

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Cabarrus met for a Board Retreat in the Multipurpose Room at the Cabarrus County Governmental Center in Concord, North Carolina at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 28, 2026.

Present - Chair:	Laura B. Lindsey
Vice Chair:	Ian Patrick
Commissioners:	Larry G. Pittman
	Kenneth M. Wortman
	Jeff Jones

Staff present were Kelly Sifford, Interim County Manager; Aalece Pugh, Assistant County Manager; Kyle Bilafer, Assistant County Manager; Doug Hall, County Attorney and General Counsel; Ariadne Olvera, Clerk to the Board; department heads and other county staff.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

Cabarrus County Schools

Robert Walter, Cabarrus County Schools (CCS) Board of Education Chair, introduced fellow board and staff members including Dr. John Kopicki, Superintendent; Philip Penn, Chief Financial Officer; Angela Fitzwater, Director of Exceptional Children; Shannon Lancaster, and Sam Treadway, both CCS Board of Education.

Mr. Walter; Dr. Kopicki; Dr. Michael Williams, Chief of Human Resources; Mr. Penn; Ms. Fitzwater; and Brian Cone, Director of Architecture; presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "Budget Trends - Board of Commissioners Planning Retreat." Topics included:

- School funding and benchmark spending data
 - How are Cabarrus County Schools funded?
 - Per Pupil Expenditures by Source of Funds
 - Benchmark Spending Data
 - Academic Rankings
- Student growth and the allotment process
 - Historic and Projected Enrollment
 - How Allotments are Determined
 - Student Growth Impact on Local Spending
- EC student growth and facilities
 - 2026 Proposed Long-Term Capital (Facilities)
- Key budget drivers impacting 2026-27
 - Salary and benefit costs
 - Replacement devices for students and staff
 - Promethean boards
 - Software
 - Increased cost of School Resource Officers (SROs)
 - New Math curriculum
 - Vehicles
 - Insurance
 - School bus cameras
- Cost mitigation
 - Reducing Local-Funded Certified Staff
 - Competitive Pricing Practices
 - School Construction Practices
 - Programmatic Review/Clear Fiscal Ownership
 - Bring Corporate Best Practices to Government
 - Maximize Revenue

A lengthy discussion ensued. During discussion, Dr. Kopicki, Mr. Penn and Mr. Cone responded to questions from the Board.

Dr. John LeGrand, Cabarrus County Schools Deputy Superintendent, was in attendance.

Kannapolis City Schools

Sara Newell, Kannapolis City Schools Superintendent, introduced Dr. Erin Anderson, Assistant Superintendent, and Scott Rogers, Director of Operations.

Ms. Newell, Dr. Anderson and Mr. Rogers presented a PowerPoint titled "Creating the Future - Kannapolis City Schools." Topics included:

- Strategic Plan
- Vision and Mission
- Who are we?
- Review of 2025-2026 Budget Cuts
- 2025-2026 Use of County Funds
- 2026-2027 Needs
- Small Capital Projects
- CIP/Deferred Maintenance Projects
- Large Capital Projects
- Other Projects
- Challenges for FY 2027
- Themes for 2027
- FY 2027 Priorities

There was discussion throughout the presentation. Ms. Newell, Ms. Anderson and Mr. Rogers responded to questions from the Board.

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

Dr. Carol Spalding, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College President introduced Tara Trexler, Chief Financial Officer.

Dr. Spalding, Ms. Trexler and Jonathan Chamberlain, Chief Officer, College Environment, presented a PowerPoint Presentation titled "Cabarrus County Commission Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request". Topics Included the following:

- 2023-2028 Strategic Plan
- Mission and Vision
- NC and Workforce Development
- Institutional Profile
- 2024-2025 Enrollment
- 2024-2025 Continuing Education Enrollment
- High School Programs and Partnerships
- Apprenticeships
- Work-Based Learning Success
- SkillsUSA
- Cabarrus County Campuses
- South Campus Workforce Innovations Center

A discussion ensued. Dr. Spalding responded.

Break

The Board took a break at 10:27 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:38 a.m.

Insurance/Health Clinic

Joanna Ray, Health and Wellness Manager, introduced the USI Consulting Team members Larry Reece, Senior Vice President, and Lynda Clyne, Senior Account Executive, who presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "2026 Medical/RX Marketing Results." Topics included the following:

- Medical Markets (Cigna, Aetna, BCBSNC, UMR)
- Pharmacy Markets
- Medical Provider Summary Access
- Medical TPA Analysis Summary Admin Fees; First Year
- Medical TPA Analysis Summary Admin Fees; Second Year
- Medical TPA Analysis Summary Admin Fees; 3-Year Summary
- Medical/Rx Estimated Annual Claims Spend +Admin Fees; First Year
- Medical/Rx Estimated Annual Claims Spend +Admin Fees; Second Year
 - o Overall Comments on Medical/Rx Marketing
 - o Overview of Medical/Rx Marketing and Considerations
 - o Pharmacy Marketing Results Summary Observations
 - o Medical/Rx Marketing Summary (Cigna, Aetna and BCBSNC)
 - o Level of Pharmacy Disruption for Members with potential carrier change
 - o Level of Medical/Other Member Disruption with potential carrier change

- o Level of Disruption to HR Staff with potential carrier change
- USI Forecast for Plan Year 7/1/2026 to 7/1/2027 with New Terms
 - o USI Forecast 7/1/2026 Cigna Renewal & Delta Dental (est. increase \$2.1M)
 - o USI Forecast 7/1/2026 with Aetna & Delta Dental (est. increase \$1.9M)
 - o USI Forecast 7/1/2026 with BCBSNC/Prime & Delta Dental (est. increase \$1.7M)
 - o USI Forecast 7/1/2026 with BCBSNC/RxB/ESI & Delta Dental (est. increase \$1.63M)
 - o 2026 Stop Loss Comments & Observations
- Adding a 3rd Medical Plan
 - o Current Plan Design Value - Plan Richness
 - o Plan Modeling - 3rd Plan Option
 - o Comparing All Options with Status Quo & 3rd Plan
 - o USI Forecast 7/1/2026 Cigna Renewal & Delta Dental & Adding a 3rd Plan (est. increase \$1.9M)
 - o USI Forecast 7/1/2026 with BCBSNC/RxB/ESI & Delta Dental & Adding a 3rd Plan (est. increase \$1.5M)
 - o Contribution Analysis for Cigna Renewal & Delta Dental & Adding a 3rd Plan (est. increase \$1.9M)
 - o Contribution Analysis for BCBSNC/RxB/ESI & Delta Dental & Adding a 3rd Plan (est. increase \$1.5M)
 - o Benefits Carrier/Pharmacy Options
- Medical/Rx Marketing Fully Insured
 - o Equivalent Rates for Cigna Current and Renewal (Self-Funded, per USI forecast)
 - o Fully Insured Rates Marketing Comparison

There was discussion throughout the presentation. Mr. Reece, Ms. Clyne, and Ms. Sifford responded to questions from the Board.

It was specifically noted that the County's current health insurance provider, Cigna, requires a 90-day advance notice of termination. The last day to provide this notice is March 1, 2026.

UPON MOTION of Commissioner Jones, seconded by Commissioner Pittman, and unanimously carried, the Board suspended the Rules of Procedure due to time constraints.

UPON MOTION of Commissioner Jones, seconded by Commissioner Pittman, and unanimously carried, the Board approved terminating the contract with Cigna and switching the County's health insurance provider to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) with the carve out.

Next, Johanna Ray, Health and Wellness Manager, introduced Grady Hardman, Atrium Health, Director of Client Leadership and Development. Ms. Ray and Mr. Hardman presented a PowerPoint Presentation titled "On-Site Clinic ROI Report Analyzing financial benefits of The Cabarrus County Employer Health Clinic". Topics included:

- Available On-Site Services
- 2025 Clinic Utilization
- Value of Service Breakdown
- On-Site Clinic ROI Overview
- Maximizing Productivity Savings
- Cost Avoidance
- Health Outcomes
- Key Quality Targets and Scores

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Mr. Hardman responded to questions from the Board.

Break

The Board and staff took a short lunch break at 12:21 p.m. The meeting resumed at 12:34 p.m.

Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Van Shaw and Chief Deputy Tessa Burchett presented a PowerPoint Presentation titled "FY27 Budget Conference: Sheriff's Office". Topics included the following:

- Year in Review
 - Ongoing efforts targeting drug traffickers and illegal weapons
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 - Expanded use of digital forensics in investigations
 - Maintained SRO presence in all Cabarrus County Schools
 - Traffic enforcement and education to reduce crashes
 - Human trafficking and child exploitation investigations
 - Detention Center programs supporting rehabilitation and reentry
 - Wellness Program
 - RTIC
- FEMA Reimbursements
- Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office Organizational Chart
- Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office Divisions
- Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office Specialty Units
- Field Operations Program Data
- Incident Reports
- Vice & Narcotics / Crime Reduction
- Youth Development Program Data
- Animal Shelter Program Data
- Detention Center Program Data (including expansion need)
- Detention Budget Factors
- Detention Center Classification Requirements
- Detention Center Need
- Regional Behavioral Health Center
- Gov't Security Unit Need
- Continuation Budget Reductions
- FY27 Focus

There was discussion throughout the presentation. Sheriff Shaw, Chief Burchett and Aalece Pugh, Assistant County Manager/CHSA Director, responded to questions from the Board.

EMS - Rate Changes

Chief James Lentz (by electronic means) provided an introduction. Deputy Chief Justin Brines and Kim Stanley, Chief Client Advocacy Officers, EMS Management & Consultants, presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "FY27 Budget Retreat EMS Update". Topics included the following:

- Regional Snapshot - 11 surrounding counties were surveyed regarding the following:
 - Percentage of calls for service that are billable
 - Collection percentage
 - Percentage of expenses recovered from revenue
- Cabarrus County EMS NC Budget Review
 - FY2025 Performance - Net Collection Percentages
 - Rate Comparison
 - Average Billed vs. Collected Amounts
 - Ground Ambulance Data Collection System - GADCS
 - Projected Rate Increase
 - Percentage of expenses recovered from revenue (with proposed increase)

There was discussion throughout the presentation. Deputy Chief Brines and Ms. Stanley responded to questions from the Board.

EDC

Gretchen Carson, President and Chief Executive Officer, of the Cabarrus County Economic Development Corporation, presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "Cabarrus County Budget Retreat". Topics included the following:

- Mission
- Local Start-Ups (Cabarrus Center)
- Existing Businesses
- Retention and Expansion - FY 24-25
- Recruiting New Industry

- Partnerships
- Cabarrus EDC Goals

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Ms. Carson responded to questions from the Board.

Tammy Whaley, Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors Chair, was in attendance.

Cabarrus Health Alliance (CHA)

Erin Shoe, Public Health Director and Chief Executive Officer, introduced members of the Cabarrus Health Alliance team, including Sue Yates, Chief Financial Officer; Tammy Alexander, School Health Division; Sonja J. Bohannon-Thacker, Behavioral Health Division; and Jacob Snider, Environmental Health.

Ms. Shoe then lead her team in a PowerPoint presentation titled "Cabarrus Health Alliance - Cabarrus County Commissioner Budget Retreat." Topics included the following:

- Cabarrus Health Alliance History
- Cabarrus Health Alliance Governance
- Mission, Vision, Values
- Quick Statistics
 - Staff
 - Financial Overview
 - Primary Funding Sources
- Divisions
- What drives our work?
 - Mandated Services
 - Community Health Needs Assessment
 - Strategic Plan
 - Assurance Services
- Making an Impact Fiscal Year 2025
- Cabarrus County Contribution
 - Total Funding, 2022-2026
 - Expansion Requests, 2022-2026
 - Expansion & Merit, COLA, Fringe Request, 2027
 - Expansion Request Justification
- Food and Lodging Inspection Frequencies

There was discussion throughout the presentation. Ms. Shoe and Ms. Yates responded to questions from the Board.

Marketing Survey/Hot Jobs

Ashley Dobbins, Human Resources Director, presented a PowerPoint presentation titled "Cabarrus County Market Analysis Overview". Topics included the following:

- Benefits of Regular Market Studies
- Position Classification Table
- Previous Market Studies
- Market Study Schedule
 - Departments Due in "Year 3" - DSS, Transportation, Infrastructure and Asset Management, Administrative Positions
- Summary - Public Safety Departments (Year 1)
- Summary - General Gov Departments (Year 2)
- Summary - DSS, IAM, Admin Departments (Year 3)
- Hot Job Market Study

A brief discussion ensued. During discussion, Ms. Dobbins and Kelly Sifford, Interim County Manager, responded to questions from the Board.

Transportation

Aalece Pugh, Assistant County Manager/Consolidated Health Services Agency Director, and Suzanne Moose, Business Services Director, presented a

power point presentation titled "CCTS Consolidation Study Overview". Topics included the following:

- Cabarrus County Transportation Services/ Service Types
- Personnel
- Funding Sources FY26
- 2020 Consolidation Study Highlights
- Consolidation of CK Rider and Cabarrus County Transportation

There was discussion throughout the presentation during which Ms. Pugh, Ms. Moose and Kelly Sifford, Interim County Manager, responded to questions from the Board.

Squad 410

Jacob Thompson, Fire Marshal, introduced Chief Dustin Sneed, Mt. Pleasant Fire Department; Randy Holloway, Mt. Pleasant Town Manager; and Steven Dixon, Mt. Pleasant Town Commissioner.

Mr. Thompson then presented a PowerPoint titled "County-Employed Firefighters Enhancing Countywide Fire & Rescue Capability." Topics included:

- The County's role in fire and rescue service delivery
- Scope of responsibilities beyond first glance
- How County-employed firefighters strengthen departments locally and regionally
- Real operations and real-world impact
- Transition from mobile units to an integrated presence
- Partner agency input
- Operational integration through co-location
- Operational benefits of co-location
- Cost-saving, high-value service delivery

There was discussion throughout the presentation, during which Mr. Thompson, Chief Sneed, Mr. Holloway, and Mr. Dixon responded to questions from the Board.

Jason Burnett, Emergency Management Director, was in attendance.

Child Welfare

Doug Hall, County Attorney/General Counsel, presented previously requested information regarding potential cost savings associated with bringing Child Welfare/Juvenile Court legal services in-house.

Currently, the County has a contract for \$400,000 to provide these services. Approximately 50% of this cost is reimbursed through state and/or federal funding sources for legal expenses related to child welfare. The reimbursement rate remains the same whether services are provided by outside counsel or in-house counsel.

Human Resources is currently working on finalizing a salary range for an in-house attorney position. Based on preliminary estimates, the total cost is expected to be between \$180,000 and \$190,000 annually, which would include salary, bar dues, and continuing education requirements.

Based on these estimates, bringing the services in-house could result in an approximate savings of \$100,000 per year in taxpayer dollars.

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Mr. Hall responded to questions from the Board.

Volunteer Fire Departments

Jacob Thompson, Fire Marshal, reported that four fire departments are requesting tax increases this year.

Mr. Thompson introduced Chief Coley and Chief Case of the Midland Fire Department, who are requesting a \$0.01 tax increase. They presented a PowerPoint titled "Midland Fire Department 2026 Fire Tax Rate Request Presentation." Topics included:

- Department Overview
- Rising Call Volume
- Purpose and Responsibility
- Current Fire Tax Rates
- Requested Increase
- Rising Costs in the Fire Service
- Critical Capital Needs
- Staffing Stability & Public Safety
- Original Financial Strategy: Natural Growth
- Stewardship & Accountability
- Community Growth & Service Demand
- Return on Investment

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Chief Coley and Chief Case responded to questions from the Board.

Mr. Thompson then introduced Chief Dustin Sneed of the Mt. Pleasant Fire Department, Mt. Pleasant Town Manager Randy Holloway and Town Commissioner Steven Dixon.

Mr. Thompson advised the department is requesting up to a \$0.02 tax increase, with the possibility of being lower pending finalization of the town budget. Chief Sneed, Mr. Holloway, and Commissioner Dixon presented a PowerPoint titled "Tax Increase Proposal." Topics included:

- Department Overview
- Granted Revaluation Increase
- Request
- \$1 Pay Increase
- Truck Replacement Needs
- Fire Station 2
- Cost Estimates

Next, Mr. Thompson introduced Chief Evan Parker of the Flowe Store Fire Department who is requesting a \$0.02 tax increase. Chief Parker presented a PowerPoint titled "Flowes Store Fire Department." Topics included:

- Department Fleet
- Members

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Chief Parker responded to questions from the Board.

Lastly, Mr. Thompson introduced Chief Jeremy Burris and Dan Brown, board member, Odell Fire & Rescue. They will be requesting a \$0.0201 tax increase, which would bring their tax rate to \$0.08. Chief Jeremy Burris and Bryan Strickland presented a PowerPoint titled "Odell Fire & Rescue FY27 Budget Presentation." Topics included:

- About Us
- Response Data
- Department Statistics
- Proposed Tax Rate
- CIPs (New Pumper, SCBA Replacement)
- Building Repairs (HVAC Replacement - Station 22; Generator Replacement - Station 22)
- Current Rate vs. Proposed Rate
- Impact on Odell Residents

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Chief Burris responded to questions from the Board.

Landfill

Kevin Grant, Environmental Management Director, presented a PowerPoint titled "Landfill Update Cabarrus/ Region". Topics included:

- Cabarrus County C&D Landfill Phase 5 Expansion
- CMS Landfill Update
- Cabarrus County C&D Landfill Fee Increase Proposal

A discussion ensued. During discussion, Mr. Grant responded to questions from the Board.

Discussion

Kelly Sifford, Interim County Manager, reviewed and provided clarification in connection with transitioning to Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) to include maintaining two plans with a pharmacy carve-out.

Rosh Khatri, Budget Director, reviewed the projected savings associated with switching insurance providers.

Ms. Sifford also reviewed closing the gap options presented earlier to ascertain guidance on continuing preparation of the FY2027 budget.

A brief discussion followed.

Closed Session

None.

Adjourn

A consensus was reached to adjourn at 6:38 p.m.


Ariadne Olvera, Clerk to the Board

