February 12, 2025

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular meeting on Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Board Room of the Martin County Governmental Center, 305 East Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina.

ASSEMBLY

Those attending the meeting were Chairman Joe R. Ayers, Vice Chair David "Skip" Gurganus, Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr., Commissioner Jeremiah Taylor, and Commissioner Ronnie Smith. Interim County Manager/ County Attorney Benjamin R. Eisner, County Clerk Julia S. Rease (Webex), Finance Officer Angela Raynor, and Human Resources Director Donna Zube.

Others in attendance: Town of Williamston Commissioner David Richmond and Sheriff Tim Manning

WELCOME

Chairman Ayers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Ayers welcomed all in attendance and asked that elected officials stand to be recognized.

Commissioner Bond Jr. provided the Pledge of Allegiance and Vice Chairman Gurganus provided the invocation. Vice Chairman Gurganus asked that everyone read Psalms 40 (Psalms Chapter 40) and briefly talked about the importance of prayer.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve the Consent Agenda, with a **Second** by Chairman Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

Chairman Ayers announced that the Clerk was handling County business and was attending the meeting via video.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. Mr. Barkley Sample– **3557 Londonville Lane , Raleigh 27604** – "The reason I am appearing today, I work with Catholic Charities, so I'm representing Catholic Charities, and we have a partnership with the Food Bank of the Albemarle, and our ask for today is that we are able to continue to use the Williamston Farmers Market for our monthly food distribution. We have previously partnered with the NC Cooperative Extension and we have been told through them that the site is no longer available because they are not available to partner with us. It's uh, it's a facility that we've used for that food distribution, for the past year. We serve, uh, roughly about 150 of the 250 people that we serve in Martin County at that location. We also serve another hundred in a second location in Robersonville. We are typically at the Farmers Market from 9:00 a.m. until noon, where we serve a majority of those people, and then we can have a second distribution from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. to serve another 100 people or so, through Robersonville. The program is a very

important program. It's called CSFP, which stands for Commodity Supplemental Food Program. It's a program that provides, uh, provides improved health for seniors 60 and over by giving their nutritious food packages. When available, we also provide fresh proteins to go along with those food boxes. Some of the benefits of that program is it improves senior health, it reduces food insecurity for seniors, and the economic benefit by improving seniors' health; it reduces their health care costs and enables them to live independently. In the county, and this county has wide support, we get a number of volunteers from places like Food Lion, WaWa, and other community partners. So, again, our ask is that we continue to use that Farmer's Market. We have two immediate challenges. One is; our next distribution is next Thursday, February 20th, and at the previous distribution in January, we told people we would be at that site again. We did not learn that the site was not, could potentially not be available until after that distribution. So, we had already communicated to all the seniors that we would be there again next Thursday and then the longer term solution of continuing to use the site that people used to coming to."

Vice Chairman Gurganus asked Chairman Ayers if he could ask a question and it was granted.

Vice Chairman Gurganus asked if the organization that Mr. Sample represented, had general liability insurance policy. Mr. Sample agreed and stated that the Food Bank had one as well and would be more than happy to provide it. Vice Chairman Gurganus asked for confirmation on the answer that both organizations had a general liability insurance policy and Mr. Sample confirmed that the Food Bank and Catholic Charities both had the policy. Mr. Sample stated that he would be happy to name Martin County as an additional insurer. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that there was a liability issue. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that the service was worthwhile cause and applauded and thanked Mr. Sample. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that as well as trying to help people, the job of the Board was to also protect the County from any potential liability, and asked Mr. Sample not to take his comment wrong. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that it was with a whole-heartedly that a way would be found to support the program, but needed to protect. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that the information was needed regarding the general liability insurance policy.

Mr. Sample agreed to submit a certificate of insurance and would even add Martin County as an additional insurer.

Chairman Ayers stated that the Board normally did not comment on public comments, but this was a different situation. Chairman Ayers asked Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner for comments.

Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner stated that his understanding of the situation was that the Food Bank partnered with the Council on Aging previously, which sort of shared the County umbrella. It was stated that the concern was working through the issues of whether this was a rental of a county building or if it was the use of a county space. There were some issues that needed to be resolved to make sure the County did not overstep its bounds in the terms of a county space as opposed to helping find if it's a rental agreement or finding an alternative space. Interim County Manager Eisner stated that he was making sure the logistics were resolved in the right way and in a content neutral way.

Mr. Sample stated that in terms of a rental, both Catholic Charities and the Food Bank were nonprofit organizations. Mr. Sample stated if there was any way to look at mitigating or reducing any charge for the utilization of the space, it would be greatly appreciated.

Chairman Ayers asked Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner for feedback on what needed to happen in this matter next.

Commissioner Smith stated that he had a comment he would like to state. Commissioner Smith applauded Mr. Sample and his organization for what they were doing. It was reported that if you check across the state of North Carolina as of 2022 or 2021, most counties were partnering with nonprofit organizations, food pantries, food banks, and providing facilities here in North Carolina. Commissioner Smith stated that Martin County had a food desert of about 14%. Commissioner Smith stated that there were solutions to the issue and to reach out to other counties in the mountains and to other counties such as Wake. Commissioner Smith asked if Catholic Charities worked directly with the Food Bank of the Albemarle.

Mr. Sample agreed and stated that the Food Bank of the Albemarle served 14 surrounding counties and Catholic Charities served about 54 counties from Central and Eastern North Carolina.

Commissioner Smith agreed and reiterated that Catholic Charities were collaborating with Martin County and the same thing was happening across the state. It was reported that most counties were providing free rental for organizations like Catholic Charities or the Food Bank of the Albemarle. Commissioner Smith stated that when the County Manager checked in with Raleigh- Wake County, Durham County, and Western counties, he would find that this was true.

Mr. Sample agreed and stated that his organization did not pay rental costs for any other food distribution site.

Chairman Ayers thanked Commissioner Smith and turned the matter over to the Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated Board action was not necessary, but if the Board was so inclined, Board action could be made pending Catholic Charities submitting the general insurance policy, but there was a question as to if he had the authority to handle the matter.

Chairman Ayers stated that a discussion in the matter of Catholic Charities could occur later in the agenda under New Business.

PUBLIC COMMENT(S)

1. **Mrs. Martha MacDonald** – **20770 US HWY 64 -** “I’m back. Some of you probably don't like that, but too bad. I didn’t want y’all to think I'd forgotten about this Board, since the election. I, along with many other citizens are probably watching and listening, even closer to this Board than we were before, because we know that you know better. We know that they knew better too, but they didn't do it. This Board is not going to get a free pass from us, for anything. We don't care if you're Republican or Democrat. We don't care what your party affiliation is at all,

your race, economic status, who your folks are. We don't care. What do we care about? Healthcare is what we care about and I'm glad to see that we're moving forward on that. Our safety and I want to circle back to that safety, use of the county funds for the betterment of our citizens, and not for the betterment of a select few Commissioners. What else do we care about? A new travel policy that I've been yelling for-for over a year now, I see that it's on the agenda tonight. So, what else do we care about? Taxes. You guys are gonna have to make some tough decisions. Decisions that a lot of citizens are not gonna like. I'm not saying that you're gonna have to cut positions because we are going to have to look at our budget. Folks out here cannot afford another tax hike and to do that, you're gonna have to do something to prevent that and it may not be cutting jobs, but it may be making people more efficient at their jobs. Maybe we need to have an Elon Musk for Martin County, is maybe what we need. Now, I want to say kudos. Thank you to Joe Ayers, Skip Gurganus and Ben Eisner, and to Dawn Carter for everything that y' have done to help our county moving forward with help care. We appreciate it so very, very much. Now, several months ago, Jason Steward came before this Board and asked for an increase for his folks that work in 911. They are our line of first defense. Without the hospital, we need to have every moment and every second that we can get. Those people are the ones that want and can do it. They haven't had a raise in some time. Now, while that was going on, Chairman Bonds was sitting there, *yeah you know, I like that. Yeah*, and then Smith got in it and it all crumbled and went downhill, and then all of a sudden Bond agreed with Smith and that was the end of that. You should be ashamed of yourself. The 911 folks deserve a raise, and you need to go back and look at that. They are the ones that are helping keep us safe, they're keeping this man safe, and his folks that look after us and by the way, congratulations Sheriff Drew. So, y'all have a lot to look at. We thank you, but again, you are not getting the free pass for us. Thank you."

