Burke Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Meeting

FEBRUARY 11, 2026 MINUTES

Burke County Commissioner's Meeting Room Section E,
110 North Green Street, Morganton, NC, 8:10 A.M.

ATTENDANCE:

Council members attending: Ronn Abernathy, Keith Bowman, Andrew Byerly, Judge Scott Conrad, Jennifer Forney, Wesley Hasson, Rev. Jasper Hemphill, Rev. Wesley Hendrix, Sheriff Banks Hinceman, Dr. Paul Holden, Joseph Martinez, Brooke Mills, Chris Norman and Dr. Dillon Sain.

Council members excused: Nicki Carpenter, Dr. Steve Moody, Camey Ervin, Korey Fisher-Wellman.

Programs attending: Drew Amburn, Brenda Throneburg– Burke Recovery; Cathy Starnes– Conflict Resolution Center; and Kim Castano and Nicole Jenkins – Kids at Work; Renee Lewis – Repay Inc.

Partners attending: Darryl Church and Jackson Koonts.

Guests attending: Jason Roehlig with Burke Recovery

Staff attending: JCPC Admin, A.J. Coutu and State Consultant Megan Webster

1.0 Call to Order: Rev. Jasper Hemphill called the meeting to order at approximately 8:16 A.M. A quorum, 14 of 22 was present.

1.1. Approval of the Agenda: **Motion by Ronn Abernathy to approve the agenda was seconded by Wesley Hendrix and passed unanimously without discussion.**

1.2 Approval of the December 2025 Minutes: **Motion by Wesley Hendrix was seconded by Brooke Mills and passed unanimously without discussion.**

COUNCIL REPORTS / BUSINESS

2.0 Governance: Dr. Steve Moody, Chair / Jasper Hemphill, Vice Chair

2.1 Membership: Vice-Chair Jasper Hemphill reported that the Council is still lacking representatives for two Youth Under 21 or At-Risk Youth/Family Representative.

2.2 Draft Executive Summary for Annual Plan: Vice-Chair Jasper Hemphill noted that the Summary sent to the Council previously needs review. He also reminded the group that **the programs/funding amounts were highlighted as they are not set until after the appropriations committee meeting on February 25th and the March 11th Council meeting which will designate the recommended funding amounts. Mr. Hemphill stated that feedback would be appreciated. Ronn Abernathy was alerted that his DJJ feedback would be particularly helpful.**

2.3 Information For APRIL Vote on Slate of Officers for FY 2026/2027. Reverend Hemphill and Joseph Martinez noted that the slate of officers was sent to the Council and anyone is welcome to nominate others or themselves for the positions. The information should go to **Dr. Moody, Jasper Hemphill , Jennifer Forney, Joseph Martinez or AJ Coutu to add a nomination to the slate of officers.**

3.0 Finance: Joseph Martinez, Chair / Nicki Carpenter, Vice Chair

3.1 Burke JCPC Administrative Budget Information. Mr. Martinez noted that the Administration budget is on target.

3.2 Request for Proposals (RFP)and Timeline Update: Mr. Martinez noted that RFP advertisement was published on line, with County website, the News Herald and through emails . Mr. Martinez noted that the Allocation meeting is Wednesday February 25th. Snow date for the Allocations meeting is Friday February 27th as that is when the room was available and won't run into the March Council meeting on the 11th. He noted that this update was already sent to the Finance Committee, but

anyone else on the Council is welcome to attend. He also thanked Megan Webster for getting a large article in the local The Paper.

3.3 Budget Revision for Kids at Work: Nicole Jenkins represented Kids at Work and reviewed all line item changes in the budget revision which had been sent to the Council by email previously. Ronn Abernathy made the motion to accept the revision as presented. Brooke Mills seconded the motion which passed unanimously without further discussion.

4.0 Outreach: Outreach Chair, Jennifer Forney / Korey Fisher-Wellman, Vice Chair:

4.1 No Current Business: With no business, Jennifer Forney yielded her time to the monitoring reviews.

LOCAL & STATE REPORTS / BUSINESS

5.0 Program Monitoring Reports:

5.1 Burke Recovery: Dr. Dillon Sain and DJJ liaison Darryl Church, monitored the program and Dr. Sain reported on their findings of the assessment and treatment programs. In the Monitoring report DJJ mentions assessment delay, however good communication and quick response. Dr. Sain mentioned that the work being done was important and that future funding is recommended.

Drew Amburn, Director was asked to give his PEP Report. He stated that they have or are working on a program manual and compiling training documents.

5.2 Conflict Resolution Center: Rev. Jasper Hemphill and DJJ liaison Derek Hare monitored the programs, including Mediation, Mediation Education, Sentencing Circles and Teen Court. Rev. Hemphill stated that the programs met or exceeded their measurable objectives. That their programs were in good shape and that future funding was recommended.

5.3 Kids at Work (Aspire): Dr. Holden and DJJ liaison Heather Atkins monitored the program. Dr. Holden reported that the program is active in 22 counties presently and that it provides interpersonal skills training as well as culinary training. They are receiving referrals from other local programs and report quick turnaround, positive feedback with families and good team building. The program provides transportation. The staff is working with community partners and are presenting program information to the community collaborative. The monitoring report noted that Communication can be improved with court counselors. Further funding is recommended.

5.4 Repay – Dr. Moody and Kristin Marshall monitored the programs. All programs were recommended for further funding. However, neither monitor was able to attend the meeting and the monitoring reports provided by them were read by A.J. Coutu as follows:

5.4a Just Girls : DJJ reports they would be lost without these programs. They are quick to return calls and answer concerns. Excellent reputation in the community. They are quick to fill gaps in services and finding funding sources. 68% are from single families and have excellent non-recidivism rates. They adapt to the needs of the individual clients. Expenditure are on track as are their referrals. Ms. Lewis noted that they have had exceptional referral numbers already this year.

5.4b Psychological Services: They do a great job, they are quick to get assessments returned. They are thorough and call if any questions to make sure all information is complete. There are no concerns. Before the Repay CCAs the return time was 6 months instead of within 7 days. They makes the DJJ staff less hesitant to refer. They offer a more complete service for referring to the proper client services. Timing of complete assessments may be effected by the number of referrals at one time. Their expenditures and referrals are low as this is a DJJ/ court driven program and depends on government reimbursement.

5.4e Restorative Services: The monitoring report reflects - good referral rate, a budget revision is the works. DJJ relayed that the program is doing a great job with communication. Supervisor comes to court every Thursday to immediately meet with the families and get the youth started. Very good feedback from families and youth. There have been cancellations that were not reported in a timely manner.

5.4 f R.I.S.E. : It was noted that this is a new program. DJJ representative reports - Good Communication, good response and good documentation. Budget expenditures are in line. Referrals are low, but increasing as expected for a new program.

Chris Norman noted that these programs provide what they need for their youth. Dr. Holden noted that across counties, Renee and her staff are very responsive and they work at filling program gaps the community needs filled such as the RISE program.

Renee Lewis noted for the Council's edification that their new Parenting Program has begun and is going really well. There are some parents of the youth being served who have joined and DSS is now making referrals to the program. They had 11 referrals in one day recently. Ms. Lewis highlighted the fact that all the Burke programs work together to assist the youth and the DJJ counselors. This is not always the case in other counties. This was reiterated by others with examples.

There was a Motion by Sheriff Hinceman to accept all monitoring reports as written which was seconded by Dr. Holden and passed unanimously.

6.0 Juvenile Justice Report: Ronn Abernathy reported for the DJJ counselors. He first thanked the programs and their staff for their hard work. He noted that it is hard to project how many clients any program would serve. Mr. Abernathy stated that Burke DJJ is probably lowest in client numbers than they every have been. He noted that staff has had times with 600 youth on their district rolls and now it is more like 300. However, the numbers are lower with the needs of each being higher. Average caseload of 13 now for Burke. He noted that there has been a great deal of ancillary work done by their staff as well as others to bring the numbers down. It cannot be overstated how impactful this effort has been. He lauded the work of the schools, SROs, Teen Court , School Justice Partnership and others for making it possible to divert youth from the courtroom. Mr. Abernathy stated that the district has 6 Juvenile Court staff positions. There was conversation on the YDC issues, female vs male populations and the use of counselors working above 40 hours to assist YDC staffing needs. Detention Centers previously holding 2,000 youth now hold more in the neighborhood of 200. Approximately 6 coming from this district. Mr. Abernathy noted that the expense is approximately $150,000 per youth annually. It was noted by Ms. Webster that the circumstances led to the development of JCPCs in North Carolina and it's funding. Additional discussion on funding decision systems for each county.

7.0 Report from the State: Megan Webster addressed the creation and funding of JCPC as well as the lack of a budget for the State of North Carolina. Due to a new law, all programs are able to continue working on the previous year's budget. She discussed NCSAFE project which is creating a committee to help with this effort. Ms. Webster encouraged folks to join. Announcement of Intensive Intervention Services RFP has been released for anyone wanting to apply. Third Quarter Accounting is coming up July 1 – February 28 will indicate if any programs have funds to release. Budget revisions were encouraged. Training for Certifications and Annual Plans will be April 13th for Administrators and Chairs.

OPEN FLOOR REPORTS / UPCOMING EVENTS

8.0 Open Discussion – Announcements, Questions and Comments

Drew Amburn introduced Jason Roehlig their new school substance abuse prevention coordinator, he will be assisting with Wednesday and Thursday 4:00PM groups. Mr. Amburn also noted efforts Burke Recovery has in the works, as noted on the previous minutes.

Vitrona Peeler introduced herself. She works with NC Works and is eager to coordinate efforts with the DJJ staff and other programs. The program is in the three counties of the district, they work with youth over 16 years of age. They coordinate internships, apprenticeships, certifications and other related work.

Mr. Abernathy announced a hiring event on February 18th at CVCC specifically for the Alexander YDC.

9.0 ADJOURN at 9:18 A.M. a motion by Wesley Hendrix, 2nd Jennifer Forney. The vote to adjourn was unanimous by acclamation.

Respectfully Submitted by:
A.J. Coutu 2/13/2026