

APPROVED 4/26/22

**MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
March 21, 2022
8:30 a.m.**

The Orange County Board of Commissioners met for a virtual breakfast meeting with the Orange County Legislative Delegation on Monday, March 21, 2022 at 8:30 a.m.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Renee Price, Vice Chair Jamezetta Bedford, and Commissioners Amy Fowler (arrived at 9:10 a.m.), Sally Greene, Jean Hamilton, and Anna Richards

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Earl McKee

COUNTY ATTORNEYS PRESENT: John Roberts

COUNTY STAFF PRESENT: County Manager Bonnie Hammersley, Deputy County Manager Travis Myren, Clerk to the Board Laura Jensen, and Assistant to Manager for Legislative Affairs Greg Wilder (All other staff members will be identified appropriately below)

LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION PRESENT: Representative Verla Insko, Representative Graig Meyer, and Senator Valerie Foushee (arrived at 8:39 a.m.)

Chair Price called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Due to current public health concerns, the Board of Commissioners is conducting a Virtual Legislative Breakfast on March 21, 2022 utilizing Zoom. Members of the Board of Commissioners will be participating in the meeting remotely. As in prior meetings, members of the public will be able to view and listen to the meeting via live streaming video at orangecountync.gov/967/Meeting-Videos and on Orange County Gov-TV on channels 1301 or 97.6 (Spectrum Cable).

A roll call of the County Commissioners was called; all members were present except for Commissioner Fowler and Commissioner McKee.

Chair Price welcomed the legislative delegation. She noted that it was the last time that the current legislative delegation will be together with the commissioners.

The Board of County Commissioners introduced themselves and welcomed the Representatives.

Senator Valerie Foushee arrived at 8:39 a.m.

Chair Price invited the legislative delegation to introduce themselves.

Representative Meyer said they were on a break from the longest long session in General Assembly history. He said the upcoming session is expected to be short. He said they anticipate making amendments to the budget that don't affect tax policy and will not be controversial. He said there is discussion of major legislation including Medicaid expansion and legalization of medical marijuana. He said it is not clear if it will proceed or not.

Representative Insko said she would be in office until after the May primary. She said she has learned a lot from the position. She said government is complex and you keep learning. She said in order to be effective you have to dig into the issues. She said she was looking forward to traveling.

Senator Foushee said it has been her pleasure to serve with the commissioners in her current position. She said she looks forward to the legislative breakfast every year. She said they have always felt badly about not bringing forward positive things for Orange County by way of the General Assembly. She said they will go into the short session with the hope that by the end of the calendar year, there will be an opportunity to expand Medicaid. She said there might be an opportunity to disperse federal funds for education, health care, and housing. She said that where possibilities exist, there is also opportunity. She said she looks forward to her last few months as a legislator.

Chair Price said there was background information in the agenda packet that everyone received. She reviewed the list of priority items. She also referred to a larger list of additional concerns that was in the agenda packet. She asked if there was anything specific that the group wanted to discuss further.

Representative Insko said she wanted to get an update on environmental issues.

Senator Foushee said she asked if the county could be more specific about the request to “structure appropriate county participation in governance” under the mental health category in the priority list.

Commissioner Bedford said the item was first written when the county was with Cardinal Innovations and there was not an Orange County representative on the board. She said now that the county is with Alliance, Commissioner Fowler is on the board, and they are soliciting applications for a second board member. She said the mental health board structures are inconsistent across state between the MCOs.

Chair Price said that the state association has advocated that counties know more about what is going on than the state. The goal would be to allow counties to have more of a say.

Commissioner Bedford said part of it is related to pass through mental health funding. She said it would be nice if counties could have more of that funding to do more specific work in the community. She said Orange County has a behavioral health task force working on the designs for a mental health crisis center because MCOs are not doing it. She said that MCOs are sitting on huge fund balances, more than what is needed. She said MCOs need closer management and greater supervision from NCDHHS.

Representative Insko referred to the request under the mental health category to “reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county detention centers.” She said intervention needs to happen earlier, even as young as elementary school. She said there should be more access by psychologists and psychiatrists at school to identify children that aren’t adjusting well.

Chair Price said the county provides funding to schools for mental health support.

Bonnie Hammersley, County Manager, said in the past year the county provided funding for behavioral health in the schools as well as to address the achievement gap. She said the schools presented their plans for spending the funds to the Board. She said both school districts used the funds for staff to address behavioral health issues. She said Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools’ request was more comprehensive, but Orange County Schools looked at both the behavioral health of children and staff. She said that was done recently due to higher sales tax revenue than anticipated. She said the recommendation was to use that funding for the behavioral health issues in the schools.

