Polk County Community Recreation Center
Prepared for the November 3, 2026, Local Government Commission meeting

Public comments and key distinctions

The packet includes 81 submissions received through October 25, 2026. For this report, 61 are classified as supporting the project, 18 as opposing it, and two as primarily requesting a hearing or additional information.

Reasons offered in support

- Year-round recreation, including an indoor pool and walking track, for children, families, and seniors.
- Youth activities, mentoring, school partnerships, health programs, and opportunities to reduce social isolation.
- Less travel outside the County and more opportunities for residents to gather in one facility.
- Private financial support and the long-term value of a County-owned community asset.
- The YMCA's programming experience and potential benefits for local quality of life and economic development.

Principal objections

- Property tax and debt burdens, particularly for residents on fixed incomes, and competition with school and infrastructure for fiscal needs.
- Uncertain maintenance costs, operating subsidies, membership demand, and consequences if the YMCA withdraws.
- Questions about donations, contracts, public access to records and meetings, conflicts of interest, and contractor selection.
- Concerns about the absence of a referendum, zoning compliance, traffic, and water and sewer readiness.

Polk County recognizes residents' concerns about taxes, public spending, and long-term responsibility for the proposed recreation center. The following responses explain the County's financial plan, public benefits, and project approvals.

1 Property taxes and debt affordability

According to NCACC published rates, Polk County has the 17th lowest among North Carolina's 100 counties for FY 2026–2027. Polk County's current property-tax rate is $0.4277 per $100 of assessed value,

North Carolina law authorizes counties to support public recreation through property taxes. G.S. 153A-149(c)(25) includes parks and supervised recreation among authorized purposes. A two-cent tax rate increase was adopted in the FY 2025-2026 budget for this purpose. The County expects the existing two-cent rate increase will cover the facility's debt service and does not intend or anticipate it will need to increase the current tax rate for this recreation facility.

The County is seeking approval for a not to exceed amount of $12 million, however, with GMP now in hand, anticipates the actual borrowing to be less with current numbers at a borrowing amount of $11,811,000. The Lender has offered a 20-year fixed interest rate at 5.185%. The Lender's schedule totals $18,301,578.30 in principal and interest, including $6,490,578.30 in interest. The largest fiscal-year payment total is $1,266,341.50 in FY 2028, followed by declining annual totals.

2 School support and benefits for students

The County intends to strengthen educational and recreational opportunities while continuing to support school funding. The Polk County school system is already collaborating with the County and YMCA on after-school child-watch and summer camp programs.

Polk County and its school system have enjoyed a collaborative relationship, especially with respect to addressing school operating and capital needs through its budget process. The new facility is intended to expand this partnership by creating an opportunity to provide swimming lessons for all second-grade students and a practice pool for the high school swim team. These are planned benefits that depend on final program arrangements. The facility shall be a resource for schools and families.

3 Existing programs and long-term operating responsibilities

The YMCA has operated and managed County recreation programs from 2021-2025 without facility-based memberships. The new center would give these existing programs a permanent location. Membership revenue is expected to support programming and operating costs of the facility.

The County plans to negotiate the facility lease with the YMCA after financing approval and during construction. The financing term sheet places maintenance and insurance responsibilities on the County as borrower; any YMCA contribution will be addressed separately.

The existing public pool, built in the 1980s, requires recurring repairs. It is subject to federal grant restrictions on discontinuing the provided recreational swimming pool use. The new pool is intended to replace that use and reduce repeated repair spending.

4 Donations and the construction funding plan

The financing plan identifies $6 million in donations, $590,394 in available County cash, and up to $12 million in financing for the $18,590,394 project budget.

$5.87 million in donations have been received, and another $960,000 committed, with release dates tied to construction milestones. The County expects those payments before the facility opens. Some donors have conditioned payment on construction moving forward. Donations that come in over $6 million will be set aside in an endowment to support facility maintenance.

5 Public records meetings and procurement

The County has followed applicable public-records, open-meetings, procurement, and conflict-of-interest requirements. Unavailable records either did not exist or were subject to procurement-related restrictions. G.S. 132-6.2(e) does not require creating a record that does not exist.

6 Public participation and the financing method

The County began developing this collaboration in 2021 and pursued community outreach, a feasibility study, and a capital campaign. The LGC staff analysis identifies a 2022 survey in which 80 percent of respondents said they would be likely to join.

The proposed financing uses G.S. 160A-20, which does not require a voter referendum for this installment-financing structure. It requires the applicable public hearing and LGC review. The staff analysis records a hearing on August 17, 2026, and the County selected this financing approach.

7 Water, sewer and fire flow

The Town of Columbus Manager's July 28, 2026, determination states that the Town's water and wastewater systems have sufficient capacity for the proposed facility. It estimates normal demand at approximately 22,185 gallons per day, about 2.8 percent of the wastewater plant's 800,000-gallon-per-day permitted capacity. This is documented support for capacity.

The June 1, 2026, fire-department test recorded 101 psi static pressure, 92 psi residual pressure, and 943 gallons per minute. The Town's letter cites these results as supporting service to the site, subject to final engineering of utility connections and fire protection.

8 Zoning access and remaining permit conditions

The recreation facility is a permitted use in the zoning district in which it will be located. On April 6, 2026, the Town issued a zoning permit for the County recreation facility. The County submitted an application for development approval with all required information and plans showing compliance with the Town's development standards.

The County is also working with NCDOT on the required access improvements, including turn-lane design. NCDOT's September 14 letter provides conditional driveway approval, subject to final site plans and applicable encroachment agreements.

NCDEQ approved the erosion and sedimentation control plan on August 25, 2026, for 4.62 acres. The NC Department of Insurance, Office of the State Fire Marshal, has reviewed the plans for fire and life safety and authorized the issuance of shell and foundation permits on October 1, 2026.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS
RELATED TO POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER – YMCA
FINANCING MATTER

NOVEMBER 3, 2026 LGC MEETING

#	User Name	Date Submitted	Comments
1.	Monica Moffat	10/26/2026 10:20	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA / community center to Polk County North Carolina
2.	David and Daryl Nelms	10/26/2026 10:48	We are in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC
3.	Linda Schutter	10/26/2026 11:52	I am in favor of bringing YMCA/Community Center to Polk County NC
4.	Constance Lawrence	10/26/2026 11:57	Having a Y in Polk Co will greatly add to the life style and life expectancy of our population by making affordable, safe, exercise and information available to all ages. Families, children, young and old will meet and develop friendships which will enhance their lives and widen their outlook on life and their neighbors. It will be located in an area accessible to all. We want it, we need it, we will support it!
5.	Harry Greensfelder	10/26/2026 14:42	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC
6.	Amile Briante	10/26/2026 15:26	I am in favor of bringing the Polk County YMCA and community center to our county.
7.	Michael Smith	10/26/2026 15:28	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC.
8.	Thomas F Fitzgerald	10/26/2026 15:55	I am in favor of bring the YMCA to Polk County.
9.	Jamie Davidson	10/26/2026 16:42	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC. This facility is much needed in Polk County.
10.	sandra L Fitzgerald	10/26/2026 16:53	I am desperate to have an indoor pool that I can utilize year round. Two years ago, Isothermal Community College in Forest City stopped allowing senior citizens to use the pool with a fee per semester, despite the fact that our taxes are funding the college. I have since joined the YMCA in Hendersonville, and sometimes travel to Asheville where the water is warmer and there are two pools. I have physical disabilities that are better served with water exercises that do not stress my body. The commutes to Hendersonville and Asheville are lengthy and fraught with traffic issues. I live in Mill Springs and have been waiting years to be able to have a pool closer to home. I would love to be able to attend exercise classes but the long commute with traffic makes it difficult to get to classes on time.
11.	John Gargiulo	10/26/2026 17:21	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC.
12.	Kathy Frederick	10/26/2026 19:25	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA / Community Center to Polk County.
13.	John Watts	10/26/2026 19:31	I am all in favor of bringing the YMCA to Polk County. It would be of great value to the citizens.

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14.	Stephanie Goble	10/26/2026 21:55	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC
15.	Gloria Underwood	10/27/2026 8:07	We need a YMCA in Polk County. It's good for kids, teens, and adults. Please recognize the value to the entire community.
16.	Gregory McFayden	10/27/2026 9:06	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC. Thank you.
17.	Shannon McFayden	10/27/2026 9:48	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County.
18.	George Alley	10/27/2026 11:18	I am in favor of bring a YMCA / Community Center to Polk County NC
19.	Penny Padgett	10/27/2026 12:36	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community center to Polk County nc.
20.	SUSAN S CANTERBURY	10/27/2026 16:43	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC
21.	Ann Fitzparick	10/27/2026 17:10	I am in favor of YMCA project coming to the county. A much needed facility
22.	Janet Gilchrist	10/28/2026 9:30	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/ Community Center to Polk County NC. This center will provide a safe space for all ages.
23.	James Thompson	10/28/2026 12:49	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC.
24.	Reed McNutt	10/28/2026 13:25	We are very very much for the YMCA in Columbus, North Carolina We made a pledge several years ago and I met that pledge each year Thank you Reed McNutt
25.	DANIEL M BRENMAN	10/28/2026 18:56	Greetings, I am writing to you to express my support for the proposed YMCA in Columbus, NC - a new branch of the YMCA of Greater Spartanburg, SC. So very many of us are extremely excited that this project is finally coming to fruition and so many people have worked so hard to make this a reality. Our County will greatly benefit with the arrival of such an esteemed organization dedicated to Healthy Living, Youth Development and Social Responsibility. In my professional career spanning 35 years I have seen how Ys across the country have enriched every single community they have grown in. They undoubtedly build Strong Kids, Strong Families and Strong Communities.

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			As an national organization YMCAs embody the very best of our country by providing a safe place where everyone - regardless of race, creed color, ability, age, sex or orientation - is welcome and embraced. I strongly urge you to give final approval to this project so we can all benefit from such a wonderful space as soon as possible. Thank you.....
26.	Ellen Douglas	10/28/2026 20:13	I am very much in favor of having a YMCA in Polk County. I was an avid YMCA member in Hickory and look forward to being able to use Y facilities here, too.
27.	Kristy Morrow	10/28/2026 20:49	I am in favor of the YMCA community center being built in Polk County. NC.
28.	Robert Morrow	10/28/2026 21:15	I am in support of the YMCA/Community Center in Polk County, NC
29.	Amber Keeran	10/28/2026 21:17	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC. This facility will be so welcome in our community and also well used. There are activities spread across our county in so many different places. The YMCA would allow for consolidation and useful facilities that would benefit adults and youth alike.
30.	Jason Morrow	10/28/2026 21:30	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC
31.	Alison Heston	10/29/2026 9:32	Please continue with plans to build a Polk County YMCA. The pool, exercise equipment, and community building physical and social activities are necessary to an improved Polk County. We go to Hendersonville but would do love to enjoy our friends and community in Polk,
32.	Jodie Jackson	10/29/2026 10:01	I am in favor of bringing a YMCA/Community Center to Polk County, NC
33.	Jared Keresoma	10/29/2026 11:04	I'm writing to express my support for the proposed project to finance and build a YMCA in Polk County. A YMCA could provide a welcoming place for individuals and families to come together, participate in health and wellness activities, and build connections within the community. It could also create opportunities for youth programs, family activities, and services that respond to local needs. I appreciate the work being done to explore this project and encourage continued collaboration among community members, local leaders, and project partners. I believe an accessible, community-focused YMCA could be a valuable investment in Polk County's future.
34.	Shannon Carney	10/30/2026 19:23	I am a Polk County resident and i am in support of the YMCA Financing Agreement being considered. Funding a YMCA is an investment in the health and future of our county. We have a large and growing older population, yet no indoor swimming pool where residents can exercise year-round. Regular physical activity helps older adults maintain strength, balance, and mobility, lowers the risk of falls, helps manage chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and arthritis, and keeps them socially connected and independent longer. Water-based exercise

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			is especially valuable for seniors because it is gentle on the joints while still building cardiovascular fitness. Our middle and high school students also have no pool, which limits swim instruction, water safety training, and competitive swimming. A YMCA would fill both gaps while offering youth sports and family wellness programs for residents of every age and income level. It would also create construction and permanent jobs, bring visitors and spending to local businesses, and give our community a welcoming gathering place. Approving this finance agreement will deliver lasting returns for generations of Polk County residents.
35.	Chris DuPre	10/31/2026 11:59	Hello, I wanted to comment on my support for the YMCA coming to Polk County. As a long time Spartanburg YMCA member our family personally sees the benefits of a YMCA in the community. We enjoy the pool, gym, and programs that the YMCA offers. Currently we are having to enjoy these benefits 30 minutes away so having such an amazing place within the County would be a tremendous benefit. Outside of our personal use of the YMCA, I have seen programs benefit many people in the community by offering a safe, affordable place for fitness and recreation. Also this can provide a compelling asset to Polk County for active families looking to move here. The YMCA can be a great asset to Polk County for years to come. Thanks, Chris DuPre
36.	Kelly O'Neal	11/2/2026 21:38	Bringing a YMCA to our area would be a great addition to the community. It would give residents a dedicated space to stay active and access amenities that we currently lack. Most importantly, it would provide a safe, welcoming environment where our kids can go to play, learn and mingle with others. We don't have anything like this in a reasonable distance for regular use and I believe many of our community members would benefit from its many possible programs and amenities.