

MEETING MINUTES
WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 2025

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting, as scheduled, on Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:30 P.M. in the Commissioners' Board Room located in the Watauga County Administration Building, Boone, North Carolina.

1. CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman Eggers called the meeting to order at 5:31 P.M. The following were present:

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

Commissioner Greene opened with a prayer and Vice-Chairman Castle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Eggers presented the May 20, 2025, regular meeting and closed session minutes.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the May 20, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the May 20, 2025, closed session minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Eggers called for additions and/or corrections to the June 3, 2025, agenda.

County Manager Geouque requested the removal of Agenda Item 11 B and to interchange Agenda Item 9 and Agenda Item 10.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the June 3, 2025, agenda as amended.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following spoke during public comment:

1. David Jackson, Boone Area Chamber of Commerce – FY 2025-2026 Budget.

5. SPECIAL PRESENTATION BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Board acknowledged the retirement of long-time Clerk to the Board, Anita Fogle. Chairman Eggers presented Ms. Fogle with a proclamation.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the proclamation as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

6. PROPOSED PROCLAMATION THANKING CCC&TI

Commissioner Marsh read a proclamation thanking Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute and its Foundation for the scholarships awarded to Valle Crucis middle school students.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the proclamation as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

7. REPORT ON WATAUGA COUNTY OPIOID SETTLEMENT PROJECTS

Ms. Lindsey Sullivan, AppHealthCare, presented the Watauga County opioid settlement projects. The projects were reviewed by the opioid committee and presented as recommended. Board approval was required to: 1) Approve projects as recommended by the opioid committee; 2) Approve the agreement with Appalachian Health District; 3) Approve the resolution to direct the unspent Fiscal Year 2024-2025 funds in Fiscal Year 2025-2026; and 4) Approve the resolution to direct the expenditure of opioid settlement funds.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the following:

1. The projects as recommended by the opioid committee.
2. The agreement with Appalachian Health District.

3. The resolution to direct the unspent Fiscal Year 2024-2025 funds in Fiscal Year 2025-2026.
4. The resolution to direct the expenditure of opioid settlement funds.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

8. PROPOSED PROCLAMATION FOR ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Christie Markham, Ms. Angie Boitnotte, and Mr. Zack Green presented a proclamation declaring June 15, 2025, as “World Elder Abuse Awareness Day” in North Carolina.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the proclamation declaring June 15, 2025, as “World Elder Abuse Awareness Day” in North Carolina.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

9. PROJECT ON AGING MATTERS

A. Proposed Revision to Home & Community Care Block Grant (H&CCBG) FY 25 Allocation

Ms. Angie Boitnotte, Project on Aging Director, requested the Board revise the original allocation of the Home and Community Care Block Grant (H&CCBG). The request was to move \$2,000 from IHA I to Congregate Nutrition and \$10,000 from IHA II to Home Delivered Meals.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the request to move \$2,000 from IHA I to Congregate Nutrition and \$10,000 from IHA II to Home Delivered Meals.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

B. Proposed Allocation of Projected FY 26 Home & Community Care Block Grant (H&CCBG) Funds

Ms. Boitnotte requested Board action to accept the projected allocation of \$320,788 in Home and Community Care Block Grant (H&CCBG) funds for FY 2026. The required local match of \$35,644 is present in the Project on Aging's FY 2026 requested budget.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to accept the projected allocation of \$320,788 in Home and Community Care Block Grant (H&CCBG) funds for FY 2026.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

10. REQUEST TO AMEND THE “NOT TO EXCEED” AMOUNT IN SDR AND DEBRISTECH’S NOTICE TO PROCEED

Mr. Chip Patterson, SDR, initially requested Board approval for an increase to the “Not to Exceed” (NTE) amount from \$3.8 million to \$5,950,000, an additional increase of \$2,150,000. However, Mr. Patterson stated they would actually need an additional \$500,000 to bring the total increase amount requested to \$2,650,000. The increase was required to allow SDR to continue right-of-way debris removal and complete the project. In conjunction with that amendment, Mr. Dennis Cruthird with DebrisTech (monitoring company as required by FEMA for reimbursement) requested an additional increase in the “Not to Exceed” amount of their contract from \$1.5 million to \$2 million. The \$2 million plus the \$6,450,000 brings the total amount to \$8,450,000. Considerable discussion was held regarding the significant increases and the disappointment in the “gross” underestimates by SDR. Further displeasure was voiced regarding the slow progress in completing the debris removal process. Mr. Patterson stated they had a total of 2,048 points identified for remediation and 500 were completed. Commissioner Marsh questioned SDR’s ability to complete removal of the remaining 1,548 points in the three (3) weeks they indicated it would be required since over eight (8) months have passed and they have only completed 500 points.

Chairman Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to accept the \$2,650,000 and \$500,000 increases to the “Not to Exceed” amounts of SDR and DebrisTech, respectively.

VOTE: Aye – 4 (Eggers, Castle, Greene, and Hodges)
Nay – 1 (Marsh)

11. MAINTENANCE MATTERS - OLD COVE CREEK SCHOOL SPORTS FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY AND CONCEPT PLAN

Robert Marsh, Maintenance Director, recommended BREC for the feasibility study and concept plan for the Old Cove Creek School Sports Facility. Estimated cost for the project including architecture and engineering services is \$1,508,000. Funds would come from insurance, FEMA reimbursements, grants, Watauga County TDA, and administrative contingency.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve BREC for the feasibility study and concept plan for the Old Cove Creek School Sports Facility along with the contract in the amount of \$185,000 for architecture, engineering, bid documents and bidding, construction documents and administration, and permitting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

12. BOARD OF ELECTIONS OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL REQUEST

Mr. Matt Snyder, Board of Elections Director, requested the Board to approve out-of-state travel for himself to attend a workshop on elections and emergency management in Kanas City, Missouri

on June 20, 2025 held by The Center for Tech and Civic Life. All expenses are paid by The Center for Tech and Civic Life.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the out-of-state travel request.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

13. STREAMFLOW REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (STRAP) UPDATE

Mr. Brian Bonville, Conservation Technician, updated the Board on a STRAP project located between the Watauga County Agricultural Extension Center and the Temple of the High Country. The report was for information only; therefore, no action was required.

14. ADOPTION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET ORDINANCE

The Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Ordinance was presented for adoption. Included were the changes recommended by the Board and County Manager. The Board thanked staff and everyone involved in the budget process from elected officials, outside agencies, non-profits, and citizens.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Ordinance as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

15. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Change Orders One (1) Through Six (6) for the New EMS Facility

County Manager Geouque presented Change Orders one (1) through six (6) for the new EMS facility for Board approval. The Change Orders were detailed in the attached information. The initial change order amount was over \$70,000 but the project architect was able to reduce the amount to \$56,503.08. The project contingency covered the Change Orders as presented. The Board requested in the future that the architect for the project be present to address the Change Orders.

Commissioner Marsh made a motion to approve only Change Orders 3 and 4. The motion failed due to absence of second.

Chairman Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve Change Orders 1-6 in the amount of \$56,503.08.

VOTE: Aye – 4 (Eggers, Castle, Greene, and Hodges)
Nay – 1 (Marsh)

B. Regular Board Meeting Schedule

Due to the Board's multiple meetings in May, the adoption of the County budget in June, and the 4th of July holiday, the first Board meeting in July has been cancelled historically. Typically, there is very limited business due to the new fiscal year. Additionally, in the event a meeting is required, the Board could schedule a special called meeting.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to cancel the July 1, 2025 regular scheduled meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

C. Announcements

On June 9th, 2025 at 10 A.M., the County will celebrate completion of the new improvements to the Sanitation Scalehouse Facility.

16. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chairman Eggers asked if there were any Commissioner comments.

- Commissioner Greene: Watauga High School Celebration – Seniors Sunrise/Sunset.
- Commissioner Hodges: WAMY Fund Raiser.
- Vice-Chairman Castle: Scalehouse improvements, staff, and the right direction the department is heading.
- Chairman Eggers: Appreciated citizens patience with debris removal, Department Heads/Staff, and Boone Chamber of Commerce.

17. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:55 P.M., Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to enter Closed Session to discuss Attorney/Client Matters, per G. S. 143-318.11(a)(3).

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to resume the open meeting at 8:21 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

18. ADJOURN

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Deron Geouque, County Manager