MINUTES
BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PRE-AGENDA MEETING

The Burke County Board of Commissioners held a pre-agenda meeting on Monday, March 2, 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 Dylan Laws, Wilson, Lackey, Rohr & Hall P.C. (Late: Arrived at 3:03 p.m.) Kay Honeycutt Draughn, Clerk to the Board

CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Brittain called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Motion: To approve the agenda as amended, with the addition of Items for Decision No. 6, *Application for Public School Building Repair and Renovation Funds*.

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

PRESENTATIONS

BOC - RECOGNITION OF THE DRAUGHN HIGH SCHOOL CHEER TEAM
Chairman Brittain explained that the Board will recognize Head Coach Macy Dula and the Draughn High School Cheerleading team for winning the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) Small Varsity DII Game Day division State Championship at their regular meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CD - FRIENDS OF FONTA FLORA PRESENTATION OF GRANT MATCH FUNDS

Sarah Chabaane, Planner – Trails Specialist, reminded the Board that the Canal Bridge Sidewalk Project has been under development since 2021 and represents a critical connection between the Fonta Flora State Trail and the Overmountain Victory State Trail. She explained that the project will construct approximately 480 feet of sidewalk on the Canal Bridge over NC 126, connecting an existing section of trail within Lake James State Park to a future trail segment on the opposite side of the bridge.



Ms. Chabaane reported that the Friends of the Fonta Flora State Trail (F3ST) and the Overmountain Victory North Carolina State Trail Friends Group (OVNCST) committed funding toward the local match required for the project's grant funding. She noted that representatives from F3ST would attend the regular meeting to ceremonially present a $150,000 contribution toward the required local match, while OVNCST had previously been recognized for its contribution. She explained that this contribution represents the final component needed for the County to submit the necessary paperwork and allow the project to move forward to the next phase under NCDOT's administration.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CD - RECOGNITION OF JAINNY ESTRADA, NCSSM'S ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

Sarah Chabaaane, Planner – Trails Specialist, explained that the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics hosts a school-wide Day of Service each year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day and regularly provides meaningful volunteer opportunities for students across the communities it serves. Jainny Estrada, Assistant Director of Student Services, leads and coordinates this impactful day of student volunteerism in addition to her many other responsibilities.

This year, Ms. Estrada organized and coordinated student volunteers throughout Burke County, partnering with organizations including Friends of Valdese Rec, Burke County Animal Services, and Fonta Flora County Park. Students worked alongside County staff and volunteers from Lake James Environmental on stormwater restoration projects and other community improvement efforts. Jainny and the students are deeply grateful to the community organizations and site leaders who host and mentor them, making this work possible through strong and lasting partnerships.

Recognition was requested for Jainny Estrada for her leadership, coordination, and dedication to fostering civic engagement and service among students, and for the continued collaboration between the School and Burke County community partners that make this day such a success.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

BOC - PROCLAMATION DECLARING APRIL 18TH AS LINEMEN APPRECIATION DAY

Chairman Brittain requested approval of a proclamation declaring April 18, 2026, as Linemen Appreciation Day in Burke County, and recognized a few linemen and women who were in attendance.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Burns and Chairman Brittain expressed their appreciation to the linemen for their dedication, service, and willingness to respond during emergencies and adverse weather conditions, recognizing the essential role they play in serving the community. There being no further discussion, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

BR - RECOGNITION OF 2026 NC1 COMMUNITY IN RECOVERY ADULT & YOUTH AWARD WINNERS (PLACEHOLDER)

Tracy Hall, Burke Recovery, stated that she will present the winners selected to receive statewide recognition for their leadership, advocacy, and service in advancing mental health awareness and substance use recovery efforts across North Carolina at the Board's regular meeting. The 2026 award categories include:

- Youth/Young Adult Voice Award – Recognizes a North Carolina youth or young adult under the age of 26 who has demonstrated exceptional leadership in championing mental health awareness or substance use recovery initiatives. This award highlights the powerful role young leaders play in reducing stigma and promoting resilience among their peers.
- Recovery Champion Awards – Honors three individuals (one each from western, central, and eastern North Carolina) who have made significant and lasting contributions to mental health advocacy, substance use recovery, community education, and/or recovery

support services. These recipients exemplify leadership, compassion, and sustained commitment to improving outcomes for individuals and families impacted by behavioral health challenges.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

BOC - RECOGNITION OF DANNY SCALISE, LOCAL HEALTH DIRECTOR, FOR HIS SERVICE TO BURKE COUNTY

Chairman Brittain announced that they will recognize Danny Scalise, who has served as the local health director since July 12, 2021, at their regular meeting. Dr. Scalise has accepted a new position, and April 3, 2026, is his last day of employment with Burke County.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

BOC - RECOGNITION OF KAY DRAUGHN, CLERK TO THE BOARD, ON HER RETIREMENT

Chairman Brittain explained that Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, is retiring at the end of March after serving in this role for the past 14 years. Including accumulated leave, she has over 30 years of local government service. Clerk Draughn will be recognized at the regular meeting.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. In a lighthearted remark, Commissioner Stroud reflected on the number of staff departures and retirements that had occurred during his brief tenure on the Board.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS – NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

BOC - PROCLAMATION FOR SOCIAL WORKER APPRECIATION MONTH 2026

Chairman Brittain relayed that the Commissioner Barrier requested the approval of a proclamation declaring March as Social Worker Appreciation Month, which recognizes the dedication, expertise, and impact of social workers in Burke County and beyond.

Additional information from the agenda packet:

The 2026 theme, "Social Workers: Uplift. Defend. Transform," highlights how

> social workers not only care deeply about people but also take meaningful action to support individuals, families, and communities. Social workers are at the forefront of addressing critical societal challenges, including mental health and substance use disorders, income inequality, and homelessness. Their work spans hospitals, schools, government agencies, social service organizations, and more, making them essential to the well-being of our society.
>
> Social work is one of the fastest-growing professions in the U.S., with demand projected to increase 6% by 2034, reinforcing the vital role social workers play in shaping stronger, healthier communities. This proclamation serves to honor their contributions, acknowledge their commitment, and emphasize the importance of self-care for those in helping professions.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CHAMBER - PROCLAMATION DECLARING APRIL 2026 AS BURKE IMPACT GROUP (B.I.G.) CHALLENGE MONTH

Due to a scheduling conflict, Tonia Stephenson, President of the Burke County Chamber of Commerce, was unable to attend the meeting. Chairman Brittain explained that the Burke Initiative Group (BIG) Challenge is an expansion of the Chamber's annual litter sweep and incorporates a broader range of community service projects designed to benefit Burke County.