Representative Insko said when a young person is arrested and they are identified as having a mental health issue, there are intermediate steps before they are incarcerated. She said when there were changes in service provision between the LMEs and state, there was an increase in the number of people going to jail. She said it is still a serious problem that needs to be dealt with.

Bonnie Hammersley said it is an ongoing problem. She said the Criminal Justice Resource Department is looking closely at that with the social workers employed in the

department. She said as state hospitals were closed, it triggered an increased inmate problem in jails. She said the county wants to focus on this area as it develops the behavioral health center.

Chair Price said there are diversion courts and programs for children. She said that Caitlin Fenhagen has hired psychologists have been hired to work with children.

Commissioner Bedford said that the proposed mental health facility was original focused on diversion from jail. She said that due to the pandemic, schools are struggling due to staff vacancies. She said that they can't find the people to do the work, but that the needs of children have been exacerbated by the pandemic. She said the behavioral health center is being restructured to serve children ages four and up. She said everything is coming together to create a very serious mental health crisis in the community. She said Orange County is number one in the state for supplementing the schools, but is below the national average. She said teachers need support as well.

Commissioner Hamilton said that there is a shortage of mental health professionals. She said we have pay people more. She said social workers are the backbone of mental health. She said we have to pay human service workers more in order to have the work force to meet the needs of our community.

Commissioner Bedford said that even Murdoch Center, a mental health facility in Butner, NC that takes people with an IDD diagnosis who are having a mental health breakdown, was closed due to lack of staff. She said providers lost staff who are not coming back. She said that state institutions and emergency departments are full and not taking more patients, and it is a crisis.

Representative Meyer said that this problem is statewide and there is attention from Republican leadership in both chambers of the General Assembly. He said that he's spoken with legislative leaders to address the crisis statewide. He said the challenge is that our ability to respond is too slow when the crisis is in front of us.

Representative Insko said she was interested in a goal under Justice and Public Safety regarding Racial Equity in Criminal Justice – "Support the implementation of the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC)." She said she was hoping to have made some progress on the issue, but there is a long way to go.

Chair Price said she felt it was still a priority.

Representative Insko said the state really needed to make abolishing the death penalty a high priority.

Senator Foushee said she felt there had been some progress. She said that passing Senate Bill 300 which several Democrats worked was an accomplishment. She said some recommendations have been implemented. She said we can always do better, but getting people together to move towards talking about it was a big step. She listed some police reform practices that were agreed upon. She said that progress had been made through bipartisan effort, which was notable.

Commissioner Greene said that was good news.

Commissioner Bedford said that in Orange County, the superior and district courts worked on bail bond policies to improve the situation locally.

Chair Price said she was part of that workgroup and they were trying to make improvements regarding the ability to pay and reducing cash bail amounts.

Commissioner Richards said that Orange County was fortunate to have had a few initiatives regarding cash bail in addition to the work done by the towns. She said there is good work being done locally, but there is still work to be done regarding the fees incarcerated individuals must pay for necessities as well as health safety for inmates. She said one issue they were watching was handgun permitting. She said there are associations watching the

issues around some of the subtleties of how policies are implemented. She said it was concerning how they took the permitting process and made changes. She said she appreciates the attention paid to issues.

Senator Foushee said that when these situations come forward, it's not just legislators who need to talk with partners. She gave an example of when progress was made on legislation, but just before it was to be considered, partners expressed objections. She said legislators can lobby, but if they don't hear from people at the county level, they get push back. She said they can't let perfect be the enemy of the good. She said that the legislative delegation pushes every day, but the numbers are often not there. She said that the commissioners' associations can also push and that will help achieve goals. She said they were almost there with the permitting legislation, but then got push back from the conference of district attorneys. She said they do everything in partnership, but that the squeaky wheel will get the grease.

Chair Price said that some county associations got pushback when they encouraged the legislation. Some recommendations might not fit in every county. She said racial injustice and inequity is in every county, even in Orange County.

Commissioner Greene said that with 100 counties, many of them rural, it is a challenge to advocate for issues.

Chair Price said that when an issue is personal that is when you begin to see progress. She said that closure of rural hospitals pushed some counties to advocate for Medicaid expansion.

Chair Price said that they skipped over Medicaid because they are hopeful that it will happen this year.

Chair Price referenced the Leandro Remedial Action Plan and asked if anyone had any questions.

Commissioner Amy Fowler arrived at 9:06 a.m.

Representative Meyer said that he believes the General Assembly will incorporate pieces of what Leandro calls for in legislation, but there will not be Republican support for anything with the name Leandro on it. He said that they are reviewing what the Leandro plan calls for and finding opportunities to work on those individual pieces. He said they are trying to find out what they can accomplish as soon as possible.

Commissioner Greene said she was pleased to hear Representative Meyer's comments on Leandro and felt that was the right approach. She said it reminded her of a previous environmental justice act that people objected to because of what it was called. She said supporters said to forget the name, just give us the justice.

Senator Foushee gave another example of when a name change made a difference in the success of legislation, specifically, the More at Four program, which changed to NC Pre-K.

Chair Price said it was similar to calling changes to Medicaid as "expansion," which turned people off. She said when you discussed specific changes that were needed for Medicaid, people were supportive.

Chair Price said the last majority priority was access to broadband. She said that the county used \$5 million in ARPA funding to jump start a broadband project. She said the state is beginning to offer financial assistance.

Commissioner Greene said to accept state broadband funding means you have to accept state control over your system. She said there is still too much direction from the legacy telecomm providers who want to keep the game theirs. She said it is great to have the money, but it is hard to accept the funding when it means accepting state terms.

Representative Meyer and Senator Foushee asked to talk with Commissioner Greene separately about the terms of accepting state funding.

Representative Meyer said that the state will spend a lot of money on broadband within the next two to six years. He said it will create a few challenges. He says one challenge is the timeframe; six years is a long time to wait when you need broadband access. He said they are essentially setting up unregulated monopolies with government funding. He said it will create an incentive for broadband companies to set high rates. He said the only way keep things affordable is through market competition, which will probably have to come through multiple modes of internet availability. He said that different approaches each have limitations. He said he wondered if there is a way to promote internet service via cell phone signals in Orange County to compliment developments with other funding sources.

Commissioner Hamilton said she felt that creating unregulated monopolies is a problem. She said if the country had approached broadband as a regulated monopoly, then it would be treated as a basic utility service. She said if fiber to the home gets a consumer what they need, then the company can initially set prices to push away competitors. She said then the company can lock in that customer and raise prices. She said there needs to be regulation in order to serve people at a price they can afford. She asked if there was any talk about that at the state level.

Representative Meyer said that Commissioner Greene is correct, the laws are being written as much by the industry as well as the legislators. He said everything he has talked about with broadband pilot legislative leaders around regulation has been rejected. He gave an example of when he wanted to offer telecomm companies more money to install infrastructure in a 2-year timeframe rather than 6 years, but was rejected because telecomm companies wanted control, not more money.

Chair Price said it is a challenge to get it installed, and then it is a challenge to make it affordable.

Representative Meyer said that the companies want the government to provide subsidies to make it affordable.

Commissioner Greene said that is not the answer and it is not sustainable. She said that the county broadband committee wants to have competition within the fiber to the home realm.

Chair Price said that rural counties across the country are screaming at Congress to provide broadband. She said it is hard for services and business to exist without broadband, such as schools and health facilities, but even farms and ranches. She said that even if Congress does do something for rural counties, it is usually based on income. She said currently Orange County is in a higher tier and does not qualify for as much funding.

Chair Price asked if Representative Insko wanted to talk about environmental legislation.

Representative Insko said she is more aware of climate change. She said that counties and the state should do more to combat climate change, and hopes that Orange County would do more.

Chair Price said that the county has a fund that goes to climate change projects.

Commissioner Fowler said she is the liaison to the climate change council. She said that Orange County needs a climate plan, which was requested by Commissioner Bedford a few months prior. She said the new sustainability coordinator will begin developing the plan. She said that electric vehicles and improving the efficiency of school and county buildings will be key projects for the county. She said several states participate in an initiative called Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions (RGGE). She said wrote a letter to a member of the state environmental council to request that North Carolina join that initiative.

Representative Meyer said that he has been communicating with the Governor's office on joining RGGE for a year. He said RGGE is a regional cap and trade system. He said when the General Assembly passed House Bill 951 to commit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, he and the Governor spoke about how joining RGGE would put some teeth into that commitment. He said the Governor has not been willing to commit the funds to join, and that it costs about \$600,000 to join. He said anything the climate council can do to help would be great.

Commissioner Fowler said the climate council had been working on LEED certification. She said it sounds like the county will qualify at some level. She said that this certification could be used as a stepping off point to examine where there are deficits in efficiencies.

Commissioner Bedford said there were two areas she wanted to mention. She said one is with the Durham Chapel Hill Carrboro MPO and the new metropolitan transit plan. She said they are trying to convince the NC Department of Transportation that bike/ped and multi-modal projects should not have to be funded only as part of a road improvement. She said those projects should be able to be funded as stand-alone projects. She said that the new plan focuses on that. She said that the state could spend hundreds of millions of dollars on adding a lane to a highway, which would only improve commute times by a few minutes. She said that spending the same amount of funds on multi modal forms of transportation could create real change.

