

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF OCTOBER 7, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on October 7, 2025, in the Commission Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Chair Amanda Edwards (arrived during the session).

Vice-Chair Moore opened the meeting and asked for discussion regarding the two Hospital Certificate of Need letters for the Board's review. The Board consented to move forward with a vote at the upcoming regular meeting.

FCC Update

Lewis with FCC provided the 9-month update. He covered reported missed collections, noting that they are trending downward, showing improvement. He stated that there are 39,000 subscribers, which surpasses the previous haulers' customers. Lewis played a video demonstrating the third eye camera technology that is used on all of their FCC trucks and provided service improvements that have been made in the last quarter.

Land of Sky DEQ Grant

Ian Ballie, with the Land of Sky Council provided background information related to the DEQ grant. He stated that this mission is to help build back greener after disasters by mobilizing cleaner energy to communities in crisis and to reconnect communities through high-speed internet connections, digital devices and assistance connecting to recovery services. He provided updates made in Marshall-Rollins, and Barnardsville. He said that the NC DEQ grant is a \$5 million grant to install up to 24 microgrids for resilience hubs and that there are already over 75 applicants. Ballie explained the "beehive" response hubs to serve as regional clean tech lending libraries and provide statewide disaster response. There is one based in Western NC and one in Eastern NC.

Review of Policies for Board Approvals

Matt Evans and Amy Davis provided background information. They provided an overview and proposed amendments to the following policies that would be coming back to the Board for approval at their next regular meeting: Conflict of Interest, Separation Policy, and Grant Funded Positions. Additionally, they provided a update made to the Secondary Employment Policy and Travel policy for the Board's awareness.

Helene Recovery Projects and Funding

Jeremiah LeRoy, Matt Evans and EB Odderstol provided background information. They provided an in depth review of Helene Recovery Projects, Funding Approaches, and Major

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Funding Sources, such as Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Community Development Block Grants – Disaster Recovery and FEMA Public Assistance. LeRoy further explained that there is an internal Helene Grants & Funding workgroup (within Foundational Recovery Support Function) which is tracking potential funding sources and that the Grants Administration team within Strategic Partnerships is analyzing funding criteria and aligning potential funding sources to projects. There are currently 134 prospects on list and as funding sources open, teams review to identify projects based on a wide range of criteria. LeRoy further explained the 3 major funding sources in detail.

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REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 7, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on October 7, 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 AGENDA

1. Approval of the September 16, 2025, Combined Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the August 2025 Tax Collection Report
3. Resolution Granting Easement to French Broad Electric Membership Corporation for Compost Processing Facility at Landfill
4. Resolution to Establish the Ad Hoc Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan Steering Committee
5. Budget Amendment to Establish Two Conservation Easement Projects
6. Budget Amendment to Accept WNC Bridge Foundation Funds for 2026 OnTrack Funding
7. Budget Amendment to Accept Grant Funds for 911 Participation in the Cardiac Arrest Response Enhancement (RACE CARS) Program

Commissioner Horton made the motion to add the two CON letters reviewed at the Briefing meeting to the consent agenda for approval to send the motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Moore and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve the Consent agenda which was seconded and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

GOOD NEWS

1. NCACC Heroic Hands Award - Alex McKnight

Manager Pinder acknowledged Alex McKnight for being awarded the NCACC Heroic Hands award. She explained that Alex McKnight is the Public Safety Communications Business Administrator and recently received the Heroic Hands Award from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. As a Public Safety Communications Business Administrator, McKnight is vital in day-to-day operations at the County, and he played a crucial

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role in the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during the pandemic and our response to Tropical Storm Helene.

2. Register of Deeds Award - Drew Reisinger

Chair Edwards acknowledged Drew Reisinger for being awarded the Register of Deeds award. She explained that the North Carolina Association of Registers of Deeds has recognized Drew Reisinger with the Buncombe County Register of Deeds for remarkable service, most notably during Tropical Storm Helene. Reisinger, his team, and volunteers helped organize wellness checks on unaccounted-for people, coordinate emergency supply distributions to offer hands-on assistance to residents in need, and even carried out a toilet flushing brigade

PRESENTATIONS

Helene survivors in need of resources can [fill out the NC-DCM survey online](#) or call 844-746-2326 to get started with a case manager.

1. Domestic Violence Prevention and Awareness Month Proclamation

Vice-Chair Moore presented the Proclamation to April Burgess. He explained that the board recognized October as Domestic Violence Prevention and Awareness Month, a time to highlight the impact that intimate partner violence has on the safety, health, and stability of the whole community. Burgess extended an invitation to attend the Domestic Violence Prevention event on October 29 at Pack Square Park.

2. Disaster Case Management Week Proclamation

Commissioner Sloan read the Disaster Case Management Week Proclamation to case managers. He explained that in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene, Disaster Case Managers provided vital resources to help survivors recover from the storm. October 12-18 is Disaster Case Management Week, a time to raise awareness about the important contributions case managers make to communities. Disaster Case Managers meet survivors where they are in their recovery journey by working with them on a one-on-one basis. The case managers thanked the Board and fellow employees for their support.

3. Health Plan Program Status for CY2025 and Upcoming Changes for CY 2026

Larry Reece with USI provided the health plan program update changes for plan programs for the 2026 calendar year. He explained that through July 2025, medical and prescription medicine claim costs were below the forecast by 8.7%. Employees in the County health plan can access wellness programs, and savings are offered through Blue Cross Blue Shield. He further explained that for the 2026 calendar year, it is projected that the County will see an increase of 5.1% or \$1.7 million to renew the health plan as is. This is below the national renewal trend at 7%. In 2026, there would be no increase to employee premiums and no change to employee plan features, except for the High-Deductible Health Plan, which is required by IRS minimums. USI also provided updates on dental, the Employee Assistance Network, Health Savings Account, and more. USI advised that employees should prepare for

the possibility of medical premium costs increasing in the 2027 calendar year. That decision will be determined by future claims cost projections.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Carolina Specialties Construction EMS East Single Prime Construction Contract

Robert Brown provided the background information. He explained that on July 31, 2025, three bids were received and publicly opened. Of the three bidders, Carolina Specialties Construction is the apparent low responsible bidder for the EMS East Base project to be constructed at 750 Old US 70 Hwy. Swannanoa NC. The low bid including base bid and alternates totaled \$8,407,908.00. He explained that for the project, a budget increase amendment was approved by the Board of Commissioners during the August 19th regular meeting. The contract is fully funded by the FY23 EMS Base Construction budget and no additional funding is needed.

Commissioner Horton made the motion to approve the contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

2. Budget Amendment to Accept United Healthcare Grant to Fund Mobile Integrated Health Initiative

Clair Hubbard, Community Paramedic Program Manager provided background information. She explained that United Healthcare will collaborate with Buncombe County EMS to expand their Community Paramedic program through an investment of \$500,000. She explained this expansion will go beyond the Post Overdose Response Team to include 2 FTE and .5 Temp/PRN additional Community Paramedics dedicated to Chronic Disease Management. Community Paramedics will visit high-risk individuals in their residences, providing follow-up care and disease management education. Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and other needs will be assessed, with referrals made to NCCARE360 or other community resources. The initiative aims to reduce non-emergent ER transport and utilization and decrease inpatient hospitalizations for uncontrolled chronic diseases.

Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the budget amendment to accept United Healthcare Investment to fund mobile integrated initiative. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Horton made the motion to approve the two new grant-funded, time-limited positions. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

3. Budget Amendment for Technology Purchases - NC911 Fund

John Hudson, Budget Director, provided background information. He explained that this request seeks approval from the Board of Commissioners to appropriate \$724,855 of NC911 Fund Balance in the 911 Fund and realize \$136,633 of interfund transfer revenue to cover critical technology investments totaling \$861,488.

He further explained that these funds will cover two critical technology investments: \$735,707 – Purchase of new Motorola radio consoles for the new primary 911 center, scheduled for completion in January 2026. \$125,781 – Purchase of countywide fire station alerting software (911's technology component).

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

4. Budget Amendment to Establish Conservation Easement Projects in Open Space Bond Fund

Ariel Zijp provided background information. She explained that this request is for 8 easement projects that are recommended for funding by the Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board. Of these projects, there are 7 transaction cost requests and 1 easement acquisition funding request from the Agricultural Growth Zone (AGZ) Bond match for conservation easements. These AGZ/Bond matching funds have already been allocated by the Board of Commissioners in February 2025.

She went through each of the projects and outlined how they fit within requirements.

Transaction Costs:

- Wilson Farm (22 acres in Fairview) - \$38,500
- Morgan Branch Farm A (112 acres in Leicester) - \$70,100
- Morgan Branch Farm B (85 acres in Leicester) - \$65,000
- Morgan Branch Farm C (148 acres in Leicester) - \$78,400
- Saddlebrook Farm (23 acres in Leicester)- \$50,500
- Brown Legacy Farm (24 acres in Leicester) - \$46,800
- Cedar Hill Farm (65 acres in Alexander) - \$53,300

Acquisition Funding:

- Slocumb Farm (120 acres in Leicester) - \$234,385

She explained that all proposed easements are to be held by Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District's Farmland Preservation Program, and all proposed easements are within Buncombe County's Conservation Focus Areas designated in the Comprehensive Plan. Of the AGZ Bond funds this is allocating \$ 636,985 which leaves 1,708,458 remaining.

Commissioner Wells thanked staff and landowners for moving this forward and made the motion to approve. Commissioner Ball seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

1. Board Appointments for October 7, 2025

The Board voted to appoint Joel Mowery to the Agricultural Advisory Board; reappoint Shanon Martin to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council; reappoint Eric Robinson to the Planning Board;

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and reappoint Greg Zornes and Taylor Foisie to the Home & Community Care Block Grant Advisory Committee.

BOARD UPDATES

The Board members provided updates on the various committees they serves on.

CLOSED SESSION

Attorney Euler provided the motion for the Board to go into Closed Session: to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6).

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to go into closed session for the reason stated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Adjourned at 6:27 p.m.