

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ALAMANCE COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS FOR ALAMANCE COUNTY**

**June 10, 2025, 9:30 AM
Agriculture Building Auditorium
209 N. Graham-Hopedale Rd
Burlington, NC 27217**

Board Members Present: Chairman John Paisley Jr
Vice-Chair Steve Carter
Commissioner Pamela Thompson
Commissioner Ed Priola
Commissioner Kelly Allen

Call to Order - Chairman Paisley

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance - Commissioner Allen

Budget Work Session Introduction - County Manager York

County Manager York said that the county had seen increased funding for mandated services and decreased funding for discretionary services since her first recommended budget in the fiscal year, 2023-2024.

County Department Questions

County Manager York said that the recommended budget proposed a \$125,000 reduction in funding for the airport.

Dan Daniele, Burlington-Alamance Airport Authority President, said they were requesting the same amount of funding as previous years. He stated that the county had agreed to a five-year, \$2 million agreement to fund the airport. He stated that \$647,000 was returned to the county in taxes per year.

County Manager York said the airport received an annual support of \$259,698 from a pot of money that matches grants. The airport received an annual support of \$400,000 from an economic incentive pot based on a 5-year agreement that ends in 2028.

County Manager York explained that Commissioner Priola asked to add \$175,000 in revenue from the Board of Elections. Commissioner Priola said that revenue projections from previous years showed that \$175,000 was a reasonable revenue projection from the Board of Elections.

County Manager York said that the proposed merit pay reduction was being budgeted at 2.5%, and Commissioner Priola had suggested cutting it to 1.5%. She stated that cutting it to 1.5% would save the county \$783,093.

County Manager York said that Commissioner Priola was proposing a reduction in staff. She stated that it saved the county an estimated \$1.1 million. The proposed reduction removed 5 full-time employees from the tax department, 6 full-time employees from the library branches, and 2 full-time employees from the County Manager's Office.

Vice-Chair Carter asked about the potential cost savings of contracting Vincent Valuations versus using county staff for future property revaluations. Brad Fowler, Alamance County Tax Administrator, said that per the county's analysis, the Vincent Valuations contract would cost more than if the tax department was fully staffed.

Vice-Chair asked about the costs of using county employees for property revaluations. County Manager York said there was an issue with a talent recruitment shortage. She said that finding qualified tax appraisers to work for the county was a problem.

Commissioner Priola asked how many positions in the tax department were vacant. Mr. Fowler said there were about 10 positions. Commissioner Priola asked how many of those positions were critical. Mr. Fowler said it was all of them.

Commissioner Priola asked whether that many positions in the tax department were needed for daily services and the property revaluations. Mr. Fowler said that in addition to the daily customer service tasks of the tax department, the tax department reviewed 12,000 permits annually, reviewed 2,000 cases of split-rate property taxes annually, and reviewed 8,200 of qualified sales of properties annually. Commissioner Priola asked if the tax department staff shortages in the last property revaluations resulted in the county not getting the job done. County Manager York confirmed that was the case.

Commissioner Thompson said that the tax department did more than just collect money. She emphasized the importance of contracting Vincent Valuations to conduct property revaluations.

Commissioner Allen said it was important to get local tax appraisers involved in the property revaluations. Mr. Fowler said that the tax department was doing a heck of a job despite being short-staffed.

Vice-Chair Carter asked about the costs, and county staff needed to replace Vincent Valuations. Mr. Fowler said it depended on the salaries the county offered to tax appraisers. He estimated that the county would need about 9 to 10 tax appraisers.

Susana Goldman, Library Director of Alamance County Public Libraries, provided the hours of operation for the library branches across the county.

Vice-Chair Carter asked how many employees were involved in the mobile library. Ms. Goldman said there were two part-time drivers that got support from an additional staff member based on their specialization i.e. children's specialist.

Commissioner Priola asked about the need for 17 part-time employees. He said it seemed inefficient having to orient a part-time employee every time they came in. Ms. Goldman said the 17 part-time employees did not receive benefits.

Commissioner Priola asked about the costs of travel for training and conferences for senior library staff. Ms. Goldman said that occasionally staff will travel to a conference once a year. She said that she had traveled to state conferences.

Vice-Chair Carter mentioned that an estimated 330,000 people visited the libraries every year. He asked about the number of library cards issued per year. Ms. Goldman answered that in the last fiscal year of 2023-2024, 1,407 new library cards were issued, and the total number of library cards issued was 78,000.

Chairman Paisley said he had calls about expanding digital services. Ms. Goldman said that the libraries could not keep up with the demand for digital services.

Chairman Paisley asked about how much of the budget was used on digital services. County Manager York said that Ms. Goldman had requested an additional \$15,000 for digital services. Ms. Goldman said that the total budget for digital services was \$105,000.

Chairman Paisley asked about the number of branch managers. Ms. Goldman said there were four branch managers.

Commissioner Thompson spoke about having the library as a public place for people to do different activities. She mentioned that Burlington Police Chief Balog had spoken with her about the downtown officer checking on the downtown businesses and the library.

Chairman Paisley asked Bruce Walker, Assistant County Manager, about his pending retirement in September. Mr. Walker spoke about his 29 years in local government and when he first came to the county.

County Manager York addressed the proposed funding for the County Manager's Office. She mentioned that cutting positions in the County Manager's Office would result in 25 departments being managed by two managers instead of four managers. She stated that when she began as county manager, positions at the County Manager's Office were being funded in a non-transparent manner. To be more transparent, positions were now being fully funded in the County Manager's Office budget.

County Manager York stated that the proposed budget reduced capital projects from \$3.9 to \$1.5 million, which cut \$2.4 million from the capital funds. She said that the proposed reduction hindered funding for computer technology, removed facility improvements, withheld equipment

requested by EMS and the Sheriff's Office, and removed replacing vehicles for emergency services.

