

January 16, 2025

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a recessed meeting on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at 9:00 AM in the Commissioners' Room, 116 Adams Street, Plymouth, NC. Commissioners Tracey A. Johnson, Ann C. Keyes, Carol V. Phelps, John C. Spruill and Julius Walker, Jr. were in attendance. Also, present were County Manager/ County Attorney Curtis S. Potter, Assistant County Manager, Jason Squires, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett and County Finance Officer Missy Dixon.

Chair Phelps called the meeting to order.

Various Department Heads came to speak to the Commissioners.

Randy Fulford—Recreation Director

If Recreation gets the gym at the old Plymouth High School (PHS), the NC High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) wants Washington County to start hosting tournaments.

He also feels that having Recreation and the Senior Center merged together will help in being able to write grants to enhance both departments.

Commissioner Spruill asked what is being done for outreach to the public. Mr. Fulford said Ms. Kneiper (CMO Assistant) puts things on the County Facebook site and in the Beacon, along with flyers that can be picked up from the gym.

Commissioner Spruill asked if he reaches out to the school system? Mr. Fulford said yes, and also his wife works for the school system and she spreads the word.

Commissioner Spruill said he appreciates Mr. Fulford looking for opportunities to bring tournaments to the County which in turn brings people that buy gas and food, which helps the County.

Mr. Potter asked if Mr. Fulford would consider using the Roper Gym. Mr. Fulford said it is more centrally located, but it is not in good condition. He does not feel there is sufficient space in Roper. PHS would be a better choice.

Mr. Potter said he will be meeting with the school system and hashing out such details. Mr. Fulford said he needs to know by February 14, 2025 if the gym & fields will be available so he can let the NCHSAA know if we can host tournaments.

Commissioner Walker said he feels that Roper Gym is in the center of the County and may be more accessible.

Mr. Potter asked about the Pea Ridge Park. Mr. Fulford said he needs to see about building dugouts there to be able to have softball there.

Mr. Potter said he thinks the standalone gym in Roper would be good for pickleball.

Dora Bell—Elections Director

There are some protests still going on from the November 2024 elections. All the counts came back the same.

She went on to say that their building was assessed by the State. They did not like the lighting. Maintenance is working on the lights. Regarding security/safety, they did not like that the Director would not have a way out if something was going on at the front of the building.

Other items they noted:

Furniture—she inherited the furniture that is there, needs some more functional pieces
Lighting inside the building is too dark.

Ms. Bell said she feels the need for an increase in pay for her and her part-time employees. Pay is different in the counties due to the amount of voters there are. Discussion ensued regarding a full-time employee—possibly a “floater”.

There will be a Municipal and County primary in FY26.

She also noted that she doesn't have a panic button if she were to encounter a situation.

She said she has no issues with BCCC administration or staff.

She would like to have a window in here office.

Harley Spruill—911 Director (and Chief Deputy Arlo Norman)

Mr. Potter gave Ms. Spruill a brief overview of how the budget process works.

Ms. Spruill said she is finishing up the 911 radio grant—getting invoices straight to turn into Finance.

911 has gone to 12 hr. shifts. This will cut back on overtime.

She said she is hoping our 911 will qualify for a 4th position (an active console)—which they could house after they move to the EMTOC building. Ms. Spruill said she is doing admin work and taking calls.

Chief Deputy Norman gave Ms. Spruill props for stepping up when the County needed her after the previous 911 Director left. She has a lot of desire to do this job and do it well.

Mr. Squires said he hears calls in his office over the radio from the Planning Office and can tell that things with 911 have drastically improved since Ms. Spruill stepped into the job.

Lance Swindell— EM Coordinator

Mr. Swindell anticipates acquiring a storage facility. He has been keeping equipment in other areas of different County departments.

