

MEETING MINUTES

WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, September 1, 2026

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 1, 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
 Tim Hodges, Commissioner
 Ronnie Marsh, Commissioner
 Nathan Miller, County Attorney
 Deron Geouque, County Manager
 Madison Mathis, Clerk to the Board

[Clerk's Note: Commissioner Greene was not in attendance due to a prior engagement.]

Commissioner Hodges offered the prayer and Commissioner Marsh led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Eggers presented the August 18, 2026, regular meeting and closed session minutes.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the August 18, 2026, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 4
 Nay – 0
 Absent – 1 (Greene)

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the August 18, 2026, closed session minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 4
 Nay – 0
 Absent – 1 (Greene)

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Eggers called for additions or corrections to the September 1, 2026, agenda.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve the September 1, 2026, agenda as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people spoke during public comment:

- **Craig Dudley** - a Sampson resident, expressed dissatisfaction with changes in the County, including increased traffic and rising property taxes. He commented on the difficulty of affording housing for individuals who work outside the County and encouraged the Board to take action regarding the changes occurring in the community.

AWARD PRESENTATION

Chairman Eggers invited Dr. Mark Poarch to assist with the presentation of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine Award to Lowell Younce in recognition of his contributions to the community.

5. 2026 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE & PREPAREDNESS REPORT

Ms. Karina Martinez-Gonzalez with AppHealthCare presented the 2026 Communicable Disease & Preparedness Report, providing an overview of communicable disease trends and incidence rates in the community, including enteric and tick-borne diseases and vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. She also discussed emerging trends and partner collaboration efforts, including the recent rabies exposure associated with a petting zoo.

Commissioners discussed communicable disease trends among students and collaboration between AppHealthCare and Appalachian State University Health Services. The cost of rabies vaccinations was also discussed.

The update was for information only; therefore, no action was required at this time.

6. PROPOSED 5311 TRANSIT FUNDS DESIGNEE CERTIFICATION RESOLUTION & ROAP UPDATE

Mr. Craig Hughes, AppalCART Director, requested the Board adopt the enclosed resolution designating AppalCART as the recipient of the 5311 transit funds for Watauga County. NCDOT requires a new resolution every five years as part of the grant application process. Mr. Hughes also provided a brief update on the Rural Operating Assistance Program (ROAP) grant and AppalCART.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to adopt the enclosed resolution authorizing the filing of applications with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and execute the designee certification form.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

7. RENEW NC COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM GRANT – EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jackson Marcellus with the High Country Council of Governments presented information regarding Watauga County's proposed application for the Renew NC Community Infrastructure Program to assist Watauga Emergency Services with communication effectiveness and redundancy. The presentation included information regarding the CDBG-DR grant application process and the required public hearing and resolution.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to schedule a public hearing for September 15, 2026, to receive public comment regarding Watauga County's proposed application for CDBG-DR funding through the Renew NC Community Infrastructure Program.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the Resolution to Apply for Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Funding.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

8. ANIMAL CONTROL VEHICLE PURCHASE REQUEST

Mr. Chris Marriott, Operations Services Director, requested the Board approve the purchase of a 2027 Ford F-150 4x4 SuperCab for Watauga County Animal Control from Parks Ford of Hendersonville for \$41,608.80, based on pricing through the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association contract. The vehicle will be used for enforcement calls, resident assistance, and the removal and transport of stray and nuisance animals. The purchase was budgeted in the FY 2026-2027 Operating Budget for the Animal Control Division.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve the purchase of the 2027 Ford F-150 4x4 from Parks Ford of Hendersonville for \$41,608.80.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

9. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. EWP Engineering Services Agreement

County Manager Geouque presented the proposed engineering consulting services needed to support the Watauga Soil and Water Conservation District's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program in addressing watershed damage caused by Hurricane Helene. The Board considered service agreements with Blue Ridge Environmental Consulting (BREC) and Brushy Fork Environmental Engineering and Consulting for assessment, planning, design, permitting, and implementation of EWP projects.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to authorize the service agreements with Blue Ridge Environmental Consulting (BREC) and Brushy Fork Environmental Engineering and Consulting for engineering consulting services related to the Emergency Watershed Protection Program.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

B. Change Order Requests #1 - 4 for Cove Creek Park

County Manager Geouque presented Change Order Requests 1-4 submitted by Greene Construction for the Cove Creek Park Project. The change orders reflected scope revisions, design changes, price escalations, and subsurface materials, with a total estimated cost of \$293,595.34.

