MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

BRIEFING MEETING OF NOVEMBER 5, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on November 5, 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.

1. **FCC Rate Discussion**

Dane Pedersen, Solid Waste Director and Lewis with FCC provided the update. Pedersen provided background about the FCC Environmental Services' franchise contract for subscription trash and recycling collection in unincorporated Buncombe County. He said that the seven-year contract began January 1, 2025, includes a one-year extension option, and provides weekly trash collection and recycling collection every other week.

FCC reported that its customer base grew from 36,676 in December 2024 to 39,766 in September 2026, an increase of 8.4%. Reported missed collections declined from 392 in August 2025 to 17 in August 2026. FCC reported recycling 4,967 tons through September 2026, 30.7% more than during the same period in 2024. The presentation also covered call center activity, cart inventory, the bear cart program, and community outreach.

He further outlined the first subscriber rate adjustment under the contract, proposed for January 1, 2027. The Garbage and Trash Collection Consumer Price Index increased 5.23% from September 2025 to September 2026. Applying the contract's 5% annual cap, the proposed monthly rate would increase from $28.65 to $30.08 per household, a difference of $1.43. The County reviews and approves the CPI data submitted by FCC, and FCC plans to notify customers through their regular billing channel. Pedersen emphasized that the Board will not need to take action regarding the rate, which has already been negotiated and approved as part of the established contract.

2. **WNC Rail Support and Sponsorship**

Commissioner Ball provided background information. He explained that this is a request for Buncombe County to participate as a co-convener and sponsor of a Western North Carolina passenger rail gathering planned for January 27, 2027, in Asheville. He said that the Western North Carolina Rail Committee is coordinating the event, and NCDOT Rail Division Director Jason Orthner and his team are expected to provide a project update. The City has agreed to host at the Harrah's Cherokee Center. He noted that the proposed participation would require no financial contribution from the County and that the request builds on the Board's prior support for the project, including two letters encouraging the development of passenger rail

service in Western North Carolina and a third letter supporting Governor Stein's proposed $28 million appropriation for the project.

The Board discussed and consented to participate as a sponsor and help promote the event.

3. Community Development Block Grant Reporting

Rachael Sawyer, Strategic Partnerships Director, presented the County's consolidated Community Development Block Grant report for the quarter ending September 30, 2026. The County submitted an amendment to redirect the $400,000 Neighborhood Revitalization grant from home repairs to sidewalk improvements in Swannanoa and increase the award to $719,400. No funds had been spent on that grant as of September 30. She said that the $3,502,213 Pathways to Recovery grant, which supports the expansion of Transformation Village, had expenditures of $33,475. The project received special use permit approval, and construction was delayed after procurement did not meet requirements and the project returned to the design phase. She said that staff aims to provide future reports within 30 days after each quarter ends and that future updates can be provided at the regular meeting on the consent agenda.

4. RFP Scope for Buncombe County Public Transit Plan

William High, Planning Department, presented the proposed scope for Buncombe County's Public Transportation Plan. The County plans to begin the $250,000 study in spring 2027 in partnership with the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization, using $200,000 in federal funding and a $50,000 local match. The study will assess existing public transportation services and capacity in Buncombe County, excluding ART services, and consider public and partner feedback, service options such as microtransit, and funding opportunities. The plan is expected to guide public transportation over the next five to ten years. He said that the next steps include selecting a consultant and proposing a steering committee process and membership structure to the Board.

5. Legislative Agenda

Josh Hallingse, Intergovernmental Affairs and Whitney with Ward & Smith presented the draft legislative agenda for the North Carolina General Assembly's 2026–2027 biennium. The draft identified three top priorities: increasing funding for the NC Innovations Waiver program to address the County's waiting list, securing a permanent solution for the County's eligibility for supplemental teacher compensation funds (PRC 071), and seeking legislation to allow surplus state property to be used for affordable housing or economic development. He said that next steps are to approve the Legislative Agenda at the November 17 regular meeting and hold the legislative meeting at East Asheville Library on January 25. The Board discussed adding additional items and being more ambitious with requests due to the recent election results.

Closed Session

Attorney Euler read the closed session motion to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the Board of Commissioners, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered in negotiations, provided that any action authorizing the payment of economic development incentives will occur in open session. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4).

Commissioner Horton made the motion to go into closed session for the reasons stated. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'

REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 5, 2026.

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Regular Meeting on November 5, 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.

The Chair opened the meeting and provided opening remarks.

CONSENT

1. Approval of the October 20, 2026, Combined Meeting Minutes

2. Approval of the September 2026 Tax Collection Report

3. Request to Waive Occupancy Tax Penalty for Honey Comb House -Ambarkaar LLC

4. Resolution and Interlocal Agreement with Land of Sky for Battery Energy Storage at Leicester Library

5. Resolution to Decline the County's Right to Purchase Surplus Real Property From the Asheville School Board

6. Budget Amendment for Affordable Housing Services Program

7. Budget Amendment for Additional Allocation of Digital Opportunities

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Pinder introduced Josh Edwards the new Assistant County Manager for the County.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Native American Heritage Month Proclamation

Vice Chair Moore read the proclamation. He stated that Native American Heritage Month is a time to honor and celebrate the rich and diverse cultures of indigenous people, raise awareness about our shared history, recognize that truth must come before reconciliation, and acknowledge the important contributions that Native Americans have made to our community

and our nation. According to the Indian Bureau of Indian Affairs, each year in November, it is a time to celebrate the traditions, languages, and stories of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and affiliated Island communities and ensure their rich histories and contributions continue to thrive with each passing generation.