The next person listed as the third public comment, was illegible. Chairman Ayers attempted to make out the last name and there was no response from the audience. Interim County Manager Eisner read the last four of the phone number listed and there was no response from the audience. The next name listed on the public comment signup sheet was called to the podium.

2. **Jeffrey Ray Grub - 1122 Cannon Road, Hobgood, NC, Martin County** – "Okay, I'm here about dog hunting again. Okay, I get up. Deer seasons over with and I been complaining about dogs being on my property all the time. It was 20 of them run across my yard, I had to grab my little dog and put it in the house and I caught one of the dogs and I got a picture of the dog I caught. Gatling says that I'm in the middle of their land. No. My land goes down to their property. Their on the other side of a dirt path. I don't know why. Now back in December, when I had the dogcatcher, took it to the dog pound for two weeks, no problems at all. They kept their dogs off of my property. Deer seasons over and they think they' going to run up to my property. That's not gonna continue to happen. Now, something needs to be done because it's gonna get nasty. It's gonna get bad. I pay the taxes, not the dog owners. Dogs don't pay them, I do. Y'all need to do something, because if I keep having problems with dogs, I'mma have to do something. I have to figure out some way to take care of this problem. I don't think it's right for me to fork out thousands of dollars and that hunting club down there has got 8,000 acres back that way, behind my property. I have maps here where of my property and my neighbors, all the way down, no Gatling. They own 8,000 back in the woods. They're always on my property. Now if you got rats in your house, what do you do? You take care of them. That's a nuisance.

These dogs are beginning to be a nuisance. I can't let my dog out of my house, because them dogs come near my yard, wanting to jump on my little dog? Ain't going to happen captain. I have a right to defend my property and as of this day and this day forward, you're gonna see me every month in here until you people decide what y'all want to do. I can't do it all by myself. Last January, uh last December, I caught one of their dogs. I had 10 of them to block me in my driveway. Now, you want to play Jesse James with me, I'll be your huckleberry. You ain't gonna push me, I push back. I don't care if it's 10 of them. I have a right to protect myself and my property now something needs to be done. There were out there Saturday morning, Sunday before last, they were out there running dogs at eight o'clock in the morning, 9 o'clock on a Sunday. I'm getting ready to go to church. All I got is dogs running everywhere. Y'all, y'all had better think. I can catch them, bring them to your houses, and turn them loose on your property. See how y'all like it. Now, something needs to be done. Gates County, they shut down dog hunting, period. You can't hunt with dogs, because of the same problem we are having. Thank you."

Chairman Ayers thanked Mr. Grub.

Mr. Grub stated that he had one question and asked if he could ask the question. It was granted. Mr. Grub asked Commissioner Gurganus if he mentioned Psalms Chapter 40 earlier in the meeting. Commissioner Gurganus agreed. Mr. Grub thanked Commissioner Gurganus.

Commissioner Gurganus asked to speak with Mr. Grub. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that the last time Mr. Grub came before the Board, what Mr. Grub said disturbed him. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that it was not disturbing because of what Mr. Grub said, but because of what was affecting Mr. Grub and what was happening. Without promising anything, Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that he spent the better part of two days on the phone, talking with people who would be harshly affected by dog hunting ending in the County, not as a threat, but to remind people that everybody had the right to do whatever they wanted to on their property. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that the issue was not the dogs fault, but the fault of the man who set the dog loose. Commissioner Gurganus stated that he wanted Mr. Grub to know that he heard him, and others heard him as well. Commissioner Gurganus stated that he'd rather everyone do what they wanted to do on their own property respectfully, instead of making hard and fast rules. Commissioner Gurganus assured Mr. Grub that he was heard and that he agreed with him.

3. **Mr. Dennis Cannon- 1729 Cannon Road** – "The issue is dog hunting and now that I'm retired, that I can hunt, somebody needs to put some laws on the books, so that the dog hunters can keep their dogs off of other people's property. They got technology they use now. The toners, but evidently they don't know how to use them, but if you put laws on the books, maybe they would learn to use them. So that way we won't have a lot of problems with no dogs running up underneath our stands while we're hunting and that's basically the only thing I got to say is to keep the dogs off the property and if it means taking laws and putting them on the books, I wish y'all would do that. That would help the landowners out. Thank you."

Mr. Cannon was thanked for his comment before the last person signed up for public comment was called.

A resident, Mr. Herbert Coltrain announced aloud that he was the person who signed up for public comment and the handwriting was illegible.

Chairman Ayers stated that Mr. Wilbur Cannon would speak first and Mr. Coltrain would speak afterwards.

4. **Mr. Wilbur Cannon** – "Good Evening Commissioners. It's the same thing about dog hunting. I just wish y'all would put something, like you said, on the books to hold these, the dog hunter, accountable for their dogs actions because it's, it's, it's getting to the point where, even though we call the Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff can't do a whole lot without something on the books and we just need to hold these hunters, dog hunters, more accountable for being on someone else's property or letting the dogs go off on someone else's property. That's all I have to say."

Mr. Cannon was thanked for his comment.

5. **Hubert Coltrain - 1031 Scenic Drive, Williamston** – "First of all, I'd like to thank some of the members of our Board for the leadership that you're showing. Thank you. However, I feel that we would be grossly negligent if we didn't constantly think of a major dilemma that we face. That being the fact that one of our County Commissioners has been criminally indicted. He's been criminally indicted for, and I'm quoting from the December 5th copy of our newspaper. *Unlawfully, willfully, and knowingly as a Chairperson of our Martin County Commission, omit, neglect, and refuse to discharge a duty of his office by authorizing an 18% salary increase for Martin County Manager Urias James Bennett without the approval of the Martin County Board of Commissioners hereby, injuring the public of Martin County.* It is my understanding that the investigation that led to this indictment was conducted by the North Carolina State Board of Investigation. In our country, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, is it reasonable for this Commissioner to be allowed to continue performing any and all duties of a Commissioner until he's found to be innocent or guilty? I don't think so. It is my opinion that until this Commissioner is found to be guilty or innocent, he should not be allowed to make any motions or to vote on any motions entertained by our Board. He should not be allowed to represent our county in any official capacity. Also, I believe his monthly stipend should be suspended until, if and when, he has been found not guilty. I believe that this Commissioner is no longer trusted by many, if not most of the members or citizens of Martin County. Therefore, he should not be considered a part of our county leadership. I believe that his continuing to occupy a seat on our Board is depriving the citizens of Martin County; the right to have a competent and trustworthy Board member fill that position. Now, Mr. Smith, again, I'm asking you to resign."

Chairman Ayers thanked Mr. Coltrain and there were no other public comments listed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Taylor made the **Motion** to approve of the Consent Agenda, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

The following items were approved as part of the Consent Agenda:

Minutes –

- January 8, 2025 Regular;
- January 21, 2025 Special;
- January 31, 2025 Special

1. Financial Report – January 2025
2. Tax Assessor – Tax Refund Request – Dec. 2024 & Jan. 2025 -
3. Tax Assessor – Tax Relief Orders – December 2024 –

Year Levy	Lname	Fname	Reason	Value	Total
2025	Warren,	Timothy Alan	Adjustment	$9.88	$5.43
2025	Moore,	Kenneth Carlton Jr.	Adjustment	$166.53	$59.99
2025	Hardison	James Isaac	Adjustment	$83.72	$56.86
2025	Thomas	Top Tier Transit LLC	Adjustment	$537.46	$274.77
		Total VTS:			**$ 397.05**
2024	Church	Community Christian	Adjustment	$ 18.87	$ 18.87
2024	Services, Inc.	Martin County Residential	Adjustment	$95.94	$ 95.94
2024	Clemmons	George, Wade	Adjustment	$102.28	$ 84.48
2024	Leathers	Nicholas Edward	Adjustment	$163.68	$142.93
2024	Whitley	Cody, Shane	Adjustment	$13.09	$ 6.29
2024	Baptist Church	Mount Shiloh Missionary	Adjustment	$55.84	$ 55.84
		Total Real & Personal Releases:			**$ 404.35**