Other items in his upcoming budget include:

Trailer & forklift--\$80 - \$100K

The recuse boat should be ready in about 3 weeks (command upfit, trailer, motor)

EMTG –training grant is a 50/50 match, \$20,695

Applied for grant for Hyper-Reach cost of \$14,600
Increase in maintenance funds, added equipment for deployment (radio)
Fuel expenses are increasing due to using more fuel (when the boat gets in the water)
Wants to be able to do tabletop exercises (as recommended by Commissioner Johnson)
New radio tower location and design

Sheriff Johnny Barnes/Chief Deputy Arlo Norman—Sheriff’s Office

Sheriff Barnes distributed paperwork entitled “Things to Know About Becoming or Being a Deputy Sheriff” including salaries for our Sheriff’s Office employees, starting salaries and starting salaries from surrounding counties. Discussion ensued. Our Deputies are currently backing up the Plymouth Police Department when needed. They are not compensated from the Town of Plymouth. They still get their pay, etc. from the County. The County is accruing overtime/comp time while doing this. Mr. Potter said the salary issue needs to get resolved in the next couple of months...not wait until FY26. Discussion ensued. Mr. Potter said he may be able to bring issue before the board in March.

Two cars (SUVs) are needed in this year’s budget for the Sheriff’s Office.

Renee’ Collier—Senior Center Director

See presentation below.



Budget FY25 Issues

- Contracted Employment of Caregiver Liaison
 - Riverlight Transit PT
- Stopped Vendor Spot @ Artisan Market (Donations)
 - Time involved
 - Price changes
- Transportation Struggles
- Unexpected NCDIT Grant
 - New Line Item Created
- ROAP Funds
 - Unable to expend all FY25 allotment from DSS

Plans for FY26

- Continue programming for Lunch participants
 - Transit Participants / Less Agile
- Movement towards more independent activities
 - Ceramics/Painting/Jewelry/Game Room/
 - More Fee Based Activities for higher quality programs
- Merge under Umbrella of Recreation
 - Senior Center activities age-specific
 - Create Recreation Programs for all ages – possible instructors
- ROAP Funds
 - Use ROAP for \$4500 towards Overnight Trip(s) = Travel Company
 - \$1500 towards day trips = GAS
- Technology Based Programming
 - Offer Computer Access for members
 - Table/Smartphone based classes
- Meal Program
 - Increase to County Contribution
- Marketing Efforts to Community
 - Recreation Merger
 - Services Available
- Possible Move
 - New Place – Reset of Programming





Needs for FY26

- **ROAP Trip Funding Reimbursement**
 - Increase to Senior Center Travel Line
 - Travel Company
 - Regular Day Trips
- **Need for Instructors**
 - Senior Center General Purpose
 - Invoice Based Instructors – no contract if possible
- **Move**
 - Space Requirements Certification for April 2028 =
 - Specific space to facilitate goals

