MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF DECEMBER 2, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on December 2, 2025, in the 1st floor conference room at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Commissioner Jennifer Horton.

Manager Pinder requested that the Board consider adding the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) Addendum to the briefing agenda for review and discussion. The Board consented and the item was added. Additionally, she requested the Audit Contact on the regular meeting agenda be pulled from considerations given new updates.

Just Home Update

Regenia Herring provided the update. She explained that Buncombe County was chosen as 1 of only 9 communities across the US. And that there are two Phases: Phase 1 – Planning Phase: Identify housing needs for individuals who have experienced housing instability and justice involvement; and Phase 2 – Capital Phase: Identify a single project to submit to MacArthur for potential $5M in loan funds (10-year loan 2% interest). She then provided detailed planning timelines for each of the phases and then announced the Just Home community event on December 17 to celebrate the completion of community engagement efforts.

Continuum of Care Update

Lacy Hoyle provided the update. She explained that the Continuum of Care (CoC) has had several actions in the past couple of months, including establishing an MOU with Goodwill of WNC as fiscal agent: appointed board representative for the Just Home Advisory Committee, and approved Code Purple and winter shelter plan. She said that funding for Code Purple FY20 was $303,000 to cover the period between November 1, 2026, through April 30, 2026, and that this year there are multiple providers and a operations coordinator role. Hoyle then provided an update on the ARPA funded projects and general funding updates.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Addendum

Kevin Madsen, Helene Recovery Officer provided background information. He explained that the current regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) was developed in partnership with Madison County under NC Emergency Management's multi-jurisdictional designation. The plan approved by NCEM and FEMA in June 2021; valid for five years and that the plan content directly impacts eligibility for federal mitigation grants, including HMGP. He further explained that the HMGP application deadline is December 15, so staff is requested Board approval to add new mitigation actions to the current HMP. The proposed HMP addendum includes actions developed in response to Tropical Storm Helene and has updated actions to strengthen HMGP

applications and support post storm recovery. Madsen then outlined the action items to be added and provided examples of impact.

The Board discussed and consented to adding this item to the regular meeting agenda for approval to move forward.

Reduce to Rebuild Program Update

Matt Baker provided the update. He explained that on June 1st, 2025, Buncombe County has reduced permitting fees for properties impacted by TS Helene that occurred to primary residences. The Helene impacted residences are those residential dwellings are within the boundaries of Buncombe County and have been documented by Buncombe County or Federal Emergency Disaster Agency Damage Assessment with a rating of Destroyed, Major, Moderate, or Minor. He explained that the reduction does not apply to expansions of residence or fees relating to Homeowner recovery and lien agents and that the reduction has been applied through December 31, 2025. Baker said that the County has received 6,019 applications for reduced permit fees across the four permitting departments: Permits and Inspections, Air Quality, Environmental Health, and Planning. 8% (472 applications) have met the program criteria and the overall financial impact to County Revenue has been $25,992.

In closing, Baker asked the Board for guidance on sunsetting or continuing the program. The Board discussed and agreed upon continuing the program at 100% waiver for all permit fees through June 30, 2026, and further directed staff to add this to the regular meeting agenda for approval.

School Funding Agreement

John Hudson provided background information. He explained that currently $146M of active school capital projects via Article 39 sales tax funding ($25.5M estimated to be generated this year). Additionally, Article 40/42 Sales Tax is estimated at $22.7M of revenue for capital projects in FY26 and Asheville City Schools Supplemental Tax is estimated to generate $16.5M of revenue for operating. Hudson further explained the proposed School Funding Agreement as well as the challenges and research done. He said that the proposed formular is based on: • Major County revenue sources • Timely reporting deadlines • Flexible adjustment for enrollment/emergencies; and • Focused solely on operating (Local Current Expense) funding. Hudson said that the draft agreement is in the materials for review and that all three boards will need to review and approve the agreement. The agreement will be coming back to the Board of Commissioners on January 6 for approval.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF DECEMBER 2, 2025.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on December 2, 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 Martin Moore; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Parker Sloan; Commissioner Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball.

Chair Edwards opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

Vice-Chair Moore made a motion to add two items that were discussed in the Briefing meeting to the consent agenda: 1) Hazard Mitigation Plan Addendum; and 2) Reduce to Rebuild program extension. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Ball made the motion to approve the Consent agenda with the addition of the two added items and the remaining agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the November 18, 2025, Combined Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the October 2025 Tax Collection Report
3. Approval of the 2026 Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Schedule
4. Approval of the Updated Proclamation Policy
5. Approval of the Pigeon River Grant for December 25- August 26
6. Resolution Approving Pyrotechnic Experts for Firework Displays
7. Ordinance to Extend the Reduce to Rebuild Program to June 30, 2026
8. Resolution to Adopt an Addendum to the Buncombe Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christopher Fink –a volunteer ombudsman and small-business mentor, informed the board that 13 small business operators running 46 residential living facilities in Buncombe County are in financial crisis. He said that recent Medicaid reimbursement cuts, combined with steep increases in operating costs, are threatening their viability and the housing stability of hundreds of residents. He noted that this is likely just the beginning, and operators are warning of potential resident evictions if conditions don't improve.

Cory Wall – updated commissioners on preparations for the Fairview Holiday Parade, noting extensive coordination with the sheriff's office, local businesses, DOT, and an engineer to ensure road-closure safety and compliance. She emphasized that the community strongly wants

the parade held in the heart of Fairview after last year's relocation due to Hurricane Helen. Wall requested clear guidance, a single point of contact, and stronger support from local government,

Adrian Butter – spoke in support of Corey Wall's efforts to organize the Fairview Christmas Parade, emphasizing its importance for community healing and unity.

Eugenio "Gino" Perez –urged commissioners to reconsider shifting Asheville's transit system to a ridership-focused model, arguing the city lacks the density and geography needed for it to work. He warned that cutting coverage would strain already overburdened services like Mountain Mobility and harm residents who rely on transit. Gino called for a coverage model that prioritizes serving people where they live.

PRESENTATIONS

1. **Early Childhood Education & Development Fund Committee Annual Report**

Vice-Chair Moore provided the background information. He explained that the committee works to support early care and education, enhancing workforce development, and improving system effectiveness. As chairman of the committee, Commissioner Moore emphasized a new Focused Investment Plan that aligns with strategic County goals, responds to current early education needs, and maximizes impact. He explained that ECE has a current budget of $3.97 million in grants that support 13 projects across the county and that funds are used by grantees for activities like behavioral health support, classroom supplies, curriculum, workforce development, teacher pay, and parent engagement activities. He said that the FY2027 Grant application opens Jan. 5, 2026.

2. **FY26 Quarter 1 Financial Report**

Melissa Moore provided the fiscal year 2026 first quarter financial report. She provided an overview of the Solid Waste Fund, County capital projects, investments, and procurements.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Personnel Ordinance Public Hearing**

Karen Marshall, Interim Human Resources Director, provided background information. She explained that the Public Hearing is for the Commission to consider approval of the Personnel Ordinance and HR Policies revisions, discontinuing longevity for new hires and rehires who start work January 1, 2026, and after.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing at 5:47 p.m. there were no public comments. The Public Hearing closed at 5:47 p.m.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to amend the Personnel Ordinance to discontinue longevity for new hires and rehires who start work January 1, 2026, and after. Commissioner Wells seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve the revised personnel policies to discontinue longevity for new hires and rehires who start work January 1, 2026, and after. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

Manager Pinder reminded the Board that a few years ago the Board voted to add a review of the compensation and salary structure every 3-5 years into the Personnel Ordinance; she said that time is approaching and an RFQ will be issued soon. She noted that salary raises are not promised but a review of the pay structure will be conducted.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Resolution to Terminate the Commercial Hauler Rebate Program**

Dane Pedersen, Solid Waste Director, provided background information. He explained that staff recommends terminating the commercial hauler rebate program that was created in 2015. He said that terminating this current program promotes equity and competitive neutrality among all haulers, as currently only larger haulers qualify and that ending the program restores pricing fairness and equal opportunity and aligns with board goal of equitable service delivery. Additionally, he shared that only five haulers of 620 active commercial accounts qualifying for rebates. In the last three years, rebates have totaled $1,496,966. He clarified that no changes to commercial tipping fees, schedule amendments, or rate adjustments are recommended.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to adopt the resolution terminating the Commercial Hauler Rebate Program effective December 31, 2025. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Moore and carried unanimously.

Manager Pinder commended Dane and his team for their innovative work diverting hazardous materials and construction debris to preserve limited landfill airspace. She noted that Buncombe County is unlikely to ever site another landfill, making these efforts especially important and cost-saving. She said the proposed ordinance supports and aligns with the landfill team's ongoing work.

2. **Resolution Approving the Design and Engineering Contract for the Grovement Landslide with ECS Southeast, LLC**

Kevin Madsen, Helene Recovery Officer, provided background information. He explained that Tropical Storm Helene caused widespread damage in Buncombe County, including nine landslide sites in the Village of Grovemont. He said that the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) has obligated funding to pay for design and engineering services to examine potential landslide hazard mitigation options in the Village of Grovemont. The County released an RFQ for this work and has selected ECS Southeast, LLC to complete this work with the contract amount of $794,200. This work will be paid for with Public Assistance funding from FEMA. This contract is the first in what is anticipated to be a series of RFQs that aim to address a total of 25 landslides in Buncombe County.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the resolution authorizing the execution of a contract for design and engineering services with ECS Southeast, LLC to examine potential

landslide hazard mitigation options in the Village of Grovemont. Commissioner Whitesides seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Revisions to the Affordable Housing Services Program Guidelines

Jonathon Jones provided background information. He explained that Buncombe County created the Affordable Housing Services Program (AHSP) to ensure comprehensive opportunities for affordable and safe housing as a foundation for healthy and thriving families and neighborhoods. He explained that at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 2, 2025, the Affordable Housing Subcommittee recommended the Board of Commissioners adopt a revised AHSP Description, Requirements, and Guidelines to provide administrative clarifications for potential applicants. On November 18, 2025, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Helene Recovery Plan which resulted in additional staff recommended amendment to the AHSP Description, Requirements, and Guidelines.

Revisions include:

- Prioritize affordable housing for Buncombe County residents permanently displaced by Tropical Storm Helene.
- Projects with Project Based Vouchers may use the local Housing Authority rent standards, which may exceed Fair Market Rent standards.
- Awards from differing fiscal years may not be combined to exceed program maximums.
- Awards are reimbursement-based unless approved at time of application.
- Borrower entities must be identified at time of application.
- Pre-development expenses (acquisition, purchase options, etc.) are not reimbursable.
- Loans are structured with recourse terms; non-recourse loans allowed if necessary (ex: 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credit).
- Construction loans to become downpayment assistance may request 0% interest.
- Construction loans have clear construction and permanent phases to set the start date of the affordability period.
- Remove reference to AHSP expenditure approval threshold to prevent potential conflict with broader County policy.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to approve revisions to Buncombe County's Affordable Housing Services Program (AHSP). Commissioner Ball seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Commissioner Ball made the motion to reappoint Commissioner Moore on the MSD. Chair Edwards seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously with Commissioner Moore abstaining from voting.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to appoint E.B Odderstol to the Mountain Community Capital Fund. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to appoint James Hunter, Liesl Erb, Cameron Farlow, David Siripoonsup to the Land Conservation Advisory Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sloan made the motion to appoint the following to the Pedestrian Steering Committee:

Gyulnara Ashari

Molly Coffey

Caitlin Constantine

Scott Dickens

Jennifer Dreisbach

Julie Judkins

Megan McCreary

Brighid O'Keane

Christopher Reese

Kara Wheeler

Billie Breeden – BC HHS

Harry Buckner – Biltmore Forest

Lucy Crown – Asheville

James Eller – Weaverville

Shannon Tuch – Woodfin

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.