County Manager York mentioned that the proposed budget removed \$25,000 to the City of Burlington transit, restored \$150,000 to Crossroads and Family Abuse Services, restored \$125,000 to the airport, and restored \$125,000 to the Alamance County Rescue Unit.

Commissioner Priola asked County Attorney Stevens if the county required non-profits to disclose their finances. Mr. Stevens responded that the county can and does.

Follow-Up Questions for the Budget Team

Commissioner Priola had some clarifying questions regarding the courthouse expansion project.

Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, gave an update on the next steps for the courthouse expansion project. He said that the county had chosen an architect and would present a contract at the next Board meeting.

Commissioner Priola said a flat budget according to the county manager would be \$4.2 million, about \$300,000 less than previously mentioned. County Manager York said it was a difference of \$203,000. She said that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) interest reduced the projected property tax revenue needed.

Commissioner Allen said the county had received less in sales tax than anticipated. Susan Evans, Finance Officer, said she did not feel comfortable increasing the projected sales tax revenues based on reductions in the hold harmless revenues.

Commissioner Priola suggested reducing merit pay to 1.5% for 6 months to get an assessment of the sales tax revenues.

Chairman Paisley said he liked merit pay. He said that the Board could not speculate what was going to happen in 6 months.

Commissioner Thompson asked whether the salary market study included merit pay. County Manager York said that it was separate.

Vice-Chair asked about the percentage of low-performing employees. County Manager York said that the county tracked that information, but did not have that information on hand.

Commissioner Allen asked whether new employees with low performance were given a second chance to come up to par. County Manager York said that the county did with coaching and performance improvement plans.

Commissioner Priola said he did not mind dipping into the fund balance rather than pressing taxpayers with a tax increase. Ms. Evans said that she would not recommend using the fund balance for reoccurring costs.

Chairman Paisley asked about what could be cut or added if the proposed budget was 2 cents instead of 1.59 cent. County Manager York said that if the property tax rate went up to 2 cents it would result in an additional \$1.082 million in funding. Rebecca Crawford, Budget and Management Services Director, said that it would restore funding to the vacant positions and non-profits.

Vice-Chair Carter said he did not see this year's financial situation being as dire as predicted. He said that the county could use the fund balance to minimize the impact on the taxpayers. Vice-Chair mentioned that removing \$10 million from ABSS operations would be a band-aid due to the year after year needs of ABSS. He said that a resolution to get a quarter cent sales tax referendum could justify not removing \$10 million from the ABSS operational budget next year. Mr. Carter said that removing \$10 million from ABSS in the proposed budget puts the county at odds with ABSS.

Commissioner Priola said that the projected revenue of \$175,000 from the Board of Elections was a prudent and reasonable amount. This amount could fund or contribute to Crossroads or the Rescue Unit.

At 12:52 pm Chairman Paisley recessed the meeting until 2:30 pm.

At 2:36 pm the meeting was reconvened.

Proposed Changes to Recommended Budget

County Manager York recapped the changes to the calculator, the 2-cent property tax increase suggested by Chairman Paisley, and the fund balance levels.

Ms. Crawford said that she was happy to update any changes with the calculator. She reviewed some proposed adjustments.

Scenario 1

Reduce budgeted merit pay from 2.5% to 1.5% (pay for "exceeds expectations" only) - \$757,544

Reduce staff (Tax -5.0 FTE, Library -6.0 FTE, Administration -2.0 FTE) -\$1,100,000

Reallocate \$25,000 from City of Burlington Transit to Crossroads \$0

Reduce transfers from the General Fund to the County Capital Fund from \$3,921,019 to \$1,521,019 -\$2,400,000

Restore funding for Crossroads and Family Abuse Services +\$150,000

Restore airport funding +\$125,000

Eliminate 8 positions from county government - \$648,000

Scenario 2

Increase property tax by a total of 2 cents (.489) +1,082,336

Restore funding to the airport +\$125,000

Restore funding to the Rescue Unit +\$125,000

Restore funding to Family Abuse Services +\$75,000

Restore funding to Crossroads +\$75,000

Restore economic development incentives +\$50,000

Restore frozen positions at 10 months only and eliminated positions +\$632,336

Scenario 3

Increase fund balance +\$4,000,000

Restore County Capital Improvement Plan +\$4,000,000 or

Increase ABSS's Capital by \$4 million +\$4,000,000 for a total of \$8 million

Ms. Evans said these were rough estimates and would not have the final numbers until the audit was completed.

Allen Gant, Chairman of Glen Raven, said that Glen Raven had been in Alamance County for 145 years and was present on six continents, employing over 3,000 people. He said Glen Raven had invested \$250 million during the COVID-19 pandemic to upgrade its facilities and those of its employees worldwide. He stated that the Board's predecessors chose not to invest. He said that the Board should have the courage to invest in the county's future. Mr. Gant suggested that increasing the property tax rate to 7 cents would bring the county closer to meeting its needs.

Commissioner Allen stated that it was important to trust the opinion of the County Manager's Office.

Chairman Paisley emphasized that the county was a council-manager form of government.

Commissioner Thompson asked what it would look like to increase property taxes by 7 cents.

Commissioner Allen inquired about a property tax increase that did not utilize a significant portion of the fund balance.

Commissioner Priola said that he was not in favor of a tax increase.

Vice-Chair Carter said that the county had long term accumulated needs. He stated that he received a call from a county resident to not raise property taxes. He mentioned that the county's low tax rate did not keep up with the needs of the county.

Adjournment

Commissioner Allen, seconded by Vice-Chair Carter, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:04 PM.

John Paisley, Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board