

**MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS’
BRIEFING MEETING OF NOVEMBER 19, 2024, AT 3:00 p.m.**

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on November 19, 2024, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Brownie Newman; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Amanda Edwards; Commissioner Jasmine Beach-Ferrara Vice-Chair Parker Sloan; Commissioner Martin Moore.

The following items were reviewed.

Hurricane Helene Recovery Update

Avril Pinder, County Manager provided an update on Hurricane Helene Recovery in Buncombe County. She provided a summary of the emergency response efforts, which included early activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), evacuation orders, shelter openings, and Swiftwater rescues. Recovery priorities focused on providing access to water, public health monitoring, debris removal, and temporary housing for displaced residents. To date, over \$70 million in FEMA assistance has been approved, benefiting thousands of households.

John Barry from Tetra Tech discussed the Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) program, explaining the application process for eligible residents to receive assistance for clearing hazardous debris and demolishing unsafe structures.

Shared Leave Policy Update

Karen Marshall, Interim Human Resources Director, introducing the discussion of a proposed shared leave policy in response to Hurricane Helen's impact on employees. She explained that some employees had exhausted their accrued leave or had insufficient leave due to their short tenure and now needed time off to address storm-related damage to their homes or rental properties. The proposed shared leave policy would allow employees to donate leave to a shared bank to assist those in need, with the Human Resources Department managing the bank.

Amy Davis, Employee Relations Manager, outlined the policy, noting that employees who have exhausted their leave balances could apply for up to 80 hours of donated leave for recovery purposes. The policy would be time-limited, ending at the fiscal year's close, with any remaining leave returned proportionally to donors. Employees could donate up to their annual leave accrual, provided they maintained a minimum balance of 80 hours.

Commissioner Edwards raised concerns, noting her preference for creating a special disaster leave category rather than relying on shared leave, especially given that some employees may not be able to work to accrue additional leave due to severe damage. Commissioners expressed interest in exploring alternative options and agreed to revisit the policy with additional options and to provide timely support for affected employees.

FCC Update

Dane Pederson introduced Charles Merkley who presented remotely. He provided on the transition to a new waste management contract with FCC Environmental Services, which begins January 1, 2025. The presentation highlighted several key aspects of the transition, including equipment, cart deliveries, personnel, communication, and routing. Charles Merkley of FCC discussed the types of vehicles to be used, such as automated side loaders, rear loaders, and specialized trucks for difficult terrains. Over 13,000 carts have already been delivered to a storage site, with plans to deploy up to 2,200 carts per day starting in December.

Closed Session

Curt Euler read the motion to go into closed session to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order 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 of a lawsuit in Federal District Court, Western District of Brandon Pickens v. Jason Lambert et al, 1:21-cv-0030-MR and workers compensation claim N.C.I.C. File No. 23-033869. There will be no formal action taken at this time. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3).

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to go into closed session. It was seconded by Commissioner Edwards and carried unanimously.

**MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS’
REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 19, 2024, AT 5:00 p.m.**

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on November 19, 2024, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Brownie Newman; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Amanda Edwards; Commissioner Jasmine Beach-Ferrara Vice-Chair Parker Sloan; Commissioner Martin Moore.

Chairman Newman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and provided opening statements.

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of the November 1, 2024 special meeting minutes
2. Approval of the November 7, 2024 regular meeting minutes
3. Budget amendment to accept extending grant funds for the Medication Assisted Treatment program in the Detention Facility
 - o Budget Amendment
4. Budget amendment to accept the Digital Opportunities Grant awarded from Dogwood Digital Literacy for Buncombe County Public Libraries
 - o Budget Amendment
5. Authorization for the County Manager to enter a contract with Enterprises G for the Detention Center Shower Repair Project

Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the consent agenda and to follow the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Edwards and carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Kim Coert urged the Commission to make exceptions to housing rules and allow temporary shelters like trailers or small homes for 90 days to help those displaced by the disaster. She stressed the importance of providing warmth during the winter to avoid health risks and potential deaths.