Additional information from the agenda packet:

> In previous years, the Burke County Chamber of Commerce held an annual litter sweep event; however, for 2026, the BCCOC has expanded the litter sweep concept into a broader, month-long initiative entitled the B.I.G. Challenge (Burke Impact Group Challenge). The initiative will run throughout the month of April and is designed to encourage diverse forms of community service beyond litter pickup.
>
> While environmental cleanup remains a core component, the B.I.G. Challenge invites businesses, civic groups, churches, nonprofits, and other organizations to participate in service activities such as:
>
> - Community litter removal and beautification efforts
> - Hosting baby showers for organizations supporting new mothers
> - Sewing blankets for hospice patients
> - Assisting with the construction of Habitat homes
> - Building accessibility ramps for residents in need
> - Other volunteer-driven community improvement projects

The expanded format allows broader participation by groups that may not be able to engage in litter collection but wish to contribute meaningfully to the community.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CLERK - REMOVAL OF ALAN GLINES AS PLAT REVIEW OFFICER FOR BURKE COUNTY
Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, requested the adoption of a resolution removing Alan Glines as a plat review officer for Burke County, due to his upcoming retirement. This removal should not have any impact on service delivery in the Community Development Department.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CLERK - ADULT CARE & NURSING HOME COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REMOVAL
Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, stated that Kathleen Andrews has resigned due to increased family commitments. This was a request to remove her name from the official roster and thank her for her service to the community.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CLERK- SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD REMOVAL & APPOINTMENT
Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, explained that Officer Keith Bowman has resigned from the Social Services Advisory Board. This was a request to remove his name from the official roster and thank him for his service to the community. This at-large seat has a term that expires September 30, 2027.

Applications on file:
2026: None.
2025: Christian Cothren

5	At-Large	Keith Bowman	7/1/2024
			9/30/2027

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was

moved to the following meeting without objection.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CLERK - APPOINTMENTS AND REAPPOINTMENTS TO THE RECREATION COMMISSION

Kay Druaghn, Clerk to the Board, noted that the following seats on the Recreation Commission have terms that are set to expire on March 31, 2026:

4	Valdese / R. College	Jonathan Carter 211 Windsor St Connelly Springs, NC 28612	A-UT R TE	4/19/2022 5/16/2023 3/31/2026
6	Hildebran / Icard	Ricky Barnes 3001 Hodges St Connelly Springs, NC 28612	A-UT R TE	4/19/2022 5/16/2023 3/31/2026
8	Ray Childers	Curtis Hildebran	A-UT R TE	3/15/2022 5/16/2023 3/31/2026
11	Salem	Sarah Ellis	A-UT TE	8/18/2025 3/31/2026
13	Mtn. View	LaPorsche Cuthbertson	A-UT R TE	3/15/2022 5/16/2023 3/31/2026

Rick Barnes and Sarah Ellis have both expressed interest in serving another term and maintained perfect attendance at all meetings held in 2025. There have been no meetings in 2026 to date. Jordan Phillips is stepping down from service. Pursuant to the Burke County Code of Ordinance, Chapter 50, Article I, Sec. 50-29 (b), Seat No. 4, representing Valdese / Rutherford College, is no longer eligible for representation on the commission. The ordinance provides that each youth athletic playing district must participate in three (3) or more county youth sporting leagues to qualify for representation. Valdese / Rutherford College currently participates in only two (2) county leagues and therefore no longer meets the eligibility requirements. As such, the seat must be removed by action of the Board of Commissioners.

The following applications have been received:

- Seat No. 7, W.A. Young: Landon Cook

- Seat No. 8, Ray Childers: Katlyn "Katie" Greer

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CLERK - APPOINTMENT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, stated that the Library Board of Trustees is a 9-member advisory Board which meets quarterly and provides guidance on the County's three (3) libraries. Seat No. 8, Hildebran, was previously held by Jennie Cook, who recently reached the maximum number of allowable terms. Martitia "Marti" Smith has applied to fill the vacancy. The three (3) year term will expire on December 31, 2028.

8	Hildebran - City	Jennie Cook	A	6/19/2018
		P.O. Box 382	R	1/21/2020
		Hildebran NC 28637	R	1/17/2023
			TE	12/31/2025

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CM - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 15 - $2,580,000

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested approval of Budget Amendment No. 15, which recognizes a grant awarded by the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) to the Burke County Public Schools for the replacement of HVAC at Freedom High School. These funds are awarded under the Helene Recovery Grant program. Capital funds from NC DPI are disbursed under the CORE banking program and require the County to act as the disbursement agent. Funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis to the school system. No County funds are involved, but this does require a budget amendment for both the County and the school system.

BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 15			
REVENUES AND EXPENSES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
REVENUES			
150-00000-01-433000-	Helene Recovery Grant	$2,580,000	
EXPENSES			
150-00000-30-550502-	FHS HVAC Project	$2,580,000	
Purpose: recognizing grant funds awarded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) to Burke County Public Schools for HVAC replacement at Freedom High School under the Helene Recovery Grant Program. The County will serve as the disbursement			

agent for these State capital funds through the CORE banking program, with reimbursements issued to the school system.

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

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 16 - $14,277

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested approval of Budget Amendment No. 16, which recognizes additional allocations from NC DHHS to the Department of Social Services.

BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 16			
REVENUES AND EXPENSES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
REVENUES			
100-52000-01-433440-	DSS Administrative Funds	$14,277	
EXPENSES			
100-52070-20-554001-	Foster Care Board Payments	$14,277	
Purpose: To recognize $14,277 in funds allocated by NC DHHS for Emergency Placement services to support foster care placement stability for children with behavioral health needs. No County funds are required.			

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

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 17 - $26,760

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested approval of Budget Amendment No. 17, which recognizes additional allocations from NC DHHS to the Department of Social Services.

BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 17			
REVENUES AND EXPENSES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
REVENUES			
100-52000-01-433440-	DSS Administrative Funds	$26,760	
EXPENSES			
100-52070-20-554010-	Family Reunification	$26,760	
Purpose: To recognize $26,760 in funds allocated by NC DHHS for Family Reunification services to support safe and stable families. No County funds are required.			

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CM - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 18 - $5,600

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested approval of Budget Amendment No. 18, which recognizes additional allocations from NC DHHS to the Department of Social Services.

BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 18			
REVENUES AND EXPENSES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
REVENUES			
100-54500-01-433100-	US DHHS	$5,600	
EXPENSES			
100-54500-20-586000-	SHIIP GRANT	$5,600	
Purpose: To recognize $5,600 in funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide shredding services for senior citizens to help prevent Medicaid and other identity fraud. Services will be offered at the East Burke and Morganton Senior Centers. No County funds are required.			

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

CM - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 19 - $36,550

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested approval of Budget Amendment No. 19, which recognizes additional funds donated from the Library Foundation to support countywide library activities.

BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 19			
REVENUES AND EXPENSES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
REVENUES			
100-55500-06-436500-	Library Donations	$36,550	
EXPENSES			
100-55500-25-569025-	Children Programming-Valdese	$4,015	
100-55500-25-569050-	Children Programming-Hildebran	$2,341	
100-55500-25-569075-	Children Programming-Morganton	$4,665	
100-55500-25-569125-	Young Adult Programming	$6,306	

100-55500-25-569150-	Adult Programming	$5,548	
100-55500-25-569200-	Library Support	$13,675	
Purpose: To recognize a $36,550 donation from the Library Foundation to support additional activities throughout the County. No County funds are required.			

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

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

CLERK - REMOVAL & APPOINTMENT - VETERANS SERVICE BOARD

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, requested the removal of Mr. Curtis Hildebran. Several applications have been received for consideration. Members of the Veterans Services Board must have an honorable record of service. Ms. Eller is currently verifying the eligibility of the following applicants:

- Geronimo Blancaflor applied in November 2025 and listed VSB as his first choice.
- Jim Frady applied in July of 2025 and listed VSB as his first choice.
- Amber Puett applied in November 2025 and listed VSB as her third choice.
- Amber Puett applied in November 2025 and listed VSB as her third choice.
- Dillon Smith applied in September 2025 and listed VSB as his first choice.
- Jodi Volker applied in November 2025 and listed VSB as her second choice.

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

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM - APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE 2026 SPRING CITIZENS ACADEMY (PLACEHOLDER)

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested that the Board select 20 participants for the Spring Citizens Academy. This free, seven (7) week program will educate residents about county government through themed weekly sessions held from April 9, 2026, to May 21, 2025. Sessions will take place on Thursday from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at rotating locations throughout the county.

Applications on file at the time of agenda distribution are listed in the order received:

1. Rich DeAugustinis - 2/21
2. Posie George - 2/21
3. Karla Busch - 2/21
4. Roy Ashkenza - 2/21

5. Mica Banks* - 2/22
6. Glen Keaton - 2/22

*Ms. Banks works in Burke County, but lives in Catawba County.

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

TAX - TAX COLLECTION REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2026 (PLACEHOLDER)

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, will present the Tax Collection Report for the period ending February 28, 2026, at the regular meeting.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

TAX - TAX RELEASE AND REFUND REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 2026 (PLACEHOLDER)

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, will present the Release and Refund Report for the period ending February 28, 2026, at the regular meeting.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

TAX - ORDER TO ADVERTISE 2025 DELINQUENT REAL PROPERTY TAXES (PLACE HOLDER)

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, requested approval to advertise the delinquent taxes as required by law.

Additional information from the agenda packet:

> Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 105-369, the Tax Collector shall report to the governing board the total amount of unpaid taxes for the current fiscal year that are liens on real property.
>
> Under this statute, the Board orders the Tax Collector to advertise these tax lines on all unpaid real property. Also, a notice must be sent to the owner of record. This notice shall be sent at least 30 days before the advertisement is to be published, to the last known address. These notices state that the owner's name will be advertised if taxes are not paid in full by Tuesday,

March 31, 2026. The Tax Office mailed these notices in February 2026 (see sample).

This Delinquent Tax Notice, which is required to be sent before advertising in the newspaper, also serves as the Debt Setoff (DSO) Notice for Burke County. The Debt Setoff Notice is featured on the front page and is further explained on the reverse side of the document. This notice gives taxpayers 30 days to pay their delinquent taxes and avoid Burke County intercepting their North Carolina Income Tax refund.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

FINANCE - APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING REPAIR AND RENOVATION FUNDS

Margaret Pierce, Finance Director / Deputy County Manager, requested approval of drawing down funds for Burke County Public Schools' capital improvement projects.

Additional information from the agenda packet:

A portion of lottery proceeds are deposited into a special fund administered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction called the Public-School Building Repair and Renovation fund. This fund is used by counties to address their school capital needs. Monies deposited into the fund accumulate and earn interest until drawn down by the county. In order to draw down funds, the Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Education must approve and submit an application for an eligible project. The Burke County Public Schools are requesting $325,000 from these funds to replace Patton High School HVAC control system units that are at end of life. This project meets the guidelines for the use of these funds.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

CM - PRESENTATION OF THE FY 25-26 MID-YEAR REPORT (PLACE HOLDER)

Brian Epley, County Manager, explained that this is a placeholder for the mid-year financial report for FY 25-26, which will be presented at the regular meeting.

