G.O. Bonds Oversight Committee: FY25 Annual Report

July 23, 2025

General Obligation Bond

In November 2022, Buncombe County voters approved two general obligation bonds: $30 million for Open Space and $40 million for Affordable Housing. The goal for the Open Space bond is to protect farmland and natural resources while also contributing to the county's goal of conserving 20% of the County's land by 2030, increasing access to recreational activities and protecting natural resources, and supporting greenway infrastructure. The goal for the Affordable Housing bond is to increase construction of housing for people of low to moderate incomes.

To support transparency and community awareness, the County developed an interactive StoryMap showcasing key milestones, financial details, and project updates related to the General Obligation Bonds. This engaging tool allows residents to explore how bond funds are being used to improve open space, greenways, and housing across Buncombe County. View it here.

Formation

The two bonds will provide essential funding for the County to support initiatives that conserve Open Space, build greenways, expand passive recreation opportunities, and increase the number of housing units for families of low- and moderate-income in Buncombe County.

In August 2022, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to establish the General Obligation Bonds Community Oversight Committee. The Committee will monitor the investment made from the two bonds in low- and moderate-income housing and Open Space conservation. As stated in the Resolution, "The purpose of the Committee is to review the investments made from the bond revenues to confirm that 100% of bond funds are invested in accordance with law and for the purposes indicated on the ballots."

In accordance with the Resolution and the intention of the Commission in creating the Committee, the goals of the Community Oversight Committee are two-fold:

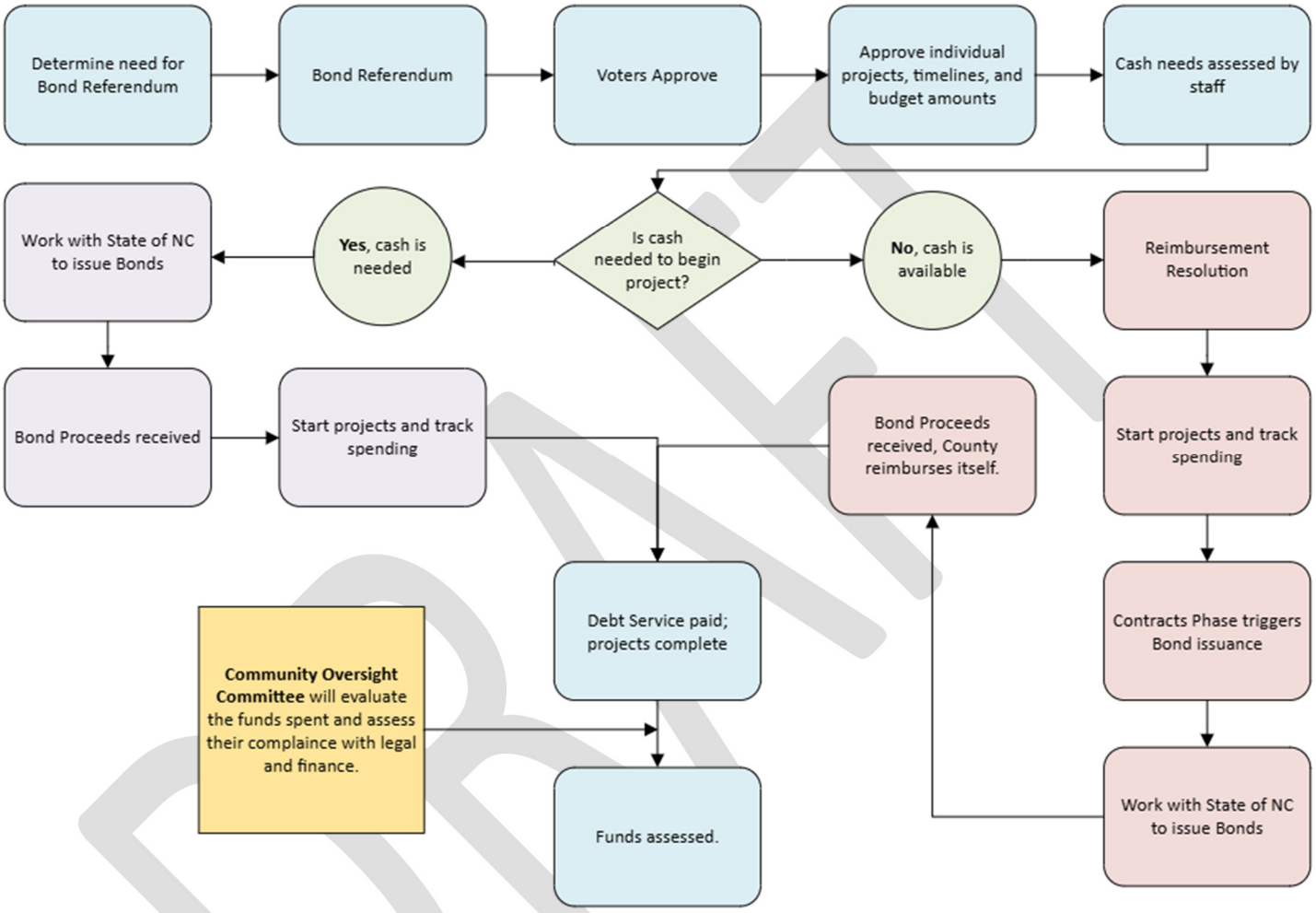
1. Ensure transparency with the public into how the Bond funds are managed and utilized.
2. Review projects after they have been funded to ensure compliance with legal and financial requirements.

