

APPROVED 5/4/21

**MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
April 19, 2021
8:30 a.m.**

The Orange County Board of Commissioners met for a virtual breakfast meeting with the Orange County Legislative Delegation on Monday, April 19, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Renee Price, Vice Chair Jamezetta Bedford, and Commissioners Amy Fowler (arrived at 8:57 a.m.) Sally Greene, Jean Hamilton, and Earl McKee

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Mark Dorosin

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 8:37 a.m.)

Chair Price called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Due to current public health concerns, the Board of Commissioners is conducting a Virtual Legislative Breakfast on April 19, 2021 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).

Chair Price said Commissioner Dorosin would be absent from the meeting, and Commissioner Fowler had a schedule conflict and would be in and out of the meeting.

A roll call of the County Commissioners was taken; all members were present, except Commissioners Dorosin and Fowler.

Commissioners introduced themselves during roll call and welcomed the Representatives.

Chair Price invited the Representatives to introduce themselves.

Representative Insko introduced herself as the Representative of House District 56, which covers mostly Chapel Hill and Carrboro in Orange County. She said she used to be a Commissioner, and is familiar with how the Board of County Commissioners works. She said she is on the Health Committee, Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee, Environment, Elections Law, and a couple of other smaller committees that are not meeting. She said she is concentrating on filing bills that will tell voters that Democrats are serious about taking back the majority, the bills that would be passed, and how the State would be different if Democrats were running it.

Representative Meyer introduced himself, and said he represents areas in Orange County that are mostly outside of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, as well as Caswell County. He shared a personal story, saying he recently lamented how little fun there has been in the

legislature this year, and his mother told him he should run for County Commissioner as maybe he could get more done. He said they would all see as they went through the agenda what the Commissioners have the power to do and what the State Legislature has the power to do. He said he wished the latter made it easier for the Commissioners to get things done.

Chair Price invited staff to introduce themselves.

Senator Foushee arrived at 8:37 a.m.

Bonnie Hammersley welcomed the Representatives and Senator, and extended thanks for being present today and their service to Orange County.

Travis Myren introduced himself, and thanked the Representatives and Senator for their participation in the Broadband Task Force meeting last week.

John Roberts introduced himself and welcomed the Representatives and Senator.

Laura Jensen introduced herself and welcomed the Representatives and Senator.

Tara May, Deputy Clerk to the Board introduced herself.

Greg Wilder introduced himself and thanked the Representatives and Senator for their service to Orange County.

Senator Valerie Foushee introduced herself, and said she served as a County Commissioner for two terms. She said she serves as the Chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus, and in that role is trying to ensure bills are passed that benefit not only North Carolinians in general, but Orange County residents, in particular. She said she has been assigned to the Education Committee and the Commerce and Insurance Committee, and is part of nine committees. She said she is trying to be a voice for Orange County residents and while it is difficult, she continues to push forward the values and ideals the people want and in many cases need.

Jim Northrup, Chief Information Officer, provided contact information in case those on the call have any technical issues.

Chair Price said everyone should have received a packet with two lists: one is the list of priorities, and the other is a list of interests the Commissioners have accumulated over the past several years. She said many of the concerns are the same, have updates, or are new issues that have emerged with time. She said there would probably only be enough time this morning to discuss the priorities, and a couple of other discussion topics if the Commissioners chose. She said she will ask each Commissioner to introduce a priority issue and the group can discuss as they go.

Commissioner Bedford introduced and read the priority on Mental Health:

“Seek legislation to develop and fund a plan to reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county jails as well as ensure that adequate State-funded mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services and facilities are available at the local level, accessible and affordable to all residents and that sufficient state resources fund service provision costs inclusive of sufficient crisis intervention and treatment, and to structure appropriate county participation in governance.”

She said this includes everything from Medicaid expansion, Medicaid transformation, MCOs, diversion facilities, the Governor’s task force with the Criminal Justice System, schools. She said the pandemic has revealed more need, and said if there is something pending in the legislature the Commissioners would like to know the status.

