



Town of Holly Ridge

Mayor's Message

MARCH 9, 2026



Happy Monday, everyone. I hope you had a great week and weekend and enjoyed the great weather we've had. I wish you all a great week ahead. We have a lot going on this month. I will do my best to keep you posted. God bless you and your family, our Town, our County, our State, and our great Country.

1. Last week, the ONWASA team, with our support, applied for a grant from the U.S Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to build our first 750K-gallon water tower to support our future growth. Congressman Murphy, Senator Tillis, Senator Budd, State Senator Lazzara, and Representative Smith support this application. We appreciate your support as well.



2. During the past two weeks, Holly Ridge citizens received their new Onslow County assessment, which is significantly higher than in the past. There are a couple of points to note. As I mentioned last week, the County will review its tax rates during the budget cycle. After they are finalized, we will do the same in Holly Ridge. I met with Onslow County officials today, and they mentioned that only **0.05% of citizens** have appealed their assessments, which is a very low number. Citizens are encouraged to use either the **informal or formal appeal process** through the Board of Equalization and Review, **located at 234 NW Corridor Boulevard, Jacksonville, NC 28540, or by calling 910-989-2200.**
3. Over the past few months, the citizens of Holly Ridge have raised concerns about a range of issues, including schools, Infrastructure, transportation, and more. I intend to share data on each of those areas in my messages over the next couple of weeks, along with any updates. Last week, I posted the state DOT data. In this issue, I am sharing some details on the School System roles and responsibilities we work with that are critical to our strategic and growth plans.

a. Our County School System Overview & Mission:

- Onslow County Schools (OCS) is the only public school district in Onslow County, serving over 28,000 students across 43 schools, including elementary, middle, high schools, virtual programs, early childhood, and special centers.
- The district's overarching mission is to prepare students to be globally competitive leaders and responsible citizens, emphasizing quality instruction, safety, and community partnership.
- OCS uses data-driven decision-making to guide instruction, resource allocation, and continuous improvement.

b. Onslow County Schools' Funding includes:

- State education funding (~\$200M +) — majority of operating budget
- County/local funding (~\$113M +) — local operations & capital
- Federal funding (~\$31.5M) — program-specific grants and supports

c. Our county allocates approximately 35% of its approximately \$380M yearly budget to the school system. Onslow County [Schools](#) plan, fund, and build new school facilities — including current construction, future needs, and the process involved: Onslow County Schools is experiencing rapid student population growth, largely due to:

- **Expansion of housing and community growth across the county and in Holly Ridge**
- Continued increases in enrollment exceeding available classroom space
- Certain older facilities are reaching capacity or becoming outdated
- To manage this growth, our district has developed a long-range capital facilities plan that identifies where new schools are needed and which facilities will best serve students and staff in the coming decade. This plan includes evaluating rapid population and student growth, overcrowded or aging facilities, and the need for modern learning environments.

d. Upcoming New Schools: According to the Onslow County School System's 10-year Capital Improvement Plan, Onslow County Schools expects to construct the following projects over the next decade:

- A new elementary school near Maysville, which broke ground in 2023 and is planned to open for the 2025–26 school year, is being built to reduce overcrowding at nearby schools.
- **A new elementary school in the southern part of the county, which is our area, is expected to break ground in April 2026**
- A new middle school in the eastern part of the county. The district anticipates continued enrollment increases in the Dixon, White Oak, and Richlands areas.

e. Construction Costs: The district's long-range plan includes projected costs like:

- New elementary schools: approximately \$49.5 million each
- New middle school: approximately \$68.8 million

- New High School: approximately \$90M

f. Process of Building a new school includes facilities planning & capacity analysis, capital budget & board approval, funding via local and state resources, design, permitting, and construction. For Onslow County Schools, the decision to build a new school is primarily driven by capacity, enrollment trends, **and long-term planning data.** **The School System looks at where new subdivisions are being built, which attendance zones are growing fastest, transportation times, and bus route strain.**

f. What we in Holly Ridge can do about School Growth Projections: Coordinate Early with the School District, which we are already doing.

In doing so, we can:

- Discuss enrollment projection data annually.
- Share subdivision approval pipelines.
- Participate in joint planning meetings.
- Align capital improvement plans.

I hope this was a good read and useful. Please keep up with Town events using our website. Please review our Strategic Plan under the government tab if you have not already. **I will not have office hours this week due to attending a conference.** I am available to discuss any subject by appointment, by phone at 336-865-0884, or by email. We do appreciate citizens' interest, and I have had many great discussions with them. I invite anyone interested to meet with me and discuss your ideas and concerns. I am available by phone at 336-865-0884 or via email at pparnian@hollyridgnc.gov. We appreciate your confidence and support. God bless you.

Mayor Pete Parnian