

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF MAY 6, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on May 6, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Amanda Edwards; Vice-Chair Martin Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

The following updates were provided by staff:

1. Helene Update

Dane Pedersen provided an update on debris removal. He explained that the Right of Way Debris Removal Mission is complete and that County & NCDOT actively inspecting each zone to determine debris remaining & resources that may be required to collect remaining debris. He explained that the application deadline for Private and Commercial Property Debris Removal is April 15 and that all PPDR debris removals are completed by June 30th. He further explained that demolition will begin mid May and that all waterway debris removal ends June 1st.

Allison Daines provided an update on Parks. She explained that Park assessments were completed by staff at all Park locations. Staff took inventory of all damage including pictures and identified short term vs long term projects for opening parks including vegetative and construction debris removal. Tree assessments were also completed at all parks to help maintain the health of trees and the safety of all park visitors. Daines provided an in-depth review of each of the damaged parks and their timeline for reopening.

Matthew Cable provided an update on Residential and Commercial Rebuilding. He explained that FEMA has completed the reported damaged units with 12,235 damaged and destroyed units. He explained that 187 zoning permits have been issued for temporary residential use with Helene Tag and 72 FEMA permits. He further explained that 276 floodplain development permits in since Helene including: 200 Helene related floodplain development permits and 76 floodplain development permits not associated with Helene.

Tyler Henry provided an update on Helene Household Assistance Program. He explained that on November 1, 2024, the Board of Commissioners approved the reallocation of \$1.597M in ARPA funds for Helene Relief Household Assistance Programs with \$300K to Grace Covenant, serving 122 households and \$1.297M to Buncombe County Economic Services. BC Economic Services announced an application for Household Assistance grants receiving 5,826 applications. On January 21, 2025, the Board of Commissioners approved the execution of an interlocal agreement to receive \$624,000 in CDBG-DDRF from the City of Asheville. He reported that there is currently a proposed new Interlocal Agreement with City of Asheville for a total amount of additional funds of \$135,000. If accepted, the CDBG funds would go toward rental assistance for City of Asheville households with incomes at 80% AMI or less with an administrative fee of 10%. He explained that the program will be administered by Economic Services.

Stacey Wood provided an update on the Helene Resource Center (HRC). She explained the hours and availability for community members. Services of the HRC include Housing assistance • Mental health services • Disaster case management • Debris removal • Roads and

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bridges information. The HRC is open to everyone and services are available in multiple languages. She noted that the center is located near the bus station, on the bus line and that there is free parking across the street. Wood said that the HRC served 95 survivors on the first day of opening in April 2025. To date, 512 survivors have been served.

2. Community Engagement Update

Lillian Govus, Communications Director provided an update on community engagement. She touched on the five County plans: Five-year strategic plan; Long-term recovery plan; Parks & Rec master plan; Pedestrian plan and the Swannanoa Small Area plan. She further explained the engagement strategy to learn more and provide input on all on-going plans. She explained that ongoing engagements will be trauma-informed; meet the community where they are; utilize existing meetings; and use existing input from the community.

3. Personnel Ordinance and HR Policies Update

Karen Marshall, Interim HR Director, provided an update on HR policies updates. She explained that in 2021 the County began a multi-year project to update the Personnel Ordinance. She explained that the updates have been designed to eliminate conflicting language, align language with practice, and increase transparency by providing employees with greater detail on HR operations. She provided a preview of three new updates that will be coming before the Board on May 20 for approval: 1) Personnel Ordinance (Revised); 2) Benefits (Revised); and 3) Position Classification (New).

4. Authorization of Officers for Tax-Exempt Bond Proceeds

Melissa Moore, Finance Director, provided an update on tax-exempt bond proceeds. She explained that she would be coming before the Board on May 20 for approval to update the delegation of authority to County Manager and Finance Officer. She explained that reimbursement resolutions which are required to reimburse capital expenditures from tax-exempt bond proceeds which include County capital projects, vehicles, and equipment and School capital projects. The Commissioners asked about the current process and how this would change the process. Moore explained that approval would delegate the Manager and Finance Officer to sign and not have to go on to the Board agenda. Manager Pinder further explained that this would not lose oversight from the Board or the LGC. The Board discussed approval for delegation and then reporting to the Board to keep the board aware.