Commissioner Bedford said she and Commissioner Hamilton are members of the Solid Waste Advisory Group (SWAG). She said that people have to look upstream and downstream when thinking about solid waste. She said upstream is trying to get people to waste less. She said there is a contract out for what zero waste looks like and what would the county need to get there. She said that the county is part of UNRBA and they are working on Falls Lake and the nutrient issues there. She said the county is the headwaters for three or four different water basins. She said Jordan Lake is a water provider and is in worse condition due to PFAS from the Haw River. She said the county has stricter requirements than the state for water protection buffers. She said climate change is harder to making progress on. She said that the county is pursuing electric vehicles for the county transportation department, but they are very expensive.

Representative Meyer asked for any economic development updates.

Chair Price said there has been recent progress. She said Morinaga is open and they had more job slots. She said Medline is about to open and is huge. She said Thermo Fisher is developing. She said ABB expanded without any incentives. She said quite a bit is happening in the western part of the county. She said Durham Tech is still a partner in many of these developments. She said part of attracting companies is making sure there is a talent pool available, and that Durham Tech is assisting with training. She said UNC is looking into training people for trades and distribution centers.

Commissioner Bedford said she said there are some possible developments in Chapel Hill. She said the previous Bucee's site is under review for another development.

Commissioner Greene said the proposed development at the Bucee's site qualifies under existing zoning, so the Board won't see it.

Representative Meyer said that Google and Apple developments will drive a lot of growth in the Triangle. He said that a Toyota battery plant will be developed in the western Piedmont, which will spur associated development. He said that along the coast there will be a major effort to make North Carolina both the largest provider of off shore wind energy and the manufacturer of off shore wind technology and infrastructure. He said that with off shore wind energy developing off the coast, and the battery industry developing in the western Piedmont, Orange County will be right in the middle of those two industries. He said those two industries will enable other clean industries to develop here. He said the county should be thinking ahead

in the type of role we want to play in these developments. He requested that the county have a larger economic development discussion with people from the state. He said that he usually doesn't hear from county economic development staff when they are working on projects that has state involvement. He said he would be open to helping staff develop projects.

Chair Price said that the county could set up meetings for Representative Meyer with the Economic Development Director, Steve Brantley. She said that the Economic Development department staff, Chair Price and Deputy County Manager Travis Myren met with representatives from the Research Triangle Regional Partnership. She said there may be opportunities for partnerships to take advantage of everything happening in the Triangle. She said the push right now is with biotech and life sciences.

Commissioner Hamilton said she was passionate about #18 on the list of priorities, which is related to school capital funding. She said there are 15 schools in the county which are more than 50 years old, which is ineffective for meeting the needs of children and inefficient environmentally. She said they will be looking to the state for help renovating and replacing schools. She said the time is now to plan for the future.

Senator Foushee said that previous school capital needs legislation she's introduced has not moved in the General Assembly. She said this kind of legislation needs the force of support from the NCACC and other groups to push legislators. She said this should not be a partisan issue; it is an issue across the state. She said there has not been the will to move forward from the leadership. She said the perception from leadership is that schools are flush with federal funds, but those funds are designated for specific uses.

Representative Insko said that it is important to elect officials who put funding of school funding as a priority in their campaigns. She said it would also be helpful to encourage other counties to push for increased school capital funds from the state.

Chair Price said that the state association has prioritized releasing more of the state lottery funds for school capital needs.

Commissioner Hamilton said it sounds like there has not been talk of a bond, because lottery funds will not be enough to meet the cost of school capital needs.

Chair Price said the lottery funds were intended to go to schools, but only about 50% actually does.

Representative Insko that would be important to emphasize, that this was an educational lottery fund.

Commissioner Amy Fowler left the meeting at 9:47 a.m.

Commissioner Greene said the Chapel Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce's Big Bold Ideas is bringing forward a report to build 1,600 affordable homes in the next few years. She said one of the recommendations is that local governments pass ordinances prohibiting landlords from discriminating on the basis of income. She said it would prevent landlords from refusing housing choice vouchers. She said that unfortunately, it's not something local governments can do, and it must be done at the state level. She asked the legislative delegation about the possibility of pursuing this at the General Assembly.

