

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on September 2, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Amanda Edwards; Commissioner Terri Wells; Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

Absent: Vice-Chair Moore.

The following was discussed:

Internal Audit Update

Robb Hartman, Internal Audit Director provided an update on recent audit reports. He said there were two audit reports conducted over the last year, the Special Project and Procurement Card audit. Hartman reviewed each of the recommendations made and their estimated completion date.

Reparations Commission Update

Dr. Noreal Armstrong provided background information and then handed the presentation to Bobbette Mayes, Vice-Chair of the Community Reparations Commission (CRC). Mayes explained that the purpose of the presentation is to provide the Commissioners with the CRC's final report and project close out. Mayes highlighted the background of the CRC, which was established in 2020 by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County by resolution. She explained that the final report includes 39 recommendations and was led by a report writing team and support staff. Mayes further highlighted key recommendations made in each of the focus areas: criminal justice, economic development, education, health and wellness, and housing. In closing, Mayes said that a Committee of the CRC has been tasked with the creation of a 501c3 to support the implementation of the Reparations in Asheville and Buncombe County. Mayes stated that the charge provided by the elected boards are now complete and that that dissolution of the CRC will take place at the October 9, 2025 City Council meeting.

Continuum of Care Update

Lacy Hoyle provided the quarterly update. She first touched on the new Continuum of Care (CoC) Board appointments and then provided notable board actions in the last quarter, in which they adopted first set of Charter revisions; approved partnership with YMCA for downtown shower access; approved participation in Right at Home project; approved forming planning group to support West Asheville homelessness response; selected Goodwill Industries as Fiscal Agent (apply for/receive/disburse funds); established MOU between CoC and Lead Agency/HMIS Lead; and established two work groups. Hoyle outlined the Code Purple FY25 close out which covered July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025, and then provided funding updates.

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Closed Session

Curt Euler, County Attorney, provided the reasons for the Board 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 Whitesides made the motion to go into closed session for the reasons provided. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on September 2, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Amanda Edwards; Commissioner Terri Wells; Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

Absent: Vice-Chair Moore

Chair Edwards opened the meeting with opening remarks.

CONSENT

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

1. Approval of the August 19, 2025, Combined Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the July 2025 Tax Collection Report

PUBLIC COMMENT - No public Comment.

GOOD NEWS

1. NACo Achievement Awards

Rafael Baptista provided background on the NACo Achievement Awards. He explained that Buncombe County is being recognized in several areas for its innovative programming. The National Association of Counties (NACO) recently released its list of 2025 Achievement Awards, and Buncombe County is being honored in four categories:

- Helene Family Assistance Center (temporarily housed in the Register of Deeds) in the category of Volunteers.
- Camp Recreation and Investigation Outdoors (RIO) in the category of Children and Youth
- Buncombe Connections: Hope, Healing, & Community Education in the category of Public Health
- Reading MENtors in the category of Libraries

He further explained that this is the type of community-oriented programming that Buncombe County prides itself on and great examples of the diverse ways we continually work to meet the needs of the public. Representatives from each of the awards provided thankful

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remarks. The Board and Manager Pinder congratulated all the dedicated work performed by staff and volunteers.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Schedule of Values Public Hearing

Eric Cregger, Interim Tax Assessor provided background information. He explained that NCGS 105-317(c)(2) states the guidelines for the review of the schedule of values and location and time of the public hearing. § 105-317(c)(2) Upon receipt of the proposed schedules, standards, and rules, the board of commissioners shall publish a statement in a newspaper having general circulation in the county stating:

(b) The time and place of a public hearing on the proposed schedules, standards, and rules that shall be held by the board of county commissioners at least seven days before adopting the final schedules, standards, and rules.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing at 5:29 p.m. There were five comments provided:

1. Christina Shimrock urged the Board of Commissioners to publish both adjusted and unadjusted ratio studies, move toward more frequent property reappraisals, and improve transparency in the appeals process.
2. Lenoir Hagerty acknowledged the work of the Assessor's Office while emphasizing the need to publicly share ratio studies to better measure progress.
3. Shanna Peele voiced the importance of publishing these studies, referencing a letter submitted to the Board, and noted their value in maintaining stability for schools and public services.
4. Carson Bridges voiced support for the letter and emphasized the need for a fair, transparent process that upholds equity and supports the success of public institutions.
5. Joe Minicozzi, founder of Urban3, expressed appreciation for the ongoing discussion around the property assessment schedule and emphasized the need for transparency and evaluation before finalizing any changes. He referenced a past tax system analysis that revealed issues and highlighted the importance of incorporating recommendations from the 2024 Keen Report. He pointed out that short-term rentals like Airbnbs are not currently being assessed using the income approach, despite functioning as commercial properties, and argued that taxing them could generate additional revenue.

Public Hearing was closed at 5:43 p.m.

Commissioner Sloan asked about the appeal period. Cregger clarified that the referred to appeal information is specific to appeals about the schedule itself, rather than individual property valuation appeals.

