



JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

**Hosted by Durham County Government
Commissioners Chambers
200 E. Main Street
Durham, NC 27701**

9:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Present: Board of County Commissioners – Chair Dr. Mike Lee, Vice Chair Nida Allam, Commissioners Michelle Burton and Wendy Jacobs

Board of Education Members – Chair Bettina Umstead, Vice Chair Millicent Rogers, Board Members Natalie Beyer, Jessica Carda-Auten, Emily Chavez, Joy Harrel Goff, and Wendell Tabb

Other: County – Claudia Hager (County Manager), Larissa Williamson (County Attorney), Maurice Jones (Deputy County Manager), Dwane Brinson (Assistant County Manager), Deborah Craig-Ray (Chief Communication Officer), Monica Wallace (Clerk to the Board), Keith Lane (Budget Director), David Ades (Assistant Budget Director), Keyar Doyle (Tax Administrator)

DPS – Dr. Anthony Lewis (Superintendent), Jeremy Teetor (Chief Financial Officer), Dr. Deborah Pitman (Assistant Superintendent), Nicole Smith (Board Executive Assistant), Sheena Cooper (Sr. Executive Director of Public Affairs)

Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Dr. Lee welcomed everyone and called the May 12, 2026, meeting to order.

Agenda Review

The agenda was presented for review. No corrections were made.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes – March 10, 2026

The Board reviewed the March 10, 2026, minutes. Chair Dr. Lee asked if there were any corrections noted prior to the approval. Hearing none, a motion was entertained.

Commissioner Jacobs moved, seconded by Vice Chair Allam to approve the March 10, 2026, meeting minutes.

The motion carried unanimously.

Durham Pre-K Discussion

Dr. Linda Chappel, Early Years, Sr. Vice President for Triangle Area Child Care Resource and Referral Services opened the discussion with a presentation titled “*Program Update for the Durham County Board of Commission and the DPS Board of Education*” which highlighted the following: What is Durham PreK, Durham Community Goal, Instructional Impact, Durham PreK (DPK) Budget, DPK Growth, Applications, 2025-2026 Enrollment by Site Type, 2025-2026 Enrollment by Seat Type, Review of Placement Priority, Expanding Access and SY24-25 Family Survey Results.

Dr. Deborah Pitman, Assistant Superintendent, Specialized Services and Karen Thompson, Director of Early Education shared a presentation titled “*Update on PreK*” which highlighted the following: PreK Classroom Totals, Total PreK Enrollment, PreK Classroom Overview, Outreach – About the Whitted School, Cross-Collaboration Enrollment, Marketing & Outreach, Community Outreach, Marketing Efforts and Moving Forward.

Commissioner Burton expressed her excitement about the Whitted School and hoped that we would continue to spread the word about PreK. She asked if transportation was provided or was it a requirement of the parents – also regarding convenience, was the PreK site closest to where they lived. Dr. Chapel responded that transportation was limited and has been a challenge for Durham PreK. Ms. Thompson stated parents were responsible for providing transportation to their PreK site; adding they look at the closest PreK location (if available) to place the children.

Board Member Carda-Auten was thrilled to hear about the work on expansion of access to Durham PreK. She noted the barriers around wrap-around-care for schools that ended at 2:15pm and how it was a challenge to get kids from school. Board Member Carda-Auten also mentioned that many families needed to develop a plan of care and with the notification of acceptance going out after July, it limits them with planning for help. Dr. Chappel responded that each location was different and shared the placement process. She also added Durham PreK was looking into ways to minimize waiting and placing kids earlier.

Board Member Chavez shared how the investments manifest from an economic and academic perspective. She inquired about the lower enrollment numbers at Whitted since the removal of wrap-care. Ms. Thompson responded prior to COVID Whitted was at capacity; however, after COVID, there was a decline in enrollment. She added there was a time when wrap-care was not available, but they are now opening availability again. Board Member Chavez asked about the limitations of seats for DPS – noting it was hard to find that information online. Ms. Thompson stated there were limited three-year-old seats. Board Member Chavez requested a DPS specific report on outcomes and metrics. Vice Chair Allam shared that the enrollment in Durham County was doubled in comparison to the State.

Commissioner Jacobs appreciated the collaboration. She asked what were some ways to form a working group related to the barriers and related to the data on the rate kids were learning when attending PreK. Dr. Chappel responded that Durham PreK have collaborative partners that work to connect families as well as leverage resources. Regarding barriers, groups meet regularly as no problem was solved by one person.

Board Member Beyer thanked Dr. Chapell, Dr. Pittman and Ms. Thompson for their leadership. She asked them to collaborate with faith groups and pediatricians to help spread the word. Board Member Beyer added GoDurham Connect could possibly assist with transportation and she asked for more demographic data on Latinx and immigrant families to ensure they were being reached as well.

Board Chair Umstead stated regarding DPS, was there a way to track student data. Superintendent Dr. Lewis stated yes that data was tracked; adding an assessment could be done on those that do not attend a Durham PreK site to show families the benefits of enrollment.

Chair Dr. Lee inquired about who was being served in Montessori, asking were we serving those who do not need PreK or those in proximity to the school. He mentioned that he would prefer to see the numbers of those who could not afford to attend. Dr. Pittman discussed the need for expansion; explaining by expanding magnet school options there was a neighborhood assignment which was to help promote access in the community and school district.

Hearing no additional questions, Chair Dr. Lee thanked Dr. Chappel, Dr. Pittman and Ms. Thompson for their presentations.

Durham County Budget Update

Claudia Hager, County Manager, shared that the recommended budget was presented to the Board on May 11, 2026, and went into detail about the challenges the County was facing.

Keith Lane, County Budget Director shared a presentation titled “*FY 2026-27 Manager’s Recommended Budget*” which highlighted the following: FY 2026-27 Manager Priorities, FY 2026-27 Property Tax Natural Growth, FY 2026-27 Property Tax, Special Tax Districts, FY 2026-27 Sales Tax, FY 2026-27 Other Major Revenue Sources, FY 2026-27 Expenditure Summary, FY 2026-27 Budget Outlook, New Position Growth, Durham Public School (DPS) Funding, DPS Per-Pupil Funding, DPS Allocations Historical Trends, DPS CIP Funding, Durham Technical Community College, Durham PreK Support, Public Safety, Transportation, Human Services, Benefits Plan, Community Stewardship, FY 2026-27 Budget Timeline and Budget Document Online Locations.

Commissioner Burton questioned DPS historical trends, asking which years the County had a tax increase. Mr. Lane responded there was tax rate increase in seven of the last nine years.

Board Member Beyer thanked Manager Hager for sharing what the challenges were. She questioned the living wage and keeping DPS staff in line with City and County employees; also inquiring about whether both parties could convene staff on how to lean into the shared value of being out of reach regarding wages and benefits. Manager Hager stated discussions were held and it was determined that the County could not afford to raise taxes; however, inflation would need to be addressed in general. She added the County shifted funding to determine how we could cover cost, noting the goal was to ensure adjustments, but it was based on a realignment of existing

dollars. Manager Hager discussed strategies on vacancies and welcomed the chance to discuss the process and understand the challenges of state dollars.

Board Member Harrell Golf commended the work it took to simplify the information in ways to be understood. She discussed the sales tax cost and the increase in taxes. Mr. Lane shared how the County received tax dollars – noting that it was not generated from gas and food but from retail and entertainment. Keyar Doyle, County Tax Administrator, shared the challenges and explained the process of reappraisals. He added we have a healthy market; however, we were just seeing the most immediate impact after the reappraisals.

Commissioner Jacobs acknowledged the challenges and explained why the County expanded services. She agreed that we must put salaries first and asked what was being done to prioritize DPS salaries; adding it could not just be a request to the County to provide the solution.

Board Member Tabb stated it was important for the community to know how those things worked – taxes, etc. In terms of salaries, we need to find viable solutions.

Board Chair Umstead noted that people were paying more money in taxes; however, questioned where their money was going. She referenced the charter allocation slides and wanted the public to know that there was money being passed to charter schools. Board Chair Umstead shared that advocacy was important and the County could not sustain the growing needs of the schools.

DPS Final Budget Request

Superintendent Dr. Lewis introduced the item.

Jeremy Teeter, Chief Financial Officer shared a presentation titled “*Joint Meeting DPS Finance/Budget Update*” which highlighted the following: Articles regarding NC lawmakers deal on state budget, Compensation & Benefits, Summary of Continuation, Current Expense Expansion, Classified Pay, Transportation Safety Assistant Supplement - \$100 per month, Occupational & Physical Therapist Salary Scale Reclassifications, Charter Share Expansion, Capital Outlay, Capital Outlay Requests and Local Funding Trend/Request to County Manager.

Vice Chair Allam asked where was DPS able to find saving opportunities. Mr. Teeter shared that staff conducted a sweep during the spring to determine funds not used by various departments and if found, they were evaluated and used in other needed areas. He added they were looking at the \$0 based budget; noting for the year ahead they adjusted staffing and were looking at \$13 million in less staffing due to changes connected to enrollments. Mr. Teeter stated if they stick to the financial notions and redirect operational funding, they could accomplish things similar to the County. Vice Chair Allam inquired about the \$13 million mentioned. Mr. Teeter stated there was the capacity for approximately \$3-\$4 million of those funds to be redirected; however, the \$13 million was not in a bank easily accessible by DPS – it was reflected of what would not be received from the state in the upcoming year and what would be passed on to the Charter Schools. Vice Chair Allam asked if the \$3-\$4 million was included in the ask from the County. Mr. Teeter responded that the DPS dollars would be rerouted for other expansion items considered important to the district.

Commissioner Burton shared the effects of higher inflation and home cost – adding we must pivot and think differently on ways to get the funding to pay classified staff without a property tax increase. She also questioned the capital expenses. Mr. Teeter responded that DPS looked at all

capital outlay pieces beyond the bond dollars. He continued to say there were lottery dollars and repairing renovation dollars; adding the question was how to reconfigure those funds. Keith Lane, County Budget Director, shared background on the general bonds and their usage, stating the purpose was to spend those funds on items that would be used for 20+ years (buildings and long-term items).

Commissioner Jacobs asked what would the charter tax on the capital outlay look like. Mr. Teeter shared that if there were cuts, DPS would be able to fund it.

Board Vice Chair Rogers explained that DPS had no additional dollars. She asked how many positions and programs would need to be cut to cover the dollars mentioned in Mr. Teeters' earlier statement. Mr. Teeter responded it would be a substantial number of positions.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Discussion

Chair Dr. Lee and Board Chair Umstead stated they met and discussed the MOU. A copy was provided to everyone, and they were asked to review the information and provide feedback.

Adjournment

Having no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

Recorder

Monica Wallace, Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners

**Next Meeting Scheduled for August 11, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
Hosted by the Board of County Commissioners**