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

RESULT:	**MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 16, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS - NONE

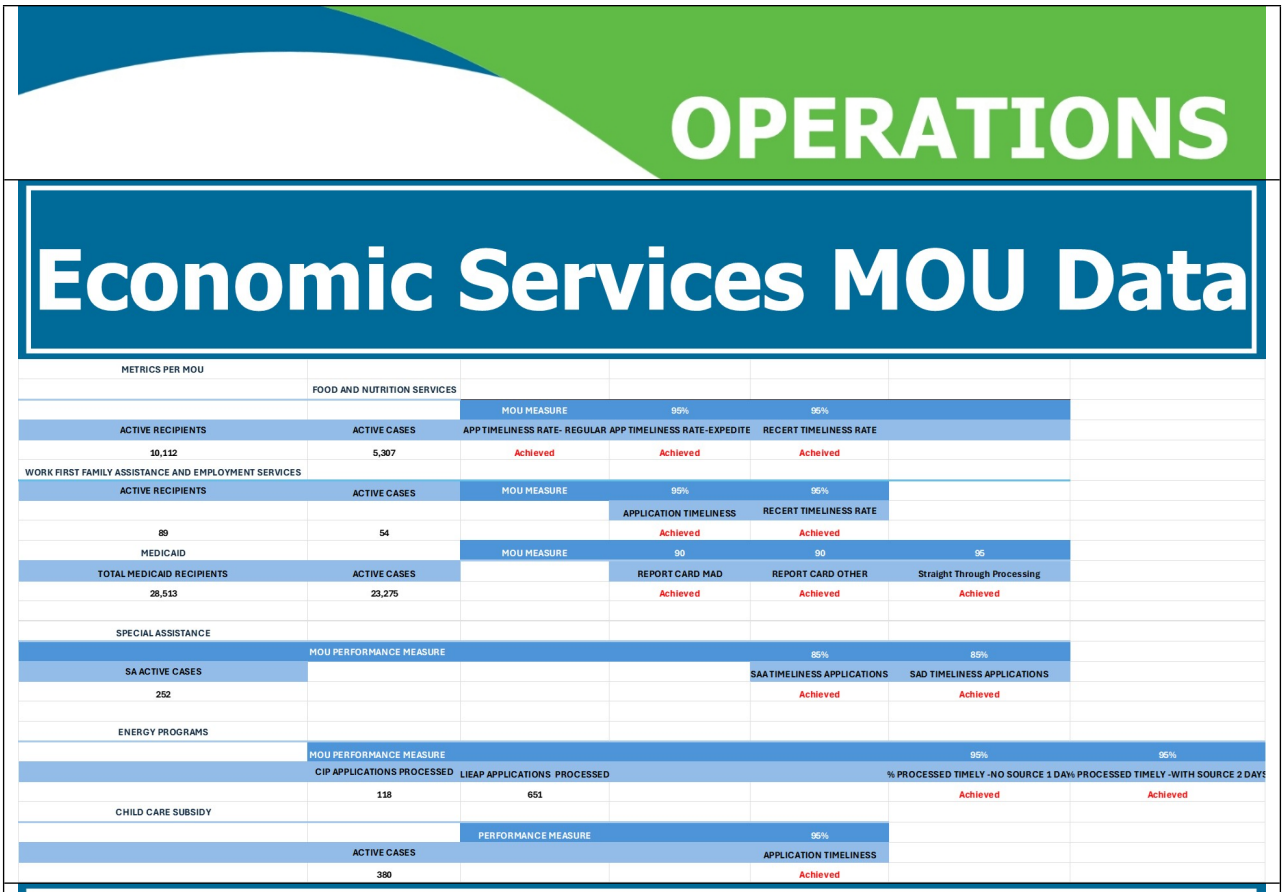
Chairman Brittain requested that Board members submit their reports to the Clerk for inclusion in the regular meeting agenda packet. He reminded attendees of upcoming Board of Commissioners meetings, encouraged citizens to participate in upcoming elections, highlighted several upcoming community events, and encouraged interested individuals to register for the Spring Citizens Academy. Chairman Brittain also invited youth groups to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at future meetings and encouraged faith leaders to contact the Clerk's Office if interested in delivering an invocation. He concluded by asking those present to keep individuals affected by the conflict involving Iran in their thoughts and prayers.

ACTION ITEMS

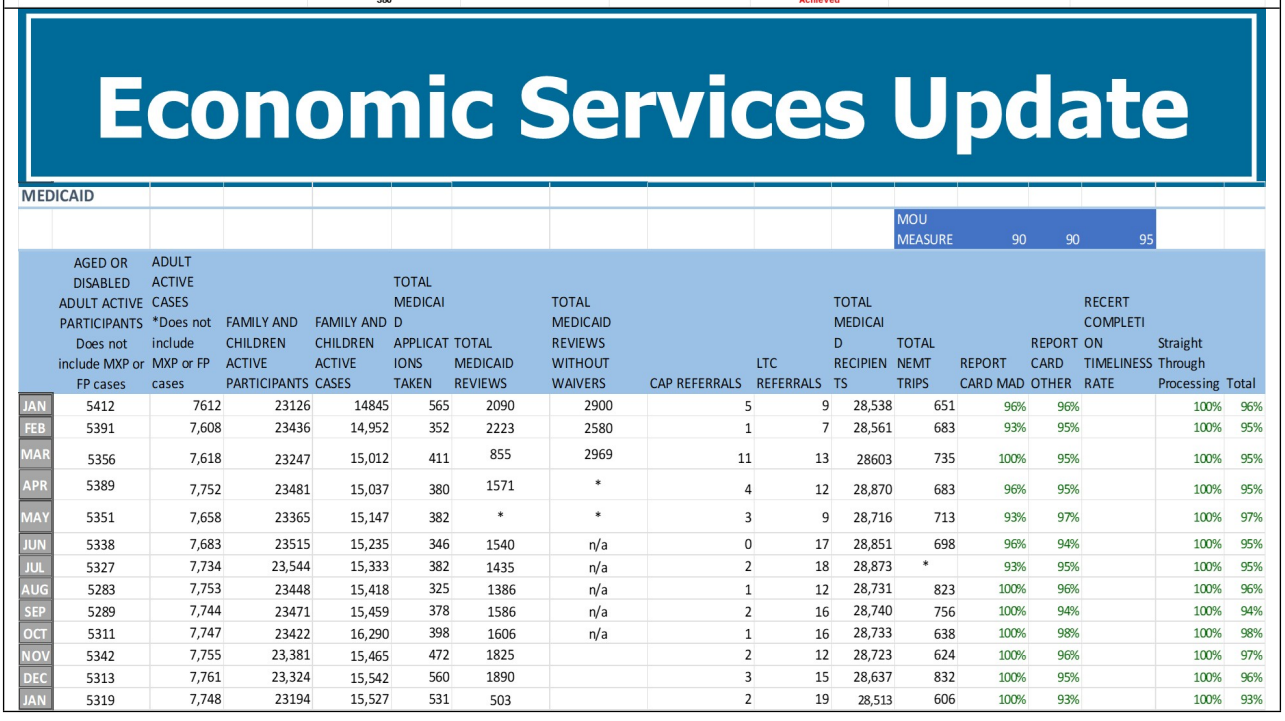
DSS - DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING JANUARY 31, 2026

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





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		
10,112	5,307	Achieved	Achieved	Acheived		
WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES						
ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	MOU MEASURE	95%	95%		
			APPLICATION TIMELINESS	RECERT TIMELINESS RATE		
89	54		Achieved	Achieved		
MEDICAID		MOU MEASURE	90	90	95	
TOTAL MEDICAID RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES		REPORT CARD MAD	REPORT CARD OTHER	Straight Through Processing	
28,513	23,275		Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE						
	MOU PERFORMANCE MEASURE			85%	85%	
SA ACTIVE CASES				SAA TIMELINESS APPLICATIONS	SAD TIMELINESS APPLICATIONS	
252				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
	118	651			Achieved	Achieved
CHILD CARE SUBSIDY						
		PERFORMANCE MEASURE		95%		
	ACTIVE CASES			APPLICATION TIMELINESS		
	380			Achieved		



MEDICAID

											MOU MEASURE	90	90	95		
	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
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%
DEC	5313	7,761	23,324	15,542	560	1890		3	15	28,637	832	100%	95%		100%	96%
JAN	5319	7,748	23194	15,527	531	503		2	19	28,513	606	100%	93%		100%	93%

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%		
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
DEC	10,269	5389	479	100.00%	100%	99.36%	336	1,721,688.20
JAN	10,112	5307	505	96%	99.09%	97.51%	482	1,662,857.00

ADULT SERVICES UPDATE



Guardianship
- Total Wards: 67
- Contracted Wards: 17

SAIH (Special Assistance In-Home)
- Active Cases: 56
- State Average Caseload: 25-30

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

January APS Data

Category	Number	Notes
Total APS Reports Received	20	
APS Reports Screened In	12	Reports meeting criteria for an investigation
Substantiated Cases	0	
Confirmed Cases	11	Includes substantiations and other confirmations
Cases Opened for Services	6	Ongoing support and case management
Outreach Cases Assigned	3	Proactive engagement with at-risk adults
Service Referrals	15	Referrals for supportive community services
Guardianship Referrals	2	Referrals for potential legal guardianship

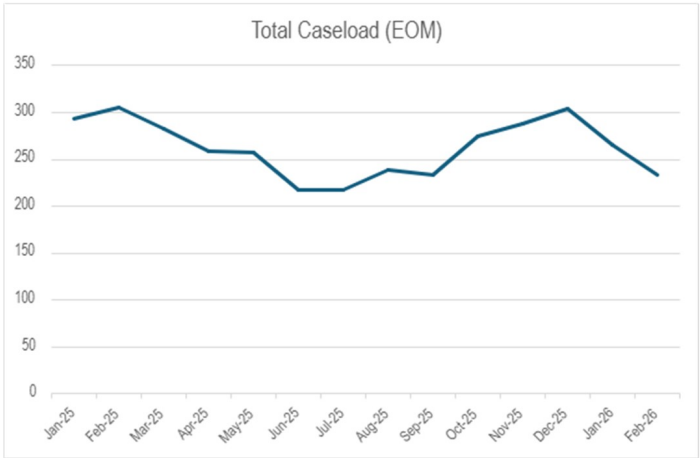
CPS REPORTS



- September 2025 intake peak
- As of 2/20/26, 44 Screen-In's for February

BURKECOUNTY

CPS CASELOADS



- High point was February 2025 with 306 open cases
- Cases trending downwards with slowed intake
- Open as of 2/20: 233

BURKECOUNTY

FOSTER CARE UPDATE



Every child deserves a family

Foster Care Snapshot – Burke County

- Total children in foster care: 197
- New entries into care this period: 9
- Exits from care this period: 4

BURKECOUNTY

THANK YOU

Questions?

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Stroud asked about accommodations for children who must remain in DSS custody and whether adequate

space would be available in the planned facility. Mr. Fisher-Wellman explained that while the department seeks to avoid creating a group-home environment, designated space is available to provide temporary accommodations, including sleeping, shower, laundry, and visitation facilities, and similar accommodations are planned for the new building.

Commissioner Barrier inquired whether substance abuse was a contributing factor in the recent child custody cases discussed. Mr. Fisher-Wellman stated that substance use was involved in all of the cases, although it was not always the primary reason for DSS involvement.

Chairman Brittain asked whether the cases involved multiple children from the same families. Mr. Fisher-Wellman clarified that the eight (8) petitions involved eight (8) separate children from eight (8) different families.

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

Motion: To accept the report as presented.

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

HEALTH - QUARTERLY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DEC. 31, 2025
Danny Scalise, Local Health Director, presented a quarterly operational report as follows:



Health Education & Community Engagement



- Completed Public Information Officer training and conducted community outreach through multiple local events and health fairs.
- Provided public health education through hygiene lessons, a university lecture, and presentation of the 2025 Burke County Community Health Assessment to the Board of Commissioners.
- Supported workforce development by hosting a semester-long intern focused on community communication and education.

Environmental Health

- Managed high volumes of regulatory and permitting activity across On-Site Wastewater and Food and Lodging programs.
- Processed 138 on-site wastewater applications; issued 54 septic permits, approved 62 installations, and issued 10 well permits.
- Completed approximately 200 food and lodging inspections, achieving 55% of required compliance inspections ahead of time.
- Supported business development by permitting two new facilities and completing six plan reviews.



Clinic & Lab Services



- One Communicable Disease nurse earned the STD Enhanced Role Registered Nurse (ERRN) designation in November.
- The CD/STI program was audited on November 18 and found to be in full compliance.
- The Tuberculosis (TB) program was audited on December 8 and also found to be in compliance.
- The clinic recorded over 1,175 patient visits during the second quarter.

