

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Final

Monday, October 6, 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

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

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

Chairman McNeill called the October 6th, 2025 meeting to order at 9:00 am.

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

Commissioner Greene 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

[PRES
25-128](#)

September 15th, 2025 Regular Session Meeting

Attachments: [10-6-2025 September 15, 2025 Regular Session Minutes](#)

[PRES
25-129](#)

Monthly Tax Report for August 2025

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Monthly Tax Report August 2025](#)

[APP 25-13](#)

Reappointment of Judy Bare to the Long Term Care Community Advisory Committee

IV. Adoption of Agenda

With addition of two items to the end of the agenda Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Killen 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 McNeil opened the floor for the Public Comment portion of today's meeting at 9:04 am.

Kurt Conkle, Willowbend Lane, Jefferson took the podium and spoke on the noise disturbance semi-tractor & trailers cause using jake brakes as they travel down hwy 221 near his home. He asked is the county could place a NO JAKE BRAKE sign inside the

city limits along the highway to deter these disturbances and also reduce the speed to 45 mph inside the city limits.

Sharon George, Willowbend Lane, Jefferson also spoke on the issue of the noise disturbance semi-tractor & trailers cause using jake brakes as they travel down hwy 221 near her home as well.

Chairman McNeill spoke saying he agreed and that he would send an email to DOT on their behalf. He also suggested that they speak with the Mayor of Jefferson as the issue was inside town limits.

Commissioner Powers stated that the sign needed to be placed back far enough outside the town limits that tractor & trailer drivers would have time to begin braking and reduce speed. He said once they start down that hill into the city limits jake brakes are necessary for them to come to a stop at the intersection.

Seeing no further movement from the citizens in attendance Chairman McNeill closed the Public Comment portion of today's meeting at 9:09 am.

VI. Presentations

[PRES 25-130](#)

9:05 AM - PUBLIC HEARING - Judson Blevins, Planner/Housing Coordinator HCCOG - 2025 Community Development Block Grant funds in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program

Attachments: [10-6-2025 2025 CDBG-NR Public Hearing Notice](#)

Chairman McNeill opened the Public Hearing on the 2025 Community Development Block Grant funds in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program at 9:12 am. Judson Blevins, Planner/Housing Coordinator HCCOG was present for discussion and to answer any questions. No comments were offered from those in attendance. Chairman McNeill then closed the Public Hearing at 9:13 am.

[RES 25-7](#)

9:08 AM - Judson Blevins, Planner/Housing Coordinator HCCOG - Resolution For The County of Ashe Application for Community Development Block Grant Funding for The 2025 Neighborhood revitalization Project

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Resolution County of Ashe CDBG Funding 2025 Neighborhood Revitalization Project](#)

Judson Blevins, Planner/Housing Coordinator HCCOG presented to the Board the Resolution For The County of Ashe Application for Community Development Block Grant Funding for The 2025 Neighborhood revitalization Project. After some discussion Commissioner Greene made the motion to adopt the Resolution. Commissioner Killen 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 25-131](#)

9:10 AM - Kelsey Wagoner, HR Coordinator - Background Check Requirements

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Coats' Canons NC Local Gov Law New Criminal History Record Check Requirements](#)

Kelsey Wagoner, HR Coordinator presented to the Board Background Check Requirement changes. A new state law (Session Law 2025-16) enacted this summer will now require all counties and cities in North Carolina to subject all applicants for positions that require working with children in any way to criminal history record checks conducted by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI). These new requirements went into effect on October 1, 2025. Commissioners voiced concerns about volunteers working with children not being included in this law. Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to approve with the addition that Ashe County include equal background checks on all county volunteers working with children going forward. 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
25-132

9:13 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Request for Proposal Information for EMS Study

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Rquest for Proposal Information for Compensation, Classification, and Workforce Study for EMS](#)

Adam Stumb, County Manager requested to put out a request for proposals to prepare a workforce study that will look at Ashe Medics current compensation and classifications as well as similar size counties to Ashe County. He stated that this will help us analyze current staffing levels, pay and provide some recommendations on structure of the new department. Once we receive proposals back, we will bring those before the Board for consideration. Commissioner Eldreth stated that the process needed to be sped up that it was his understanding that EMS Personnel are taking jobs in other counties for better pay. He questioned the necessity of the work study. After some discussion Commissioner Greene made the motion to direct staff to publish the request for proposals. 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
25-133

9:18 AM - Dr. Eisa Cox - Ashe County Schools - Capital Budget Request

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Ashe County Schools Budget Request & Mountain View Elem School Site Inspection & Evaluation-Storm Drainage System](#)