4. Tax Collector's Report – January 2025

	Category	Jan. 2025	Jan. Y-T-D
Real Property	**20**	$18,848.87	$ 6,171.14
Personal Property	**25**	$1,366.90	$105,586.09
Total	**+**	**$20,215.77**	**$111,757.23**
Motor Vehicle	**30**	$0.00	$0.00
Total MV		$0.00	$0.00
All Total		**$20,215.77**	**$111,757.23**

5. Board Appointments / Reappointments

a. Council on Aging

The Council on Aging recommended the reappointment of Mayor Tina Brown of Robersonville and Mrs. Vickey Manning to complete another 3 – year term ending on February 12, 2028. The Council on Aging also recommended the appointment of Mr. Johnny Barber to serve on the Council on Aging for a 3 – year term ending on February 12, 2028.

b. Bertie Martin Regional Jail Commission

The Bertie Martin Regional Jail Board recommended the reappointment of Mr. Brent Jackson for another 4-year term ending on February 12, 2029

6. Child Fatality Team Request to Remain as a Single Entity

The NC Child Fatality Prevention System is a statewide multi-disciplinary system that was developed in the 1990s consisting of the North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention Team, North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force, and local teams (CFPTs and CCPTs).

N.C.G.S. 7B Article 14 defines the membership composition of CCPTs and CFPTs, statutorily required to represent disciplines among the community, as well as the responsibilities and duties of the local CFPT to review resident county child fatalities, assess potential gaps in systems and policies that may have contributed to the deaths, and make recommendations to policy makers to improve local and statewide systems to better protect children and prevent future deaths. changes to the law via the 2023 Appropriations Act [Section 9H.15 of Session Law 2023-124. Passed in 2023] now required all Boards of County Commissioners to determine if the local team proceeds as a single or multicounty team.

Health Director Nicole Barnes sent a request asking that the Board of Commissioners confirm designation of the Martin County Child Fatality Prevention Team/Community Child Protection Team (CFPT/CCPT), Future Local Team, to remain as a single county team.

The Board of Commissioners approved of the CFPT/CCPT remaining a single county teams as part of the Consent agenda.

7. Clerk Report

PUBLIC HEARING - Resolution of Intent to Sell, Lease, or Convey Hospital Property

At: 7:29 a.m. Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Enter Public Hearing – Resolution of Intent to Sell, Lease, and or Convey Hospital Property, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0).

According to N.C.G.S. 131 E-13(d)(3), several statutory steps had to occur in the process to sell, lease, or convey hospital property.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that a resolution of intent to sell, lease of convey hospital property was adopted at the last Board meeting. The next statutory required step was to hold a public hearing not less than 45 days after the resolution was adopted and to notice the public 15 days before that public hearing. Interim County Manager Eisner reiterated that the public hearing was in regards to the resolution of intent to sell, lease, and or convey hospital property that was adopted previously. It was stated that more public hearings would occur in the future. Interim County Manager Eisner asked if there were any comments and or questions from the Board before public hearing comments would be heard.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made comments about the hospital closure and stated that the hospital was the number one issue was for the County. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that he was not aware previously and was still learning what all it took to reestablish healthcare in the County. Commissioner Gurganus stated that he did know that there was a team of people that was working

tirelessly to bring the situation to the point that it is currently. Commissioner Gurganus made comments about a person who lived and worked in another county, but attached himself to Martin County and the effort to restore healthcare. It was stated that this person worked tirelessly, had to learn about healthcare and the legal aspects of it, and was not compensated fairly, but had not required it. This person was Interim County Manager/County Attorney Benjamin Eisner. Vice Chairman Gurganus asked that if anyone saw the Interim County Manger, to thank him, as the County would not have gotten this far in the process of attaining healthcare. Vice Chairman Gurganus also pointed out Ascendient Health Consultant Dawn Carter and other members of the team that had been working tirelessly.

Interim County Manager was thankful and made comments regarding others who have also made efforts. Interim County Manger Eisner recapped the process from the hospital closure. Interim County Manager stated that the bankruptcy filing was in August of 2023 and the County had to wait 60 days before making any efforts while the Chapter 7 bankruptcy trustee in another state decided if they wanted to keep the building or not. From there, the team had to sort issues with medical records for about four months since the hospital company left, which involved the Attorney General's Office being involved. Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the public hearing was another step in the process.

There were no names listed on the public hearing sign-up sheet and Chairman Ayers asked if there were any comments and or questions from the audience. There were a few questions and comments from the audience. Interim County Manager Eisner answered all questions received.

Chairman Ayers stated that what Vice Chairman Gurganus stated earlier was true; the County did have a great team assisting with hospital matters. Chairman Ayers stated that it's been a long road, but Vice Chairman Gurganus did not mention how hard he had worked for the hospital. Chairman Ayers stated that Public Works Director Harrison and Vice Chairman Gurganus worked well together, had construction expertise, and knew the lingo. Chairman Ayers stated that efforts would continue to be made and that the hospital would not be full-fledged, but would be an emergency room with other provisional care.

At: 7:40 p.m. Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Exit Public Hearing - Resolution of Intent to Sell, Lease, and or Convey Hospital Property, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by a raise of hands (5-0).

Chairman Ayers announced that the bid packages for the hospital operator search would be sent tomorrow.

Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that he believed in prayer and that it could have a profound effect on the County. Vice Chairman Gurganus asked that if the public was so inclined to pray for the County and spoke on how he has seen prayer work throughout this process of attaining healthcare.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Financial Audit Report – Madonna Stafford, Carr, Riggs, and Ingram

Auditor Madonna Stafford of Carr, Riggs, and Ingram CPA's and Advisors presented the financial audit report for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 as mandated. CPA Madonna Stafford briefly discussed what the auditing firm was engaged to do and what their objectives were. This was summarized in two parts.

The first objective was to perform a financial audit an issue an opinion on whether the financial statements were materially clean and materially correct as a whole. The audit was conducted and in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, as well as government auditing standards, and an unmodified opinion on the financial statements for June 30, 2024 was issued. It was reported that this essentially meant that there was a clean opinion and nothing materially wrong was found. The audit opinion letter was cited to be on pages 3-6 of the audit report.

The second objective was to perform a compliance audit over all major federal and state major programs for the year, and then issue an opinion on whether the county was in compliance with all direct and material compliance requirements related to those major grant awards. In very simple terms, a major federal program was determined by spending $750,000 or more in a fiscal year. For Fiscal Year 24, the county had two major federal programs that met this requirement and those were:

- Medical Assistance
- Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, commonly known as American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding.

The major state programs were reportedly determined by expending $500,000 or more in a fiscal year. In Fiscal Year 24, the county had one major state program, which was:

- The State Aid to Airports Grant

An unmodified opinion on compliance for all major federal and state programs for Fiscal Year 24 was issued. Basically, this meant that the auditors did not find any compliance issues, no deficiencies, and no question costs to be recorded within the grants tested. The report on the major federal programs were cited on pages 166- 168 and the opinion on the major state programs was cited on pages 169 -171 of the audit report.

Financial Highlights:

CPA Stafford pointed listed financial highlights to recap the year:

- The net position for the county in total for both governmental and business type activities increased approximately $9.8 million this year and end of the year at $490,810,318. This was about $1.6 million better than what auditors reported seeing in Fiscal Year 23. CPA Stafford reported that the difference between both years was due to recognizing the ARPA funds as

revenue for Fiscal Year 24. The bulk of this increase was due to governmental funds with the business type activities only accounting for about $105,000 of that total increase. This information was cited on page 19 or Exhibit 2 of the audit report.

