in the cost benefit analysis.

Discussions were held regarding whether the County had any input or authority surrounding advocating for infrastructure changes. Mr. Lester shared majority of infrastructure improvements were driven by private investments, so should the annexation be approved and site plan be brought before the planning staff, the applicant would be required to make road improvements only to adjacent properties. Pertaining to general infrastructure projects, majority went through the State STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program) Process, which was for larger projects and included public engagement. Mr. Lester added within the City, Capital Improvement Projects that were debated by City Council but created another avenue for upgrading infrastructures.

The Board requested data on population growth and the availability of services for the residents.

Directive:

- **Staff to provide Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA).**
- **Staff to the cost benefit analysis.**
- **Staff meet with EMS to be included in the cost benefit analysis.**
- **Staff to provide data on population growth and the availability of services for the residents.**

25-0541 FY 2025-26 Budget Update and Framework for FY 2026-27 Budget Development

The Board received a presentation on the budget landscape for FY 2025-26 and the proposed approaches for developing the FY 2026-27 budget. The presentation outlined the planning framework for both operating and capital budgets. Staff explained approaches to evaluate core budget operations, refine Key Performance Indicators, and prepare for potential budget adjustments that may be needed due to economic changes or reduced funding.

Discussions were held regarding cost saving measures. County Manager Hager, shared staff, would need to investigate what was in the current framework.

The Board expressed the need for weekly check-ins related to Public Health and DSS to see how services the County offered may affect residents due to potential financial cuts.

John Keefer, Director of Organizational Effectiveness, shared the strategic planning goals creation process would stay the same as staff reviewed the updated plans, with the focus being on more outcome measures. He added there would be a change in the budget books to provide other opportunities to decisions makers and to show the residents how the County was doing and how tax dollars were being spent. County Manager Hager stated staff would follow up with an updated framework in December.

Adjournment

Commissioner Burton moved, seconded by Commissioner Vice Chair Lee, to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sk. Wardrick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shaunecie Wardrick
Administrative Assistant