

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on September 16, 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:

Helene and Recovery Plan Update

Staff provided an update on current recovery programs underway. Rachael Sawyer introduced the Helene Recovery Plan and said that the plan includes 114 projects across the 7 local governments in Buncombe County. The draft plan is posted online and open for community feedback via a survey until October 3. Dane Pedersen provided a debris update. He stated that most missions are complete and that demolition is currently underway. Matt Cable provided an update on the Renew NC program. He stated that there is \$807,354,000 in NC CDBG-DR action plan designated for owner-occupied Helene-related home repair, rebuilding or replacement. There are currently 1,060 applications in progress but not submitted and a total of 2,905 applications have been submitted. Brad Hughes provided an update on the Hazard Mitigation Grant program. He stated that there is a total of 350 applications, and 235 acquisitions have been made. The deadline to apply is October 15, 2025. Jennifer Harrison provided an update on the Emergency Watershed Protection program. She said that \$26.33 million has been federally approved to date. The Board had questions about the timelines and funding for the various programs which were answered by Staff.

Helene After-Action Report

Heather Parkinson provided the background information and introduced the Buncombe County After-Action Report. She explained that the After-Action Report (AAR) is a structured review of incident or event that is developed with stakeholder input and identified what went well and areas for improvement. The County's AAR focuses on internal operations, in the Emergency Operations Center and the external operations were evaluated and analyzed by NEX Disaster Services. Heather recognized the various agencies that contributed to the AAR, noting that 144 interviews were conducted with 47 organizations.

Parkinson reviewed what worked well in the AAR which included: County staff resiliency and response, outside emergency assistance, joint communication center, community volunteers, 911 overflow assistance, secured warehouses and shelters, and warehouse operations. Areas for improvement included: staffing gaps and burnout, emergency operations training, back up communication, resource availability, emergency operating guidelines, role clarity, and partner coordination.

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Parkinson explained that the AAR includes a Preparedness Action Plan and 49 recommended actions with 199 subtasks. She further provided a high-level overview of the Preparedness plan and high priority items.

The Board asked questions about the preparedness action plan, a timeline for tasks and requested quarterly updates.

Strategic Plan Update

Kathleen Blackney provided an update on the Strategic Plan development. She reviewed the focus areas and the slight changes made since the Board reviewed last month. She announced that the draft Strategic Plan is now available on the County Engage website and open for community feedback through October 3, 2025. At the October 21 meeting the updated draft plan will come back to the Board for review with tentative adoption scheduled for November.

Pedestrian Plan Update

William High provided background information for the proposed Pedestrian Plan Steering Committee. He explained that the Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan is a joint led plan between the Planning Department and the French Broad River MPO. He explained that the plan is funded with the MPO, with Buncombe County paying the match in FY 2024. This plan is guided by a consultant team from McAdams and managed by the FBRMPO and that a steering committee was proposed to enhance local input and community engagement. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to help guide the planning process for the Plan and that the proposed Board will be made up of 8-10 members appointed by the Board. The established resolution will be presented at the next regular meeting on October 7 with appointments to be made in November.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'
REGULAR MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on September 16, 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.

The Chair opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

CONSENT

1. Approval of September 2, 2025, Combined Meeting Minutes
2. Resolution Approving Pyrotechnic Experts for Firework Displays

Commissioner Horton made the motion to approve the consent agenda and the agenda as proposed. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Moore and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Steve Legeay- commended the Community Reparations Commission for their hard work and encouraged the Commissioners and City Council to review resolutions again which center on commitment to rectifying harms.

Sora Pedersen – spoke about the upcoming reappraisal process and asked that the Board prioritize increase base or starting salaries for county employees in the upcoming budget.

Christine Shimrock - spoke about the upcoming reappraisal coalition letter about reappraisal and requested the board publish both adjusted and unadjusted ratio studies, move toward more frequent reappraisals and increase transparency in the appeals process.

GOOD NEWS

D.K Wesley, Assistant County Manager, acknowledged Lillian Govus, Communications Director, who was selected and awarded the “2025 3CMA Communicator of the Year”, an award that recognizes a truly outstanding individual in local government communications. She explained that this honor is presented annually by the City-County Communications & Marketing Association (3CMA) to someone whose work has had a significant impact not just within their own jurisdiction, but also in elevating the profession and advancing the mission of 3CMA across the country. Lillian was recognized during the Annual Conference in Las Vegas, which took place at the beginning of September.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Manager Pinder played a video commemorating the 1-year anniversary of Tropical Storm Helene that was created by the Communications Media Team.