Chairman Eggers asked whether the County would seek FEMA reimbursement for the costs, and County Manager Geouque confirmed that the County would.

Chairman Eggers, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to approve Change Order Requests 1-4 with Greene Construction for the Cove Creek Park Project in the amount of \$293,595.34, as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

C. *Change Order Request #9 for Valle Crucis School*

County Manager Geouque presented Change Order Request 9 submitted by H&M Constructors for the Valle Crucis School Project. The change order included adjustments for door access, fire tank wiring, occupancy sensors, and a filler piece for sink aprons. The project continued to reflect a negative cumulative change order balance.

Commissioner Marsh questioned the cost associated with the replacement of a heater and why the County was responsible for the expense. The Board discussed the matter.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve Change Order Request 9 with H&M Constructors for the Valle Crucis School Project in the amount of \$21,292.42, as presented.

VOTE: Aye – 3
Nay – 1 (Eggers)
Absent – 1 (Greene)

D. *Rescind Rootsii, LLC Economic Development Incentive*

County Manager Geouque presented the request to rescind the economic development incentive previously approved for Rootsii, LLC. The County was notified that Rootsii, LLC had accepted an offer from another county; therefore, the previously approved incentive was no longer applicable.

Commissioner Marsh expressed concerns regarding the work undertaken by County staff and economic development partners on the project and the County's prior discussions regarding the incentive. Chairman Eggers commented on the importance of trust and following through on commitments and expressed appreciation to those involved in the project.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to rescind the economic development incentive previously approved for Rootsii, LLC.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

E. Boards and Commissions

The Town of Boone designated Council Member Adrian Tait to serve as the Town Council liaison on the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Commission in place of Council Member Virginia Roseman.

Chairman Eggers waived the first reading and allowed the Board to proceed with consideration of the appointment.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to appoint Adrian Tait to the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Commission.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

F. Announcements

County Manager Geouque announced that the Board would hold two public hearings on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 5:30 P.M. regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 11 of the Watauga County Code of Ordinances concerning electronic access gates for gated communities and the proposed Watauga County Ambulance Franchise Ordinance. He noted that the EMS Advisory Committee had been encouraged to review the proposed Ambulance Franchise Ordinance and recommend any changes it deemed appropriate.

County Manager Geouque announced that the High Country Council of Governments would hold its 51st Annual Banquet on Friday, October 16, 2026, at the Appalachian State University Grandview Ballroom. RSVPs were required by September 30, 2026.

County Manager Geouque announced that the Watauga County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) and public survey were now available on the County's website and encouraged the public to participate.

10. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

- **Vice-Chairman Castle** echoed the sentiments expressed regarding the County's efforts to work with Rootsii, LLC and disappointment that the project did not move forward.
- **Commissioner Hodges** agreed with Vice-Chairman Castle's comments and emphasized the resilience of the County and community and the importance of continuing to move forward.
- **Commissioner Marsh** reiterated the importance of resilience and a County and community that stand behind their values. He expressed appreciation for individuals who live in the County and work to make it a better place to live and work.
- **Chairman Eggers** congratulated Vice-Chairman Castle's son on being signed to the Indianapolis Colts' practice squad.

11. BREAK

12. CLOSED SESSION

At 6:30 p.m., Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, 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 – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

At 8:47 p.m., Chairman Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to resume the open meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

13. ADJOURN

At 8:48 p.m., Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Greene)

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Madison Mathis, Clerk to the Board