

Greenville County Council Retreat Summary Report



Introduction

The Greenville County Council met for two Council workshops on Thursday, February 5, 2026, and Friday, February 6, 2026, at Camp Spearhead in Greenville County. The purpose of the two workshops was to hold an open discussion about current and future issues facing the County. The retreat was attended by a total of eight County Council members, the County Administrators, and select staff. The Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) facilitated the workshops.

The workshops were designed to allow Council members to have an open discussion about the issues they saw as important to Greenville County's current and future activities. ACOG staff introduced each conversation topic, and Council members provided input on the issues and priorities they saw for the County. The main emphasis of the workshops was to facilitate an open discussion among Council members and to develop high-level goals and priorities for the County.

1. Governance, Roles & Procedures

Key Issues Raised

- Need to tell the County's story better; communicate accomplishments, projects, and outcomes in plain language; improve communication with the public.
- Clarify roles of Council, committees, staff, and Administrator; restate roles and responsibilities.
- Create a clear policy for appropriate communication with staff.
- Evaluate whether new communication policies would hinder needed discussions.
- Improve interaction norms between Council and Administrator (consistent with state law).
- Add committee reports to Council agendas; require regular updates.
- Improve the one-page staff report; ensure simple explanations of agenda items.
- Standardize board appointment processes, review committee appointment procedures.
- Establish annual evaluations for the three council-appointed staff (with criteria matrix, July reviews).
- Develop "Did You Know?" communication explaining county government structure.

What we heard / agreed

- Desire to clarify Council–Administrator–staff interaction norms (consistent with state law); define “appropriate” communication with staff.
- Restate committee roles; embed routine committee reporting in agendas.
- Standardize board/commission appointment procedures.
- Establish annual evaluations for the three Council-appointed staff: define a criteria matrix, add to Council rules, and conduct reviews in July. -appointed staff: define criteria matrix, add to Council rules, conduct reviews in July.
- Better structured communication between Council, staff, and the public.

Why it matters

Procedural clarity and consistent expectations improve decision quality and accountability across the organization.

2. Mission & Strategic Priorities (1–3 Year Outlook)

Attendees were provided with copies of Greenville County’s current mission and vision statements. A brief discussion was held regarding the evolution of the mission and vision statements over time. Council members agreed to discuss these at a separate meeting so that all Council members could attend and provide input.

Key Issues Raised

- Need to identify what is working and replicate successful approaches.
- Use staff and AI to summarize committee work and support better visibility across Council.
- Renew public engagement around growth management, infrastructure, affordability, and County goals.
- Reestablish communication between Council and constituents.
- Review and standardize public comment procedures (sign-ups, equal time, avoiding repetition) and align chair facilitation practices.
- Need a communications plan, staffing assessment, and possible expansion of the public information office.

What we heard / agreed

- Tell the County’s story better; communicate accomplishments, projects, and outcomes in plain language.

- Provide simple explanations for agenda items; rework the one-page staff report for clarity.
- Standardize committee updates and add committee reports to Council agendas; create “Did You Know?” pieces to explain County structure and roles.
- Review and standardize public comment procedures (sign-ups, equal time, avoiding repetition) and align chair facilitation practices.
- Assess Public Information Office capacity; consider staffing increases and a formal communications plan; explore AI to synthesize committee/department work.

Why it matters

Clear, consistent communication is a top crosscutting need for public trust and policy implementation.

3. Land Use, Housing & Growth Management

Key Issues Raised

- Housing affordability and the need to rethink the County’s approach.
- Property rights concerns; impact fees raising housing prices.
- Need to work with legislative delegation to reform impact fee laws.
- Address overconcentration of development where infrastructure is insufficient (e.g., Five Forks/Woodruff Road).
- Urban growth boundary concept; public discussion on growth management.
- Strengthen tools for rural and unzoned areas—lack of protection under current structure.
- Annexation pressures; concerns about city growth and coordination.
- Need to evaluate whether current policies allow implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Encourage infill, redevelopment, adaptive reuse; incentivize use of abandoned buildings.
- TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) is a potential tool.

What we heard / agreed

- Manage overconcentration in constrained corridors (e.g., Five Forks/Woodruff); advance public conversation on growth management tools (e.g., urban growth boundary, TDR).
- Address gaps in rural/unzoned areas; review whether existing policies allow us to implement the Comprehensive Plan; define Planning Commission’s role.
- Encourage infill, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment of abandoned buildings; consider incentives and MOUs with municipalities.

- Tackle housing affordability: reassess impact fee effects on prices, partner with nonprofits (GCRA cited as high ROI partner), and rethink the County’s affordable housing approach and rethink the County’s affordable housing approach.
- Coordinate on annexation or “annexation equivalent” strategies with cities.

Why it matters

Council emphasized that growth has outpaced infrastructure, and housing pressures require modernized tools aligned with the comprehensive plan and municipal partners.

4. Infrastructure, Transportation & Capital Planning

Key Issues Raised

- Timing of infrastructure improvements; concurrency with development.
- Road issues, traffic control improvements through technology.
- Need for an Infrastructure Coordinating Council (county, municipalities, DOT, utilities, schools).
- Sewer expansion causing growth challenges; utilities driving development without coordination.
- Need to solve ongoing road issues; maintain core road infrastructure.
- The ability to solve infrastructure issues depends on other agencies’ cooperation.

What we heard / agreed

- Prioritize road maintenance, traffic management technology, and concurrency—timing infrastructure with development.
- Sewer expansion and utility-led growth need stronger coordination; establish an Infrastructure Coordinating Council spanning the County, municipalities, DOT, utilities, and schools.
- Recognize that solving many issues depends on external entities; formalize coordination frameworks and shared priorities.

Why it matters

Infrastructure capacity is the limiting factor for sustainable growth; coordinated capital planning is needed to match land use decisions.

5. Intergovernmental Partnerships & Public Engagement

Key Issues Raised

- Strong need for an annexation strategy and better coordination with cities.
- Develop MOUs with municipalities on development, utilities, land planning, and growth.
- Public engagement must be improved—particularly around growth management.
- Review public comment procedures to ensure fairness and productivity.
- Chairs should manage public comment more effectively; avoid repetitive testimony.

What we heard / agreed

- Develop MOUs on development review, utilities, and infrastructure with municipalities; align on annexation expectations and growth areas.
- Move beyond statutory minimums for public engagement; standardize expectations for proactive communication and feedback loops.

Why it matters

Regional issues (roads, sewers, housing, annexation) require joint action and mutually understood processes.

6. Economic Development & Incentives

Key Issues Raised

- Support for adaptive reuse programs (e.g., GADC models).
- Recognize GCRA as a valuable partner with good ROI.
- Interest in redevelopment incentives to reuse abandoned buildings.
- Impact fees influence economic competitiveness.
- Examples like Fountain Inn's Fox Hill Business Park demonstrate coordinated, successful development.

What we heard / agreed

- Support adaptive reuse and infill (GADC programs; example: Fox Hill Business Park collaboration in Fountain Inn).
- Align incentive use with infrastructure readiness and growth management goals; coordinate redevelopment tools with housing affordability objectives.
- Recognize MCIP as a form of FILOT and clarify implications for fiscal planning.

Why it matters

Targeted redevelopment and business recruitment should reinforce broader land use, infrastructure, and affordability use, infrastructure, and affordability -strategies.

7. Fiscal Policy & Performance

Key Issues Raised

- Conversation on funding priorities; budget process transparency.
- Explore separate millage for Sheriff through dedicating a portion of the county millage for public safety.
- Need to identify new revenue opportunities.
- Performance audits are suggested.
- Infrastructure funding remains challenging without broader coordination.

What we heard / agreed

- Growing need for predictable funding for public safety and infrastructure; explore separate portions of millage dedicated to public safety.
- Explore additional revenue options, pair with stronger performance measurements and audits.
- Desire for clearer fiscal strategy tied to Council's adopted priorities and capital investment principles.

Why it matters

Predictable funding and performance accountability are essential to meet service demands during rapid growth.

Major Cross-Cutting Themes

Across all comments, the following themes emerged clearly:

1. Communication (Internal + Public)

Possibly the single largest area of concern—Council wants greater clarity, transparency, and communication with the community. Professionalize and resource County communications; adopt plain language practices; use AI for internal visibility.

2. Coordinated Growth Management

Concerns about growth outpacing infrastructure. Pressure on zoning, infrastructure, annexation, utilities, and rural areas calls for unified policy direction. Update codes/ordinances; deploy tools (UGB, TDR, adaptive reuse incentives) to manage pattern/pace of growth.

3. Infrastructure Capacity & Timing

Roads, sewers, traffic, and concurrency concerns appear repeatedly across every discussion area. Interest in stronger coordination across governments and utilities. Formal structures (Infrastructure Coordinating Council, MOUs) need to align land use, annexation, utilities, and capital timing.

4. Housing Affordability & Impact Fee Reform

Council perceives affordability as a major challenge. Recognition that housing affordability and development pressures require new tools and partnerships. Remove barriers, partner with GCRA/nonprofits, calibrate fees, and focus growth where infrastructure exists.

5. Governance & Procedural Clarity

Need clearer roles, processes, and expectations within county governance. Communication expectations, committee processes, and evaluations need updated rules and structure. Codify roles, staff interaction norms, and evaluation processes to improve execution and accountability.

6. Intergovernmental Cooperation

Annexation, utilities, DOT, and municipal relationships are critical to solving Countywide issues.

Appendix – List of Retreat Comments and Notes

- Need to tell story better
- Identify what efforts are working and apply it to everything
- Use staff/AI to provide summary of what all committees/council are working on
- Clear policy for how/what staff communicates from Council
- Simple explanation of agenda items
- Clarify roles/process of each (staff/council?)
- Add committee reports to council agendas
- Should there be a policy defining what “appropriate” communication with staff is?
- Do any other counties have a policy?
- Does a new policy hamstring conversations?
- Need to expand public information office?
- Homeowner’s property rights
- Impact fees raising prices
- Housing affordability
- Work with legislative delegation on legislation to fix impact fee process
- Annexation
- Rethink affordable housing process
- Work with nonprofits to boost affordable housing. Greenville County Redevelopment Authority?
- Board appointment procedure
- Greenville Area Development Corporation – adaptive reuse program
- Infill development
- Memorandum of Understanding between cities/county on development
- Utilities driving growth – how to coordinate better
- Policy to incentivize redevelopment of abandoned buildings
- Rework one page staff report
- Review and update current codes and ordinances
- How to make use of AI
- Focus on rural/unzoned areas – lack of tools to control development

- Overconcentration of development in areas with insufficient infrastructure – Five Forks/Woodruff Road example
- Urban growth boundary
- Public discussion around growth management
- City annexation
- Communication
- Conversation on funding priorities
- Separate millage for Sheriff or designate a portion of county millage for public safety?
- How to generate additional revenues
- Improving traffic control through technology
- Timing of infrastructure and road capacity improvements – Concurrency
- Infrastructure coordinating council
- Budget process
- Reestablish communication between council and constituents
- Solve ongoing road issues
- Public safety in general
- Land planning/use issues – zoned versus unzoned areas
- Define the role of the planning commission
- Performance audit
- Maintain road infrastructure
- No protection in unzoned areas
- Infrastructure-sewer expansion causing issues
- Board appointment process
- Ability to solve infrastructure issues dependent on others – DOT, municipalities, utilities, etc.
- Growing sophistication of municipalities
- Impact fees impact on prices
- Infrastructure coordinating council – county/municipalities/utilities/schools/DOT
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
- Annexation
- Are existing policies allowing us to implement the comp plan
- Encourage urban cores to grow up rather than out
- Policy on council/administrator interaction based on state law?

- Restatement of committee roles and responsibilities
- Committee updates each council meeting
- Did you Know: Type of County Government and Council/Admin roles
- Better council communication to public about successes and projects
- Set policy for annual evaluations
- Develop matrix of criteria
- Add process to council rules
- Yearly evaluations for three staff that report directly to council
- Do reviews in July
- Housing – better way to do it
- Impact fees
- GCRA is a good partner, excellent return on investment
- Add staff for Bob M if needed? What do you want them to do and then I can look at staffing.
- Fountain Inn – Fox Hill Business Park – GADC assembled property, recruited developer, helped negotiate incentives/infrastructure
- MCIP are their own form of FILOT because there are not ad valorem taxes applied
- Communication
 - Plan for better communications
 - Identify staffing needs
 - Add positions
- Coordination council
- Annexation equivalent
- Chair does better job of directing public comment (equal time)
- Review the public comment sign-up process
- Public comment procedures need review
 - Better job by chair
 - Committee versus full council procedures
 - How do you limit multiple people saying the same thing
- Create a Did You Know? Document to communicate how county structure functions
- Committee appointments
- Communication with public
 - On roles/responsibilities/process

- Growth management
- Accomplishments
- Annexation/coordination with other agencies
- Road issues/traffic control
- Zoned versus unzoned issues
- Infrastructure
- Funding priorities/budget process
- Coordinating on utilities/growth/roads