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REGULAR MEETING OF MAY 6, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on May 6, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Amanda Edwards; Vice-Chair Martin Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

Chair Edwards opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.. Vice-Chair Moore made the motion to approve the consent agenda and to move the proclamations and all presentations other than the Manager's proposed Budget to be heard before Public Comment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

1. Approval of the April 1, 2025 Combined Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the April 8, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of the March 2025 Tax Collection Report
4. Adoption of Municipal Agreements for Tax Collection Agreement Addendums

The City of Asheville approved an additional taxing district within their budget ordinance for fiscal year 2025, the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID). The property tax for the BID is included on regular property tax bills processed within Buncombe County Tax Collections, requiring an adjustment to the Tax Collection Agreement with the City of Asheville. Beginning with fiscal year 2025, the General Assembly approved an amendment to NCGS 160A-314(a1)(4) allowing Town of Woodfin Stormwater Fees to be billed and collected in the same manner as regular property tax. Beginning with fiscal year 2025 the stormwater fees for the Town of Woodfin are included on the property tax bills processed within Buncombe County Tax Collections, requiring and adjustment to the Tax Collection Agreement with the Town of Woodfin. The City of Asheville and the Town of Woodfin have approved the addendum to their Tax Collection Agreements.

5. Adoption of a Resolution Approving Pyrotechnic Experts for Firework Displays

Request from Joshua Caleb Webb and Pyrotecnico, Inc. to conduct a fireworks show on May 30,2025 and May 31, 2025 at The Biltmore House, 1 Approach Rd. Asheville, N.C. 28803 • Request from Steve Sandman and Camp Rockmont to conduct fireworks shows on June 26,2025, July 5,2025, and August 7,2025 at Camp Rockmont for Boys, 375 Lake Eden Rd. Black Mtn., N.C. 28711 • Request from James Wright and PyroWright LLC to conduct a fireworks show on July 4, 2025, at Lake Julian Park, 37 Lake Julian Rd., Arden, N.C. 28704

6. Adoption of a Resolution Supporting NCDOT Project on NC-63 at the Intersection of South Turkey Creek Road

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is planning to construct a turning lane for northbound traffic on NC-63 at the intersection of South Turkey Creek Road. The project will expand the existing right-of-way and is expected to cost \$1,000,000. No

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financial match of County funds will be required. N.C.G.S. § 136-11.1 requires NCDOT to notify municipalities and counties affected by a planned transportation project and request a written resolution expressing the county's view on the project. Accordingly, NCDOT notified the County by and through Planning and Development and is requesting that the Board of Commissioners support this project.

7. Budget Amendment for the FY25 StreamFlow Rehabilitation Assistance Program

The Agriculture and Land Resources Department has been awarded \$76,531 from the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services under the StreamFlow Rehabilitation Assistance Program. The funds will be used for the removal of storm-related stream debris. The period of performance is July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2026.

8. Approval of Interment of Cremains of Unclaimed Bodies Interlocal Agreement

Per statute, The County is responsible for the disposition of unclaimed bodies, which includes cremation and interment. The County does not however have cemetery space and cremains must be handled by a licensed cemetery for final interment. HHS has had an informal agreement with Riverside Cemetery and the City of Asheville in the past to assist with interment of the cremains of unclaimed bodies, however an interlocal agreement has been requested from our City partners to formalize the relationship to inter cremains only for the foreseeable future.

9. Approval to designate Buncombe County as the "Local Team" to Complete Child Fatality Reviews

N.C.G.S. 7B-1406 mandated the establishment of a Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) and a Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) in each county as part of the NC Child Fatality Prevention System. The duties of these teams are to review the records of child deaths from birth to age 18 that occurred in their county; identify any gaps or deficiencies in the delivery of services to children and their families; and make recommendations for changes to laws, rules, and policies that will prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death. NC Session Law 2023-134 (the Appropriations Act of 2023) revised this statute, changing it to read, "each county in the state shall have its own Local Team or participate in a multi-county Local Team, as determined" by the county's local board of county commissioners after consultation with the local Health Director and the local HHS Director. This reorganization into either a single county or multicounty Local Team is to take effect on 05/31/2025. The Buncombe County Health Director and HHS Director, as well as the BCHHS Board, recommend that Buncombe County continue as a single county "Local Team" for child fatality reviews and request that the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners confirm this operational model.