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PRESENTATIONS

1. National Manufacturing Month Proclamation

Commissioner Whitesides read the Proclamation to Eaton and Chamber members. He explained that Manufacturing Day is a nationwide movement to show the reality of modern manufacturing careers by encouraging companies and educational institutions to open their doors to students, parents, teachers, and community leaders. This year, the Chamber has partnered with Eaton to host 200+ high school students from Asheville City & Buncombe County schools to see behind the scenes and learn about advanced manufacturing career paths.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. ZPH2025-00021 Foundation for the Arts (Art Space Charter School) Map Amendment

Gillian Phillips provided background information. She explained that Sarena Fuller, on behalf of Foundation for the Arts at the Core of Education, Inc. has applied to rezone two (2) parcels of land further identified as PIN 9688-19-0048 and 9688-19-1005, located at 104 Sherwood Road, from R-1 Residential to NS-Neighborhood Services.

She said that the main subject parcel is approximately 0.38 acres in size. There is a second silver, which is just under 204 sq ft. The recorded plat (PB 244/PG 142) states this sliver is to be recombined with the adjoining Foundation for the Arts property to the south at PIN 968819205100000 (2044 US 70 HWY). The properties are adjacent to R-1 to the north and northeast as well as along Sherwood Rd right-of-way that borders to the west. It is adjacent to NS zoning to the south and southeast, as well as across Sherwood Rd to the west, where the rest of the NS-zoned ArtSpace Charter School facilities are. Staff do not consider this spot zoning. Staff recommends approving the map amendment as proposed.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 5:57 p.m. There were no public comments. The chair closed the public hearing at 5:57 p.m.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve the proposed rezoning as it is consistent with the Buncombe County 2043 Comprehensive Plan, as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Moore and carried unanimously.

2. FY 2027 Annual Section 5311 Administrative and Capital Grant Applications

William High, Transportation Planner, provided background information. He explained that Buncombe County's Community Transportation System, Mountain Mobility, provides transportation to senior adults, persons with disabilities, clients of human service agencies, members of the general public (outside the City of Asheville), clients of Medicaid (under contract), and residents of the City of Asheville eligible for ADA Complimentary Paratransit (under contract). He further explained that Buncombe County is a designated applicant/recipient of state and federal transportation funds made available through North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and that designated applicants/recipients must possess the technical and financial capacity to: (1) apply for, administer, operate, and carry out transportation projects;

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and (2) comply with all applicable state and federal laws, regulations, and guidelines. The FY 2027 Grant Applications budgets are summarized below:

Section 5311 Administrative Grant		
Source	Percent	Funding
Federal Share	80%	\$314,993
State Share	5%	\$19,687
Local Share	15%	\$59,061
Total Expenditures	100%	\$393,741

Section 5311 Capital Grant		
Source	Percent	Funding
Federal Share	80%	\$451,139
State Share	10%	\$56,392
Local Share	10%	\$56,393
Total Expenditures	100%	\$563,924

The Chair opened the public hearing at 6:01 p.m. There were no public comments. The Chair closed the public hearing at 6:01 p.m.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to adopt the Resolution Authorizing the Chairperson to Execute an Application for FY 2027 Public Transportation Program Funding, Enter into Agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and to Provide the Necessary Certifications and Grant Documents. The motion was seconded by Chair Edwards and carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Resolution to Adopt the Schedule of Values

Eric Cregger, Tax Assessor, explained that NCGS 105-317 requires the Assessor to prepare and maintain the Schedule of Values for the upcoming reappraisal. It also requires the Board of Commissioners to review and approve the schedule prior to January 1 of the year in which the reappraisal will be effective. He explained that the Assessment office formally presented the schedule of values to the Board of Commissioners on August 19, 2025. A public hearing was held on September 2, 2025, and the Board of Commissioners can formally adopt the Schedule of Values seven (7) days after a public hearing is held for the schedule of values.

Additionally, Cregger provided responses to some of the questions and requests made at the September 2 Public Hearing. He provided an overview of the 2022 Ad Hoc Committee recommendations and the actions underway in the Tax Assessors office. Cregger also summarized the actions underway as they relate to the Keen Study recommendations. He further explained that in accordance with NC Gen. Stat 105-282 all property, real and personal, shall as far as practicable be appraised or valued at its true value in money and that sales comparison approach is the only recommended approach. He stated that NC State Law must change to treat STRs differently than like-residential properties. Lastly, Cregger addressed the requests made at the public hearing.