Senator Foushee said it was not something that could be brought forward in a short session, as it would be considered controversial. She said that preparations should be made in order to introduce that kind of legislation in the long session. She said the more partners that are involved, the better off they'll be. She said there are members of both caucuses that share the same values as the county. She said the pandemic showed us that most of us are in the same boat. She said a collective effort is needed to get positive results.

Commissioner Bedford referenced #49 on the legislative issues list, regarding dangerous dog determinations. She said that in Orange County, a dog owner can appeal a

dangerous dog designation after a period of time if the dog's circumstances are reevaluated and it is determined that the dog is no longer dangerous. She said Orange County's ordinance is in conflict with state law, and she wanted to know the process for requesting a local bill that would allow the county to have this ordinance.

Senator Foushee suggested that the county forward the bill to the legislative delegation.

Senator Foushee said it was an honor and pleasure to be with the Orange County Commissioners.

Representative Insko said she appreciated that the county called for regular meetings with the legislative delegation.

Representative Meyer expressed his appreciation for everyone at the meeting and that he looks forward to helping new representatives in the future.

Chair Price thanked the staff for their work in putting the meeting and background materials together. She thanked the delegation for their work in Orange County.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bedford, seconded by Commissioner Richards, to adjourn the meeting at 9:54 a.m.

Roll call ensued.

VOTE: UNANIMIOUS

2022 ORANGE COUNTY PRIORITY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Mental Health – *Seek legislation to develop and fund a plan to:*

- *provide assistance to NC residents, especially youth, who are dealing with the impacts of COVID;*
- *reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county detention centers;*
- *ensure that adequate State-funded mental health, developmental disability and substance use disorder services and facilities are available at the local level, accessible and affordable to all residents;*
- *ensure that sufficient state resources fund service provision costs, inclusive of crisis intervention and treatment; and*
- *structure appropriate county participation in governance.*

Medicaid Expansion – *Support legislation increasing access to the Medicaid program to make health insurance available to North Carolina residents at 138% of the poverty level; broaden the opportunity for coverage for more than 500,000 North Carolinians to address chronic conditions and to prevent illness and disease progression; to provide additional support for rural hospitals; and to protect families from medical debt and bankruptcy.*

Racial Equity in Criminal Justice – *Support the implementation of the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), including:*

- *legislation to legalize the possession and use of marijuana and permit licensed businesses to engage in retail sales to adults, as this decriminalization will in turn broaden the agricultural economy and jobs as well as enhance revenue for*

governments with taxes, licenses, and other associated revenues that can be utilized to address opioid and other drug-related problems and other needs;

- *policing reforms to address use of force, community oversight and law enforcement training on crisis intervention;*
- *Funding at the county level to expand access to diversion and restorative justice programs; and*
- *the reduction of fines, fees and costs in criminal court, noting that such fines, fees and costs disproportionately impact people of color and people of low income.*

Full Funding of the Leandro Remedial Action Plan – Support equity and racial justice by fully funding the Leandro Remedial Action Plan, which details additional comprehensive, targeted education funding over the next eight years, predominantly to low-wealth and minority communities, in order for the State to come into compliance with its constitutional obligation to provide every student a sound basic education.

Broadband/Digital Infrastructure – Support legislation, funding, and other efforts that provide counties with flexibility and opportunities to support options for increasing access to high-speed internet connectivity and expanding digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the un-served and under-served areas of the state. Access to high speed internet connections will reduce disparities, enhance quality of life for all the State's residents, and broaden opportunities in areas such as education, jobs creation, small business development, health care, civic participation, and growth in farm enterprises.

2022 Orange County Legislative Interests

(Note: Italicized Items are Priority Legislative Issues)

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

- 1) **Mental Health** – Seek legislation to develop and fund a plan to:
 - *provide assistance to NC residents, especially youth, who are dealing with the impacts of COVID;*
 - *reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county–detention centers;*
 - *ensure that adequate State-funded mental health, developmental disability and substance use disorder services and facilities are available at the local level, accessible and affordable to all residents;*
 - *ensure that state resources fund service provision costs, inclusive of crisis intervention and treatment; and*
 - *structure appropriate county participation in governance;*

- 2) **Behavioral Health Services** – Support increased state funding for behavioral health services and facilities at the state and local level, including dedicated resources for community para-medicine projects and enhanced mobile crisis response. Support Medicaid reimbursement to EMS for behavioral health transport to crisis centers and structure appropriate county participation in behavioral health program governance;

- 3) **Child Care** - Seek legislation to reverse changes made to the childcare subsidy program available to working families, including establishing eligibility for all children at 200% of the federal poverty level and prorating fees to actual hours attended. This change will help working parents to become financially self-sufficient while assisting employers to maintain a stable workforce. Support legislation to increase and ensure stable funding for enhanced quality early care and education through Smart Start and NC Pre-K;
- 4) **Opioid Epidemic Efforts** – Support county efforts to address opioid epidemic impacts by providing funding for: diversionary facilities and programs to provide and expand access for individuals with opioid use disorder to seek and complete treatment and sustain recovery; to collect data regarding opioid overdoses; for additional law enforcement to investigate and enforce drug laws and to divert individuals into treatment resources through pre-arrest deflection or post-charge treatment courts; and funding for harm reduction efforts at the county level is critical and should include access to naloxone kits and fentanyl strips to assist overdose prevention;
- 5) **Crime Intervention Services** – Support legislation and state funding to provide early intervention services through the Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils, and support increased state funding for the prevention, intervention and treatment of adolescent substance use, gang involvement and domestic violence;
- 6) **Adult Protective Services** – Support increased funding and legislation to strengthen adult protective services;
- 7) **Medicaid Expansion** – *Support legislation increasing access to the Medicaid program to make health insurance available to North Carolina residents at 138% of the poverty level; broaden the opportunity for coverage for more than 500,000 North Carolinians to address chronic conditions and to prevent illness and disease progression; to provide additional support for rural hospitals; and to protect families from medical debt and bankruptcy;*

JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

- 8) **Racial Equity in Criminal Justice** – *Support the implementation of the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), including:*
 - *legislation to legalize the possession and use of marijuana and permit licensed businesses to engage in retail sales to adults, as this decriminalization will in turn broaden the agricultural economy and jobs as well as enhance revenue for governments with taxes, licenses, and other associated revenues that can be utilized to address opioid and other drug-related problems and other needs;*
 - *policing reforms to address use of force, community oversight and law enforcement training on crisis intervention;*
 - *Funding at the county level to expand access to diversion and restorative justice programs; and*

- *the reduction of fines, fees and costs in criminal court, noting that such fines, fees and costs disproportionately impact people of color and people of low income;*
- 9) **Abolish State Death Penalty** – Support legislation to abolish the State of North Carolina’s death penalty;
 - 10) **Legislative Study on Educational Requirements for Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs)** – Support a legislative study commission to review the current educational curriculum for law enforcement officers and make recommendations regarding potential modifications/additions. The overarching purpose of curriculum revision would be to instill in future LEOs some depth of understanding of the complex nature of the society they will serve. In addition to members of the Senate and House, study members should include a diverse array of experts in law enforcement and criminal justice education; also in higher education, and specialists in the humanities/social science subject matter;
 - 11) **County Jail System/Housing State Inmates Reimbursement** – Support legislation to protect the fiscal viability of the county jail system by reinstating reimbursement for state inmates housed in county jails sentenced to 90 days or less;
 - 12) **Concealed Weapons in Parks** –Seek legislation re-authorizing counties to fully regulate the carrying of concealed weapons on county-owned playgrounds and in county-owned parklands and authorize counties to prohibit the carrying of concealed weapons on county and county funded college/university campuses, in addition to playgrounds;
 - 13) **Court Funding** – Support increased state funding for NC courts and for Clerks of Superior Court, including reinstating funding for drug treatment courts and funding for additional clerk positions;
 - 14) **Local Government Funding for Law Enforcement** – Oppose any legislation that is designed to limit local government control of local law enforcement funding decisions or practices, or that financially or otherwise penalizes local governments based on local law enforcement funding decisions or practices;
 - 15) **Red Flag Law** –Support legislation allowing courts to prevent access to firearms for individuals who show signs of being a danger to themselves or to others. Mental illness, escalating threats, substance abuse and domestic violence are among the circumstances in which a judge should have the authority to order weapon restrictions or surrender;

EDUCATION

- 16) **Full Funding of the Leandro Remedial Action Plan** – *Support equity and racial justice by fully funding the Leandro Remedial Action Plan, which details additional comprehensive, targeted education funding over the next eight years, predominantly to low-wealth and minority communities, in order for the State to come into compliance with its constitutional obligation to provide every student a sound basic education;*