Merger & Move with Recreation

MERGER

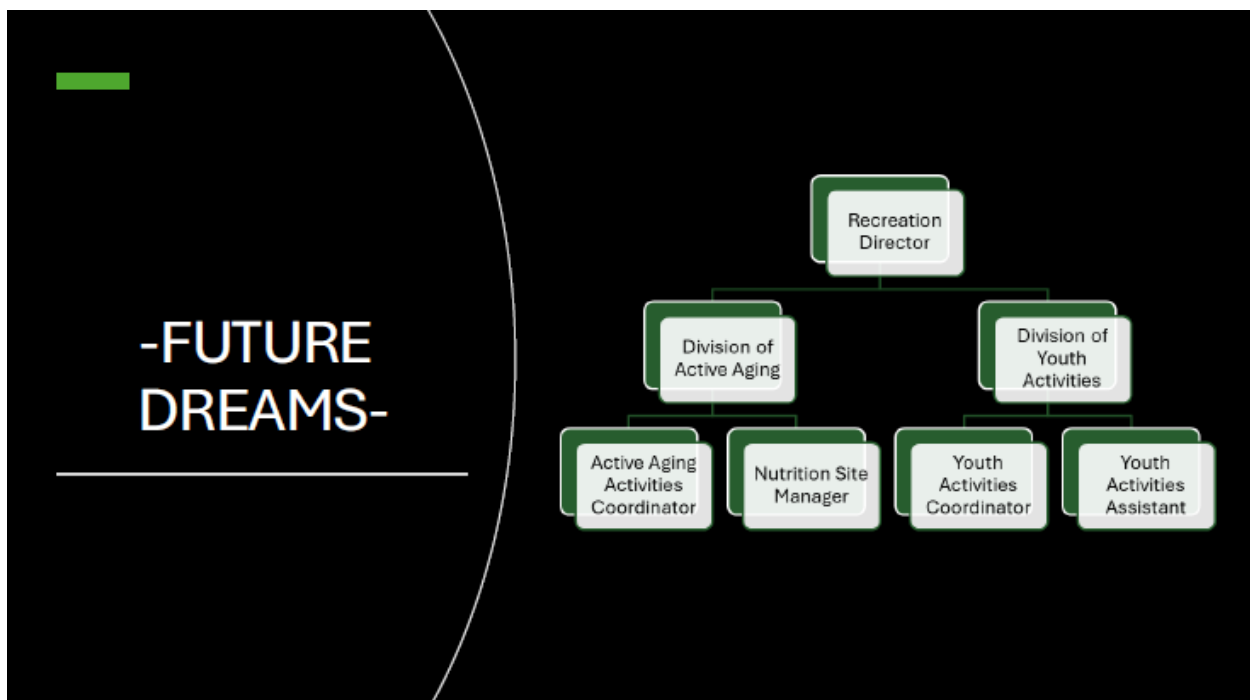
- Senior Center under umbrella of Recreation
- PRO FORMA
- Financials unaffected
- Continue Mutual Working Relationship
- Benefit from shared programming
- Benefit from possible grants

MOVE WITH RECREATION

- Create more opportunities for citizens
- Create hub for Recreation Department and Senior Center info
- Learn from Recreation Director
- Opportunity to share resources more efficiently

Next 1-3 Years?

- Use Future Move to Adjust Programming to meet Needs of More Diverse Group
 - More independent based programming
 - More afternoon & evening programs
 - Large Group Trips via Travel Companies
- Change Name with once Merged & Moved
 - Change name with move- "Division of Active Aging"
- More community-based fundraisers & marketing
 - Reach out to community to get feedback from non-participants
- Prepare for possible transition or retirement of staff members
 - Better to proactive for obvious changes in staff rather than being reactive



She note that the County needs a minimum of 4000 sq ft for the Senior Center for certification in April 2028.

Ms. Collier also feels the merger and move with Recreation would be advantageous to the County and likes the idea of the newly merged departments to be in Roper.

Clerk of Court—Keith Phelps

See email from Mr. Phelps below.

I am writing you concerning a dire staffing situation in this office. I have been informed that the temporary Deputy Clerk position in this office will not be funded after

January 31, 2025, so I will be losing an essential position. The temporary Deputy Clerk serves as the primary cashier and is who currently receipts payment of child support purge payments, fines, and court costs, provides front counter coverage in the civil division, processes filings in Small Claims Court and provides general coverage elsewhere in the office. This staff member has mastered the Enterprise Justice software, which allows citizens to be served in a timely manner in filing Small Claims cases and paying money as ordered by the Court. The Washington County Clerk of Superior Court's Office is a small office, with five non-temporary positions and one temporary position as well as me. This office is physically divided, in that the office is separated by a public accessible hallway in the Washington County Courthouse, with two (non-temporary positions) staff members in the criminal division and four (three non-temporary positions and one temporary position) staff members in the civil division, which also serves as the cashier station. My private office, which is in the criminal division, is where estate and special proceedings matters are filed, processed and most hearings for these matters are held. The staff members in this office wear multiple hats due to the workload of this office and the need to segregate duties in the financial work of this office. The financial team of this office consists of one bookkeeper, two head cashiers, two cashiers (one of whom is the temporary Deputy Clerk) and one back-up cashier, who is also a criminal staff member. As you can see the financial team consists of my entire staff.

Enterprise Justice in the courtroom setting requires the use of two courtroom clerks to process judgments/orders, enter in financial data for payments and handle other clerical business of the Court. Currently, I have two criminal staff members (one of whom serves as the backup cashier) to provide coverage at criminal/traffic sessions of District Court and two civil staff members (one of whom serves as the secondary cashier) to provide coverage at civil/child support sessions of District Court. If a Deputy Clerk position is lost, then I will be unable to send two clerks to provide courtroom coverage for traffic, criminal, civil and child support sessions of District Court as one of the two clerks who is also a cashier must be in the office to receipt payments of child support purge payments, fines and court costs, provide front counter coverage in the civil division and process filings in Small Claims Court, which will result in a massive backlog in Washington County District Court. Further, a massive backlog may result in the exodus of longtime staff members, which will only add to the backlog. Please know that I am not making threats, but stating what I fear will be a certainty if this office loses a Deputy Clerk position. Additionally, to operate this office with only one cashier is a heading for disaster. If sole cashier is out unexpectedly due to illness or injury, then there will be no one available to receipt payments or I will have to serve as the cashier. A few years ago, I was having to serve as the cashier while attempting to conduct a hearing in an estate matter and had to take a recess to receipt a child support purge payment. As stated previously, this office is physically divided by a public accessible hallway, so I had to take a recess, walk across the hallway to the cashier station, receipt the child support purge payment, process the child support purge transmittal form, go back into the hallway, get stopped in the hallway by a citizen with a question, get back into my private office and regain my thoughts to resume the hearing, while the parties to the hearing had been sitting for over thirty minutes. Having to halt the proceeding before me, I felt was an injustice to those that were appearing before me and a violation of my obligation as a judicial official to provide justice without unnecessary delay.

I am the sole person in the Estates, Special Proceedings and Civil Superior Court Divisions as I simply do not have enough staff members to cover these areas. On

Tuesdays, when there is a criminal/traffic session of District Court, I am in the office alone, which requires me to answer the telephone and handle walk-in traffic, all while attempting to handle estates and special proceeding matters in addition to my administrative duties as the Clerk of Superior Court. A few months ago, one of the two criminal staff members was out with COVID AND the flu, which required me to serve as one of the two courtroom clerks at a criminal/traffic session of District Court. Since there was no one to provide coverage for criminal, estates and special proceeding matters, I was forced to completely shut down these divisions as I did not have enough staff members to staff these areas and individuals that needed to transact criminal, estates and special proceedings business were turned away. Again, this office is a small office, where the staff members wear multiple hats and one staff member being out of the office can create a strain on the work of this office. Further, staff members should be able to be out due to illness or vacation without worrying about the strain they are creating by being out of the office. I am very concerned that if I lose a Deputy Clerk position, this office is heading for collapse.

I have contacted my legislative delegation via email for assistance as well as to request a meeting with them when I visited the General Assembly with other elected Clerks of Superior Court in May and received no response. My plan is to begin making telephone calls to my legislative delegation when the General Assembly convenes on January 8, 2025. On December 11, myself, and Clerk Goodwin from Chowan County, who has a temporary Deputy Clerk position that is essential to the function of his office, traveled to the NC Judicial Center to meet with NC AOC Director Boyce and Deputy Director Kyzer about the dire staffing situation in our respective offices. Clerk Goodwin and I were appreciative for Director Boyce and Deputy Director Kyzer taking the time out of their busy schedules to meet with us. We also expressed our appreciation for the temporary Deputy Clerk positions in our offices. Director Boyce informed Clerk Goodwin and myself that the financial resources to fund temporary positions were depleted, offered suggestions, such as cross-training of staff, which is used by this office as well as the use of "Magi-clerks", which is not an option as the three Magistrates in Washington County have been renominated and reappointed for a four-year term. As the Clerk of Superior Court, who is elected by the citizens of Washington County, I feel that I have a duty to provide an efficient District and Superior Court to the citizens of Washington County and to do otherwise would be a disservice to them as well as a violation of the oath of office of the Clerk of Superior Court.

