MEETING MINUTES

WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Board Room located in the Watauga County Administration Building 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 December 16, 2025, regular and closed session meeting minutes.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the December 16, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the December 16, 2025, closed session minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Eggers called for additions or corrections to the January 13, 2026, agenda.

There were no additions or corrections.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the January 13, 2026, agenda as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

- **Eileen Flieg** expressed concerns regarding the voting maps having been altered or manipulated and that the results of a referendum were disregarded.

- **Roachel Laney** thanked retiring Parks and Recreation Director, Keron Poteat, for her years of service to the County and its citizens.

- **Kathryn Cahou** spoke during the public comment period.

5. PUBLIC HEARING TO ALLOW CITIZEN COMMENT ON WATAUGA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Chairman Eggers stated that a public hearing was scheduled to allow citizen comment on the Watauga County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Planning Board recommends the proposed changes for the Board's consideration. The High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) assisted Watauga County in updating the Citizen Plan. In coordination with the Planning Board, HCCOG conducted public surveys and held a community meeting to gather input and identify resident priorities and concerns.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to open the public hearing at 5:42 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

No one signed up to speak.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to close the public hearing at 5:43 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

The Board requested staff to include the Comprehensive Land Use Plan in the Annual Pre-Budget Retreat agenda for discussion.

6. PUBLIC HEARING TO ALLOW CITIZEN COMMENT ON WATAUGA COUNTY’S AMBULANCE FRANCHISE AGREEMENT WITH APPALACHIAN REGIONAL HEALTHTHCARE SYSTEM

Chairman Eggers stated that a public hearing was scheduled to allow citizen comment on Appalachian Regional Healthcare System’s request to be granted a franchise agreement.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to open the public hearing at 5:46 P.M.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

No one signed up to speak.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to close the public hearing at 5:47 P.M.

At this time, no action was taken to grant the franchise agreement.

7. PROJECT ON AGING MATTERS

A. Request for Acceptance of FY 2026 Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) Grant/Contract

Ms. Angie Boitnotte, Project on Aging Director, requested the Board accept a Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) Grant from the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP). The grant is in the amount of $3,379 with no local match required.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to accept the MIPPA Grant in the amount of $3,379 to expand low-income subsidy outreach and supplies.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

B. FY 2026 Senior’s Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) Grant/Contract

Ms. Boitnotte requested the Board accept the grant from the Senior’s Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) which is a division of the North Carolina Department of Insurance. The grant was in the amount of $4,538 and does not require any County match.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to accept the grant from the Senior’s Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) in the amount of $4,538 with no County match.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

8. PARKS AND RECREATION MATTERS

A. Approval to Submit PARTF Helene Recovery Fund Grant

Ms. Keron Poteat, Parks and Recreation Director, requested permission to apply for a $988,000 Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant to assist with the Old Cove Creek Park Project. High Country Council of Governments is currently helping with the application. The grant requires a 50% ($494,000) local match.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to authorize the application for the PARTF Grant as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

B. Presentation of Watauga County Outdoor Spaces Report

Mrs. Joy James, a Recreation Commission Member and App State Professor, presented the Watauga County Outdoor Spaces Report.

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

C. Presentation of Resolution Honoring Keron Poteat's Years of Service and Her Retirement

Chairman Eggers presented a resolution to retiring Parks and Recreation Director, Keron Poteat, for her years of service and wishing her a happy retirement.

9. APPROVAL TO APPLY FOR THE NORTH CAROLINA HELENE RECOVERY RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE (HRRI) GRANT PROGRAM

Mr. Chris Marriott, Operations Services Director, requested Board approval to submit a grant application to North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for recycling infrastructure. The purpose of the grant was to restore, rebuild, or enhance recycling operations and material recovery in the 39 North Carolina counties that received a FEMA disaster declaration as a result of Tropical Storm Helene. The requested grant funds of $268,437.00 would be used for roll-off containers to increase recycling capacity, a metal pre-crusher and mini-excavator to enhance efficiency of the scrap metal recycling program, as well as the installation and electrical services required to operate the pre-crusher. No local match is required.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to authorize the submission of the HRRI grant application in the amount of $268,437.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

10. TAX MATTERS

A. Monthly Collections Report

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, presented the Monthly Collections Report for December 2025, 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 for December 2025, and was available for questions and discussion.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to accept the December 2025 Refunds and Releases Report as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

10. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Change Order Request #3 for Howard Knob Park

Staff requested Board approval for Change Order Request #3 for the Howard Knob Park in the amount of $8,249.64. The Change Order was to switch from seeding to sod, primarily for the area between the sidewalk and overlook. Funding was being provided through grants and the TDA.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to accept Change Order Request #3 in the amount of $8,249.64.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

B. Furniture Bid Award for EMS Facility

Staff presented bids for furniture for the new EMS facility. Two bids were received with 1 bidder being disqualified upon follow-up review. Staff requested the Board to award the bid to PBI as the lowest responsive bidder in the amount of $315,146.26. The items are on state contract pricing. The bid was within the budgeted amount for the new EMS facility.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to award the bid to PBI in the amount of $315,146.26 for furniture for the new EMS facility.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

C. State Employees' Credit Union ATM Lease

The State Employees Credit Union requested to renew the ATM lease located at the Human Services Parking Lot which expired on December 31, 2025. The monthly amount is $250.00 with a three (3) year term. No other changes were made to the current agreement. The Credit Union was actually looking to remove the ATM, however, staff provided information regarding the present location of the ATM. The current site is the only location for state and local government employees to utilize on the western side of the County. Also, the location allows for employees at the Human Services Building and Health Department access without traveling across town. Upon conversations with staff, the Credit Union agreed to renew the lease.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approved the lease agreement with the State Employees' Credit Union for $250.00 a month for a three (3) year period contingent upon County Attorney review.

D. Proposed Dates for Annual Pre-Budget Retreat

The proposed dates for the Annual Pre-Budget Retreat are February 26th and 27th with times proposed from 12–7 P.M. and 9 A.M.–1 P.M. Two days are required for the Retreat and should the Board wish, times and dates may be adjusted accordingly.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to set the dates of the Annual Pre-Budget Retreat for February 26th and 27th with times set for 12–7 P.M. and 9 A.M.–1 P.M., respectively.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

E. Proposed Dates for Budget Work Sessions

The Board holds two budget work sessions each year. The work sessions are scheduled after the Manager's proposed budget is presented at the first meeting in May. The proposed dates for the budget work sessions are May 7th and 8th, with times proposed from 12–8 P.M. for the first day and 9 A.M.–1 P.M. for the second day. Should the Board wish, times and dates may be adjusted accordingly.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to set the dates for the budget work sessions for May 7th and 8th, with times proposed from 12–8 P.M. for the first day and 9 A.M.–1 P.M. for the second day.

VOTE: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

F. Boards and Commissions

Watauga Economic Development Commission

The terms of Lee Rankin, Virginia Wallace, and Suzanne Livesay on the Watauga Economic Development Commission expired at the end of 2025. Each was appointed to a three-year term and are eligible to serve two consecutive terms. Virginia Wallace and Suzanne Livesay have expressed a willingness to serve another term if reappointed. Lee Rankin is unable to serve another term. Blake Brown and James Milner have submitted applications to serve on this board. These were second readings for Virginia Wallace and Suzanne Livesay.

The Board decided to select appointees at their next Board meeting.

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

12. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:30 PM, Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, 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.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

At 8:27 PM, Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to resume the open meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

12. ADJOURN

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

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Deron Geouque, County Manager