- 17) **Priority School Issues** – Support legislation to address the following issues related to schools:
- a) Provide local school systems with calendar flexibility;
 - b) Provide full funding for State allotments including Average Daily Membership (ADM) growth and infrastructure/capital, and support legislation to provide for an overall increase in funding based on average daily memberships outside of the current formula system;
 - c) a periodic accounting process for State per pupil funds so that funds and pro-rated funds follow students to their respective schools, as opposed to the current process that only considers State funding allocations based on students' attendance location on a single day during the school year;
 - d) Impose class size reductions commensurate with State funding for staffing; and
 - e) Maintain full funding for Driver Education;
- 18) **School Capital Funding** – Support legislation to provide needed State capital funding to support school infrastructure, renovations, and new construction, and support a State bond referendum to address school capital needs;
- 19) **Maternity/Paternity Leave and Benefits for School Employees** – Support legislation which provides State coverage for maternity/paternity leave for all local school system employees that is similar to the coverage the State already provides to all other State employees; support legislation for the State to provide two (2) paid FMLA days to local school system employees; and oppose any legislation shifting the State's existing responsibility for employee benefits to local school boards and local governments;
- 20) **Private School Voucher Funding** – Oppose House Bill 32 and any other legislation expanding funding, eligibility, or availability of private school vouchers, which reduces available funding for public education statewide, encourages students to leave public education, and diminishes services and educational opportunities for all remaining public school students;
- 21) **Virtual Charter School Expansion/Funding** – Oppose any legislation expanding or providing additional funding to the State's current virtual charter school program based on its poor performance, failure to meet the needs of students, and the resulting negative impact on funding for public education statewide;

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

- 22) **Broadband/Digital Infrastructure** – *Support legislation, funding, and other efforts that provide counties with flexibility and opportunities to support options for increasing access to high-speed internet connectivity and expanding digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the un-served and under-served areas of the state. Access to high speed internet connections will reduce disparities, enhance quality of life for all the State's residents, and broaden opportunities in areas such as education, jobs creation, small business development, health care, civic participation, and growth in farm enterprises;*

- 23) **Repeal of the Monument Protection Act** – Support legislation that repeals the (so-called) Monument Protection Act which was enacted to protect confederate monuments and symbols, and restore the regulation of monuments or symbols on public property to local governments;
- 24) **Non-Partisan Redistricting Process for Elections** – Support legislation to establish a process for an independent, non-partisan redistricting process after each United States Census for the election of representatives from North Carolina to the United States House of Representatives, the North Carolina House, and the North Carolina Senate;
- 25) **Voter Registration and Voting** – Support legislation to maintain and expand access to and participation in the voting process, including early voting, Saturday and Sunday voting, automatic voter registration, and pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds, and mail-in voting; support legislation to make Election Day a State holiday; and oppose any legislation which creates any barriers or deterrents to voting;
- 26) **Expansion of Protected Classes** – Seek statewide legislative action to provide all North Carolina local governments with the authority to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes in order to protect these classes from discrimination and discriminatory practices; and authorize complaints for discrimination to be brought in North Carolina Courts by any Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recognized protected class;

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 27) **Minimum Wage Increase** – Support legislation to raise the minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour for all, not just employees of the State of North Carolina, to enhance people's economic security, improve access to safe and secure housing, boost the economy with increased spending, decrease dependence on government assistance programs, and improve the lives of families;
- 28) **Agricultural Economic Development** – Support state funding and staffing for agricultural research, Cooperative Extension services and other agriculture-related efforts to support the largest economic driver in North Carolina;
- 29) **Economic Development Efforts** – Support legislation to grow North Carolina's statewide economy through sound state investments, including public infrastructure funding, competitive incentives, and coordinated efforts with county economic development services;

REVENUE & TAX

- 30) **Revenue Options for Local Government** – Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction to all counties. Oppose efforts to divert to the state

fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams;

- 31) **Re-instatement of Earned Income Tax Credit** – Support legislation to re-instate the State Earned Income Tax Credit which greatly benefitted low wage earners until its elimination after the 2013 tax year;
- 32) **Homestead Exemption** – Support revisions to the Homestead Exemption provisions of the Machinery Act to:
- a) provide greater opportunities for low-income seniors to remain in their homes and not be displaced due to property tax burdens by approving a one-time ten percent (10%) increase in the base income qualification standard; and maintaining the current provisions which increase the income qualification standard each year based on any cost-of-living adjustment made to the benefits under Titles II and XVI of the Social Security Act for the preceding calendar year; and
 - b) diminish the discriminatory features of the current exemption provisions relating to married couples by establishing graduated income qualification standards for single individuals versus married couples;
- 33) **Sales Tax Distribution Formula** – Support legislation directing that all sales tax be distributed on a per capita basis as it is fair and more equitable for counties with less economic development as compared to the point of delivery basis. The UNC School of Government has indicated that a per capita basis tax "would indeed be a more even distribution of LOST revenue across the state";
- 34) **Machinery Act** – Support local governments' need for more flexibility to remedy measurement and/or condition property appraisal errors related to local property tax functions. North Carolina property tax law substantially limits the ability of local governments to address property tax discrepancies, such as prohibiting the refund of prior years' taxes paid after a measurement and/or condition property appraisal error is discovered. Just as local governments can recoup prior years' property taxes from owners for "discoveries", local governments should likewise be authorized to refund prior years' taxes paid when situations such as measurement and/or condition property appraisal errors are discovered;
- 35) **Agriculture – Support Conservation of Working Lands and Farmland Preservation**
– Support a revision to the revenue and acreage requirements of the Use Value Program to reduce acreage requirements, balanced by increasing the income threshold;

