

MEMO

To: Wake County Board of Commissioners
David Ellis, County Manager
From: Michelle Ferguson, Executive Vice President
Date: September 10, 2025
Re: Annual Board Retreat Preparation

I look forward to being with you on September 17-19, 2025 for the Board of Commissioners Annual Retreat. The purpose of this memorandum is to:

- Identify what needs to be done to prepare for the Retreat.
- Share the agenda.

Logistics

Location: Wake County Office Building
337 Salisbury Street, Room G-103

Wednesday: 5:30 *Jeffersonian Dinner*

A Jeffersonian Dinner is a structured yet informal gathering designed to facilitate deep, respectful dialogue among a diverse group of individuals, seated at a single table. Inspired by Thomas Jefferson's own dinners with members of Congress, the format focuses on discussing one topic, encouraging all participants to engage in a collective conversation rather than breaking into side discussions. By engaging in a single conversation with only one person speaking at a time, dinner companions were able to unlock the power of their collective wisdom. The objective is to foster the exchange of different perspectives, generate new ideas, and build community around a shared interest or issue, and distinct from formal presentations or political debates.

The purpose is simple: to listen, learn, and inspire one another through meaningful dialogue around a particular topic!

Thursday: 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM *

Friday: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM *

*** Lunch will be available each day.**

Norms

- Listen with respect
 - Let others finish before you start talking
 - Be attentive to the speaker
 - Disagree agreeably
- Be:
 - BOLD
 - high-level
 - positive and realistic
 - candid and honest

- patient and self-aware
 - engaged and fully present
- Strive for consensus
 - Look for opportunities to agree
 - Remember the power of “if” and “and”
- Have fun!

Preparation

Several agenda items will benefit from preparation. Please spend a few minutes reviewing these materials and prepare to participate.

Video

City Slickers was a box office hit in 1991 and one of the memorable video clips was a conversation with Mitch and Curly where Curly shared his wisdom about the One Thing that is the secret to life. (Please excuse the curse word!)

- [City Slickers \(8/11\) Movie CLIP - The Secret of Life \(1991\) HD - YouTube](#)

Your One Thing

Taking this lesson from Curly and Mitch, your job is to figure out “the one thing” that matters most to you – and work together with your Board colleagues and the County staff to make it happen. So, let’s talk about your One Thing

- Share Your One Thing.
- Why is it important to you?
- Why do you believe it is important to Wake County?
- Why do you believe it should be important to your Board colleagues?

Agenda

Day One: Thursday, September 18, 2025, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Introductions

- Welcome and agenda review
- Norms and expectations for the retreat

Your One Thing

Each Commissioner will share the “One Thing” they hope to see through to fruition during their tenure on the Board.

Communicating Together

We will discuss personal communication styles and how each Commissioner can best communicate with one another in order to make progress on their One Thing.

Governing Together

Wake County operates under the Council-Manager Form of Government.

- How does the form of government define the roles of the Board of Commissioners?
- What is the role of the Chair and Vice Chair?
- What is the role of the County Manager?

Long Range Budget and Financial Outlook

Staff will provide a high-level update on the County’s current financial outlook and the budget development process.

Strategic Planning

Staff will provide a high-level overview of the County’s Strategic Plan and engage in conversation about the recommended priority goals for the next budget development process.

Day Two: Friday, September 19, 2025, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Welcome and Check-In

Documenting our Processes

The Commissioners will discuss procedures and protocols to enhance ability to govern effectively.

- Rules of Procedure
- Ethics Policy
- Proclamations
- Board Appointments
- Board Liaison Process/Roles
- Rule 1
- Public Comment
- Other unspoken norms?

Closing Exercise

As the retreat comes to a close, each participant will engage in a closing exercise.