Strategic Partnership Grants Committee
December 4, 2025
1:00 – 2:30 pm
200 College St, Room 310

In attendance:
Committee Members:
Present: Dr. Amy Russell (virtual), Ann Flynn (virtual), Cathy Ray, Dede Styles, Liz Ward, Mark Mickey, Ray Hemachandra (virtual)

County Staff: Rachael Sawyer, Angelyn Johnson

Opening Remarks
Staff announced that Kate Burger and Doug Clarke have served the maximum terms on the committee, and their terms have ended. Ray Hemachandra, current vice-chair, called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes
Cathy Ray made a motion to approve the minutes from January 9, 2025, and Mark Mickey seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business
- There was no old business.

New Business
- Election of officers
    - Cathy Ray made a motion to nominate Ray Hemachandra for chair. Mark Mickey seconded the motion. Ray Hemachandra abstained from the vote. The motion was unanimously approved.
    - Cathy Ray made a motion to nominate Ann Flynn for vice chair. Mark Mickey seconded the motion. Ann Flynn abstained from the vote. The motion was unanimously approved.
    - Cathy Ray made a motion to nominate Liz Ward for secretary. Mark Mickey seconded the motion. Liz Ward abstained from the vote. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Buncombe County Strategic Plan overview
    - Staff reviewed the Strategic Plan 2025-2030, and a copy of the adopted strategic plan was included in the meeting materials. Focus Areas and objectives include:
        - Growth & Development
            - Encourage a diversity of housing as a foundation for affordable, healthy and thriving communities, particularly for the most vulnerable residents
            - Maximize the use of land, guiding development to targeted growth areas that lead to resilient communities
        - Economic Development
            - Increase opportunities and support for local workforce
            - Increase economic and business opportunities in Buncombe County
        - Education
            - Enhance early & adult learning
            - Improve outcomes in education
        - Community Health

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- Increase coordination and resilience of community health services to create a healthier and safer community
- Improve outcomes in physical, mental, and behavioral health, and increase connectedness
- Improve community well-being by providing person-centered, trauma informed services

▪ Public Safety
- Increase prevention and harm reduction
- Increase hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness to support a climate resilient community
- Enhance individualized diversion services

▪ Energy & Environment
- Preserve the agricultural heritage of Buncombe County & prioritize the conservation of natural resources
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect air quality

o Funded Strategic Partnership Grants projects must directly support one or more objective from the strategic plan.

- FY2027 planning
  - Staff reviewed the draft FY2027 Grant Guidelines and Scoring Criteria, which were included in the meeting materials.
  - Committee members discussed the documents and made the following suggestions:
    - Remove the requirement that organizations must have been in active operation for at least two years since many organizations were formed in response to Tropical Storm Helene.
    - Since alignment with Helene is included in the scoring, emphasize it in the grant guidelines.
    - Consider including the possible number of grants to be awarded for each option.
    - Consider making option 1 a fixed amount of $10,000 rather than up to $10,000

Announcements:
- There will be no meeting on January 1 due to the holiday. Committee members would like to consider an additional meeting to discuss scoring. This topic will be added to February's agenda and if more discussion is needed, an additional meeting can be added.
- Staff will send an email to committee members to share within their network to help recruit applicants for the two vacant positions on the committee.

Adjournment:
Cathy Ray made a motion to adjourn. Mark Mickey seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Next Meeting – The next meeting will be February 5, 2026, 1:00 – 2:30 pm – 200 College St Room 310.