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

- 36) **Bona Fide Farm Use** – Support legislation clarifying that the farm use and agriculture exemption of 153A-340 that restricts local zoning authority applies only to property on which the production of crops or livestock is the primary use. Clarify that marketing and agri-tourism activities must be secondary uses of the property and do not qualify for the exemption in the absence of the production of crops or livestock;

- 37) **Renewable Energy** – Support renewable energy initiatives available to residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural activities to create a market for energy credits. This support will provide incentives to produce renewable energy, which will become increasingly important to preserving and strengthening the economy and infrastructure, and in the case of agriculture help maintain rural heritage and culture;
- 38) **Eminent Domain** – Oppose adding language to a constitutional amendment on eminent domain that extends any further preemption of county authority to regulate the placement of telecommunication towers;
- 39) **Land, Water and Agricultural Preservation Funding** – Support the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, the Land and Water Fund, and other existing trust funds established for the protection of the State’s land, water, biological resources, agriculture, and special places before they are irreversibly lost, and request that these funds receive additional funding, preferably through dedicated funding sources;
- 40) **Oppose any shift of state transportation responsibilities to counties** – Oppose legislation to shift the state’s responsibility for funding transportation construction and maintenance projects to counties. Counties cannot afford to assume costs for maintaining secondary roads and/or funding expansion projects;
- 41) **Transportation Funding** – Support increased state funding for transportation construction and maintenance needs, recognize Bike and Pedestrian modes of transportation, and support legislation to ensure that the STI funding formula recognizes that one size does not fit all and that projects in both rural and urban areas are prioritized and funded, and eliminate the cap on light rail funding;
- 42) **Aquatic Vegetation Control** – Support legislation to provide for and fund a comprehensive statewide approach to noxious aquatic vegetation control in public water reservoirs;

SOLID WASTE

- 43) **Maintain Local Government Authority over Solid Waste Management** – Oppose any shift of solid waste management and recycling services away from local governments;
- 44) **Recycling** – Support legislation to provide additional funding to local governments for recycling to cover significant increased costs for recycling these materials, especially for electronics, and to oppose the lifting of restrictions on disposal of electronics in landfills;

OTHER INTERESTS

- 45) **Flexible Billing Options for Water & Sewer Utility Providers** – Support legislation allowing local governments and other water and sewer providers to implement flexible

billing practices to establish pricing policies, potential waivers and debt forgiveness opportunities to assist impacted customers;

- 46) **Evictions Information Detailed in Credit Reports** – Support legislation that would remove an eviction from a tenant's credit report (1) that occurred as a result of the pandemic during the period covered by the Governor's State of Emergency Declaration; and (2) after having been on a tenant's credit report for three years;
- 47) **Food Resiliency and Supply Chain Initiatives** – Support food resiliency and supply chain initiatives and funding for equipment, supplies, and other nonrecurring expenses based on the urgency and need created by the COVID pandemic. The average food insecurity rate across North Carolina counties is 14 percent, with that rate projected to rise to 19.3 percent due to the COVID pandemic, and from 19.3 percent to 28 percent for children. A more secure and resilient supply chain will benefit residents and better prepare the State for emergencies that adversely impact the State's food supply;
- 48) **E-911 Funds** – Support maintaining and broadening applications of the NC 9-1-1 Fund to ensure that 9-1-1 systems are able to upgrade existing performance levels and pay for 9-1-1 operations and 9-1-1 related upgrades such as infrastructure and technology enhancements. Orange County has appreciated past efforts and supports future initiatives to assure the public receives full access to emergency services from all sources; and
- 49) **Dangerous Dogs Determinations** – Support legislation to amend the NC Dangerous Dog Law to allow dangerous-dog declarations to be revoked after a period of time, and when there is substantial justification for doing so, in order that a dog does not needlessly live its entire life with restrictions such as being muzzled. Orange County's ordinance includes this language, but that consideration is meaningless without a parallel provision within State law.

Renee Price, Chair

Recorded by Laura Jensen, Clerk to the Board

Submitted for approval by Laura Jensen, Clerk to the Board.