

**Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2023**

**MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Informal Session in the Meeting Chamber Conference Room CH-14 of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m. and in Formal Session in the Meeting Chamber of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center at 6:04 p.m. on Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Chair George Dunlap, Vice-Chair Elaine Powell and Commissioners Leigh Altman, Patricia “Pat” Cotham, Arthur Griffin, Mark Jerrell, Vilma D. Leake, Laura J Meier, and Susan Rodriguez- McDowell
County Manager Dena R. Diorio
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade
Clerk to the Board Kristine M. Smith
Deputy Clerk to the Board Arlissa Eason

Absent: None

-INFORMAL SESSION-

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dunlap, after which the matters below were addressed.

REMOVAL OF ITEMS FROM CONSENT

The Board identified item(s) to be removed from Consent and voted upon separately. The items identified were Items:

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23-0154 Commissioner Leake
23-0155 Commissioner Leake
23-0159 Commissioner Leake
23-0181 Commissioner Leake

STAFF BRIEFINGS - None

23-0164 CLOSED SESSION

Motion was made by Commissioner Jerrell, seconded by Commissioner Cotham, and unanimously carried (9-0) to go into Closed Session for the following purpose(s): Land Acquisition and Business Location and Expansion.

The Board went into Closed Session at 5:27 p.m. and came back into Open Session at 5:55 p.m.

The Board then proceeded to the Meeting Chamber for the remainder of the meeting.

-FORMAL SESSION-

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dunlap called this portion of the meeting to order, which was followed by introductions, invocation by Chair Dunlap, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag; after which, the matters below were addressed.

George Dunlap began tonight's meeting by honoring the recent passing of Parks Helms, a highly esteemed political figure in Mecklenburg County. Helms, who served 16 years as a County Commissioner and chaired the Board for eight years, left a lasting impact with his memorable personality, infectious laughter, and significant influence in both his political party and the state house.

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23-0164 CLOSED SESSION – LAND AQUISITION

Motion was made by Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Jerrell, and carried 8-1 with Commissioners Altman, Cotham, Dunlap, Griffin, Jerrell, Meier, Powell and Rodriguez-McDowell, voting yes, and Commissioner Cotham voting no to authorize the county manager to negotiate and execute all documents necessary for the acquisitions of tax parcels 139-012-04 and 139-012-11 (+/- 13.931 acres) in the Town of Mint Hill for park and recreation purposes from D&B Realty Group, LLC for a purchase price of \$3,500,000.

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Powell, and carried 8-1 with Commissioners Altman, Cotham, Dunlap, Griffin, Jerrell, Meier, Powell and Rodriguez-McDowell, voting yes, and Commissioner Cotham voting no to authorize the county manager to negotiate and execute all documents necessary for the acquisitions of tax parcels 06708210 plus or minus 2.5 acres from Derek M. Wallace and Erin E. Looney and spouse Bobby Looney for the purchase price of \$85,000 for park and recreation purposes.

AWARDS/RECOGNITION

23-0152 JOINT PROCLAMATION - CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Background: Child Abuse Prevention Month is an annual campaign that has been in place for the last eleven years organized by the Mecklenburg Child Abuse Prevention Team (CAPT). The purpose is to create awareness and to educate the community about child abuse prevention strategies.

The Proclamation was read by Commissioner Meier.

Motion was made by Commissioner Meier, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried 9-0 to adopt a Joint Proclamation declaring April 2023 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte.

Bridget Happney, Sr Social Services Manager, accepted the proclamation and gave remarks.



City of Charlotte
and
Mecklenburg County



JOINT PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, children are vital to our state's future success, prosperity and quality of life as well as being our most vulnerable assets; and

WHEREAS, all children deserve to have the safe, stable, nurturing homes and communities they need to foster their healthy growth and development; and

WHEREAS, child abuse and neglect is a community responsibility affecting both the current and future quality of life of a community; and

WHEREAS, communities that provide parents with the social support, knowledge of parenting and child development and concrete resources they need to cope with stress and nurture their children ensure all children grow to their full potential; and

WHEREAS, effective child abuse prevention strategies succeed because of partnerships created among citizens, human service agencies, schools, faith communities, health care providers, civic organizations, law enforcement agencies, and the business community;

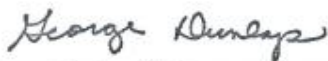
NOW, THEREFORE, WE, Vi Alexander Lyles, Mayor of Charlotte, and George Dunlap, Chair of the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners, do hereby proclaim, April 2023 as

“CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH”

in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and call upon all citizens, community agencies, faith groups, medical facilities, elected leaders and businesses to increase their participation in our efforts to support families, thereby preventing child abuse and strengthening the communities in which we live.

WITNESS OUR HANDS and the official Seals of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.


Vi Alexander Lyles, Mayor
City of Charlotte


George Dunlap, Chair
Mecklenburg Board of County
Commissioners

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23-0162 ORDER OF THE HORNET INDUCTION JANE WHITLEY

Background: The Order of the Hornet was established in 1972. It is bestowed by the Board of County Commissioners on persons who have displayed valor or high order of service uniquely and specifically to the residents of Mecklenburg County. This is the highest honor bestowed by the Board. The Order of the Hornet was founded in the spirit of the early Mecklenburg patriots who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775, and proclaimed the County's freedom from Britain more than a year before the U.S. Declaration of Independence was signed. Those early patriots valiantly fought for their independence during the Revolution and gave Lord Cornwallis such difficulties during his occupation of Charlotte that he termed the town a "hornet's nest" of rebellion. Because Jane Whitley reflects the honor, strength, and fierce American patriotism that so stung Lord Cornwallis, she is being recommended for membership in the Order of the Hornet.

Jane Ellen Whitley is a Rowan County native and a UNCC Graduate. Ms. Whitley founded the Whitley Scholarship Fund at UNCC in the early 1990s to assist students with tuition and supplies. The scholarship continues to help UNCC students to this day. She has been a resident of Plaza-Midwood for 30 years and supports and mentors high school and college students to understand, participate, and become leaders in their communities. Ms. Whitley is also proudly active in the Foster Dog community.

But of all her acts of public service over her lifetime, perhaps her greatest impact has been in strengthening voter involvement and involving local residents in the political process. Indeed, few Mecklenburg County residents have had such a tremendous impact on increasing voter turnout as Jane Whitley over the span of her career. Ms. Whitley worked for campaigns in 1992 and 1993 then every Primary and General Election since 2001 - which is close to 50 elections.

For decades, Ms. Whitley has organized and participated in providing rides to the polls, absentee ballot programs, and voter education programs. Over the years, Ms. Whitley answered and talked to thousands of voters with questions and needs and trained hundreds to do the same.

In recognition of her service on numerous Countywide and Statewide boards, commissions, and organizations, and because Ms. Whitley has helped make voting a reality for thousands of Mecklenburg residents, the Board of County Commissioners hereby bestows The Order of the Hornet in thanks and gratitude.

Commissioner Leigh Altman gave the presentation.

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Motion was made by Commissioner Altman, seconded by Commissioner Leake, and carried unanimously (9-0) to induct Jane Ellen Whitley into the Mecklenburg County Order of the Hornet, the highest honor bestowed by the Board.

The Order of the Hornet

Know All Persons by These Presents that Jane Whitley

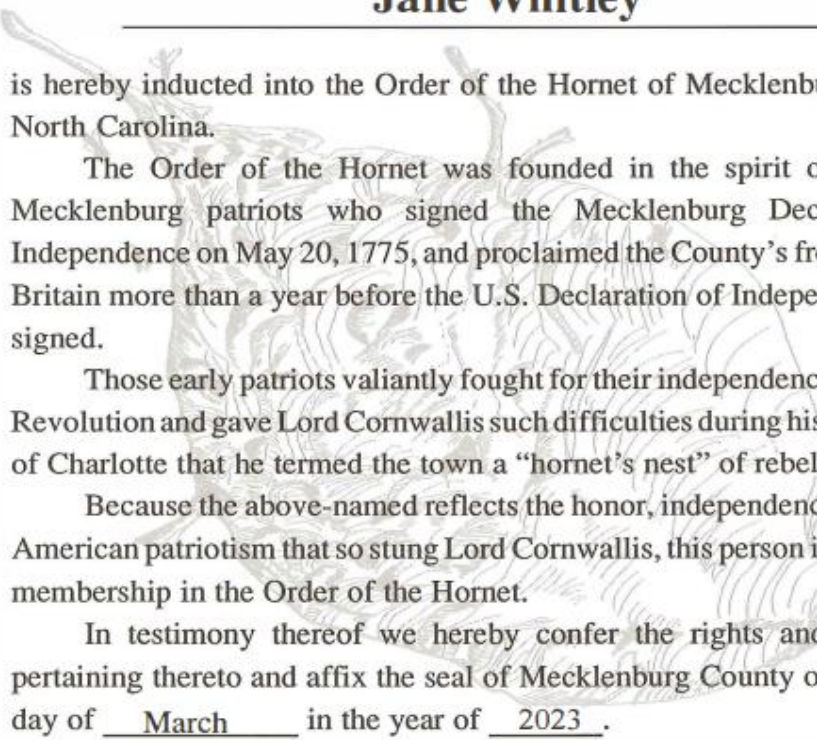
is hereby inducted into the Order of the Hornet of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

The Order of the Hornet was founded in the spirit of the early Mecklenburg patriots who signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775, and proclaimed the County's freedom from Britain more than a year before the U.S. Declaration of Independence was signed.

Those early patriots valiantly fought for their independence during the Revolution and gave Lord Cornwallis such difficulties during his occupation of Charlotte that he termed the town a "hornet's nest" of rebellion.

Because the above-named reflects the honor, independence and fierce American patriotism that so stung Lord Cornwallis, this person is chosen for membership in the Order of the Hornet.

In testimony thereof we hereby confer the rights and privileges pertaining thereto and affix the seal of Mecklenburg County on this 21st day of March in the year of 2023.



George Dunlap

Chairman,
Mecklenburg Board of
County Commissioners

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23-0169 PUBLIC ART MOMENT

The Board received a presentation on Public Art piece "Time Further Out".

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell gave the presentation.

Background: On January 5, 2021, the Board of County Commissioners approved the addition of an agenda topic to the second Regular meeting of the month entitled Public Art Moment. The item, with the help of the Arts & Science Council, will highlight a piece of public art - a different one each month. The purpose of this item is to raise public awareness and appreciation for the tax dollars that are spent on public art each year. This month's featured art piece called "Time Further Out" was created by Tom Stanley and Shaun Cassidy and is located at the Matthews Sportsplex in District 6.

Time Further Out

Tom Stanley and Shaun Cassidy

Matthews Sportsplex



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23-0165 PUBLIC APPEARANCE

The following persons appeared to speak during the Public Appearance portion of the agenda:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Stefan LaCaria | Topic: Service Animals in restaurants |
| 2. Cindy Campbell | Topic: County growth and need |
| 3. Arthur Rogers | Topic: VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) Center thanked the Board |

APPOINTMENTS

23-0175 APPOINTMENTS- ALLIANCE HEALTH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Affirm the appointment of Tchernavia Montgomery to the Alliance Health Board of Directors.

BACKGROUND: In January of 2023, Alliance Health notified County Manager Dena Diorio of one opening on the Alliance Health Board of Directors for one (1) Mecklenburg County Resident. The Clerk's Office advertised for the vacancy on their Advisory Board Website. Applicants applied directly through Alliance Health.

Alliance board members may serve up to three consecutive terms. Terms are dictated by specific seats, so a member's first term may not be a full three years (depending on their appointment date). Alliance process for filling vacant seats concludes with a recommendation from Alliance's board. Alliance will forward that recommendation via letter, which includes the end date for the first term. This letter is emailed to the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners, and the Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners receives a copy.

Motion was made by Commissioner Jerrell, seconded by Commissioner Meier, and unanimously carried (9-0) to affirm the appointment of Tchernavia Montgomery to the Alliance Health Board of Directors.

PUBLIC HEARINGS - N/A

ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTS - N/A

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MANAGER'S REPORT

**23-0156 BUDGET AMENDMENT - CODE REALIGNMENT AND CODE ENFORCEMENT FUND
BALANCE APPROPRIATION**

Background: LUESA Code Enforcement is proposing a realignment/restructure of the division in anticipation of the go-live of the new Accela technology by the end of the calendar year. This realignment request includes an addition of 15 positions to enhance efficiency and customer service while providing career growth opportunities.

Code Enforcement also would like to place an order for vehicles that are slated for replacement. Due to current manufacturing, delivery and purchasing delays and dealer/supplier lead times, vehicles ordered in April could be delivered by end of calendar year 2023 or first quarter of 2024.

Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Director of LUESA, gave the presentation.



LUESA Code Enforcement Restructure

REALIGNMENT FOR NEW BUSINESS MODEL – ACCELA 2023

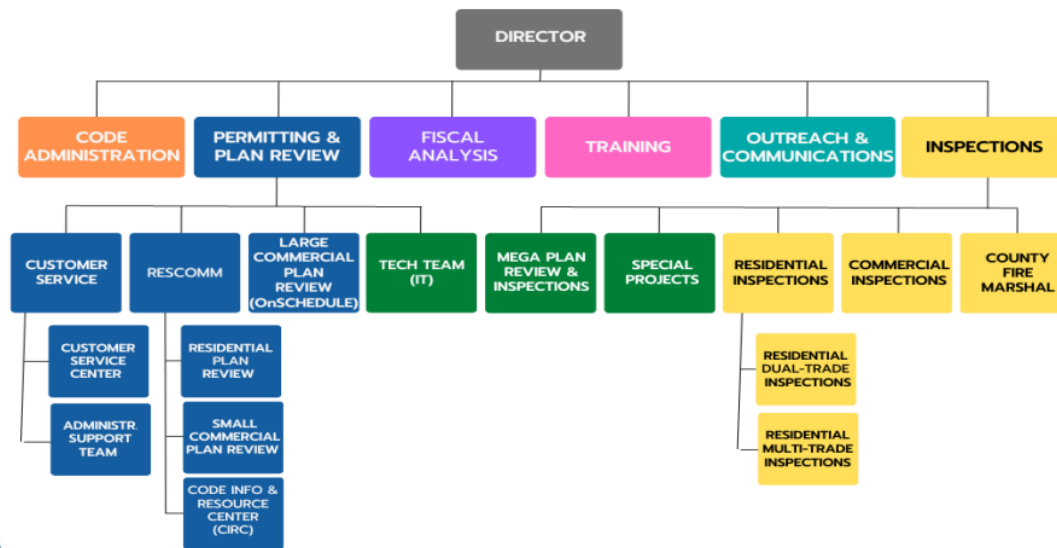
BOCC Presentation – March 21, 2023

Background

- Aligns the teams and associated staffing with process changes programmed in Accela
- Proposal is based on the Gartner Report and the Architect and Engineering feedback received in 2017
- Proposed organizational structure allows for alignment with MeckACT (County Performance Management System)
- Proposal allows for more effective resource allocation
- Proposal sets up Code Enforcement for the next 5+ years



Current Organizational Structure



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Challenges of Current Structure

- POSSE configured to current structure
- Unsustainable manager to staff ratio
- Siloed organization based on BDC requests and recommendations
- Significant staff transition in the next 5 years
- Lack of cross-functional team flexibility
- Lack of career opportunities
- Difficulty in collaboration



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Opportunities in Realignment

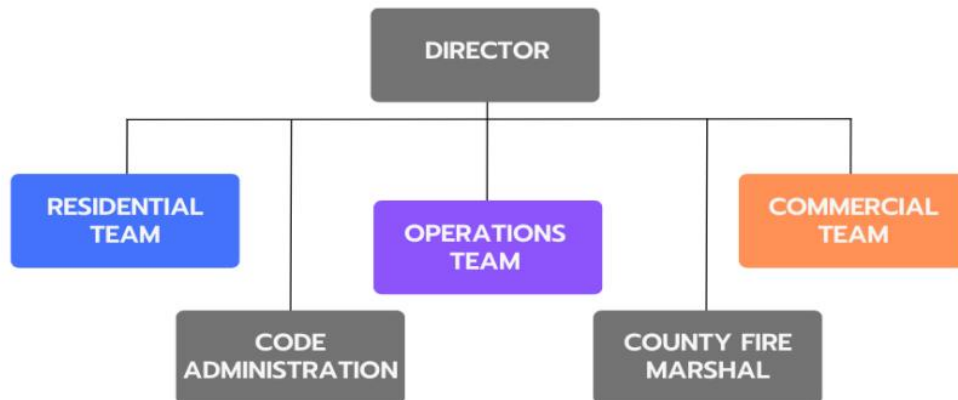
- Organization responds to Accela functionality (and continued support of current technology)
- Reduces manager to staff ratios
- Cross-functional team flexibilities, reducing inconsistencies
- Enhanced customer focus – Residential & Commercial teams
- Career progression opportunities
- Structure meets the technology challenge for multiple systems; additional positions may be necessary
- Considers existing vacancies



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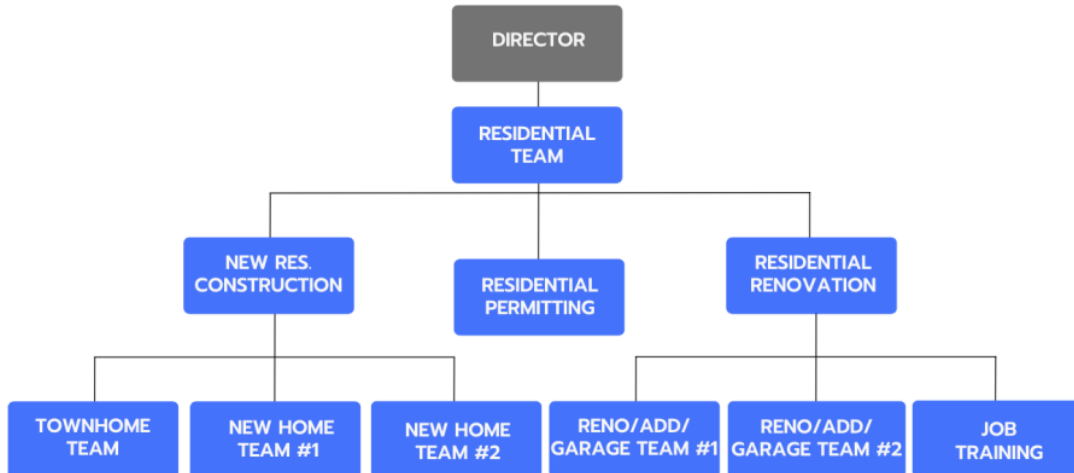
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Proposed Organizational Structure



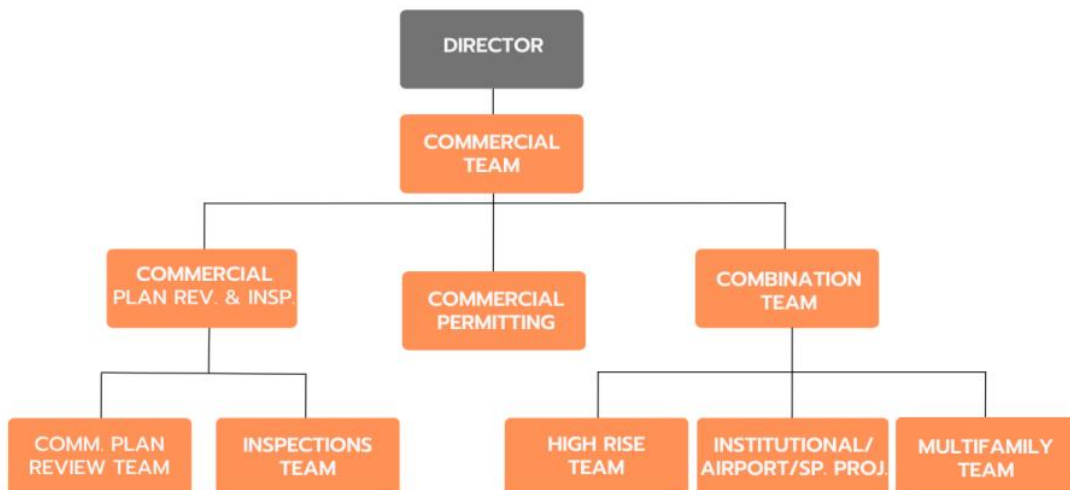
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Proposed Organizational Structure - Residential



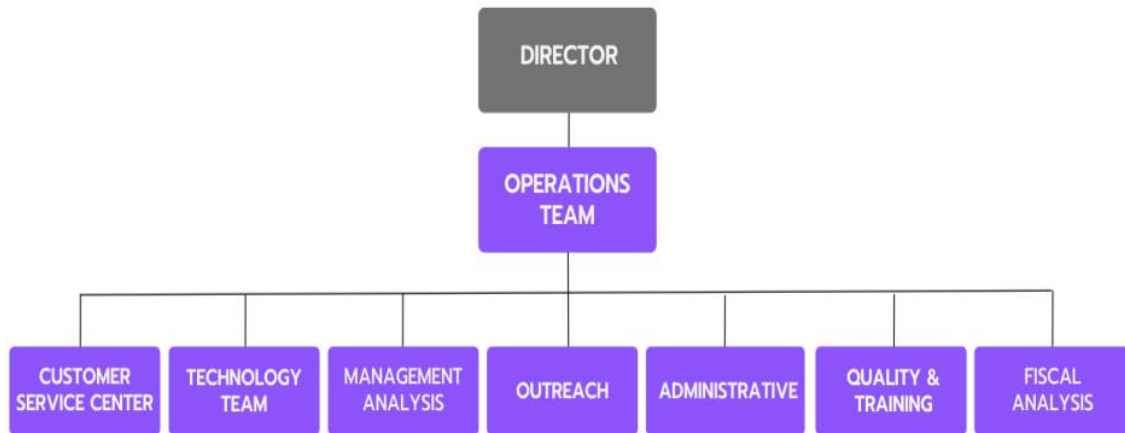
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Proposed Organizational Structure - Commercial



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Proposed Organizational Structure - Operations



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Requested Positions

15 New Positions

- 1 Sr Business Manager
- 4 Sr Code Enforcement Managers – **new HR classification**
- 3 Code Enforcement Managers
- 2 Permitting/Insp/CO Managers – **new HR classification**
- 1 Sr Permitting/Insp/CO Facilitator – **new HR classification**
- 1 Management Analyst
- 2 Inspector III for Live Remote Inspections
- 1 Deputy Fire Marshal

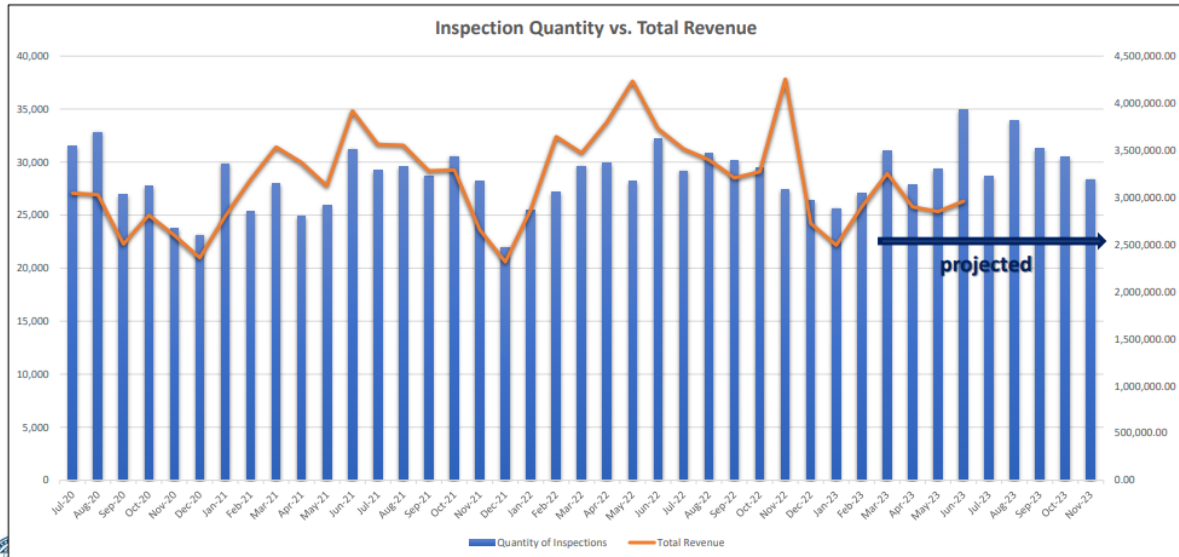


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Monthly Revenue & Inspection Volume



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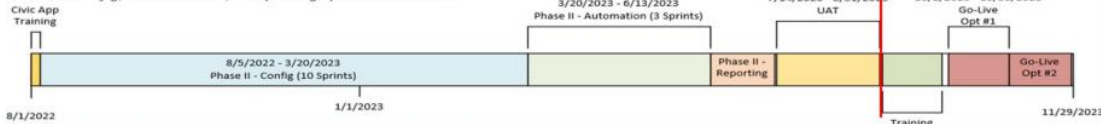


TIMELINE FOR TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

Code Enforcement Phase II Sprints		Mon 8/1/22	Wed 7/19/23
Analysis and Configuration		Mon 8/1/22	Mon 3/27/23
CE Phase II - Civic App Overview and Training		Mon 8/1/22	Fri 8/5/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 1 (Config) - Residential RT's 1 - 5		Fri 8/19/22	Fri 9/9/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 2 (Config) - Residential RT's 6 - 10		Mon 9/12/22	Fri 9/30/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 3 (Config) - Residential RT 11 & Inspection Automation		Mon 10/10/22	Tue 10/18/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 4 (Config) - Commercial RT's 16, 18, 19, 20		Wed 10/19/22	Tue 11/8/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 5 (Config) - Commercial RT's 21 - 24		Tue 11/8/22	Thu 12/1/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 6 (Config)		Fri 12/2/22	Thu 12/22/22
CE Phase II - Sprint 7 (Config)		Mon 1/2/23	Mon 1/23/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 8 (Config)		Tue 1/24/23	Mon 2/13/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 9 (Config)		Tue 2/14/23	Mon 3/6/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 10 (Config)		Tue 3/7/23	Mon 3/27/23
Automation and Scripting		Tue 3/28/23	Tue 6/20/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 1 (Automation)		Tue 3/28/23	Mon 4/24/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 2 (Automation)		Tue 4/25/23	Mon 5/22/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 3 (Automation)		Tue 5/23/23	Tue 6/20/23
CE Phase II - Sprint 1 (Reports)		Wed 6/21/23	Wed 7/19/23

Civic Apps Phase II Deployment

10 Config, 3 Automation, 1 Reporting Sprint back to back



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BOCC Ask

- Approve Restructure of Code Enforcement
- Approve addition of 15 positions
- Approve fund balance appropriation of \$1.5 million - \$1.0 million for vehicle purchases and \$500k for new position costs including technology.



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COMMENTS

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Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Cotham, to add 15 positions and amend the 2022-2023 Annual Budget Ordinance to appropriate \$500,000 in available fund balance to fund the new positions and associated technology and vehicle needs.

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Cotham to amend the 2022-2023 Annual Budget Ordinance to appropriate \$1,000,000 in available fund balance to finance the purchase of vehicles for Code Enforcement.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked about the type of vehicles being considered for purchase, specifically asking if they will be electric. *Director Gujjarlapudi said while they were not electric yet, the plan was to move towards hybrid vehicles. He highlights the current market challenges in obtaining electric vehicles due to their higher cost.*

Commissioner Cotham said she had concerns about the choice of dealerships outside of Mecklenburg County for vehicle purchases. *Director Gujjarlapudi said the efforts were being made to prioritize local dealerships, working with Asset and Facility Management.*

Motion was unanimously carried 9-0 to approve realignment of the Code Enforcement Division to add 15 positions and amend the 2022-2023 Annual Budget Ordinance to appropriate \$500,000 in available fund balance to fund the new positions and associated technology and vehicle needs.

Motion was unanimously carried 9-0 to amend the 2022-2023 Annual Budget Ordinance to appropriate \$1,000,000 in available fund balance to finance the purchase of vehicles for Code Enforcement.

23-0184 MECKLENBURG COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

The Board received information to endorse the Mecklenburg County Farmland Preservation Plan.

BACKGROUND: Mecklenburg County values the social, economic, and environmental contribution of farmers to the health and well-being of our community. An analysis by the American Farmland Trust in its study, "State of the States: Farms Under Threat" found from 2001- 2016, North Carolina converted 572,000 acres of working agricultural land into industrial/commercial/residential development. Growth trends demonstrate a strong correlation to loss of farmland during a similar timeframe in Mecklenburg County. Farmers are aging and the number of farmers willing and/or able to succeed them is also decreasing. Legacy farm families, often in

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the 9th generation and owning 25 or more acres, are ambivalent over the future of farming. New and beginning farmers, on the other hand, are seeking to buy land, but cannot find arable and affordable land.

In an effort to address these challenges, the Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded a grant to develop a Farmland Presentation Plan in partnership with Mecklenburg County. The Farmland Preservation Plan will serve as a foundational platform for protecting family farms, increasing acreage in support of local agriculture, providing mentorship programs for new and beginning farmers, and offering a host of health and wellness benefits.

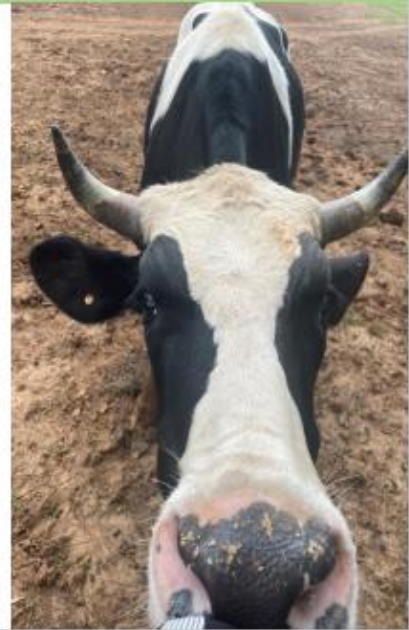
The Farmland Preservation Plan was presented to the Environmental Stewardship Committee on March 14, 2023.

Erin Stanforth, Sustainability and Resiliency Manager accompanied by Barbara Bleiweis, the Chair of Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District, and Theodore Castro, a student from Johnson C. Smith University, gave the presentation.



Background

- Studies have shown there is a strong correlation to loss of farmland to commercial and residential development, within Mecklenburg County.
- In October 2021, County Managers Office leadership met with Mecklenburg County Soil and Water Conservation District Chair to discuss opportunities for a Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Since then...



Agriculture Development Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Grant (ADFP)

- Grant submitted December 2021 and awarded October 2022, allowing us funding for assistance with drafting and finalizing the Farmland Preservation Plan
- \$14,000 was awarded
- Letter of support from County Manager was included
- Grant funding to be used by October 2024



Background

- We have met with 46 farmers in all corners of the County, 3 were Century Farms
- We listened to farmer's stories, went on farm tours and visited farmers markets



Farmers attend a Soil Health workshop at Hodges Family Farm.



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Data collected attempt to answer these questions:

- What does Farmland Preservation mean to the farmers?
If there was a Farmland Preservation Plan in place, what would farmers want?
- How much farmland does Mecklenburg County have?
- Where are the farms located?
- How does Farmland Preservation address County ELAP goals?



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Farmer Feedback

Common Themes and Areas of Concern	LP	EP	EDS	ENV	QL	
Landowner wishes heir(s) to have options for future land use. Heirs have differing views/knowledge on requirements for financial and environmental sustainability	✓	✓				LP: Land Preservation
Limited land availability and affordability (especially for small farmers in urban areas)	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Dependency on PUV as primary tax program for financial survivability			✓			EP: Estate Planning
Agritourism as economic driver for revenue growth and sustainability			✓			
Stronger inclusion of agriculture/farming into municipal/County policy and service base			✓		✓	
Lack of awareness of available funding/cost share or grant programs			✓	✓		EDS: Economic Development & Sustainability
Strong commitment to connecting community with farm education (where food comes from, healthy food, soils, farm practices)				✓	✓	
Understand and value their role improving Quality of Life (ex. sharing open space for recreation)				✓	✓	
Interest in regenerative agricultural/environment certifications-degree to which farmers already practice soil health				✓		ENV: Environmental Stewardship
Preference for on-farm direct to consumer sales			✓		✓	
Limited pathways to provide incentives for local farmers to other agriculture/land preservation	✓		✓			
Frustration with municipal zoning and lack of understanding NC agricultural exemption programs			✓			QL: Quality of Life
Awareness of property rights and respect for farmers by local business					✓	
Lack of formal network for local farmers for support and collaboration	✓			✓		
General reluctance to use government programs				✓	✓	

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How much farmland is in Mecklenburg County?

Land Use (generated by GIS)	Primary Land Use Acreage	Secondary Land Use Acreage	Total Acreage by Land Use
4310 - Conservation Agricultural	17.75	10.03	27.78
4311 - Conservation Forest	402.8	0	402.8
4312 - Conservation Woodland	65.26	0	65.26
4314 Conservation Wildlife	23	0	23
5310 - Agricultural	3279.5	408.5	3688
6100 - Forest Commercial	6776.1	418.7	7194.8
6210 - Woodland	962.5	155.2	1117.7
6711 - Horticultural	259.3	110.7	370
7000 - Farm Institutional	160.2	0	160.2
Totals	11946.41	1103.13	13049.54

County-owned parkland with an agricultural component: 732.2 acres

Source: Mecklenburg GIS

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Chatham County Farmland Preservation Plan

- Developed the plan in 2010, in partnership with Chatham County Center of Cooperative Extension Service, Soil & Water Conservation District & NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Fund.
- Agricultural Advisory Board, appointed by BOCC
- Current staffing
 - District Administrator
 - Soil Conservation Specialist
 - Environmental Specialist/District Director
- Have established a Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)

The purpose of a VAD is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of a County by increasing the identity of, and pride in, the agricultural community and its way of life. To encourage the economic and financial health of agriculture, horticulture and forestry through protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

Buncombe County Farmland Preservation

- County's Farmland Preservation ordinance was adopted in 1989. Initial Farmland Protection Plan was adopted in 2007, updated Plan was adopted in 2020.
- Agricultural Advisory Board is appointed by the BOCC
- Current staffing:
 - District Director
 - Soil Conservationist
 - Environmental Educator
 - Farmland Preservationist
 - Administrative Assistant
- Have established a Voluntary Agricultural District

Proposed Farmland Preservation Plan Draft

- Based on feedback collected from farmers, as well as information from other existing farmland preservation plans, we worked together to draft the following Farmland Preservation Plan.



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Proposed Farmland Preservation Plan Strategies

- 1) Protect farmland through voluntary programs that incentivize land preservation, conservation and succession planning
- 2) Promote agricultural workforce development of next generation farmers
- 3) Promote agricultural economic development
- 4) Promote farmland preservation, conservation and equity through innovative public private partnership programs



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Strategy 1: Protect farmland through voluntary programs to incentivize land preservation, conservation and legacy planning

- 1) Conduct biannual 'Your Land, Your Legacy' workshops
- 2) Conduct biannual USDA conservation workshops
- 3) Partner with local trusts to advocate for a conservation easement matching fund program
- 4) Establish a Voluntary Agricultural District ordinance (VAD)



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Strategy 2: Promote agricultural workforce development of next generation farmers

- 1) Create 'Next Generation Farmer Guide'
- 2) Create a mentor/apprentice program connecting new farmers with experienced farmers
- 3) Use existing and apply for additional state/federal/private funding for the purpose of new equipment, supplies and educational courses. Appropriate seed or matching grant funding, if applicable
- 4) Conduct a study to evaluate the creation of a teaching farm program on public land



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Strategy 3: Promote agricultural economic development

- 1) Include MSWCD conservation program reporting in County Stormwater monthly meetings
- 2) Establish agriculture economic mini grant program
- 3) Research best practices within the state and other conservation districts that provide incentives to farmers that do not currently qualify for Present Use Value Program (PUV)
- 4) Explore the feasibility of streamlining permitting process for value-added marketers/farmers
- 5) Communicate funding opportunities to local farmers
- 6) Conduct biannual Agritourism Weeks
- 7) Conduct biannual farmer showcase



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Strategy 4: Promote farmland preservation, conservation and equity through innovative public private partnerships

Food Deserts and Equity in Mecklenburg County

- a) Support the development of future land ownership opportunities for next generation black farmers
- b) Develop options to expand food access and combat food deserts for Mecklenburg County residents
- c) Partner with MSWCD and North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to pursue grants



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Strategy 4: Promote farmland preservation, conservation and equity through innovative public private partnerships

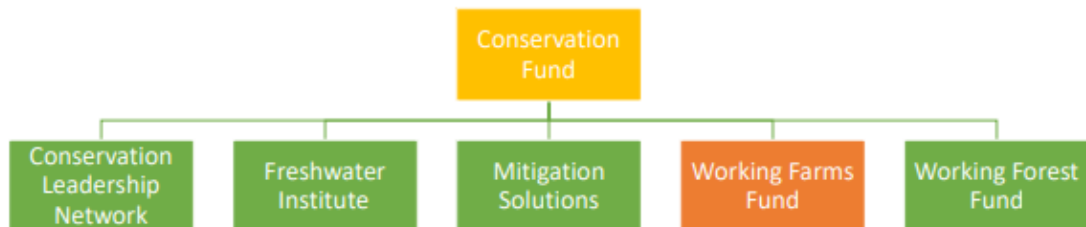
Formalize partnership with Working Farms Fund to preserve farmland, invest in agricultural production of that land and provide a pathway to land ownership for next generation farmers

- a) Establish five-year plan that identifies and prioritizes potential farmland acreage for acquisition
- b) Develop conservation easement funding strategy
- c) Identify soil and water conservation technical and financial assistance strategy
- d) Identify next generation farmer pipeline and workforce development strategy
- e) Establish DEI partnership with Johnson C. Smith University



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The Conservation Fund (CF)



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The Conservation Fund (CF) Mission:

PROTECT America's most critical lands and waters to provide greater access to nature, strengthen local economies and enhance climate resiliency. Since its founding in 1985, CF works in all 50 states and protects over 8.8 million acres of land.

FOCUS on locally led conservation and community partnerships to protect natural resources and save the places that matter most—farms, forests and properties with ecological, historic and/or cultural significance.

DELIVER conservation and economic vitality through strong partnerships with government, business and colleague organizations for grants and philanthropic funding.



The Conservation Fund in North Carolina

- Protects 236,222 acres of land and water
- Notable projects include
 - *Coharie River Stream Restoration* and debris removal in support of Coharie Tribal Community in Sampson County
 - *Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative* led the production of an enhanced GIS-based Watershed Protection Model, Wake County
 - *Food Desert Technical and Financial support* for Sand Hill coastal communities through grants for farmers and organizations to implement programs address food deserts by improving access to healthy food.
 - *Creating New Headwaters State Forest* through land acquisition in collaboration with NC Forest Service and Conservation Carolina



The Conservation Fund in North Carolina: Expanding the Working Farms Fund



The Working Farms Fund : A New Path Forward

In 2021, The Conservation Fund launched the Working Farms Fund, an innovative program that rebuilds the local food system and creates sustainable farm businesses

The Working Farms Fund:

- Creates a patient pathway to affordable land ownership for diverse next generation farmers
- Breaks down traditional barriers to capital for farmers
- Accelerates adoption of sustainable agricultural practices
- Permanently conserves farmland at risk of being lost to development
- Grows a resilient local food system



Conservation Fund in North Carolina: Expanding Working Farms Fund

- The WFF program preserves farmland, invests in agricultural production of that land and provides a pathway to land ownership for next generation farmers.
- WFF targets urban regions where farmland is under threat, demand for local, healthy food is increasing as rapidly as food insecurity and where leadership is seeking transformational solutions for a more resilient food system.
- Conservation Fund has identified Mecklenburg County as its next pilot area for a Working Farms Fund. Work on this has commenced.
- Through Mecklenburg County partnering with WFF, the fund makes investments for 5 years. The County may be requested to fund a portion of the conservation easements, beginning in the 5th year.



Conservation Fund in North Carolina Program Impacts



10 FARMS
705 ACRES
40 FARMERS SUPPORTED
2 METROPOLITAN AREAS
3 INSTITUTIONAL MARKET PARTNERS
\$200k INVESTED IN ON-FARM INFRASTRUCTURE



Proposed Farmland Preservation Plan Strategies

- 1) Protect farmland through voluntary programs that incentivize land preservation, conservation and succession planning
- 2) Promote agricultural workforce development of next generation farmers
- 3) Promote agricultural economic development
- 4) Promote farmland preservation, conservation and equity through innovative public private partnership programs



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Questions & Answers



Erin Stanforth, Sustainability and Resiliency Manager
Erin.stanforth@mecknc.gov

Barbara Bleiweis, Supervisor, Mecklenburg Soil and
Water Conservation District
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COMMENTS

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Commissioner Leake thanked Ms. Stanforth for her presentation. She said her concerns were about the feasibility of farmland in the region, referencing the eastern part of North Carolina and highlighting the different types of farming activities and landscapes. *Ms. Bleiweis said specific characteristics of farmland in Mecklenburg County, including smaller independent farms, tree canopy forested land. She said of the farmers they spoke to 100% focused on low-input, organic-style farming without large-scale animal operations.*

Commissioner Leake raised concerns about the support for black farmers and the need for federal grants. *Ms. Bleiweis discussed partnerships with organizations like the Conservation Fund and Johnson C. Smith University to address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in farming. She said JCSU made an investment in sustainable agriculture as well as sustainable energy and had an entire center for renewable and sustainable energy. She said they were looking to them to help build capacity to be the next generation of conservationists. She said from West Charlotte High School to JCSU there would be internships and would be able to create jobs for them in that field.*

Commissioner Meier expressed gratitude for the presentation and inquired about the involvement of a student from Johnson C. Smith University, Theodore Castro. *Theodore shared his role in promoting education, initiatives, and accessibility to fresh produce in food-insecure areas.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell thanked Ms. Bleiweis for her work.

Commissioner Cotham asked how many farms were in the County. *Ms. Bleiweis said there were about 200 farmers and farms. She said 13,000 acres is the acreage that qualified for the Present Use Value System which was an Agricultural Tax Deferral System through the General Assembly. She said there were several farms that did not qualify for that but were actively growing produce and contributing to the farmers' markets and all the food issues so that number of farmers could be higher.*

Commissioner Altman asked Ms. Townsend-Ingram, what her role was in this initiative. *Ms. Townsend-Ingram said she was the Director of Foundational Relations. She said JCSU sat in the food desert in District 2 and that District 2 was 63% black which was the most populated African American district in the County. She said JCSU is involved in historic preservation and had a desire to collaborate within and bring more education the community.*

Commissioner Jerrell congratulated Ms. Bleiweis and stated that Ms. Stanforth was an amazing talent. He said he was appreciative of the partnership with JCSU and that it was important not to minimize the scope to just a particular group.

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Commissioner Jerrell asked, with regard to recruiting students, what did that process look like and where were they coming from. He said it needed to be looked at from a “both/and” prospective and expand beyond 5 points and look at short-, mid- and long-term planning.

Ms. Townsend-Ingram said Dr. Mark Dugo was the Director of the Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainability and would be working with Ms. Bleiweis to develop a curriculum both at the high school and college levels. She said they had an MOU with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools they were working on. Ms. Bleiweis explained further about the collaboration.

Powell thanked the presenters and Dr. Leslie Johnson. She said developers were hounding farmers. She said it was important to consider how much farmland that it used to be, what was being lost every day and the risk for resilience and having a worse food desert situation. She said it was a regional priority to protect land, air, water, soil.

Motion was made by Vice-Chair Powell, seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell, to endorse the Mecklenburg County Farmland Preservation Plan.

Commissioner Griffin said he was concern from a youth perspective in creating pathways for farming and conservation. He said whatever the Board could do to help create pathways was important. He said there could be successful strategies to embrace a broader sector of the community particularly by pulling in young people.

Commissioner Dunlap said he was seeking suggestions in the plan that the Board could support in an effort to preserve farmland, for example, tax incentives or special designation for farmers to benefit from or expanding 4H in the County, to encourage farmers to keep their land as opposed to selling it.

Motion was unanimously carried (9-0) to endorse the Mecklenburg County Farmland Preservation Plan.

23-0187 COUNTY BOUNDARY LINE

Background: The Board was updated at the January 18, 2023 meeting by the tax assessor regarding information brought to his attention by the County Assessor in Union County that based upon the location of certain historical monuments there appeared to be some uncertainty of segments of the boundary line between Mecklenburg County and Union County, North Carolina. The Union County Assessor determined that a portion of the uncertain boundary was

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in the Shannamara subdivision, which was developed in 2001 and 2002 and some portions straddle the boundary line between Mecklenburg and Union Counties.

At its January 3, 2023 meeting the Union County board deferred action pending a decision by Mecklenburg. On February 6, 2023, Union County directed staff to draft a resolution in support of maintaining all assumed county boundary lines affecting properties in Union County and children attending Union County schools.

Ken Joyner, County Assessor, and Tyrone C. Wade, County Attorney gave the presentation.



Union – Mecklenburg County Boundary Line Update

March 21, 2023



Staff Discussions

- County Attorney & County Assessor has held discussion with their respective peers in Union County.
- Discussions have focused on the same approach
 - Find a solution that has the least negative impact on residents of both counties the least



Staff Discussions

- With that goal in mind how do we get there
 - Status Quo – Use existing border as much as possible to agree upon a shared border
 - Work with the legislative delegation members to have our mutually agreed upon solution ratified in statute to avoid history repeating itself again



Staff Recommendation

Adopt resolution

- A similar resolution was approved by Union County BOCC on February 20, 2023
- Approval provides a framework to where:
 - No resident has their voting rights moved from one county to another
 - No resident has their school district changed from one county district to another



Union – Mecklenburg County Line Update

- Questions?

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**RESOLUTION OF THE MECKLENBURG COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
IN SUPPORT OF MAINTAINING THE ASSUMED COUNTY BOUNDARY LINE
BETWEEN UNION COUNTY AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY**

WHEREAS, Mecklenburg County was created from a portion of Anson County in 1763, and Union County was created from portions of Mecklenburg County and Anson County in 1842; and

WHEREAS, since the time of the creation of the respective Counties, and the associated county boundary lines between the two counties, residents and businesses have chosen to locate in these respective counties with the presumption that they will continue to be located in the same county; and

WHEREAS, residents choose to live in either Union or Mecklenburg County for a myriad of reasons, including the quality of life, available services, amenities, schools and a host of other personal reasons; and

WHEREAS, residents and businesses in Union County and Mecklenburg County pay taxes, receive services, attend schools, vote in elections, and perform many other activities core to the daily lives of themselves, their families, and their businesses based upon the assumed county boundary lines; and

WHEREAS, around 2001 and 2002 the Shannamara Subdivision was developed straddling the Mecklenburg County line with Union County. It became apparent at that time that there was some uncertainty as to the exact location of the county line. On January 1, 2007, the Town of Stallings in Union County annexed a portion of homes in the Shannamara subdivision in Mecklenburg County. In about 2009 the North Carolina Geodetic Survey had a preliminary survey done of the county line. It appears that the establishment of the county line was never completed; and

WHEREAS, the Board is in receipt of a resolution from the Town of Stallings, supporting the continued current shared use of the boundaries between Union and Mecklenburg Counties, that has been in place for decades, asserting that any realignment would cause extreme personal and financial hardship on the residents of the Town of Stallings in Union and Mecklenburg Counties; and

WHEREAS, any formal and permanent establishment of a county boundary line between Union County and Mecklenburg County that is different from the assumed county boundaries may result in a substantial disruption to residents' lives, families, businesses, and expectations with the primary impacts being felt at the household and family level; and

WHEREAS, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners believes that a solution concerning any formal and permanent establishment of a county boundary line for Mecklenburg and Union Counties which preserves, as much as practically possible, the existing status quo of the assumed Mecklenburg and Union County line, with the least disruption to business and

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family life is in the best interest of the residents of Mecklenburg and County Counties and of all involved; and

WHEREAS, Union County has adopted a similar resolution.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners that it supports a county line resolution that is adopted by the State of North Carolina which officially establishes and utilizes the existing assumed county boundary line that preserves the expectations of existing Union and Mecklenburg County residents, without adverse impact to the lives, families, and businesses of the residents of these two counties.

Adopted this the ____ day of _____, 2023.

ATTEST:

Kristine M. Smith, Clerk to the Board

George Dunlap, Chairman

Resolution recorded in full in Ordinance Book____, Document#____.

