

MEETING MINUTES

WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Watauga County Community Recreation Center in Boone, North Carolina.

1. CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman Eggers called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The following were present:

PRESENT: Braxton Eggers, Chairman
 Todd Castle, Vice-Chairman
 Emily Greene, Commissioner
 Tim Hodges, Commissioner
 Ronnie Marsh, Commissioner
 Nathan Miller, County Attorney
 Deron Geouque, County Manager

Commissioner Marsh offered the prayer and Commissioner Hodges led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Eggers presented the February 3, 2026, regular and closed session meeting minutes.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the February 3, 2026, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the February 3, 2026, closed session minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Eggers called for additions or corrections to the February 17, 2026 agenda.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the February 17, 2026, agenda as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people spoke during public comment:

1. Lornie Webster – spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
2. Diane Wilson – spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
3. Kinney Baughman – spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
4. Brian Juneau - spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
5. Mary Rose Carroll - spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
6. Stacey Rex - spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
7. Alana Baird - spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
8. Cathy Williamson - spoke on redistricting lawsuit.
9. Donna Lisenby - spoke on redistricting lawsuit.

5. WATAUGA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. Monica Caruso, County Librarian, presented the Watauga County Public Library Annual Report.

The report was for information only; therefore, no action was required.

6. CHANGE ORDER FOR BAKER GRADING CONTRACT FOR ANGLER PARK

Ms. Wendy Patoprsty, Middle Fork Greenway Director, presented a change order to the Baker Grading contract for Angler Park in the amount of \$225,000.00. The increase would cover the cut and removal of approximately 48 feet of guardrail in accordance with NCDOT standards, as well as repairing a washout area consistent with plans prepared by Solid Rock Engineering. Sufficient funding was available through the NC Land and Water Fund, the NC Division of Water Resources, and matching funds from Middle Fork Greenway private donations. No County match was required.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the change order for Baker Grading in the amount of \$225,000.00.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

7. REQUESTING AWARD TO RETIRING OFFICER

N.C.G.S 17F-20 allows a governing body of a law enforcement agency to award a retiring member their badge and service side arm at a price determined by the governing body. Law enforcement

personnel may retire at age 55 with five (5) years of credible service as an officer with full retirement benefits.

Deputy Perry Scot Brown is retiring March 1, 2026. The Sheriff's Office requested that Scot's respective badge and side arm be awarded to him upon retirement and that the Board set the price of the badge and side arm at \$1.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to award Deputy Perry Scot Brown his badge and side arm in the amount of \$1.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

8. SANITATION TRUCK PURCHASE REQUEST

Mr. Chris Marriott, Operations Services Director, requested the Board approve the purchase from Parks Ford (NC Sheriff's Vehicle Procurement Contract) for a 2026 Ford Ranger 4x4 SuperCrew pickup truck in the amount of \$33,961.21 and taxes and tag in the amount of \$1,025.00. The new truck would be a replacement for a 2014 Ford F150 that has considerable rust and wear. Adequate funds have been budgeted to cover the requested purchase. Board action is requested to approve the purchase of a 2026 Ford Ranger 4x4 SuperCrew pickup truck in the amount of \$33,961.21 along with taxes and tag in the amount of \$1,025.00.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the purchase of a 2026 Ford Ranger 4x4 SuperCrew pickup truck in the amount of \$33,961.21 along with taxes and tag in the amount of \$1,025.00.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

9. TAX MATTERS

A. Monthly Collections Report

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, presented the Monthly Collections Report and was available for questions and discussion.

The report was for information only; therefore, no action was required.

B. Refunds and Releases

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, presented the Refunds and Releases Reports.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve the Refunds and Releases Reports, as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

10. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Hardin Park School Boundary Survey

The Watauga County School System facility study inventoried all of the systems facilities. Hardin Park School has been identified for years as needing to be replaced. Discussions have determined the most cost-effective path forward would be to build on the existing site. In order to determine if the construction on the site is feasible; soil, boundary, and utility studies will need to be conducted.

As part of that process, a contract for boundary and topography services was included in the packet. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-64.32, the Board must exempt the project from the Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) process, as the professional services fee is less than \$50,000.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to exempt the project from the Qualifications-Based Selection process pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-64.32.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to award the contract to JMT for boundary and topography survey services in an amount not to exceed \$47,150.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

B. Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex Bathroom Agreement

The County Attorney provided an agreement with High Country Soccer Association, Appalachian State University and Watauga County regarding the bathroom use during the months of November through April 1 at the Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the agreement as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

C. Franchise Request from Appalachian Regional Healthcare System

Appalachian Regional Healthcare System (ARHS) was requesting a franchise agreement to allow for the transportation of patients. Watauga County Emergency Services would retain the first right of refusal for all interfacility transports, with the following exceptions:

- Transports originating outside of Watauga County
- Transports requiring critical-care–level support, such as ventilator support, IABP support, or other services meeting the NCOEMS definition of Specialty Care

These two exceptions would have no impact on the County system and would provide relief for EMS crews by limiting potentially long-duration transports, which reduce available units for 911 calls. Granting a franchise agreement would also provide an additional backup resource for the County’s system. The proposed term of the franchise was one year to evaluate its impacts on the County EMS system. Per the County’s Franchise Ordinance, a public hearing was held on January 13, 2026, to allow input on granting a one-year ambulance franchise to ARHS.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to grant the franchise agreement to Appalachian Regional Healthcare System for a period of one year.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

D. Boards and Commissions

Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Advisory Board

The Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Advisory Board recommended the reappointment of Mr. Andrew Ellis, Ms. Kristy Hackler, and Ms. Jennifer Miller. Each were willing to continue to serve if so reappointed.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to waive the first reading requirement and appoint Mr. Andrew Ellis, Ms. Kristy Hackler, and Ms. Jennifer Miller to the Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Advisory Board

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

The following Watauga County TDA Board members terms expired at the end of February:

- Tina Houston of Reid’s Café & Catering and The Beacon Event facility
- Matt Vincent of VPC Builders (Current TDA Board Chair)
- Lisa Cooper of Mast General Store

All three were willing and eligible to be re-appointed to 3-year terms and the TDA Board supported the re-nomination of each of them. The TDA Board Chair was appointed by the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Matt Vincent was eligible to continue in that role.

Chairman Eggers, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to waive the first reading and re-appoint Tina Houston, Matt Vincent, Lisa Cooper, and re-appoint Matt Vincent as Chair to the Watauga County TDA Board.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

E. Announcements

The Annual Pre-Budget Retreat was scheduled for Thursday, February 26, 2026, beginning at 12:00 P.M. and Friday, February 27, 2026, beginning at 9:00 A.M.

Budget Work Sessions are scheduled for Thursday, May 7, 2026, beginning at 12:00 noon and Friday, May 8, 2026, beginning at 9:00 A.M.

11. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Greene congratulated the Watauga Lady Pioneers for winning the 6A State Indoor Championship.

12. BREAK

13. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:34 PM, Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to enter Closed Session pursuant to G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3) to discuss matters protected by attorney–client privilege, including Case No. 5:25-cv-157; and pursuant to G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(5) to consider matters related to the acquisition of real property and pursuant to G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6) personnel matters.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

At 8:27 PM, Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to resume the open meeting.

14. ADJOURN

At 8:28 PM, Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Deron Geouque, County Manager