

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Monday, May 19, 2025

4:00 P.M. – 5:15 P.M. Budget Workshop

5:30 P.M. Closed Session

6:30 P.M. – Regular Session

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and time at the Columbus County Commissioners Chamber, 127 West Webster Street, Whiteville, North Carolina 28472, for the purpose of conducting the Regular Session.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Lavern Coleman, **Chairman**
Chris Smith, **Vice Chairman**
Giles E. Byrd
Ricky Bullard,
Barbara Featherson
Brent Watts
Scott Floyd

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Eddie Madden, Jr., **County Manager**
Amanda B. Prince, **Attorney**
Jana Nealey, **Clerk to the Board**

APPOINTEES ABSENT:

Agenda Item #1: MEETING CALLED to ORDER:

At 5:30 P.M. Chairman Lavern Coleman called the regular meeting to order.

RECESS REGULAR SESSION and enter into CLOSED SESSION in ACCORDANCE with N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(A)(3) ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE

MOTION:

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to recess regular session and enter into closed session and **add-on N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (A)(6) Personnel**, seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Items #2: CLOSED SESSION IN ACCORDANCE with N.C.G. N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(A)(3) and N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (A)(6) PERSONNEL ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE.

RECESS CLOSED SESSION and enter into REGULAR SESSION

MOTION:

At 6:25 P.M. Commissioner Bullard made a motion to recess closed session and enter into regular session, seconded by Vice Chairman Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

GENERAL ACCOUNT:

Attorney Amanda Prince gave the general account as follows:

The Commissioners discussed matters of attorney-client privilege, and personnel. No action was taken by the board.

MOTION:

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve the General Account, seconded by Commissioner Watts. The motion unanimously passed.

Chairman Coleman recessed regular session until 6:30 P.M.

Regular Session resumes at 6:30 P.M.

Agenda Items #3 and #4: INVOCATION and PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE:

The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Bullard. Everyone in attendance stood and pledged Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, which was led by Vice Chairman Smith.

Agenda Item # 5: APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

a. May 19, 2025

MOTION:

Commissioner Watts made a motion to approve the agenda with two add-ons, seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

The add-ons will be listed as:

Agenda Item # 20-A – Sheriff’s Office Travel Request

Agenda Item # 21-F – Health Department – (Environmental Health Software Contract)

Agenda Item # 6: BOARD MINUTES APPROVAL:

a. May 05, 2025 Regular Session

MOTION:

Commissioner Watts made a motion to approve the Board Minutes, seconded by Vice Chairman Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item #7: PUBLIC INPUT:

Johnny Edge - 470 Happy Home Road, Nakina. It’s nice to be here. Everybody has smiling faces. I don’t even have any notes, because I’m going to speak to you, gentlemen and lady, from the heart, from the inner person.

We’re all here because we want to do the best we can for Columbus County.

Over the last few weeks, we’ve brought up some issues. Some of you commissioners were already aware of them; some of you were not. The bottom line is: we need to do what is best for the people who live in and love Columbus County.

I’ve talked to a lot of people. There have been things discussed about Columbus County, believe it or not, that go back to before even some of you older members were born. That’s history. We can’t do anything about what’s happened in the past. We need to move forward, and we need to move forward together.

One thing that was brought up to me in the last few days really touched my heart, and that was the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's seven fruits are:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

I have trouble with one of those and I think y’all know which one, but things happen for a reason.

My pastor preached on unity and the Holy Spirit this past Sunday.

I don’t have all the answers. None of y’all do either. But together, we can come up with the best answers, the ones that are in the best interest of Columbus County, which we all love.

So I’m offering the hand, not just my own, but the hand of all the people I’ve spoken with and I want to hear your suggestions as leaders of this county. How can the people who live here work with you, hand in hand, to make Columbus County a better place to live?

Thank you for your time.

Agenda Item #8: EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

County Manager Eddie Madden recognized Patrick Treadaway from Building Inspections Department as the Employee Spotlight.

Mr. Patrick Treadaway has been employed with us since 2021.

He previously worked in Columbus County’s Facility Services Department, where he did an excellent job under the leadership of Mr. Stewart Carroll. He was later selected to become a building inspector for the county and has quickly demonstrated himself to be a leader in the department.

Patrick has excelled both in the field and in the classroom, having earned his Level One certifications in Mechanical, Plumbing, and Electrical at a rapid pace.

Patrick is a stellar employee and a tremendous asset to the Building Inspections Department. He is highly ambitious, eager to learn, and very conscientious when it comes to his duties. He never complains, and he consistently performs his job with professionalism and thoroughness.

For these reasons, please join me in recognizing Mr. Patrick Treadaway as tonight’s Employee Spotlight honoree.

Agenda Item #9: PROCLAMATION – ADOPTION of the 1ST ANNUAL COLUMBUS COUNTY RAMPS and RAILS APPRECIATION MONTH PROCLAMATION:

The Governing Body requested the adoption of the 1st Annual Columbus County Ramps and Rails Appreciation Month Proclamation.

MOTION:

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approved, seconded by Commissioner Bullard. The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Bullard – Requested that everyone involved with Ramps and Rails, not only those from Hallsboro, come forward

I will say, Ms. Kristy has been working very hard to keep you all within the budget, and she's done a great job with that.

If everyone would gather around, please. Thank you for coming this evening. We're doing things a little differently this year. In the past, we’ve added this to the agenda randomly, but we’ve now decided to schedule it automatically every May. That way, we won’t have to scramble to coordinate everyone’s schedules, it’ll just be set for May going forward.

RAMPS and RAILS APPRECIATION MONTH

WHEREAS, Matthew 5:16 states, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”; **and**

WHEREAS, in the face of great need these volunteers have allowed their bright light to shine all across the county, selflessly volunteering their time and effort to help those in need; **and**

WHEREAS, despite unprecedented challenges, including a global pandemic and supply chain shortages, the members of Ramps and Rails have continued to work in their community, showing concern and compassion for their neighbor;

WHEREAS, no job or act of kindness is too small because the work of Ramps and Rails goes beyond physical construction, even one ramp touches the hearts of those in need and is part of each group ministry by embodying the spirit of love and generosity and shows it is truly more blessed to give than to receive; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we the Columbus County Board of Commissioners, wish to declare May, 2025 as the first annual Ramps and Rails Appreciation Month. A way to express its deepest appreciation today and for the years to come. We would like to thank all members of Ramps and Rails for their selfless service and unwavering commitment to creating a more accessible and inclusive environment for all residents.

APPROVED and ADOPTED this the 19th, day of May, 2025

Agenda Item # 10: PRESENTATION – VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT (VAD) PROGRAM:

Soil and Water Conservation Director Morgan Hayes conducted a presentation regarding the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Program.

Why Have Voluntary Agricultural Districts?

- In Chapter 106, Article 61 of the North Carolina General Assembly authorized counties to undertake a series of programs to encourage the preservation of farmland.
 - As a result, counties throughout the state of North Carolina have begun to adopt Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinances (VAD).

The purpose of Columbus County Voluntary Agricultural Districts is “to increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life and to decrease the likelihood of legal disputes, such as nuisance actions between farm owners and their neighbors, and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.”



Eligibility

- In order for farmland to qualify for inclusion in the Columbus County Voluntary Agricultural District, it must be real property that meets the following requirements:
 - Is used for bona fide farm purposes, as that term is defined in G.S. 106-743.4(a) and G.S. 160D-903.
 - Be managed, if highly erodible land exists on the farm, in accordance with the Columbus County NRCS defined erosion-control practices that are addressed to said highly erodible land.
 - The property must be subject of a conservation agreement as defined in G.S. §121-35 between the county and the owner of such land that prohibits nonfarm use or development of such land for a period of at least ten (10) years, except for the creation of not more than three (3) lots that meet applicable municipal and county zoning and subdivision regulations. The form of the conservation agreement shall be approved by the agricultural advisory board created under G.S. 106-739.

Minimum Acreage Requirements for VAD (Per Bona Fide Farm Purposes Statute)

To qualify for enrollment in the Columbus County Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program, land must meet the following minimum acreage thresholds:

- **Forestry:** 20 acres of qualified forestland
- **Agriculture:** 10 acres of qualified agricultural land
- **Horticulture:** 5 acres of qualified horticultural land



Benefits to the Farmers

- **Recognition & Public Education about Agriculture**
 - Members of the program will post a sign, identifying their farm as a members of the VAD, indicating to any potential neighbors and passersby that their land is committed to the preservation of the agriculture way of life.
- **Decrease the likelihood of legal disputes, such as nuisance actions between farm owners and their neighbors**
 - Notice on the property signaling Agricultural District membership and a notice in the Columbus County computerized land record system making those within ½ mile (2640 ft.) of an Agricultural District farm aware of the potential for noise, odor, dust, or slow moving farm vehicles associated with farming.
- **Eligibility for funding.**
 - District members may be eligible for farmland preservation funds as local, state, and federal funds become available for further preservation projects.
- **Public hearing required for proposed condemnation**
 - Public hearings are held by the Agricultural Advisory Board if a farm in an Agricultural District is considered for a public project that may result in the land being condemned.

Benefits to the Public



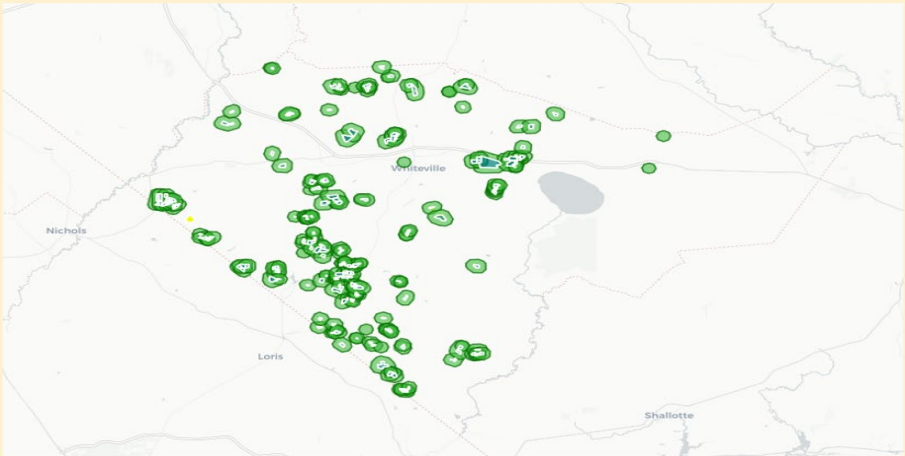
- Preserving North Carolina's #1 Industry
 - Agriculture and agribusiness combined is the leading industry in North Carolina. The success of the VAD program will foster the growth, development, and sustainability of family farms as well as increase public awareness of agriculture in NC and Columbus County.
- Quality of life.
 - When farms are kept in agriculture, it maintains the quality of life that many Columbus County families enjoy each day. Farming fields and forested areas enhance the physical beauty of Columbus County and also contributes to clean air and water. The rural farming community is part of our heritage that must be preserved for future generations.
- Ability to buy locally grown products.
 - Maintaining the agriculture industry in Columbus County allows consumers to purchase and consume locally grown products that are healthy and economically viable.

Columbus County Farms placed in VAD

- Number of Farms:
 - Approved and Filed with Register of Deeds: 49 farms
 - Approved, Pending Filing: 7 farms
- Total Acreage:
 - Approved and Filed with Register of Deeds: 10,234.38 acres
 - Approved, Pending Filing: 823.05 acres



Columbus County VAD Map



<https://mangomap.com/columbusmis/maps/122724/vad-2015?preview=true#>

Purchase of VAD Signs Effective July 2025

Members of the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Program have the opportunity to display their commitment to farmland preservation by purchasing official VAD signs.

