



FY2016 Recommended Budget

Board of County Commissioners Question & Answers

Section I: County Department Q&As

Commissioners: George Dunlap

Question: Just as you did for CMS and CPCC, could you provide the list of items requested by Court Services that were and were not funded?

Answer: Criminal Justice Services requested \$27,500 to expand contract hours for family law facilitators, but adequate funding is available to cover this cost in the existing budget.

Commissioner: Bill James

Question: Can you provide a list of the elections scheduled to occur in FY2016 and will require the additional \$786,524?

Answer: The Board of Elections will administer four elections in FY2016: the City of Charlotte Municipal Primary in September 2015; the Countywide General Election in November 2015, the Presidential Preference Primary in February or March 2016; and the Congressional Primary in May 2016. The baseline budget for the Elections Office provides funding for one election. The \$786,524 increase provides funding for three additional elections in FY2016.

Commissioners: Bill James

Question: For a number of years, the County has paid an outside firm to do 'business auditing' with much success. This process allows the outside firm to audit various local tax returns and their efforts and identifying errors and fraud have paid for their salaries. I am curious about whether this reduction or 'repurpose' is related to that function and the reason for this change.

Answer: The County continues to contract with Tax Management Associates (TMA) to conduct Business Property Audits. The \$1.3 million funding for this contract is included in the County Assessor's Budget. The portion that is being repurposed for FY2016 is the funding for the contingency-based contract that was eliminated by the State in 2012 and phased out of the County budget from FY2013 to FY2016.

Commissioners: Bill James

Question: Consistently throughout the budget, with the exception of personnel services and employee benefits, which is expected to change, I noticed that (2) other categories consistently changed, which is Contractual Services and Commodities. Am I correct in thinking that Contractual Services are things that are outsourced and commodities are goods purchased by the department?

Answer: Contractual service accounts pay for contractual services and many routine departmental functions, including payments for utilities, rentals, maintenance and repairs, insurance and payment of fees. Commodity accounts are used to pay for departmental supplies, food, dues, subscriptions, books, software, and other non-capital supply purchases.



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Commissioner: Commissioner Leake

Question: How much grant funding is included in the Recommended Budget for the Public Health Department?

Answer: The Manager's Recommended Budget includes \$1,082,331 in grant funds for the Health Department. There is an additional \$358,592 in grant funds that is budgeted in a separate grant fund. Below is a summary of each grant.

Health Department Grants	Description of Grant	Amount
Smart Start - Healthy Families	Provide home visiting to the highest risk 1st time parenting pregnant women in the County. Utilizing the evidence-based model Health Families America, assistance in obtaining a primary care physician, promote healthy pregnancy, positive lifestyle choices, encourage healthy parent-child interaction, parenting education, monitoring child growth & development & decrease risk of child abuse & neglect are promoted.	\$611,411
Smart Start - CCHC	Provides education & trainings to regulated child care centers in the County on health, safety, nutrition, and physical activity.	323,448
Triple P	A parenting & family support system designed to prevent and treat behavioral and emotional problems in children and teenagers.	147,472
Sub-Total		\$1,082,331
Carolina Alcohol & Drug Resources	Serves HIV positive Individuals with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues.	\$208,592
Susan G Komen	Provide screening mammograms & diagnostic services for low-income women, uninsured/underinsured women.	150,000
Sub-Total		\$358,592
Grand Total		\$1,440,923

Section II: Human Capital

Commissioners: George Dunlap

Question: Will a RIF (reduction-in-force) be required in the Sheriff's Office as a result of the elimination of 45 detention officers or are the positions vacant?

Answer: As of April 21st, the Sheriff's Office had 95 vacancies. Therefore, 45 positions can be reduced by eliminating vacancies. However, County staff may present the Board a RIF plan if the Sheriff's Office employees decline to accept a position associated with the decision to eliminate 45 positions.

Commissioners: Bill James

Question: Does the Recommended Budget include any form of a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)?

