MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF OCTOBER 20, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on October 20, 2026, in the 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 Jennifer Horton; Commissioner Drew Ball and Commissioner Parker Sloan.

Continuum of Care Quarterly Update

Lacy Hoyle provided an update on the Continuum of Care (CoC). She covered Code Purple operations, grant funding activities, recent board actions, and upcoming meetings. She explained that Code Purple planning for the 2026–2027 season includes expanded weather-response criteria, reduced steady-state shelter beds, increased Code Purple bed capacity, and a 24% budget increase supported by higher county and city contributions. The CoC has advanced its FY27 Code Purple process, including issuing an RFP, approving a per-diem funding rate, and preparing a full plan for board approval. Significant grant activity included submitting applications for ESG, HUD CoC, and YDHP funding, receiving Right at Home and Dogwood Health Trust funds, and anticipating changes to permanent supportive housing capacity due to HUD Tier 1 funding adjustments. The CoC Board also adopted a new coordinated entry tool, added committee members, submitted a letter regarding emergency shelter development, and approved data quality and illicit drug enablement policies.

Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan

William High provided background information. He outlined the Pedestrian Plan's development history, noting its shift from a multimodal plan proposed in FY22 to a pedestrian-focused plan contracted in FY25. The plan involves external stakeholders such as regional municipalities and the French Broad River MPO, as well as internal county departments, and follows a multiyear timeline extending through 2026. The need for the plan is driven by an average of six annual pedestrian deaths, suburban growth in unincorporated Buncombe County, and the requirement to maintain an expanding sidewalk network, while also enabling access to federal funding and implementation of NCDOT's Complete Streets Policy. Public engagement included steering committee meetings, public sessions, and collaboration with NCDOT, municipal partners, and other counties. He reviewed the location recommendations which focused on priority sidewalk and multimodal projects selected based on safety data, connectivity, demand, and existing constraints, with ten major corridors identified for improvement. Supporting and additional projects are also included to qualify for NCDOT construction funding, contingent on local maintenance commitments. He said that next steps include final draft edits, plan adoption considerations by the Board of Commissioners and FBRMPO, and establishing county sidewalk policies and funding strategies.

Swannanoa Small Area and Resilience Plan

Gillian Phillips and Shannon Capezzali provided background information. Phillips outlined how the Swannanoa Small Area Plan builds on the County's Comprehensive Plan, incorporating lessons from Tropical Storm Helene and emphasizing resilience, land use, and community priorities. The planning process involved extensive engagement, including 1,862 community responses, 24 technical committee members, 38 organizations, and six phases of public input, with a strong community desire for major regulatory changes focused on disaster mitigation. Capezzali highlighted the key vision themes: heritage, safety, connectivity, environmental protection, infrastructure strengthening, and community belonging. She explained that the plan includes a wide range of actions, spanning hazard resilience, conservation, growth and redevelopment, transportation, land use, economic development, health, and infrastructure, noting that many of which have county-wide impacts and nearly 40% of which are near-term. Supporting materials include a Future Land Use Map, Sidewalk & Bike Priority Map, and transportation recommendations. The project timeline includes Planning Board and Commissioner Public Hearings in November 2026, followed by implementation efforts such as ordinance revisions for stormwater, watershed protection, zoning, housing, and development standards. Phillips outlined the future small area plans which will follow a multi-step process, noting that only one plan could be worked on at a time due to staff capacity.

Resolution of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners Opposing Proposed Constitutional Amendments That Could Limit Local Fiscal Flexibility

Commissioner Ball reviewed the draft resolution that was presented to the Board for consideration. He explained that the resolution states that the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners is committed to responsible fiscal management and providing essential public services, which are largely funded through property taxes and emphasizes that property-tax authority is a primary and stable revenue source that allows counties to respond to economic changes, emergencies, population growth, and state or federal requirements. He noted that restricting this authority could undermine long-term budget planning, reduce local fiscal flexibility, and force counties to rely on less stable revenue sources such as sales taxes and fees, which may disproportionately affect lower-income residents and older adults. The resolution cites Tropical Storm Helene as an example of why counties need flexibility to respond to extraordinary circumstances and long-term recovery needs and states that sound tax policy must preserve flexibility for local governments while maintaining accountability to taxpayers. The proposed resolution supports North Carolina's current property-tax authority and formally opposes any constitutional amendment that would cap, reduce, or otherwise limit county property-tax authority.

The Board discussed, provided wording amendments and then consented to adding the amended resolution to New Business on the regular meeting agenda.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 20, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on October 20, 2026, in the Chamber at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m.

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

Absent:

The Chair opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

CONSENT

1. Approval of the October 6, 2026, Meeting Minutes

2. Purchase of Duty Weapon by Retired Officers

3. Budget Amendment to accept JAG 2025

Commissioner Horton made the motion to approve the consent agenda and agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cory Wall – requested support for the Fairview Holiday parade on highway 70. emphasizing the community's strong engagement and the importance of fostering connection and resilience in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene.

Alex Ramirez- urged the Board to pass a resolution and make a public statement to oppose the three constitutional amendments on the 2026 ballot, noting that these amendments, if passed will hurt our public schools, public services, and community members.

Amy Mullen- expressed her support for the Fairview Holiday Parade, explaining that it was created after a tragic period to bring joy and connection to the community.

Heather Quigley- urged the Board to oppose two proposed tax amendments, warning they would severely restrict state and local funding for public schools, worsen already inadequate education funding, and limit the County's ability to address budget shortfalls, emphasizing that a Board resolution would help inform voters of the amendments' true long-term consequences.

Leigh Shultis- urged the Board to support the Fairview Parade on Charlotte Highway, emphasizing its vital role in fostering hope, community connection, and economic recovery after

Tropical Storm Helene, and noting that residents have organized the event without requiring county funding.

Dan Slagle- asked the Board to contact the U.S. Postal Service to clarify whether the new Swannanoa post office will include a full-service retail counter as previously promised, noting the community's ongoing hardship since losing its post office after Tropical Storm Helene and the conflicting information now circulating about available services.

Marissa Pack – spoke in support of the Fairview Parade, emphasizing its importance in helping the community heal after Hurricane Helene by restoring joy, supporting small businesses, and allowing residents to come together in the heart of Fairview.

PRESENTATIONS

1. **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

Commissioner Sloan read the proclamation. Caroline Long and Rocio Borghini in Human Resources provided information related to the Counties polices related to employees with disabilities.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Appalachian Mountain Health Economic Development Agreement and Building Reuse Grant**

Josh Halingse provided background information. He explained that Appalachian Mountain Health (AMH), a Federally Qualified Health Center, has purchased and is renovating a medical facility in East Buncombe County and has been awarded a $480,000 Building Reuse Grant from the NC Department of Commerce to support job creation and facility improvements. He explained that the project involves $2.5 million in eligible construction costs, will create 48 jobs with an average wage of $39.81 per hour, and requires a 5% local match that will be provided by Dogwood Health Trust, resulting in no cost to the County. He further explained that Buncombe County must serve as the applicant and direct recipient of the funds, passing them through to AMH via an Economic Development Agreement. As part of this process, the Board is asked to accept the Building Reuse Grant Agreement, approve the related budget amendment, and authorize the Economic Development Agreement for grant management purposes. The overall project supports AMH's broader $14 million investment in expanding healthcare services through its new Black Mountain–Swannanoa facility.

Dr. Chantel Simpson, president and CEO, provided an overview of AMH's services, noting that AMH provides care for all and strives to be a one stop shop for patients. AMH currently provides services in Buncombe, Cherokee, Graham and Jackson counties and has been serving in Western North Carolina since 2015.

The Chair opened the public hearing at 5:34 p.m. There were no public comments. The public hearing closed at 5:34 p.m.

Commissioner Horton expressed enthusiasm that a medical provider is returning to the long-vacant Swannanoa doctor's office building and that she is particularly excited that Appalachian Mountain Health will be in the space offering multi-specialty services.

Commissioner Horton made the motion to accept the Building Reuse Grant Agreement with N.C. Commerce and Appalachian Mountain Health and approve the budget amendment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Hotron made the motion to approve the Economic Development Agreement between Appalachian Mountain Health and Buncombe County. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells can carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Letter of Support for Fairview Holiday Parade**

Commissioner Horton provided background information. She explained that last year the Board passed an ordinance and that this year the request is for the Board to provide a letter of support for the Fairview Holiday parade to NCDOT. She noted that issuing the letter does not create any County liability and that the parade organizers, not the county, will coordinate with NCDOT and handle all remining requirements once the letter is issued – noting that this was the only action the Board would need to take. The Board discussed and Manager Pinder confirmed that staff had reached out to NCDOT to ensure the process is correct and that the County's role ends once the letter is provided.

Chair Edwards requested that the proposed letter be amended to remove any reference to last year's ordinance, noting that it may cause confusion, as it did the year prior. The Board discussed and consented to the amended letter.

Commissioner Horton made the motion to approve the letter of support for the Fairview parade as discussed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

2. **A Resolution of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners Opposing Proposed Constitutional Amendments That Could Limit Local Fiscal Flexibility - added Oct. 20**

Commissioner Ball provided background information, noting that the proposed resolution was introduced and reviewed in the Board's Briefing meeting. Commissioners further discussed the consequences if the proposed constitutional amendments on the 2026 ballot were to pass and highlighted the strong community concerns raised during public comment periods. Commissioners noted that the amendments would significantly restrict state and local revenue flexibility, undermine the County's ability to respond to emergencies such as Tropical Storm Helene, and negatively impact public schools, emergency services, municipal partners, and long-term borrowing costs. They stressed that while the ballot language appears simple, it does not reflect the broad financial and service-level consequences for residents, particularly working

families and lower-income households who may bear disproportionate burdens if revenue authority shifts or is capped. Several commissioners highlighted that local governments already face increased responsibilities due to federal and state underfunding and that restricting property-tax authority would further strain the County's ability to maintain essential services. Commissioner Whitesides also noted that the local delegation in Raleigh voted against these amendments on the ballot.

Commissioner Ball made the motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Sloan seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

County Board of Adjustment – Chair Edwards noted that it had been the Board's process to interview for the BOA and that reappointments are not automatic, requested that the Clerk's office reopen the applications and hold interviews in or before January.

BOARD UPDATES

None reported.

CLOSED SESSION

Attorney Euler read the motion for the Board to go into closed session to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6).

Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to go into closed session for the reason provided. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

Entered closed session at 5:56 p.m.