BURKE JCPC FINANCE COMMITTEE

February 25, 2026

Burke County Commissioner's Meeting Room Section E,

110 North Green Street, Morganton, NC, 9:00 A.M.

Finance Committee Members present included: Chair, Joseph Martinez; Vice Chair, Nicki Carpenter; Ronn Abernathy, Heather Atkins, Dr. Paul Holden, Jackson Koonts, Chris Norman and Sheriff Hinceman.

JCPC and DJJ Staff present: A.J. Coutu and Megan Webster

Program Representations: Drew Amburn and Bernice Gragg for Burke Recovery; Cathy Starnes and Patti Ferree for the Conflict Resolution Center; Kim Castano and Nicole Jenkins for Kids at Work; and Renee Lewis for Repay, Inc.

Chair, Joseph Martinez welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at approximately 9:14 A.M.
Housekeeping issues were covered along with handouts of hardcopy documents for the meeting.
It was noted that Committee Member Damion Patton was excused from the meeting due to illness, and that Chris Norman would be picking up his program review obligation.

The agenda as emailed previously to the committee indicated a presentation of the applications for funding for the 2026/27 fiscal year and the review of the same by the Finance Committee for recommendations to the full Council at the March meeting.

Megan Webster provided documents to the Finance Committee members on funded program analysis of client projections and served covering a span of fiscal years, as well as a excel worksheet breakdown of what the programs have been given in recent years and what they are currently requesting.

All of the programs applying reviewed some or all of their current, past and projected data on client intake and numbers served as indicated by Ms. Webster's report. Each of the programs described their programs' actual activities and the need for any expanded funding if requested. All programs and the JCPC Administration were recommended by the reviewers for future funding at the same rate as the current year. Highlights of the presentations were as follows:

A.J. Coutu presented the line item for the JCPC Administration Budget which was the same as the most recent budget revision for the administration budget. Ms. Coutu mentioned to the Committee that the budget for administration has been static in recent years, however, will soon include an Adobe software purchase for the county laptop, according to the county I.T. folks. Joseph Martinez reviewed the application and asked if there were any questions. There were no further questions from the committee.

Drew Amburn presented for Burke Recovery. Mr. Amburn stated that the funding request for the program was the same as recent years. He succinctly told the Council that the substance abuse assessment and treatment programs were receiving JCPC funds and gave data on their services. Ms. Carpenter asked for budget information which was explained by the program bookkeeper as well as Megan Webster. Further funding was recommended.

Cathy Starnes and Patti Ferree presented for Conflict Resolution Center's (CRC) three programs: Mediation, Mediation Education and Restorative Circles (a Teen Court component). Chris Norman reviewed the program components. Ms. Starnes noted the numbers for each program and described their success with the new Teen

Court component to add to their current "restorative circles" model. She stated that they are proposing 2 more to be served in the CRE program and 5 less in Mediation with 31 in Teen Court and Circles. Ms. Starnes encouraged the Council to attend the Teen Court sessions. She noted that the accountability with this process is significantly more impactful on their thought processes and entitlement than traditional courtroom involvement. Ms. Starnes described the range of attitudes from the youth. She thanked the Court, LEO and JCC folks for making this work. Ms. Ferree was in attendance perhaps for the last time in many years. She noted that the youth have 90 days to complete, and volunteers the third Tuesday of each month are needed someone interested in criminal justice. Mr. Norman added to Ms. Starnes descriptions of Circles and Teen Court, CRC Mediation and Mediation Education programs as very beneficial. He was pleased with the restructuring of the budget. He complimented the smooth start-up of the program, and noted that it blends well with the other programs. He also noted that it assists the School Justice Partnership effort. The program design and numbers proposed to be served and served were discussed as well as the breakdown of the fact that they were requesting the same funding as the previous year. The fact that Mediation programs are strongly encouraged by the State and the support from Mr. Abernathy that this was part of a coordinated effort with the Justice Partnership group to impact local juvenile justice was discussed. The programs were recommended for funding by both reviewers.