- The general fund performance was stated to be the most important fund for the county because it funds the basic operating needs and services that are provided. The fund balance this year increased about 6.4 million over last year. The overall revenues in the general fund increased about $1.1 million from Fiscal Year 23 and CPA Stafford noted that $ 4.7 million in ARPA funds was transferred in as well. In regards to Revenues, the largest increases were Property Taxes at $785,000, Restricted Grants increased $435,000, and Investment Earnings increased $450,000. It was reported that all of these increases in revenue were due to improved overall economic recovery within the state that has trickled down to the local level, and better investment returns in the market. It was stated that these were all very positive trends that CPA Stafford had seen across the board this year for all entities. In looking at the expenditure side of the general fund, it was reported that total expenditures increased about $2 million over Fiscal Year 23 results. The largest increases on these was about $450,000 for the General Government Function and Public Safety increased about $1.2 million. The increases that were seen for General Government were reported to be largely due to the county's expenses associated with maintaining the hospital building and then the increases on the Public Safety side related to the County's increased funding on the local rescue squads. This information on the County's General Fund was cited on Exhibits 3 and 4 on Pages 20 through 22 of the County's audit report.

- Next, Auditor Stafford discussed the ratio of the unassigned fund balance to the Total expenditures. This was one of the primary indicators that the Local Government Commission (LGC) monitored for financial health and was stated to be a great measure of reserves and financial health. This tool reportedly gauged how well the County is prepared to meet future needs. The unassigned fund balance for year-end was $16,656,988 and it represented $49.7% of the General Fund Expenditures. CPA Stafford made a comparison stating that the unassigned fund balance in the General Fund last year was $12.8 million, but with an increased rate about $3.7 million or 28% over last year. Again, the real driver behind the increase was related to the ARPA funds of $4.7 million being transferred into the County. CPA Stafford stated that this number represented that the county had enough reserves on hand to operate and pay all expenses for almost six months without receiving any new revenue during that time. The county had a Fund Balance Policy in place that requires available fund balance to be at least 20% of the budgeted expenditures, and this is the same recommendation that the LGC has as well. The County, almost at 50%, the county is in excellent standing there with meeting both county policy and the LGC's recommendation.

- CPA Stafford discussed utility funds, which were cited as Exhibit 8 and 9 or Pages 28 and 29 of the audit report. The net position for business type activities reportedly increased about $106,000 this year for Water District #1 and #2 combined. CPA Stafford stated that this was the first time since being contracted to conduct the audit with the county, that she'd seen positive results in both water districts. In comparison, the water districts had had a combined loss of $15,000 last year. This was reported to be a net swing of about $210,000 between those years. On the operating revenue side, there was an increase of about $37,000 for Fiscal Year

24 and resulted in savings of about $160,000 this year. Fiscal Year 24 was reportedly a very lean year for the utility funds. There were small repair costs compared to some of the prior years, which saved money. CPA Stafford stated that she was aware that maintaining profitability in the utility funds had always been a struggle for the county and the issue had been discussed every year. CPA Stafford stated that it was encouraging to see that the county was finally able to somewhat breakeven this year. This was a great trend recognized by the auditing firm and the LGC.

Audit Findings for Fiscal Year 24

CPA Stafford discussed findings within the audit and stated that there were two for fiscal year 24. Both findings were reportedly classified as significant deficiencies, which was the lower level of classification rather. This information was cited on Page 174.

The first deficiency that was noted was a statutory violation for the timely audit submission. The audit was reportedly due to the LGC by October 31st every year, with an addition of a 30-day grace period. CPA Stafford reported a slight delay in the submittal of the audit this year and stated that this was mainly due to turnover within the finance department. CPA Stafford stated that the new staff required a little more time to get ready for the audit, which delayed the audit testing and delivery by 60 days.

Commissioner Smith asked if it was correct that the grace period had been extended to 60 days and CPA Stafford Agreed.

CPA Stafford agreed and reported that the grace period would occur before December 31st, beginning Fiscal Year 25. CPA Stafford did not see the first finding reoccurring as the new staff were settling in their position as well as the extension of the grace period.

The second finding was reportedly related to documentation on the medical assistance files during the auditing firms testing. CPA Stafford mentioned once instance, wherein information in the files were not properly documented during the eligibility determination process. In that case, there was no reported no actual effect on eligibility discrimination, therefore, no question caused to be reported. CPA Stafford stated that the only issue in this case was that there proper documentation missing in the file. It was reported that the auditing firm discussed this matter with the Department of Social Services whom agreed to provide more training to make sure staff was aware of the documentation requirements. CPA Stafford reported not seeing this finding occur in the future as it was addressed. This finding was cited on Page 174.

Commissioner Smith asked if this was corrected immediately. CPA Stafford agreed and stated that the DSS Director was contacted about the finding and staff began scheduling trainings.

Key Performance Indicators

CPA Stafford explained the data input worksheet and reminded the Board that this was a new tool that the LGC implemented about three years ago. It was reported that the worksheet was the LGC's tool to monitor each entity's key performance indicators and areas of concern that they monitor every year. Similar to last year, the county had a few performance indicators related to the water

districts. CPA Stafford stated that the indicators may have been the same as the last year, but needed to discuss them. The indicators were stated as:

- The first performance indicator was related to the quick ratio for the water debt and the quick ratio was explained to be a ratio of the current assets to current liabilities, and it was stated that this amount should always be one (1). The quick ratio demonstrates that there is enough resources on hand to cover immediate needs. The county's ratio for Fiscal Year 24 was 0.22, which meant that the county didn't have any cash to cover current liabilities. In comparison, the quick ratio last year was 0.15 and this year there was little difference.

- It was reported that the County also had a performance indicator on the proprietary funds cash flow. Water Districts #1 and #2 had an unrestricted cash flow as a percentage of the total expense was only 1.14% and the LGC wanted to see at least two months of cash being held on hand, which would be about 16%. CPA Stafford stated that this was a shortfall. The LGC was reported to be concerned that the districts did not have available cash to be self-sustaining, which was a requirement of being a proprietary fund. CPA Stafford stated that this was also an issue that was ongoing for several years, was discussed every year, and was discussed to be mindful of the shortages in the upcoming budget season.

- The last performance indicator on the data input worksheet this year was related to the late audit, which was mentioned in the statutory deficiency finding as well. It was reported that the next steps for the county regarding these performance indicators would be to submit a response to the LGC, explaining how the issues would be prevented in the future. CPA Stafford reported discussing the issues with the Finance Officer who was also given a copy of the data input worksheet to draft a response. It was reported that the Finance Officer would report to the board for review and signature and then submit the response to the LGC for their evaluation.

In closing, CPA Madonna Stafford thanked the finance department staff for their assistance in the audit regardless of the difficulty in navigating an audit with new staff. The finance department staff were reportedly accommodating and the auditing firm was thankful. CPA Stafford asked if there were any questions and or comments.

Commissioner Smith stated that he was aware of the LGC applying more emphasis on the Unit Assistance List to the point that the list was more visible now that ever. Commissioner Smith thanked the auditing firm for working with the County, as there were many other counties and entities that were not able to attain an auditing firm to receive auditing services. Commissioner Smith mentioned attending the *Essentials of County Government* class amongst others a few weeks ago and there were extensive discussions on audits, the importance of audits, and what the LGC was doing different. Commissioner Smith stated that there were locals governments that had not conducted an audit in three or four years and the LGC took action.

Chairman Ayers thanked Auditor Stafford and asked if there were any additional questions and or comments. Chairman Ayers stated that Commissioner Gurganus had some information about the water districts that was pertinent.

Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that a couple of years ago, a check was issued by former Congressman G.K. Butterfield worth around $3 or 4 million. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that there were some issues with how the funding was applied for and the opportunity almost died on the vine, but the County was fortunate enough to have Ms. Emily Miller. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that Ms. Miller was a very good grant writer and revived the funding opportunity. Commissioner Gurganus reported that the line share of the money, but the grant was rewritten to fund, because the money could not be received and would die on the vine, the grant was rewritten so the county could receive the funding. In addition, Vice Chairman Gurganus stated there being an $800,000 or $850,000 match that was repeatedly mentioned. Ms. Miller was reportedly able to waive the match amount however much it was. A budget for the funding was reported to be fleshed out by about June of this year. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that the funding would go towards helping with the water system, such as Automatic Water Meters and other projects. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that it was with hope that the automatic meter readers would restore confidence in the consumer base and improve accuracy. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that other projects required statutory steps and certain criteria met for submittal to Washington, D.C. or Raleigh, N.C. Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that Ms. Miller was working tirelessly to make sure the County did not lose the funding opportunity and there was a great possibility that the funding could be received. Vice Chairman Gurganus thanked Ms. Miller for her assistance and working with him to complete the efforts made instead of the opportunity dying. It was with hope that trends could be reversed over time, customer confidence could be restored in the water system, and more people would sign up for water services generating revenue and overall lowering the water bill. Vice Chairman stated that this was a work in progress, but work that needed to receive attention.