10. Budget Amendment for Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program funding

Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program funding for law enforcement operations has been awarded to the City of Asheville, of which Buncombe County Sheriff's Office is a sub recipient. The 2024 funding to Buncombe County is \$13,310, to be used to purchase First Aid Responder Kits with AEDs for sworn personnel. No new County funds are required.

Presentations

1. Nurses Week Proclamation

Commissioner Horton read the Proclamation to Public Health staff. Ampora thanked the Board for championing public health and all nurses who make a difference everyday.

2. Air Quality Awareness Week Proclamation

Commissioner Sloan read the Proclamation to Ashley Featherston, Director of the Air Quality Agency. Featherston thanked the Board for their recognition and support for their work.

3. Annual Airport Report

Lew Blewies, CEO and President of the Asheville Regional Airport provided an update. He noted the airport surpassed two million passengers for two years in a row, despite a 3% dip following storm-related disruptions.

4. Annual Report of the Buncombe County Community Child Protection Team/Child Fatality Prevention Team

Dr. Mullendore provided an update on the Child Protection Team. She explained that N.C.G.S. 7B-1406 establishes a Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) and a Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) in each county. These teams review the records of child deaths from birth to age 18 that occurred in their county to understand the causes and contributing factors of childhood deaths; identify any gaps or deficiencies in the delivery of services to children and their families; and make recommendations for changes to laws, rules, and policies that will support the safe and healthy development of children and prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death. The CCPT/CFPT is to submit a report annually to the board of county commissioners with their findings and any recommendations for system improvements and needed resources where gaps and deficiencies may exist.

Public Comment

1. Susan Schiemer – support for supplemental aging funds and requested the budget be restored and increased in future budgets.
2. Matt Barker –thanked the Board for showing up at community events and invited the Board members to keep showing up. And asked the Board to encourage Ingel’s supermarket to reopen in Swannanoa.
3. Roy Harris – thanked the Board for the services provided in Buncombe County
4. Rachel Murdang – spoke about I-16 connector project on behalf of citizens coalition. The negative effects of the proposed NCDOT I-26 plan that was updated without community engagement. She explained that the coalition will be holding a community design charette with the goal to arrive at a design that will meet community needs.
5. Cindy Wilson – spoke about the Beech Community license agreement and requested clarity and transparency on chain of ownership. And asked why the process changed.

6. Sonia Marcus – spoke about the I-26 recent changes and the negative neighborhood impacts. She requested the Board attend upcoming community listening events.
7. Ellen Girardi- spoke about IC Imagine Public Charter needs for an SRO assigned to the charter school.
8. Meg Turner – spoke about IC Imagine Public Charter needs for an SRO assigned to the charter school to help ensure safety for students, teachers and parents.
9. Jenn Townley - spoke about IC Imagine Public Charter needs for an SRO assigned to the charter school to help ensure safety for students, teachers and parents.
10. Eleanor S –advocated for teachers and schools in support for school funding
11. Ashni Rhodes – advocated for teachers and schools in support for school funding
12. Maya M – advocated for teachers and schools in support for school funding
13. Kam M – advocated for teachers and schools in support for school funding
14. Tim Loyd – presented a petition for maintain for staff services and programs for students and to fully fund school request
15. Christina Shimrou- support for school funding and support for community petition
16. Christina Mason- support for school funding and support for community petition
17. Franklin Keel – support for school funding
18. Dori Darras – I-26 Citizen Coalition, concerns of current design of the I-26 Connector
19. Gerry Nugent – support for school funding
20. Laina Stapleton – support for school funding
21. Samantha Gallman – Support for school funding
22. Joan Hoffman – Support for school funding
23. Shanna Peele – support for school funding

5. Manager's Recommended FY26 Budget

Avril Pinder, County Manager presented the Manger's proposed FY26 budget. She outlined a \$435 million General Fund plan shaped by recovery from Tropical Storm Helene and a shifting economic landscape. The proposal includes a 3.26-cent property tax increase, resulting in an estimated additional \$114 annually for a home valued at \$350,000. This adjustment is projected to generate \$17.1 million to close the County's budget gap without using reserves. Pinder explained that Education remains the County's largest funding priority, with \$121.8 million allocated—nearly 28% of total expenditures. Over the past four years, education funding has increased \$23.5 million. The FY2026 recommended education budgets are each reduced by the unrestricted revenue rate, which is down 3.49% from the FY2025 adopted budget. Additionally, Pinder noted that Recommended General Fund budgets also include:

- Public Safety (including Sheriff's Office, detention center, community paramedics, EMS, and more) - \$99 million
- Human Services (including Medicaid, child support, aging & adult services, public health, veterans services, and more) - \$97 million
- General Government (including elections, Register of Deeds, tax collection, information technology, and more) - \$66 million
- Debt - \$18 million
- Cultural and Recreational (including parks, libraries, and more) - \$12 million
- Interfund Transfers - \$9 million (including Early Childhood Education funding, Transportation, and Conservation Easements)

Additionally, the recommended budget provides \$624,058,019 in total expenditure across all operating funds. Other annual funds include:

- 911 Special Revenue Fund budget of \$728,900
- Opioid Settlement Fund budget of \$3,218,194
- Tax Reappraisal Reserve Fund budget of \$703,280
- Solid Waste Enterprise Fund budget of \$16,237,293
- Insurance and Benefits Fund budget of \$48,242,165

Pinder concluded with noting that the full recommended budget can be accessed using the [Buncombe County Budget Explorer](#) and that the Public Hearing for the

New Business

1. Consideration of the Reduce to Rebuild Program

Rafael Baptista provided background information. He explained that the Reduce to Rebuild would reduce certain planning and inspection permit fees by 50% through December 31st, 2025, for repair and renovation work on residential structures damaged by Tropical Storm Helene. This proposal was shared with the Board of Commissioners at their April 1st Briefing. This program would reduce the range of planning and inspection permit fee costs per project from \$305-\$1890 to \$152-\$945. The anticipated revenue impact of this program would be approximately ~\$641,000-\$843,000 spread over two fiscal years.

Commissioner Wells made a motion for a fee reduction of 50% for Buncombe County residential permits associated with documented Helene damaged or destroyed primary residences beginning June 1st, 2025, and continuing until December 31st, 2025. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-1 with Chair Edwards voting no.

2. Budget Amendments for Project/Grant Closures

John Hudson provided background information. He explained that the attached ordinances close projects and grants across seven funds as follows: - In the Special Projects Fund (224), 10 projects budgeted at \$4.0M are closed. Savings total \$101K and will cover future costs. - In the School Capital Fund (326), 11 projects budgeted at \$6.7M are closed. Total LOBS savings is \$1,526 and will be returned for future use. - In the Grant Projects Fund (327), 20 grants budgeted at \$21.5M are closed. Two grant overages require coverage (total \$49K) and this amendment accounts for those. - In the AB Tech Capital Fund (333), one project budgeted at \$150K are closed. There are no savings. - In the School Lottery & ADM Fund (335), three projects budgeted at \$1.9M are closed. Additionally, a portion of the previous years' Articles 40 & 42 sales tax revenues that are required to be sent to schools are closed, totaling \$49M. - In the Capital Projects Fund (341), six projects budgeted at \$8.9M are closed. Savings from debt proceeds total \$158K and savings from interfund transfer total \$258K, which will remain in the fund for other projects. - In the Solid Waste Capital Fund (342), two projects budgeted at \$200K are closed. Savings total \$9,277 and will remain in the fund to offset future projects.

Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the proposed budget amendments as stated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and approved unanimously.

3. Budget Amendment to Realize Insurance Rebates and Increase Budget for Health Claims

John Hudson provided background information. He explained that for the Health, Employment, Property & Casualty Fund: Each year, the process of reconciling estimated health claims prior to the budget year to projected health claims during the budget year must take place. Current projections show health claims in excess of about \$2.5M. Offsetting revenues are available thanks to unbudgeted stop loss credits, projected to be around \$1M, and rebates already \$1M in excess of budget with more to come. Therefore, this amendment will increase the budget expenditure by \$3M and balance against these projected revenues.

Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the proposed budget amendments as stated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and approved unanimously.

4. Budget Amendment to Appropriate Fund Balance for Inmate Medical Care

John Hudson provided background information. He explained that the Sheriff's Office is appropriating \$740,460 of fund balance in the Inmate Commissary and Welfare Fund to pay \$507,732 in medical care for Buncombe County inmates being housed at other locations, and \$232,728 for excess outside medical care for local inmates. The Sheriff's Office is appropriating \$740,460 of fund balance in the Inmate Commissary and Welfare Fund to pay \$507,732 in medical care for Buncombe County inmates being housed at other locations, and \$232,728 for excess outside medical care for local inmates.

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to approve the proposed budget amendments as stated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and approved unanimously.

5. Budget Amendment to Increase Hurricane Helene Funding

John Hudson provided background information. He explained that this action is to approve an amendment that increases the current \$29,000,000 budget of the Hurricane Helene grant project by an additional \$8,449,311 to accommodate expenditures to include insurance claims, cost of replacement of insured property included in the FEMA Damage Inventory, contracting costs for Tetra Tech and address budget capacity for future permanent work.

Commissioner Wells requested details about the request for additional funds. Hudson explained that Tetra Tech had a recent increase in the contract and that insurance claims continue to fluctuate. Commissioner Wells requested more information related to the Tetra Tech task order, including information on what may/may not be reimbursed. Manager Pinder noted that Staff would follow up with more information.

Commissioner Ball made the motion to approve the proposed budget amendments as stated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and approved unanimously.

6. Consideration of the FY2025 Audit Contract with Mauldin & Jenkins

Mason Scott provided background information. He explained that in April 2023, the Commission awarded a three-year engagement to Mauldin & Jenkins for the County's annual independent financial audit. The contract award was based on a competitive selection process and recommendation of the County's Audit Committee. In response to the County's 2023 RFP, Mauldin & Jenkins proposed base costs for the initial three-year term of the contract including a base cost for the FY2025 audit of \$199,000. The County's Audit Committee met on April 1, 2025, and considered the audit contract for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. The Audit Committee recommended approval of an FY2025 audit contract with Mauldin & Jenkins in an amount not to exceed \$226,000, including the base cost and audit of five major grant programs, and reduced pricing for audit of any additional major grant programs. Following the Audit Committee meeting and in recognition of the County's ongoing recovery efforts, Mauldin & Jenkins agreed to further reduce contract pricing for FY2025. The revised pricing maintains the FY24 base cost of \$192,000 and further reduces pricing for an additional major grant programs beyond the initial five. The Commission's approval of the FY2025 contract authorizes staff and the external auditor to begin audit work in May 2025. The majority of contract costs will be paid in fiscal year 2026 pursuant to budget adoption.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the FY2025 audit contract with Mauldin & Jenkins in an amount not to exceed \$220,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and was carried unanimously.

Board Appointments

- Planning Board – the Board voted to reappoint Ken Kahn to appoint Liza Schillo to the vacant seat. The Commissioner's expressed appreciation for the great applicants.
- Historic Resources Commission – the Board voted to appoint Bill Roberts and Robert Skouby to the two vacant county seats.
- Asheville Board of Adjustment – the Board voted to appoint Jeremy Plemmons.
- Agricultural Advisory Board for Farmland Preservation – the Board voted to reappoint Steve Duckett and Anne Grier to the board.
- Health & Human Services Board – the Board voted to appoint Donna Martin to the board.

Following appointments, Commissioner Moore requested a database of applications that could be accessible for the Board of the Commissioners to review past applications and suggested that applicants be able to check if they are interested in serving on more than one board in their application form. The Clerk said her office would discuss options.

Closed Session

Interim County Attorney Curt Euler explained the motion to go into closed session for the following reasons:

1. To consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged to consider and give instructions concerning the handling workers' compensation

claim N.C.I.C. File No. 22-048198. There will be no formal action taken at this time. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3).

2. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(4), to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body including economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body. This closed session will be to provide staff guidance. Any action authorizing payment of economic expenditure shall be taken in open session.

Commissioner Moore made the motion to go into closed session for the stated reasons. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

Adjourned at 7:55 p.m.