NOTE: VARIATIONS IN TABLE BORDERS MAY OCCUR DURING THE CIVICCLERK/ADOBE AGENDA GENERATION PROCESS AND ARE NOT PRESENT IN THE ORIGINAL WORD DOCUMENT.

MINUTES
BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PRE-AGENDA MEETING

The Burke County Board of Commissioners held a pre-agenda meeting on Monday, January 5, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, Burke County Services Building, 110 N. Green Street, Entrance E, in Morganton, North Carolina. The meeting was streamed live on the County's YouTube channel, BurkeCountyNC, and it was broadcast on the local cable systems. The agenda, in its entirety, was posted to the County's website, www.burkenc.org, several days prior to the meeting. Pursuant to Resolution No. 2024-17, adopted and effective on August 20, 2024, the Burke County Board of Commissioners conferred upon itself all the power, duties, and responsibilities of the Board of Health and the Social Services Board. Those present were:

COMMISSIONERS:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman Phil Smith, Vice Chairman Brian Barrier Randy Burns Mike Stroud
STAFF:	Brian Epley, County Manager Margaret Pierce, Finance Director / Deputy County Manager Destin Hall, County Attorney (Late- arrived at 3:04 p.m.) Kat Wright, Deputy Clerk
STAFF ABSENT:	Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board (Vacation.)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brittain called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: To approve the agenda as presented.

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Phil Smith, Vice Chairman
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, Randy Burns, and Mike Stroud

PRESENTATIONS

CM - FOSTER CARE PRESENTATION (PLACE HOLDER)

Brian Epley, County Manager, relayed that Judge Robert A. Mullinax, Jr., who is the Chief District Court Judge for District 36 (Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba counties), will speak at the Board's regular meeting to address foster care issues from a judicial officer's perspective.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

BOC - RECOGNITION OF CHRIS JERNIGAN, FOR SERVICE ON THE CPCFPT
Chairman Brittain announced that the Board of Commissioners wishes to recognize Mr. Chris Jernigan for his exemplary 35 years of service on the Burke County Child Protection and Child Fatality Prevention Team. Mr. Jernigan's steadfast commitment and compassionate leadership have been instrumental in advancing the team's mission to safeguard children and prevent future tragedies. Through decades of collaboration with local agencies, health professionals, and community partners, his contributions have strengthened child welfare systems and improved outcomes for vulnerable families in Burke County.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CM - PRESENTATION OF FY25 AUDIT (PLACE HOLDER)
Brian Epley, County Manager, reported that, at the regular meeting, the County's independent auditor, Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams, & Co., P.A., will present highlights of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Audit Report. This presentation will provide a comprehensive review of Burke County's financial statements, compliance with state and federal regulations, and overall fiscal health. Key findings and recommendations, if any, will be highlighted during the presentation.

As required by North Carolina General Statutes, the audit has been submitted to the Local Government Commission (LGC) for review and approval.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CM - COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION INITIATIVE (PLACE HOLDER)
Hugh Sandoe, Budget Strategy and Performance Analyst, stated that he will present an update on the Community Beautification Initiative, which was launched in September 2023 to enhance the appearance, functionality, and overall quality of shared public spaces throughout Burke County.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

SO - RESOLUTION AWARDING COUNTY-ISSUED SERVICE SIDE ARM AND BADGE
Banks Hinceman, Sheriff, in accordance with N.C.G.S. § 20-187.2(a), requested that the gun (Glock G45, Serial Number CETE928) and badge worn by Lieutenant Timothy Branch be awarded

to him for retirement for the fee of $1.00. Lieutenant Timothy Branch retired on September 29, 2025.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO ITEMS FOR DECISION AT THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

Note: Later in the meeting, Commissioner Burns requested that this item be moved to Items for Decision so the Board could formally recognize Lt. Branch for his service. There being no objection from the Board or the Sheriff, the item was moved to Items for Decision.

CLERK - REMOVAL FROM THE JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

Kat Wright, Deputy Clerk, requested the removal of Dayonna Wilkerson, Seat No. 13 (student under the age of 18), from the JCPC due to her graduation and transition to college.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CLERK - REMOVAL FROM THE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kat Wright, Deputy Clerk, reported that Seat No. 8 on the Library Board of Trustees is designated for a resident of the Town of Hildebran and has an expired term. Jennie Cook has served the maximum number of terms permitted under the LBOT bylaws; therefore, her removal was requested.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

GS - RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2024 LOCAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN

Mark Delehant, General Services Director, reported that the Local Water Supply Plan (LWSP) has been approved by the Division of Water Resources. Adoption of a resolution is required to formally acknowledge the plan. The resolution affirms that the Burke County Board of Commissioners finds the Local Water Supply Plan to be in accordance with North Carolina General Statute § 143-355(I) and that it will provide appropriate guidance for the future management of water supplies in Burke County, as well as useful information to the Department of Environmental Quality for development of the State Water Supply Plan as required by statute.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

ITEMS FOR DECISION

TAX - TAX COLLECTION REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025 (PLACE HOLDER)

Brian Epley, County Manager, stated that John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, will present the Tax Collection Report for the period between July 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, at the regular meeting.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

TAX - TAX RELEASE AND REFUND REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025 (PLACE HOLDER)

Brian Epley, County Manager, stated that John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, will present the Tax Release and Refund for the period between July 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, at the regular meeting.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JANUARY 20, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Chairman Brittain asked Board members to submit their reports to the Clerk for inclusion in the regular agenda packet. He issued a reminder for some upcoming office closures, community events, and meetings. He also invited youth groups to sign up to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at Commissioners' meetings.

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS – NONE

ACTION ITEMS

DSS - DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE FOR NOV/DEC 2025

Korey Fisher-Wellman presented the monthly DSS report as follows:

Social Services
Director's Monthly Report
January 5, 2026

PERSONNEL

HIRING & SEPARATION REPORT NOV. 2025

Current Openings:

Position Title	Position #:	Status
IMC III Lead worker	51901	
IMC II	51382	Interviews
IMC II	51820	Interviews
IMC II	51898	
IMC II	51785	
Social Worker IAT	51775	
Social Worker IAT	51776	Interviews
Social Worker IAT	51905	
Social Worker IAT	51341	
Social Worker III	51460	
Social Worker III	51827	
Training Supervisor	51908	
Administrative Officer II	51667	

Separations:
Total = 1
Dismissal = 1

Number of Hirings:
Total = 5
After Hours Support Specialist = 1
Income Maintenance Caseworker III = 1
Part-Time Processing Assistant IV = 1
Processing Assistant IV = 1
Social Worker Supervisor III = 1

BURKE COUNTY

OPERATIONS

Economic Services MOU Data

METRICS PER MOU						
	FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES					
		MOU MEASURE	95%	95%		
ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	APP TIMELINESS RATE- REGULAR	APP TIMELINESS RATE-EXPEDITE	RECERT TIMELINESS RATE		
10,418	5,445	Achieved	Achieved	Acheived		
WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES						
ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	MOU MEASURE	95%	95%		
			APPLICATION TIMELINESS	RECERT TIMELINESS RATE		
84	55		Achieved	Achieved		
MEDICAID		MOU MEASURE	90	90	96	
TOTAL MEDICAID RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES		REPORT CARD MAD	REPORT CARD OTHER	Straight Through Processing	
28,723	23,220		Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE						
	MOU PERFORMANCE MEASURE			85%	85%	
SA ACTIVE CASES				SAA TIMELINESS APPLICATIONS	SAD TIMELINESS APPLICATIONS	
256				Achieved	Achieved	
ENERGY PROGRAMS						
	MOU PERFORMANCE MEASURE				95%	95%
	CIP APPLICATIONS PROCESSED	LIEAP APPLICATIONS PROCESSED			% PROCESSED TIMELY -NO SOURCE 1 DAY	% PROCESSED TIMELY -WITH SOURCE 2 DAYS
	170	585			Achieved	Achieved
CHILD CARE SUBSIDY						
		PERFORMANCE MEASURE		95%		
	ACTIVE CASES			APPLICATION TIMELINESS		
	417			Achieved		