CPA Stafford thanked Vice Chairman Gurganus for sharing.

Chairman Ayers thanked Vice Chairman Gurganus for his work with Ms. Miller in this matter. Chairman Ayers stated that he spoke with Ms. Miller some, but stated that Vice Chairman Gurganus did most of the heavy lifting in this matter. Chairman Ayers stated that the funding was lost, but with Ms. Miller's work it had been revitalized in addition to her ability to waive a match of $800,000. Chairman Ayers stated that this was great news and thanked CPA Stafford for her time.

2. NC Works Youth Career Programs – NC Works Youth Advisor Darius Smith

Mr. Smith was unable to attend the meeting due to unforeseen reasons.

3. Economic Impact on Agriculture in Martin County and NC Cooperative Extension Overview Mr. Lance Grimes and Director Lisa Smith

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Director Lisa Smith thanked the Board for allowing time for the presentation. NC Cooperative Extension Director Smith made comments about Interim County Manager Eisner stating that he was supportive to the various departments and could be contacted for assistance whenever needed. Director Smith reported that Cooperative Extension was funded on a federal, state, and local level. Cooperative Extension reportedly provided services through agricultural, youth development, financial literacy, and health and nutrition programs.

Cooperative Extension Director Smith reported receiving a grant and Interim County Manager Eisner agreed for Cooperative Extension to leave posters in the Commissioners Boardroom lobby with information about the grant, funded programs, and impacts made. The showcase would remain a few days for viewing. One of the programs showcased for its impact was the Agricultural and Pesticide Education, and Ag. Agent Lance Crimes was showcased as well for the support he has provided in that program.

NC Cooperative Extension Agriculture Extension Agent Lance Grimes assists with filed crops and pesticide education and assists Martin County growers. Ag. Agent Grimes presented an Agricultural report emphasizing on the economic effects on agriculture in Martin County.

Ag. Extension Agent Grimes discussed data regarding agriculture in Martin and stated that the data had not changed. It was reported that there was an slight influx in young farmers going back to their family farms.

Martin County Data:

- Total Acres in County: 295,152
- Total Land in Farms: 140,980
- Harvested Cropland: 97,775
- Number of Farms: 332
- Average Farm Size: 425
- Average Age of Farmers: 58.8

Next, Ag. Extension Agent Grimes presented data on crops over the past 3 years. It was reported that the acreage had not fluctuated from year to year, but commodity prices could make a difference. This year, Martin County was reportedly number one (#1) in peanut acreage in the state with a production of 11,388 acres. It was stated that Bertie and Martin Counties fluctuated in the most peanut acreage. The top commodity produced in Martin County was cotton. Ag. Extension Agent stated that there may be a slight increase in corn acreage due to current cotton prices.

Crop	**2024 Acres**	**2023 Acres**	**2022 Acres**
Cotton	29,962	29,015	31,721
Wheat	3,010	6,471	6,581
Corn	6,671	6,733	4,346
Soybeans	23,271	24,215	24,218
Sweet Potatoes	1,375	1,059	1,517
Peanuts	11,388	9,550	9,479
Tobacco	2,016	2,091	2,325

Why Do We Test?

Between 2023 and 2025 Ag. Extension Agent Grimes conducted on farms tests on a variety of varieties were planted in the same row, same production, and the same farmer. Six of the varieties were in both 2023 and the 2024 plot, so there was no major change in varieties. Ag. Extension Agent Grimes noted that in 2023, the farmer averaged 594 pounds per acre on that plot, which was no difference other than the weather. The weather was reported to be hotter and dryer in 2023 than 2024. In 2024, with the different weather, the farmer had an average of 1,198 pounds of cotton from the same field. It was reported that this showed that a farmer could not cut expenses off the feeling that the crop would not be a good one. The farmer had the same amount of money per acre in 2024 that he did in 2023 and he made half a yield.

2023 Cotton Plot		
Variety	**Lint %**	**Lint Lbs/A**
DP 2333 B3XF	43.1	696
ST 5091 B3XF	42.5	693
DP 2127 B3XF	41.3	667
ST 4595 B3XF	43.2	664
NG 3195 B3XF	40.9	614
NG 4190 B3XF	39.3	574
DG 3519 B3XF	40.6	539
DG 3528 B3XF	38.8	534
PHY 443 W3FE	38.5	504
PHY 415 W3FE	40.4	453
	trial avg:	***594***

2024 Cotton Plot		
Variety	**Lint %**	**Lint Lbs/A**
AR 9371 B3XF	45.5	1372
NG 3195 B3XF	43.3	1356
PHY 411 W3FE	43.5	1353
DP 2333 B3XF	42.8	1274
DG 3519 B3XF	44.8	1189
PHY 415 W3FE	44.4	1146
DP 2127 B3XF	44.1	1135
DG 3528 B3XF	41.0	1070
NG 4414 B3XF	41.1	1044
ST 6000 AXTP	43.7	1043
	trial avg:	***1198***

Yield and Gross Amounts from Cotton Crops

In 2023, most cotton farmers reportedly averaged about $0.92 cent per pound on the cotton they sold. Ag. Extension Agent Grimes stated that if the County average of cotton was 1,000 pounds yield per acre in 2023, a farmer would have grossed at about $920.00 per acre. It was stated that farmers would have around $650.00 minimum to $800.00 per acre after paying rent, infrastructure, input cost, and other fees. The current cotton price was reportedly close to $0.66 cent, which meant that the farmer would gross at about $680.00 per acre before paying fees (rent, infrastructure, etc.) With this information, Ag. Extension Agent Grimes asked that people thank farmers for working hard to put a shirt on their backs and to buy 100% cotton shirts to support the farmers.

Ag. Extension Agent Grimes answered questions from the Board.

	2023 Cotton Crop	**2024 Cotton Crop**
Average price sold	$.92 average price sold	$.68 average price sold
Yield lbs. per acre.	Yield of 1,000 per acre	Yield of 1,000 lbs. per acre
Average money per acre	$920 per acre	$680 per acre

County Agricultural Importance
Ag. Extension Agent Grimes listed and discussed some important factors of agriculture in the county:

- Land Rent – Ag. Extension Agent stated that farmers renting land from landowners generated money from crops farmed to spend.

- Employers – Agriculture was stated to be a major employer as it provided jobs at places such as the Cotton Gin. There were reportedly five peanut stations in Martin County that employed five to eight people to help grate peanuts for two to three months.

- Seed, Chemical, Fertilizer Companies, Peanut Buying Points (5), and Cotton Gin – The Cotton Gin and Seed, Chemical, Fertilizer Companies brought in infrastructure and employers. These companies also assisted in sponsoring events.

- Custom Sprayers, harvesters, etc.

Ag. Extension Agent Grimes invited anyone interested to contact him for a field visit to farms around the County and asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Bond Jr. stated that it was always a pleasure to attend the Livestock shows and appreciated the farmers.

Chairman Ayers thanked NC Cooperative Extension Director Smith and Ag. Extension Agent Lance Grimes.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Board Appointments – Commissioner's Appointment

With the past General Election, there were Commissioner Appointments that needed to be filled for the Advisory Boards of Martin County. Each Commissioner is assigned to Advisory Board as a Commissioners Appointment. The following appointments were made to fill vacancies:

- Martin Community College Board of Trustees
  Commissioner Jeremiah Taylor was appointed to fill an unexpired term expiring on June 30, 2025. At the time of expiration, Commissioner Taylor may be reappointed to serve a full 4-year term ending on June 30, 2029

- Department of Social Services
  Chairman Joe R. Ayers was appointed to fill an unexpired term ending on June 30, 2026. At the time of expiration, Chairman Ayers may be reappointed to serve a full 3 – year term ending on June 30, 2029.

