

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'
BRIEFING MEETING OF JUNE 17, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on July 15, 2025, in the Chamber located on the 3rd floor at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Chair Amanda Edwards

The following was discussed:

1. FCC Update

Lewis Knight, General Manager for FCC provided the update. He explained that as of July 1st, all calls are being answered at the local site, 5 additional on-site Customer Service Representatives and that 4 dispatchers and 1 onsite billing agent are already in place. For the month of June, FCC averaged 22 calls per day. Knight further explained that FCC currently serves 38,233 subscribers for trash and recycling services, surpassing previous haulers 36,483 customers. Service improvements are underway, including: 1) Continue to adjust routes as more customers sign up to be sure we have the capacity on the truck and that we are routing it to the correct type of vehicle; 2) Fully staffed and now have the Swing drivers available to cover absences and or assist if a route gets behind; 3) Morning crew out, all drivers are given a copy of any escalation from prior missed customer along with a list of any new additions to the route and they sequence them, so they are not missed the next service day; 4) Evening check in dispatch verifies route completion through the tablets and 3rd Eye camera and GPS system. Additionally, he noted that FCC will be present at the upcoming Town Halls hosted by the County.

2. Helene Update

Dane Pedersen began the update with an update on debris. He explained that 3,315,783 cubic yards. He explained that the demolition is still under review by the federal and state partners and that the timeline for demolition to begin is unknown due to funding issues at the federal level. The temporary debris sites will be closing out July 30th except for Enka. There are a couple opportunities that staff is exploring for debris processing, including biochar and biomass powerplants as well as firewood plants.

Tim Love provided an update on Helene Legislative items. He explained that NC State has spent 1.9 billion dollars on Helene aid. He reviewed HB1012 and explained that this bill was signed into law June 26, 2025 and 1) Allocated \$700 million into the Helene Relief Fund and appropriated \$500 million for direct recovery efforts, leaving the other \$200 million for future relief; 2) Includes: water & wastewater treatment; for private roads & bridges; matching funds for FEMA programs; crop loss program; support for volunteer organizations actively working on Helene Recovery; funding to help address wildfires; dam safety & rehabilitation; and tourism

promotion for Western North Carolina. Love noted that the bill does not include small business relief or local government revenue replacement.

Samantha Browers provided an update on Helene funding approach. She explained that the County is striving to 1) maximize external funding sources for local recovery projects – including federal, state & private grants, & financing options; 2) Incorporate project management & fund administration to the greatest extent possible; 3) Prioritize accountability to both outcomes & compliance requirements; 4) Coordinate within the Grants & Funding team within Foundational Recovery Support Function (extension of existing internal Grant Governance Team); 5) Partner with community-based organizations in their efforts to secure recovery funding. She said that there are 113 prospective funding opportunities in grants and loans supporting Helene recovery and 68 projects in FEMA Public Assistance.

Rachael Sawyer provided an update on the Helene Recovery Office. She explained that the new Recovery Officer position has opened and closed and that still is in the process of interviewing candidates. The Officer will: 1) Oversee Buncombe County's Tropical Storm Helene disaster recovery efforts; 2) Organize, coordinate, and advance local recovery initiatives by facilitating collaboration among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders to implement recovery strategies; 3) Align efforts, and drive progress toward County recovery goals to ensure a unified and effective response Recovery Office Project Managers: (Grant Funded); 4) Manage and coordinate the implementation of projects in the Helene Recovery Plan. Sawyer also provided an update on the Recovery Plan. She explained that the plan started with community input in April-May and that the plan is currently in project development for public comment in September- October. Adoption is estimated for November 2025.

3. Code Enforcement Team

Jason Rogers, Assistance Director of Permits and Inspections, provided background information related to the Code Enforcement Team. He explained that the internal team was established to manage multi-departmental nuisance cases in a consistent and collaborative manner with the purpose of leveraging varied expertise to develop creative, trauma informed solutions to complex compliance issues. The team coordinates with outside agencies such as DEQ, NCDOT, MSD, etc. Once a complaint is levied, it becomes an internal staff process until the complaint is resolved. The team reviews the following types of violations: Buildings and Building Regulations; Air Quality - Illegal burning; Environmental Health – Wastewater; Fire Prevention and Protection; Solid Waste – Junk and Trash; Zoning/Development Ordinances – Junkyards, Erosion Control, Junk Vehicles. To date, 2,192 complaint cases for all departments since 2022 have been received. 107 Properties have met the criteria of 2 or more violations and have been reviewed by the Code Enforcement Team and 9 properties with major issues are currently in review by the team. Rogers noted that this is resource intensive and requires a lot of staff time to follow up; additionally, funds are often need to bring effective remedy and when a property does come into compliance, it may require monitoring to sustain. The Board discussed and asked if there are Community partners that could assist with the monitoring and management.

