

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, November 3, 2025

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 November 3rd, 2025 Regular Session Meeting at 9:00 am. Also in attendance for today's Public Hearing were the West Jefferson Board of Alderman, John K. Reeves, Alderman, Russell W. Barr, III, Mayor Pro Tem, Calvin Green, Alderman, Beth Shelton, Alderwoman, Stephen Shoemaker, Alderman, Rebecca Eldreth, Assistant Town Manager, Brantley Price, Town Manager. They too called their meeting to order.

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

Brantley Price, West Jefferson Town Manager led the Pledge of Allegiance and Chairman McNeill 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 25-29](#) October 20th, 2025 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [11-3-2025 October 20 2025 Minutes](#)

[MIN 25-30](#) Executive Session Minutes from April 7th, 2025, July 7th, 2025, July 25th, 2025, August 4th, 2025, August 18th, 2025, September 2nd, 2025, September 15th, 2025, and October 6th, 2025.

[APP 25-15](#) Reappointments to Farmland Preservation Advisory Board of Kaleb Davis & Keaton Craven

[APP 25-16](#) Appointments to JCPC - Tracie McMillan and Kelly Welsh

Attachments: [11-3-2025 JCPC Request from Tracie McMillan](#)
[11-3-2025 Request from JCPC](#)

[APP 25-17](#) Appointments to Ashe County Volunteer Advisory Board - Amy Heflin and Leslie Fuller

Attachments: [11-3-2025 Request from Volunteer Advisory Board](#)

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 floor for the Public Comment portion of today's meeting at 9:02 am.

Nancy Beth Weaver from Warrensville took the podium. She read a United Methodist Church statement urging elected leaders to set aside partisanship and work toward just resolutions. Nancy criticized board members for being out of touch with Ashe County residents. She highlighted issues such as housing problems, food insecurity, lack of clothing for poor residents. She recalled a previous question about personal benefit in helping the poor. Nancy urged board members to engage directly with residents facing hardship. She called for representation of every person in Ashe County.

Lou Zeller introduced himself as a resident of Glendale Springs, North Carolina, and a member of Down Home North Carolina. He spoke on behalf of working families, seniors, and young people across the state, representing Ashe County residents. Highlighted deep cuts and uncertainty affecting health clinics, hospitals, schools, and disaster recovery services. Noted that the ongoing federal government shutdown adds chaos to these challenges. Lou stated that these issues directly threaten the stability and well-being of working people. He emphasized that decisions made far from Ashe County skew priorities away from local communities.

Criticized tax policies that favor handouts to the wealthy over investments in the common good. Described how such policies cause ripple effects that impact everyday life on main streets and kitchen tables. Called on county commissioners, city councilors, and other local representatives to be champions for their communities. Urged officials to stand in the gap, protect constituents, and hold the line alongside residents. Requested tireless advocacy for reopening the federal government and securing full funding of essential services, especially healthcare. Emphasized the need for proactive, compassionate leadership from local officials. Lou described the moment as pivotal for North Carolina and invited local representatives to stand in solidarity with working people statewide. He warned that failure to "draw the line" would suggest local leaders do not prioritize their constituents. He called for partnership to build a North Carolina that works for everyone and ended with a clear message to "draw the line."

No further comments were offered. Chairman McNeil then closed the floor for Public Comment at 9:08 am.

VI. Presentations

[PRES](#)
[25-151](#)

9:05 AM - PUBLIC HEARING - Nick Farmerie, Community Development Director & Assistant County Manager - Expenditure of Local Funds for Economic Development Purposes

Attachments: [11-3-2025 Public Hearing Notice](#)
[11-3-2025 Project Pandora Incentive Agreement](#)

Public hearing was called to order at 9:10 AM for Ashe County and the West Jefferson Board of Aldermen to consider expenditure of local funds for economic development. No comments were offered from those in attendance. The public hearing was then closed at

9:11 am. The agenda focused on Project Pandora A, an incentive agreement reviewed by town and county attorneys and modeled on recent agreements. County of Ashe will allocate \$390,000 over three years. The town of West Jefferson will allocate \$300,000 over three years. Ashe County Job Development will allocate \$310,000 over two years (starting this year). The agreement provides cash incentives tied to capital investment and the creation of jobs paying above the area median income. Specific investment amounts and job numbers remain confidential until the state formally announces the project. Once the state announcement occurs, redactions will be removed and full figures disclosed. The anticipated jobs are manufacturing positions. Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the Project Pandora incentive agreement. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Also, a motion was made to approve the Project Pandora incentive agreement for West Jefferson by the West Jefferson Board of Aldermen. The motion was seconded, and passed unanimously.