Kids at Work was represented by Kim Castano and Nicole Jenkins. Jackson Koonts reviewed the program. Ms. Jenkins presented a description of the services the program provides as well as some examples of the programs effectiveness. They highlighted the personal responsibility, decision making, team work and other interpersonal skills being integrated into the program design within the culinary training. Information from the parents indicating positive behavior change was also mentioned. Certification of Serve Safe training and testing was mentioned and the 15 year age requirement noted which lasts for 3 years. It was noted that the pass rate is above 75% and up to 95%. Mr. Koonts asked about the result if the additional funding was not possible. Ms. Castano highlighted the fact that JCPC cut funding last year and the additional funds they managed to procure. She stated that 19 -21 youth are typically served. Their current projection is 12. There was discussion on the addition of a staff person who was previously employed by DJJ, Byran Alexander. The funding request was $16,000 more than previously requested. The staff noted that stagnant funding would be an ongoing stress for the program, although it would not decrease the number to be served. The program was recommended for funding at the current rate.

Renee Lewis presented the Just Girls, RISE, SAIS, Psychological Services and Restorative Services programs. Psychological Services was reviewed by Paul Holden. Ms. Lewis noted that the programs now have four full time therapists. Mr. Norman noted that it was very helpful with using the funds effectively that judges now rely more on the JCC recommendations. There was a budget increase request of $632. The quick turnaround time was lauded. Ms. Lewis noted that Psychologicals are costing $2,000 or more on the local market and they are grateful that they can mitigate this cost. She assured the group that they will serve as many as come, they work with juvenile justice to assist with managing too many referrals. Mr. Norman commented on the CCAs being produced saying they are timely, complete, trustworthy and are incorporated into their court orders. Ms. Lewis emphasized that their staff welcomes referring to other programs as needed and assists with that connection. The program was recommended for funding at the current rate.

Ms. Lewis presented the SAIS program request which was reviewed by Dr. Holden. Ms. Lewis noted that in addition to Ashley Church they how have an additional clinical psychologist for this difficult population. There was data presented. Ms. Lewis noted that the internet appears to be at the heart of an ongoing increase in this

population. She noted that not all youth assessed need their specific treatment. There was discussion concerning this as well as budgetary discussion. There was a side discussion on the use of the program from Third Talk which addresses sex offender issues noting that the largest worldwide group watching pornography is American youth. Ms. Webster indicated that if monies allow and there is a related presentation, that all JCPCs would be invited. There was also discussion on the use of avatars and AI generated individuals in games with youth/people making their own pornography. There were comments on AI generated therapists and youth committing suicide. Dr. Holden noted JCPCs appreciation of Repay's willingness to bridge gaps. Also, noted their proposed service rate has not been met over the years and Ms. Lewis explained the connection of the reasonable cost per evaluation as related to that. An increase of $1,535 was requested. The program was recommended for funding at the current rate.

Ms. Lewis presented the Just Girls program with Ronn Abernathy reviewing. There was discussion concerning the beginning of the program in 2005. Anecdotally, Ms. Lewis mentioned that current youth are now being referred by their mothers, who attended the program in their youth and found it to be helpful. There have also been referrals from Teen Court. The program is substantially surpassing their projected service numbers. She noted that some are being served individually. Mr. Abernathy noted that the juvenile court counselors have smaller caseloads, however, the discussion pointed out that the youth are much more difficult to impact. There was further discussion on the efficacy of diverting the youth and the extensive work done to bring the caseloads to this point. Their request is for $804 increase in this budget which will help with insurance increase. The program was recommended for funding at the current rate.

Ms. Lewis presented Restorative Services, community service and restitution program this was reviewed by Sheriff Hinceman. This program's data indicated they are on track to serve their projected number of youth. The referrals are coming largely from JCC although Teen Court contributes as well. There was discussion of the types of community service being performed as well as the restitution bank activity which has been modified to allow payback without a court order for those youth deferred. The maximum amount of restitution requires around a year of work to accomplish. A special process has been designed to allow payout through Repay so that court involvement is not necessary. The program supervisor is maximizing weekend hours and they are always supervised. Sheriff Hinceman asked about locations. The Recreation Center, thrift stores, pregnancy care center and others. The Sheriff recommended the Lake James Cleanup. The budget request was for $653 increase. The program was recommended for funding at the current rate.

R.I.S.E., being the newest program funded by Burke JCPC, engendered much discussion. It was presented by Ms. Lewis and reviewed by Chris Norman. This is the at-risk teenage boys program. They are identified by low self–esteem, bullying, aggressive behavior and truancy. It is similar to Just Girls with boundaries, decision making and discussions of emotional issues. These are mostly middle school boys and is just now getting off the ground with between 3 and 5 referrals at the time of the meeting. They are meeting from Mondays 4PM to 5:30PM and are let out prior to the dismissal of the girls. They are getting referral from Teen Court. Chris Norman noted that they have had difficulty getting enough for a group but they are individually counseled. It was noted that even though this is diversion, the youth are still on Heather Atkins "caseload" of about 25 youth even though it is not reflected in DJJ numbers. Ms. Lewis noted that their groups are segregated by age as much as possible. Ms. Lewis noted that the organization would make accommodations in their budget if the increase of $330 was not awarded. The program was recommended for funding at the current rate.

Parenting for Success was a new request for funding. Ms. Lewis presented the program for the second year. She has kept the Council up to date on this effort this past year. Ms. Lewis noted that 67% of the Just Girls group were in a single parent family. The issue being obvious that siblings coming up were going to be parented in the same inadequate manner. The program has had 26 referrals these past months. 84% from DSS, 16% from DJJ and 1 self-referral. There was discussion on the retention rate of the various groups indicating that the DJJ referrals completed at a higher rate. Ms. Lewis mentioned that they had recently had 10 referrals within just 2 days. Additional discussion centered around grandparents and guardian's special needs as well as the fact that over 30% were uninsured. Asked if the program would continue without the JCPC funds, Ms. Lewis noted that they would attempt to find additional funding with local foundations.

Temporary Shelter Service: Ms. Lewis stated that the organization provides this service in other counties and it was requested for Burke County. This serves youth removed from the home until insurance can be established. However, discussion ensued that noted beds provided by Partners may be a possible catchment for this population. Chris Norman thanked Ms. Lewis for creating this application to address this gap in services. Discussion noted that Ms. Lewis's offer makes it possible for this problem to coordinated between other organizations. It was also noted that recently youth can again be brought directly to Broughton rather than going through local ER. Dr. Holden made a motion to table this program application for next year's funding, to give time for further exploration. Ronn Abernathy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Dr. Holden noted that Ms. Lewis offers consistently to fill gaps with needed services to great effect. He stated that the Parenting for Success program is currently serving mostly DSS, that this year could solidify DJJ coordination for the program. Dr. Holden made a motion that Parenting for Success also be tabled for next year's consideration. No second was noted. Dr. Holden noted several major considerations in the budget: the amount available is the same as last year; Burke Recovery's funding is minimal; the two new requests for funding have been tabled; Kids at Work is the other program other than Repay asking for additional funds. The question being, is the committee willing to take money from existing programs to increase other existing programs. Discussion ensued concerning last years' budget changes and the Governor's budget. Ms. Lewis agreed that her organization would make any budget work. Dr. Holden noted that Kids at Work was the only one left with outstanding additional request. The DJJ staff noted that they were lucky to have the spread of programs they heave and would be hesitant to sacrifice any current programs for any other. Ms. Webster recapped the states position on current programs.
Dr. Holden made a motion that the committee fund all the currently funded programs at the current rate of funding. Jackson Koonts seconded the motion. Ms. Castano answered the question of her understanding of the situation. The Funding Decision Summary was reviewed by the programs. Kids at Work asked that their section add "Addresses use of alcohol/controlled substances", which was allowed. The remaining previously funded programs were noted to stay the same. The vote was called and unanimously passed.

The following programs were noted for funding as follows: JCPC Administration - $13,911; Burke Recovery - $19,191; Conflict Resolution Center - $49,934; Kids at Work - $27,632; Repay Restorative Services - $66,347; Repay Just Girls - $26,798; Repay Psychological Services - $21,078; Repay R.I.S.E - $11,000; Repay SAIS - $51,183; Repay Parenting for Success - $0; Repay Temporary Shelter - $0.

At approximately 11:32, Heather Atkins made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Paul Holden and passed by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted by:
A.J. Coutu, 02/29/2026