2. Operation Green Light Proclamation

Commissioner Whitesides read the proclamation. He stated that in recognition of Operation Green Light for Veterans, Buncombe County will illuminate the Courthouse and Health and Human Services building green from November 4-11. The green lights symbolize support for veterans, gratitude for their service and sacrifice, and recognition of their ongoing contributions to our communities. Residents are encouraged to participate by displaying a green light in a window of their home or business to show that veterans are seen, appreciated, and supported.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Budget Amendments for Conservation Easement Funding

Jennifer Harrison provided background information. He explained the Conservation Easement funding to fund Buncombe Farmland Preservation Program conservation easements. She said that in FY27 Annual conservation easement funds from the Special Projects Fund for transaction costs to complete conservation easement projects:

- Battle Forest Conservation Easement - $6,000 additional transaction cost funding to finalize due diligence materials.
- Sluder Branch Farm — $62,900 for transaction costs to protect the 59 acre farm in Leicester. This project will return with a request for Open Space Bond Funds once an appraisal has been completed.

She also explained the request to allocate funding from the previously funded Agricultural Growth Zone Project in the Open Space Bond fund to these individual conservation easement projects. All of these projects have been previously approved by the Commissioners for transaction costs and this is the final easement purchase funding request now that the final appraisals have been completed.

- Brown Legacy Farm - $135,500 conservation easement acquisition funds
- Cedar Hill Farm - $230,700 conservation easement acquisition funds
- Saddlebrook Farm - $57,250 conservation easement acquisition funds

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve two budget ordinances approving funding for the conservation easement projects. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ball and carried unanimously.

2. Budget Amendment for Landfill Gas-to-Energy Generator Rebuild

Kristy Smith, Solid Waste Manager, provided background information. She explained that the landfill has operated a landfill gas to energy program since 2011. In Nov 2021, staff presented the BOC with a summary of the project financials and explained that the generator was approaching its end of life and would require a significant capital investment to continue the program. In October, the generator ceased to operate. The estimated replacement cost is $550K. When the generator is down, energy sales revenues are not earned; thus, timely replacement of the generator is critical to the system's financial outlook. The service life of the generator after the rebuild should add another eight years, which exceeds the current power purchase agreement that ends November 2029. Savings from the Cell 7 Engineering project, which will be closed later this year, will be repurposed to cover the cost.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the budget amendment. The motion was seconded by Commisisoner Moore and approved unanimously.

3. Budget Amendment to Accept Treatment Court Enhancement Grant

John Hudson provided background information. He explained that Justice Services has been awarded $1M from the Department of Justice to enhance Treatment Court services. The grant period is from 10/01/26 - 09/30/30.

Jillian with Justice Services further explained that the Buncombe County Approaches to Supporting People in Recovery Everyday (ASPIRE) Court, Drug Treatment Court, and Veterans Treatment Court Enhancement Project will expand treatment, housing and transportation supports, and evaluation practices for adults with substance-use disorders in Buncombe County. Enhancements include continuation of an in-house clinician to deliver individualized treatment and assessment-driven case plans, expanding access to transitional housing and transportation, strengthening drug testing capacity, and providing regular staff training and program evaluation. She stated that the project will also improve data collection, monitoring, and referral tracking. The expected outcomes include increased treatment engagement, reduced substance use, improved program completion, reduced recidivism, and strengthened long-term recovery.

Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the budget amendment; 2. Accept the grant; and 3. Authorize the County Manager to execute the grant agreement and other necessary grant documents. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

4. Resolution to Approve Design Services Contract for Tower Road Repairs

Ronald Lunsford, General Servcies, provided background information. He explained that eight access roads to Buncombe County communication tower sites were damaged by rainfall from Tropical Storm Helene. The damaged sites are:

- Broad River
- High Top
- Swannanoa
- Barnardsville
- Elk Mountain
- Seven Glens
- Avery's Creek
- Upper Hominy

Lunsford further explained that temporary repairs were made by the General Services team to keep access to the sites, but a larger project is needed to fully repair and implement mitigation efforts to prevent future damage. These sites were evaluated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and a scope of work was generated. To progress the project, engineering and design services are needed.

Per General Statute, General Services released a request for qualifications to solicit firms interested in providing engineering and design services. Four statements of qualification were received and scored by a committee based on those statements. Of the four, Mattern and Craig Inc. scored the highest. After negotiations, their fee is $199,800, which is in line with the expectations for this project. This will be funded by already established budgets within General Services and no new funds are needed at this time.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to approve the design services agreement with Mattern and Craig through the associated resolution. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Agricultural Advisory Board for Farmland Preservation- Commissioner Wells made the motion to appoint Vanessa Campell. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and carried unanimously.

Community Transportation Advisory Board – Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to appoint Joanne Baker. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wells and carried 6-1 with Ball voting nay.

CLOSED SESSION

Attorney Euler read the motion to go into closed session to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged to consider and give instructions concerning the handling of a lawsuit in Federal District Court, Western

District of North Carolina Buncombe County vs. HCA Management Services, LP et al, 1:24-cv-00227-MR. There will be no formal action taken at this time. The statutory authority is contained in G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3).

Commissioner Ball motioned to go into closed sessionf or the reason provided. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.

Meeting went into closed session at 5:39 pm.