Approved

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

PRO 25-4

9:10 AM - Missy Parker, Veteran Service Officer - 2025 Operation Green Light Proclamation

Attachments: [11-3-20205 Green Light for Veterans 2025 Proclamation](#)

Missy Parker, Veteran Service Officer presented to the Board the 2025 Operation Green Light Proclamation. She stated that it was a Nationwide effort uniting counties to support veterans, now in its fifth year (2025). Initiated by the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers. Missy said it aims to raise awareness of veterans' challenges and available resources at county, state, and federal levels. Residents and businesses are encouraged to replace one light with a green bulb to show appreciation. Commissioner Killen made the motion to adopt the 2025 Operation Green Light Proclamation. Commissioner Green seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Adopted

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

PRES
25-150

9:13 AM - Dr. Mike Rogers, President of WCC-Ashe Campus - Presentation Showcasing WCC including Ashe County

Dr. Mike Rogers, President of WCC-Ashe Campus presented the Board with an update. He spoke about launching a strategic enrollment management plan after a year of development, achieving the highest curriculum enrollment in 10 years across WCC. Ongoing workforce development enrollment; final numbers to be confirmed at term end. Completed fire academy graduation at the Ashe campus. Successfully completed a SACS COC site visit with no recommendations for any campus, securing a clean bill of health for a June 2026 reaffirmation and a five-year mid-year review. Reworked the Applied Engineering Technology program to better align with local industry needs. Updated skilled trades areas, adding residential wiring and construction facilities. Dr. Rogers stated that they graduated the first class of the commercial driver's license program; the second class is currently in progress. The CDL program, run from the Wilkes campus, serves the high country region in collaboration with Caldwell Community and Technical College. Offered tours of the updated Applied Engineering Technology and skilled trades spaces for interested stakeholders. Smart Asset placed WCC #4 nationally for retention, cost to attend, tuition, and fees; #3 in North Carolina for cost to

attend. The Aspen Institute identified WCC as one of the top 200 schools eligible for the 2027 Aspen Prize, offering a chance to compete for a \$1 million award. Dr. Rogers talked about ongoing workforce development talks with local businesses and other colleges (Caldwell, Surry) to align programs with community needs. He also noted the challenge of recruiting skilled trades instructors for program expansion. Commissioners cast an informal vote of support for the energy savings project to proceed with procurement.

PRES
25-152

9:23 AM - Tracie McMillan, DSS Director - DSS Statistics for September 2025

Attachments: [11-3-2025 DSS Statistics September 2025](#)

Tracie McMillan, DSS Director spoke on the DSS Statistics for September 2025. Tracie talked about the September statistics are steady overall, with a slight rise in child welfare and adult services reports.

She said there is a pressing need for foster parents; few candidates have completed background checks or begun applications. Interested individuals are asked to contact Tori Logel to start the foster parent training process. November has been approved as Adoption Awareness Month. A resource table will be set up in the rotunda to provide information for prospective foster parents. Emphasis was placed on the positive impact fostering can have on both children and families. Tracie stated that the federal government shutdown prevents November Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits from being loaded onto EBT cards. Ashe County serves 1,872 families (3,545 participants) who rely on FNS. The state cannot fund the benefits; statewide costs are estimated at \$6-8 million. Updates are posted on the NC DHHS website, and a community resource page on ashdss.org lists local food banks. Recipients can check their balances via the EBT EDGE app or the phone number on the back of their card; existing balances remain intact. Information about the shutdown and resources has been shared via newspapers, radio, and robocalls. The "No One Should Be Hungry" food drive will have collection boxes in the rotunda, Chamber of Commerce, town halls, the hospital, and other key locations. Coordination is underway with Second Harvest Food Bank for possible truck deliveries.

An Ashe Food Council is being formed to bring together food bank leaders, assess distribution, identify gaps, and plan future initiatives such as home-delivered meals. Community members are invited to attend food council meetings.

PRES
25-157

9:25 AM - Tracie McMillan, DSS Director - DSS Reclassification

Attachments: [11-3-2025 DSS Reclassification Information](#)

Tracie McMillan, DSS Director asked for a DSS position reclassification. She stated that a foster care supervisor was transitioned to the Disaster Case Management unit and then returned to foster care.

Crystal Halque is serving as part-time supervisor for Disaster Case Management; an NC Works applicant is being considered for a permanent role. A request was made to move the disaster case management position back to temporary status, using existing budget funds. Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve the position transition.

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

PRES
25-153

9:30 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Center Lease

Attachments: [11-3-2025 Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Center Lease](#)

Adam presented the lease for Ashe County Livestock Campus. No questions or comments were raised by commissioners. A motion to approve the lease was made by Commissioner Killen and seconded by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

Approved

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

PRES
25-154

9:35 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Handling Facility Policy and Procedures, Ashe County Livestock Working Facility Policies, Bylaws of the Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Center

Attachments: [11-3-2025 Bylaws of the Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Center](#)
[11-3-2025 Ashe County Livestock Working Facility Policies](#)
[11-3-2025 Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Handling Facility Policy and Procedures](#)

Adam Stumb, County Manager brought back before the Board the Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Handling Facility Policy and Procedures, Ashe County Livestock Working Facility Policies, Bylaws of the Ashe County Agriculture Campus and Livestock Center Focus on Article Three of the bylaws concerning board composition. Discussion focused on Section 3(1) amended to specify board members appointed by the Ashe County Board of Commissioners for staggered terms, removing the phrase "only nominations provided by the board." Added provision that one board member shall be a Jefferson alderman, town manager, or mayor. Section 3(3) revised to allow the commissioner to appoint a replacement from public applications or board nominations if a member resigns or fails to serve the full term. The amended bylaws were read aloud for clarity. A motion to approve the bylaws as amended was made by Vice Chairman Powers and seconded by Commissioner Greene. The motion carried with all members in favor.

Approved as Amended

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

GENERAL SESSION

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

X. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to adjourn today's meeting at 10:03 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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Todd McNeill, Chairman

Missy Seivers
Clerk to the Board