

# Ashe County

150 Government Circle  
Jefferson, NC 28640



## Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

9:00 AM

Commission Meeting Room

### County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill  
Vice Chair Jerry D. Powers  
Commissioner Russell Killen  
Commissioner Wes Greene  
Commissioner Mike Eldreth*

**BUSINESS SESSION****I. 9:00 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Courthouse**

*Chairman McNeill called the January 20th, 2026 Regular Session Meeting of the Ashe County Board of Commissioner to order at 9:00 am.*

**Present:** 5 - Chairperson Todd McNeill, Vice Chairman Jerry D. Powers, Commissioner Mike Eldreth, Commissioner Russell Killen and Commissioner Wes Greene

**II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer**

*Commissioner Eldreth led the Pledge of Allegiance and Vice Chairman Powers offered the opening Prayer.*

**III. Consent Agenda**

*Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[MIN 26-1](#) January 5th, 2026 Regular Session Minutes

**Attachments:** [1-20-2026 January 5th, 2026 Regular Session Minutes](#)

[MISC 26-1](#) Monthly Tax Report December 2025

**Attachments:** [1-20-2026 Monthly Tax Report December 2025](#)

**IV. Adoption of Agenda**

*Commissioner Killen made the motion to adopt the Agenda. Commissioner Greene seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Adopted**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**V. Public Comment**

*Chairman McNeill opened the Public Comment portion of today's meeting at 9:03 am.*

*Charles Stafford from the Fleetwood area of Ashe County stepped to the podium he began by highlighting recent national events involving Renee Good and Officer Ross in Minneapolis, mentioning conflicting descriptions in the media and by officials (including Renee Good being labeled as a domestic terrorist). He noted the lack of concurrent federal and state investigations, which is unusual for such situations. Charles shared that local DOJ leaders in Minneapolis wanted to pursue a civil rights investigation but were directed not to; instead, they were told to investigate Renee Good's partner, leading to multiple resignations. He addressed why he was bringing up this Minneapolis incident in Ash County, pointing out the commission's oversight over local law enforcement. Charles emphasized the importance of preserving life, especially during routine stops, and*

advocated for procedures that prioritize arrest, trial, and due process over the use of deadly force. He mentioned ongoing local tensions and an upcoming protest scheduled for Saturday at 1:00 at Badger Funeral Home regarding events in Ash County. He spoke on concerns about personal threats on social media directed at protesters, including himself. He called for compassion and thoughtful consideration from the commission and the community regarding these issues.

No other comments were offered by those in attendance. Chairman McNeill then closed the Public Comment portion of today's meeting at 9:05 am.

## VI. Presentations

### PRES 26-1 9:03 AM - Nick Farmerie, Assistant County Manager & Community Development Director - Proposed Animal Shelter Site Development Engineering Contract & Budget Amendment

**Attachments:** [1-20-2026 Agreement for Professional Services - WithersRavenel](#)

Nick's presentation focused on the proposed Ashe County Animal Shelter site development and associated budget amendment. Two main items discussed: contract agreement with WithersRavenel (engineering firm) for site development and a related budget amendment. Nick began by discussing the contract which includes a wetlands and stream assessment, a prerequisite for securing a special use permit from West Jefferson. Boundary and topographic survey to assess elevation differences and boundaries for all parcels impacted by the development. Level B SUE (Subsurface Utility Engineering) using ground-penetrating radar to determine optimal utility access routes for water and sewer. Preliminary code research to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. Development of a developable area exhibit, conceptual layout, and preliminary engineering addressing lighting, street access, retaining walls, and general site readiness. Conceptual stormwater design to account for site grading and infrastructure impacts. Assistance with special use permit application, including possible presentations to the Town of West Jefferson if requested. Nick stated the total contract value: \$119,700. He said that a motion is required to approve the WithersRavenel contract and a separate motion for the budget amendment. Budget adjustment increases Department of Public Buildings' appropriation from \$4,250,863.28 to \$4,324,063.28 (an increase of \$73,200). Funds are being moved from the Department of Administration's budget (reduced from \$450,310 to \$377,110), not additional/new funding. Clarification provided that this is an internal transfer within the existing budget. Commissioner Greene raised concerns about the placement of new water lines on the property when lines are run to an existing house on the property. Nick explained that water and sewer needs for the animal shelter are possibly different from the existing residential setup (likely requiring larger lines and a commercial-grade meter). He said that the engineering assessment will help determine optimal utility pipe sizes and routing for the shelter's demands. Coordination with the Town of West Jefferson to ensure proper sewer connections and compliance is integral to the contract. Nick stated that the process will result in a definitive answer about the site's suitability for the shelter and readiness for further development. Commissioners asked about a completion date and Nick stated that the project aims to be completed by May to allow for inclusion of dollar figures in the annual budget cycle. Engineering work will begin as soon as notice to proceed is given; some due diligence work can start immediately, with onsite work starting as weather permits (likely April). A motions for approval of the contract was made by Commissioner Eldreth and seconded by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the budget amendment, seconded by Commissioner Killen, and passed with no opposition.

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**PRES 26-2** 9:06 AM - Chris Lambert, Tax Administrator - 2027 Countywide Revaluation Update

*Chris began by saying that the next county-wide reevaluation is scheduled for January 1, 2027, with staff currently working in preparation. He said that updates and presentations on the revaluation process will be provided to the board throughout the year. Chris reiterated that the county's revaluation process follows State Law and Department of Revenue guidelines, requiring analysis of all sales. Mass appraisal methods use all qualifying sales data, not just a small sample, to determine property values. Sales involving business entities or rentals are excluded from the market value calculations. When asked Chris clarified that local appraisers, not outside contractors, conduct all assessments and revaluations in-house. Since 2011, the county has handled its own revaluations, yielding better results and local oversight. Commissioner Eldreth raised concerns about rising property values, especially from out-of-county buyers impacting affordability for local residents. He expressed worry that young people in Ashe County are being priced out, with many homes being bought by wealthy people from outside the county. The number of houses converted to vacation rentals was questioned by Commissioner Eldreth, but Chris noted occupancy tax numbers have remained stable, suggesting limited growth in short-term rentals. Chris stated that the scale of revaluation is significant, requiring careful management and review of a large number of properties. He said there are around 18,000 houses and approximately 39,842 parcels in Ashe County, with less than half of the parcels containing dwellings.*

**No Action Taken**

**PRES 26-3** 9:10 AM - Tracie McMillan, DSS Director - DSS Statistics November 2025

**Attachments:** [1-20-2026 DSS Statistics November 2025](#)

*Tracie began by saying that the number of children in foster care has decreased to 34 for the reported month, attributed to staff efforts in securing permanency and safety. Remaining foster care cases are more complex and require continued care. Tracie spoke of a notable achievement in child support collections: Andy Sexton facilitated the collection of \$13,750.18 for one family, placing in the top 20 collections statewide. The child support team received another award for excellence. Tracie talked about a national funding freeze that was announced for the Childcare and Development Fund (CCDF), affecting several states due to fraud concerns; North Carolina is not currently impacted. She also said that January subsidy payments and daycare attendance in North Carolina are secure, with future funding status pending further updates. Ashe County currently has zero children on the daycare waiting list. Families in need and eligible for subsidies are encouraged to apply. Tracie stated that Ed Hurst, longstanding foster care supervisor with over 30 years in the field, is retiring. Alyssa Triplett has been promoted to foster care supervisor, having previously worked as the disaster case management supervisor; she will shadow Ed through January before taking over in February. Tracy also stated that she herself has been nominated to the Western Regional Citizen Review Panel to advise on child welfare improvements at the state level. Commissioner Eldreth questioned about the homeless in the current cold weather situation. Tracie said that DSS is prepared to transport homeless individuals to shelters, with law enforcement available for additional support. Hospitality House's outreach team actively engages with the local homeless population, including those living in tents. Cold weather shelter operations ensure all individuals have a place to stay, though conditions may be crowded.*

Some homeless families with children are known, but none are currently living in cars as thought by Commissioner Eldreth. Assistance is available for any such cases. Tracie stated that Hospitality House offers various programs, including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing. She also said that Ashe County faces a severe shortage of affordable rental properties, making it difficult to place individuals even with HUD assistance due to low inventory and high rental rates.