4. Healthy Opportunities Letter

Commissioner Wells provided background information. She explained that she, alongside Commissioner Horton and Chair Edwards, prepared a draft letter for the Board's consideration, urging continued state funding for the Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP) program. Commissioner Wells shared her experiences observing the program's direct impact in communities like Barnardsville and Swannanoa and emphasized how critical HOP services were in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Wells explained that currently, with no state budget in place, the pilot program is unfunded. Wells referenced the economic data in the letter, highlighting HOP's broader impact, including a \$74 million economic benefit from food-related services alone, over 500 jobs supported, and \$22 million in labor income—over \$21 million of which was generated in Buncombe County. Additionally, 81 of the 400 farms involved are based in Buncombe, and many local farmers depended on HOP for about 20% of their annual income. The Board expressed appreciation for the leadership and affirmed support for the letter. The Board discussed and decided this item should be put on this afternoon's regular meeting agenda under New Business for further discussion and a vote.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 15, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on July 15, 2025, in the Chamber located on the 3rd floor at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Chair Amanda Edwards

Vice-Chair Moore opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

CONSENT

Commissioner Wells made a motion to add the Healthy Opportunities letter of support discussed at the briefing to New Business. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

Commissioner Whitesides moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

Commissioner Moore made a motion to move the Proclamations before Public Comment on the agenda. Commissioner Whitesides seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

1. Approval of June 17, 2025, Combined Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the Corrected June 3, 2025, Combined Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of the May 2025 Tax Collection Report
4. Approval of Waiver of Occupancy Tax Penalty for Parks Hospitality Group
5. Budget Amendment for the Youth Sports Grant - North Carolina Amateur Sports
6. Amendment to the FY2026 Fee Schedule

PROCLAMATIONS

1. Proclamation Acknowledging Independent Retailer Month

Commissioner Ball read the Proclamation and Rebecca with Downtown Merchants accepted the Proclamation.

2. Proclamation Acknowledging Parks and Recreation Month

Commissioner Sloan read the Proclamation, and it was accepted by County Parks and Rec staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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1. Woody Davis – expressed support for saving the UNCA woods
2. Steve Arpin - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods
3. Dennis Ash - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods
4. Chris Cotteta - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods and to oppose the UNCA development through a resolution
5. Jonathon Horton – 10 mins - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods and oppose the UNCA development through a resolution
6. Sandy Newes - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods and opposed a new stadium in the neighborhood
7. Daven Walter – ceded time
8. Many Schultz – ceded time
9. David Clarke - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods
10. Molly Thomas-Gregory - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods and to oppose the UNCA development through a resolution
11. Howard Lubel - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods and to oppose the UNCA development through a resolution
12. Mica Moore - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods
13. Tom Craig – expressed the need to explore alternative locations for the potential stadium
14. Susan Schiemer – thanked the Board for the funding to the BC Aging Funds – as Chair, she stated that the allocated funds will support 12 programs
15. Matthew Zimmerman - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods
16. Jeffery Decristofaro - expressed support for saving the UNCA woods and requested it be preserved as a nature preserve

PRESENTATIONS

3. Homeowner Grant Program Update

Phillip Hardin provided an update on the Homeowner Grant Program. He explained that the Homeowner Grant Program began in 2022. To date, 506 applications have been approved by Buncombe County. Hardin provided the policy highlights, stating that the program requires: 1) 80% Area Median Income; 2) \$60,000 Liquid Reserve limit; 3) Primary residence occupied 12 months/year; 4) Cannot own multiple properties (adjoining lot exclusion); 5) 5-year ownership minimum; 6) Single residence property; 7) and cannot already receive a state tax exemption. The application opened today, and 72+ applications were received in the first day.

Manager Pinder asked the Board to review the policy highlights and to provide guidance if there are any proposed changes for staff to explore and bring back.

Commissioner Ball asked about prior years' enrollment and various ways to inform the community about this program. He also asked about the drop in funds from FY25 to FY26 and expressed concern that people may be turned away. Manager Pinder clarified that if applicants are eligible it will come to the Board before being denied and that the Board would have the ability to add more. Commissioner Sloan asked about the application framework and if there are parts that could be streamlined to reduce the burden on staff. Pinder clarified that this is not a tax-exempt program noting that the County cannot legally do that; rather, it is a general assistance program and therefore needs to be about the area of medium income. She explained

that there are administrative costs budgeted for contracted work to help maintain the program. The Board further discussed possible tweaks for consideration. Manager Pinder said that staff would follow up with an analysis.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of the Home and Community Care Block Grant Agreement and Funding Plan

David Sweat and Alison Banzhoff, in Health and Human Services, provided background information. He explained that during the FY26 budget work sessions, recommendations allocating \$1,700,000 in HCCBG federal grant funds were shared with the Board of Commissioners. The Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) is a grant agreement managed between local Area Agencies on Aging, the Board of County Commissioners, and community service providers. Buncombe County partners with Land-of-Sky Regional Council and the Buncombe Aging Services Alliance (BASA) to provide services to the older adults of Buncombe County. On June 3rd, the Board of Commissioners approved an additional \$375,000 in Supplemental Aging Funds (BCSAF), for services that are beyond the scope of the HCCBG guidelines. A portion of this funding is also granted to Buncombe County Health and Human Services for the administration of In-Home Aide Services totaling \$360,668 from HCCBG and \$45,000 from BCSAF funds. For FY26, the county has been awarded \$315,668 for the In-Home Aide program. In the event federal funding changes, the HCCBG Advisory Committee will prepare revised recommendations and funding amounts to share with the board.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to adopt the resolution as presented. Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

2. Consideration of the C&D Landfill Phase 8 Construction Contract

Dane Pedersen, Solid Waste Director, provided background information. He explained that Buncombe County Solid Waste is currently operating in Phase 7, the active disposal area for Construction and Demolition materials. Phase 7 will fill to capacity in the next few months and the department needs to permit and construct the next disposal area, Phase 8. Construction for the 4.7 acre Phase 8 disposal area will begin in August 2025 and will take approximately 7 months to construct. Phase 8 has an estimated disposal capacity of 5-6 years. Buchanan and Sons, Inc. has emerged as the lowest responsive bidder for the landfill's Phase 8 Construction and Demolition expansion project by submitting a bid to complete the project for \$2,093,015.93.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to adopt the resolution authorizing the Execution of a Contract for the Construction and Demolition Landfill Phase 8 Expansion with Buchanan and Sons, Inc. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

3. Healthy Opportunities Program – added to agenda by vote

Commissioner Wells provided background information and noted that the letter was discussed at today's Briefing meeting. The proposed letter is to state legislators to encourage support for continued funding for the Healthy Opportunities Program (HOP). She explained the importance of the HOP and explained that if the County did not have these programs in place,

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then Helene would have been even more devastating; because the HOP program was already in place, local partners had the capacity and infrastructure to respond quickly to urgent community needs such as food, housing, and transportation. The program, operated by Impact Health in Western North Carolina, addresses critical needs such as housing instability, food insecurity, transportation barriers, and interpersonal safety.

Commissioner Wells highlighted the program's significant impact across Buncombe County where local nonprofits have built strong community ties and effectively delivered services. She explained that because HOP was a pilot program it is currently unfunded in the state's proposed budget, affecting both vulnerable residents and local farms that relied on it. Commissioner Wells further explained that the economic analysis showed that the food component alone had a \$74 million impact and supported over 500 jobs and \$22 million in labor income. 81 farms in Buncombe County rely on this programming and have figured this into their crops.

Commissioners emphasized that these services not only address immediate needs but also improve long-term health outcomes and reduce future costs. The board expressed unanimous support for the letter and thanked Chair Edwards, Commissioner Horton and Commissioner Wells for bringing this forward and preparing the letter.

Commissioner Horton made the motion to approve the letter for sending. Commissioner Wells seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. Swannanoa Steering Committee

Vice-Chair Moore explained that the Swannanoa Steering Committee was established on May 20, 2025 by the Board of Commissioners to help guide the planning process for the creation of the Swannanoa Small Area & Resilience Plan. He said that the application opened on May 20, and that 45 applications were received. He explained that Planning Staff have made recommendations based on key community representation needs and reminded the Board members to send their top 5 nominations to the Deputy to schedule interviews on August 5.

2. July 15, 2025 Board Appointments

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to reappoint Maia Sloan and Heather Zanzig to the Early Childhood Education and Development Committee. Commissioner Ball seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.