Amanda Coldiron (finance officer) and Jody Corum (new maintenance director) were present to discuss Chiller Savings and Funding Requests. A lengthy discussion with Commissioners took place regarding the cost of the chiller replacement project coming in significantly lower than expected, saving around \$363,000. Amanda stated that initial cost analyses were based on outdated studies and only one company, leading to higher estimates. When the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Planning Division handled the bidding, four companies bid, and BoilerMasters won with a bid of \$524,000 (others ranged up to \$590,000). DPI's involvement and improved market conditions helped drive the price down. Jody stated that the chillers are still running but are at end-of-life; new units are projected to ship late December/early January, with installation completion by next May. The plan is to limp along if current chillers fail before then,

possibly calling in outside help if necessary. Commissioner Eldreth questioned the school system's fund balances. Amanda said that it was around \$2.5 million in recurring expense funds, \$600,000 in capital. They are requesting of the chiller savings, \$61,060 to repair storm water drainage and the playground at Mountain View due to a sinkhole and aging infrastructure. Jody stated that FEMA was involved but could not absorb the repair costs. Other projects discussed for possible funding include: Water treatment system upgrades at Blue Ridge. Replacement of a corroded pump system at the high school's CTC building (earlier quote: ~\$86,000). Addressing an aging water tower and related infrastructure; current solutions involve adding a pump. Vice Chairman Powers suggested a smaller tank for drinking water may be more effective.

Commissioners showed great concern about the Fire suppression system issues at Westwood Elementary, including water pressure problems when fire trucks use hydrants, affecting sprinkler function—a life safety concern. Jody said the Engineering reports are in process for these issues, but no concrete timeline or finalized solutions yet. Vice Chairman Powers made a motion to allocate \$50,000 toward the Mountain View pipe & sinkhole repair, with \$11,063 to be handled by the school system. The remaining savings are to be held for now. Commissioner Eldreth seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Commissioners stressed that high priority will be given to a solution for the fire suppression system at Westwood Elementary, including further discussions with engineering, city, and fire marshal as needed.

Also to continue to assess additional maintenance needs (water treatment, pump system, water tower) and determine appropriate use for remaining savings as project scopes and costs become clearer and to follow up on the legal situation with the swimming pool.

Approved as Amended

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

PRES
25-134

9:25 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Hurricane Helene Cash Flow Loan 3

Attachments: [10-6-2025 State Cashflow Loan Agreement \(Round 3\)](#)

Adam stated that this is the 3rd and final cashflow loan being offered by the State for Helene affected communities. The amount of the loan is \$485,631.36. As with the other two loans, he stated he would recommend accepting these to maintain some cash for ongoing recovery projects, like Riverview Community Center. After some discussion Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to approve the Hurricane Helene Cashflow Loan 3. Commissioner Greene 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
25-135

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

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Lease Agreement Draft Between Ashe County Local Government and Ashe County AG Campus and Livestock Center Committee](#)

Adam Stumb, County Manager brought before the Board for discussion the Ashe County Agriculture Campus & Livestock Center Lease. The lease is under consideration, along

with accompanying policies and procedures. Recent changes were made to the lease to address issues from the previous meeting, with a need to ensure consistency in wording between the lease and the policies/documents.

A specific inconsistency was noted by Chairman McNeill the lease states "No alcohol shall be available for sale on the premises," while the policies and bylaws prohibit all alcohol. The group agreed to strike "for sale" to ensure alignment (i.e., simply "no alcohol on the premises").

Chairman McNeill also asked if the County Attorney John Kilby has reviewed the lease. Adam stated he had reviewed the document itself but not the rules and procedures yet. Commissioner Greene pointed out under section six, "Lessee's Responsibilities", item ten requires reports to the Ashe County Board of Commissioners detailing facility usage, revenues, expenses, and events, "as requested."

Commissioner Greene suggested and the Board agreed that such reports be submitted at minimum quarterly, or more often if specifically requested, to monitor first-year operations. Commissioner Eldreth suggested signage at the facility entrance clearly stating prohibited items/activities (e.g., alcohol, smoking, gambling) to inform all visitors. Adam stated that changes would be made and the lease would be presented again at the Commissioners next meeting on October 20th, 2025.