**No Action Taken**

**PRES 26-4** 9:15 AM - Patty Gambill, Emergency Management Coordinator - Riverview Community Center Repairs Budget Amendments

**Attachments:** [Budget Amendment Request](#)

Patty presented four budget amendments related to Riverview Community Center repairs. Funding sources included: \$108,817.94 from FEMA for Riverview contents, \$106,317.94 grant from the Office of State Budget Management for Riverview contents, \$104,910.40 from insurance for roof repairs, and \$197,910 from FEMA for ground repair. Acceptance of the negotiated bid for repair work from Foggy Mountain Nursery was requested. Ground repairs involve fixing displaced river rocks, rock veins, and pipes affected by flooding. Additional repairs include restoring the carousel, picnic tables lost in the storm, repairing the retaining wall around the parking lot, and replacing some fencing. The scope is similar to prior work done by Glen Sullivan, but with added elements from recent storm damage. Patty stated that the two projects funded by FEMA with money already received. Insurance proceeds for roof repairs are also in hand. The \$106,317.94 grant from State Budget Management is pending but expected soon. Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the four budget amendments related to Riverview Community Center repairs. Commissioner Killen seconded, the motion passed with unanimous approval with no further discussion.

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**PRES 26-5** 9:20 AM - Steve Trinkle - Riverview Community Center Update

Steve began his presentation saying that the Riverview Community Center remains in recovery from significant flood damage caused by Hurricane Helene, with ongoing repairs and planning for mitigation against future flooding. Initial plans to relocate the facility were abandoned after failing to find a suitable site outside of the floodplain; focus shifted to repairing and improving the existing building. Flooding caused extensive electrical, plumbing, and structural damage, including to the heating system, basement, and gym floor. Steve stated that multiple tiers of insurance are being utilized: a primary flood insurance policy (about \$500,000 received), a secondary policy (\$1,000,000 pending), and a general liability policy for specific repairs (e.g., roof repair for \$104,000). He did also make an \$8,000 request to Commissioners for an electrical assessment needed to determine required service amps for a new heating system; this is expected to be reimbursed by insurance.

Electrical system upgrades are on hold until required service amps are determined; design work and bids were paused to avoid under-powering the future heating system. Major repair items include ceiling tiles, interior/exterior doors, plumbing, bathroom renovations, flooring (including asbestos testing), and concrete work on the building exterior. Basement repair and sealing is a more extensive job than anticipated due to active plumbing, electrical, and tanks that require removal. The gym and entrance have been completed; the gym floor was installed by out-of-county specialists (paid for by the Hornets), but most contractor work is intentionally sourced locally. Additional planned

work includes a fire detection system, roof replacement, and potential future projects like flood-proofing doors/windows, flood wall installation, and a structural engineering assessment. Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve the requested \$8,000 for an electrical assessment needed to determine required service amps for a new heating system (with a future budget amendment) Commissioner Powers seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**PRES 26-6** 9:30 AM - Chief Deputy Jeremy Williams - Position Reclassification

**Attachments:** [ACSO Agenda Request](#)

Chief Deputy Jeremy Williams presented a job reclassification issue regarding the detective positions. The initial job classification plan omitted a general crimes detective position, which was discovered during a recent pay study review. Williams consulted with the County Manager to address and resolve the oversight. The proposal is to reclassify class number 1904 (sergeant detective) to a standard detective position. A new sergeant detective position would be created at grade 113, one step higher than the detective role, to establish a pay gap between supervisor and detectives. The reclassification only affects two current positions: sergeant detective in narcotics and sergeant detective in general crimes. The salary increase for the sergeant detective role is approximately 3% (about \$4,000 annually). The required funds for the reclassification are available within the current budget, specifically through unused payroll. Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the reclassification. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**PRES 26-7** 9:33 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Capital Improvement Plan Adoption

**Attachments:** [Ashe County Capital Improvement Plan](#)

Adam presented the updated Capital Improvement Plan, noting changes since October and emphasizing that the CIP is a flexible, (living) regularly updated document. Board approval is important for strengthening future grant and funding applications. Landfill and Environmental Services building are in active construction, pending weather and bid outcomes.

Ambulance base is the next major priority; engineers/architects will evaluate sites and design needs.

Courthouse mechanical upgrades are underway, with analysis of energy use to potentially fund improvements through cost savings. Recreation center/YMCA and industrial park remain ongoing; the Shell building is scheduled for construction this year, with hopes for grant funding for additional buildings.

Riverview Community Center continues but faces funding uncertainty.

Animal shelter and Northwest Community & Recreation Center (old middle school) are

moderate priorities; the shelter is still in early development. Most project funding comes from grants and outside sources, not local tax dollars; some funds are zero-interest. The board approved the CIP as a non-binding "wish list" to guide future development. Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Killen and passing unanimously.

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**PRES 26-8** 9:37 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Environmental Services Project Update

Adam's Discussion focused on the Environmental Services expansion and associated projects. He spoke on a previous meeting which included updates from Vannoy on project progress. Current facilities are outdated and unsafe for maintenance of large trucks, with many trucks not fitting inside. New facility planned as a metal building with several bays for garbage and roll-off trucks, improving maintenance safety and efficiency.

Project location is on recently acquired property at 163, chosen for its suitability for both the convenience site and new facility. Site layout preserves the cabin used by South Mountain Child Development Center, ensuring continued service for local children. Adam stated that the new site will utilize an existing back gate to allow trucks to drive straight through the facility and exit onto the highway, enhancing traffic flow. The design considered and retained the cabin to avoid disruption for truck drivers and child development services.

Construction drawings for the facility are expected to be completed by next month. Adam spoke on the landfill expansion saying it includes a new landfill cell adjacent to the animal shelter and a row of pines.

The new cell is expected to provide 15 to 20 years of additional capacity, depending on waste volume. Project is currently out for bid and has been advertised in local media and on the county website. At least three contractor bids are targeted for compliance. The most complex part of the project is the specialized landfill lining required. Questions were raised about the acreage, the number of cells, and long-term site viability.

Historical context noted—cell number one was initiated over 30 years ago. Adam stated that all bids and construction costs are targeted for finalization by February 27, with the aim to apply to the local government commission for April approval. Combined cost for the building and landfill project is estimated at \$15 million, with favorable financing anticipated due to strong credit. The landfill property is estimated at 250 to 300 acres, affording flexibility for future expansion. Maintaining local landfill capacity controls costs and provides leverage compared to neighboring counties reliant on external landfill services.

**No Action Taken**

**PRES 26-9** 9:42 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - EMS Update

Adam began by saying that monthly updates are planned to inform the Board and the public about the shift from private to county-run EMS service. The current focus is on following an implementation schedule, though some factors remain outside the team's control. Adam stated that the Piedmont Triad Regional Council of Governments has begun an employment study, meeting with current EMS staff to review pay, benefits, and roles. Staff are filling out surveys similar to those completed by county staff previously, to ensure competitive compensation and benefits packages. The study will benchmark pay and benefits against neighboring counties to remain competitive. Staffing structure, shift schedules, and roles (including director, assistant director, mechanic, trainer, and

*billing staff) are under review for right-sizing. Current EMS staff have been actively involved in the transition process and their opinions are highly valued. He said two possible base locations have been identified and are being evaluated by architectural and engineering teams. The process for base location selection will be streamlined to move quickly into the design phase once a site is chosen. By the first February meeting, action is expected on the purchase of two ambulances, with efforts to piggyback on existing contracts to expedite the process. Design options for the ambulances are being discussed, including a possible silver and purple color scheme. Feedback from EMS staff suggests a preference against white vehicles and some concerns about purple being less visible at night. There is consensus that lighter primary colors with increased reflectivity are safer and easier to see, especially at night. Final design decisions will consider both industry standards and staff preferences. There was discussion over the timing of developing EMS Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) and hiring the EMS director.*

**No Action Taken**

**PRES 26-10 9:47 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Airport RFQ**

**Attachments:** [Statement of Qualifications Airport Planning & Engineering](#)

*Adam began the discussion centered on renewing AVCON's qualifications and ongoing contract for airport projects. The airport board expressed support for continuing the relationship with AVCON due to past success.*

*AVCON has successfully managed several state FAA grants, including some 100% grants and others requiring a 10% match. Adam stated that AVCON has completed several projects including the runway expansion, waterline extension, apron and taxiway expansions, a property purchase, obstruction clearing, and recent fencing. Adam stated that there are no significant changes planned for AVCON's contract structure, as their fees are project-specific and have remained consistent over the years. Commissioner Greene made the motion to accept AVCON's qualifications and approve contract as needed. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

**GENERAL SESSION**

**VII. Commissioner Comments**

**VIII. Announcements**

**IX. Executive Session**

*Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to enter into Executive Session at 10:50 am. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Commissioner Greene made the motion to exit Executive Session at 11:57 am. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Approved**

**For:** 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[ES 26-1](#) G.S. 143-318.11(5) Property

[ES 26-2](#) G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Contract

[ES 26-3](#) G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) Legal

## X. Adjournment

*Commissioner Greene made the motion to adjourn at 11:57 am. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

### Approved

For: 5 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

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