

Ashe County

150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Friday, June 19, 2026

3:00 PM

Special Budget Session with ACSO

2nd Floor Conference Room

County Commission

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

BUSINESS SESSION**I. 3:00 PM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Courthouse**

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

[PRES](#)
[26-102](#)

Budget Discussion with Ashe County Sheriffs Office, Corrections and Communications

Chairman McNeill opened the session at 3:00 pm. Those in attendance with the Board of Commissioners were: Adam Stumb, County Manager, Sandy Long, Fiscal Operations Director, Teresa Bare, Assistant Finance Officer, Ashley Lambert, Deputy Finance Officer, Kelsey Wagoner, Human Resources Coordinator, Sheriff B. Howell, Captain Jeremy Williams ACSO, Captain Linda Carrow, Corrections, Lieutenant DJ Bowlin, Corrections, Director of Communications, Brian Greer, Chris Lambert, Tax Administrator, Ashe Post & Times Reporter Jesse Campbell and Clerk to the Board, Missy Seivers.

Chairman McNeill began by emphasizing the difficulty of the current economic climate, noting for example that high fuel prices—budgeted at \$5 to \$6 for diesel—and general inflation have made budgeting for county services a significant challenge. The meeting focused on the proposed tax increase, which the commissioners felt they could not support given the financial hardships faced by local residents and the recent added tax for development of the future county run EMS.

Sheriff Howell and Cpt. Jeremy Williams stated that while the budget technically increased by \$331,000, that money is entirely allocated to a 3% cost-of-living increase and salary benefits, not operational growth. The group also discussed grant funded positions within Law Enforcement with the one vacant grant position that was cut within Law Enforcement. Funding on grant positions has expired. Sheriff Howell said that he had not considered the positions "grant positions" since 2024 because the county paid for them. Chairman McNeill reiterated that no staff lost their job with the budget decisions made for the next fiscal year.

Communications Director Brian Greer expressed deep concern over the decision to cut/freeze a vacant position in dispatch, warning that high-performing staff are facing burnout and have threatened to leave if asked to cover night shifts. Director Greer also stated that he was in the interview process with a perspective new dispatcher for the now frozen position within his department.

Detention staff Captain Linda Carrow and Lieutenant DJ Bowlin defended the cutting of a vacant position within the Detention Center. They spoke on the higher standards within the Detention Center, security checks, feeding schedules for offenders, nurse visits, mental health visits, hospital visits and jail transports. Stating all these require the presence of a detention officer with each inmate.

Commissioner Killen expressed offense at the term "defunding the police" being used in relation to the budget cuts, arguing that the department was not receiving less money than it had the previous year. The board discussed the SMCP (Statewide Misdemeanant Confinement Program) inmates, with Chairman McNeill suggesting that housing them for \$40 a day from the state while costing the county roughly \$95 a day might be a larger conversation for the future.

Vice Chairman Powers raised concerns about departmental priorities, specifically mentioning hotel costs for conferences in Myrtle Beach, while Sheriff Howell defended the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association conference as essential professional development. Chairman McNeill stated that he was a big supporter of professional development. It strengthens you, it strengthens your staff. Conferences and continued education for staff were no issue for him.

Chairman McNeill reiterated that in the coming fiscal year budget, the county must stick to a specific budget number (\$9,021,064 for the Sheriff's Office, Corrections and Communications) to avoid a tax hike, but he offered to support reclassifying or moving positions within that total if the Sheriff needs to shift resources. He stated he appreciated everybody's comments, he appreciated their positions, and he respected them.

PRES
26-103

Approval of the FY 2026/2027 Budget Ordinance & the FY 2026/2027 Economic Development Budget Expenditures

Chairman McNeill stated a motion was needed to approve the Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Budget Ordinance totaling \$162,619,528. This amount includes ongoing construction expenditures for the new middle school, the new landfill and Environmental Services building and new landfill cell.

Also, set the FY 2026–2027 ad valorem tax rate at \$0.44 per \$100 of assessed value. This rate remains unchanged from FY 2023–2024, FY 2024–2025, and FY 2025–2026. Fire District Tax Rates, all rates remain the same and are set per \$100 of assessed value:

- Creston — \$0.06
- Fleetwood — \$0.04
- Glendale Springs — \$0.07
- Lansing — \$0.06
- Warrensville — \$0.12
- Jefferson — \$0.039
- New River — \$0.07
- West Jefferson — \$0.06
- Laurel Springs — \$0.07
- Pond Mountain — \$0.08
- Todd — \$0.07
- Deep Gap — \$0.04

Set the FY 2026–2027 Rescue/EMS tax district rate at \$0.024 per \$100 of assessed value.

\$0.004 to Ashe County Rescue Squad,
\$0.02 to the county capital reserve fund for establishing and equipping a future county-run ambulance service when the Ashe Medics contract ends.

Solid Waste Disposal Tipping Fees Effective July 1 (all unchanged):

- Commercial: \$75
- Industrial: \$65
- LCID: \$55

Adopt revised fee schedules for:

- Fire inspections
 - Planning
 - Building inspections
- Effective July 1.

Chairman stated that action is requested on this motion. Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Budget Ordinance. 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

II. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to adjourn today's meeting at 4:15 pm. 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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