Answer: A cost of living adjustment is not included in the Manager's Recommended Budget. Mecklenburg County provides an annual raise to employees based on performance. Performance increases can range from 0 – 4.5% and average around 3% of the job market Rate.



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Commissioners: Bill James

Question: Explain the \$410k life insurance savings in the Recommended Budget. Also, I believe that the current policy has a discriminatory effect on lower paid employees by forcing them to go through underwriting for the same amount of insurance that higher paid executives do not have to do.

Answer: The life and disability benefits were competitively bid in FY2015 resulting in a reduction in cost to the County of \$409,988 for FY2016. A salary multiplier as the baseline for the tiers of coverage is the standard structure among group coverage providers. The intent is to provide survivors with a benefit that is equivalent to the annual earnings lost over a number of years after an employee dies. Life and disability benefits are fully insured with plan designs primary controlled by the vendor.

Commissioners: Bill James

Question: Regarding the “repurpose of funds” by reducing vacant position salaries from 100% to 90% market. It would appear that there is a large amount of ‘lapsed salaries’ built into the budget (funded but unfilled positions). I estimated this because if 10% equals \$1.12 million then total ‘funded but unfilled positions’ must total about \$112 million. If true, that would be a very big fudge factor and would explain why our expenditures have been less than projected and why our fund balance has been growing. I would like to know the total amount of dollars dedicated to ‘funded but unfilled positions’ for the last 2 years.

Answer: Vacancy rates fluctuate daily, and vacancies at the time of budget estimates are typically filled early in the next fiscal year. County vacancies as of April 30th, 2015 were used to estimate needed funding for FY2016. In previous years, the County estimated the salary for vacancies for budget purposes at 100% of the market rate each position. However, employees are hired above or below the market rate, and the average new hire salary in FY2015 is equal to 90% of market. As a result, the funding estimate for FY16 has been revised to 90% of market.

The reduction estimate of \$1.12 million is not calculated on a base of \$112 million. The estimate is the result of reducing funding for vacancies from \$10.18 million to \$9.16 million, and \$130k in savings from benefits associated with salaries.

As of April 30th, 2014, the point-of-time, County-funded cost for all vacancies was \$17.4 million. One year earlier, the County-funded cost for all vacancies was \$12.6 million.



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Commissioners: Bill James

Question: Provide an explanation for the staff summary comparison by agency sheet. Example: In 2015, Social Services adopted budget had 1,238 FTE's and 6 PTE's. In 2016, it is recommended to have 1,304 FTE's and 5 PTE's, a difference of 66 new FTE's and 1 less PTE. Where can I find the difference in the budget?

Answer: Page 42 of the FY2016 Recommended Budget describes position changes for each County agency (FY2016 Staff Composition Changes by Agency) and page 45 explains position changes for each County agency (Explanation of Staff Changes by Agency).

Commissioners: Bill James

Question: I noted an increase of \$8 million to fund retiree health benefits but I am unsure what the balance of any unfunded liability exists and whether the \$8 million represents the basic maintenance required to keep Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) at the proper funding level.

Answer: Currently, annual postemployment health expenditures are made from the General Fund as they come due. As of 6/30/14, the unfunded liability was \$103.4M. The \$8M represents the County's basic contribution towards funding the OPEB liability. With that, the County has an investment valued at \$86M (cost \$69.3M) in the State Treasurer's Local Government OPEB Trust Fund as of 4/30/15.

Section III: Non-County Agencies

Commissioners: Vilma Leake and Bill James

Request: Provide more specifics about the Arts & Science Council's program – Library & Parks Orchestra programs. Include location(s) of the program. (\$300K)

Answer: The program will offer ballet, symphony, theatre and other performances in parks, recreation centers, libraries and museums across the County. Sites include the Mint, Bechtler, Gantt, Levine museums. Other sites will include Discovery Place, the McColl Center, and other locations determined by Park and Recreation and the Library.



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Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: How long has the County funded the Arts & Science Council (ASC)?