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Comments

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked for clarification on the blue and red lines on slide 14. *Mr. Joyner explained the blue line represented the actual Mecklenburg County line and the red line indicated the State's proposed new line. He said the two counties aimed to keep residents where they were, which would have the least impact. He said the parcels in blue would stay in Union County and the parcels in white would stay in Mecklenburg County as those individuals had bought and sold and voted over the last ten plus years.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the State could come back and say it wanted it the way they originally had it. *Attorney Wade said the General Assembly had the right to draw the boundary lines. He said Union County passed a resolution asking the State to leave the lines as assumed by the residents and Mecklenburg County is joining with them. He said the State could do that but don't know that they would do that because of the problem it would create with the residents in these particular areas.*

Commissioner Altman asked what the net loss in acreage would be for Mecklenburg County. *Mr. Joyner said from his understanding it would be very minimal. He said last he heard the County might gain a little less than \$300,000 in overall value but not sure how much acreage that would be.*

Vice-Chair Powell asks Attorney Wade to explain a sentence in the resolution, which mentions the state adopting the existing assumed county boundary line. *Attorney Wade explained that the General Assembly would need to pass a bill allowing the counties to define these lines. Mr. Joyner said Union County filed a placeholder bill to which the County would be joining.*

Motion was made by Commissioner Powell, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, and unanimously carried (9-0) to adopt a Resolution in Support of Maintaining the Assumed County Boundary Line Between Mecklenburg County and Union County.

DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTORS' MONTHLY REPORTS

The Board received as information the department directors' monthly management reports. The monthly management reports can be accessed online via public dashboards at:

<https://meck.co/DataDashboard>

STAFF REPORTS & REQUESTS - NONE

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COUNTY COMMISSIONERS REPORTS & REQUESTS - NONE

23-0164 CLOSED SESSION – LAND AQUISITION

NOTE: Due to an incorrect purchase price stated in first motion, the following motion was made to correct error:

Motion was made by Vice Chair Powell, seconded by Commissioner Meier, and carried 8-1 with Commissioners Altman, Cotham, Dunlap, Griffin, Jerrell, Meier, Powell and Rodriguez-McDowell, voting yes, and Commissioner Cotham voting no to authorize the county manager to negotiate and execute all documents necessary for the acquisitions of tax parcels 06708210 plus or minus 2.5 acres from Derek M. Wallace and Erin E. Looney and spouse Bobby Looney for the purchase price of \$85,200 for park and recreation purposes.

CONSENT ITEMS

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Altman, and unanimously carried (9-0) to:

23-0158 TAX REFUNDS

Approve refunds in the amount of \$2,467.75 for registered motor vehicles as statutorily required to be paid as requested by the County Assessor; and approve refunds in the amount of \$33,792.61 as statutorily required to be paid as requested by the County Assessor.

Background: This Board action is necessary to approve registered motor vehicle tax refunds resulting from clerical errors, value changes and appeals processed in the statewide vehicle tax system.

This Board action is necessary to approve tax refunds resulting from clerical errors, audits, and other amendments, including revaluation appeals. There is accrued interest of \$1,176.66 in the refund amount of \$33,792.61. Refunds total \$33,792.61.

23-0171 MINUTES

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Approve the following Meeting Minutes: February 16, 2022

THIS CONCLUDED ITEMS APPROVED BY CONSENT

23-0172 PULLED CONSENT ITEMS

Commissioners may remove agenda items from the Consent Agenda for a separate vote, to bring public awareness or to make comments. The following items were pulled and voted upon separately:

23-0154 SOLE SOURCE VENDOR APPROVAL, ABERDEEN CAROLINA & WESTERN RAILWAY

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Altman and unanimously carried (9-0) to authorize the County Manager, or designee, to develop an ongoing contract for signs, signals, infrastructure, and road crossings as authorized by the sole source exemption of G.S. 143-129 (e) (6) for Aberdeen Carolina & Western Carolina Railway; and approve the expenditure of \$437,124.92 with the Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway for work necessary for the repair and maintenance of rail crossings at the Hickory Grove Complex from the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund.

Background: North Carolina General Statute and Mecklenburg County Procurement Policy mandate the procurement of all apparatus, supplies, materials, and equipment totaling \$30,000 or more by competitive bidding. An exemption is allowed if a needed service or product is available from only one source or standardization, or compatibility is the overriding consideration.

Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway (AC&WR) is the owner of a railroad which runs in front of the solid waste center along Pence Road in Charlotte, NC. AC&WR is therefore the only possible supplier for work for establishing/maintaining any railroad crossings and associated warning signals required for rail crossing upgrades.

Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway AC&WR owns and operates the railroad and rail crossing that allows access to the County property located on Pence Road. It is the responsibility of those crossing AC&WR tracks to pay for upgrades and annual maintenance fees. Mecklenburg County

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Solid Waste has received a cost estimate from AC&WR of \$412,382.34 for necessary upgrade work. Adding a 6% contingency to this work would bring the contracted cost to \$437,124.92.

23-0155 MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY (MRF) EXTENDED PARTS ROOM

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Altman, and unanimously carried (9-0) to authorize the County Manager, or designee, to negotiate and execute a contract with AVM Contractors, LLC for the Mecklenburg County.

Background: The Mecklenburg County Material Recovery Facility (MRF), located at 1007 Amble Drive, is the County-owned processing facility that separates the single stream recyclable materials collected from various sources. As part of Mecklenburg County Solid Waste strategic capital plan, a permanent addition of 1600 square feet has been planned as a storage room at the MRF. The additional storage area is necessary to house parts and replacement equipment used at the MRF. Additionally, this project will add a much-needed restroom on the back side of the building, to provide additional facilities for staff working in the production area.

23-0159 JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (JCPC) CHANGE TO PROPOSED FY23 FUNDING ALLOCATION- CJS

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Jerrell and unanimously carried (9-0) to rescind action taken on November 1, 2022 (Agenda Item 22-7984 Action A.) that recognized, received, and appropriated an increase in vehicle auction revenue of \$32,704.41 to Fleet Reserve Fund (9010) for future vehicle purchases; and recognize, receive and appropriate an increase in vehicle auction revenue of \$28,060.41 to Fleet Reserve Fund (9010) for future vehicle purchases and revenue of \$4,644 to the General Grant Fund (G001); and approve revised FY23 funding allocation plan as recommended by the Mecklenburg County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC).

Background: Mecklenburg County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) received \$2,051,713 in FY23 funding from the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Board approved item #22-7577 on May 3rd, 2022, to recognize, receive, and appropriate the funds for Mecklenburg County Criminal Justices Services. On April 19th, 2022, the Board approved the disposal by auction, completed on September 2022, of two vans purchased with JCPC funds. Disposing of the two vans generated \$4,644 in funds to be allocated back to JCPC programs. The JCPC approved the unallocated funds on February 16th, 2023, to the following programs: Tresports Positive Action Program; JCPC Administration

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23-0181 FY2023 BUDGET ADJUSTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CAPITAL

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Jerrell, and unanimously carried (9-0) to approve the transfer of \$300,000 of available Public Health operating funding to capital outlay in the General Fund (0001) to replace and install cubicles at Billingsley Road Health Department.

Background: New cubicles are needed for the newly established Office of Health Equity and the relocation of the Population Health staff from the Hal Marshall Annex to Billingsley Road Health Department. Funding will be reallocated from other operating budget lines within the Public Health department.

23-0166 COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioners shared information of their choosing within the guidelines as established by the Board, which included, but not limited to, past and/or upcoming events.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Meier, and unanimously carried (9-0) that there being no further business to come before the Board that the meeting be adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Kristine M. Smith, Clerk to the Board

George Dunlap, Chair