

LEADING YOUR COUNTY GOVERNING BOARD: AN ORIENTATION FOR COUNTY BOARD CHAIRS

Guilford County
Grandover Resort

January 8, 2026	
8:30 a.m.	Registration Opens
9:00 a.m.	<p>Welcome <i>Wallace Nelson, NCACC President & Perquimans County Commissioner</i></p>
9:15 a.m.	<p>Meetings & More: Leading the Board, Working with Staff <i>Panelists: Don Martin, Forsyth County Chairman; Shontell Robinson, Forsyth County Manager; Jodi H. Stewart, Catawba County Attorney</i> <i>Moderator: Neil Emory, NCACC Outreach Associate</i></p> <p>There is no substitute for experience, and one of the Association's objectives is to provide a forum for county officials to exchange ideas and experiences. This panel discussion will allow participants the opportunity to learn from and ask questions of a veteran board chair, county manager, and county attorney on how they navigated unique and/or difficult real-world scenarios.</p>
10:15 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m.	<p>Public Comment Periods & the First Amendment <i>Kristina Wilson, UNC School of Government Assistant Professor of Public Law & Government</i></p> <p>Can the county limit commenters' speech during public comment period? How can they do so without violating the First Amendment? This session will explore how to balance First Amendment protections with enforceable, common-sense public comment period policies.</p>
11:45 a.m.	Lunch
12:45 p.m.	<p>Legal & Procedural Responsibilities: Overview & Real-World Experiences <i>Amy Bason, NCACC Deputy Director & General Counsel; and Jodi H. Stewart, Catawba County Attorney</i></p> <p>This segment will provide an overview of the legal and procedural responsibilities of the board chair. Bring your questions, observations, and experiences to engage in discussion on rules and procedures, setting the agenda, and more!</p>

<p>1:45 p.m.</p>	<p>The Role of the Board Chair in an Emergency or Crisis <i>Norma Houston, NCACC Disaster Recovery Advisor; Lacy Pate, NCACC Director of Disaster Recovery & Grant Assistance; Drew Pearson, Dare County Emergency Management Director</i> Effective leadership is critical when a county faces an emergency or crisis. This session explores the vital role of the Board Chair in guiding decision-making, supporting staff, and maintaining public confidence during challenging times. Participants hear from seasoned professionals who bring a wealth of real-world experience. Drew Pearson, Emergency Management Director for Dare County, shares insights on effective communication strategies during crises; Norma Houston, NCACC Disaster Recovery Advisor, discusses leadership responsibilities and coordination with county teams; and Lacy Pate, NCACC Director of Disaster Recovery & Grant Assistance, discusses the nexus between crisis communications and disaster recovery, and shares helpful tips to deliver accurate and timely messaging. Attendees are sure to leave with actionable strategies to strengthen their leadership and ensure their board effectively supports the county and community during emergencies.</p>
<p>2:45 p.m.</p>	<p>Break & Afternoon Snack</p>
<p>3:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Social Media: Evaluation, Engagement, and Leverage <i>Mark Weaver, UNC School of Government Communications Counsel and Adjunct Professor</i> As an elected county board Chair or Vice-Chair, your online presence shapes public trust. This session, which is eligible for CLE credit, helps you turn criticism into constructive engagement using a clear triage flow: ignore, monitor, respond, or take offline. Learn how to manage social media threads within legal boundaries, distinguish official accounts from personal ones, and apply public forum principles fairly. You'll also explore ways to build support through transparency, visuals, and timely updates. In a hands-on "comments section" exercise, you'll practice crafting responses that de-escalate tension while reinforcing credibility and leadership.</p>
<p>5:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Wrap Up and Adjourn <i>Amy Bason, NCACC Deputy Director & General Counsel</i></p>