The Community Oversight Committee includes five members comprised of: (1) an individual with an accounting background, (2) a person with a banking background, (3) a representative of the Affordable Housing community, (4) a representative from the conservation/greenways community each to be appointed by this Board, and (5) a member to be appointed by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce.

The following report details the procedures established by and the accomplishments achieved by the Community Oversight Committee in its first year.

Figure 1: General Obligation Bond Funding Flow Chart

A bond referendum gives voters the power to decide if a municipality should be authorized to raise funds through the sale of general obligation (G.O.) bonds. A G.O. bond is a long-term borrowing tool (typically 20 years) in which a municipality pledges its full faith and credit (taxing power) to repay the debt over a specified term. Generally, G.O. bonds are the least costly financing option available to the county for potential projects being considered. Figure 1 below details the process for securing, allocating, and repaying the G.O. Bond funds:



Committee Members

As of July 2025, membership is as follows:

1. Accounting Background: Patricia Rosenberg, CPA
2. Banking Background: Stephanie Lee, CFO N.C. Arboretum (formerly of First Horizon Bank)
3. Affordable Housing Representative: Joel Henderson, AB Tech
4. Conservation/Greenways Representative: Vacant (as of July 2025)
5. The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce: Casey Gilbert (as of September 2024)

The five members of the Community Oversight Committee will serve until all bond funds have been spent. Any member who is unable or unwilling to serve will be replaced by the appropriate appointing authority for the remainder of the term.

A Buncombe County staff employee is responsible for providing administrative support to the Community Oversight Committee, including keeping a true and accurate account of all proceedings of Committee meetings, issuing notices of all meetings, issuing any call for special meetings, preparing an annual report, and notifying the Clerk to the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners office of any vacancies on the Committee. Currently, Max Taintor of the Buncombe County Strategy and Innovation Department serves as staff liaison. Additionally, one member of the County Finance Department and one member of the County Legal Department will be present at each meeting to provide support and technical guidance.

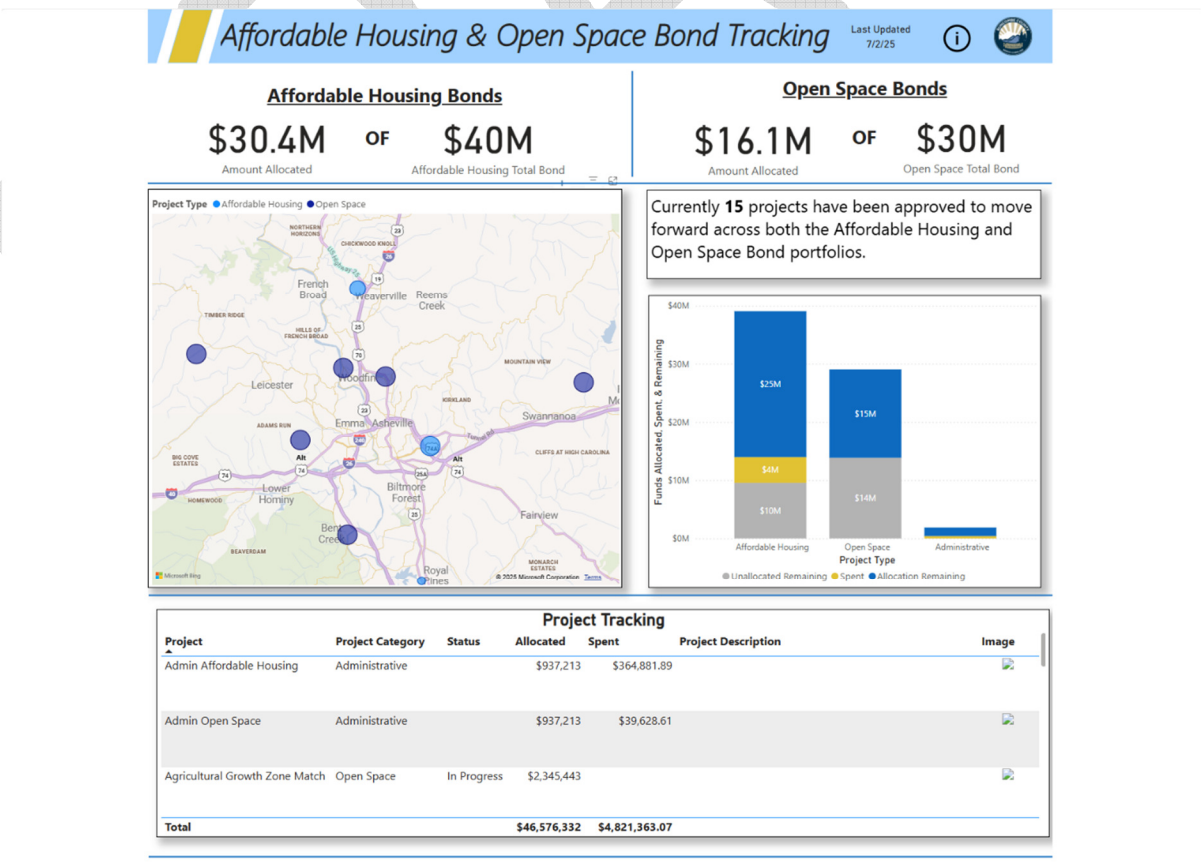
The Community Oversight Committee set its most recent regular meeting schedule in May 2025:

- Wednesday, July 30, 2025 - 3:30pm-4:30pm
- Wednesday, November 12, 2025 - 3:30-4:30pm
- Wednesday, March 25, 2026 - 3:30-4:30pm

The Committee's meeting schedule aligns with key County financial processes: (1) County debt issuance, (2) the annual independent financial audit, and (3) the mid-year financial review. The Committee will revisit the specific meeting days and times on a yearly basis.

Dashboard

To support public transparency and accountability, Buncombe County has created an interactive Affordable Housing & Open Space Bond Tracking Dashboard, available to the public **here**. The dashboard displays real-time information on bond-funded projects, including project status, allocated and spent funds, and geographical distribution. This tool allows residents and stakeholders to track how bond investments are being deployed and supports the Committee's goal of ensuring full transparency throughout the life of the bonds.



FY 24 Actions

While Open Space and Affordable Housing bond funds have been allocated to specific projects, no project spending occurred during Fiscal Year 2024, just administrative costs. Staff have been working with lead contacts for funded projects to identify future draw schedules for bond funds, which will support a streamlined financial review process. Additionally, the County's Finance Department has worked with the State of North Carolina, our financial advisors, and bond counsel to sell approximately $15M of the Affordable Housing and Open Space Bonds.

During the Committee's regular meetings, project updates will be presented by staff from the Planning, Recreation and Parks, and Agriculture and Land Resources departments. A financial review of the Bond draw requests will also be presented. The Committee will utilize the Annual Report as the formal mechanism for flagging any financial concerns about the bond-funded projects. The staff liaison will note the concerns within the annual report and the Committee will approve the report before it goes to the Board of Commissioners.

Fiscal Year 2024 is the second year the Affordable Housing and Open Space Bonds were included in the County's annual independent financial audit. For FY24, the County was issued a "clean" audit opinion, indicating the good standing of accounting and financial reporting for funds in the County's care.

FY25 Accomplishments

In the past fiscal year, the Bond Oversight committee was able to meet July 17, 2024, and again March 25, 2025. The November 2024 meeting was canceled as a result of Hurricane Helene. The July 2024 meeting involved approval of the FY24 Annual Report and a review of the bond tracking dashboard. Also, in FY25, the County entered into affordable housing contracts for Lakeshore Villas for $3.6M, and Meribel for $8.4M; and open space contracts with Lake Eden Preserve for $250K.

Looking Ahead

As project spending both begins and continues, the Committee will review these expenditures during their three annual meetings, flagging any concerns or questions. These findings will be included in the Community Oversight Committee's 2025 Annual report and presented to the Board of Commissioners.

The majority of G.O. Bond funds are expected to be allocated and spent in FY26 and beyond. See below for current fund allocations and funding.

Current Bond Allocations and Funding

According to the Affordable Housing & Open Space Bond Tracking dashboard, located here, currently fifteen (15) projects have been approved to move forward. In the table below, "Status" refers to the current stage of each project as identified by the project manager. Status categories (e.g., "Not Started," "In Progress") reflect the project manager's assessment of where the project stands in its implementation timeline.

- $30.4M of $40M of the Affordable Housing bonds have been allocated.
- $16.1M of $30M of the Open Space Bonds have been allocated.

Affordable Housing Project	Status	Allocated	Spent
Asheville Affordable Pine Lane	Not Started	$6.5M	$0
Lakeshore Villas	Not Started	$3.6M	$1.9M
Laurel Wood	Not Started	$800K	$0

DRAFT

Lofts at Swannanoa	Not Started	$379K	$0
Meribel	Not Started	$8.4M	$2.4M
Redwood Commons	Not Started	$1.8M	$0
Rocky River Apts.	Not Started	$7.8M	$0
	TOTAL	**$30.4M**	**$4.3M**

Open Space Project	Status	Allocated	Spent
Agricultural Growth Zone Match	In Progress	$2.3M	$0
Deaverview Mountain	Not Started	$7.6M	$0
Ferry Road Open Space	Not Started	$3M	$0
Lake Eden Preserve	In Progress	$250K	$0
Okoboji Farm	In Progress	$511K	$0
Parham-Fortner Farm	In Progress	$150K	$0
Woodfin Greenway-Beaverdam		$997K	$0
Woodfin Greenway-Hwy 251		$275K	$0
	TOTAL	**$15M**	**$0**

DRAFT