Representative Insko said this is a huge issue. She said the Legislature’s biggest problem is that so much money has been cut out of the budget, and there are not many options for money to come in. She said President Biden’s plan will send some money that may be able to be used for this. She said mental health is gaining more interest on both sides of the aisle,

and knows some Republicans that are looking more closely at mental health issues. She said she has been working closely with some Republicans.

Representative Meyer said there has been a good group of advocates working on involuntary commitments, and also the broader intersection of mental health and policing. He said he was been trying to work with them. He said Representative John Autry has drafted four bills at the request of the advocates, and he is shopping those bills to some of the Republican leaders in the House, but as of now there are no Republican co-sponsors on the bills. He said they will be filed this week, and does think it is possible that at least one of them will be a bipartisan bill.

Senator Foushee said there is not much to report on the Senate side. She said the Senate's main focus over the last several years has been Medicaid transformation. She said there is not much happening besides what the Representatives shared. She said there may be some intersection between what is done for school children, as it relates to mental health, but she cannot see anything that expands beyond providing the services that are more needed because of the pandemic. She said there has to be some rectifying and ensuring the services needed at that level are appropriated. She reiterated that anything beyond rolling Medicaid transformation has not come up in the Senate.

Representative Insko said she believed there would be a bill to increase Innovation Waiver slots. She said she and Representative Hawkins filed a bill to increase it by 1,000 beds. She said a Republican in the House filed a similar bill. She said there is interest on both sides of the aisle.

Commissioner Bedford said within the County there is a Behavioral Health Taskforce looking at the specific issue of a crisis diversion facility, as part of needs that were exposed through Criminal Justice Resource Department. She said this group's work is trying to keep people out of jail and out of the criminal justice system. She said other counties have been able to [cut out due to technical issue].

Chair Price said several years ago, the National Association of Counties (NACO) was looking into keeping mental health out of jails and prisons. She said several of the Commissioners have been on tours in the State and across the country to facilities where people never see handcuffs or bars and there is a warm hand off to mental health. She said she visited a facility like that in Wake County.

Commissioner Hamilton read the priority on 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.”

She said based on her experience serving three terms on the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School (CHCCS) Board of Education, the state has not been keeping up with funding needs for public education, especially in the low wealth and minority communities. She said teachers need to be paid more, especially with the stresses of teaching online, but even before that there was insufficient funding for teachers, students, and facilities.

Representative Insko said every time this issue goes to court it wins, but nothing happens. She said the last ruling was that the state needed to put in \$8 billion a year for eight years. She asked and Commissioners with a law background to share what else they thought could be done. She said Democrats taking the majority would help, but besides that was unsure.

Commissioner Greene said this presents a question of separation of powers, and if the legislature or the courts have authority over the other. She said ultimately they need to change the composition of the legislature as Representative Insko said.

Representative Meyer said Commissioner Dorosin is one of the litigants in the current case, and he has been coordinating with him on legislation strategy and litigation strategy. He said there was a debate in the House last week on the expansion of school vouchers, and it was used as a strategy to get Republicans on the record mischaracterizing the Constitutional obligation to support sound basic education for every child as it refers to funding private schools, and made the argument that they are trying to achieve the obligation through school vouchers. He said this is all part of a long term strategy of what Commissioner Greene said to show the Legislature is not meeting its obligation, and the Courts should take additional action if and when the legislature does not fully fund it. He said there is a full funding bill being filed and the Governor's budget has been filed and is aggressive on school funding, but it is going to be about what is in the budget negotiations this year, and if the amount recommended meets the court's expectations. He said if it does not, that is why he and other Representatives are trying to work with the litigators to ensure the groundwork is there for them to continue to press the court for action.

Senator Foushee said the Senate has been introducing a number of bills that get at funding, and specific aspects of the decision, but getting the bills heard will be no small feat. She said the other thing that hurt was the judge said the court did not mandate what the funding should be because the court cannot do that, but he hoped the legislature would do the right thing and act with a sense of urgency. She said short of changing the leadership by changing the results of the elections, Democrats would not be successful in these efforts.

Representative Insko said she believes the Republicans' goal is to transfer public schools to the private sector. She said the per pupil allocation in public schools is \$9,000 and \$8,000 are being put into the vouchers, which is \$1,000 less than what is being spent in public schools. She said there was a lot of talk on the needs of students, not the need of public education. She said the argument is the needs are filled through the private school system rather than the public school system.

Commissioner Fowler arrived at 8:57 a.m.

Commissioner McKee read the priority on 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."

He said the lack of infrastructure and connectivity has become a critical issue and a social justice issue. He said he, and many others, fear that over last year we have reached a crossroads where access to broadband is a requirement. He said he is aware there is some funding that is going to be available to the County. He said Orange County has committed to doing this by forming a Broadband Taskforce. He said more needs to be done than just increasing; it needs to be built out.

Representative Meyer said he had a great meeting with the Broadband Taskforce recently and the biggest thing the Commissioners should know is there will be a major announcement from Governor Cooper on this this week or next week.

Commissioner Greene thanked Representative Meyer for bringing in his Republican colleague from Union County to the Broadband Taskforce meeting.

Senator Foushee said there are bills that were promoted by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC). She said she will push forward Senate Bill 689, which will expand County Broadband authority so they can use vertical assets, make grants to providers that are willing to provide service in underserved areas. She said Senate Bill 582 provides funding for homes to access Broadband when it is available. She said both of those bills are bipartisan bills and hopefully there will be some movement in conjunction with what the Governor is announcing.

Commissioner McKee said he is pleased to hear that there is some movement on the previous restrictions that prevented counties' ability to move forward. He said he does not think all restrictions will be lifted, but some adjustments are critical to make it work.

Senator Foushee said the one drawback on Senate Bill 689 is the language needs to be changed such that co-ops are held harmless. She said the way the bill is written now, they would lose in terms of having to replace vertical assets as necessary.

Chair Price said this has been the number one priority for past several years for the State and National Associations of Counties, particularly in rural areas.

Commissioner Fowler left the meeting at 9:03 a.m.

Commissioner Greene read the priority on 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.”

Representative Insko said there are many bills being filed to address this. She said she is interested in getting some information on the change in the low-income group in poverty, and showing that this group is increasing, and the money is continuing to go to the top, and what it is doing to society.

Commissioner McKee said he considers this more critical than he did in the past. He said during his 50 years of working life, he never had a job where he received an actual regular paycheck, until three years ago. He said he was shocked to realize it would have been hard to live a normal lifestyle on the paycheck he received, and it was not a minimum wage paycheck. He said it was shocking to see how the majority of other people live. He said he had income, but did not receive it every week, or every other week, or every month. He said it brought home to him the reality of the majority of the people in the County, State, and Country who are living paycheck to paycheck.

Commissioner Greene read the priority on Protection of Civil Rights for Transgender Persons:

“Oppose any legislation that limits equal rights for transgender persons or otherwise discriminates against them, including in the areas of healthcare and sports.”

Senator Foushee said she would oppose Bills 358, 514, 515.

Representative Insko said she was appalled, and said the Republican Party was supposed to be the party of individual liberties.

Commissioner Fowler arrived at 9:08 a.m.

Chair Price read the priority on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice:

“Support the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), and specifically legislation to legalize the possession and use of marijuana and permit licensed businesses to engage in retail sales to adults, and 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.”

She said the numbers of people who are incarcerated because of possession of marijuana are overwhelmingly Black, Indigenous, and people of color. She said it goes back to 100 years ago when marijuana was decided to be an illegal substance because too many Black and white people were coming together to smoke. She said it is a very unjust system, so Commissioners are putting this forward. She also said there are some farmers that would like to be able to make some money from the crop.

Senator Foushee said Senate Bill 646 does all of those things.

Representative Meyer said there was a House companion to that bill. He said Chair Price was right about farmers, and he hears more about this in Caswell County than Orange County.

Representative Insko said she agrees, and would like to see something like the ABC system for marijuana. She said North Carolina has one of the lowest teen alcoholism rates in the nation and gives credit to ABC system for that, and she wants to be careful about teens and marijuana. She said the State needs the tax money, and she would like to see that money come in.

Commissioner Fowler said as a pediatrician she does not support marijuana use, but supports the bill of decriminalizing and legalizing it because of the reasons stated. She said regulation is important because the way some people use marijuana through vaping is incredibly dangerous.

Commissioner Fowler read the priority on Flexible Billing for Water and Sewer:

“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.”

She said this issue has become really important with the pandemic.

Chair Price said Representative Insko has been working on this issue.

Representative Insko said the bill has been filed, and was so popular that everyone wants to be part of it. She said the new bill extends it to all public water agencies, so cities and counties would also have the authority to do this. She said it is a good idea to get grants, but the more popular it gets, the more competition there will be in getting those grants. She said she thinks the bill will pass, and it is ready to be heard in Committee now.

Commissioner Fowler left the meeting at 9:13 a.m.

Chair Price indicated the Board was done presenting its priorities, and asked if there were any questions on other issues listed.

Representative Insko said abolishing the State death penalty was important, and asked Representative Meyer if a bill had been introduced in the House this year.

Representative Meyer said he was the sponsor of that bill in the House in previous years but passed it along to Representative Vernetta Alston from Durham because she has been a death penalty litigator. He said he is not sure if she introduced the bill yet or not.

Senator Foushee said she liked the issue of legislative leadership term limits. She asked if a Commissioner would like to talk about it.

Chair Price said she did not vote for it so someone else would have to speak on it. Commissioner McKee said he does not think it is a bad idea, but the question would be how many terms.

Senator Foushee said she is not opposed to it, just thought it was interesting.

Chair Price said she knows in other states there are term limits, but she did not want to let the Representatives from Orange County go.

Representative Insko clarified that the issue mentioned leadership positions, which would apply to Representative Moore.

Commissioner Greene said she wanted to mention an issue that came up at the Transit Policy Advisory Committee last week. She said the state maintenance assistance program and rural operating program money has been eliminated. She said the impact of that in the current year was \$6 million to Chapel Hill and Durham. She said the money is vital and ends up having to be replaced through limited capital budgets. She said she has a statement calling for the General Assembly to fully restore the public transportation budget in those two funds. She said she would appreciate any comments.

Representative Meyer said the transit folks have been in touch since it happened. He said this will be revisited during this year's budget discussion. He said he is unsure if the Governor's budget team is proposing to address this through ARP funds or state funds. He said it would be better for it to be funded with state funds because it can go back to recurring funding.

Senator Foushee said Senator Murdock is working on this on the Senate side.

Commissioner Bedford asked if there would be any work across the aisle in developing the budget, or if Democrats would be shut out after Governor proposes the budget and the school increases.

Senator Foushee said there is already some change, but she is not sure how effective it is going to be. She said she represents the Senate Democratic Caucus in the budget discussions, and Representative Adcock was also part of initial discussions. She said she has been invited to several of those meetings. She said even though there is a Representative and herself in those discussions, she thinks the way Senator Berger is framing how the process moves forward, particularly with a cap on what the spend number will be, what will be considered for recurring or one time funding through ARP allocations, there is going to be a trick some way where the discussions will only go so far. She said she hates to be pessimistic, but is leery about what influence Democrats will have, and the process being any different than it has been before.

Representative Insko said the Democrats are getting public overtures, but in private will have no impact on the budget. She said there does seem to be an interest in a public collaboration, but it will be a miss when it comes to the money.

Representative Meyer said in the end it will be Senator Berger and Governor Cooper.

Senator Foushee said Speaker Moore and Senator Berger want a budget that the Governor will sign.

Representative Insko said she thinks they want a budget they can run on in 2022.

Senator Foushee said the Governor not signing the budget would mean the legislature has failed to do its duty. She said she believes the Senate Democrats will sustain a veto if they believe it is in the best interest of the state, and Senator Berger knows that. She said she believes they want a budget that the Governor will sign and believes the Senate will work towards that effort.

Chair Price brought attention to issue #52 on evictions, which came from the Department of Human Rights and Relations. She said this asks the Representatives and Senator to support legislation that would remove an eviction from a tenant's credit record because it tends to follow them. She said even during the pandemic, when a lot of work has

been done to avoid evictions with the Eviction Diversion Program, it is something that has been a problem and it has gotten worse and can go from bad to worse when the moratoria is ended. She having this on a credit report really hurts families and communities.

Representative Insko said she would pass this around to people who are working on criminal law, to see if it could be amended to a bill, because the filing period has passed. She said she would do that.

Chair Price asked if the timing for this meeting should change in the future, because as Representative Insko said, the filing period is over. She said the Board has talked about starting its process earlier. She asked if there is a better time to meet with the Representatives and Senator next year.

Representative Insko said the primary will most likely not be until May next year because of the Census. She said the sooner, the better, especially in a long session.

Chair Price asked if January would be good.

Representative Insko said she the legislature will not be in session in January next year, and believes they will not be back in session until after primary in May, but noted this is her assumption.

Representative Meyer said in a long session year like this year, it would be better to have this meeting earlier in the year. He said in a short session year, this time is probably fine, somewhere around mid-April. He said next year is a short session year.

Senator Foushee said February in long session year, and April is fine for a short session year. She said the Senate's bill filing deadline is two weeks earlier than the House.

Commissioner Bedford asked if the Senate was going to crush the school calendar changes.

Senator Foushee said she does not see the Senate making any headway, but she files the bills every year.

Commissioner Bedford asked as things are happening on short timelines with amendments to bills, what is the best way for Commissioners to effectively communicate with Representatives and Senator and what to tell residents of Orange County.

All members of the Legislature said email is preferred because it is a written record.

A motion was made by Commissioner McKee, seconded by Commissioner Greene, to adjourn the meeting at 9:29 a.m.

Roll call ensued.

VOTE: UNANMIOUS

2021 Orange County Priority Legislative Issues

Mental Health – Seek legislation to develop and fund a plan to reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county jails as well as ensure that adequate State-funded mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services and facilities are available at the local level, accessible and affordable to all residents and that sufficient state resources fund service provision costs inclusive of sufficient crisis intervention and treatment, and to structure appropriate county participation in governance.

Racial Equity in Criminal Justice – Support the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), and specifically legislation to legalize the possession and use of marijuana and permit licensed businesses to engage in retail sales to

adults, and 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.

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.

Protection of Civil Rights for Transgender Persons – Oppose any legislation that limits equal rights for transgender persons or otherwise discriminates against them, including in the areas of healthcare and sports.

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.

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.

Other 2021 Orange County Legislative Interests (*italics denote priority issues*)

Health and Human Services

- 1) *Mental Health* – *Seek legislation to develop and fund a plan to reduce the number of people with mental health issues in county jails as well as ensure that adequate State-funded mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services and facilities are available at the local level, accessible and affordable to all residents and that sufficient state resources fund service provision costs inclusive of sufficient crisis intervention and treatment, and to 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 paramedicine projects. 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, to help many working parents who are trying to become more financial self-sufficient, and to prorate fees for children attending based on the hours attended;
- 4) Opioid Epidemic Efforts – Support adequate 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, as well as increased funding to collect data regarding opioid overdoses and to provide for additional law enforcement to investigate and enforce drug laws;
- 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 abuse, gang involvement and domestic violence;
- 6) Adult Protective Services – Support increased funding and legislation to strengthen adult protective services;
- 7) Increase Access to Medicaid – Support legislation to increase access to the Medicaid program to make health insurance available to North Carolina residents at 138% of the poverty level and as additional support for rural hospitals;

Justice & Law Enforcement

- 8) Racial Equity in Criminal Justice – *Support the recommendations of the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), and specifically legislation to legalize the possession and use of marijuana and permit licensed businesses to engage in retail sales to adults, and 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;*
- 9) Abolish State Death Penalty – Support legislation to abolish the State of North Carolina's death penalty;
- 10) Bail Reform – Support legislation to develop and fund a plan to help reduce unnecessary arrests by expanding the use of citations or summons, replace money bail with non-financial, least restrictive conditions, restrict detention to the small number of people for whom no condition or combination of conditions can reasonably assure appearance in court and public safety, and reduce disparity within the pretrial justice system. Currently, indigent or poor people charged with crimes are often unable to get out of jail prior to trial because of their inability to pay;
- 11) Legislative Study on Educational Requirements for Law Enforcement Officers – Support legislation to establish 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. Potential topics for consideration include sociology, American history and literature, psychology, philosophy, and conflict resolution. In addition to members of the Senate and House, members should include a diverse array of experts in law enforcement and criminal justice education; also in higher education, specialists in the humanities/social science subject matter listed above;