The Board discussed and had several questions related to relisting, STR bans, and internal audit systems. Staff postponed and Manager Pinder clarified that the Keen study includes a post revaluation and that the Board can expect another study from him following the revaluation.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to adopt the Schedule of Values has presented. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

2. Budget Amendment to Appropriate Article 39 Sales Tax for School Operating

John Hudson, Budget Director, provided background information. He explained that on June 3rd, the Board approved Resolution 25-06-06 stating the intention to return school funding levels to pre-Helene levels, citing the proposed legislation amending Article 39 funding restrictions. On June 30th, House Bill 309, containing the proposed Article 39 provisions, became law, S.L. 2025-32. Pursuant to S.L. 2025-32, Article 39 funds in the amount of \$4,092,419 will be transferred from use-for-capital to use-for-operating expenses. Per S.L. 2025-32, both Boards of Education will present on the impacts of shifting these dollars from capital to operating.

Both Buncombe County Schools (BCS) and Asheville City Schools (ASC) presented the impact of use of Article 39 funds for operating expenses. Dr. Jackson, BCS Superintendent stated that the diversion of the Article 39 funds into operating expenses has allowed the school system to mitigate the impact of the January 2025 reduction of County Appropriation of \$3,971,874 to maintain our level of services to students and families during the 2025-2026 school year. Dr. Jackson noted that the Buncombe County Schools Board of Education respectfully requests the Board of County Commissioners issue a bond referendum to address school capital needs for voters to consider. Dr. Fehrman, ASC Superintendent, stated that SL 2025-32 reallocated \$718,577 to general operations from capital, managing ASC level of services for 2025-2026 and that a Feasibility Study is underway with result anticipated in 7-8 months.

Commissioner Sloan asked if BCS has discussed what would potentially go in the proposed bond. Dr. Jackson said that he is in discussion with the School Capital Fund Commission and that he will be providing more information to the board in an upcoming meeting.

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

3. Budget Amendment to Accept the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Grant Award

Allison Dains, Parks and Recreation Director, provided background information. She explained that on April 18, 2023, the Board of Commission passed a resolution for Deaverview Mountain which declared its intent to explore creating a county park or preserving for passive recreation and educational opportunities for our community. This resolution also directed Parks & Recreation Department staff to partner with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) seeking state and federal funding for the acquisition of the approximately 342+ acre property. SAHC applied to the North Carolina Land and Water Fund and was awarded \$4,377,130 for the acquisition of the Deaverview property with the support of Parks & Recreation staff. Additionally, private donation funds have also been secured. The total cost of

acquiring the Deaverview property is estimated at \$8,950,000. SAHC and the Buncombe County Parks & Recreation Department have been in conversation with the State of North Carolina, and been encouraged to apply for federal funding to cover the additional \$4,475,000 needed to fund the rest of the acquisition through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grant (ORLP) program. This federal grant was created to aid disadvantaged, urban communities that lack access to close-by outdoor recreation. Daines explained that Buncombe County Parks & Recreation has received notice of award for \$4,475,000 for the acquisition of Deaverview Mountain from the State through the ORLP grant program and this action is to accept the \$4,475,000 ORLP award. Pending approval from Commissioners, County staff and SAHC will now work to finalize the acquisition of the property.

Commissioner Wells expressed gratitude and thanked the partners and staff for moving this project forward.

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to adopt resolutions accepting the ORLP Grant award, approve budget amendment as presented and enter into an agreement with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy to utilize their grant funds as matching funds with County grant resources for the acquisition of the Deaverview Mountain property. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells and carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The Board unanimously reappointed Noreal Armstrong to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. The Board unanimously reappointed Josh Little John and Christopher Link to the Environmental & Energy Stewardship Subcommittee. With Commissioner Horton recused, the Board unanimously appointed Chris Frink and reappointed Mary Adami, Peggy Franc, Bennett Lincoff, Mark Feldman, Kathleen Cooper, and Ellen Morrissey. The Board unanimously reappointed Suzanne Booth to the Home & Community Care Block Grant Advisory Committee.

In closing, the Chair announced that the October 7, 2025, Briefing meeting would be held in the first-floor conference room. The Meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.