Answer: The following response was provided to the Board by the ASC President during the March 10 public policy workshop:

"The ASC began receiving County funding to support cultural programming in the late 1970s/early 1980s. The ASC has not received any programming funding for general cultural programming from the County since FY2011. The funds that are received from the County are a pass through of \$750,000 to pay for the operation of Spirit Square by the Performing Arts Center (ASC receives none of these funds), and \$350,000 to support the Studio 345 program. At its' highest point in FY2001, the ASC received \$2.1M in funding to support grants for operating and project grants and educational programs for school children (field trips, in-school programs)."

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: What type of programming will be offered by Read Charlotte? Where will it be administered?

Answer: Read Charlotte will examine all of the programs, initiatives & efforts around literacy in this community and use data to help us determine which programs work to improve literacy and those that do not. It will encourage all programs to use similar metrics in measuring outcomes of various programs.

A central staff of three, led by an executive director, will facilitate and administer activities, share data, build public support, advance policy and mobilize funding. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library will provide office space for the executive director and staff.

Four working groups of experts and community members will plan, prioritize and inform the governing board by being aligned around four critical times in a child's life that can affect reading proficiency.

- Working Group #1: *Talk with Me, Baby* (promoting early language development);
- Working Group #2: *Ready for School* (expanding quality early childcare and Pre-K);
- Working Group #3: *Schoolhouse* (supporting teachers and classrooms);
- Working Group #4: *Summer Learning* (keeping kids reading during the summer)

The Foundation for the Carolinas will be the fiscal agent for Read Charlotte, and will manage the operating budget for the initiative, along with a \$500,000 Transformation Fund that will help existing organizations be more innovative, collaborative and data-driven, and will seed new programs that meet unmet needs.

Targeted co-funding will have the greatest potential to make the largest impact because Read Charlotte's research will influence how many corporations, foundations, local government and other funders invest millions of dollars in grants focused on childhood literacy.



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Read Charlotte will use the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other indicators to measure progress against the goal. NAEP is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what American students know and can do in core subjects. Its results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts.

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: Is the Public Library providing office space for Read Charlotte with County dollars, if so, how much?

Answer: The Library is providing office space at Main Library. The space is an underutilized area of the library. The monetary value of the in-kind donation has not been determined.

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: How much has been committed by corporations?

Answer: \$4.5 million has been committed to-date over the next 5 years

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: Is the County paying for staff beyond the \$100,000 annual contribution that is recommended for Read Charlotte?

Answer: The County is not paying for staff beyond the \$100,000 annual contribution that is recommended for Read Charlotte. Below is a summary of Read Charlotte's expenses, including how the County's \$100,000 would be spent.

Read Charlotte Expense	Total Budget	Request to Meck County	Brief Description
Salary & Benefits (3 FTE)	\$365,000	\$33,181.82	Executive Director; Project Coordinator; Admin Assistant
Consultants/ Mapping/Data	125,000	11,363.64	Engage experts to advise, analyze & map county-wide support & service ecosystem from birth to 3 rd grade. Track progress & measure impact
Community Sessions	20,000	1,818.18	Outreach with parents, educators & community members.
Communications	50,000	4,545.45	Outreach communication (website) and provide literacy & language development information to parents, educators, etc.
IT/Office	10,000	909.09	Technology & office supplies
Professional Development	10,000	909.09	Training & travel
Other	20,000	1,818.18	Miscellaneous operating expenses
Pooled Transformation Fund	500,000	45,454.55	A Strategic grant making fund that will target investments to promote innovation, collaboration, and seed new programs addressing unmet needs
Total Expense	\$1,100,000	\$100,000	



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Section IV: Education Funding

Commissioner: Bill James

Question: I am curious to know the basis for directly allocating money to Charter schools in the County budget. Clearly, Charter Schools are a responsibility of CMS (not the County). However Charter Schools (by law) are to receive the exact same operating funding allocation as CMS students (or State-wide students for the State allocation). I would also like to know the basis for partial funding since state law mandates that CMS MUST provide equal funding to Charters. In short, while the County can decide to only provide a specified amount to CMS – CMS cannot decide to only provide a certain amount to Charters. The law requires equality of funding (excluding capital). As a practical matter, I am not sure I agree with providing CMS with the \$14 million, I am certain that if Charters are required by State law to pony up \$8 million – they will have to pay it. Whatever that amount – it is not an issue for the County's budget.