Jen Hampton thanked the Commission for their compassion at the last meeting and urged them to support a state-level eviction moratorium. She highlighted the financial strain on service workers who are unable to pay rent due to job loss and asked the Commission to provide direct rental assistance.

Jeremy Phillips expressed frustration with delays in getting permits and assessments, which are holding up rebuilding efforts. He suggested partnering with outside firms to speed up the process and proposed using shipping container homes as a quick solution for temporary housing.

Justin Fromkin proposed partnering with his company in the Netherlands that builds sustainable housing units of shipping containers with units ready for delivery and set up in Western North Carolina if FEMA would fund it.

Sonya reported that over 300 volunteers had come to assist, but many people are still waiting for help, with over 230 requests pending. She urged the Commission to expedite permits so that volunteers can begin repairs and highlighted the donation of campers as a temporary housing solution for vulnerable individuals.

GOOD NEWS

Recipient of the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

John Hudson, Budget Director explained that for the 29th consecutive year, Buncombe County has received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the FY2025 Budget Document. He explained that the award recognizes budget documents of the highest quality based on best practices in state and local government budgeting and finance. In addition, when all reviewers rate specific categories at the highest level, the GFOA awards special recognition. This budget award came with special recognition in Strategic Goals & Strategies and in Capital Programs. Hudson introduced his budget team, Sam Riddle, Esther Lail and Jay Shih.

PRESENTATIONS

Proclamation recognizing November as Native American Heritage Month

Commissioner Moore read the Proclamation which was received by Drew Reisinger, and Trey Adcock, PhD, Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, UNC Asheville.

Proclamation honoring Commissioner Beach-Ferrara years of service

Commissioner Whitesides read the Proclamation to Commissioner Jasmine Beach-Ferrara and thanked her for her years of service.

Proclamation honoring Chairman Newman years of service

Commissioner Edwards read the Proclamation to Chairman Newman and thanked him for this leadership. Newman thanked the 2024 Commissioners and staff for the many successes in his tenure with Buncombe County.

Financial quarterly update – 4th quarter, FY2024

Melissa Moore, Finance Director, presented the preliminary financial report for FY24, highlighting key areas for the fourth quarter. She explained that this report is considered preliminary since it is unaudited results. The general fund's amended budget was \$4.138 million, including \$24.6 million of appropriated fund balance. Actual revenue collected was \$47.8 million, exceeding projections by \$3.6 million, although sales tax and Medicaid hold harmless distributions underperformed. Total expenditures for the year amounted to \$49.5 million, with \$9.4 million remaining, including \$3.2 million rolled over. The available fund balance was 17.6%, equating to \$75.8 million, slightly below the prior year due to expenditures surpassing revenue.

In the Solid Waste fund, revenue was \$14.9 million, slightly under the budget of \$17.3 million, with a 23.8% increase over the previous year. Capital projects totaled \$52 million year-to-date, with \$15 million spent in FY24, an increase from \$9 million the previous year. The county's investment portfolio earned \$14.2 million in interest, with a significant portion in interest-earning accounts, achieving favorable returns despite interest rate reductions. The county's debt overview showed that 47% of debt is dedicated to school capital projects, and the total direct debt to assessed value is well under the 3% maximum, providing capacity for future projects.

Melissa also discussed the county's strong debt metrics, with a 10-year debt payout schedule and no variable debt, ensuring financial stability. She concluded by confirming that the Quarter 1 report for this fiscal year would be presented in December.

Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization (CDBG-NR) quarterly update

Nate Pennington, Planning Director, provided the Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization update. He explained that the grant from the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Rural Economic Development Division, which has a maximum award of \$400,000 for home repairs. Initially, five home repair sites were selected, but this has now been increased to nine. Following the recent storm, the team has been in communication with the Department of Commerce and Asheville Habitat for Humanity, which sustained damage to its offices, to potentially use the funds for additional home repairs related to storm damage.

The selection criteria for repairs focus on addressing basic issues such as roof, septic, gutter, and siding repairs to help individuals remain in their homes and prevent further damage. The team is working to expand the site selection across the county, with a goal to achieve geographic equity. They are also conducting necessary environmental reviews and awaiting clearance from the Department of Commerce to proceed with repairs by Habitat for Humanity.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing to consider an amendment to Chapter 78 of the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance to regulate crypto-currency mining operations, data centers, and government protective services

Gillian Phillip, Long Range Planning Division Manager provided background. She explained that the Board will be consider amendments to Chapter 78 of the Buncombe County Code of Ordinances, and more specifically, sections 78-581 Definitions, 78-641 Permitted Uses, and 78-678 Uses by right subject to special requirements and special use standards. The amendments propose to further regulate crypto-currency mining operations, data centers, and government protective services.

She explained that a moratorium was placed cryptocurrency mining in May 2023 to allow staff time to study regulations, and it was extended in May 2024. Data centers, defined as groups of computer servers used for data storage, processing, or distribution, were distinguished from cryptocurrency mining facilities. Additionally, government protective services, such as fire stations, police stations, EMS, and E911 centers, were found to require zoning changes for certain areas where they were not previously permitted.

The proposed text amendments: add the definition of Crypto-currency mining operation to the definitions section; add the definition of Data Center to the definitions section; add Government Protective Services to the Permitted Uses Table to allow it as a Use-By-Right in all zoning districts; add Data Center (non-crypto currency) to the Permitted Uses Table, and permit it in the CS, EMP, PS, and AI zoning districts with Special Requirements (SR); add Special Requirement standards for Data Centers, to include: sound study, facility enclosure, certification of noise level, setback requirements from residential properties and structures, generator use hours of operation, screening requirements; and add Crypto-currency mining to the Permitted Use Table and prohibit it in all zoning districts

The public hearing was opened at 6:09 p.m., and two public comments were provided. George Shuling shared concerns about the ongoing suffering in the community following the recent disaster. He called for the government to streamline processes to provide aid and support and suggested loosening restrictions on marijuana laws to generate revenue. Wayne Buris shared his personal challenges in assisting others after the disaster, including having his truck impounded. He requested more support from the government to help those affected. No additional public comments were made, and the public hearing was closed at 6:16 PM.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve the text amendments as proposed, it was seconded by Commissioner Wells and was carried unanimously.

Public Hearing to consider an amendment to Chapter 78 of the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance to create standards to allow Emergency Housing within Buncombe County in response to Tropical Storm Helene

Shannon Cappazeli, Planning Department, provided background information. She explained that the Board will consider amendments to Chapter 78 (The Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance) of the Buncombe County Code of Ordinances, and more specifically, sections 78-581 Definitions, 78-641 Permitted Uses, 78-644 Steep Slope/High Elevation Overlay District, 78-645 Protected Ridge Overlay District, and 78-678 Uses by right subject to special requirements and special use standards. The amendments propose to create standards to allow Emergency Housing within Buncombe County in response to Tropical Storm Helene and that this amendment would provide additional flexibility to work with partners on housing needs. These amendments are intended to allow FEMA and nonprofit agencies to deploy travel trailers and manufactured homes for short- and long-term housing needs in disaster-affected areas.

The proposed changes would define emergency housing, revise the definition of travel trailers, add emergency housing to the Permitted Use Table and allow in all zoning districts with special requirements, add Emergency Housing as an allowed use Steep Slope Overlay District and Protected Ridge Overlay District and create special requirement standards for Emergency Housing. Special requirements include that applicants must have been affected by the disaster or be assisting in recovery, that the housing cannot obstruct recovery operations, and that it cannot be placed in regulated floodways. Housing would be allowed for up to two years, with an option for a one-year extension. Specific conditions include a requirement for E-911 addressing, approved utilities, waste management, and adequate access for vehicles. Additionally, there are recommendations for geotechnical reviews in areas prone to landslides or heavy flooding.

Chairman Newman opened the Public Hearing at 6:27 pm and there were three speakers.

- DeeDee Styles expressed support for the zoning amendments but raised concerns about the wastewater provisions for travel trailers. Specifically, they questioned the three-month grace period for connecting travel trailers to approved wastewater systems and worried about the environmental impact, particularly with wastewater potentially contaminating nearby waterways. She suggested that travel trailers should be required to have an immediate wastewater management plan, such as a contract with a portable toilet company, to avoid contamination. She acknowledged the urgency of the amendment and requested the board to address the wastewater issue.
- Sam Burson, co-pastor of Covenant Community Church spoke in favor of the amendment, emphasizing that the need for emergency housing is urgent, with over 1,100 displaced students in the county. He explained that his church had already partnered with Buncombe County Schools to establish a transitional housing village for 30 families, and he asked for the commissioners' support to expedite the process, ensuring that these families had safe housing as soon as possible.
- Timothy Lloyd spoke in support for the amendment. He noted that the storm had exacerbated housing insecurity in the community, particularly among families and school staff who had already been struggling. He urged the commissioners to move forward with the amendment swiftly, as delays meant additional hardship for displaced families, especially children.

Chairman Newman closed the public hearing at 6:36 p.m.

Nate Pennington, Planning Director clarified that he has already reached out to Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) and Environmental Health to explore options for reconnecting damaged homes to septic systems or existing water taps. For group housing sites, additional infrastructure, including water and electricity, will be required, and the fire marshal has been consulted to ensure that safety standards are met. A key consideration is avoiding harmful situations, such as placing RVs in floodways. The goal of the proposed amendment is to provide flexibility for staff to address community needs as they work through winter.

Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the text amendment as presented. Commissioner Edwards 2nd the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Public Hearing to consider the administration of a small business job retainage grant program to assist those individuals who have suffered substantial financial damages due to Hurricane Helene

Elizabeth Odderstol, provided background information. She explained that the purpose November 19th Public Hearing is to authorize \$1.5 million in economic development appropriations in accordance with GS 158-7.1 and Ch. 166A. These appropriations are for the facilitation of the Helene Relief small business job retainage grant program to assist those individuals who have suffered substantial financial damages due to Helene. She explained that this project was approved by the Board of Commissioners at the November 1st meeting. As an economic development appropriation, staff have provided a 10-day notice for this public hearing. If approved, funds will be made available for this program and the County will partner

with Mountain BizWorks, a Community Development Financial Institution, to administer the program.

Mountain BizWorks, which is already administering an additional \$1.5 million in relief funds, will use a common grant application to streamline the process. Their staff will determine which funding source is most appropriate for each business, based on eligibility criteria. The contract with Mountain BizWorks includes a 2.5% administration fee for managing the program.

Odderstol clarified that the program would combine this funding with other resources already managed by Mountain BizWorks, using their common grant application process. Staff also confirmed that the relief would be available to businesses of various structures, including sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations, as long as they employ 25 or fewer people. There was a question as to whether a resident could apply to both programs – as to which Staff replied they would follow up.

Chairman Newman opened the public hearing at 6:48 p.m. There were no public comments, and the public hearing closed at 6:48 p.m.

Commissioner Edwards made the motion to approve as presented; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

Avril Pinder, County Manager, introduced David Sweat as the new Health and Human Services Director. Sweat is a public health professional with more than thirty years of experience serving the public and improving the health of communities. He has worked for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Texas Department of Health, the UNC Center for Public Health Preparedness, and most recently the Mecklenburg County Department of Health.

NEW BUSINESS

Authorization to reallocate COVID Recovery Funding from the Ferry Road Infrastructure project to Coxe Avenue Affordable Housing Development project

Tyler Henry provided the background information. Henry explained that in 2021, Buncombe County was awarded a total of \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (“COVID Recovery Funding”) via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to invest toward recovery from COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts. These funds were awarded on a rolling basis to projects by Commissioners as selected via multiple Request for Proposals (RFP) processes. Funding Hurricane Helene has had severe impacts on our community’s infrastructure and housing needs. He explained that the Ferry Road project requires an access road and other infrastructure to be built making the project more difficult to construct at this time because it would be competing against other projects/needs that currently exist in Buncombe County. The delayed timeline to construct Ferry Road would also put COVID Recovery Funds at risk of not being spent on time. The Coxe Avenue Affordable Housing project will be able to move much quicker, allowing funds to go towards meeting the need of affordable housing in the community while also meeting requirements set by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Chairman Newman said this would help meet urgent community housing needs while ensuring that the funds are spent on time and will provide 200 affordable apartments in downtown Asheville. He requested the County partner with the City of Asheville for future funding on the project.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and it was carried unanimously.