- Tourism Development Authority
  Vice Chairman Gurganus resigned from this Board and Commissioner Jeremiah Taylor was appointed to serve an ongoing term.

- Mid-East Commission
  Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr. was reappointed to the Board as the Commissioners Appointment and Commissioner Ronnie Smith was reappointed as an Alternate Commissioners Appointment. Both terms are ongoing

Interim County Manager Eisner suggested a motion to approve the appointments as stated.

Commissioner Taylor made the **Motion** to Approve of the Commissioners Board Appointments as stated, with a **Second** by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

NEW BUSINESS

1. USDA Lease Agreement Amendment

Public Works Director Justin Harrison presented an opportunity to the Board in a previous Board meeting regarding the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Kehukee Park Center, wherein the USDA would provide 100 % reimbursement to the County for the construction of a building on Kehukee Park Road and would pay a lease payment to the County. A lease agreement was approved between the USDA and Martin County that detailed the terms of the agreement. It was stated in this agreement that charging stations for electric vehicles would be constructed in the parking lot of the center for federal use, but this amenity was removed from the lease agreement.

The Board was asked for an approval of the amendment.

Public Works Director Harrison added that the change included a deduction of $4,650.00 that was allotted for the EV Chargers. It was reported that $137,000.00 was the total amount to be reimbursed

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve the USDA lease Amended Agreement, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

2. Approval of USDA Bids for Improvements

Public Works Director Harrison stated that as part of the construction of the USDA Kehukee Park Center, a bidding process had to occur for each construction project and approved by the Board. The construction projects included keypad installation, changes to the locks, painting, dry wall installation, dust removal, electrical work, and resurfacing of the parking lot. The bids were posted on the Martin County website (www.martincountyncgov.com) under “Public Notices” for a week and bids were received from various companies.

Public Works Director Harrison presented the bids to the Board and gave recommendations for each construction project. The recommended bids were as stated:

Construction Project	Company Name	Price
New Key Pad Devices, and Doors for Security (An ask by USDA and USDA would be reimbursed)	Brown Lock Shop	$6,476.64
Painting (County would be reimbursed)	Hernandez Painting	$9,200.00
Electrical Work	Donnie Whitehurst Electric Service	$14,650.00
Resurfacing – Parking Lots	H & H Concrete Landscaping and Services	$22,480.00
Wall and Demo Wall Construction	H & H Concrete Landscaping and Services	$28,295.00

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Approve of the H&H Concrete Bid for Wall and Demo Wall Construction Labor and Supplies, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

Vice Chairman asked Interim County Manager if one motion could be given for all bids as there were several.

Interim County Manager Eisner suggested that either way of approving the bids was acceptable as long as the method of approving the bids was clear.
Vice Chairman Gurganus asked if the Board was so inclined to make one motion to approve all bids and it was granted.

Public Works Director stated that there was an additional bid for flooring that was being advertised at the time.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Approve the Brown Lock Shop at $6,476.64, H&H Concrete at $22,480.00, H&H Concrete and Landscape at $28,295.00, and Donnie Whitehurst at $14, 650.00, and Hernandez Painting at $9,200.00, with a **Second** by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

Public Works Director Harrison mentioned speaking with a point of contact with the USDA who stated that there may be an issue with the county being reimbursed. It was stated that construction work would not begin until a letter from USDA was sent to the County stating that the USDA would reimburse the County for certain renovations. In speaking with the point of contact, the future was promising, but the letter was needed before beginning work. The bid process and approval was reportedly conducted to start when the letter is received.

Chairman Ayers stated that this project was discussed before but the USDA volunteered to renovate a county building at Kehukee Park. The County would reportedly pay for the renovations upfront and would receive reimbursement from the USDA as well as an increase in lease payments.

3. Clerk of Court Budget Appropriation

Clerk of Superior Court Amanda Bramble thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend and asked the Board for funding for the Clerks of Courts Office. By statute, the County was required to provide facilities including furniture for the judicial facilities. It was reported that there were 10 Deputy and Assistant Clerks in the Clerks of Courts Office. The furniture was reportedly worn and in desperate need of replacement. It was stated that last year, the County went to an ECourts system, the Clerks had a lot more equipment at their desks, and they were sitting at their desk more. This has reportedly caused worn chairs and some Clerks have purchased their own chairs. Clerk of Superior Court Bramble was aware of the various funds that the Board had to allot, but asked for any funds that could be allotted to the Clerks of Courts Office.

Interim County Manager Eisner reported that the previous Clerk of Superior Court before retirement mentioned that some counties had a budgetary appropriation for the County. Martin County reportedly did not have this appropriation and over the years, facility funds have been almost depleted. In transition with the newly appointed Clerk of Superior Court, Interim County Manager mentioned this matter being discussed during the upcoming budget process.

Chairman Ayers mentioned that there was a budget amendment for $25,000.00 to purchase new chairs and supplies in the agenda packet. Chairman Ayers asked Clerk of Superior Court Bramble if this was enough funding to start and Clerk of Superior Court Bramble agreed.

Vice Chairman Gurganus stated that he could not remember the Clerks of Courts Office asking for anything, but anytime the County needed something, the Clerks of Courts Office provided it.
Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Appropriate $25,000.00 to the Clerks of Courts Office, with a Second by Commissioner Smith. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

Interim County Manager stated that the second part of the agenda item was a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the courts continuity of operations in the case of an emergency and included a list of officials. Interim County Manager stated that the Board was asked for the Interim County Manager to sign off on the continuity plan.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Approve the Memorandum of Agreement, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

4. Adult and Aging Senior Citizen General Purpose Funding Application

Interim County Manager Eisner reported that the Adult and Aging Director Madison Wilkinson applied for grant funding from the state, wherein the state would contribute $3,755.00. The funding would go towards general operations such as food distribution, maintenance, office materials, etc.

The grant application required a signature from the Chairman of the Board and a 25 % local match of $ 1,252.00 from the County, totaling in $5,007.00 of funding to the senior centers. The Board was asked for approval of the grant and grant application.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve of the Adult and Aging Senior Center General Purpose Funding Application, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

5. Tax Assessor Resolution Removing and Adding Review Officers

It was reported that in the process of hiring new staff in the Tax Assessors Office, the adoption of a resolution appointing review officers by the Board was required per Article 2 of Chapter 47 (§47-30.2 Review Officer). The resolution appointing new staff and the removal of past staff is as stated:

MARTIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RESOLUTION APPOINTING REVIEW OFFICERS

WHEREAS, Article 2 of Chapter 47 (§47-30.2 Review Officer) of the North Carolina General Statutes requires the Board of Commissioners of each county, by resolution, designate by name one or more persons experienced in mapping or land records management to be appointed as a Review Officer to certify the maps or plats presented to the Register of Deeds as complying with all statutory requirements for recording; and WHEREAS, the review of statutory requirements is of a technical nature; and

WHEREAS, it appears most efficient for the County of Martin to designate County staff to be appointed or reaffirmed by the Martin County Board of Commissioners to serve as Review Officers, in order to certify each map and plat presented to the Martin County Register of Deeds for recording satisfies the statutory requirements for recording.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County that this resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption. That the following person is recommended to be appointed or reaffirmed by the Martin County Board of Commissioners to serve as Review Officer for all lands within the municipal and extraterritorial jurisdiction of the County of Martin in order to certify each map and plat presented to the Martin County Register of Deeds for recording satisfies the statutory requirements for recording:

Name	**Position/Title**
Robert Smith	Tax Assessor
Erica Davis	Property Tax Specialist
Tyler Bennet	Property Tax Specialist

Remove the following from being a review officer:

Name
Melissa Phillips

Allen Hilderbrandt
Paulette Bullock

Adopted this this 12th day of February, 2025.

