BRUNSWICK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OFFICIAL MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
BUDGET WORKSHOP
MAY 5, 2025
9:00 A.M.

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners held a Workshop on the above date at 9:00 a.m., Commissioners' Chambers, David R. Sandifer Administration Building, County Government Center, Bolivia, North Carolina.

PRESENT:	Commissioner Mike Forte, Chairman Commissioner J. Martin Cooke, Vice-Chairman Commissioner Randy Thompson Commissioner Pat Sykes Commissioner Frank Williams
STAFF:	Steve Stone County Manager Bryan Batton, County Attorney David Stanley, Deputy County Manager Niel Brooks, Deputy County Manager Aaron Smith, Finance Director Daralyn Spivey, Clerk to the Board LeAnn Weigand, Deputy Clerk/Executive Assistant Meagan Kascsak, Communications Director Currie Elkins/Peter Gillis, IT Lt. Nathan Hester, Sheriff's Office

Board Action, containing all items in this set of minutes, is filed within the Clerk to the Board's office.

I. <u>CALL TO ORDER</u>

Chairman Forte called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. <u>ORDER OF BUSINESS</u>

Chairman Forte gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Cooke made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Sykes seconded the motion with all in favor (5 to 0).

The following items were presented and discussed:

- **Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Preliminary Recommended Balanced Budget, Fees, and Capital Improvement Plan**
  Mr. Stone explained that the preliminary budget was a working document, the Board would have an opportunity to adjust and revise prior to approval in June, and the current ranking of Brunswick County as it relates to population growth. This draft budget proposal reflects a balanced budget and holds no property tax increase as presented, however there are areas that show deferable initiatives presented for consideration with the associated tax increase to fund such items.
- **Preliminary General Government Recommended Budget**
  General Government: The draft total General Government budget for FY26 is recommended to be $19.9M with increases to include County administration, Communications, Tax Administration, Finance Register of Deeds, and the Board of Elections.

Central Services: The draft total Central Services budget for FY26 is recommended to be $27.3M with increases in IT, decreases in Fleet Services and Operation Services and increases in non-departmental funding.
Public Safety: The draft total Public Safety budget for FY26 is recommended to be $81.7M with increases for the Sheriff's Office, Detention Center, Central Communications, Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Community Paramedicine, National Opioid Settlement Funds with reimbursable expenses, Building Inspections/Central Permitting, and a decrease for Fire Inspections.
Transportation: The draft total Transportation budget for FY26 is recommended to be $161K with no proposed changes from prior year.
Environmental Protection: The draft total Environmental Protection budget for FY26 is recommended to be $28.3M, with increases to Solid Waste and Forestry to support the state contracted services.
Economic Development: The draft total Economic Development budget for FY26 is recommended to be $11.6M for Planning and Community Enforcement, no proposed changes for funding for Brunswick BID. Other economic development includes increases to Occupancy Tax funding, retainer for contract services, shoreline protection, and year three (3) of the four (4)-year commitment to Boiling Spring Lakes offset by a transfer from Reserves.
Public Housing: The draft total Public Housing budget for FY26 is recommended to be $157,353 with an increase in Voucher expenses.
Health Services: The draft total Health Services budget for FY26 is recommended to be $6.6M with an immediate reduction due to the separation of Human Services Agency budgets, and a reduction in Environmental Health.
Social Services: The draft total Social Services budget for FY26 is recommended to be $11.6M with an immediate reduction due to the separation of the Human Services Agency budgets, an increase due to additional personnel and two replacement vehicles.
Human Services: The draft total Health Services budget for FY26 is recommended to be $40.7M. For Veterans Services the funding remains consistent with the prior year, an increase in personnel and a total of $3.9M for Brunswick Senior Resources. Trillium is budgeted for $250.4k, Brunswick Family Assistance increase of $30K for a total of $202k, Brunswick Partnership for Housing (BPH) at $70k and the continued support of contracted services with $90k to Hope Harbor, $35k for Coastal Horizon, $35k or Providence Home, $75k for New Hope Clinic, the Healing Place has $481.8k with reimbursement at 40%, and Christian Recovery Center for $3285k with expected 75% reimbursement.
Education: The draft total Education County Funding budget for FY26 is recommended to be $69.7M with an increase in Brunswick County Schools per the funding agreement with increase due to growth in the tax base and the impact of planned debt service. Brunswick Community College reflects increases in the total Capital Improvement budget and includes $350K for the Brunswick Foundation Guarantee Scholarship Program.

Chairman Forte called for a recess for lunch at 12:00 p.m.

Chairman Forte called the meeting back to order at 12:30 p.m.

Culture & Recreation: The draft total Culture and Recreation budget for FY26 is recommended to be $7.9M. For the Library, reflecting an increase in personnel and books. For Parks and Recreation, an increase in athletic programs, personnel, ancillary equipment and increasing escalating costs associated with grounds maintenance.
Sheriff's Office: Elizabeth Bynum and Robert Benya brought information to the Board regarding the digital evidence equipment requested as part of the budget for FY26 along with information about the mobile command center request.

Debt Service: The draft line item for Debt Service is $17.5M. Debt Service Policy is 10-13% of total expenditures. FY26 recommendation is 4.1%, well below the required policy threshold.
Expenditures: The draft total Expenditures for FY26 including salaries (with overtime), fringe benefits, operating costs, capital outlay and debt service is $300.7M.
Transfer to Other Funds: Recommended for FY26 is $13.1M planned debt service for the DHHS/EOC building project currently underway and contract requirement to schools.
Budgetary Uses: Recommended FY26 budget is $8M. Holden Beach funded debt service agreement of $1.3M and fund balance appropriation of $6.7M.
Employee Retention and Recruitment: Budgeted 2.75% merit (ranging from1% to 3.75%) and a 3.0% COLA increase with the County currently employing 1,443 people.
National Opioid Settlement Funds: FY26 expectation is $909,578
Water Fund – Revenue: The draft total Water Fund budget for FY26 revenue is recommended to be $48.3M with an increase due to growth, with a conservative rate of return on investments and a conservative budget recommendation for taps/ connections with remaining funds transferred to capital reserves as received.
Water Fund – Expenditures: The draft total Water Fund budget for FY26, the recommended expenditures are $49.3M with increases in personnel, vehicles, and ancillary equipment.
Wastewater Fund – Revenue: The draft total Wastewater Fund budget for FY26 the recommended revenue is $44.1M with an increase due to growth in the County, an improved but conservative rate on return on investments with a conservative budget recommendation for tap connections and the remaining funds will be periodically transferred to capital reserves as received.
Wastewater Fund – Expenditure: The draft total Water Fund budget for FY26 is recommended expenditures are $44.9M with increases in staff and the purchase of both replacement and additional vehicles and ancillary equipment.
Fee Increases: The draft budget includes proposed fee changes in EMS, Building Inspections/Central Permitting, Fire Inspections, Parks and Recreation, Health Administration and Environmental Health.

Next Steps for the Board include the following:

- May 19 at 6:00 p.m. – Presentation of the recommended budget
- June 2, at 1:00 p.m. – Board Budget Workshop, if needed
- June 2, at 3:00 p.m. – Public Hearing regarding the Budget
- June 16 at 6:00 p.m. – Additional Public Hearing and Adoption of the Budget Ordinance, Capital Improvement Plan/Fees for FY26

III. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Sykes moved to adjourn at 2:36 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams and passed unanimously (5 to 0).

Mike Forte, Chairman
Brunswick County Board of Commissioners

Attest:

Daralyn Spivey, NCCCC/CMC
Clerk to the Board

BRUNSWICK COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA