

## Commissioner Goals

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Beginning In 2017 and continuing in the coming fiscal year the Board of Commissioners adopted Plan Chatham goals and added three additional goals. The complete set of goals adopted are as follows:

### *Plan Chatham Goals:*

- Preserve the **rural character** and lifestyle of Chatham County
- Preserve, protect, and enable **agriculture and forestry**.
- Promote a **compact growth pattern** by developing in and near existing towns, communities and in designated, well-planned, walkable mixed-use centers.
- **Diversify the tax base** and generate more quality, in-county jobs to reduce dependence on residential property taxes, create economic opportunity and reduce out-commuting.
- Conserve **natural resources**
- Provide **recreational opportunities** and access to open space.
- Provide **infrastructure** to support desired development and support economic and environmental objectives
- Become more **resilient** by mitigating, responding and adapting to emerging threats.
- Provide **equitable access** to high-quality education, housing, and community options for all.
- Foster a **healthy community**.

### *Additional Commissioner Goals:*

- Demonstrate sound fiscal stewardship to ensure we can meet the important service needs of our residents.
- Provide **effective, efficient government** that is responsive to the different needs of residents and varying circumstances across the county.
  - Mitigate the impacts of poverty among individuals and households in the county through programs and services that promote stabilization and resiliency.
- **Ensure public safety** through adequate resources, plans, and partnerships to keep people and property safe.
- **Strengthen relationships** with other boards, municipalities, and regional entities to address common challenges and opportunities.

County departments with similar missions formed teams to provide better focus on achievement of these goals. To make the numerous goals, objectives, and strategies of Plan Chatham easier to track and address, high-level themes were identified and adopted by each team:

- Safe, Vibrant, Healthy Community
- Demand Driven Public Services
- Growth and Resource Management
- Organizational Excellence and Resiliency
- Data and Technology Gaps.

The pandemic and the cyber incident that incapacitated the county network presented county staff with unprecedented challenges. Staff rose to the occasion, and CITs accomplished much to be proud of. All departments within the CITs developed and implemented practices to

provide services at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic that safeguarded the health of applicants and employees while maintaining service levels.

## **Administration**

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The Administration team includes internal service departments that provide support functions for departments that deliver services. Departments on this team include the County Manager department, Elections, Facilities, Finance, Governing Board, and MIS.

**Themes:** The themes that guide the work of this team are:

- Demand Driven Public Services
- Organizational Excellence & Resiliency
- Data and Technology Gaps

### **FY 2020-2021 Accomplishments**

#### Manager's Office

- Began planning for Chatham 250 despite COVID challenges
- Coordinated meeting procedures for Boards and Committees during the pandemic that increased public participation
- Managed the distribution of COVID Relief Funds to towns and non-profits
- Siler School Square, the former Henry Siler School, was finished in October 2020 and is providing 44 units of affordable housing for low to moderate income households.
- Collaborated with the Health Alliance to create and coordinate the Chatham Resource Hub, a co-located effort to disperse free resources to community members during the pandemic.

#### Human Resources

- Managed implementation of FFCRA (Families First Coronavirus Relief Act)
- Graduated 18th class of Leadership Academy
- Received 12 Department of Labor safety awards – 8 gold, 4 silver
- Served as a hub to connect personnel to resources and needs during the pandemic

#### Governing Board

- Clerk and Deputy Clerk worked with a team of county staff to facilitate in-person and virtual hybrid Board of Commissioner meetings in response to the pandemic
- Clerk elected as Treasurer of both the NC Association of County Clerks and the Alumni Association of the Municipal and County Administration Course
- Clerk represented the Governing Board and Manager's Office on the Youth Advisory Council Task Force to develop the County's first Youth Council

#### MIS

- Facilitated a comprehensive response to system-wide cyber incident that stabilized and restored the county network. This response was done in collaboration with local & state agencies along with the NC Department of Emergency Management including the NC National Guard cyber response team.
- Procured CARES act funding for wireless internet upgrades at the Pittsboro Library & Chatham County Agricultural Conference Center
- Migrated to Office365 during the cyber incident

### Elections

- Coordinated a safe and secure election. There were no reported COVID clusters tied to any voting sites in Chatham County.
- Processed record number of absentee mail ballots with new tools provided by the State Board of Elections to assist voters, including the Online Request Portal and Ballot Trax.
- Leased additional office space and upgraded internet speed to enable live-streaming of absentee board meetings and serve as a secure drop off for return of absentee ballots.
- Recruited record number of Poll Workers through the Democracy Heroes campaign implemented by the State Board of Elections to ensure each voting site was adequately staffed.

## Development Services

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The Development Services team includes departments that either directly regulate and permit development or support that work. Departments on this team include Central Permitting and Inspections, Environmental Health, GIS, Planning, Register of Deeds, Tax, Water, and Watershed Protection.

**Themes:** The themes that guide the work of this team are:

- Safe, vibrant, healthy community
- Growth and resource management

### FY 2020-2021 Accomplishments

#### Central Permitting and Inspections

- Utilized software user group to make recommendations on new software, promote gains in work efficiency and perform a top to bottom review of workflow between and within departments.
- Implemented new software that spans every division in Central Permitting and Environmental Health, Watershed Protection and Planning. This implementation required months of pre-planning, and approval from multiple stakeholders including the Board of Commissioners.

#### Planning

- Transitioned to alternative customer service the same day the cyber incident occurred, including holding a previously scheduled remote Appearance Commission meeting the same night as the incident
- Began coordinating an on-going bi-monthly Planning Board subcommittee to evaluate the impacts of well use in residential subdivisions on agricultural operations. Staff hosts remote meetings, compiles research, and coordinates participation by multiple state and county resources.
- Re-issued the request for proposals for the Unified Development Ordinance

#### Tax

- The Tax Administrator received her Real Property Appraiser II certification through the NC Department of Revenue.
- Added the Papaya app on tax bills as a payment option for taxpayers, resulting in 75 payments totaling \$143,169 as of January 5, 2021
- Began offering online listing for personal and business personal property. Taxpayers can request extensions online.
- Previous bank building at 192 West St. was converted to serve as the tax and utility billing payment center
- Continued collection of tax payments during the cyber incident (both in person and online)

#### Water Department

- Completed Bennett Tank Altitude Valve upgrade
- Completed Risk and Resiliency Assessment
- Completed lagoon dredging

### Watershed Protection

- Partnered with TJCOG on a grant for the “Watershed Action Plan for the Dry Creek Watershed”
- Created and implemented a new permitting workflow for the EPA-mandated changes to the NCG01 Construction Stormwater Permit requirements for Local Erosion Control Programs. This effort guided applicants and the public through the changes and provided technical guidance and updates to the website. The Residential General Plan was created as an option for homebuilding projects that meet certain criteria to move more quickly through the new process.

## Economic and Workforce Development

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The Economic and Workforce Development team includes departments that are positioned to encourage business growth, ensure a trained workforce, and attract visitors to Chatham County. Departments include the Economic Development Corporation, Convention and Visitor Bureau, and Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center. Central Carolina Community College also participates on this team.

### Themes:

- The themes that guide the work of this team are:
- Safe, vibrant, healthy community
- Organizational Excellency & Resiliency

### FY 2020-2021 Accomplishments

#### EDC

- Appointed a new Executive Director
- Began planning for a new fundraising campaign

#### CVB

- Launched the statewide Count on Me NC initiative for Chatham County
- Participated in the Chatham Food Hub, a countywide initiative
- Secured grant funds for a redesign of the website
- Sent weekly tourism and hospitality e-news during the pandemic
- Implemented two new website pages; One kept visitors informed of COVID-related developments pertaining to operations, and another kept businesses informed of financial, marketing, and safety-related resources

#### CCA&CC

- Served as a distribution center for COVID related supplies
- Since events were not being held, staff assisted Emergency Operations and other departments that were short-staffed.
- Upgraded the audiovisual equipment to assist with virtual events
- Assisted the clerk to the Board of Commissioners to conduct safe and effective BOC meetings and virtual meetings.

## Human Services

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The Human Services team includes departments that provide services that enhance the health and welfare of county residents. Departments on the team include the Council on Aging, Department of Social Services, Public Health Department, Court Services, Library and Parks and Recreation. Chatham Transit Network, Chatham Trades, and Cardinal Innovations also participate on this team.

**Themes:** The themes that guide the work of this team are:

- Safe, vibrant, healthy community
- Demand Driven Public Services
- Growth and Resource Management
- Data and Technology Gaps

### FY 2020-2021 Accomplishments

#### Council on Aging

Given the serious adverse effect of social isolation owing to COVID-19, the Council worked to reach, engage, and comfort seniors sheltering in place through various means:

- Held weekly check-in calls
- Created a robust array of virtual and phone programming
- Awarded a BAND NC grant from the NCSU Institute for Emerging Issues to purchase computer tablets and subsidize Internet for at least 12 isolated, non-digital seniors
- Awarded a grant to purchase a year-long subscription to the Chatham News + Record for 218 seniors
- Planned and presented parking lot events at Chatham's two centers
- Conducted drive-way visits to seniors and family caregivers
- Organized a virtual Angel Tree event that helped over 90 seniors.
- Invited by the National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging to be one of three agencies across the country to present in a national webinar on "Addressing Nutrition and Social Connection Needs of Rural Older Adults during the COVID-19 Emergency."
- Served an additional 103 meals recipients
- From July 1 through December 31, served 20 total respite clients, with 19 able to keep their loved one in their home and out of long-term facility placement.
- Some frail seniors suspended their in-home aide personal care, fearing outside assistance. COA implemented a consumer-directed care arrangement with the Triangle J Council of Governments (Area Agency on Aging) to allow those seniors to receive needed care in a manner they determine safe.
- Selected by Meals on Wheels America and the Home Depot Foundation to receive an \$85,000 Helping Homebound Heroes Grant to assist older Veterans with home modification and repairs. Working with Rebuilding Together of the Triangle, and the Chatham Veteran's Service Office, 18 Veterans were assisted. Because of this success, the Council is receiving a second round of funding (\$100,000) to assist at least 18 more veterans.

#### Court Services

- In collaboration with DSS, submitted and was awarded a three-year grant for \$870,000 by The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to implement a Family Drug Treatment Court in Chatham County

## DSS

- Developed and implemented virtual trainings for safety, confidentiality, and civil rights
- In collaboration with the Health Department, Piedmont Health Services and Chatham Hospital, engaged in a multi-agency equity assessment to inform future work at DSS as part of the EMBRACE grant. This grant is aimed at improving disparities in birth outcomes.
- In collaboration with Court Services, submitted and was awarded) a three-year, \$870,000 grant to implement a Family Treatment Court for Chatham County scheduled to begin in March 2021
- Increased the number of children exiting foster care through adoption by 230% over the prior fiscal year

## Public Health

- Finalized and implemented the Environmental Health Strategic Plan with a focus on well water and improving residents' understanding of water quality and water treatment.
- Staff partnered with Cooperative Extension to provide the first virtual annual workshop for 40 homeowners of wells and septic systems
- Staff acted as liaisons with the Latinx community connecting the community to resources and information about COVID prevention and vaccination
- Staff led efforts with community partners and volunteers to vaccinate thousands of Chatham residents against COVID
- Staff hosted weekly/monthly meetings with long-term care facilities, childcares, food service facilities, non-public schools, and community stakeholders to discuss COVID prevention and vaccinations, and partnered in walk through visits of schools prior to opening to evaluate COVID prevention plan

## Parks and Recreation

- Partnered with the Health Alliance for the "Kids in Parks - TRACK Trail" project for Southwest Park
- Socially distant "Holiday in the Park" event was featured on the National Association of Counties (NACo) site
- Completed construction of a dog park at the park at Briar Chapel
- Completed addition of small parking lot at the park at Briar Chapel

## Library

- Planned and implemented new children's programming, including Digital Citizenship for Kids and Kids Club for Social Justice. The Digital Citizenship program introduced children in grades K-5 to different aspects of being online (Staying Balanced, Staying Private, Staying Kind, Staying Alert). The Club for Social Justice introduced social justice topics frequently in the news and encouraged brainstorming about how to make the world a better place.
- Staff continued to present live (virtual) youth programming including story time, teen time, and K-5 activities through various online programs
- Increased digital offerings to continue providing service during the pandemic, including e-books and additional digital/virtual programming



## Natural Resource & Agriculture

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The Natural Resources & Agriculture team includes departments that provide services that preserve, protect, and enable agriculture and forestry. Departments on the team include Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation and Environmental Quality.

**Themes:** The themes that guide the work of this team are:

- Safe, vibrant, healthy community
- Growth and Resource Management

### FY 2020-2021 Accomplishments

#### Cooperative Extension

- Hired Chatham County's first Extension Agent from NC A&T. The new Community Resource Development and 4-H Youth Development Agent is the first such Extension Agent position in the state.
- Partnered with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture (NCDCA) to host a contactless, socially distanced pesticide collection day at the Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center for Chatham and surrounding counties. Approximately 1,295 pounds of materials (from 204 containers) were collected and properly disposed of, continuing mission work to (1) educate citizens about pesticide stewardship, (2) protect human health and the environment by reducing the potential for spills, and (3) offer cost-free assistance with proper pesticide disposal for all North Carolinians.
- In partnership with North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Chatham County Center became a distribution point for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and educational materials to migrant farm workers in Chatham and surrounding counties.
- During this time of in-person programming restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the Chatham County Center pivoted to continue programming to the community through online classroom platforms. From youth-based programming such as the 4-H Mars Mondays four-part, after school series that engaged youth in STEM activities during our 4-H National Science Month Initiative to the 14-week, online Carolina Backyard Naturalist lecture series that garnered nearly 500 registrants from across North Carolina, Extension staff sought out opportunities to keep the public informed, engaged, and learning.
- With partners, including UNC Healthcare and Health Promotion Disease Prevention, coordinated installation of a food hub to support local restaurants as well as establish a distribution hub for food boxes from the local food pantry. Clients of Communities in Schools, Chatham Housing Initiatives, Salvation Army of Chatham County, the Department of Social Services, and the Health Department received the emergency food. Approximately 210 meals and farm boxes were provided to individuals and families during September and October 2020.

#### Environmental Quality

- A waste characterization study was completed in March. The results will be used to inform departmental policies and guide community education efforts.
- The electronics recycling program was expanded. Three collection centers (Bonlee, Cole Park, and Pittsboro) now accept electronics of any size and weight, reducing travel time to an accepting facility and with more convenient hours of operation than our main facility. Residents without a decal and small businesses can now bring electronics to the main facility for a charge of \$5 for each large item and no charge for small items.

- Construction and demolition debris (C&D) recycling was expanded to two centers- Martha's Chapel and Pittsboro. These centers were chosen for expansion due to previous waste characterization study results and their location. Four centers can now collect C&D separate from other solid waste. A portion of this C&D can be recycled and diverted from the landfill.
- Improvements were made at four collection centers to enhance the public experience, improve employee operating conditions, and extend the life of these centers. Improvements included addition of heavy-duty concrete pads, easy access ramps, and pavement repair.
- A greenhouse gas inventory was completed for Chatham County, both government operations and community wide. These results will be used to inform sustainability policy decisions and education efforts going forward and as a benchmark toward the County's goal of becoming carbon negative.

#### Soil & Water Conservation

- Soil & Water staff reached out to Chatham County Schools K-8, High School, and Charter Schools' science curriculum directors to promote and provide resources for our education programs.
- Assisted the Town of Siler City and the Piedmont Conservation Council with water quality projects and urban conservation grant implementation in the Loves Creek Watershed.
- Hosted a local partner workgroup (virtually) to ensure that agricultural stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input on Soil and Water Conservation District priorities.
- Staff completed the installation agricultural best management practices including an Irrigation Pond, Poultry Waste Dry Stack, Composter and Incinerator, High Tunnel, and Ag Road Repair through Agriculture Cost Share Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Accepted 31 State and Federal cost share and incentive program applications, which will be contracted and funded based on local priorities for natural resource conserving practices.
- Soil and Water District staff assisted the Agricultural Advisory Board with the Voluntary Agricultural District Program, enrolling 249 eligible parcels for 10,250 acres to date. Staff also assisted with Farmland Preservation Plan extension request.

## Public Safety

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The Public Safety team includes departments that respond to emergency situations, prevent crime and other public safety hazards, and generally protect the safety of county residents and property. Departments on the team include: Emergency Management, Emergency Communications, Fire Marshall, and Sheriff.

**Themes:** The themes that guide the work of this team are:

- Safe, vibrant, healthy community
- Demand-driven public services
- Organizational excellence and resiliency
- Data and technology gaps

### FY 2020-2021 Accomplishments

#### Emergency Management

- Participated in response to 3 missing person searches, recovery of 2 drowning victims, and 3 fuel and/or chemical spills, including a large aviation fuel spill that required closing US 64 for ten hours.
- Coordinated the response and recovery from the October 2020 cyber incident impacting the County. Engaged in the COVID19 Pandemic response every day since January 2020.
- Facilitated a local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) with 67 fully trained members and 320 individuals on a volunteer mailing list. Through the end of January 2021, 35 members have given 286 volunteer hours, including COVID19 vaccination sites, food distributions, and Emergency Management exercises
- Supported Board of Elections during Primary and General Elections, including early voting
- Completed update of Cape Fear Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

#### Emergency Communications

- Processed over 6,000 calls by pen and paper during the cyber incident
- Completed 2 of the new towers associated with the radio project

#### Fire Marshall

- Partnered with Orange County, Office of the State Fire Marshal, Safe Kids North Carolina and the UNC Trauma Center to develop a virtual fire prevention presentation for grades K-5. The presentation was delivered remotely to the 2 counties' students.

#### Sheriff

- Expanded victim services to meet the North Carolina Victim's Crime Rights Act.
- Received the Humane Law Enforcement Award in NC for 2020 for animal welfare investigations.
- Developed personal contacts by interacting with homebound and elderly and by assisting other agencies such as Council on Aging during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Developed our community outreach program with Special Olympics North Carolina by becoming the number one fundraiser for law enforcement agencies statewide.
- Doubled the number of youths served with our annual Shop-with-a-Sheriff event to assist children during the holidays.
- The detention center was one of two jails in North Carolina with no active COVID-19 cases in 2020.

## Looking Ahead

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In FY 2022, there are several common issues that the CITs will need to address to continue to achieve commissioner goals. The issues are not discrete but are interconnected and interdependent. The issues are as follows:

**Application Support and Infrastructure:** There is a growing need for improved vendor support, SQL expertise, and consistent staff training and education to ensure that software functionality is maximized. To address this issue new cloud-based Microsoft applications and new permitting software will be implemented. These will change many internal processes and improve effectiveness and collaboration. GIS support and solutions will be maximized to better serve the community. The county website will be redesigned. Sustainability initiatives will include a strategy for transitioning to electric vehicles and studying the feasibility of installing rooftop and ground-mounted solar panels on county property.

**Internal Process Management:** The issue of internal process management relates to three key areas; communication, process implementation and administration. In the face of increasing demand for service, teams will focus on the evaluation and coordination of processes. Some of the efforts that will address this issue include: Updating disaster recovery plans to incorporate all recently added security measures and consultant guidance; Restarting the development of a Unified Development Ordinance to implement the recommendations of Plan Chatham, and the establishment of off-site, immutable backups will be created to strengthen the resiliency of county data.

**Access to Technological Resources:** The pandemic emphasized the already urgent need for more widespread broadband service in Chatham County, and staff will continue to explore every possible opportunity to make this possible within the limitations imposed on counties by the legislature. In addition, internal core bandwidth will be upgraded to improve efficiency and effectiveness of county technology and departments will continue to offer online services that were created in response to the pandemic.

**Service Availability and Capacity:** Across CITs strategies are being developed to begin in-person services that will incorporate some of the changes caused by the pandemic. All CITs are facing challenges around recruitment and retention and in meeting the increased demand for service and responsiveness created by accelerating development. In addition, peripheral services needed by the Human Services CIT – particularly surrounding mental health - are often unavailable in Chatham. The Natural Resources and Agriculture CIT

**Equity:** All CITs noted that the most pressing equity issues include language and communication barriers and diverse representation on boards and committees. To address these issues the county will review and streamline language access support for all departments. The county will also conduct research to determine how other rural counties engage clients and residents on boards. DSS will serve as a pilot after the research is complete. In addition, CITs are working to understand what equity might mean for their specific services. To support this work, the county plans to become a core member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (G.A.R.E.). Core members demonstrate their commitment to racial equity by developing a Racial Equity Strategic Plan.