MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on August 19, 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 Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells; Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

The following was discussed:

Letters for Board Review:

1. **UNC-A Letter**

Commissioner Sloan and Commissioner Ball introduced the proposed letter to UNCA regarding the proposed development and said that it was a result of the Save the Woods advocacy in community. They acknowledged that UNCA paused moving forward and the letter requests that the school leadership work collaboratively and collectively with the local governments and community to move forward. The Board agreed and thanked UNCA for slowing down the project to listen. The Board gave consensus to send the letter.

2. **AdventHealth Letter**

Chair Edwards provided background information. She explained the proposed letter which is to express the Board's full support for AdventHealth's Certificate of Need application to develop a fixed PET scanner and it's approval in Weaverville. She noted that AdventHealth's longstanding commitment to community service and regional investment is evident in this proposal. Furthermore, The addition of PET services at the Weaverville hospital directly supports their mission to enhance access and promote health equity across Western North Carolina. The Board have consensus to send the letter.

3. **Mission Hospital Application for Trauma Center Designation Letter**

Chair Edwards noted that the Board has not had a public meeting since the public comment period opened and therefore was unable to submit public comments. However, Commissioner Ball explained that he spoke with DHS staff and that the Board would be able to submit comments – presented in the proposed letter. Commissioner Ball further explained that The decision on this application will have far-reaching consequences for patient safety, access, system reliability, and affordability in western North Carolina. At present, it appears that Mission Hospital has not demonstrated the staffing stability, operational reliability, or patient safety culture required for Level I trauma designation. Our purpose is not to oppose or endorse, but to ensure that OEMS has all pertinent information to make a well-informed decision. In the letter, the Board urges OEMS to:

1. Scrutinize whether Mission's ER staffing, care culture, and recent performance align with Level I standards.

2. Fully evaluate any commitments Mission is making to address these deficiencies.

3. Consider the potential impact on patients' costs, care, and access.

The Board further discussed, and Commissioner Sloan requested that this letter be added to New Business on the regular meeting agenda for further discussion and a vote of the Board.

Renew NC Update

Stephanie McGarrah, Deputy at RenewNC provided background information. She explained that the program was created by Governor Stein when he took office and further explained that the program seeks to repair, reconstruct, or replace Helene-damaged, owner-occupied single-family housing. It is expected that the program will mostly be reconstructing homes. Additionally, the program will be providing contract grade finishes to program houses. She explained the criteria to apply and the process for applying. McGarrah reported that as of August 15, 2025 that 415 in Buncombe County, of those 143 are confirmed as eligible. She said that the deadline to apply is December 31. 2025 and then provided an overview of the upcoming RenewNC programs.

The Board had several questions about the details of the program and communication of the services in community. McGarrah explained that the team is working with partners to first establish policy rules and procedures. McGarrah also mentioned the programs prioritization matrix. Through this matrix, Renew NC are taking into account a family's income, location, and household characteristics to ensure that we are directing our funding towards the most vulnerable homeowners who were impacted by Helene first.

Additionally, McGarrah noted that the team recently made some changes to their outreach strategy. Some of these efforts include:

- Hiring and retraining staff to do a door-knocking campaign through impacted areas,
- Calling those who may be qualified for the program to answer their questions and help with applications (we are currently making 1,000 to 1,500 calls a day),
- Advertising in local newspapers, radio, and TV
- Attending community events (such as the Swannanoa Community Farmer's Market and various disaster recovery resource fairs throughout our Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) communities),
- Partnering with long-term recovery groups, other voluntary organizations, and local or state governments to share information and receive or provide referrals

She said that In Buncombe County, there are staff at the Buncombe County Helene Resource Center on a regular basis to assist those seeking more information about the program.

Grown NC update

Drew Christy with Grow NC provided background information. He explained that Governor Stein created this program on his first day in office. The main function is to coordinate with the state agencies. Christy explained the main pillars for the recovery effort are:

- Rebuilding safe housing
- Restoring our infrastructure
- Revitalizing our economy
- Supporting children and families
- Supporting our farmers

Christy further explained the various recovery efforts underway; which include rebuilding safe housing; restoring infrastructure and revitalizing the economy. He said that OSBM certified $575 million in new funding appropriated by HB 1012, which was signed into law on June 27, 2025. Christy provided further updates on various programs, including infrastructure, private road and bridge program, road re-openings, and the great trails project. To close, he explained key factors for looking forward:

• As we continue to move from response to recovery, some eligibility-based federal funding streams are winding down. (E.g., FEMA Individual Assistance, SBA loans)

• Signed by Governor Stein on June 27, 2025, SL 2025-26 appropriates or reallocates more than $850 million in additional hurricane relief. Agencies can move quickly to put new state funds into action.

• There is an ongoing scarcity of key personnel in recovery-related fields: inspectors, nurses, skilled tradespeople, counselors, etc.

• Some federal funding streams remain uncertain or have been slow to arrive.

• Former NC Secretary of Commerce Sharon Decker is leading the development of a long-term economic and community recovery strategy for western North Carolina.

The Board had questions about the road and bridge program. Christy explained that all receipts will be required for reimbursement in the program and that there are about 5400 applications which the team is currently going through. He noted that Governor Stein directed the work to be done as swiftly as possible.

Helene Recovery Staff update

Dane Pederson provided the debris update. He explained that the Right of Way Debris Removal mission is complete with a total of 1,557,232 total cubic yards of debris removed. Likewise the Private and commercial debris removal is close to complete with some remaining properties receiving removal yet. Waterway removal is also marked as complete. Manager Pinder noted the milestone and congratulated the team on the hard work since January.

Burnett provided an update on landslides. Overview of the 55 landslides we deemed most risky, the status of the assessments, our remediation plans Partnering with FEMA to conduct the assessments. Manager Pinder clarified that this is a pilot program and that the rest of NC can learn from our learnings.

Kathleen Blackney provided an update on the long-term Recovery Plan. She explained that the plan is in collaboration with the City of Asheville and the 5 towns and is tailored to each local government's organizational scope. It is not an overall community plan and does not guarantee that these projects will come into fruition. Blackney highlighted the top 10 recovery priorities that were gathered from the Envision Survey and then proceeded to talk through each of the proposed projects in each of the focus areas which are: Grown & Development, Economic Development, Community Health, Public Safety, Energy and Environment. Blackney asked for the Commissioner's feedback, particularly, where does the board see the potential for the most impact. Due to time, it was requested the Commissioner's submit their comments to staff by the end of the month to be incorporated.

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

Nancy Williams provided background information. She explained the program overview and that the Community Development Block Grant-Neighborhood Revitalization (CDBG-NR) is funded by NC Commerce Rural Economic Development Division (NCDOC REDD). The Award Amount is $400,000 for the Grant Fiscal Year: FY 2023 to FY 2026. The home repair program with Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity was well underway when Tropical Storm Helene hit. Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity noticed exit from the contract Buncombe County notified NC Commerce REDD and initiated discussions around potential uses of the CDBG-NR for Helene Recovery projects.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on August 19, 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 Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells; Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

Chair Edwards opened the meeting with opening remarks.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Whitesides made a motion to add the Mission letter to New Business and to add the briefing presentations to Presentations on the agenda and then to follow the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

1. Approval of August 5, 2025, Combined Meeting Minutes

2. Ordinance Declaring a Road Closure for a Remembrance Walk in Swannanoa

3. NCDOT Sidewalk Maintenance Agreement

4. Approval of the Interlocal Agreement Between the City of Asheville and Buncombe County Governing the Homeowner Grant Program

5. Budget Amendment for reimbursement of Fire Station Alerting equipment

6. Budget Amendment for Transfer to 911 Fund for Ineligible Expenses

7. Budget Amendment to Appropriate Funds Balance for Forfeiture Funds for Vehicle Purchases.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Edwards noted that the Board discussed a letter at 3:00 p.m. Briefing to send letter to the UNCA Chancellor on behalf of the Board. The draft letter is posted online on the briefing agenda.

David Clark – thanked the Board for their backing of the Save of the Woods advocacy and said the Goal of this group is to act in a positive manner. He thanked the group members for their positive contributions.

Woody Davis – thanked the commission for the letter and said that the letter is transparent.

Heather Rayburn - (10 mins) - Save the Woods - invited everyone to attend a tree wrap in September and emphasized the importance of nature and the species that live there.

Sandy Newes - Thanked the Board for the letter and listening to the group. Emphasized the importance of nature for humans.

Clark Duncan –spoke about EDC's 32 year in partnership talked on behalf of the Future Factories. He said this plan represents common ground goals to recovery and reflects the vision and innovation to accelerate recovery. He Thanked the board for their partnership and asked the board to approve the budget amendment on the agenda.

Lake Silver –introduced himself as the new field representative at Congressman Edwards Office. He reminded community that their office has resources and staff available to help make connections.

MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Manger Pinder updated the Board to let the Board know that BC team USAR team is on the East coast to help assist with Hurricane Erin.
2. Introduction of Lead for NC Fellow – Daysha Chaney

D.K Wesley, Assistant County Manager, introduced Daysha Chaney as the new Lead of NC Fellow. She explained that Buncombe County was selected as one of Lead for North Carolina's host jurisdictions for the 2025-2026 program year. The pool was competitive. Over 60 government entities across the state put forward competitive applications, but the selection team believed Buncombe County would provide an exceptional experience for an AmeriCorps Fellow.

She said that County staff were afforded the opportunity to interview several candidates. As a result of this process, Daysha Chaney was selected and agreed to complete her year of service in Buncombe County. She graduated from the University of North Carolina Asheville with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a minor in Legal Studies. While at UNC Asheville, Daysha was a Division I athlete on the Women's Soccer team, earning both academic and athletic recognition, including a distinction in Political Science and Academic All-District honors.

PRESENTATIONS

Advanced Planning Storage Facility Update

Robert Brown, General Services provided background information. He explained that 28 County departments identied needs for storage space. He said that the initial total area requirement identified by Advaned Planning would be 102,900 sqft and that the estimated cost would vary between a new building or leasing a building. The next step is to identify and evaluate the best option to pursue.

Schedule of Values for Reappraisal 2026

Eric Cregger, Interim Tax Assessor, provided background information. He explained that NCDOR requires the County to perform a reappraisal within 3 years received on 01/01/2023 and that values currently reflect January 1, 2021; he further explained that all property shall be appraised at its true value in money and that the reappraisal is scheduled for January 1, 2026 and January 1, 2029 will follow. Cregger explained the methodology enhancements, which include luxury and modest properties focus, land and building valuation enhancements and market area audits and delineation. He said that using methodology that has been used throughout the State and Nationally after a hurricane to provide new values to Helene impacted properties and that new values were applied to impacted parcels and updated in the County system for the 2025 tax bill.

Cregger then explained the Schedule of Values which the values, standards, and rules are required by subdivision (b)(1) shall be reviewed and approved by the board of county commissioners before January 1 of the year they are applied. If it's not in the schedule, then we cannot do it. He said that there are three approaches to value, which include: cost approach, sales comparison, and income approach. He provided scenarios and further explained the present-use value and that rules, requirements, value schedules, and guidelines are set by the Use Advisory Board and approved by NCDOR. Cregger said that the public hearing for the Schedule of Values is scheduled for the next regular meeting, on September 2, 2025.

During the presentation on the appraisal schedule of values, Cregger addressed questions regarding the addition of five new positions, explaining that increased staffing and a vendor partnership using machine learning are enhancing data review. In response to concerns about past luxury appraisal issues, he noted improvements including higher-skilled staff, better training, and upgraded tools. Manufactured homes, previously unassessed in 2021, are now being analyzed. Cregger also confirmed the capability to run internal audits through before-and-after ratio analyses to ensure accurate valuations. Manager Pinder emphasized that appraisal data reflects a specific point in time and is subject to market fluctuations. Regarding the impact of Hurricane Helene, Cregger stated that site visits and ongoing tracking are accounting for damage. Pinder concluded by highlighting the team's commitment to transparency, documentation, and significant investment in staffing, technology, and data accuracy.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Budget Amendment for WNC Futures Factory Grant Match (A-B Tech)**

Vice-Chair Moore made the motion to recuse Chair Amanda Edwards from voting on this item due to role with A-B Tech. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Dr. John Gosset with A-B Tech provided background information. He explained that A-B Technical Community College is seeking approximately $30M in federal grant funding from the Economic Development Administration (US Department of Commerce) for the Western North Carolina (WNC) Futures Factory. This project will create a 70,000 square foot advanced manufacturing innovation hub on a 13-acre site donated by Biltmore Farms. The WNC Futures Factory will be a regional center for economic recovery, workforce development, and industry modernization, involving collaboration between 5 universities and 5 community colleges. The project is expected to finish in 2029.