- Single Sided
\$115.00
- Double Sided
\$155.00

Display your support for agriculture and help raise awareness in your community!

Available Through Columbus Soil and Water Conservation District!



[illegible]

Sample Conservation Agreement

**NORTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION AGREEMENT FOR THE COLUMBUS COUNTY
VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT PROGRAM**

Columbus County and the undersigned real property owner(s), John Doe into this Conservation Agreement for Voluntary Agricultural District covering said property as described in the legal description 123 SWCD Drive (Parcel 5632). Property located at 123 SWCD Drive, Columbus County.

Both parties understand and agree that this Agreement is being entered into to protect farmland, horticultural land and/or forestland in Columbus County as contemplated by Article 61 of Chapter 106 of the North Carolina General Statutes and the Columbus County Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance and to permit such property to qualify for the benefits granted by these laws and ordinances.

During the term of this Agreement, Owner agrees to prohibit non-farm use of Owner's property subject to this Agreement except as permitted by the above laws and ordinances, which Owner acknowledges, Owner has read, and is familiar with.

This Agreement is in place for a period of ten (10) years from the date of its execution and is automatically renewed if not terminated for an additional ten (10) years, and may be revoked by Owner at any time, with thirty (30) calendar days' written notice to the Columbus County Voluntary Agricultural District Board, or its designee. The Columbus County Voluntary Agricultural District Board may revoke this Agreement if the Owner is noncompliant with this Agreement or the above laws and ordinances.

IN WITNESS, both parties have signed this Agreement on the dates indicated in the signature acknowledgments.

COLUMBUS COUNTY	OWNER
_____ BY: Voluntary Agricultural District Board Chair	_____ OWNER _____

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF COLUMBUS

_____ has personally appeared before me this _____ day of _____, 20____, who acknowledged the due execution of the foregoing Conservation Agreement for a Voluntary Agricultural District for the purposes therein expressed.

WITNESS my hand and notarial seal, this _____ day of _____, 20____.

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: _____

File at Register of Deeds

- Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVADs) are a tool used by counties—primarily in North Carolina and some other U.S. states—to support and protect agricultural operations. They build upon the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) programs.
 - EVADs provide protections against encroachments, like utility easements, and encourage agriculture in the designated area. Landowners must agree to a 10-year irrevocable agreement, which may be renewed.

The diagram illustrates a hierarchy of conservation incentives, structured as a pyramid with five levels. A large blue arrow points upwards along the left side of the pyramid, labeled "Increase Protection" and "More Financial Incentives". The levels of the pyramid, from bottom to top, are:

- Voluntary Agricultural District (Green base)
- Enhanced VAD (Yellow)
- Funded Conservation Agreement (Orange)
- Term Conservation Easement (Brown)
- Perpetual Conservation Easement (Red top)

County Manager Eddie Madden requested acceptance of the FY 25-26 Proposed Budget Presentation and approval of the FY 25-26 Budget Public Hearing for Monday, June 2nd, 2025, at 6:30 P.M. or as soon as can be heard.

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to accept the presentation and establish June 2, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. as the date and time for a public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Floyd.

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to accept the presentation and establish the June 2, 2025 as a public hearing at 6:30 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

****THE BUDGET MESSAGE IS REFLECTED IN THE WORKSHOP MINUTES – THE FULL FY 25/26
PROPOSED BUDGET IS HOUSED IN THE CLERK’S OFFICE****

Agenda Item #12: COLUMBUS COUNTY SCHOOLS – APPROVAL to USE LOTTERY FUNDS and BUDGET AMENDAMENT for NAKINA MIDDLE SCHOOL PARKING LOT:

Assistant Principal Adam Thompson requested approval to use NC Lottery Funds and the associated budget amendment to pave the Nakina Middle School parking lot.

MOTION:

Commissioner Watts made a motion to approve the use of the lottery funds and the associated budget amendment for the Nakina Middle School Parking Lot, seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

DISPOSITION REQUEST PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING REPAIR & RENOVATION FUND NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION LOTTERY	DPI USE ONLY Approved By: _____ Date: _____
---	--

Date of Request: 05/05/2025

County: Columbus County Contact Person: Adam Thompson
 Address: 127 Webster St. Whiteville, NC 28472 Title: Assistant Superintendent
 LEA: Columbus Co. Schools Phone: 910-642-5168
 Address: 2586 James B. White Hwy Building A Whiteville NC 28472 Email: athompson@columbus.k12.nc.us

Project Title: Nakina Middle School Bus & Staff Parking Improvements
 Project Address: 9822 Seven Creeks Hwy Nakina, NC 28455

Type of Facility: Bus/Staff Parking Lot

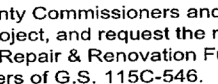
The Public School Building Repair & Renovation Fund was established by S.L. 2021-180, Section 4.4.(a1). The purpose of the Fund is to provide revenue to counties for repair and renovation projects. Per G.S. 115C-546.16, counties are to utilize funds for enlargement, improvement, expansion, repair, or renovation of classroom facilities at public school buildings within local school administrative units (LEAs) located in the county. As used in this context, "Public School Buildings" shall include only facilities for individual schools that are used for instructional and related purposes, and does not include administration, maintenance, or other facilities.

Brief Project Description (include est. start/end dates): Bus Parking Lot Pavement/Teacher Parking Resurfacing
NCDOT has agreed to partillay fund the bus parking lot up to \$50,000.00.

Estimated Start Date: August 1, 2025 Estimated Completion Date: August 22, 2025
 Estimated Costs:
 Planning and Design Services..... \$ _____
 New Construction – Facility Enlargement \$ _____
 New Construction – Addition(s) \$ _____
 Existing Construction – Facility Improvements \$ _____
 Existing Construction – Facility Repairs \$ \$140,000.00
 Existing Construction – Facility Renovations \$ _____
TOTAL \$ \$140,000.00

We, the undersigned, agree to submit a statement of state monies expended for this project within days following completion of the project.

The County Commissioners and the Board of Education do hereby jointly request approval of the above project, and request the release of \$ \$140,000.00 from the Public School Building Repair & Renovation Fund. We certify that the project herein described is within the parameters of G.S. 115C-546.



 (Signature – Chair, County Commissioners)

5-20-25

 (Date)

 (Signature – Chair, Board of Education)

 (Date)

PRINT FORM

Form Date: March 12, 2024

CLEAR FORM

Agenda Item #13: TRANSPORTATION- APPROVAL to SIGN the PRE-APPLICATION DOCUMENTS NEEDED for OUR FY27 5311 NCDOT GRANT APPLICATION:

Transportation Director Joy Jacobs requested approval to sign the pre-application documents needed for our FY27 5311 NCDOT Grant application.

MOTION:

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Featherson. The motion unanimously passed.

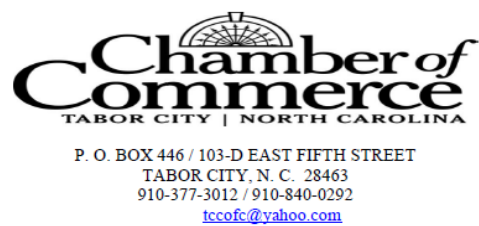
****ALL FY27 TRANSPORTATION DOCUMENTS ARE HOUSED IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE***

Agenda Item #14: TABOR CITY CHAMBER of COMMERCE – REQUESTING PERMISSION to POSSESS, TRANSPORT, RECEIVE, DELIVER, and DISPLAY FIREWORKS at SOUTH COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL, WAIVE PERMIT FEE, and APPROVAL of \$1,000 SPECIAL APPROPRIATION BUDGET AMENDMENT:

The Tabor City Chamber of Commerce Director Cynthia S. Nelson, requested permission to possess, transport, receive, deliver and display fireworks, waive the permit fee and approval of the special appropriation budget amendment in the amount of \$1,000. This is for the 38th Annual Columbus County Fireworks Celebration Thursday, July 3, 2025.

MOTION:

Commissioner Watts made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Bullard. The motion unanimously passed.



Date: May 13, 2025
Re: Columbus County Fireworks Celebration
To: The Honorable Lavern Coleman, Chairman
Columbus County Board of Commissioners
127 W. Webster Street
Whiteville, N. C. 28472

Dear Chairman,

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce requests permission from the Columbus County Board of Commissioners to possess, transport, receive, deliver, and display fireworks at South Columbus High School on Thursday, July 3, 2025, for the 38th Annual Columbus County Fireworks Celebration.

We also would like to request that the fee for the permit from the Columbus County Fire Marshal's office be waived as it has been in the past.

We appreciate the sponsorship of \$1,000 from you all for many years and hope y'all will again choose to sponsor this patriotic event.

Thank you for your consideration of the above requests and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Cynthia S. Nelson, EVP

Cc: Mr. Edwin H. Madden, Jr., Columbus County Manager
Mr. Brent Watts, Columbus County Commissioner, District 5
Ms. Jana Nealey, Columbus County Clerk

Agenda Item #15: OPIOID SETTLEMENT – APPROVAL of the RESOLUTION for the FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 OPIOID SETTLEMENT BUDGET:

Consultant Cynthia Wiford requested approval of the resolution for the FY 25/26 Opioid Settlement budget.

County Manager Eddie Madden commented: For your review, attached, beginning on page 13 of your packet and continuing through page 17, is detailed information regarding the budget and the justification for each expenditure. These are consistent with the Attorney General's requirements for the administration of funds.

MOTION:

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice Chairman Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

**A RESOLUTION BY THE COUNTY OF Columbus
TO DIRECT THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS**

WHEREAS Columbus County has joined national settlement agreements with companies engaged in the manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing of opioids. Including settlements with drug distributors Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen, and the drug maker Johnson & Johnson and its subsidiary Janssen Pharmaceuticals;

WHEREAS the allocation, use, and reporting of funds stemming from these national settlement agreements and certain bankruptcy resolutions (“Opioid Settlement Funds”) are governed by the Memorandum of Agreement Between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation (“MOA”);

WHEREAS Columbus County has received Opioid Settlement Funds pursuant to these national settlement agreements and deposited the Opioid Settlement Funds in a separate special revenue fund as required by section D of the MOA;

WHEREAS section E.6 of the MOA states that, before spending opioid settlement funds, the local government’s governing body must adopt a resolution that:

(i) indicates that it is an authorization for expenditure of opioid settlement funds; and,

- (ii) states the specific strategy or strategies the county or municipality intends to fund pursuant to Option A or Option B, using the item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to identify each funded strategy; and,
- (iii) states the amount dedicated to each strategy for a specific period of time.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, in alignment with the NC MOA, Columbus County authorizes the expenditure of opioid settlement funds as follows:

1. First strategy authorized

- a. LEADERSHIP, PLANNING AND COORDINATION
- b. Exhibit A-1
- c. \$100,000
- d. July 1, 2025 through End date June 30, 2026
- e. Columbus County to update its strategic plan as required by the MOA and support grant writing efforts to leverage the opioid settlement funds to expand services if opportunities become available and coordinate implementation of the plan as needed.
- f. Provider: Columbus County contract with ACT Associates, LLC

2. Second strategy authorized

- a. HARM REDUCTION-NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION
- b. Exhibit A-7
- c. \$18,000
- d. July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
- e. Columbus County provides Naloxone for its County and municipal first responders as needed.
- f. Provider: Columbus County.

3. Third strategy authorized

- a. PREVENT OVERDOSE DEATHS AND OTHER HARMS (HARM REDUCTION)
- b. Exhibit B: H-5
- c. \$15,000
- d. July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
- e. Software support for EMS database to track Opioid and other drug overdoses occurring in the County EMS system.
- f. Provider: Columbus County

4. Fourth strategy authorized

- a. SUPPORT PEOPLE IN TREATMENT AND RECOVERY
- b. Exhibit B: B-2
- c. \$289,080.00
- d. July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
- e. Columbus County needs to continue to execute a contract for an estimated need of 10-12 beds per day/annually with The Healing Place of New Hanover County for services. The County has entered into a contract with The Healing Place of New Hanover County to contract for beds available to adult men and women from Columbus County. The Healing Place of New Hanover County will allow individuals with Opioid Use Disorder to be admitted and offer the use of Vivitrol (one/month/injectable Naltrexone) to assist the individual with Opioid cravings.
- f. Provider: The Healing Place of New Hanover County

5. Fifth strategy authorized

- a. CONNECT PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP TO THE HELY THEY NEED
- b. Exhibit B: C-16
- c. \$91,500.00
- d. July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
- e. Hire an independent contractor to assist Columbus County residents in identifying and accessing treatment services. The contractor will serve as the County Liaison for Columbus County referrals to The Healing Place of New Hanover County. The contractor will organize and update as needed, a County resource guide that contains information regarding available services for Opioid Use Disorder, Substance Use Disorder, and Mental Health conditions. The resource will also list other supports that can be utilized by County residents needed to support and gain recovery. The contractor will provide in-service training to community groups on topics of stigma, Naltrexone (Narcan), SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) and other topics as assigned and needed in the community to intervene with the County's individuals and families affected by Opioid use. Funds allocated include cost of independent contractor and materials needed to provide public education on relevant subjects, acceptable mileage, meal and training reimbursements.
- f. Provider: Columbus County

6. Sixth strategy authorized

- a. PREVENT MISUSE OF OPIOIDS
- b. Exhibit B: G-9
- c. \$30,000
- d. July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
- e. Columbus County implemented a 6-10th grade Evidence Based Practice Prevention program in the Whiteville and Columbus County School Systems. The program was implemented year 1 in 6th grade. Funds will be allocated to implement the curricula in the 6th and 7th and 8th grades for the school year beginning in Fall 2025. The project would train up to 20-6th grade teachers and up to 1725 students in year 3, across both school systems.
- f. Provider: Botkin "Lifeskills Training" – Evidence Based Prevention curricula.

7. Seventh Strategy Authorized

- a. PREVENT MISUSE OF OPIOIDS
- b. Exhibit B: G-9
- c. \$42,700
- d. July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026

- e. Columbus County and Whiteville School Systems will be installing Vape Detectors in the high schools to identify students who are using Vape products on school property. Vape Detection will assist the school in identifying students who may be vaping opioids and other illicit substances on school property and assist in early intervention into harmful activities.
- f. Provider: Columbus County and Whiteville School systems via a contract with Lockstep Technology Group.

8. Eighth strategy authorized

- a. SUPPORT TREATMENT AND RECOVERY COURTS THAT PROVIDE EVIDENCE BASED OPTIONS FOR PERSONS W OUD AND ANY CO-OCCURRING SUD.MH CONDITIONS.
- b. B: D-3
- c. \$258,992.75
- d. July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
- e. Provide funding for up to 1 year of operations for a Columbus County Recovery Court operating out of the District Court. Budget will include staff, court personnel mandatory national training, urinalysis, supplies, assessment and case management software systems, Allocated funds will support registration, travel, lodging, and per diem expenses. Purpose of the funding is to support the development of a Recovery Court which meets the national drug court standards and will qualify the Court for potential future grant funding to sustain it in the future.
- f. Provider: Columbus County.

9. Ninth strategy authorized

- a. PREVENT MISUSE OF OPIOIDS
- b. B:G-2
- c. \$20,000
- d. July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
- e. Maintain current County Resource List and regularly update Quit-It Columbus Facebook Resource Page
- f. Provider: Columbus County

10. Tenth strategy authorized

- a. PREVENT MISUSE OF OPIOIDS
- b. B: G-1
- c. \$30,000
- d. July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
- e. Update Marketing materials, develop outreach efforts at community education about opioids and other harmful substance use to outlying areas and municipalities in Columbus County including posters, brochures, bill-boards, mailers, yard signs.
- f. Provider; Columbus County via contract with Josh Fraim and Indigo Media, Inc.

11. Eleventh strategy authorized

- a. SUPPORT PEOPEL IN TREATMENT AND RECOVERY
- b. B: B-7
- c. \$7500
- d. July 1 2025- June 30, 2026
- e. Provide (up to \$5000) to transport Columbus County residents to Jacksonville and Greenville for detoxification/stabilization services for conditions related to their opioid, dual diagnosis or other substance use issues requiring specialized assessment and stabilization. Provide (up to \$2500) to individuals who are in recovery from Opioid and other substance use disorders who need financial assistance in the forms of rent or utility deposits for recovery housing needs.
- f. Provider: Columbus County.

12. Twelfth strategy authorized

- a. LEADERSHIP, PLANNING AND COORDINATION
- b. B: J-4
- c. \$72,000
- d. July 1, 2025-June 30 , 2026.
- e. This supports two part-time positions within the County Government: Grants Coordinator and Accounting Technician who account for the Opioid Settlement Funding and outcomes reporting requirements.
- f. Provider: Columbus County.

13. Thirteenth strategy authorized

- a. PREVENT OVERDOSE AND OTHER HARMS
- b. B: H-13
- c. \$42,700
- d. July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
- e. With the rise in fentanyl and other illicit drugs, deputies need to be equipped with technology that will protect the staff during a search and seizure which may include highly toxic substances harmful to the individuals conducting the searches. These funds will provide a narcotics detector for the Columbus County Sheriff's Department which will prevent the deputies from exposure to the toxic substances like fentanyl.
- f. Provider: Columbus County Sheriff's Department.

The total dollar amount of Opioid Settlement Funds appropriated across the above named and authorized strategies is \$1,018,7272.85

Agenda Item #16: EMERGENCY SERVICES – APPROVAL of NEW 911 CENTER VIPER RADIO and INTERNET CONNECTIVITIY CONTRRACT:

Interim Emergency Services Director Kay Stephens requested approval of the new 911 Center VIPER Radio and internet connectivity contract for emergency dispatch procedures.

Interim Emergency Service Director Kay Stephens commented: As you know, we are currently performing construction on the building next door to relocate the new 911 center. As part of that, we need fiber connectivity in order to operate the VIPER radios and to ensure redundant internet communications. Therefore, we are requesting your approval of the contract with MCNC to provide this fiber connectivity.

This is being funded by the 911 grant and SCIF grants.

MOTION:

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

****THE CONTACT IS HOUSED IN THE CLERK’S OFFICE***

Agenda Item #17: ATTORNEY’S OFFICE – APPROVAL of the 3M (PFAS) SETTLEMENT:

Attorney Amanda Prince requested approval of the 3M (PFAS) settlement.

Finance Director Heather Woody commented: During our last two audit presentations, our auditor requested that we revamp our depreciation schedule to reflect a more realistic lifespan for our assets. In response, we are providing a more detailed list, which also includes an increase in the useful life of certain assets, particularly within our infrastructure, such as water and sewer lines, in our enterprise funds. As a result, we are required to conduct two readings.

MOTION:

Commissioner Floyd made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice Chairman Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

BARON & BUDD, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS
3102 OAK LAWN AVE., #1100
DALLAS, TEXAS 75219-4281
(214) 521-3605

SETTLEMENT STATEMENT

IN RE: Columbus County		
Settlement: 25 12915 - 24 17368 1		
3M Company - Initial Payment		47,745.05
Less Common Benefit Assessment (8%) & Attorneys' Fee (17%)*		11,936.26
Common Benefit Assessment - Court Ordered	3,819.60	
Cossich, Sumich, Parsiola & Taylor, LLC	3,652.50	
Seagle Law, PLLC	405.83	
Ward and Smith, P.A.	405.83	
Baron & Budd, P.C.	3,652.50	
Less Partial Litigation Expenses		
Referring Attorney Costs	15.00	
Experts/Lien Resolution Fees	9,812.50	
Sub Total Expenses		9,827.50
Balance Due Claimant		25,981.29

* Attorneys' Fees are equal to the Original Contract Fee % less the Common Benefit Assessment - Court Ordered %

Client has received from Attorneys the Balance Due Claimant shown above. Client hereby approves of the distribution of funds as hereinabove set forth, the services of the Attorneys, and the amount and breakdown of attorneys' fee. Client further authorizes Attorneys to disburse the proceeds in accordance with the above itemization.

A copy of Rule 1.8 of the Louisiana Rules of Professional Conduct is attached. It allows attorneys to advance courts costs and litigation expenses prior to settlement but requires that a copy of the rule be provided at the time of the approval of any settlement statement.

Columbus County	Date
-----------------	------

Rule 1.8. Conflict of Interest: Current Clients – Specific Rules

(a) A lawyer shall not enter into a business transaction with a client or knowingly acquire an ownership, possessory, security or other pecuniary interest adverse to a client unless:

- (1) the transaction and terms on which the lawyer acquires the interest are fair and reasonable to the client and are fully disclosed and transmitted in writing in a manner that can be reasonably understood by the client;
- (2) the client is advised in writing of the desirability of seeking and is given a reasonable opportunity to seek the advice of independent legal counsel on the transaction; and
- (3) the client gives informed consent, in a writing signed by the client, to the essential terms of the transaction and the lawyer's role in the transaction, including whether the lawyer is representing the client in the transaction.

(b) A lawyer shall not use information relating to representation of a client to the disadvantage of the client unless the client gives informed consent, except as permitted or required by these Rules.

(c) A lawyer shall not solicit any substantial gift from a client, including a testamentary gift, or prepare on behalf of a client an instrument giving the lawyer or a person related to the lawyer any substantial gift unless the lawyer or other recipient of the gift, is related to the client. For purposes of this paragraph, related persons include a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, or grandparent.

(d) Prior to the conclusion of representation of a client, a lawyer shall not make or negotiate an agreement giving the lawyer literary or media rights to a portrayal or account based in substantial part on information relating to the representation.

(e) A lawyer shall not provide financial assistance to a client in connection with pending or contemplated litigation, except as follows:

- (1) A lawyer may advance court costs and expenses of litigation, the repayment of which may be contingent on the outcome of the matter, provided that the expenses were reasonably incurred. Court costs and expenses of litigation include, but are not necessarily limited to, filing fees; deposition costs; expert witness fees; transcript costs; witness fees; copy costs; photographic, electronic, or digital evidence production; investigation fees; related travel expenses; litigation related medical expenses; and any other case specific expenses directly related to the representation undertaken, including those set out in Rule 1.8(e)(3).
- (2) A lawyer representing an indigent client may pay court costs and expenses of litigation on behalf of the client.
- (3) Overhead costs of a lawyer's practice which are those not incurred by the lawyer solely for the purposes of a particular representation, shall not be passed on to a client. Overhead costs include, but are not necessarily limited to, office rent, utility costs, charges for local telephone service, office supplies, fixed asset expenses, and ordinary secretarial and staff services.

With the informed consent of the client, the lawyer may charge as recoverable costs such items as computer legal research charges, long distance telephone expenses, postage charges, copying charges, mileage and outside courier service charges, incurred solely for the purposes of the representation undertaken for that client, provided they are charged at the lawyer's actual, invoiced costs for these expenses.