Authorization for the County Manager to execute individual structure leases between the County and Milestone Towers, land lease between the County and property owners of the Broad River tower, and co-location lease between the County and Verizon Wireless for radio towers and to improve cellular connectivity

Vance Bell provided the background information. He explained that at the July 16, 2024 meeting of the Board of Commissioners he advised the Board that the County was prepared to move forward with several leases regarding County owned radio towers which would require public notices given the length of time of the leases. These leases include: Land lease between the County and property owners of the Broad River tower at 221T Still Springs Road; Co-location lease between the County and Verizon Wireless; and Twelve (12) individual structure leases for the County owned towers between the County and Milestone Towers As required by NC Statute § 160A-272, public notices detailing a description of the property subject to the lease, the amount of the lease and the Commissioners' intent on executing the leases were publishing on September 23, 2024 for the required thirty (30) days. A breakdown of the leases are as follows: 1. The Cato/Baker lease is for a 2.02 acre parcel identified as PIN 0635-76-7924 is located at 220T Still Springs Road, Black Mountain 28711. The Lease Term will be ten (10) years with the option to renew for three (3) additional five (5) year terms for a total of twenty-five (25) years. As rent, the Property owners will receive 40% of the monthly gross rental revenues from any new antenna rentals executed on the Tower or \$1,000 per month whichever amount is greater.

The Verizon lease is for the same property, allowing Verizon to co-locate on the property and tower. The term of the lease shall be five (5) years with an option to renew for four (4) additional five (5) year terms for a total of twenty-five (25) years. Verizon will pay the County \$28,500.00 per year and the rent will increase 3% each year. 3. The County will enter into twelve (12) structural leases for the available space on the radio towers. The Lease Term will be ten (10) years with the option to renew for three (3) additional five (5) year terms for a total of twenty-five (25) years. The County will receive forty percent (40%) of the gross revenue from any new antenna rentals on each tower and ninety percent (90%) of the gross revenues from existing rentals on the towers. Execution of these agreements will allow the County to continue to operate the Board River Tower for twenty-five years, to give formal permission to Verizon Wireless to locate their equipment on the Broad River radio tower and to allow Milestone to market the vacant space on its radio towers. This will greatly improve the cellular connectivity in the Broad River/Garren Creek areas which is sorely needed, especially after Helene.

Commissioner Wells if the contracts have wording in place to ensure service will be replace in future issues or another disaster. Bell confirmed there was wording in place. Commissioner Sloan asked about the current state of coverage. Bell explained that Veriozon got all their sites back up and running and two weeks and that AT&T restored even quicker. Be noted that he was unaware of any ongoing issues. Commissioner Whitesides asked who

received the money. Bell and Euler explained that for new customers brought in by Milestone, they receive 40% of the revenue, while the county receives 60%. For existing contracts, such as the one being approved during the meeting, the revenue is split differently. Milestone receives 10% of the revenue, and the remaining is divided between the county and landowners.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the three resolutions as presented. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Authorization for the County Manager to amend the Mountain Community Capital Fund Operating Agreement

Elizabeth Odderstol provided the background information. She explained that the Mountain Community Capital Fund (MCCF) agreement has been updated to reflect the current state and practices of the MCCF Operating Committee. This is the first revision of the Agreement since the establishment of the fund in 2018. The updates to the Agreement serve to evergreen the document, establish a five-year term with option to renew, allocate eligible losses based on funding sources, and move the description of funds to a separate exhibit.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

Budget amendment to purchase three pieces of equipment for Solid Waste that are currently used on month-to-month leases

