MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

SPECIAL MEETING ON JULY 14, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Special Meeting on July 14, 2026, in the 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 Drew Ball; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; and Commissioner Parker Sloan

The Chair opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Pepi Acebo- thanked the Board of Commissioners and staff for their support of public education.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Amend the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget**

Budget Director John Hudson and Tax Assessor Eric Cregger presented an overview of the impacts of Senate Bills 889 and 474 on Buncombe County's FY2027 budget and property tax rates. They explained that SB 889 delays implementation of the County's 2026 real property revaluation until 2027, requiring the use of prior real property values for FY2027, while SB 474 provides Buncombe County the option to use the 2026 reappraisal values if the Board adopts a revenue-neutral tax rate. The presentation also outlined the effect of the legislation on property values, noting that the delay applies only to real property revaluation values and does not affect personal property. Staff reviewed the FY2027 budget development process, including work sessions held between November 2025 and June 2026, the major budget drivers, non-negotiable expenditures, and the factors that resulted in the adopted FY2027 budget of $484.4 million.

Hudson then compared two implementation options. Under Option 1 (SB 889), the County would maintain the FY2027 budget adopted on June 2 by using prior property values and adjusting the County tax rate to 61.54 cents per $100 of assessed value, while also adjusting the tax rates for the Unified Fire District and Asheville City Schools. Staff noted that this option would preserve the adopted funding levels for education, County services, and community investments. Under Option 2 (SB 474), the County would use the 2026 reappraisal values with a revenue-neutral tax rate of 40 cents per $100 of assessed value, resulting in an estimated $24.7 million reduction in property tax revenue that would require corresponding budget reductions to achieve a balanced budget. The presentation also addressed impacts on special taxing districts and noted that SB 474 authorizes the Board to amend the FY2027 budget ordinance based on the legislative changes. Staff concluded by requesting adoption of an amended FY2027 budget under Option 1, including revised tax rates for Buncombe County, the Unified Fire District, and Asheville City Schools.

Commissioners expressed concern and frustration with the legislation and its effect on the County's budget process. They noted that significant time and effort had been devoted to developing the FY2027 budget through a transparent public process that included community input. Commissioners stated that the legislation jeopardized the County's ability to maintain essential services, undermined the purpose of the property revaluation process, and did not provide the type of targeted property tax relief that had been advocated for at the state level. It was also noted that the County was uniquely impacted by the legislation following Tropical Storm Helene and they emphasized the importance of making responsible fiscal decisions to continue funding County government and supporting ongoing recovery efforts.

Commissioner Whitesides made a motion to Adopt the amended FY27 budget with prior values and the following tax rates: (Option 1)

- Buncombe County – 61.54 cents per $100 of assessed value
- Unified Fire District – 17.38 cents per $100 of assessed value
- Asheville City Schools – 11.75 cents per $100 of assessed value

Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Attorney Curt Euler provided background information. He explained that the Board is requested 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 and give instructions concerning the handling of a lawsuit in Federal District Court, Western District of Buncombe County et al v. HCA Healthcare Inc., et al, 1:22-cv-147-MR. He noted that no formal action will be taken. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3).

Commissioner Horton made the motion to go into closed session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously.