

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'
BRIEFING MEETING OF JANUARY 20, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on January 6, 2026, in the 1st floor conference room 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 Drew Ball; and Commissioner Jennifer Horton.

Absent: Vice-Chair Martin Moore.

Manager Pinder provided information about the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant Application for the FY27 boat launch replacement project and noted that the project requires the Chair's signature to move forward and requested the Board add it to the regular meeting agenda for approval. The Board consented to adding the resolution to the regular meeting agenda.

Helene Recovery Updates

Kevin Madsen, Helene Recovery Officer, provided an update on Buncombe County's Helene Recovery efforts, including staffing of the Helene Recovery Office, implementation of the Helene Recovery Plan, and ongoing reporting. Three grant-funded positions have been filled, and all 31 recovery projects have been assigned project managers. Quarterly recovery updates to the Board will continue, while monthly recovery briefings will conclude after January 20, 2026, with future briefings scheduled as needed based on project or grant activity.

The update highlighted progress on landslide mitigation projects, including active Phase One design and engineering work at Grovemont and procurement underway for the Garren Creek project, both funded through FEMA Public Assistance. Staff also reported on recovery funding status, noting \$28.6 million obligated across 32 FEMA Public Assistance projects, with \$11.76 million received to date. Additional updates were provided on Hazard Mitigation Grant Program applications, Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery programs, statewide FEMA recovery efforts, and key recovery metrics across housing, infrastructure, debris management, and other recovery support functions.

Just Home Update

Regenia Herring, Director of Justice Services, presented a progress update on the Just Home initiative, a national program addressing the intersection of housing instability and justice involvement, for which Buncombe County was selected as one of nine participating counties nationwide. Phase 1 of the project has been completed and included community engagement, creation of a Community Advisory Committee, countywide surveys, internal data analysis, and development of the Housing Investment Action Plan (HIAP). Findings confirmed a significant connection between housing instability and justice involvement, including a 51% increase in the

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number of unique unhoused individuals booked between fiscal years 2024 and 2025, reinforcing the need for targeted housing interventions.

The project has entered Phase 2, focused on project selection and funding approval. Staff are currently awaiting feedback from the MacArthur Foundation on the HIAP, after which a request for proposals (RFP) will be developed and released. A tentative timeline anticipates RFP release in February–March 2026, with proposals due in April–May 2026, followed by developer selection and underwriting to secure program-related investment financing for the construction phase.

Paint NC Mural

Rachael Sawyer, representing Buncombe County Strategic Partnerships, presented an overview of *Paint NC: 100 Murals in 100 Counties*, a statewide public art initiative that aligns with Buncombe County's vision of fostering a healthy, thriving community and supporting recovery through the arts. The initiative commissions large-scale murals rooted in local history and community narratives to strengthen community cohesion, support emotional resilience, and contribute to economic recovery. Buncombe County proposes participation through the installation of a public mural at the Pack Memorial Library, featuring more than 3,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor artwork.

The project plan includes community engagement through focus groups, public input on mural themes and designs, and community paint days during installation. The project is scheduled to move from design development in early 2026 to installation in April–May 2026. Funding will be provided through the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF), with \$37,600 allocated for the Paint NC mural and sufficient funds remaining for future public art projects. Next steps include convening a focus group, promoting design participation opportunities, and maintaining the mural for a minimum of five years.

Community Health Update

Ellis Mathes provided the Community Health update. She said that as of January 20, 2026 there have been 6 confirmed cases in Buncombe County. She explained that Buncombe County Public Health staff are coordinating with NCDHHS and Mission Hospital to identify and contact individuals potentially exposed to measles, assess immunity status, and provide guidance to reduce further spread. Testing is not recommended for exposed individuals unless symptoms develop. Those who believe they were exposed and have not been contacted are encouraged to call Public Health for assessment and guidance.

She emphasized that measles is highly contagious and increasing nationally. Vaccination remains the most effective prevention measure, with two doses of the MMR vaccine providing 97% protection. Unvaccinated individuals are at high risk, and residents were advised to stay home if symptomatic and contact healthcare providers before seeking in-person care.

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REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 20, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on January 20, 2026, in the Commissioner Chambers at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m.

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

The Chair called the meeting to order and provided opening remarks.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the January 6, 2026 Combined Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the Buncombe County Public Transit Plan Funding Match
 1. Commitment Letter
 2. Reimbursement of NC USAR Task Force 2 Mission #338658 in response
 3. to Tropical Storm Erin.
4. Approval of the Construction Manager at Risk Contract with Vannoy
5. Construction for FY24 Courthouse Renovation Project
6. Realize Insurance Proceeds for Purchase of Replacement Vehicle
7. Rescission of Section 5307 Urban Transit Funding to the City of Asheville

Based on discussion held during the Briefing meeting, Commissioner Ball made a motion to add a Resolution Authorizing Submission of Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTIF) Grant Application to the Consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Greenson – representative of GAP AVL urged the Board to adopt a countywide anti-displacement policy, noting that displacement follows predictable patterns tied to economic development, infrastructure investment, and rising housing costs.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Pinder introduced Shauna Shepherd as the new Human Resources Director.

PRESENTATIONS

1. **Economic Development Coalition Annual Report**

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Clark Duncan, Executive Director with the Economic Development Coalition (EDC) provided the annual report. He explained that the EDC is a public-private partnership between Buncombe County, the City of Asheville, and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce that promotes the local economy.

Some data from the presentation to the board includes:

- 14 economic expansion announcements from 2020-25 resulted in 1,627 new jobs with an average wage of \$61,520, and over \$1 billion in new investments.
- Venture Asheville served 125 startups from 2020-25 that resulted in 166 jobs and over \$45 million in venture investment.
- EDC projects have resulted in \$1.15 billion in Buncombe County property tax value.

Over the next five years, EDC will focus on continued recovery from Tropical Storm Helene with a focus on five areas: building a competitive workforce, attracting industry growth, startup assistance and funding, developing apprenticeship and education opportunities, and fostering growth through data

2. Land Use and Transportation Update from the French Broad River MPO

Tristan Winkler, French Broad River MPO Director, provided the update. He explained that the French Broad River MPO is responsible for developing data on projected regional growth and how that growth will impact transportation in Buncombe and surrounding counties. He further outlined recent data, which shows that from 2000-2020, population growth has been the largest in unincorporated Buncombe and Henderson counties, which are locations where residents rely more on cars for transportation. He noted that at the same time, many urban areas have lost population since 2000, including areas north of downtown Asheville. Poverty rates have also increased in the county, with more than 43,000 residents in poverty in 2000, up to nearly 56,000 in 2020, according to the presentation. The presentation also covered commuting, methods of transportation, infrastructure, housing, and more.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Resolution of Intent to Participate in the Commercial Property Assessed Capital Expenditure (C-PACE) Program

Jeremiah LeRoy, Sustainability Director, provided background information. He explained that The North Carolina Commercial Property Assessed Capital Expenditure (NC C-PACE) Program is a statewide, financing mechanism for commercial property owners to fund energy efficiency, water conservation, renewable energy, and resiliency improvements. He further explained that the financing comes from private lenders and is repaid through a special assessment on the property tax bill over a long term. The program is administered by the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. The goal of a low-cost, long-term financing option for qualifying building improvements, is to promote economic development, reduce utility costs, and enhance building resilience. Participation by local governments is voluntary and requires adoption of a Resolution of Intent.

The Commissioners thanked staff for their work on this project and noted this aligns well with the strategic plan.

Commissioner Ball made the motion to approve the resolution of intent to participate in the Commercial Property Assesses Capital Expenditure Program. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

- **Juvenile Crime Prevention Council** - Commissioner Moore made the motion to appoint Eliza Jackson and Katie Kurdys and to reappoint Craig Loveland, Sylvia Clement, CiCi Weston, Khadia Ross, Natasha Adwaters, Angel Redmond, and Eric Robinson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously.
- **Strategic Partnership Grants Committee** – the Commissioners agreed to hold interviews for the three candidates at 9:00 a.m. on February 3.
- **Adult Care Home Community Advisory Committee** – Commissioner Moore made the motion to recuse Commissioner Horton from voting on this appointment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously. Commissioner Moore made the motion to appoint Terry Rafinski. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells and carried unanimously.
- **Agricultural Advisory Board for Farmland Preservation** – Commissioner Wells made the motion to appoint Lewis Welch. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.
- **Community Transportation Advisory Board** – Commissioner Ball made the motion to appoint Gary Ray and Kim West. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.
- **Early Childhood Education & Development Fund Committee** – Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to reappoint Commissioner Moore. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horton and carried unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Curt Euler, County Attorney, provided the motion. He explained that the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners 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. Statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6).

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to go into Closed Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Meet adjourned at 6:21 p.m.