

MEETING MINUTES
WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2025

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting, as scheduled, on Tuesday, June 17, 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 5:30 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 Hodges opened with a prayer and Commissioner Marsh led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Eggers presented the June 3, 2025, regular and closed session meeting minutes as well. County Manager Geouque clarified that Item B, Valle Crucis Change Order, under Miscellaneous Administrative Matters, of the May 20, 2025 minutes, was a deductive change order as it was not clearly noted.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the June 3, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented and the change to the May 20, 2025 minutes.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the June 3, 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 17, 2025, agenda.

County Manager Geouque requested the additions 5 A. North Carolina Forest Service Update, and Item E. North Carolina Round 2 Cashflow Loan Agreement, Resolution, and Promissory Note and Item F. Possible Ambulances Purchases under Miscellaneous Administrative Matters.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the June 17, 2025, agenda as amended.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

5. DISCUSSION ON BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION FOR A GUARANTEED ENERGY SAVINGS CONTRACT

Dr. Leslie Alexander, Watauga County Schools Superintendent, and Mr. Graham Lewis, Schneider Electric, presented a guaranteed energy savings contract. The contract was to provide for cost savings, which then are used to pay back the cost of the improvements, and to allow for the investment in future infrastructures and utility improvements. There would be no cost to the County. The Board would have to adopt the resolution to allow the School Board to enter into such a contract. As there are no numbers associated with the contract at this time, the purpose of the presentation was to gauge the willingness of the Board of Commissioners to approve such a contract.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to table the contract until the July 15, 2025, meeting and conduct informational meeting(s) with the School Board to receive additional information.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

6. NORTH CAROLINA FOREST SERVICE UPDATE

Andrew Harsey, Forest Ranger, provided an update to the Board on forest service matters. The report was for information only; therefore, no action was required.

7. MIDDLE FORK GREENWAY BOONE GORGE PARK BID AWARD

Ms. Carrie Caviness, Interface Environmental Consulting, requested the Board award the bid to MBI Builders in the amount of \$3,823,590.24 for the construction of Boone Gorge Park. Funding

for the project would come from Watauga County Tourism Development Authority and numerous grant sources.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to award the bid to MBI Builders in the amount of \$3,823,590.24 for the construction of Boone Gorge Park, contingent upon County Attorney approval of a contract.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

8. APPROVAL OF THE JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (JCPC) FY 2026 CERTIFICATION, MEMBERSHIP AND COUNTY PLAN

Ms. Austin Combs, JCPC Program Manager, requested Board approval of the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) FY 2026 certification, membership, and County Plan.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) FY 2026 certification, membership, and County Plan.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

9. WATAUGA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION GREENHOUSE BUILDING PROJECT BID AWARD

Ms. Paige Patterson, Cooperative Extension Agent, requested that the contract for the Greenhouse Building Project in the West Annex/impound lot be awarded to Designed Habitat Inc. This project was being completely funded by the Tobacco Trust Fund Grant awarded in October 2024 and matching funds from Extension's Master Gardener fruit-plant sales over the past few years. A request for design-build proposals was posted to the County website in March 2025. Three inquiries and two formal proposals were submitted to the County/Cooperative Extension. Designed Habitat Inc was deemed to be the most qualified for the project, as they have experience assembling the Atlas Greenhouse that was purchased and have completed similar projects.

Vice Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to award the contract to Designed Habitat Inc. for the Greenhouse Building Project in the West Annex/impound lot.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

10. NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF MILITARY VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANT

Ms. April Goodman, Veterans Service Officer, requested the Board accept a grant from the NC Division of Military Veterans Affairs in the amount of \$18,288.98.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to accept the grant from the NC Division of Military Veterans Affairs in the amount of \$18,288.98.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

11. BOARD OF ELECTIONS VOTING EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

Mr. Matt Snyder, Board of Elections Director, requested the Board formally approve the purchase of 31 DS300 and 28 Express Votes from ES&S/Printelect for \$319,730.25, which does include shipping; 19 VC EZ Carts from Printelect, and 2 VC EZ Carts from Caldwell County Board of Elections for \$38,825, not including shipping; and 12 Balotars from ES&S/Printelect for \$71,570, does not include shipping. As shipping is not included in two (2) of the three (3) proposed purchases, Mr. Snyder will provide the total cost for shipping at a later date. If the amount for shipping exceeds \$15,000, the Board would need to authorize the County Manager to pay the shipping costs not to exceed \$50,000. Board action is required to formally approve the \$430,125.25 for:

1. 31 DS300 and 28 Express Votes from ES&S/Printelect for \$319,730.25
2. 19 VC EZ Carts from Printelect and 2 VC EZ Carts from Caldwell County Board of Elections for \$38,825
3. 12 Balotars from ES&S/Printelect for \$71,570
4. Authorize the County Manager to pay the shipping cost once determined not to exceed \$50,000.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to formally approve the following:

1. 31 DS300 and 28 Express Votes from ES&S/Printelect for \$319,730.25
2. 19 VC EZ Carts from Printelect and 2 VC EZ Carts from Caldwell County Board of Elections for \$38,825
3. 12 Balotars from ES&S/Printelect for \$71,570
4. Authorize the County Manager to pay the shipping cost once determined not to exceed \$50,000.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

12. TAX MATTERS

A. Monthly Collections Report

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, presented the Monthly Collections Reports from May 2025. The report is for information only; therefore, no action was required.

B. Refunds and Releases

Mr. Rash presented the Refunds and Releases Reports.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to accept the Refunds and Releases as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

C. Resolution Advancing the Scheduled Pentennial Reappraisal

The County's last property revaluation was 2022 and the next revaluation is scheduled for 2027. The Board needs to formally adopt the resolution advancing the scheduled pentennial reappraisal in accordance with NCGS 105-286 (a)(3).

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the Resolution advancing the scheduled pentennial reappraisal.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

D. Proposal for Business Personal Property Audit Services

Mr. Rash requested the Board approve GOVTAX's contract in the amount of \$25,500 for 34 business personal property audits. The contract is less than the previous provider. Adequate funds were budgeted in FY 2026 to cover the expense.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve the contract with GOVTAX in the amount of \$25,500 for 34 business personal property audits.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

E. Board of Equalization and Review Hearing Dates

Mr. Rash requested the Board approve Monday, June 30th at 9:00 AM for a Board of Equalization and Review appeal.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve Monday, June 30th at 9:00 AM for a Board of Equalization and Review appeal.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

F. License Plate Agency Contract Renewal

Mr. Rash requested Board approval to submit the renewal application for the License Plate Agency.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to submit the renewal application for the License Plate Agency.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

13. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Budget Amendments

Deron Geouque, Finance Director, presented the budget amendments for approval as included in the Board packet.

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

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

B. Proposed Human Services Parking Lot Agreement with Appalachian State University

Appalachian State University was requesting a renewal of the Human Services Parking Lot Agreement. The term was from September 6, 2025 through December 20, 2025. The amount of the lease is \$5,000. The University did express interest in a longer term.

Chairman Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, tabled the issue until Chairman Eggers and Commissioner Hodges could have further discussion with ASU officials.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

C. Boards and Commissions

The Board of Adjustment received notice from Virginia “Ginny” Nilles that she is resigning from her position effective immediately. Ginny served in the alternate member position.

There were no recommendations from the Board of Adjustment at this time and no volunteer applications have been received.

D. Announcements

The first regular meeting in July was cancelled; therefore, the next Board of Commissioners Meeting is to be held on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 5:30 P.M.

E. North Carolina Round 2 Cashflow Loan Agreement, Resolution, and Promissory

Board action was required to approve the resolution for the North Carolina Cashflow Loan Agreement and Promissory Note. This is round 2 of the programs and the requirements are identical as previously approved with Round 1. The additional funding will allow the County to use the monies to front payment of Hurricane Helene damages until FEMA reimbursements are received. The County received \$895,477.60 in Round 1. The County is eligible for an additional \$590,884.30 for Round 2. The loan is interest free and continues to be a significant tool in the County’s cash flow management.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the resolution for the North Carolina Cashflow Loan Agreement and Promissory Note for Round 2.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

F. Ambulance Purchases

Staff had solicited competitive bids for 3 new F450 4WD chassis with remounted boxes for \$707,710.80 and 3 new 2026 F450 Super Cab 4WD ambulances for \$990,250. The Board tabled a decision until after closed session.

Upon returning to open session, Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to accept the bid from ETA for 3 new F450 4WD chassis with remounted boxes for \$707,710.80 and 3 new 2026 F450 Super Cab 4WD ambulances for \$990,250 for a total of \$1,697,960.80.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

14. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

15. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:57 P.M., Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to enter Closed Session to discuss Attorney/Client Matters and Land Acquisition per G. S. 143-318.11(a)(3) and G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5)(i), respectively.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to resume the open meeting at 8:44 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

16. ACTION AFTER CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the Asset Purchase Agreement, Bill of Sale, and Real Estate Contract for Medic Base 2 owned by Craig Sullivan. The Asset Purchase Agreement was in the amount of \$1 million and \$700,000 for Medic Base 2. The funds will come from the fund balance (\$1,075,000) and the recognition of \$625,000 from the additional loan payment from Appalachian State University.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

17. ADJOURN

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Deron Geouque, County Manager