With client consent and where the lawyer's fee is based upon an hourly rate, a reasonable charge for paralegal services may be chargeable to the client. In all other instances, paralegal services shall be considered an overhead cost of the lawyer.

- (4) In addition to costs of court and expenses of litigation, a lawyer may provide financial assistance to a client who is in necessitous circumstances, subject however to the following restrictions.

(i) Upon reasonable inquiry, the lawyer must determine that the client's necessitous circumstances, without minimal financial assistance, would adversely affect the client's ability to initiate and/or maintain the cause for which the lawyer's services were engaged.

(ii) The advance or loan guarantee, or the offer thereof, shall not be used as an inducement by the lawyer, or anyone acting on the lawyer's behalf, to secure employment.

(iii) Neither the lawyer nor anyone acting on the lawyer's behalf may offer to make advances or loan guarantees prior to being hired by a client, and the lawyer shall not publicize nor advertise a willingness to make advances or loan guarantees to clients.

(iv) Financial assistance under this rule may provide but shall not exceed that minimum sum necessary to meet the client's, the client's spouse's, and/or dependents' documented obligations for food, shelter, utilities, insurance, non-litigation related medical care and treatment, transportation expenses, education, or other documented expenses necessary for subsistence.

- (5) Any financial assistance provided by a lawyer to a client, whether for court costs, expenses of litigation, or for necessitous circumstances, shall be subject to the following additional restrictions.

(i) Any financial assistance provided directly from the funds of the lawyer to a client shall not bear interest, fees, or charges of any nature.

(ii) Financial assistance provided by a lawyer to a client may be made using a lawyer's line of credit or loans obtained from financial institutions in which the lawyer has no ownership, control and/or security interest; provided, however, that this prohibition shall not apply to any federally insured bank, savings and loan association, savings bank, or credit union where the lawyer's ownership, control and/or security interest is less than 15%. Where the lawyer uses such loans to provide financial assistance to a client, the lawyer should make reasonable, good faith efforts to procure a favorable interest rate for the client.

(iii) Where the lawyer uses a line of credit or loans obtained from financial institutions to provide financial assistance to a client, the lawyer shall not pass on to the client interest charges, including any fees or other charges attendant to such loans, in an amount exceeding the actual charge by the third party lender, or ten percentage points above the bank prime loan rate of interest as reported by the Federal Reserve Board on January 15th of each year in which the loan is outstanding, whichever is less.

(iv) A lawyer providing a guarantee or security on a loan made in favor of a client may do so only to the extent that the interest charges, including any fees or other charges attendant to such a loan, do not exceed ten percentage points (10%) above the bank prime loan rate of interest as reported by the Federal Reserve Board on January 15th of each year in which the loan is outstanding. Interest together with other charges attendant to such loans which exceeds this maximum may not be the subject of the lawyer's guarantee or security.

(v) The lawyer shall procure the client's written consent to the terms and conditions under which such financial assistance is made. Nothing in this rule shall require client consent in those matters in which a court has certified a class under applicable state or federal law; provided, however, that the court must have accepted and exercised responsibility for making the determination that interest and fees are owed, and that the amount of interest and fees chargeable to the client is fair and reasonable considering the facts and circumstances presented.

(vi) In every instance where the client has been provided financial assistance by the lawyer, the full text of this rule shall be provided to the client at the time of execution of any settlement documents, approval of any disbursement sheet as provided for in [Rule 1.5](#), or upon submission of a bill for the lawyer's services.

(vii) For purposes of Rule 1.8(e), the term "financial institution" shall include a federally insured financial institution and any of its affiliates, bank, savings and loan, credit union, savings bank, loan or finance company, thrift, and any other business or person that, for a commercial purpose, loans or advances money to attorneys and/or the clients of attorneys for court costs, litigation expenses, or for necessitous circumstances.

(f) A lawyer shall not accept compensation for representing a client from one other than the client unless:

(1) the client gives informed consent, or the compensation is provided by contract with a third person such as an insurance contract or a prepaid legal service plan;

(2) there is no interference with the lawyer's independence or professional judgment or with the client-lawyer relationship; and

(3) information relating to representation of a client is protected as required by [Rule 1.6](#).

(g) A lawyer who represents two or more clients shall not participate in making an aggregate settlement of the claims of or against the clients, or in a criminal case an aggregated agreement as to guilty or nolo contendere pleas, unless each client gives informed consent, in a writing signed by the client, or a court approves a settlement in a certified class action. The lawyer's disclosure shall include the existence and nature of all the claims or pleas involved and of the participation of each person in the settlement.

(h) A lawyer shall not:

(1) make an agreement prospectively limiting the lawyer's liability to a client for malpractice unless the client is independently represented in making the agreement; or

(2) settle a claim or potential claim for such liability with an unrepresented client or former client unless that person is advised in writing of the desirability of seeking and is given a reasonable opportunity to seek the advice of independent legal counsel in connection therewith.

(i) A lawyer shall not acquire a proprietary interest in the cause of action or subject matter of litigation the lawyer is conducting for a client, except that the lawyer may:

- (1) acquire a lien authorized by law to secure the lawyer's fee or expenses; and

(2) contract with a client for a reasonable contingent fee in a civil case.

(j) [Reserved].

(k) A lawyer shall not solicit or obtain a power of attorney or mandate from a client which would authorize the attorney, without first obtaining the client’s informed consent to settle, to enter into a binding settlement agreement on the client’s behalf or to execute on behalf of the client any settlement or release documents. An attorney may obtain a client’s authorization to endorse and negotiate an instrument given in settlement of the client’s claim, but only after the client has approved the settlement.

(l) While lawyers are associated in a firm, a prohibition in the foregoing paragraphs (a) through (k) that applies to any one of them shall apply to all of them.

Certificate Of Completion

Envelope Id: D40D5921-C884-4D07-AE78-F76F3993BC53

Subject: PFAS - 3M Initial Payment - Settlement Statement - Columbus County

Source Envelope:

Document Pages: 4

Certificate Pages: 1

AutoNav: Enabled

EnvelopeId Stamping: Enabled

Time Zone: (UTC-06:00) Central Time (US & Canada)

Status: Delivered

Envelope Originator:

Erin McIntosh

3102 Oak Lawn Ave

Suite 1100

Dallas, TX 75219

emcintosh@baronbudd.com

IP Address: 10.104.81.137

Record Tracking

Status: Original

5/1/2025 9:42:39 AM

Holder: Erin McIntosh

emcintosh@baronbudd.com

Location: DocuSign

Signer Events

Signature

Timestamp

Edwin H. Madden, Jr.

emadden@columbusco.org

County Manager

Columbus County

Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure:

Not Offered via Docusign

Sent: 5/1/2025 9:50:59 AM

Viewed: 5/1/2025 12:48:43 PM

In Person Signer Events

Signature

Timestamp

Editor Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Agent Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Intermediary Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Certified Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Carbon Copy Events

Status

Timestamp

Witness Events

Signature

Timestamp

Notary Events

Signature

Timestamp

Envelope Summary Events

Status

Timestamps

Envelope Sent

Hashed/Encrypted

5/1/2025 9:50:59 AM

Certified Delivered

Security Checked

5/1/2025 12:48:43 PM

Payment Events

Status

Timestamps

Agenda Item #18: FINANCE – APPROVAL of the 1st READING of the AMENDED DEPRECIATION SCHEDULE:

Finance Director Heather Woody Requested approval of the 1st reading of the amended depreciation schedule.

MOTION:

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Watts. The motion unanimously passed.

Chapter 24: Budget and Finance Fixed Assets

§24.1 Purpose

The purpose is to establish and maintain complete and accurate records accounting for fixed assets.

Local governments are required by N.C.G.S. § 159-26(b)(8) to maintain "a ledger or group of accounts in which to record the details relating to the general fixed assets of the unit."

Fixed assets records are required under GAAP and are necessary for the local government's auditor to render an unqualified opinion on its financial statements. Also, fixed asset information is required for an Annual Comprehensive Financial Report to qualify for the Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

§24.2 Definition

Fixed assets may be tangible or intangible in nature, have a value of \$5,000 or more, \$100,000 or more for infrastructure, and have a useful life of longer than one year. They are classified as land, improvements other than buildings, buildings, equipment, vehicles, infrastructure, software, and construction in progress. Intangible assets include certain right to use assets such as leases and subscription based IT arrangements (SBITs). Columbus County has determined an individual SBITA and lease liability threshold of \$50,000. This individual capitalization threshold applies to all SBITAs and leases with a maximum possible term of more than one year. Fixed assets can be both movable and immovable. Items of insignificant value, while they may meet the above criteria, are normally expensed instead of being considered fixed assets.

An item is considered a capital purchase subject to depreciation or amortization if it meets the following conditions:

- ◆ The equipment is a major end use item. The item meets the dollar and life criteria and is designed to stand alone in its normal function.
- ◆ The item enhances, upgrades, expands, or increases the life of an existing capital equipment item. A major repair would qualify to be capitalized if it does extend the life and enhances the value of a capital asset.

Items that are not capitalized are those that function alone but do not meet the dollar and life criteria. These items must be expensed:

- ◆ Individually purchased component items costing less than \$5,000.

- ◆ A replacement item that replaces part of a system but does not significantly enhance the life of the system. If an item is purchased as replacement for a system component or repair part, it is not a capital expenditure, regardless of the cost. Examples are a dump body for a truck, a bush hot for a tractor or a front-end loader for a tractor.

Fixed assets containing separate physical parts (i.e., CPU, monitor and keyboard) are not considered one asset having one or more component parts. Each separate physical part is considered to be a separate asset and is individually evaluated to determine if capitalization criteria are met.

§24.3 Responsibility

It is the responsibility of each Department Director to accurately maintain the Asset Register for their respective departments and to maintain secure control of their assets. Individual departments are also responsible for maintaining non-capitalized assets at their level. Non-capitalized assets are frequently portable and/or subject to theft or loss. Therefore, it is important to maintain accountability for them. The Finance Department is responsible for maintaining the computerized fixed asset system.

Department directors who acquire capital assets with grant monies are responsible for tracking and managing them in a manner consistent with Federal, State, or grant agreement requirements regarding accountability and stewardship of grant-funded capital assets. If ownership of a grant-funded asset transfers to the County and the asset is valued at \$5,000 or more, the procedures in this policy for tracking and reporting the asset will apply.

§24.4 Classifications

Fixed assets owned by Columbus County are recorded in the accounting records. Accounting classifications of fixed assets are:

- ◆ **Land** – A fixed asset account that reflects the acquisition value of land and the rights to land owned by the County. It includes all land held in fee simple and all rights to land that have no termination date.

If the land is purchased, the valuation includes such costs as purchase price, legal fees, filling and excavation, and other costs directly related to the acquisition of the land and its preparation for use. Rights-of-way and easements are recorded at purchase cost plus legal costs. If land is acquired by a gift, the valuation recorded should be the appraised value at the time of acquisition. Proceeds from the salvaging of any assets removed from the land reduce the land's cost. (i.e., funds received from the sale of the components of an existing building on the land).

- ◆ **Improvements Other than Buildings** – A fixed asset account that reflects the acquisition value of permanent improvements (other than buildings) that add value to the land or improve the use of the land, but do not have an indefinite life. Examples of such improvements are fences, retaining walls, sidewalks, parking lots, driveways, most landscaping, etc.

An improvement provides additional value to an existing asset. Such added value is achieved by either lengthening the asset's estimated useful life or increasing the asset's ability to provide service (greater effectiveness or efficiency).

If purchased or constructed, the valuation includes such costs as the purchase price, acquisition legal fees, and other professional fees (related to design or construction). If acquired by gift, the valuation recorded should be the appraised value at the time of acquisition.

- ◆ **Buildings** – A fixed asset account that reflects the acquisition value of permanent structures owned by the County used to house persons and property. Permanently installed fixtures to or within these structures are considered parts of the structures. The costs of major improvements to structures are included in this account.

If purchased or constructed, the valuation includes such costs as the purchase price, acquisition legal fees, and other professional fees (related to design or construction). If acquired by gift, the valuation recorded should be the appraised value at the time of acquisition.

- ◆ **Equipment** – A fixed asset account that reflects the value of tangible property not permanently affixed to real property, used in carrying out the operation of the County.

The basis of valuation of purchased equipment includes the net contract price, transportation charges, and the cost of installing special devices or other preparations required to ready the asset for its intended use. The basis of valuation of donated equipment is the appraised value at the date acquired.

- ◆ **Vehicles** – A fixed asset account that reflects the value of motor vehicles owned by the County.

The basis of valuation of purchased vehicles includes the net contract price, transportation charges, and the cost of installing special devices or other preparations required to ready the asset for its intended use. The basis of valuation of donated vehicles is the appraised value at the date acquired.

Agenda Item #19: FINANCE – APPROVAL of the AMENDED BUDGET ORDINANCE AND FEE SCHEDULE:

Finance Director Heather Woody requested approval of the amended budget ordinance and processing fee schedule due to software conversion.

Finance Director Heather Woody commented: We're getting ready to start converting our software at the collection center over to Edmunds. As a result, the online bill pay and telephone portal pay systems will be deactivated on May 27th at noon.

Logics' online bill pay system will send out an email blast to all currently registered users, notifying them that the system will be shutting down. That email will go out on May 19th and again on May 27th.

In discussions with the Edmunds conversion team, there may be a delay in activating the new online bill pay system. We are expecting a 2–4-week turnaround time before those services are available again.

Customers who have automatic draft payments set up through the collection center will not be affected by this change.

As part of the May 6 billing cycle, we included a bill insert with every statement that outlines a general timeline for the changeover.

Also, please note: the collection office will not be able to accept payments or look up accounts on May 28th, as the system will be fully shut down for data conversion from Logics to Edmunds. This may extend into May 29th.

If customers bring in their bill during this time, we can accept payments and handwrite a receipt, and we'll enter that information into the new system once it's operational. However, customers must bring their bill, and staff will not be able to answer any account-related questions during the transition.

During the conversion, only cash, checks, or money orders will be accepted. Credit and debit card payments will not be processed during this time.

Additionally, the convenience fee structure is changing. Currently, credit and debit card fees vary depending on how the payment is made. Going forward, the fee will be uniform across all payment methods in-person, by phone, or online. The new fees are also lower:

- Credit/debit card payments: 2.95% fee
- E-check payments (online or by phone using routing and account numbers): \$1.95 flat fee

That's when you call in and give your account and routing numbers for a direct withdrawal from your checking account.

Commissioner Byrd - Are the fees you listed the same as they were last year?

Finance Director Heather Woody - Yes, we will not make any changes to the other fees on the fee schedule until the July 1st budget. I've included this information on page 52, about halfway down the page, under 'Other Fees.' You will see that we are changing the merchant processing fee from 3.95% to 2.95%. We waited until the very last meeting to make this change because we did not want to cause any confusion for those paying the fees.

Commissioner Byrd - In the new budget that we've been working on, are the fees increased?

Finance Director Heather Woody - Yes, there is an automatic increase built into the meter service fee for 3/4 of an inch. There are probably additional fees that are changing as well, but I don't have all of them right now. I've just included this one page here to address the changes.

Commissioner Byrd - At some point, we should point out what the changes are going to be.

Finance Director Heather Woody - They're in your book.

Commissioner Byrd - I'm talking about to the public. I know the information is in the book, but I'm referring to the public because there might be someone out there trying to decide whether or not to hook on. If they know it's going to cost them more next month or next year, they might decide to do it now.

Finance Director Heather Woody - I think everything that's changing are the service fees, like the sign-up fees and things like that. I believe those are pretty stagnant or remain the same. However, your service fee of \$29 this month for a standard line will go up to \$30 per month after July 1st.

Commissioner Watts - You mentioned a \$1.95 fee for calling in, is that a credit card fee?

Finance Director Heather Woody - No, that's for when you call in and they ask for your account information if you want to pay by check or credit card. If you choose to pay by check, that's the fee.

Commissioner Watts – So, we charge people \$2 to call in?

Finance Director Heather Woody- Yes.

Commissioner Watts - From a telephone line that the taxpayer pays for.

Finance Director Heather Woody – No, sir. It's done through a third party.

Commissioner Watts – Why can't we answer the calls and take in the money?

Finance Director Heather Woody - It causes security issues when we do that, because a lot of times when they're calling in and providing that information, it's being written down on a piece of paper and then keyed into the computer. They often repeat the information back to confirm it's correct, and then that piece of paper gets thrown in the trash. So, it's definitely a security concern. Now, I do know that with our new credit card processor, it is swipe-only. I'm not sure if it will even allow the option to manually enter credit card information.

Commissioner Byrd - But there will be a charge if you choose to pay that way.

Finance Director Heather Woody - Yes. So, if you go in and swipe your card, that's one method. If you call in and give them your credit card number over the phone, the system will confirm and notify you that there's a fee. Even if you pay online, before you complete the transaction, the final confirmation screen will show you your bill amount and the convenience fee. You have to press 'Yes' to accept before it processes the payment. But if you are set up on automatic draft, there is no charge.

Chairman Coleman – It looks like using automatic draft would be encouraged, as it can save you a few dollars and ensures your payment is always on time.

Finance Director Heather Woody - The convenience fee doesn't even go through our checking account with this new processor. We receive the full amount of the bill, and the convenience fee is sent directly to the payment processor.

Commissioner Bullard - The other day, a lady called me and said, 'Rick, you know my husband died 10 years ago. I went to get water service, and they wouldn't let me have it because the account is still in his name.' Thankfully, Gail helped me resolve the issue, but it seems like the process should be a little easier for people who have gone through the loss of a husband or wife.

Finance Director Heather Woody - All of that is outlined in a policy that has already been approved. I understand that. So, if we need to make changes to the policy to make things easier or more accommodating, we would need to rewrite it and bring it back to you all for two readings.

Commissioner Bullard - It might be something we could look into, because it's very difficult for some people to deal with.

Commissioner Watts - I want to agree with Ricky. I know we're busy with the budget, but I feel like people sometimes feel penalized just for trying to get county water. I mean, I know this isn't on you, but I just got a text a little while ago, someone's pump is going out. Eventually, they're going to get frustrated. And if they do, they'll just fix their well instead of hooking up to county water, and we'll lose that customer.

Finance Director Heather Woody - I know that policy was created in conjunction with some laws and the water department itself. A lot of it just carried over when finance absorbed the collections, so that policy was transferred. We would be happy to look at it again, in coordination with Public Utilities, to make sure we're covering everything we need to. However, we would need to bring it back to you all for a vote, and it would require two readings.

Commissioner Watts - We all agree that we'd like to do this.

Commissioner Byrd - You can understand that the account will be in either the wife's or the husband's name, but when something happens to either one of them, it shouldn't be a hassle to switch the account over to the surviving spouse's name. They shouldn't have to do anything but go up there and inform you. I'm not sure if you require a copy of the death certificate or whatever, but we really need to make that process as simple and easy as possible.

Chairman Coleman - There are so many legal aspects you have to go through to do that. You can't just arbitrarily make the change; there are a lot of legalities involved.

Finance Director Heather Woody - It would probably be a process of providing, maybe not a death certificate, but perhaps a newspaper announcement, along with the driver's license and social security card. This is something we can work on.

Commissioner Featherson – If the power company account is in Jimmy and Barbara's names, and Barbara passes away, Jimmy can continue with the account.

Finance Director Heather Woody - I think it can only be in one person's name because we tie it to a social security number. If they don't pay their bill, we use that social security number through the debt set-off program to try to recoup our funds.

MOTION:

Commissioner Floyd made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Bullard. The motion unanimously passed.

The Logics Online Bill Pay portal and the Logics IVR-Phone Pay system will be inactivated on May 27, 2025 at 12:00 noon. Logics Online Bill Pay system will be sending out an email blast to those signed up on that system letting them know the system will be shutting down. The email blasts will be sent out on May 19, 2025 and on May 27, 2025. In a discussion with the conversion implementation manager for Edmunds, there may be a delay in activating the Edmunds Online Bill Pay Portal and the Edmunds IVR system. Those systems may be down up to 4 weeks due to a technical issue. Clients that have bills on automatic draft set up thru the collections center will not have to update any information.

Included in the May 6th Billing, was another bill insert letting customers know the software change is imminent.

Collections will not be able to accept payments or look up accounts on May 28th and, maybe, a portion of May 29th due to final data pull and converting to Edmunds on those days. If customers bring in their bills during this time, we will take their payment but caution that the amounts may not be accurate if late fees have been added to their account after the bill was printed. Also, payments can only be in the form of cash, checks or money orders.

The current convenience fee amount charged by the processor will change upon completion of the software conversion and will be the same amount if paid in person, by phone or by internet.

Credit card and debit card fees will be reduced to 2.95%. And online or phone check payments, also known as eCheck, will be \$1.95 each.

Please see attached bill insert and new fees schedule for the Water Districts for the convenience fee approval and change.

UTILITY BILL & PAYMENT OPTION CHANGES

WHEN

June 2025

WHAT

New Utility Bill Format
New Online Bill Pay Portal
New IVR-Phone Pay System

Credit & Debit Card usage fees are being reduced with the new system.

WEB ADDRESS:

COLUMBUSCO.ORG

HOME PAGE QUICK LINK: PAY MY UTILITY BILL
PLEASE BE AWARE, COLUMBUS COUNTY
COLLECTION CENTER/PUBLIC UTILITIES
ONLY ACCEPTS AUTHORIZED PAYMENTS
THROUGH THE COUNTY'S WEBSITE PORTAL
FOR ONLINE UTILITY PAYMENTS. (WEB
ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE)

CAUTION! THE "DOXO" PAYMENT PLATFORM
IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH COLUMBUS
COUNTY PUBLIC UTILITIES. IT IS HIGHLY
RECOMMENDED NOT TO USE THIS PAYMENT
PLATFORM.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Current Online Bill Pay Portal & IVR-Phone Pay Systems (Logica) will be **SHUT DOWN** during the software transition process.

These platforms will be unavailable for approximately **5 to 14 days** beginning on May 26th thru June 10th.

You will need to make arrangements to pay your bill without these platforms during that time period.

Once the Logics Online Bill Pay Portal is shut down, customers that have scheduled Auto Payments through the Online Bill Pay Portal **WILL NOT PROCESS!!!!**

It will be the account holder's responsibility to assure payments are made in a timely manner to avoid late fees, penalties and service disconnects during this transition.

UTILITY BILL FORMAT

Your utility bill will look different with the first billing from the new software.

Your Utility Account Number(s) will change. Your old account numbers will not work with the new payment platforms.

The new Online Bill Pay Portal will be located on the County's website. From the homepage under "Quick Links" you would click "Pay My Utility Bill". You will be directed to:
EdmundsGovPay.com/Columbus County

The new IVR-Pay by Phone telephone number will be located on the front of your new bill for your convenience.

Columbus County

Public Utilities - All Districts



FY 2024 - 2025 Fee Schedule

Description	FY 24-25	
Base Rate Charge by Meter Size		
Meter Service - 3/4 Inch	\$	29.00
Meter Service - 1 Inch	\$	35.00
Meter Service - 1.5 Inch	\$	42.00
Meter Service - 2 Inch	\$	57.00
Meter Service - 3 Inch	\$	84.00
Meter Service - 4 Inch	\$	111.00
Meter Service - 6 Inch	\$	168.00
Meter Service - 8 Inch	\$	219.00
Consumption Charges (Per 1,000 Gallons)		
0 - 2,999	\$	4.75
3,000 - 4,999	\$	5.00
5,000 - 20,999	\$	5.25
21,000 - 40,999	\$	7.50
50,000 +	\$	8.50
Bulk Water Rates (Per 1,000 Gallons)		
Industrial Bulk Rate	\$	5.25
Municipal Bulk Rate	\$	5.25
Water Service Connection Fees (During Construction Costs)		
Meter Service - 3/4 Inch	\$	550.00
Meter Service - 1 Inch	\$	750.00
Meter Service - 2 Inch	\$	3,050.00
Water Service Connection Fees (After Construction Costs)		
Meter Service - 3/4 Inch (\$1,150)		Cost + 15%
Meter Service - 1 Inch (\$1,600)		Cost + 15%
Meter Service - 2 Inch (\$4,250)		Cost + 15%
Security Deposit Fees		
Property Owners	\$	100.00
Renters	\$	150.00

Public Utilities - All Districts Continued

Customer Service Fee (Over the Phone Credit Card Payment with CSR)

Payment with CSR	\$	5.00
------------------	----	------

Hydrant Rental Rates (No Water Included in Base Rate)

Meter Service - 3/4 Inch	\$	29.00
--------------------------	----	-------

Consumption Charges for Hydrant Rentals (Per 1,000 Gallons)

0 - 2,999	\$	4.75
3,000 - 4,999	\$	5.00
5,000 - 20,999	\$	5.25
21,000 - 49,999	\$	7.50
50,000 +	\$	8.50

Damaged Equipment Fees

Meter Box - 3/4 Inch	\$	48.00
Meter Box - 1 Inch	\$	95.00
Meter Box - 2 Inch	\$	150.00
Meter Box Lid - 3/4 Inch	\$	25.00
Meter Box Lid - 1 Inch	\$	80.00
Meter Box Lid - 2 Inch	\$	115.00
Meter - 3/4 Inch	\$	160.00
Meter - 1 Inch	\$	270.00
Meter - 1 1/2 Inch	\$	1,581.00
Meter - 2 Inch	\$	1,900.00
Meter - 3 Inch	\$	2,310.00
Meter - 4 Inch	\$	3,990.00
Meter - 6 Inch	\$	6,890.00
Meter - 8 Inch	\$	10,522.00
Battery Pack	\$	192.00
Cable	\$	25.00
Adaptor Clip	\$	2.00

Damaged Equipment Fees

Antenna	\$	35.00
Locking Nut	\$	10.00
Insulated Sleeve	\$	5.00
Complete Housing	\$	45.00
Setter - 3/4 Inch	\$	325.00
Setter - 1 Inch	\$	485.00
Setter - 2 Inch	\$	4,230.00

Penalty Fees

Late Fee Penalty	\$	35.00
------------------	----	-------

(Assessed on Accounts with Outstanding Balances after Monthly Due Date)

Delinquent Account Penalty	\$	50.00
----------------------------	----	-------

(Assessed on Accounts with Outstanding Balances when Cut Off is Issued for Termination of Service)

Returned Check and Bank Draft Fee	\$	35.00
-----------------------------------	----	-------

(Per Account: NSF, Closed Account, Stop Payment - Assessed for Returned Checks and Bank Drafts)

Public Utilities - All Districts Continued			
Disconnection Fee - Assessed for Permanent Removal of Water Service			
Property Owners	\$	250.00	
Renters	\$	25.00	
Personnel			
Director	\$	37.00	
Assistant Director	\$	32.00	
Utility Field Operations Supervisor	\$	22.00	
Utility System Operator	\$	21.00	
Equipment			
Backhoe/Mini Excavator	\$	125.00	
Dump Truck	\$	100.00	
Service Truck	\$	60.00	
Rented Equipment		Cost + 10%	
Parts & Supplies		Cost + 10%	
Other Fees			
Merchant Processing Fees for Debit and/or Credit Card Use			Old Rate
Credit and Debit Card Merchant Processing Fees		2.95%	3.95%
Echeck Processing Fee	\$	1.95	
Meter Box Move, Labor	\$	250.00	
Meter Testing Fee	\$	25.00	
Service Call - Weekdays 8AM - 5PM	\$	25.00	
Service Call - Weekend/After Hours	\$	50.00	
Service Call - Holidays	\$	75.00	

Leak Adjustments
Adjustments can be given for leaks on amounts exceeding the average bill based on a calculation of the preceeding twelve months and only once in any twelve month period.

Meter Tampering Fees - Unauthorized Non-metered Use of Water
No person, except a duly authorized employee of the Public Utilities Department, shall turn the cutoff installed in each meter box nor shall any person construct or have constructed any bypass around any meter except as may be installed and sealed by the Public Utilities Department. The fact that water is cut on to any premises by an occupant thereof without the prior knowledge of either the Public Utilities Department or the owner shall not relieve such premises of liability for such unauthorized use of water. The Public Utilities Department may, in addition to prosecution by law, permanently refuse service to any customer who tampers with a meter or other measuring device.

Any person violating any of the provisions of meter tampering shall be guilty of a Class I Misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or imprisoned not longer than two years, or both fined and imprisoned not longer than two years, or both fined and imprisoned, in the discretion of the court. See Section 14-151.1 (c) of the North Carolina General Statute.

If the seal is broken on any locked meter and water is used, the following types of fees will be applied to the customer's water service account and must be paid in full before any reconnections are made to the water system:

A) Locking Device Replacement Fee	\$	5.00
B) Meter Replacement Fee	\$	75.00
C) Component Replacement Fee	\$	100.00
(Refer to Section H of Rates & Fees Schedule - Fees Vary Per Damaged Component)		
D) Damaged Equipment Fee	\$	125.00
(Refer to Section H of Rates & Fees Schedule - Fees Vary for Damaged Equipment)		

Public Utilities - All Districts Continued
Columbus County Public Utilities will permanently remove the water service tap from the property due to tampering with meters and cutoffs. Customer will be responsible for paying current water tap fees to reinstall service once the water service tap has been removed from the property due to tampering with meters and cutoffs.

System Development Fee by Meter Size			
Meter Size	AWWA Capacity	Capacity Factor	Water SDF
5/8" x 3/4"	30	1	\$ 2,978.00
1"	50	2.56	\$ 7,624.00
1.5"	100	5.76	\$ 17,153.00
2"	160	10.24	\$ 30,495.00
3"	300	23.04	\$ 68,613.00
4"	500	40.96	\$ 121,979.00
6"	1000	92.16	\$ 274,453.00
8"	1600	163.84	\$ 487,916.00
Over 8 inches to be Calculated if required.			

See Ordinance and Resolution(s) from January 2, 2024 Columbus County Board of Commissioners meeting minutes.
Fee Schedule effective for fiscal year July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025

Agenda Item #20: SHERIFF’S OFFICE/ DETENTION CENTER- REQUEST for DETENTION CENTER FUNDING and BUDGET AMENDMENT:

Logistics Captain Robert Creech requested approval of the funding for food at the Detention Center and the associated Budget Amendment.

MOTION:

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Featherson. The motion unanimously passed.

BUDGET AMENDMENT					FY 24/25
Name of Department:		SHERIFF'S OFFICE			
Agency Head Signature:					
Date Prepared	May 14, 2025		Date Received in Finance :		

Budget Code			EXPENDITURES	Requested Increase or (Decrease)
Fund	Dept.	Category	Classification	
010	4201	544001	INSURANCE - WORKERS COMP	(\$19,644)
010	4320	519001	CONTRACTED SERVICES	\$90,000
			Total Net Expense	\$70,356

Budget Code			REVENUES	Requested Increase or (Decrease)
Fund	Dept.	Category	Classification	
010	3432	489000	MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE - JAIL	\$70,356
			Total Net Revenue	\$70,356

Explanation of Increase or Decrease:
 BUDGETED REFUND FROM PREVIOUS MEAL VENDOR TO FINISH OUT YEAR, ALONG WITH REALLOCATING FUNDING FROM ANOTHER SOURCE THAT WILL NOT BE SPENT BY JUNE 30 , 2025

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This budget revision has been reviewed by the Columbus County Finance Officer. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <i>Alexander M. Woody</i> Signature </div>		Date 5/14/25
<input type="checkbox"/> This budget revision has been reviewed by the Columbus County Budget Manager/County Manager. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <i>[Signature]</i> Signature </div>		Date 5-14-25
Notes:		

This budget revision has been approved by the Board of Columbus County Commissioners on:

 Signature

 Date

Agenda Item #20a: SHERIFF'S OFFICE – APPROVAL of TRAVEL EXPENSES, and AUTHORIZATION for SHERIFF ROGERS to ATTEND the ANNUAL SHERIFF'S CONFERENCE:

The Sheriff's Office requested approval of a budget amendment for travel expenses and authorization for Sheriff Rogers to attend the annual Sheriff's Conference.

MOTION:

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Featherson. The motion unanimously passed.

*****THE FULL TRAVEL REQUEST IS HOUSED IN THE CLERKS OFFICE*****

Agenda Item #21: FINANCE – APPROVAL of the BUDGET AMENDMENTS, and PROJECT ORDINANCES:

Finance Director Heather Woody requested approval of the following Budget Amendment and Project Ordinances:

- Budget Amendment – Fines and Forfeitures
- Budget Amendment – ABC Profit Distributions
- Budget Amendment – ABC Bottle Tax Increase
- Budget Amendment – Veterans Office Grant
- Project Ordinance – Airport

Agenda Add-On 21f. Budget Amendment - Health Department (Environmental Health Software Contract)

MOTION:

Commissioner Floyd made a motion to approve items A-F, seconded by Commissioner Watts. The motion unanimously passed.

BUDGET AMENDMENT

FY 24/25

Name of Department: FINANCE

Agency Head Signature:

Date Prepared: May 10, 2025

Date Received in Finance

[illegible]

Budget Code			REVENUES	Requested
Fund	Dept	Category	Classification	Increase or (Decrease)
010	3591	440021	ABC BOTTLE TAX DISTR-MENTAL HEALTH	\$2,000
			Total Net Revenue	\$2,000

Explanation of Increase or Decrease:
INCREASE 5 CENT BOTTLE TAX DISTRIBUTION FOR YEAR END JUNE 30, 2025

☒ This budget revision has been reviewed by the Columbus County Finance Officer.

Signature Leather M-Wooddy

5/12/25
Date

☐ This budget revision has been reviewed by the Columbus County Budget Manager/County Manager.

Signature

5-12-25
Date

Notes:
INCREASE 5 CENT ABC BOTTLE TAX DISTRIBUTIONS BUDGET DUE TO ESTIMATED COLLECTIONS OVER FY25 BUDGET. ALL FUNDS ARE A PASS THROUGH.

This budget revision has been approved by the Board of Columbus County Commissioners on:

Signature _____ Date _____

BUDGET AMENDMENT

FY 24/25

Name of Department: VETERAN SERVICES

Agency Head Signature

Date Prepared: May 14, 2025

Date Received in Finance

Budget Code			EXPENDITURES	Requested
Fund	Dept.	Category	Classification	Increase or (Decrease)
010	5820	569940	GRANT	\$18,289
			Total Net Expense	\$18,289

Budget Code			REVENUES	Requested
Fund	Dept	Category	Classification	Increase or (Decrease)
010	3582	436020	GRANT	\$18,289
			Total Net Revenue	\$18,289

Explanation of Increase or Decrease:
INCREASING BUDGET FOR NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS (NCDMVA) GRANT PROGRAM FOR COUNTY VETERANS OFFICES (GPCVO). THIS GRANT IS PROVIDING FUNDS FOR ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS, OFFICE SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS, GENERAL PURPOSE EQUIPMENT AND OFFICE FURNISHINGS.

☒ This budget revision has been reviewed by the Columbus County Finance Officer.

Signature Heather M. Woody

Date 5/14/25

☐ This budget revision has been reviewed by the Columbus County Budget Manager/County Manager:

Signature James H. Hurd

Date 5-14-24

Notes:

This budget revision has been approved by the Board of Columbus County Commissioners on:

Signature _____ Date _____

COLUMBUS COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
Ordinance amending the appropriations of the Columbus
County Airport – New Terminal Building and Apron Expansion
SCIF Project Fund
for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2024

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Columbus County, North Carolina as follows:

Section 1: The following amounts are hereby amended to the Columbus County Airport – New Terminal Building and Apron Expansion SCIF Project Fund pursuant to G.S. 159 -13.2 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024.

Source of Revenue		Current Budget	Changes	New Budget
51-3457-431019	STATE BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS 36244.18.9.1	\$ 7,000,000.00	\$ -	\$ 7,000,000.00
51-3457-449100	INTEREST	\$ 250,000.00	\$ -	\$ 250,000.00
Total Estimated Revenues		\$ 7,250,000.00	\$ -	\$ 7,250,000.00
Project Appropriations				
51-4537-999910	CONTINGENCY 36244.18.9.1	\$ 220,207.00	\$ (75,000.00)	\$ 145,207.00
51-4537-548002	ADMINISTRATION COSTS 36244.18.9.1	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
51-4537-524000	CONSTRUCTION 36244.18.9.1	\$ 6,391,461.00	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 6,466,461.00
PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING TESTING 36244.18.9.1				
51-4537-518012	PROJECT INSPECTION, QUALITY ASSURANCE, TESTING 36244.18.9.1	\$ 23,650.00	\$ -	\$ 23,650.00
51-4537-519036	ENGINEERING SERVICES 36244.18.9.1	\$ 163,305.00	\$ -	\$ 163,305.00
51-4537-519034		\$ 441,377.00		\$ 441,377.00
Total Project Appropriations		\$ 7,250,000.00	\$ -	\$ 7,250,000.00

Description: Amendment needed paying at Airport not originally budgeted for in Grant 36244.18.9.1.

Section 2: The project undertaken pursuant to this ordinance is in accordance with the Recommended Budget and any changes made during the County Commissioners' budget work sessions.

Section 3: The Finance Director is hereby directed to maintain within the Capital Project Fund sufficient specific detailed accounting records to satisfy all applicable regulations. The terms of any financing agreement also shall be met.

Section 4: The County desires to expend its own funds for the purpose of paying certain costs of various projects, for which expenditures the County reasonably expects to reimburse itself from the proceeds of debt to be incurred by the County.

Section 5: All expenditures relating to obtaining any bond referendum and or installment purchase will be reimbursed from bond proceeds and installment purchase proceeds in accordance with the requirements of the United States Treasury Regulations Section 1.150 -2.

Section 6: This declaration of official intent is made pursuant to Section 1.150-2 of the Treasury Regulations to expressly declare the official intent of the County to reimburse itself from the proceeds of debt to be hereinafter incurred by the County for certain expenditures paid by the County on or after the date which is sixty (60) days prior to the date hereof.

Section 7: The County intends to seek Federal, State, and/or other grant funding to reduce the amount of loan proceeds. The adoption of this ordinance authorizes the County Manager and/or his representative to apply for and accept such funding if awarded.

Section 8: This project ordinance shall be entered in the minutes of the Board of Commissioners of Columbus County. Within five days hereof, copies of this ordinance shall be filed with the finance office in Columbus County, and with the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners of Columbus County. Copies of the Capital Project Ordinance shall be made available to the Budget Officer, the Project Manager, and the Finance Officer for direction in carrying out this project.

Agenda Item #22: DSS – MONTHLY REPORT FOR APRIL 2025:

DSS Director Dwella Hall will present the monthly report for the month of April.

Monthly Administrative Update

For April, 2025

May 19, 2025 Meeting

Child Abuse Prevention Month

April was Child Abuse Prevention Month. We remembered the 36 children in North Carolina that died at the hands of their caretakers in 2024 with a beautiful memorial service held at DSS. We appreciate everyone that came out and supported the cause.

Community Assistance

On April 10, I met with the Director for the Salvation Army of Wilmington to finalize our partnership in offering rental and utility assistance to the residents of Columbus County. The 1st day will be on May 5.

NC PATH

A new, statewide digital system designed to improve the management of child welfare cases. It is being implemented to address inefficiencies and improve data collection and reporting. NC PATH aims to support child welfare staff by providing tools for case management, decision-making, and communication.

It is a technology platform for NC child welfare staff that will support their efforts in promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

Our Region will be going live July 14, 2025. We will have State personnel on site to ensure we have a smooth transition.

April Collections

Child support \$426,566

Program Integrity \$4,185.51

Respectfully Submitted,

Dwella M. Hall

Director

April 2025
Human Services

Adult Services (APS)

APS Reports Accepted: 11
County Wards: 29
Number of Payee Cases: 8
Adults Served APS: 0

Children’s Protective Services (CPS)

Reports Accepted: 19
Reports Screened out: 27
Families Receiving In-Home Services: 12
Children Served: 19
Contacts with Families Monthly: 103
Assessments: 14

Foster Care

Foster Children in Foster Homes: 83
Children Placed Outside County: 32
Agency Adoptions: 0
Pending Adoptions: 0
Total Foster Homes Licensed: 6
Total Children in Foster Care: 83

Work First Employment (TANF)

Applications Taken: 26
Applications Approved: 4
Individuals Receiving Benefits: 135
Entered Employments: 3
Number in Non-Paid Work Experience: 0

April 2025
Human Services (continued)

Program Integrity

Collections for Fraud: \$4,185.51
New Referrals: 1
Cases Established: 0

Day Care

Children Receiving Day Care Assistance: Not Available
Children on the Waiting List: Not Available
Amount Spent on Day Care Services: \$256,715.0

April 2025
Economic Services

Food & Nutrition

Applications Taken: 266
Applications Approved: 260
Active Cases: 5,992
Benefits Issued: \$1,982,366.00
Participants Served: 11,680

Adult Medicaid

Applications Taken: 85
Redeterminations: 136
Applications Processed: 128
Total Medicaid Cases: 15,222
Total Individuals Receiving: 21,694

Medicaid Transportation (NEMT)

Number of Medicaid Transportation Trips: 1,003
Amount Requested for Reimbursement: \$28,095.24

Family & Children’s Medicaid

Applications Taken: 194
Applications Processed: 352
Redeterminations: 869

Child Support

Absent Parents Located: 38
Orders Enforced: 982
Active Cases: 2,986
Collections: \$426,566.00

HUMAN SERVICES BOARD REPORT

Marcee Swindell-Thompson, Program Manager

Vacancies/Updates/News for April 2025

Intake/Investigation/Assessment:

The CPS unit currently has five vacant positions, two full time Social Workers and one contracted Vanguard worker. Currently the Supervisor is carrying a caseload due to vacancies. The In Home Services staff continues to assist with case initiation, and visitations. Pre Service training will begin for the new worker on May 19 2025. Once this employee attends training, she will be able to carry a caseload. Everyone has been working together to ensure CPS cases are being initiated, and completed in the required time frame for this unit. The Child Welfare department hosted a successful Child Abuse Prevent Ceremony at the agency on April 23, 2025. Butterflies where released in memory of the thirty-six children that lost their lives in the state of NC. The Regional Child Welfare Consultant conducted an on-site visit to review agency data, policy updates and casework.

In-Home Services:

The I H S unit currently has four full time Social Workers, with one vacant position and the Supervisors' position. Currently the Program Manager is supervising this unit at this time. I H S currently has twelve open cases, which services nineteen children. Our caseload sizes are small at this time which allows flexibility to support CPS with initiations, and visitations. The Program Manager/Supervisor continues to attend monthly school truancy meetings and court truancy sessions. The Regional Child Welfare Consultant conducted an on-site visit to review agency data, policy updates and casework.

Foster Care/Permanency Planning:

At this time, we currently have three Foster Care Social Workers and four vacant positions within the Foster Care Unit. Currently the Supervisor is carrying a caseload due to the frozen positions. We currently have eighty-three children in Foster Care being cared for by relatives or foster parents. We continue to have monthly staff meetings to ensure we are in compliance with meeting the needs of the families we serve. We will continue to strive to protect and serve all the children in Foster Care also known as Permanency Planning. The Regional Child Welfare Consultant conducted an on-site visit to review agency data, policy updates and casework.

Transitional Unit:

The Transitional Unit's Links & 18 to 21 position is vacant. This unit continues to work caseloads while assisting the other Child Welfare Units as needed, particularly in the areas of courtesy requests (home studies and monitoring cases) from other counties, assisting with supervising visits and transporting children in custody as needed. This Unit continues to assist particularly in the area of making monthly contacts with the children in foster care and assisting in finding placement when disruption occurs and when children come into custody. Foster Home Licensing continues to work on completing more licensures to help increase the number of foster homes within the county. A Meet & Greet is scheduled on 4/2/2025 at 6pm. This meeting is being held to give individuals an opportunity to learn more about becoming a licensed foster parent as well as signing up for a class. The Regional Child Welfare Consultant conducted an on-site visit to review agency data, policy updates and casework.

Adult Services:

The Adult Services Unit continues to be fully staffed with the exception of the frozen Guardianship position. This unit continues to serve ages 18 and above, with protective services, guardianship, and special assistance in-home case management as well as many inquiries/outreach situations and completing complaint investigations on Adult Care Homes.

Guardianship cases are increasing exponentially with currently nine cases waiting to go to court. The guardianship cases continue to demand extensive time due to severe and persistent mental illness and the lack of resources for this population. Currently the Supervisor is carrying a caseload due to the frozen position.

The Adult Services State Consultant continues to monitor cases monthly.

Work First Employment:

This Unit continues to be fully staffed. The unit is open for in-person applications, telephone interviews continue for Work First applications, recertification's, short-term services and benefits. Certain necessary application documentation can be mailed to individuals that wish to apply and when received back the worker can conduct telephone interviews to complete that application. Workers are able to conduct home visits to complete the interview process when necessary. Some application information is also being provided for pick-up in the foyer area of the agency. Workers are encouraged to make telephone contacts with clients at least every two weeks to offer support and resources to clients and to encourage program participation. The workers will continue helping the foster care unit with transporting and monitoring foster care visits. The agency continues to have monthly meetings with the state reps by conference calls.

Child Day Care:

The Child Day Care Unit continues to be fully staffed. The agency has continued to have a waiting list due to funding. As of today there are about 158 children on the waiting list. Due to extra funding, a list of 25 clients were pulled from the waiting list. Letters were sent out on April 30, 2025 and will be processed as clients respond. The unit is open for in-person applications and telephone interviews, and staff continue to complete Day Care applications and recertification's. Day Care Unit will continue to be monitored by Supervisor to ensure workers are completing cases correctly and documenting appropriately.

Program Integrity:

Program Integrity continues to be fully staffed. Repayments are being collected. Staff continue to work towards cleaning up the backlog, establishing cases and repayment agreements.

RECESS REGULAR SESSION and enter into COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV AND V BOARD MEETING.

At 7:36 P.M. A motion was made by Commissioner Bullard and seconded by Commissioner Floyd to recess regular session and enter into Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts I, II, III, IV and V. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item #23: APPROVAL of WATER and SEWER DISTRICTS I, II, III, IV AND V COMBINATION MINUTES:

a. May 05, 2025 Regular Session

MOTION:

Vice Chairman Smith made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item #24: WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT I, II, III, IV and V – APPROVAL of the RESOLUTION for the LOCAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN:

Public Utilities Director Harold Nobles requested approval of the resolution for the Local Water Supply Plan.

MOTION:

Commissioner Bullard made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Floyd. The motion unanimously passed.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE 2024 LOCAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN FOR COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER DISTRICTS PWSID 04-24-060

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (l) requires that each unit of local government that provides public water service or that plans to provide public water service and each large community water system shall, either individually or together with other units of local government and large community water systems, prepare and submit a Local Water Supply Plan; and

WHEREAS, as required by the statute and in the interests of sound local planning, a Local Water Supply Plan for the Columbus County Water Districts, has been developed and submitted to the Columbus County Board of Commissioners for approval; and

WHEREAS, the Columbus County Board of Commissioners finds that the Local Water Supply Plan is in accordance with the provisions of North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (l) and that it will provide appropriate guidance for the future management of water supplies for the Columbus County Water Districts, as well as useful information to the Department of Environmental Quality for the development of a state water supply plan as required by statute;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Columbus County Board of Commissioners of the Columbus County Water Districts that the Local Water Supply Plan entitled Columbus County Water Districts, dated 2024, is hereby approved and shall be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Columbus County Board of Commissioners intends that this plan shall be revised to reflect changes in relevant data and projections at least once every five years or as otherwise requested by the Department, in accordance with the statute and sound planning practice.

This the 19th day of May, 2025.

ADJOURN COMBINATION MEETING of Columbus County Water and Sewer Districts I, II, III, IV and V BOARD MEETING.

MOTION:

At 7:38 P.M. Commissioner Bullard made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Byrd. The motion unanimously passed.

Agenda Item #25: COMMENTS:

A. Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Watts – I hope everyone has a good Memorial Day.

Commissioner Bullard - I talked with Ms. Edwards about this earlier this week. I'm glad Brandon is here. It was about some lots on Red Hill Road that have been an issue for years. They were putting in another mobile home during Mother's Day, and I got a text about it. A neighbor said, 'Man, they over here working hard trying to get this thing set up before they come to inspect it,' because it's violating the code.

All I knew to do was forward the text to the appropriate people at the county who could help. Come to find out, the mobile home on that lot is, I believe, four feet over the 15-foot setback boundary. And this is about the third mobile home that's been placed in that little subdivision over the years. Now, the landowner is going to come before the planning board to request a variance, just like every time they set one up. This has been going on and on.

My question is: Why isn't someone ensuring that the rules we ask people to follow are being enforced?

I know that in a town like Cerro Gordo, when I go pull a building permit, I have to bring a paper showing the lot with boundary lines, footage on each side, and where the house or building will be located before I can even get the permit. Then, when inspectors come out, whether it's for footings or something else, they make sure the setbacks are being followed.

So I'm just wondering: Why can't we implement something similar here? Sometimes the solutions are simple and could prevent bigger problems down the line. I just don't know who I need to talk to about this.

Environmental Health Supervisor Brandon Grigsby - As far as setup goes, they'll come out for tests and submit an application. If they know the size of the proposed home, we'd like to have that information. But in some cases, I've heard they'll say it's a 60-foot double-wide, and then by the time it's actually on the lot, it's a 76-footer. Changes like that are often made after the fact.

Commissioner Bullard - Maybe there's a way for the Health Department, since you all are usually the first on the scene to see if the land perks, to coordinate with Building Inspections. They're typically the first to talk with the developer or landowner about placing a mobile home or building a house. Setbacks should really be on everyone's mind from the start.

If we're going to have setback requirements, then let's make sure we're following the guidelines. Otherwise, maybe we need to vote to do away with them altogether.

Environmental Health Supervisor Brandon Grigsby – Sometimes the properties aren't clearly marked, and it becomes a burden on the applicant to get as close as possible to the required 15-foot setback.

Commissioner Bullard - Well, it's not fair to the adjacent landowner who's already living there for someone to encroach over the setback. It's not fair to the existing homeowner. I've been in building all my life, so I understand setbacks and how they work, but we're just not consistent on this.

If we could strengthen the process at the point where building permits are issued, that might help. I just wanted to bring this to everyone's attention so maybe we can work on the issue. This is exactly where a good planning and zoning person can really make a difference.

Commissioner Byrd - Mr. Brandon, I got a call the other week to come out to the George Henry White Center. It's just across the line into Bladen County, but they sometimes have crowds of 200 to 300 people there. They were concerned about having enough capacity for restrooms, septic systems, and so on. So, they ordered an eco-friendly toilet system.

It's a large, nice facility with restrooms for both men and women. You hook it up to the water, and it includes a tank and an incinerator. Are you familiar with anything like that? I believe they said it cost around \$55,000.

For locations that host large gatherings, like the fairgrounds, this might be a better alternative to portable toilets. Bladen County hasn't submitted it for permitting yet, but it's already installed. I took pictures of it. When it's used, the waste goes through the system and comes out as dry ash. That's what the incinerator produces.

I'd like to ask if you'd be willing to go take a look at it. It's just across the line. If needed, I can meet you and drive you there myself rather than using a county vehicle.

To get there, head down Hwy 101 by the racetrack, past the Farmers Union store. Take the next road on the right, it goes past Jehovah Church. Keep straight, and you'll cross out of Columbus County into Bladen. You won't go far past the daycare, if even that far. It's a large white house where they host a lot of community meetings and large events.

I can give you the phone number for the gentleman who's usually there so he can show you around. I think it's something very interesting and potentially beneficial for our county, especially in places where the land won't perk. Like I said, the waste comes out as dry ash.

Environmental Health Supervisor Brandon Grigsby –It would have to be approved by the state, not my office.

Commissioner Byrd - Oh, I understand that. I'm just thinking it might be something you'd want to be familiar with, as it could come up at some point in the future. If you don't mind riding out there, I'd be happy to meet you and go with you.

Commissioner Byrd – Another thing, Mr. Chairman, I see Mr. Creech is still here. A few months ago, what was the cost we paid for inmate housing? Was it \$800,000? \$900,000? How much was it last year?

Logistics Captain Robert Creech - Yes, it was sometime last year, and the cost was over a million dollars.

Commissioner Byrd – Yes, it was sometime last year, and the cost was north of a million dollars for inmate housing (*this comment if referring to the medical bills accrued while inmates are housed in the Columbus County Detention Center and the county is responsible for paying them*) because they were incarcerated, and the courts weren't moving through the cases. This kept them in our county facility instead of transferring them to state custody, which would relieve us of responsibility. But now you're telling us we're looking at roughly \$731,000 for inmate costs. That's a significant amount, and there's no way Mr. Madden and this board can effectively budget for that. I'm not sure what steps can be taken, especially if an inmate requires extensive medical care. Is there no way we can transfer them to Raleigh or another facility?

Logistics Captain Robert Creech - We still pay the cost regardless of where we house them. Even if we send them to Raleigh, we're still responsible for the costs. If they're sent to places like Rex or Duke, it actually costs us more than keeping them here. So, it doesn't matter where we hold them. What we really need to figure out is how to get the DA and the judges on the same page to release inmates if they're in that bad of a shape. They could be granted an unsecured bond until they recover. Then, if they get out of the hospital and are better, they can be rearrested. But if they're in our custody, this county is responsible for their care, regardless of where they are held.

Commissioner Byrd - That's where the ankle bracelet would really be effective.

Logistics Captain Robert Creech - Again, the judge and the DA would have to approve them for placement on that monitor.

Commissioner Byrd - Earlier today, the sheriff mentioned an individual who has been very expensive to house. His bond was only \$500. That's when I suggested we need to have a fund available to bond someone out and let them go, rather than keeping them in jail and incurring those kinds of expenses. It's just ridiculous. The courts could handle these cases more effectively if they'd take action. \$500 is not a large bond, so it couldn't have been a very serious case.

Logistics Captain Robert Creech- We could go to the DA's office, and for some individuals, we can get them out, but for others, we can't. Like I said earlier this afternoon, if they're incarcerated for something like sexual assault, where there's another party involved, both parties have to agree for the individual to be released.

Commissioner Byrd - But that depends on how many hours, right? After 24 or 48 hours, they can be released.

Logistics Captain Robert Creech – Yes, Sir.

Commissioner Byrd – This guy has been in there for how many months?

Logistics Captain Robert Creech – Well, one gentleman had been in there for over two years.

Commissioner Byrd - That's just totally uncalled for, period.

Commissioner Byrd - One other thing, Mr. Madden, do you think it would be beneficial to send a letter to our legislators asking them to consider increasing the sales tax on vapes? We've discussed this before, and currently, the tax is much lower than it is on groceries, unless the vape contains nicotine. In that case, I understand the taxes are somewhat higher. I'm just wondering: would it do any good to ask them? After all, they've raised taxes on tobacco in the past.

County Manager Eddie Madden - Yes, sir, we can do that. I would also suggest that we include it when we send our legislative goals to the Legislature.

Commissioner Byrd - I just think something needs to be included, because for years and years, they raised the tax on tobacco every year, so why not raise it on vapes too?

Vice Chairman Smith – No Comments

Commissioner Floyd – No Comments

Commissioner Featherson – No Comments

B. County Manager

County Manager Eddie Madden - I'll be brief. I appreciate everyone's participation in the budget workshop, where we presented our balanced budget to you with no tax increase included.

As a reminder, county offices will be closed Monday in observance of Memorial Day. Also, the ribbon cutting and Blue Star Monument dedication at Memorial Park is scheduled for May 30th at 10:00 a.m.

You all approved the public hearing and budget approval for June 2nd. The public hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m., during which you'll receive public input on the proposed budget. In the meantime, the budget document and ordinance are available for public review. If any board members or members of the general public have questions, we're happy to address them as they arise.

Lastly, on Thursday, the board traveled to Wilmington and received the 2025 Preservation Award for Interior Preservation for the Historic Courthouse. We were presented with three framed certificates, one for the county, one for our architect, and one for our contractor.

With your permission, I would like to have the county's plaque placed at the Historic Courthouse for public display.

Chairman Coleman commented before the meeting ended that I want to concur with what Mr. Madden said about the presentation at the Historic Courthouse. It was a nice meeting, and the atmosphere was very positive. The commissioners and everyone who attended seemed to enjoy it, I think we can all agree on that.

With Memorial Day coming up, I want to encourage everyone to really reflect on what it means. Support your Veterans as much as you can.

To our county employees, thank you. You do so much for us, and it's appreciated. I know times are tough for everyone, but I want to express my gratitude.

I'd also like to give a special thanks to Jana for her work on the "Charters of Freedom" walls at the courthouse. She worked diligently to gather the necessary information and ensure the granite plaques were completed accurately. Jana, I know how much effort you put into staying ahead of the process and keeping us on track, and I truly appreciate it.

Agenda Item #20: ADJOURNMENT:

At 7:51 P.M., Commissioner Watts made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Vice Chairman Smith. The motion unanimously passed.

JANA NEALEY, Clerk to the Board

LAVERN COLEMAN, Chairman