Answer: You are correct that Charter Schools must be funded by CMS at the same per-pupil amount that the County funds CMS. Funding for charter schools was listed in the presentation because funding for Charter Schools in the amount of \$7,985,537 was rolled into the CMS's total request of \$39,893,198, and accounts for 20% of the total request. Because the recommended funding for schools is \$13,965,758 (including charter schools), then CMSs is not required to fund the same amount to Charter Schools that was originally request because the local funding will be less.

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: Why does Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) use the same contractors for different projects?

Answer: The following response was provided to the Board during CPCC's FY2016 Budget Presentation on May 12: "CPCC uses multiple contractors, and sub-contractors. Every contract over \$50K is put out to bid. CPCC maintains records of contract advertisement, awards, and MWSBE participation. "

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: What is the County's community college funding requirement per the State law?

Answer: Of the CPCC request of \$36.1 million (excluding the one-time funding for the replacement of the phone system), \$27.6 million (76%) is required by State statute. This includes capital purchases, facility maintenance, and facility support costs. The estimate was developed with input from CPCC.



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Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: What is the County's public education funding requirement per the State law?

Answer: Of the CMS's total operating budget request of \$428 million, \$97 million (23%) is required by State statute. This includes funding for maintenance and repair of school buildings, supplies of school buildings, and school furniture and apparatus. This 23% estimate was confirmed by CMS. The methodology for calculating the estimate was first utilized by Deloitte Consulting in a 2001.

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: What is the "strength" of the CMS diploma? Are the high school graduates college ready?

Answer: Many but not all of our 2014 high school graduates were college and career ready. College and career readiness is a complex measure that states and school districts are grappling to define. There is no single measure that captures the set of 21st century skills that the workplace demands as well as the technical, analytic and critical thinking skills higher education institutions expect of matriculating students. CMS utilizes a set of measures to monitor college and career readiness:

- ACT scores;
- ACT WorkKeys scores;
- Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) participation and performance; and
- SAT performance

Moving forward, we will also monitor participation and performance in dual-enrollment courses.

In North Carolina, all juniors are required to take the ACT test. On the ACT, a minimum composite score of 17 is monitored by the state for the percent of students meeting the expected level of attainment (proficient). A composite score of 17 is the University of North Carolina (UNC) System's minimum requirement for admission. In 2013-14, fifty-nine percent (59%) of juniors met this threshold. Likewise, in 2012-13 fifty-seven percent (57%) of juniors met this threshold.

The ACT WorkKeys performance measure is administered to students who are identified as Career and Technical Education (CTE) Concentrators. CTE Concentrators are students who complete 4 units of CTE credit in a career cluster, with at least one credit in a Level 2 course. Students can earn ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) for performance at the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze level. For accountability reporting purposes, a minimum NCRC of Silver is required to meet the expected level of attainment (proficient). In 2013-14, 73.7% of graduating CTE concentrators met this threshold.

CMS annually offers over 20 AP courses district-wide to high school students. At the conclusion of these courses students are administered a national assessment to determine their level of mastery of the subject matter. Students scoring a 3 or higher out of 5 are considered proficient, and can be awarded college credit for the course upon matriculation (awarding of credits varies by college and university). Research shows that students that had access to AP courses performed better in college even when they



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Failed to score a 3, 4, or 5 on their AP exam. In 2014, 7,687 high school students took 14,574 AP exams, with 7,188 of those exams (49.3%) receiving a 3 or higher.