Since this office serves the citizens of Washington County, would Washington County fund the temporary Deputy Clerk position in this office? I was wondering if the salary allotted for a vacant county position could be used to fund the temporary Deputy Clerk position until the end of the fiscal year. The position would not require any benefits only an hourly wage. I am glad to meet with you to discuss this matter.

Finance would have to look into this if it is the pleasure of the Board to pay for this temporary position. CSP said he would rather pay the AOC and let them continue to pay her.

Commissioner Spruill asked Mr. Phelps what his feelings were regarding the Courthouse. Mr. Phelps said he feels that if the nonjudicial offices were moved out of the Courthouse (Jail and Sheriff's office) it would free up a lot of office space and parking spaces.

Mr. Potter said he will look into this and bring this back to the Board.

Commissioner Spruill asked what the County is going to do about the Sheriff's Office salaries. Mr. Potter said he is going to go back and take another look at what surrounding counties are doing for starting pay and raising their salaries.

Tax Office—Sherri Wilkins

Ms. Wilkins stated her office is down two positions. She would like to change to change one of the open positions from Assistant Tax Administrator to Tax Analyst. There are so many reports to send to various agencies and reconciliation that the analyst position would be responsible for. She is also collecting data for salary requests. She will be actively recruiting for her positions in June in hopes to hire in July.

Mr. Potter explained to Ms. Wilkins that we need to start FY26 with Keystone in place.

Mr. Potter asked her to explain the revaluation process. Ms. Wilkins said they will start in 2027 for reval in 2029. He asked her what about moving reval to every 6 years rather than 8 years. Ms. Wilkins said it takes 18 months to complete. She would have to have the change approved by Dept. of Revenue. Mr. Potter asked Ms. Wilkins to just check on what it would take to move up the reval.

Jennifer O'Neal—EMS

Ms. O'Neal talked through the following presentation.



AGENDA

- Performance Review
- Executive Summary
- Personnel and Equipment
- Challenges
- Future Goals

PERFORMANCE

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • FY 24 | • FY25 (to date 1/15/2025) |
| • 4274 calls for assistance answered | • 2309 calls for assistance answered |
| • 718 in Tyrrell | • 393 in Tyrrell |
| • 3556 in Washington | • 1916 in Washington |
| • 95,539 miles driven | • 50,758 miles driven |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Since 2007, Washington County has provided EMS and Transport Services under the direction of 5 different EMS Directors. The longest serving so far since late 2018.
- Over the years, EMS services were added to Tyrrell County by contract.
- EMS utilizes Quick Response Vehicles to assist with calls and provide some basic community MIH services.
- Fully staffed, EMS services are provided through 4 locations. EMS Station 1 in Plymouth, EMS Station 2 in Creswell, EMS Station 3 in Columbia and the EMS Administrative Office on Water Street.

OUR TEAM

- EMS Division
 - Work 24/48 Shift Schedule
 - 3 Shifts
 - 9 Paramedic Positions
 - 5 Intermediate Positions
 - 4 Basic EMT Positions
 - EMS Director
 - EMS Deputy Director
- Transport Division
 - 40 hour Work Week (10 hour days)
 - 2 Shifts
 - 4 Basic EMT Positions

OUR TEAM

- EMS Division
- As of 01/15/2025
- 3 Vacant Paramedic
- 2 Vacant Basic
- Transport
- As of 01/15/2025
- 1 Vacant Basic

OUR FLEET



OUR FLEET

- EMS Division
 - 2010 G4500 – 261,370 miles
 - 2018 E450 - 226,217 miles
 - 2018 E450 – 187,724 miles
 - 2018 E450 – 141,492 miles
 - 2023 E350 – 54,560 miles
- Transport Division
 - 2017 Transit – 222,160 miles
 - 2023 Transit – 30,283 miles
- EMS QRV's
 - 2021 GM 1500 – 32,886
 - 2023 GM Traverse – 24,081
 - 2024 GM Blazer - 2,014

FLEET STUFF.....