A-B Technical Community College will contribute $5,000,000 towards the project match by re-purposing $4,955,670 from the A-B Tech Workforce Training Center project budget and allocating $44,330 in Article 46 funds. Additionally, the Community College will use $5,000,000 from the State Capital Infrastructure Fund (SCIF) for an extra match, bringing the total match to $10,000,000. The total WNC Futures Factory budget will be approximately $40,000,000.

This county budget amendment establishes the $5,000,000 budget for the WNC Futures Factory Grant Match by reallocating $4,955,670 from the previously approved A-B Tech Workforce Training Center project budget and appropriating an additional $44,330 of Article 46 funds. Gosset asked that the County consider being a Co-applicant to ensure success as it will be a competitive process.

The Board discussed being a co-applicant and asked what that looks like for the County. Gosset explained that the applicant is the one to provide the day-to-day tasks and that the co-applicant is a sign of support. He said that there's no daily request of the County for being co-applicant for this grant and that there is no additional cost to the County.

Manager Pinder requested that the Board pause voting as co-applicant at this time so that staff can fully vet the information, as this was not a request presented to staff before the meeting. Pinder agreed the goal was to get to yes, however, wanted staff the time to do due diligence and fully understand the scope. The Board asked about the importance of having a co-applicant and asked how competitive the grant process will be. Gosset explained that it is a national grant that will be very competitive and having the Couty as a co-applicant is important. He also noted that time is of the essence, and that the applicant has been open for four months.

Commissioner Wells suggested that the Board proceed with the caveat that the County Attorney and the County Manager review the contracts before signing and moving forward. After discussion and procedural consensus with the County Attorney, the Board decided to move forward.

Vice-Chair Moore made the motion to adopt the budget amendment as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and it was carried 6-0 with Chair Edwards recused from voting.

The Board further discussed the review process and asked how long the review process would take. Manager Pinder advised it would be her first time reviewing the request in-depth, but she and staff would work quickly and put time to the calendar to start that process.

Vice-Chair Moore made the motion to authorize the County Manager to sign documents as a co-applicant after the Manager and Attorney had time to review the documents and ensure the arrangement would work.

Motion to empower the County Manager and County Attorney to proceed with co-application pending appropriate due diligence pending the language of the contract put before the County. Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, and it was carried 6-0 with Chair Edwards recused from voting.

2. **Request to rename the Fairview Library community room to the Annie Clarke Ager Community Room**

Jason Hyatt, Libraries Director, provided background information. He explained that The Friends of the Fairview Library seek to honor Annie Ager's lifelong dedication to Fairview and Buncombe County by renaming the Fairview Library community room in her honor. Annie played a critical role in the establishment of the Fairview branch library, helping to organize community members and rally support from elected officials for the new facility. Annie went on to serve on the system-wide Friends of the Library board and spent two terms on the Library Board of Trustees. She continues to be a tireless advocate for education, literacy, and Buncombe County Public Libraries.

Per Buncombe County's Policy and Procedures for Naming County Owned Properties, Facilities, and Parks, naming requests may be considered by the Board of Commissioners to honor individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the community. Hyatt explained that this request is in alignment with the criteria outlined in the policy, as Annie Ager's efforts have made a contribution to the community which resulted in the long- term well being of the people of Buncombe County, she has been actively involved in Buncombe County affairs for no less than 10 years, and her efforts have made a lasting, significant contribution to the County's goals and objectives.

Becky Stone, fellow Friend of the Libraries, provided background information on Annie Clarke Ager and all her many contributions in the Fairview community.

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to adopt the resolution renaming the Fairview Library community room to the Annie Clarke Ager Community Room. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

3. **FY2025 Budget Carryforwards**

John Hudson, Budget Director, provided background information. He explained that the attached ordinance provides information regarding departments or functions that have requested FY2025 budget in the amounts indicated to be carried forward into FY2026 for the following reasons:

- Purchases in FY2025 not delivered prior to June 30, 2025 due to shipping or vendor delays;
- Services obligated in FY2025 however were unable to be completed prior to June 30, 2025;
- Prepaid purchases made in prior years not in service prior to June 30, 2025.

He explained that the total annual budget requested to be carried forward by fund are as follows:

- General Fund: $609,656
- Mountain Mobility Special Revenue Fund: $1,161,700
- Solid Waste Enterprise Fund: $1,760,000
- Health, Employment, Property & Casualty Insurance Internal Service Fund: $49,840

And that the total amount to be carried forward is $3,581,196.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the carry-forwards budget amendment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

4. EMS Bases Budget Consolidation and Adjustments

Robert Brown, General Services Project Manager, provided background information. He explained this action is to approve budget amendments to 1) Consolidate the remaining budgets of the FY23 West Asheville EMS Base Design project ($602,190) and the FY25 EMS Local Base – Design project ($750,000) into the FY25 EMS Regional Base – Land & Design project, which would increase the FY25 EMS Regional Base – Land & Design project budget by $1,352,190, to cover additional costs for land acquisition and design. No new County funding is required for this increase; and 2) Increase the total project budget of the FY23 EMS East Base Construction project by $3,398,000 to cover additional costs for constructing the facility. This increase would be funded by future bond proceeds.

Brown explained that the FY25 EMS Regional Base – Land & Design project is also requested to be renamed to FY25 EMS West Regional Base – Land & Design. These amendments would result in the FY23 EMS East Base Construction project having a total budget of $9,998,000 and the FY25 EMS West Regional Base – Land & Design project having a total budget of $3,112,190.

Brown further explained the difference between local and regional bases. He said that a local base has 3 bays and houses up to 12 as well as 6 vehicles; whereas, a regional base has 5 bays and greater staff and supply capacity – it is much bigger facility to help support a greater area.

Pinder clarified that the cost increased because of inflation over the years and the building had not been bid. With the current bid Staff have a closer estimate on current costs.

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

5. Mission Hospital Letter – added to agenda

Chair Edwards noted that the proposed letter was discussed at the Briefing held earlier in the day. Commissioner Ball provided background information. He noted that the North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), part of the NC Department of Health and Human Services, has requested comments on Mission Hospital's application for initial designation as a Level I trauma center. Currently designated as a Level II trauma center, Mission is undergoing a site visit on September 25–26 in coordination with the American College of Surgeons. Commissioners acknowledged that there has been limited public discussion on the matter but emphasized the importance of using this opportunity to communicate values and concerns. Key points raised included the lack of access to Mission's application, preventing a clear understanding of HCA's commitments, and concerns about the hospital's history of operational and staffing issues. While there is strong support for enhanced trauma care in western North Carolina, the potential for increased patient costs, questionable care improvements, and access concerns were highlighted. Furthermore, the purpose with this letter is not to oppose or endorse a new designation, but to ensure that OEMS collect all relevant information and make a well-informed decision. With this letter we will urge OEMS to:

1. Scrutinize whether Mission's ER staffing, care culture, and recent performance align with Level I standards.

2. Fully evaluate any commitments Mission is making to address deficiencies.

3. Consider the potential impact on patients' costs, care, and access.

With that, Commissioner Ball made the motion to approve the draft letter for sending. Commissioner Whitesides seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Board of Adjustment - Commissioner Sloan made the motion to advertise the current vacancies and to schedule interviews for applicants. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells and carried unanimously.

Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Advisory Committee – Vice-Chair Moore made the motion to appoint Jennifer Cook; Leslie Young; Christina Dupuch. The motion was seconded by Chair Edwards and carried unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Curt Euler informed the Board of the motion to go into closed session for the following reasons:

To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5). Commissioner Ball made the motion to go into closed session for the reasons stated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horton and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.