



JOINT CITY-COUNTY COMMITTEE MEETING DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

Hosted by the City of Durham - 9:30 a.m.

Agenda

Presiding – Mayor Pro Tempore Javiera Caballero

Present: Board of County Commissioners Committee Members –Chair Mike Lee, and Commissioners Michelle Burton, Wendy Jacobs, and Stephen J. Valentine

City Council Members: Mayor Pro Tempore Javiera Caballero and Council Member Carl Rist

Others – County: County Manager Claudia Hager; County Attorney Larissa Williamson, Assistant City Manager Dwane Brinson, Assistant City Manager Joanne Pierce, Deputy County Manager Maurice Jones, Tax Administrator Keyar Doyle, Durham County Budget Director Keith Lane, and Clerk to the Board Monica Wallace

Others – City: City Manager Bo Ferguson; City Attorney Kimberly Rehberg, Deputy City Manager Bertha Winbush, Deputy City Manager Keith Chadwell, Assistant City Manager Karmisha Wallace, Budget and Management Services Director Christina Riordan and Deputy City Clerk Paola Roland

Call to Order/Welcome

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance to the Tuesday, June 9, 2026, Joint City-County Meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

Chair Lee made the motion to approve the April 14, 2026 minutes, the motion was seconded by Vice Chair Allam. The motion passed unanimously.

Property Tax Appeals Process - Discussion

Council Member Rist introduced the item and stated that community members had raised questions regarding the property tax appeals process, particularly commercial property tax appeals and their impact on City and County revenues. He noted that the City experienced a decrease of approximately \$5.4 million in general fund property tax revenue from the January projection and approximately \$9.2 million across all funds. He raised questions regarding the City's role in the

process, the Board of Equalization and Review, the methodology used to determine property values, the timing of appeals, and whether the process remained fair when a large number of appeals were received late in the process.

Commissioner Jacobs provided additional context regarding the appeals process. She stated that while commercial appeals received significant attention, many residential appeals were also submitted late in the process. She noted that approximately 5,000 appeals were received in the final two weeks, including approximately 3,000 appeals in the final weekend, and that most late appeals were residential. She also noted that while appeals reduced the projected tax base by approximately \$3 billion, Durham County still experienced a significant overall increase in valuation.

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero stated that City Council understood that both commercial and residential property owners submitted appeals; however, the budgetary impact from commercial appeals was significant because of the value of those properties. She raised questions about whether the process contains structural inequities, including whether commercial property owners are more likely to have attorneys or professional representation. She also emphasized the need for earlier communication between County and City budget staff when appeal volume indicates that projected revenue may change materially.

County Manager Hager stated that the County's budget process requires ongoing coordination among the Tax Administrator, Budget Office, and County Manager's Office. She stated that the County originally projected valuation growth at approximately 74%, but after appeals the final number was closer to 68%. She said the reappraisal year was unusual because of the size of the valuation increase and number of appeals. She also stated that the County extended the appeal period to allow residents more time to appeal.

Tax Administrator Doyle stated that in a typical year, appeals are usually completed by January 5. He explained that reappraisal years are more complex and that, during this cycle, appeals were still being received while budget presentations were occurring. He stated that the office initially built projections around an estimated 7,500 appeals, but the actual number exceeded 10,000.

Commissioner Burton stated that the revaluation was unprecedented and reflected Durham's significant growth. She emphasized the importance of educating residents about the appeal process and noted that the State establishes many of the rules governing property tax administration.

Council Member Cook stated that the purpose of the discussion was not to suggest that staff had done a bad job, but to ask whether the process could be improved in the future. She raised concerns about proportionality, noting that commercial appeals represented a smaller share of total appeals but had a large impact on revenue. She stated that this impact can shift more of the burden to residential property owners and said City and County officials should examine whether future processes can better address fairness and equity.

Tax Administrator Doyle and Assistant County Manager Brinson provided additional explanation regarding appraisal methodology. They stated that the appropriate appraisal approach depends on property type and that income-producing commercial properties are commonly valued using the income approach. They explained that all three approaches to value: sales comparison, cost, and income may be considered, but the primary approach is selected based on best appraisal practices, available data, market conditions, and property characteristics.

Council Member Rist asked whether the three approaches could be averaged when values differ. Tax Administrator Doyle stated that the Board of Equalization and Review determines value based on evidence and appraisal standards and that local decisions must be well-supported because appeals can continue to the Property Tax Commission and North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that she was uncomfortable with comments that could be interpreted as politicizing the appeals process. She stated that County staff and the Board of Equalization and Review were following applicable laws, statutes, and processes. She emphasized that County staff worked hard during an unprecedented reappraisal and appeal cycle.

Budget Director Lane stated that the County Budget Office communicates with the City Budget Office when there are property tax changes. He stated that County staff were in regular communication with the Tax Administrator and City budget staff because property tax revenue represents a significant portion of both local governments' revenue.

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero stated that the City and County should evaluate how to tighten future processes, including communication between staff, resident engagement, and planning of the next revaluation. She requested that City and County staff work together and return to a future Joint City-County Committee meeting with recommendations related to revaluation preparation, resident communication, and opportunities to improve equity in the appeals process.

Affordable Housing, Homelessness Framework & Eviction Diversion – Discussion

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero introduced the item and stated that the City recently adopted the Homelessness Strategic Framework. She requested an update from the County regarding its timeline for formal adoption and implementation. She also discussed the need for City and County staff to better align homelessness, housing, rental assistance, and eviction diversion work.

County Manager Hager provided an overview of Durham County investments related to affordable housing, housing stability, homelessness response, and eviction diversion. She referenced the handout provided to the Committee and stated that the County planned to bring an item related to the Homelessness Strategic Framework to the Board of County Commissioners at an upcoming meeting.

Manager Hager stated that the County's FY2026-27 budget included \$500,000 to support the homelessness response, including the flexible housing fund and staffing needed for strategic implementation. She stated that the County would return to the Board in the fall to identify additional ways to support the initiative. She also discussed ongoing funding for Urban Ministries, a \$350,000 day shelter pilot, an \$18 million Capital Improvement Program placeholder for systemwide infrastructure needs, ARPA housing investments, and the Street Medicine Grant administered through Housing for New Hope and Central Pines Regional Council.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that homelessness and housing stability should be a standing item at Joint City-County Committee meetings. She discussed potential federal funding changes, the importance of coordinated communication between governments and the public, and the need to align City and County work in a way that supports federal HUD requirements. She also discussed the \$18 million capital placeholder for homelessness infrastructure and stated that intermediary housing and case management for individuals with mental health needs should be considered as part of that future investment.

Council Member Rist asked about rental assistance funding and how much of the Homelessness Strategic Framework could be implemented with currently available funding. He also asked how elected officials should think about annual funding needs moving forward.

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero discussed the importance of evaluating all City and County homelessness-related investments together, including programs serving people who are formerly incarcerated, residents facing housing instability, and individuals facing barriers to employment. She stated that both governments should consider how their investments are functioning together and how dollars can be used most effectively.

Manager Hager discussed County eviction diversion and rental assistance funding. She stated that prior to COVID, the County had approximately \$200,000 allocated for eviction diversion and rental assistance. She stated that last year approximately \$830,000 was budgeted, and that for the current year realignments brought the amount to approximately \$425,000. She noted that some state and federal funding sources may change and that the County would continue to aid to the extent resources allow.

Community Safety Director Ryan Smith stated that the original funding request for the Homelessness Strategic Framework included approximately \$4.55 million from the City, \$3.4 million from the County, and \$5 million from external partners. He stated that with the funding currently committed, the framework can move forward, but reduction targets will need to be adjusted from the original assumptions tied to a \$13 million first-year budget. He stated that staff would provide future updates to the Committee as funding levels and implementation progress become clearer.

Topics for Future Joint City-County and DPS Meetings – Discussion

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero opened the discussion regarding future agenda items for Joint City-County Committee and future Joint City-County-Durham Public Schools meetings.

Vice Chair Allam requested discussion of a City-County merger study process and related procedures.

Members discussed several potential future agenda items, including an on-demand transit pilot for Northeast Durham, an update on the Low-Income Homeowner Relief Program, youth activity coordination, youth jobs and recreation programming, school zone safety enforcement, a crossing guard pilot program, and opportunities for Durham Public Schools students to use City bus service.

Mayor Pro Tempore Caballero stated that updates regarding the Homelessness Strategic Framework and transit should be ongoing. She also suggested a future violence reduction update following the planned violence reduction summit and noted that the Low-Income Homeowner Relief Program should return in the fall.

Council Member Rist requested future discussion of economic development alignment between the City and County, including the City's developing economic development plan, County economic development work, and workforce development connections with Durham Technical Community College. He also requested a future discussion about parkland, open space, and public recreational space. Staff noted that the City and County are currently working together on a joint open space plan and that the item could be returned once that work is complete.

The following topics were noted:

- City-County merger study process and procedures, including possible departments or functions that could be reviewed
- On-demand transit pilot for Northeast Durham
- Update on the Low-Income Homeowner Relief Program
- Youth activity coordination, including jobs, recreation, and programming opportunities
- School zone safety enforcement and potential fines for speeding in school zones
- Crossing guard pilot program
- Transit opportunities for Durham Public Schools students, including City bus usage and outreach
- Ongoing updates regarding the Homelessness Strategic Framework
- Ongoing transit updates and transit funding opportunities
- Violence reduction update following the planned Violence Reduction Summit
- Economic development alignment between the City and County, including the City's economic development plan, County economic development work, workforce development, and Durham Technical Community College connections
- Parkland, open space, and public recreational space needs
- Future update on the joint City-County open space plan once staff complete additional work

Adjournment

Hearing no additional comments, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Next Meeting Date: August 11, 2026 – 9:30 am, Hosted by Durham Board of County Commissioners – Board of the Durham County Commissioners' Chamber, 200 East Main Street, Second Floor Durham