

MEETING MINUTES

WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 3, 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 Greene offered the prayer and Vice-Chairman Castle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Eggers presented the January 13, 2026, regular and closed session meeting minutes.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the January 13, 2026, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the January 13, 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 3, agenda.

There were two (2) additions.

1. Consideration of Neil Hartley's appointment to the Watauga County Planning Board and serve as its Chairman.
2. Possible action after closed session.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve the January 13, 2026, agenda as amended.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Clerk Note – No one signed up for public comment. However, Walker Stone requested to be added as he was late to the meeting. Chairman Eggers allowed Mr. Stone to speak.

- **Walker Stone** - spoke regarding the need for a pedestrian bridge near the Winkler Creek area.

5. REQUEST TO APPROVE ARCHITECT FOR THE LIBRARY RENOVATION PROJECT

Mr. Russell Taylor, Director of Libraries for Appalachian Regional Library, requested the Board appoint John Arnaud as architect for the Library Renovation Project. The proposed fee was a lump sum of \$21,490, and Mr. Arnaud worked extensively with the library on the development of this project.

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. Funding for the project will be provided through grants, fundraising efforts, and the County's capital project set-aside for the library.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to exempt the project from the Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) process per N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-64.32.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

6. BID RECOMMENDATION FOR MYSTERY HILL TRAIL REPAIR

Ms. Wendy Patoprsty, Blue Ridge Conservancy Middle Fork Greenway Director, presented bids for the repairs to the Mystery Hill Trail. Four bids were received. Ms. Patoprsty requested the Board award the bid to S&W Construction as the lowest responsive bidder in the amount of \$35,159.00. The bid was within the assessed amount approved by FEMA.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to award the bid to S&W Construction as the lowest responsive bidder in the amount of \$35,159.00.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

7. NEW EMERGENCY SERVICES FACILITY ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM REQUEST

Mr. Drew Eggers, IT Director, requested the Board approve a quote from Creekside Electronics in the amount of \$18,862.35 for installing the access control (security system for doors) at the new Emergency Services Facility. Three (3) bids were received. Adequate funds were available in the FF&E budget for the project.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to award Creekside Electronics the bid for installing the access control (security system for doors) at the new Emergency Services Facility in the amount of \$18,862.35.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

8. HAGERTY CONSULTING, INC. CONTRACT EXTENSION

County Manager Geouque requested Board approval to extend Hagerty Consulting, Inc's contract. Due to delays and additional requirements at the federal level with several projects, Hagerty Consulting's time and costs have increased for this work managing the public assistance projects for the County. The request was for \$150,000 in additional funding and a 6-month timeline extension to September 17, 2026. Funding will come from the Category Z funding through the FEMA Public Assistance program.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the request for \$150,000 in additional funding and a 6-month timeline extension to September 17, 2026 for Hagerty Consulting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

9. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Acceptance of NC Youth Sports Grant Award

Watauga County Parks and Recreation was awarded a NC Youth Sports Grant in the amount of \$3,300.00. The funding will fully cover the registration fees for youth selected to All-Star teams.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to accept the NC Youth Sports Grant in the amount of \$3,300.00.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

B. Revised Annual Pre-Budget Retreat Agenda

The approved dates for the Annual Pre-Budget Retreat were February 26th and 27th with times approved from 12–7 P.M. and 9 A.M.–1 P.M.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the Pre-Budget Retreat dates as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

C. Boards and Commissions

AppalCART Board

The Town of Boone recommended reappointment of Todd Carter as the Town representative on the AppalCART Board. This item was presented for a first reading.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Chairman Eggers, moved to waive the first reading and appoint Todd Carter as the Town representative to the AppalCART Board.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Parks and Recreation Commission

The Town of Boone recommended reappointment of Virginia Roseman as the Town representative on the Parks and Recreation Commission. This item was presented for a first reading.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to waive the first reading and appoint Virginia Roseman as the Town of Boone representative to the Parks and Recreation Commission Board.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

Ms. Kim Rogers was no longer able to serve on the Watauga County TDA Board. The TDA requested the appointment of Mr. Eric Woolridge and asked to waive the first reading,

so that Mr. Woolridge can sit at their next board meeting. This item was presented for first reading.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to waive the first reading and appoint Eric Woolridge to the Watauga County TDA Board.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

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 were eligible to serve two consecutive terms. Virginia Wallace and Suzanne Livesay have expressed a willingness to serve another term if reappointed. These items were previously presented as a first reading on December 2, 2025. Blake Brown and James Milner have submitted applications to serve on this board. These items were previously presented as a first reading on January 13, 2026.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to appoint Suzanne Livesay, Blake Brown and James Milner to the Watauga Economic Development Commission.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Watauga County Planning Board

Commissioner Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to appoint Neil Hartley to the Watauga County Planning Board and as chairman to that Board.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

D. Announcements

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to relocate the Board's regularly schedule meetings for February 17th, March 3, 2026, and the Pre-Budget Retreat February 26th and 27th to the Watauga County Community Recreation Center Community room.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

10. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

11. BREAK

12. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:00 PM, Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, 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 6:02 PM, Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to resume the open meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

At 6:04 PM, Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, 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 7:47 PM, Chairman Eggers, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to resume the open meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

13. POSSIBLE ACTION AFTER CLOSED SESSION

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to authorize the travel and expenses (not to exceed \$2,000) for two (2) Social Services workers to travel to Florida for foster child placement.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

14. ADJOURN

At 7:55 PM, Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 5
 Nay – 0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Deron Geouque, County Manager