_____
Joe R. Ayers, Chairman

_____
Julia Rease, Clerk to the Board

Commissioner Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to Adopt the Resolution Adding Review Officers, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** by raise of hands (5-0).

6. Budget Season Schedule

Chairman Ayers announced Special Call budget meeting dates for the upcoming fiscal year. These meetings give department supervisors, outer agencies of Martin County that provide services, and the Board of Education an opportunity to present budget requests and or proposals. The Special Call meetings are as stated:

Meeting	Meeting Location	Meeting Date	Meeting Time
Special Call Meeting-Department Budget Requests	Commissioners Boardroom Martin County Governmental Center/Courthouse 305 E. Main Street, Williamston, NC 27892	March 17, 2025	6:00 p.m.
Special Call Meeting-Outer Agency Budget Requests	Commissioners Boardroom Martin County Governmental Center/Courthouse 305 E. Main Street, Williamston, NC 27892	March 18, 2025	6:00 p.m.
Special Call Joint Meeting Board of Education - Budget Presentation	Innovation Campus 415 E Main Street, Williamston, NC 27892	April 14, 2025	7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Smith asked if there would be a Board Retreat to hear the Departmental and Outer Agency request. It was stated that a Board Retreat discussion would occur at the next month's Board meeting.

Commissioner Taylor stated that the departmental request needed to be detailed with research and comparisons by surrounding counties.

Commissioner Taylor made the **Motion** to Approve of the Budget Season Schedule as stated, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

7. Board of Commissioners Agenda Packets

Commissioner Taylor reported that the Board wanted to save money and thought that it would be proper to start cutting excess funds from the Board and County Managers Office first. Commissioner Taylor requested documentation on costs estimates to print agenda packets and provided the following cost analysis:

Cost Analysis for Paper Agendas for Martin County

Current Criteria: 10 Agenda Packets per Meeting, Printed One-Sided, All Color

*Ink Analysis (*Average Number of Pages per Agenda: 133)

Cost Per Page	Number of Agendas	Total Cost
0.06	10	$79.80

Paper Analysis (Average Number of Pages: 133)

Cost Per Page	Number of Agendas	Total Cost
0.01	10	$13.30

Binder Analysis:

Cost Per Binder	Number of Agendas	Total:
$4.98	10	$49.80

Estimated Monthly Cost for Agendas: $ 142.90
Estimated Yearly Cost for Agendas: $1,714.80

Clerk to the Board Time/Wages Estimate (Assuming 4 hours of work)
$20.00 per hr. X 4 hours worked = $80.00 each meeting X 12 months = $960.00
(This assumes no reprinting, which happens often.)

*TOTAL LOSS***:** $2,674.80 (over $3,000.00 per yr. due to reprints/change in agenda's)

This estimate did not include the cost of a Deputy Sheriff delivering the agenda packets to each Commissioners home for regular and special meetings each month. (Two Commissioners live in Williamston, one in Oak City, one in Farm Life-Williamston, and one in Robersonville).

Mileage Estimate:
.64 cent a Mile x 100 miles= 64.00
+ $20.00 an hr. x 2 hours. = $40.00 == 104.00 per event x 12 Events = $ 1,248.00 per yr.

The total cost to provide paper agenda packets was around $4,500.00 a year without the inclusion of ink, reprints, extra travel, extra time, multi meeting events (ex: 3 Meetings in Dec 2024), multi travel expenses for Deputy Sheriff's delivery.

Commissioner Taylor stated that each Commissioner had a County issued laptop. Commissioner Taylor thanked the Board for bringing in their laptops to be updated by the IT Department and that he was willing to help any Commissioner if they had an issue with operating their computer.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Approve of Electronic Agenda Packets, with a **Second** by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

8. Commissioners Travel Policy

Chairman Ayers passed out a travel policy for Commissioners regarding travel and read it aloud. The travel policy is as stated:

"The County of Martin ("County") is undertaking a review of its overall policy regarding travel by employees and officials, both elected and appointed. Until such time as an updated travel policy is reviewed and approved, the following will apply to travel by members of the Board of Commissioners (the "Board"):

A. No more than two (2) members of the Board shall attend the same out-of-county conference/meeting without prior approval of the Board at a regular meeting or duly special called meeting.
B. All travel will require notification and approval by Chair and/or Vice-Chair.
C. Travel Documentation must include sufficient documentation to support cost estimates including, but not limited to:
   a. Formal Conference/meeting agenda, but where a formal conference/meeting agenda is not available, employee or official should submit a written narrative summary of the conference or meeting.
   b. Per Diem calculation with a screenshot of the GSA per diem rates as found on https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates, and explanation of hardship, if applicable.
   c. Registration quote;
   d. Lodging Quote
   e. Transportation, such as mileage, rideshare, or public transportation quite;
   f. Listing of other employees or officials attending same conference /meeting; and,
   g. Any other costs estimates.
D. Per Diem rates will be established
E. Explanation of travel, listing of other employees, and any other costs associated with the travel
F. Clerk can reserve and pay for registration after Finance has pre-audited expenses
G. Report is needed after travel at the next meeting under Board Reports
H. Cards will not be issues to the Commissioners

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Adopt the Commissioners Travel Policy, with a Second by Commissioner Taylor. **Discussion:**

There was a brief discussion on the timeliness of approval of travel.

The Motion was **Carried (3-2)** by raise of hands.
Ayes: Chairman Joe R. Ayers, Vice Chairman David "Skip" Gurganus, and Commissioner Jeremiah Taylor
Nays: Commissioner Dempsey Bond Jr. and Commissioner Ronnie Smith

9. Proposed Hospital Contracts

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the previous hospital operators left the hospital building in bad condition. It was stated that before proposals were sent out, certain things in the building needed to be fixed and renovated. The Board approved a series of contract previously to start the renovations and there were a few more contracts that the Board was asked to approved.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that Williams Fire and Sprinkler submitted a proposed contract to replace the fire panel.

Public Works Director Justin Harrison stated that Criterion Healthcare Principal Herbie Hammes, who was contracted to assist with the renovation of the hospital, proposed two bids. It was stated that Williams Fire & Sprinkler was founded to be $ 30,000.00 less than a bid submitted by Criterion Healthcare Principal Hammes.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the Board approved about $400,000.00 in contracts and with the addition to the Williams Fire and Sprinkler contract, the total amount needed increased by $65,000.00

Public Works Director Harrison stated that an increase in funding was needed for a certain phase in the renovation of the hospital.

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that the total renovations with the additional contract would cost $510,000.00. Interim County Manager Eisner asked the Board for approval of the Williams Fire & Sprinkler Contract and budget appropriation increase from $400,000.00 to $510,000.00 for this phase of hospital renovations.

Vice Chairman Gurganus explained the renovations being made and stated that the hospital was being renovated to be presentable to potential operators and to maintain a county asset.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Increase the overall spending to $510,000.00, which would include the Williams Fire and Sprinkler and the work on the fire panel, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously (5-0) by raise of hands.

8. Budget Amendment(s)

Budget Amendment #20
Budget Amendment #20 is to appropriate and authorize the expenditure of $510,000 for construction repairs for the hospital facility.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#20

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund-County Commissioners, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Consulting Srv -Hospital	$510,000	

This will result in an increase of $400,000 in the expenditures of the General Fund-County Commissioners. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	$510,000

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Commissioner Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to Adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 12th day of February 2025 with the amendment of $510,000.00, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
Consulting Srv-Hospital	1141100-519903	$ 510,000	
Fund Balance	1100090-499099	$ 510,000	

Budget Amendment #21

Budget Amendment #21 is to appropriate and authorize the expenditure of $18,500 for litigation settlement expenses (County Retirees-File No. 4:21-cv-122).

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#21

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund-County Commissioners, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
County Commissioners-Miscellaneous	$18,500	

This will result in an increase of $18,500 in the expenditures of the General Fund-County Commissioners. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation $18,500

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to Adopt the budget ordinance amendment this 12th day of February 2025, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
County Commissioners-Misc.	1141100-549900	$18,500	
Fund Balance	1100090-499099	$18,500	

Budget Amendment #22

To appropriate and authorize the expenditure of $1,000 to the Martin County Transit-wreck reimbursement (James Norfleet).