The College Board's SAT examination is administered annually to students as a measure used by colleges and universities to inform their admissions decisions. Students are administered sub-tests in Critical Reading, Math, and Writing. Acceptable performance for admission consideration varies by college and university. Each section is worth 800 total points for a maximum possible score of 2400. In 2014, our graduating seniors achieved an overall score of 1481, just 6 points off of the national average (1497).

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: Why is new funding required to support additional space needs when there are 10 closed schools.

Answer: Currently, 116 – or 78% -- of CMS schools are over 100% utilized and we are projecting growth of over 21,000 students in the next 10 years. Refer to the separate attachment showing the current status of all leased and vacant CMS school buildings. Note that the district is repurposing some of the previously "closed" schools with the opening of Starmount and Oakhurst this August. In addition, the Board will be considering the feasibility for use of any and all CMS owned school properties, as well as surplus property on our existing campuses to assist in meeting the needed relief and future growth needs to serve CMS students.

Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: How will CMS rectify the number of teachers absent in District II? There are teachers employed by CMS in District II that do not show up for work.

Answer: The Human Resources team leaders will continue to work with principals to set expectations for teachers coming to work. We provide coaching and support for principals when they have to address teacher misconduct, which may include excessive absenteeism. Consequences could include, but are not limited to, written warnings, letters of reprimand, performance counseling letters, referrals to Employee Relations or Employee Assistance Program, recommendation for non-renewal or dismissal. Additionally, we post and recruit for substitutes several times throughout the year and hire substitutes year-round. Finally, quarterly absence lists are sent to the Office of School Performance and shared with the community superintendents so they can work with their principals who have large numbers of teacher absences. They can help determine if the absences are a result of FMLA, workers comp, workshops, school culture or possibly other issues. The recruitment department is working to source high quality teachers for all schools and provides more individualized support for the schools with the greatest number of vacancies.



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Commissioner: Vilma Leake

Question: How many reading programs does CMS have? Which reading program work? What are the locations of the programs that work?

Answer: See below.

Reading Framework/Program	Description	Notes/Results
Balanced Literacy <i>The Continuum of Literacy Learning</i>	Providing teachers with descriptions of texts that students should read, listen to, write and perform.	Components of balanced literacy approach include writing, word work, independent reading, and supported reading. These components will prepare students at all grade levels and in all disciplines to meet the rigorous demands of the Common Core State Standards. CMS continues to outperform the State averages in literacy assessments, and is seeing above average growth in nationally normed assessments in literacy performance.
Making Meaning	Provides a full year of research-based instruction for grades k-5 to help teachers deepen their understanding of best practices for teaching comprehension and vocabulary.	The 2014-2015 school year was the first year this classroom material was provided across the district. During the summer of 2014, over 4,500 teacher seats were provided for teacher training to support its release
Intervention (LLI)	Supplemental literacy instruction designed to help teachers provide daily, small-group instruction for the lowest achieving students at their grade level.	The 2014-2015 school year was the first year this classroom material was provided across the district. During the summer of 2014, over 4,500 teacher seats were provided for teacher training to support its release. Previous to the 2014-2015 school year, CMS had tracked measurable gains in LLI pilot programs in a number of elementary schools.
Words Their Way	Assists students with targeted, differentiated word work to align spelling development.	This program has been a part of the balanced literacy work for CMS and has supported assessment outcome gains.
Writing Pathways Writers' Workshop	Supports students in self-assessment and development of writing skills in each genre (opinion/argument, narrative and informational writing).	This program has been a part of the balanced literacy work for CMS and has supported assessment outcome gains.
Compass Learning	Provides an online individualized pathway for learning literacy based on student assessment data.	Students using the Compass program who complete 70% or greater of the aligned content grew 42% more than the students who did not use the program on MAP (Measure of Academic Performance) scores. (MAP is a personalized assessment that adapts to each student's learning level, precisely measuring a student's progress and growth).
Reading A to Z	Supplies thousands of downloadable, projectable, printable teacher materials, covering all the skills necessary for effective reading instruction	The 2014-2015 school year was the first year this classroom material was provided across