Care Management

- CMHRP referrals declined over the quarter while caseloads increased overall, with multiple participant graduations achieved.
- CMARC experienced fluctuating referrals and caseloads, with strong graduation outcomes throughout the quarter.
- A late-quarter decline in CMARC activity was attributed to the transition of foster children to different PHP providers, impacting referrals and caseloads.



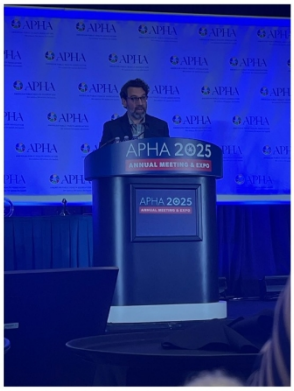
WIC

- Averaged 2,292 participants per month, reaching 101% of assigned caseload and resulting in a caseload increase of 75 participants.
- Completed 194 new applications and recorded 1,971 kept appointments, reflecting strong participant engagement and access to services.
- Maintained stable operations despite the federal government shutdown; while statewide participation declined temporarily due to public perception, full funding was restored in November.



Leadership & Staff Development

- Demonstrated national leadership through presentations by Ashley Jarrett and Miranda Smith at the 2025 APHA Conference, highlighting local public health best practices.
- Achieved professional recognition and advancement, including Danny Scalise receiving the Milton and Ruth Roemer Prize for Creative Local Public Health Work and Ashley Jarrett earning her Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP).
- Strengthened community engagement and workforce development by successfully hosting a Fall Community Health Fair.



Administration & Finance

- Hosted a Leadership and Systems Thinking training to strengthen staff capacity to navigate complex public health systems and apply systems-level problem solving.
- Emphasized leadership development, cross-department collaboration, and identification of root causes to improve processes.
- Supported a culture of continuous improvement and data-informed decision-making to address public health challenges sustainably.
- Continued to demonstrate sound fiscal stewardship throughout the quarter.



Burke County Public Health Achievements

BURKECOUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Overall

- PHAB Reaccredited
- North Carolina Local Health Department Reaccreditation
- 2024 Dr. Sarah Taylor Morrow Health Department of the Year
- Healthy People 2030 Champion
- 2022 Diversity Champion Award
- Inaugural Cohort – NC Strategic Scholars Program
- Mental Health Community Collaborative Initiative
- Vital Records – Top 10 in Processing Speed

Health Education

- Implemented NCCARE360 to Strengthen Cross-Sector Coordination and Address Social Determinants of Health
- Established the Child Fatality Review Team
- Grant awarded to assist with 2025 Burke Community Health Assessment

Public Health Preparedness

- Tropical Storm Helene
- Winter Storm Fern
- Recived multiple grants with one to develop the Hot Car Display

CLINIC

- All nurses have achieved their Public Health Nursing credential
- Waitng on Nick for Maternity and STI data
- Our vaccination initiative provided 725 citizens with 1,952 vaccinations.
- The maternity clinic saw 179 expecting mothers, with a total of 1,597 visits for the year.
- Vaccines for Children Program Site-visit: no compliance issues found.

WIC

- Awarded the USDA Gold Breastfeeding Award of Excellence
- Served over 100% of assigned caseload
- Over $2.5 million spent at Burke County Vendors