- By staying on top of regular maintenance of our vehicles, we have kept repair costs down and avoided major breakdowns.
- In addition, we keep our ambulance boxes on a routine maintenance plan to keep them in their best condition for remount purposes. Better condition = Less cost for repairs during a remount.
- The average time for completion could still push the delivery once ordered into the next FY or beyond.
- The Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) has announced the release of GVS V3.0 effective July 1st.

CHALLENGES

- Nationwide EMS Shortages
- Current EMS population is aging out with no one to fill our shoes.
- Trends showing less interest in public service as a whole.
- Pay Differences among agencies. (Part-time)
- Hospital Closures/Diversions
- Decrease in facilities (closed or reduced services ie OB, Orthopedics)
- Specialty needs (Cardiovascular Intervention/Dialysis/Trauma)
- Increased turnaround time for EMS units.

GOALS

- Continue to maintain our fleet with appropriate and timely care.
- Find new ways to engage and recruit/retain employees.
- Improve our employees work spaces.
- Increase the safety of our employees.
- Continue to help with the delivery of healthcare to citizens challenged by the lack of local access to healthcare. MIH

SWOT

Clear Direction and Strategic Focus



MANY THANKS!



- I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE BOARD AND THE MANAGERS FOR YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT AND DEDICATION TO ADVANCING OUR GOALS AND ENSURING THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF OUR EMS SYTEM.

DSS--Clifton Hardison/Lynn Swett

Mr. Hardison said no big surprises were coming up. Children Services is where the biggest concern is. DSS still has three (3) vacancies in this area at this time. They have 30 kids in care and one (1) social worker with limited experience.

They will be asking for various increases and gave explanations why.

In the CIP, they will be asking for \$22K to replace the Jeep Compass.

They will be having some painting done in the offices and will be asking for Maintenance to do this work.

Utilities--Lee Sasser

He has a few issues with retention of employees

He has updated quite a few things on both sides of the plant (distribution and water)

He will be asking for new distribution truck to replace a 2013 with 145K miles on it and would be letting the Landfill have this one

Other items:

Needs a new pressure washer for cleaning equipment

Needs a new mud pump

Toolboxes in the trucks—been using ones from the old trucks (they do not lock)

Locks for meters—they are expensive--\$10/ea

8 ½ x 12 enclosed trailer—rapid response trailer to carry tools/equipment when they have to go to a jobsite--~\$5,600

They have finished up with the new SCADA system.

Mr. Potter asked about the timeline for Pea Ridge Expansion completion. Mr. Sasser replied by the end of 2025.

Mr. Sasser said his staff are working on making sure all meters are working.

Well #1 was rehabbed this year (it is about 25 years old).

Mr. Potter asked about the Asset Inventory. Mr. Sasser said it is 95% complete.

Mr. Potter asked did the AIA include a water rate study. Mr. Sasser said yes .

Mr. Potter said that all water employees need body cams to help show what is going on with customers.

The expansion project is going out for bid in early spring.

He has 5 employees.

He will be getting some new software to monitor the fire hydrants and will be able to relay information to fire departments,

He is also working with the Landfill---the trash loader is worn out and will cost about \$25,000 - \$100,000 to fix. A used compactor would be more useful to have, which would cost \$500,000. A new one runs \$800,000. The County will soon need dirt to fill in for the C&D at the landfill.

He would like to have an arm mower & a batwing mower.

He needs to revisit the overgrowth at the landfill. The quotes he received are apples to oranges.

Commissioner Spruill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Keyes seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Julie J. Bennett, NCMCC, MMC
Clerk to the Board

Carol V. Phelps
Chair