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#22

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund-Martin County Transit, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Martin County Transit-Vehicle Repairs	$1,000	

This will result in an increase of $1,000 in the expenditures of the General Fund-County Commissioners. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

General Fund-Miscellaneous $1,000

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Commissioner Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 12th day of February 2025, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
General Fund-Miscellaneous	1100050-483982	$1,000	
Transit-Vehicle Repairs	1145200-535300	$1,000	

Budget Amendment #23
This budget amendment is to exclude $4,650.00 from the USDA Lease Agreement Amendment that excluded EV Chargers for electric vehicles.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#23

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows.

	Increase	Decrease
Kehukee Office Building		$4,650

This will result in an increase of $4,649.99 in the expenditures of the General Fund-Fund Balance. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance	$ 4,650

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 12nd day of February 2025, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
Kehukee Park-Capital Outlay	1142710-551000	$4650	
Fund Balance	1100090-499099	$4650	

Budget Amendment #24

Budget Amendment #24 is to amend the Department of Aging budget to reflect the actual revenues and expenditures for the MIPPA.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#24

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows:

	Increase	Decrease
Department of Aging-MIPPA	$1,673	

This will result in an increase of $1,673 in the expenditures of the General Fund-Dept. of Aging. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	$ 1,000
Restricted Intergov-MIPPA	$ 673

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Commissioner Taylor made the **Motion** to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 12th day of February 2025, with a **Second** by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
Restricted Intergov-MIPPA.	1100025 455125	$ 673	
Fund Balance	1100090 499099	$ 1,000	
Dept. Of Aging-MIPPA	1158610 549125	$ 1,673	

Budget Amendment #25 and #26

Budget Amendment #25 and 26 are to appropriate $17,500 for the repayment of disaster recovery funds. The NC Housing Finance Agency is requesting reimbursement from the County due to homeowners withdrawing from the program.

Chairman Ayers asked that this item be tabled to allow the company representative could explain the situation.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#25

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows:

	Increase	Decrease
Transfer to Fund 36	$17,500	

This will result in an increase of $17,500 in the expenditures of the General Fund. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	$17,500

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Commissioner Taylor made the Motion to Table Budget Amendment # 25 for more information, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by a raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
Transfer to CDBG	1198000-598360	$17,500	
Fund Balance Appropriation	1100090-499099	$17,500	

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#26

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows:

	Increase	Decrease
Transfer to Fund 36	$17,500	

This will result in an increase of $17,500 in the expenditures of the General Fund. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	$17,500

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Commissioner Taylor made the Motion to Table Budget Amendment # 25 for more information, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by a raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
Transfer to CDBG	1198000-598360	$17,500	
Fund Balance Appropriation	1100090-499099	$17,500	

Budget Amendment #27

Budget Amendment #27 is to appropriate funds for maintenance needs and furniture in the Clerks of Court Office.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT-#27

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Martin County, North Carolina, that the following amendments be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be changed as follows:

	Increase	Decrease
Transfer to Miscellaneous	$2,500	

This will result in an increase of $17,500 in the expenditures of the General Fund. To provide an increase in revenue for the above, the following revenues will be changed.

Fund Balance Appropriation	$2,500

Section 2. Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board and to the Finance Officer for their direction.

Vice Chairman Gurganus made the **Motion** to adopt the above budget ordinance amendment this 12th day of February 2025, with a **Second** by Commissioner Smith. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

For Your Information			
Account Name	**Account Number**	**Increase**	**Decrease**
Transfer to Miscellaneous	1141100-549900	$2500	
Fund Balance Appropriation	1100090-499099	$2500	

Catholic Charities Food Distribution at the Farmers Market – Mr. Barkley Sample

Mr. Sample made a public comment earlier in the meeting and a decision on the matter was stated to take place under New Business. Chairman Ayers asked for a motion to approve of Catholic Charities to utilize the Farmers Market contingent upon Interim County Manager Eisner clearing all legalities.

Commissioner Smith made a **Motion** to Approve of Catholic Charites utilization of the Farmers Market Contingent upon the Interim County Manager/County Attorney Eisner clearing legalities and giving the approval, with a **Second** by Vice Chairman Gurganus. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise if hands (5-0).

Mr. Sample asked about the upcoming food distribution and it was stated that Interim County Manager Eisner would give Mr. Sample a response before the next distribution occurred.

CLOSED SESSION(S)

At: 9:19 p.m., Vice Chairman Gurganus made the Motion to Enter Closed Session(s) 1. N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11. (a)(6) Personnel, with a Second by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was Carried by raise of hands (5-0).

At: 10:46 p.m. Vice Chairman Gurganus made the Motion to Exit Closed Session(s) 1. N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11. (a)(6) Personnel, with a Second by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was Carried by raise of hands (5-0).

OPEN SESSION

Interim County Manager Monthly Financial Statement – January 2025

Interim County Manager reported on the monthly financial statement that was pre audited by the Finance Office and Human Resources Director. The statement is as follows:

Hours of Work:	$2, 873.00
Mileage	+ $463.74
Total:	**$3,336.74**

Commissioner Taylor made the **Motion** to Approve of the Interim County Managers Monthly Financial Statement for the month of January 2025, with a **Second** by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

Sheriff's Salary

Interim County Manager Eisner stated that Sheriff Robinson was appointed on January 31, 2025, but the salary was not discussed. Upon submission by the Sheriff and discussion from staff, the recommended starting salary was $103,000.00. Interim County Manager Eisner stated that this could be reviewed again with the upcoming budget meetings.

Commissioner Smith made the **Motion** to Approve the starting salary for the Sheriff at $103,000.00, with a **Second** by Commissioner Bond Jr. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

BOARD REPORTS/COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Essentials of County Government Course – Commissioner Jeremiah Taylor
Commissioner Jeremiah Taylor gave details regarding his attendance at the Essentials of County Government Class in Winston Salem, NC last month.

It was reported that the County paid for Commissioner Taylor's hotel room and registration fees. The hotel reservation was discounted to $107.00 a night and the registration was discounted by $70.00 due to the reservation and registration being booked in advance. Commissioner Taylor stated that he traveled in his personal vehicle, did not charge the County for mileage, and paid for subsistence (food) with his personal funding. Commissioner Taylor reiterated that the County only paid for his hotel reservation and class registration.

Commissioner Taylor reported learning about various topics in the two-day class, such as *Welcome to County Government, County Government 101, Open Meetings and Public Records, Building in Management Relationships, County Finance, Budget Overview and Exercises, Financial Oversight and Internal Control,* and *Ethics*. Commissioner Taylor reported that he submitted his Ethics certificate to Interim County Manager Eisner to be filed by the Clerk to the Board. Commissioner Taylor discussed what he learned and some suggestions with a few people.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there were any questions and or comments.

Vice Chairman Gurganus reported that Commissioner Taylor gave him a packet of information from the class as he was unaware of the information.

Chairman Ayers clarified that the Ethics class was mandatory for Commissioners that elected. According to N.C.G.S § 160A-87, Ethics education program required:

(a) All members of governing boards of cities, counties, local boards of education, unified governments, sanitary districts, and consolidated city-counties shall receive a minimum of two clock hours of ethics education within 12 months after initial election or appointment to the office and again within 12 months after each subsequent election or appointment to the office.
(b) The ethics education shall cover laws and principles that govern conflicts of interest and ethical standards of conduct at the local government level.
(c) The ethics education may be provided by the North Carolina League of Municipalities, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, North Carolina School Boards Association, the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, or other qualified sources at the choice of the governing board.
(d) The clerk to the governing board shall maintain a record verifying receipt of the ethics education by each member of the governing board. (2009-403, s. 1.)

Chairman Ayers asked if there were any other Board comments or reports and there were none.

Adjournment:

At: 10:51 p.m. Commissioner Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to Adjourn, with a **Second** by Commissioner Taylor. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously by raise of hands (5-0).

Joe R. Ayers, Chairman
Martin County Board of Commissioners

Julia S. Rease
Clerk to the Board