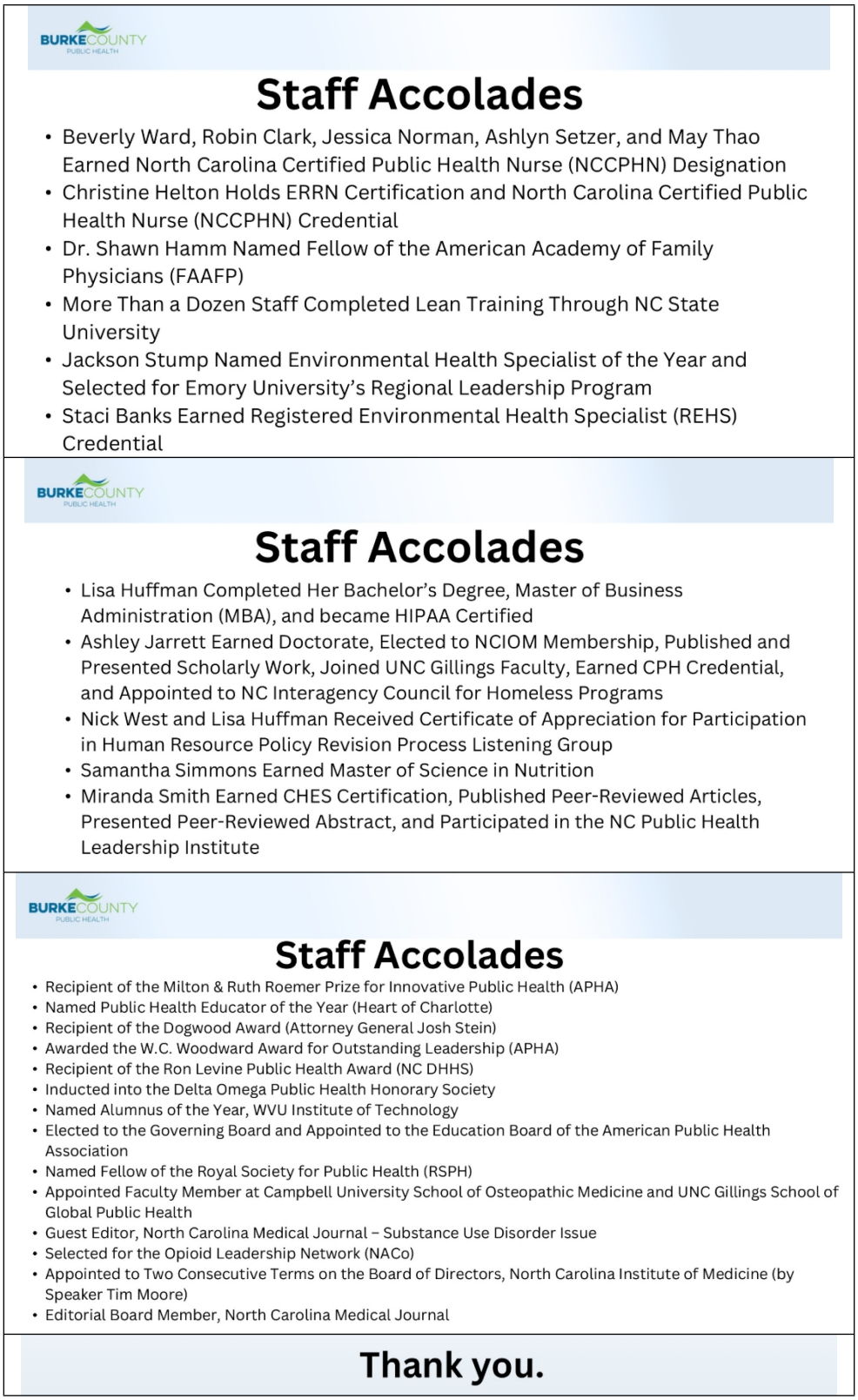
Environmental Health

- NACo Achievement Award for Enhancing Data Collection for Septic and Well Permits in Burke County
- Onsite applications from 14 weeks to 3 weeks for permit
- GPS
- Started utilizing ground penetrating radar



Substance Use Disorder

- Partnered with Olive Branch Ministry to Operate a Mobile Harm Reduction Clinic in Burke County
- Collaborated with The Fletcher Group to Develop a Regional Recovery Ecosystem Report
- Hosted Community Forums to Address Substance Use and Recovery Needs
- Launched Peers Partnering for Excellence (PPE) to Support County Peer Support Workers
- Established the Opioid Fatality Review / Public Health and Safety Team (OFR/PHAST)
- Responsibly Managed Opioid Settlement Funds During Initial Allocation Period



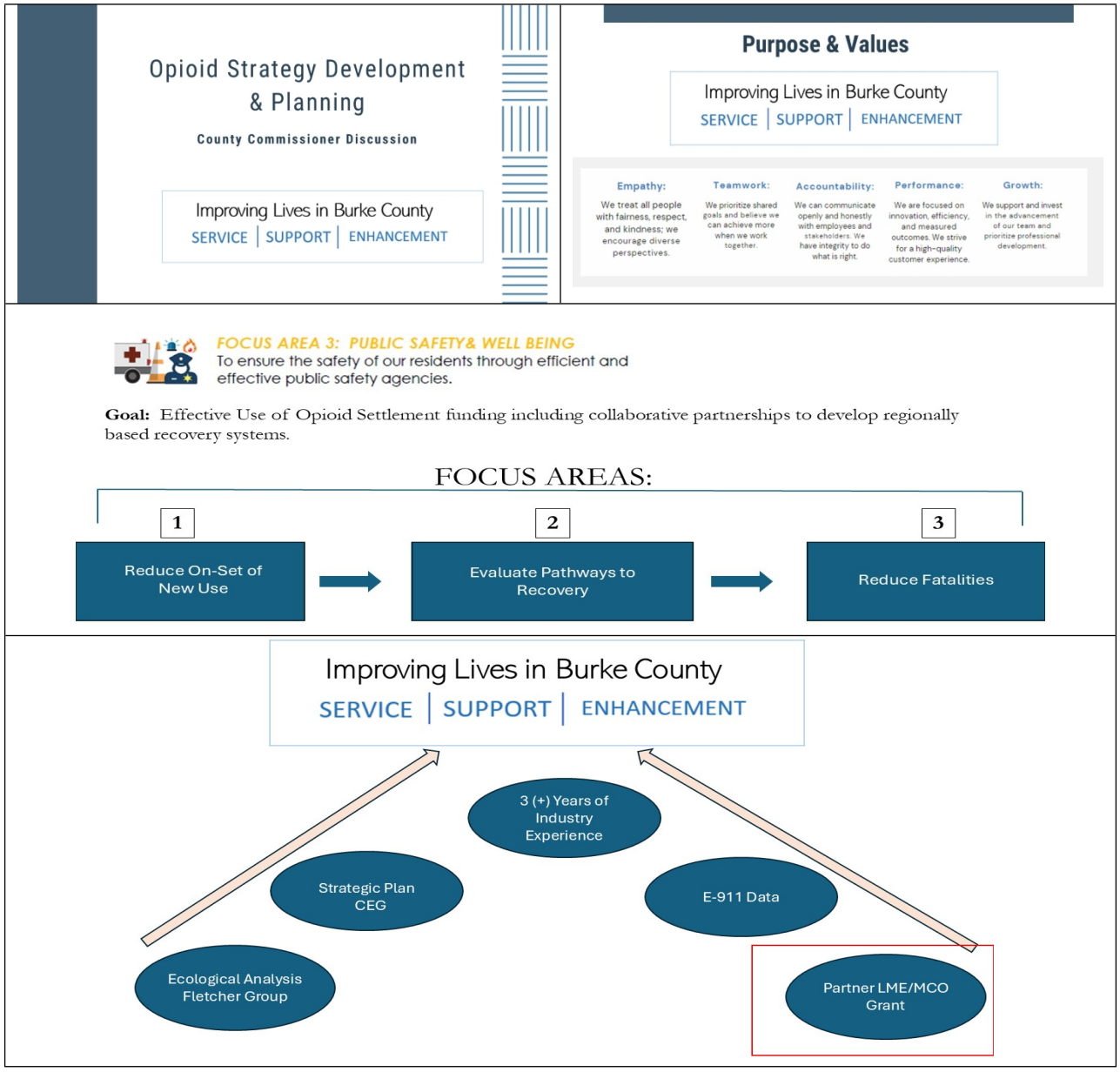
Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, he called for a motion.

Motion: To accept the report as presented.

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

CM - REQUEST TO APPROVE PROPERTY PURCHASE, CONTRACTS WITH PARTNERS HEALTH MANAGEMENT & PROJECT ORDINANCE - FACILITY-BASED CRISIS CENTER

Brian Epley, County Manager, presented information regarding the purchase of real property for use as a 16-bed facility-based crisis center to serve adults experiencing behavioral health or substance use crises, contracts between Partners Health Management and Burke County, and the associated Capital Project Ordinance. Highlights of his presentation were as follows:



722 East Union St. Morganton

Burke County

Behavioral Health Urgent Care
Crisis Detox Center

2.23 Aces
HID Zoning

$865,000 Purchase Price
$133/Sq Ft



Facility Based Crisis (FBC) Center

What It Is

A 16-bed, short-term crisis stabilization and detoxification facility with an average length of stay of 7–14 days. The center will provide medical monitoring, comprehensive assessment, and enhanced care coordination to support transition into long-term treatment and recovery services.