John Hudson, Budget Director provided the background information. He explained that given the increase in volume and the outlook of existing leases on specific equipment, this budget amendment allows Solid Waste to move forward with the purchase of three pieces of equipment currently used on month-to-month leases: one wheel loader, one landfill compactor, and one excavator. He explained that the purchase will end those agreements and bypass the wear-and-tear charges normally required. Since some savings will be garnered by the end of the leases, the required amount is only \$280,293.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the budget amendment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Budget amendment to appropriate State 911 fund balance for backup center equipment, recorders, additional training, increased telephone expenses, fire station alerting, CAD upgrades, and equipment maintenance & monitoring

John Hudson, Budget Director provided the background. He explained that this amendment appropriates State 911 fund balance for the following expenditures in the 911 Fund: Backup Center Equipment, Recorders, Additional Training, Increased Telephone Expenses, Fire Station Alerting, CAD Upgrades, and Equipment Maintenance & Monitoring. The total fund balance to be appropriated is \$859,927.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Interlocal Agreement with the City of Asheville and Black Mountain for debris removal

Amy Broughton, Legal, provided the background information. She explained that Tropical Storm Helene yielded over 10 million cubic yards of debris countywide, much of which is on private property (residential, commercial, and in waterways) and constitutes a threat to public health, safety, and welfare. It is estimated that approximately 4000 private property owners in the county (including the incorporated municipalities) require storm-related debris removal. Many of these property owners and some businesses will qualify for no-cost private property debris removal (PPDR) by a third-party debris-removal entity and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In order to qualify for no-cost PPDR, property owners must participate in a detailed intake process involving an application, insurance verification, a right-of-entry, and inspection. Tetra Tech, Inc., the County's disaster-recovery consultant has been tasked with designing and implementing a PPDR intake process. To facilitate the intake process, Tetra Tech will perform PPDR outreach in person at intake centers, online through a PPDR dashboard, and via a call center. The City of Asheville and the Town of Black Mountain have expressed interest in having the County, by and through Tetra Tech, administer the intake process for their residents and businesses. The interlocal agreements would govern the PPDR intake for Asheville and Black Mountain. It is anticipated that FEMA will reimburse the County for these services entirely, but to the extent that they are not reimbursed, the municipalities will reimburse the County for the actual costs incurred by the County to administer the PPDR intake for Asheville and Black Mountain residents. Once the intake process is complete, Asheville and Black Mountain will each engage a third-party entity to remove the debris.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve the interlocal agreements as presented. Commissioner Whitesides seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

Resolution authorizing the County Manager to contract with Grace Covenant to administer the Household Assistance Program and to allocate the remaining fundings to Economic Services for Household Assistance

Elizabeth Odderstol provided background information. She explained that on November 1st, the Board of Commissioners approved the reallocation of ARPA funds for Helene Relief Programs. Staff released an RFP to identify partners to manage the Household Assistance relief funds. Two proposals were reviewed by staff and one was selected. Staff recommend proceeding with Grace Covenant and administering the remaining funds via Buncombe County Economic Services with additional temporary staffing resources.

Odderstol emphasized that the goal is to minimize administrative costs to maximize relief, and both Grace Covenant and Buncombe County will track income and demographic data to ensure the assistance reaches households at or below 80% of the area's median income. The program will prioritize accessibility and include an open application window for residents. Commissioners praised the swift response to the community's needs and expressed support for the program. There were questions about the speed of implementation, particularly in addressing evictions, and it was noted that Grace Covenant is already working with landlords to prevent evictions, and that Staff is already working closely with a staffing firm to quickly deploy temporary workers to help manage the program. This process is meant to ensure that the county's side of the relief effort could move forward without unnecessary delays. Chairman Newman asked if community members could apply for both programs. Odderstol said staff would follow up and that the County will work to ensure the process is clear and that individuals are directed to the appropriate resources to avoid any confusion.

Commissioner Edwards made the motion to approve as presented. The motion was seconded, and it was carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Chairman Newman noted that there were no board appointments to be made at this time. He asked Manager Pinder when Board and Commission meetings would resume as they have been inactive due to the focus on emergency response and recovery. Pinder advised that the timeline to resume these meetings is yet to be determined while staff continues to support the Emergency Operating Center and staff capacity is limited. Meetings will resume when the majority of staff can be released from emergency work and are able to support board activities.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.