Economic Services Update

MEDICAID

	AGED OR DISABLED ADULT ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS Does not include MXP or FP cases	ADULT ACTIVE CASES *Does not include MXP or FP cases	FAMILY AND CHILDREN ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS	FAMILY AND CHILDREN ACTIVE CASES	TOTAL MEDICAID APPLICATIONS TAKEN	TOTAL MEDICAID REVIEWS	TOTAL MEDICAID REVIEWS WITHOUT WAIVERS	CAP REFERRALS	LTC REFERRALS	TOTAL MEDICAID RECIPIENTS	TOTAL NEMT TRIPS	REPORT CARD MAD	REPORT CARD OTHER	RECERT COMPLETION TIMELINESS RATE	Straight Through Processing	Total
MOU MEASURE												90	90	95		
NOV	5405	7584	22,655	14304	688	363	1746	9	10	28,062	573	97%	97%	[redacted]	100%	97%
DEC	5415	7567	22936	14554	582	1485	2246	10	11	28,351	582	100%	97%		100%	96%
JAN	5412	7612	23126	14845	565	2090	2900	5	9	28,538	651	96%	96%		100%	96%
FEB	5391	7,608	23436	14,952	352	2223	2580	1	7	28,561	683	93%	95%		100%	95%
MAR	5356	7,618	23247	15,012	411	855	2969	11	13	28603	735	100%	95%		100%	95%
APR	5389	7,752	23481	15,037	380	1571	*	4	12	28,870	683	96%	95%		100%	95%
MAY	5351	7,658	23365	15,147	382	*	*	3	9	28,716	713	93%	97%		100%	97%
JUN	5338	7,683	23515	15,235	346	1540	n/a	0	17	28,851	698	96%	94%		100%	95%
JUL	5327	7,734	23,544	15,333	382	1435	n/a	2	18	28,873	*	93%	95%		100%	95%
AUG	5283	7,753	23448	15,418	325	1386	n/a	1	12	28,731	823	100%	96%		100%	96%
SEP	5289	7,744	23471	15,459	378	1586	n/a	2	16	28,740	756	100%	94%		100%	94%
OCT	5311	7,747	23422	16,290	398	1606	n/a	1	16	28,733	638	100%	98%		100%	98%
NOV	5342	7,755	23,381	15,465	472	1825		2	12	28,723	624	100%	96%		100%	97%

Economic Services Update

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

	ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	APPLICATIONS TAKEN	APP TIMELINESS RATE-REGULAR	APP TIMELINESS RATE-EXPEDITE	RECERT TIMELINESS RATE	RECERTS COMPLETED	FNS EBT BENEFITS
MOU MEASURE				95%	95%	95%		
NOV	11,981	6206	394	100.00%	97.81	67%	739	2,962,954.00
DEC	12,193	6312	346	97.62%	98.15%	100%	356	2,016,823.00
JAN	12,108	6275	585	99.31%	99.77%	100%	525	1,973,378.00
FEB	11,951	6236	449	97.18%	100%	98.75%	561	1,963,605.00
MAR	11,907	6183	499	97.21%	100%	98.48%	526	1,965,566.00
APR	11,396	5959	591	97.24%	100.00%	97.77%	720	1,871,687.00
MAY	11,002	5732	576	98.11%	99.15%	99.13%	692	1,808,941.00
JUN	10,804	5,597	598	97.69%	92.73%	98.19%	553	1,783,246.00
JUL	10,715	5,556	594	96.83%	96.84%	98.74%	548	1,760,696.00
AUG	10,783	5602	558	99.52%	99.31%	98.86%	528	1,778,789.00
SEP	10,794	5605	580	99.13%	97.98%	99.41%	509	1,752,253.00
OCT	10,695	5568	512	99..07%	99.02%	98.65%	445	1,797,705.00
NOV	10,418	5445	417	99.15%	98.81%	99.70%	336	1,759,731.00

ADULT SERVICES UPDATE



Guardianship
- Total Wards: 69
- Contracted Wards: 16

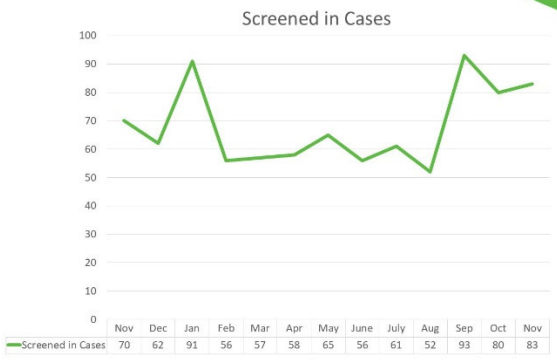
SAIH (Special Assistance In-Home)
- Active Cases: 53
- State Average Caseload: 25-30

CAP (Community Alternatives Program)
- Current Enrollment: 133
- Capacity: 188+

Nov. APS Data

Category	Number	Notes
Total APS Reports Received	38	
APS Reports Screened In	23	Reports meeting criteria for an investigation
Substantiated Cases	2	
Confirmed Cases	2	Includes substantiations and other confirmations
Cases Opened for Services	5	Ongoing support and case management
Outreach Cases Assigned	6	Proactive engagement with at-risk adults
Service Referrals	6	Referrals for supportive community services
Guardianship Referrals	2	Referrals for potential legal guardianship

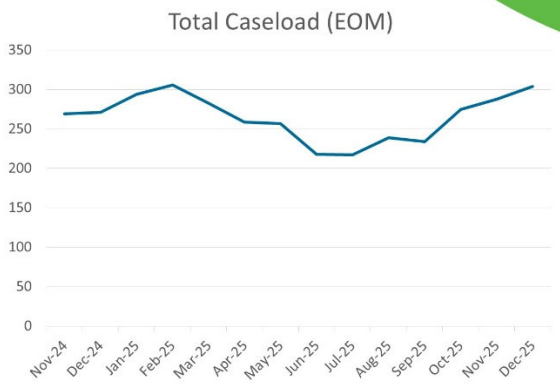
CPS REPORTS THROUGH 11/21



- September 2025 intake peaks at 93
- Average Screened-In reports per month since PathNC adoption is 77
- As of 12/18, 44 Screen-In's for December

BURKECOUNTY

CPS CASELOADS



- High point was February 2025 with 306 Open cases.
- A stark increase in reporting numbers has contributed to a rise in caseload.

BURKECOUNTY

FOSTER CARE UPDATE

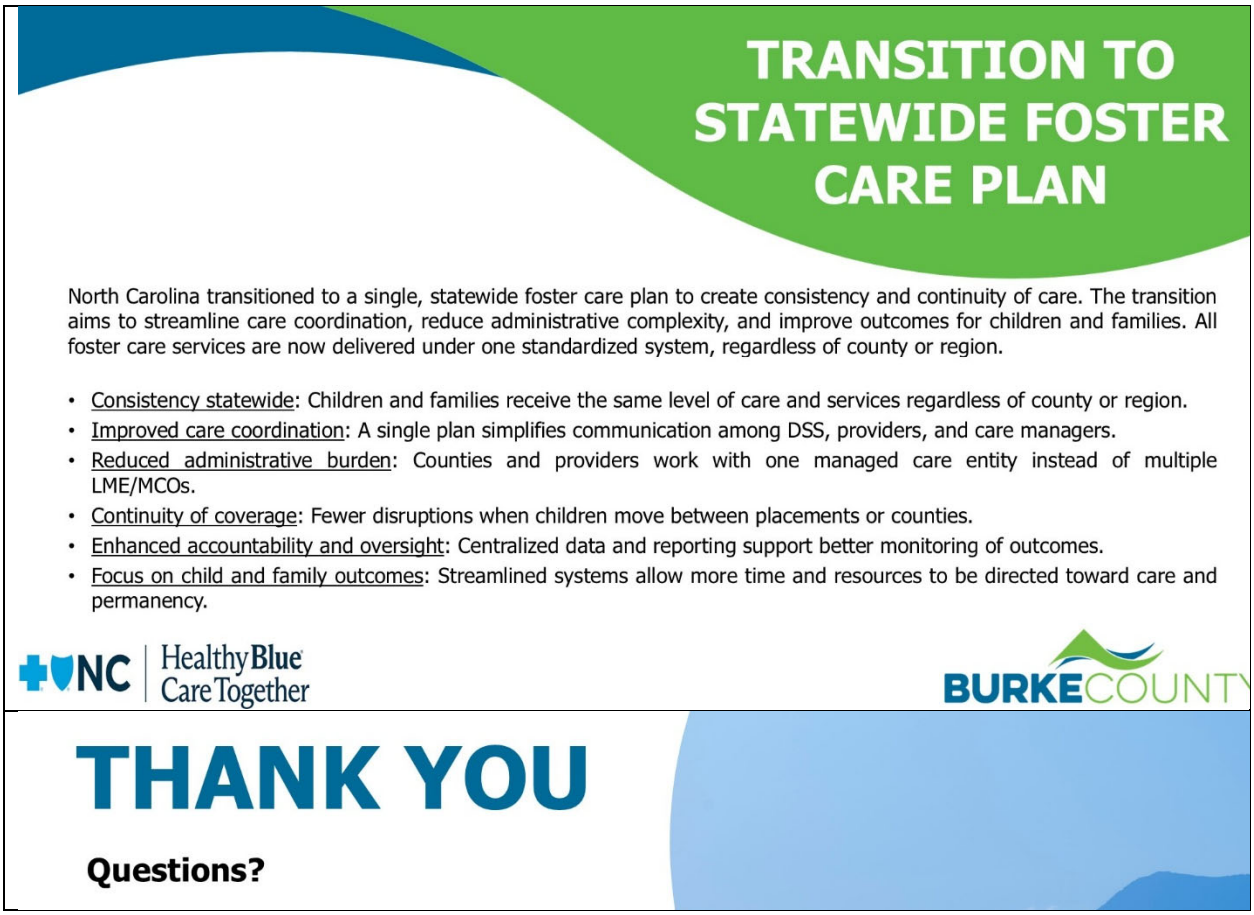


Every child deserves a family

Foster Care Snapshot – Burke County

- Total children in foster care: 190
- New entries into care this period: 6
- Exits from care this period: 4

BURKECOUNTY



Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Barrier asked Mr. Fisher-Wellman to elaborate on the challenges experienced with Healthy Blue. Mr. Fisher-Wellman explained that many of the issues stemmed from the program's new statewide operation, which involved hiring new staff and clarifying roles and responsibilities. Early confusion occurred regarding the function of in-person support staff assigned to counties, as expectations differed between counties and Healthy Blue. He noted that additional challenges arose from the need to renegotiate provider contracts previously held with the LME (Local Management Entity). This created occasional difficulties with placements when contracts had not yet been finalized.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Brittain called for a motion.

Motion: To accept the report as presented.

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Mike Stroud, Commissioner
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, Randy Burns, and Mike Stroud

CLOSED SESSION
Chairman Brittain announced that a closed session is needed.

Motion: To enter closed session to consult with the Board Attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the Attorney and the Board, including,

but not limited to, the matter of *Burke County v. Telma M. Juan Pedro*, 25 CVS 57, Burke County Superior Court pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3); to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, or conditions of appointment or initial employment of a public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6); and to prevent the disclosure of confidential or privileged information pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(1) and § 153A-98. Further, the Code Enforcement Officer was invited to join the Board in closed session.

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, Randy Burns, and Mike Stroud

Motion: To come out of closed session.

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Randy Burns, Commissioner
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, Randy Burns, and Mike Stroud

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT IN THE MATTER OF BURKE COUNTY V. TELMA M. JUAN PEDRO, 25 CVS 57, BURKE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

Chairman Brittain announced that a proper motion was made to come out of closed session and that the Board approved a settlement agreement in the matter of *Burke County v. Telma M. Juan Pedro*, 25 CVS 57, Burke County Superior Court.

This space is intentionally left blank.

The agreement reads as follows:

NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY

FILE NO: 25CVS000057-110
IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION

FILED
DATE: January 22, 2026
TIME: 11:27:24 AM
BURKE COUNTY
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT
BY: K. Benson

BURKE COUNTY,
Plaintiff,

v.

TELMA M. JUAN PEDRO,
Defendant.

CONSENT ORDER

This matter came on for consideration before the below-signed Resident Superior Court Judge. It appears to the Court that the parties have consented to the entry of this Consent Judgment, together with the findings of fact and conclusions of law contained herein.

The Court makes the following FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. Plaintiff (hereinafter, "the County") commenced this action on January 8, 2025, asking that the Court require Defendant to cease keeping chickens on her property located at 2140 Hidden Hill Street, Morganton, North Carolina 28655, Burke County PIN 1774962844.

2. The Defendant was properly served, and the Court has personal and subject matter jurisdiction over her.

3. The parties have agreed to final disposition of this matter on the terms described in this Consent Judgment under a mediated settlement agreement the parties signed on January 2, 2026.

4. The Burke County Board of Commissioners approved the terms of the agreement on January 5, 2026, as required by law.

5. The memorandum of mediated settlement recites that the "signatures of the parties on the formal judgment/order are not necessary."

NOW, THEREFORE, it is ORDERED and ADJUDGED as follows:

1. Defendant will remove all chickens from her property located at 2140 Hidden Hill Street, Morganton, North Carolina 28655, Burke County PIN 1774962844, on or before May 2, 2026.

2. Defendant will allow the County reasonable access by employees to view and document Defendant's progress once after March 3, 2026 and as reasonably necessary after May 2, 2026. The County may take photographs and video recordings as necessary.

3. Prior to removal, Defendant will maintain her chickens in safe, secure, and clean pens and will not allow the chickens to run at large.

4. Defendant will have on her property neither roosters nor more than 50 chickens.

5. Defendant will respond within a reasonable time to requests from the County as to the status of the removal of the chickens from her property.

6. Should Defendant fail to remove all chickens from her property by May 2, 2026, the County, upon presentation to a superior court judge of a verified motion, will be entitled *ex parte* to a hearing on contempt under N.C.G.S. § 5A-23(a) without the necessity of an intermediate show-cause order.

7. The court retains jurisdiction over this matter to enforce the terms of this order.

January 21, 2026

1/21/2026 2:40:19 PM
Sarah E. Daily-Turner

Resident Superior Court Judge

ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 4:44 p.m.

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Phil Smith, Vice Chairman
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, Randy Burns, and Mike Stroud

Approved this 16th day of March 2026.

_____
Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
Burke Co. Board of Commissioners

Attest:

_____
Kay Honeycutt Draughn, CMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board