A question was raised regarding the conclusions of the former ad hoc reappraisal committee, specifically relating to the publication of sales ratio studies. It was confirmed that ratio studies are conducted and submitted to the Department of Revenue annually for equalization purposes. While the studies are used for state-level equalization, they are based on

public sales and value data and are published annually. Additionally, internal ratio studies are conducted after January 1 of the reappraisal year to monitor market trends and ensure accuracy.

The Board also inquired about a prior conversation about the frequency of reappraisals. There was interest in whether conducting them more frequently could improve accuracy, especially as market conditions change rapidly. Cregger explained that the Department of Revenue intervenes if a county's sales ratio falls below 85% or exceeds 110%, requiring a reappraisal within three years. Manager Pinder noted that although more frequent reappraisals could potentially improve data accuracy, they would require significant additional resources and that no formal cost analysis has been done yet.

Commissioner Wells asked about luxury and modest homes evaluation strategies. Cregger said that both luxury and modest homes processes have been updated to ensure fair and accurate property valuations. He explained that these properties require significantly more time and resources due to their unique features and variability. To address this, multiple appraisers, data staff, and a reappraisal analyst are assigned to these cases. A new quality adjustment for unique properties is also being introduced in the Schedule of Values, using historical market data to improve valuation accuracy. These appraisals involve extensive fieldwork, including on-site visits and follow-ups with realtors or closing agents to understand complex transactions. He further explained that manufactured housing efforts are being made to reduce overvaluation by refining size adjustment tables and conducting condition audits. Several of the site visits have been completed, and additional contracted staff are being brought in to expand this work through the end of the year. The goal is to ensure that by January 1, all property data is updated and accurate. Manufactured home parks are also being reviewed to ensure their values are in line with those tied to real estate.

Commissioner Ball inquired about performance indicators to evaluate the new system once implemented. Cregger explained that various metrics are used, with ratio studies being the primary tool. Other statistical measures such as coefficient of dispersion are also tracked. These reports help monitor how different market areas perform relative to assessments. Additionally, he and his team are working to secure an external ratio study to supplement internal reviews and provide independent performance validation.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the progress made following the recommendations of the ad hoc reappraisal committee. Cregger confirmed that several foundational elements from those recommendations—such as enhanced team development, training, and analytical improvements—have already been implemented. However, he emphasized that while some changes can be made in the short term, many are part of a long-term strategy that will require multiple reappraisal cycles. He said that continuous improvement is the goal with each reappraisal cycle.

Chair Edwards asked about the ad hoc committee's recommendation to differentiate in short-term rentals as well as secondary homes and that if she recalled correctly, that would

require state action. Cregger confirmed that he believed that it would require legislative action at the state level. The Board thanked Cregger for his ongoing efforts and commitment to improvement and noted that they may send additional questions before the next regular meeting on September 16.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Appointment of Tax Assessor

Sybil Tate, Assistant County Manager, provided background information. She explained that Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 105-294, the board of county commissioners for each county shall appoint a county assessor to serve a term of not less than two nor more than four years; and Eric Cregger (herein "Mr. Cregger") has been employed by Buncombe County since October 2015, and has served as the Land Records Supervisor, GIS Analyst, Tax Analyst, Assistant Tax Assessor and has currently been serving as the interim County Assessor since September 17, 2024. Mr. Cregger is certified by the Department of Revenue as having successfully completed the requirements of the North Carolina General Statutes for Certification of County Assessor; and County staff recommend to this Board that Mr. Cregger is a person of character and integrity whose experience and service as the interim County Assessor and Assistant Tax Assessor makes him well-suited for appointment as County Assessor.

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to appoint Eric Cregger to serve as the Buncombe County Tax Assessor. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells and carried unanimously.

2. Acceptance of State Disaster Cashflow Loan - Round 3

Melissa Moore, Finance Director, provided the update. She explained that On July 31, 2025, the State Treasurer's Office announced the third round of cashflow loans to support disaster recovery efforts related to Tropical Storm Helene. County staff applied to the State for funding consideration prior to the Round 3 deadline of August 15. On August 20, the State notified the County of eligibility for an additional \$5.41 million in disaster loan funding. Round 3 awards are based on need as determined by the State Treasurer's Office and Division of Emergency Management. To date, Buncombe County has received approximately \$14.02 million through the first two rounds of the loan program.

Local governments must execute a new loan agreement, promissory note, and other associated agreements with the State to participate in the third round of the cashflow loan program. The resolution considered today accepts the third round of loan funding from the State and authorizes the County Manager to execute necessary documents to participate in the loan program.

Commissioner Wells asked how much FEMA and insurance reimbursement has been received. Moore did not have the actual amount received on-hand but noted there have been recent approvals made at the Federal level. County Attorney Euler said he would follow up via email regarding insurance funds.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to accept State Cashflow Loan Round 3 funding in an amount not to exceed \$5,418,433.85 the motion was seconded by Commissioner Horton and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the resolution authorizing the County Manager to execute the necessary documents related to the loan agreement; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. Board Reappointment for September 2

Commissioner Wells made the motion to reappoint Elizabeth Putnam to the Tourism Development Authority. The motion was seconded by Whitesides and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.