Project Status

- County-owned building, provider managed (selected through RFQ process)
- Planning and partnership development underway
- Site preparation and operational coordination in progress
- Anticipated launch later this year

Community Impact

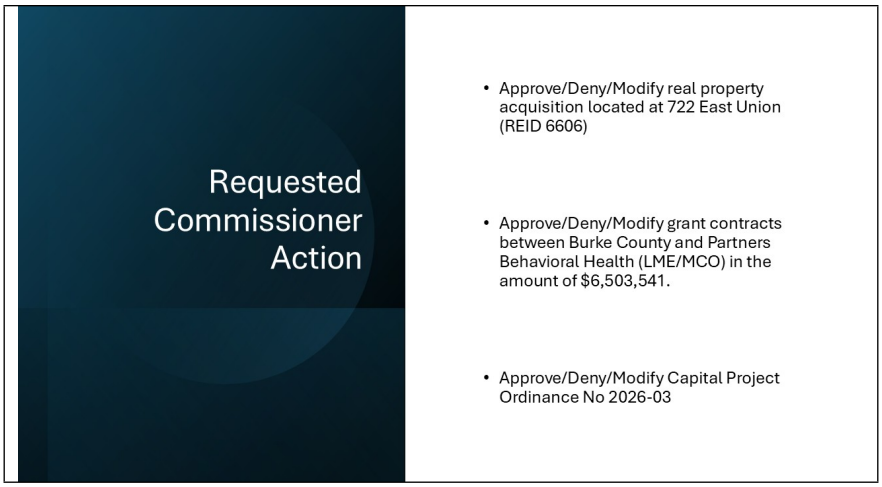
- Expands local short-term detox capacity
- Provides structured intake and evaluation prior to long-term placement
- Serves as a first evaluation site for IVC cases, reducing emergency department burden
- Improves care coordination and continuity of treatment
- Strengthens system efficiency across EMS, hospitals, and behavioral health providers



Facility-Based Crisis Center: Diversion Model



Goal: Redirect appropriate individuals to a structured stabilization setting that improves outcomes while reducing strain on hospitals, law enforcement, and emergency services.



Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, Chairman Brittain called for several motions.

Motion: To approve the purchase of real property (REID # 6606) located at 722 E. Union Street in Morganton for use as a facility-based treatment center in the amount of $870,000. Further, to authorize the Chairman, County Manager and Finance Director to execute closing documentation on behalf of the Board.

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

Motion: To approve contracts between Partners Health Management and Burke County totaling $6,503,541 as presented, and to authorize the County Manager to execute the contracts on behalf of the Board.

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

Motion: To adopt Capital Project Budget Ordinance No. 2026-03 in the amount of $6,503,541.

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

Capital Project Ordinance No. 2026-03 reads as follows:

SUBSTANCE ABUSE FACILITY
CAPITAL PROJECT BUDGET ORDINANCE

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Burke County, that, pursuant to Section 13.2 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the following capital project ordinance is hereby adopted:

Section 1. The project authorized is the purchase and renovation of a property to be used for substance abuse recovery.

Section 2. The officers of the County are hereby directed to proceed with the capital project within the budget contained herein.

Section 3. The following revenues are available to complete this project:

Interlocal agreement with Partners Health Management	$ 6,503,541
Total	$ 6,503,541

Section 4. The following amounts are appropriated for the project:

Property purchase	$ 870,000
Renovations	5,633,541
Total	$6,503,541

Section 5. The Finance Director is hereby directed to maintain within the Capital Project fund sufficient specific detailed accounting records. Any funds remaining at the end of this project will revert to Partners Health Management.

Section 6. Copies of this capital project budget ordinance shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Board for direction in carrying out this project.

Adopted this 2nd day of March 2026.

/s/: Jeffrey C. Brittain
Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
Burke County Board of Commissioners

Attest:

/s/: Kay Honeycutt Draughn
Kay Honeycutt Draughn, CMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board

Note: Chairman Brittain announced the upcoming retirement reception for Clerk to the Board Kay Draughn, noting that he had inadvertently omitted the reminder during his earlier announcements.

CLOSED SESSION
Chairman Brittain announced that a closed session is needed and called for a motion.

Motion: To go into closed session to prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential, to discuss threatened or pending litigation, to preserve the attorney-client privilege, to discuss economic development matters, to discuss contractual matters (land acquisition) and to discuss personnel matters as authorized by NCGS 143-318.11(a) (1), (3), (4), (5) and (6).

RESULT:	**APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Randy Burns, Commissioner
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

Chairman Brittain announced that a proper motion was made to come out of closed session.

Brian Epley, County Manager, clarified for the record that the Board's earlier motion approving the purchase of real property (REID # 6606) located at 722 E. Union Street in Morganton for use as a facility-based treatment center referenced an amount of $870,000, while the purchase price was $865,000. Mr. Epley explained that the difference was intended to account for closing costs and other incidental transaction expenses. A brief discussion ensued regarding whether a revised motion was necessary to clarify the record. Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, noted that the associated Capital Project Ordinance authorized expenditures up to $870,000. Margaret Pierce, Finance Director / Deputy County Manager, explained that the authorized amount included permits and other miscellaneous acquisition-related costs. Dylan Laws, Wilson, Lackey, Rohr & Hall P.C., advised that an additional motion was not required but could help clarify the record.

Motion: To approve the purchase of real property (REID # 6606) located at 722 E. Union Street in Morganton for use as a facility-based treatment center with total costs not to exceed the amount of $870,000. Further, to authorize the Chairman, County Manager and Finance Director to execute closing documentation on behalf of the Board.

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

ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 4:34 p.m.

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

Approved this 15th day of June 2026.

_____

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

March 2, 2026 (Pre-Agenda)

Attest:

_____

Morgan Buchanan
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners