

MEETING MINUTES

WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 6, 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
- Madison Mathis, Clerk to the Board

Commissioner Greene offered the prayer and Vice-Chairman Castle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Eggers presented the September 15, 2026, regular and closed session meeting minutes.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the September 15, 2026, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the September 15, 2026, closed session minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Eggers called for additions or corrections to the October 6, 2026, agenda.

Chairman Eggers requested the removal of Item F, “Innovation Drive Parcel Offers and Agreement,” under Miscellaneous Administrative Matters, and its replacement with a Parks and Recreation Out-of-State Travel Request.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the October 6, 2026, agenda as amended.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one signed up to speak during public comment at this time.

5. WATAUGA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY INTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS

John Arnaud, Architect PLLC, presented an update on the Watauga County Public Library interior improvements, including review drawings and architectural site plan information. In response to questions from Commissioner Marsh, Mr. Arnaud confirmed the project would not reduce the library’s collection area. Chairman Eggers asked whether the renovation could be completed within the established budget, and Mr. Arnaud confirmed it could.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Greene, approved to move forward with the renovation design as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

6. SANITATION EQUIPMENT REPAIR REQUEST

Chris Marriott, Operations Services Director, requested approval to increase the repair authorization for the 2019 Peterbilt front-load garbage truck from \$9,516.50 to \$21,666.50 due to additional repairs identified during the repair process. Mr. Marriott confirmed the additional repairs were not covered under warranty and that TLG Peterbilt of Glade Spring, Virginia, was the closest available service provider. The truck is utilized by the Sanitation

Department to service County container sites and other County properties. Funding is available in the FY 2026-27 Maintenance & Repair – Vehicles budget.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the revised repair cost of \$21,666.50 with TLG Peterbilt of Glade Spring, Virginia.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

7. 2027 GENERAL REAPPRAISAL SCHEDULE OF VALUES

Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, and Joshua Kleene of Vincent Valuations LLC, presented the proposed 2027 General Reappraisal Schedule of Values, Standards, and Rules, along with the 2027 Reappraisal Summary and Use Value Manual. Mr. Kleene provided information regarding land valuation methods, neighborhood delineations, and the use of prior reappraisal data in developing current property values. He also addressed questions regarding property assessments and the appeal process. The Board was reminded that the reappraisal establishes assessed property values and does not determine individual tax bills.

Pursuant to N.C. General Statute 105-317, a public hearing is required prior to adoption of the proposed Schedule of Values. The Board discussed the proposed timeline, including publication of the public hearing notice on October 14, 2026, the public hearing on October 20, 2026, and adoption of the final Schedule of Values on November 17, 2026.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to set a public hearing for October 20, 2026, regarding the proposed 2027 General Reappraisal Schedule of Values, Standards, and Rules, and to authorize publication of the required notices.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

8. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Change Order Requests #28 and #29 for Emergency Services Facility

The Board reviewed Change Order Requests 28 and 29 from Greene Construction for the Emergency Services Facility. Change Order Request 28 provides a credit of \$3,395.15 for the removal of SVG2 and SVG3 from the project, while Change Order Request 29 reflects an additional cost of \$2,761.08 for the replacement of Door 100.4 at the County's request. County Manager Geouque confirmed the changes involved a combination of County and architectural considerations.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve Change Order Request 28 in the amount of -\$3,395.15 and Change Order Request 29 in the amount of \$2,761.08 for net deductive change balance.

VOTE: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

B. Department of Social Services Out-of-State Travel Request

Amy Bateman and Mandy Davis, Department of Social Services, requested approval for out-of-state travel to Charlotte and West Palm Beach, Florida, on September 29–30, 2026, to transport a child in DSS custody back to North Carolina. Due to the timing of the required travel, the trip occurred prior to a Board of Commissioners meeting with approval from the County Manager. All expenses were covered by the Department of Social Services budget.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the out-of-state travel in accordance with County policy.

VOTE: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

C. Fire Tower Road Radio Building Easement

County Manager Geouque presented a utility easement and Owner's Agreement with Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation d/b/a Blue Ridge Energy for the installation of underground and overhead electrical facilities serving the Emergency Services radio building on Fire Tower Road.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the utility easement and Owner's Agreement to allow Blue Ridge Energy to install the necessary electrical facilities to serve the Emergency Services radio building.

VOTE: Aye – 5

Nay – 0

D. IAED Annual Renewal for Emergency Services

County Manager Geouque presented the annual renewal of the IAED Priority Dispatch software license in the amount of \$22,500. The Priority Dispatch software is used for call processing of Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement calls and provides standardized questions for the prioritization of emergency calls. The renewal covers all three disciplines and will be funded entirely through 911 surcharge funds.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve the \$22,500 annual renewal of the IAED Priority Dispatch software license.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

E. Unit Surplus for Emergency Services

County Manager Geouque requested approval to surplus the 2021 Chevrolet 3500 ambulance currently serving as a reserve unit for the Watauga County Emergency Services Division. With the addition of two new ambulances, the vehicle is ready to be decommissioned in accordance with the County's replacement schedule.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to declare the 2021 Chevrolet 3500 ambulance surplus.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

F. Parks and Recreation Out-of-State Travel Request

Craig Lands, Department of Parks and Recreation, requested approval for out-of-state travel to accompany the Special Olympics Watauga County Program to the annual Tennis and Pickleball Championships in Hilton Head, South Carolina. No additional expenses are anticipated; however, the use of a Watauga County van is requested for transportation of athletes and coaches.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the out-of-state travel and use of a County van.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

G. Recommended Contract Award for Employee Medical and Dental Insurance

County Manager Geouque presented the recommended 2027 employee insurance renewals, including a 5.0% increase in medical insurance and a 9.0% increase in dental insurance. The recommendation also included a \$1,000 County contribution to each eligible employee's Health Savings Account (HSA). Vision and life insurance premiums and benefits will remain unchanged under existing rate-lock agreements. Adequate funds have been budgeted to cover the renewals.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the recommended employee insurance renewals.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

H. Sheriff's Office Retirement Award Request

County Manager Geouque presented a request for Deputy Steven “Patrick” Anderson to be awarded his assigned duty weapon and badge upon retirement from the Watauga County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Anderson served with the Sheriff's Office from October 8, 2001, through September 30, 2026, completing more than 24 years of service. The request included setting the purchase price of the duty weapon at \$1, pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 20-187.2.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the award of the duty weapon and badge and set the purchase price at \$1.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

I. Wildcat Communications Tower Site Lease Agreement

County Manager Geouque presented an updated Memorandum of Lease and lease agreement for the Wildcat Communications Tower Site with Blue Ridge Buffalo Partners, LLC. The proposed ten-year lease included a \$1 consideration, reversion of the property to the County upon expiration, and provisions regarding tower rental revenue, property insurance, and taxes. The lease was intended to facilitate relocation of the existing Wildcat Tower to support the County's emergency communications system.

County Attorney Miller reported that the other party to the agreement had requested additional revisions, noting that three of the proposed changes were acceptable while another required further consideration. The matter was scheduled for discussion in closed session.

It was recommended that the Board amend the agenda to add possible action regarding the Wildcat Communications Tower Site lease agreement following closed session.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to amend the agenda to add possible action regarding the Wildcat Communications Tower Site lease agreement following closed session.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

J. Appointment of the Watauga County Finance Director

County Manager Geouque presented a request to appoint Ms. Misty Watson as the County's Finance Director, effective October 6, 2026, pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 159-24.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to appoint Ms. Misty Watson as the Watauga County Finance Director, effective October 6, 2026.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

K. Boards and Commissions

County Manager Geouque presented the volunteer application of Mr. Marcos Miralles of Boone for consideration for appointment to the Watauga County Planning Board. Mr. Miralles resides in New River Township and expressed interest in supporting thoughtful growth while preserving the character and natural beauty of Watauga County.

County Manager Geouque noted that there were currently no vacancies on the Planning Board and that Mr. Miralles' application would be kept on file for consideration when future openings became available.

As this was a first reading, no Board action was required.

L. Announcements

County Manager Geouque recommended cancelling the regularly scheduled November 3, 2026, Board of Commissioners meeting due to Election Day.

The County Manager also reminded the Board that the next meeting was scheduled for October 20, 2026, at the Watauga County Recreation Center.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to cancel the November 3, 2026, Board of Commissioners meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

9. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

- **Vice-Chairman Castle** thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

- **Commissioner Greene** encouraged everyone to enjoy the fall foliage and take a drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

10. BREAK

11. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:20 p.m., Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to enter into Closed Session pursuant to G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(3) to discuss matters protected by attorney-client privilege.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

At 8:14 p.m., Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to resume the open meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

12. ADJOURN

At 8:16 p.m., Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
Nay – 0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Madison Mathis, Clerk to the Board