- 12) 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;
- 13) 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;
- 14) Court Funding – Support increased state funding for NC courts, including reinstating funding for drug treatment court;
- 15) Local Government Funding for Law Enforcement – Oppose Senate Bill 100 and any other similar 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;
- 16) Red Flag Law – Support legislation allowing courts to prevent individuals who show signs of being a danger to themselves or to others from having access to firearms. 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

- 17) *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;
- 18) 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;
- 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) School Impact Fee Authority – Support legislation authorizing all North Carolina local government jurisdictions providing funding for public education to levy impact fees on new residential development to help pay for school construction. The North Carolina General Assembly approved legislation in the 1980's for some jurisdictions to levy these impact fees to support public school infrastructure. The authority to levy the fee to support school facility needs should be available to all local government jurisdictions providing funding for public education;
 - 21) Smart Start and NC Pre-K – Support legislation to increase and ensure secure and stable funding, enhanced quality early care and education, and family access and benefits in settings public and private;
 - 22) State/County Partnership for Education – Seek legislation to establish a new state-county partnership to address statewide public school capital challenges—including but not limited to maintenance, renovation, construction and debt—through a dedicated, stable funding stream that is consistent from county to county and sufficient to meet the school facility needs of all 100 counties;
 - 23) 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;
 - 24) 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

- 25) 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;

- 26) 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 in the wake of the murders of nine African Americans in South Carolina in 2015, and that restores the regulation of monuments or symbols on public property to local governments;
- 27) Legislative Leadership Term Limit – Support legislation that limits the length of time a North Carolina General Assembly member can serve in the same leadership position to eight consecutive years;
- 28) 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;
- 29) Voter Registration and Voting – Support legislation to expand access to and participation in voting, including early voting, Saturday voting, automatic voter registration, pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds, mail-in voting, and by making Election Day a State holiday;
- 30) 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;
- 31) Protection of Civil Rights for Transgender Persons – *Oppose any legislation that limits equal rights for transgender persons or otherwise discriminates against them, including in the areas of healthcare and sports;*

Economic Development

- 32) 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;*
- 33) 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;

- 34) 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

- 35) 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;
- 36) 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;
- 37) 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;
- 38) 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";
- 39) 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;
- 40) 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

- 41) 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;
- 42) 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;
- 43) 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;
- 44) Fees-In-Lieu – NCDOT as Additional Recipient – Support legislation amending North Carolina General Statute 153A-331 to add a provision allowing counties to transfer fees collected as part of subdivision development, and in lieu of required street construction, to be transferred to and held by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for the future construction of roads intended to be added to the State Maintained system. Presently there is no mechanism where a county can collect fees in lieu of transportation improvement construction based on conditions agreed to by both parties during a conditional zoning process. These fees may be for a developer fair share of a future comprehensive intersection improvement but would not be built by NCDOT until other funding could be assigned to do a complete improvement;
- 45) Land, Water and Agricultural Preservation Funding – Support Park, Agricultural Preservation, Clean Water Management 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;
- 46) 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;
- 47) 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;
- 48) 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

- 49) Maintain Local Government Authority over Solid Waste Management – Oppose any shift of solid waste management and recycling services away from local governments;
- 50) 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

- 51) 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;
- 52) 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 their credit report for three years;
- 53) 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;
- 54) E-911 Funds – Support protection and broader applications of the NC 9-1-1 Fund to be used primarily for assuring that 9-1-1 systems are able to upgrade existing performance levels in order to pay for 9-1-1 operations or 9-1-1 related upgrades such as the infrastructure needed to migrate to next-generation (NG911) technology. Orange County has appreciated past efforts and supports future initiatives to assure our residents are provided continued access to emergency services from all sources; and
- 55) 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 Tara May, Deputy Clerk to the Board

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