No Action Taken

[PRES](#) [25-136](#)

9:40 AM - Judy Bare, Ashe Agriculture Campus Board & other Members -
Ashe Agriculture Campus Proposed Policies and Bylaws

Attachments: [10-6-2025 Ashe County AG Campus & Livestock Center Policy and Procedures](#)
[10-6-2025 Ashe County Livestock Working Facility Policy](#)
[10-6-2025 Ashe County AG Campus & Livestock Center Accident Waiver & Release of Liability Form](#)
[10-6-2025 Bylaws of the Ashe County Agriculture & Livestock Center](#)

A lengthy discussion took place between the Ashe Agriculture Campus Board Members (Judy Bare, Vickie Young, Richard Calhoun and Amy Walker) and Commissioners in regard to the Ashe Agriculture Campus Proposed Policies and Bylaws. AG Campus Board members stated that the documents in question are a work in progress and considered a living document, with ongoing improvements and changes. They also provided a facility usage update. This included recent and upcoming events include a Pumpkin Festival (Hope For A Vision), a veterinarian-led horse clinic with about 60 horses, and the FFA Regional Cattle Handling Competition in November. Various community groups such as AgSouth, the local Cattlemen, 4-H Horns and Hooves Ag Club, Farm Bureau, and regional beekeepers have held or plan to hold meetings and activities at the facility. There is active communication with grant committees, including reporting event usage and facility engagement. Discussions about hosting new types of events are ongoing, including a baby shower, a county-wide yard sale, small car competitions, a potential county fair, and fun or safety days for families. The facility's usage is steadily increasing, with positive comparisons to neighboring counties for event turnout. Facility rental process and fees were also discussed. Renting the facility is managed via an online Google Form where renters provide their contact information and select from available rental options. Livestock facility rental is \$15/hour; weighing animals is \$4/head. Classroom and arena rental rates were also discussed, with half-day and full-day options (\$300 for half-day including setup and teardown).

Rentals require committee approval to ensure alignment with the facility's vision. The committee meets twice a month. Renters receive immediate email confirmation and further steps, including information on insurance and deposits. Cleanup and setup are included within the rental time-frames; flexibility is maintained for rental periods while

usage is still low. Definitions of half-day/full-day (e.g., four/five hours for half-day, eight/ten for full) are still being refined and handled on a case-by-case basis. Financial and Operational status was also discussed. The facility has around \$7,000 in the bank, much of it sourced from successful events and generous sponsors, particularly for the recent horse pull. Grants require activity and usage reporting, broken down by facility area (working facility, arena, meeting room, etc.). All spaces are being utilized, with continued growth in usage expected as awareness increases. Future event planning considers parking and property needs, especially for larger events like the possibility of a county fair. A review of rental policies and procedures is underway, with active committee input and suggestions for improvement. Clarification was made that county departments are not charged for facility use; the definition of what constitutes a county department or function is being refined. Cleaning standards are expected to be upheld by all renters, including county departments. Deposit refund policy was discussed in detail; consensus emerged for a tiered approach: full refund if canceled more than six weeks out, 50% refund between six and four weeks, and no refund if canceled less than four weeks before the event. There will be flexibility for emergencies at the discretion of the board. Safety and security requirements will reference fire codes and permit requirements, with clearer language to be added. Prohibited items (such as fireworks and potentially knives) were discussed. The policy manual borrows best practices from other facilities and is open to further revision. Funding policy will align with county budget processes, with boards expected to submit budget requests through the County Manager / Finance Officer as per standard procedure. Commissioner suggestions were to Finalize language and steps on deposit refund policy, including emergency exceptions at board discretion. Refine definitions and fee waiver guidelines for county department usage. Clarify safety and prohibited items language in policies. Prepare budget requests consistent with county procedures and submit as required. Continue expanding event offerings and pursue partnerships for larger community activities (e.g., county fair, safety day, equipment day, yard sale). Come back to the next Commissioners meeting on October 20, 2025 with changes.

No Action Taken**PRES**
25-137**9:50 AM - ADD ON - Aaron Flannery, Conservation Trust for North Carolina
- Cranberry Creek Preserve**

Aaron Flannery, Western Conservation Manager, introduced the Conservation Trust for North Carolina (CTNC), a nonprofit dedicated to protecting land along the Blue Ridge Parkway. He stated that CTNC has a memorandum of understanding with the National Park Service and focuses on expanding protected land adjacent to the Parkway. Since 1996, CTNC has protected 37,000 acres, with over 4,400 acres transferred to the Blue Ridge Parkway to expand the park boundary. The organization's efforts support public access, resource protection, recreation, watershed protection, and preservation of the parkway's viewshed, contributing significantly to local economies. The current project is the Cranberry Creek Preserve, consisting of two parcels totaling 200 acres near Laurel Springs (mile marker 249/250), with 5,000 feet bordering the Parkway. The Mountains-to-Sea Trail runs through the property, and plans are underway to reroute the trail for an improved user experience and increased safety by removing at-grade crossings. Restoration efforts included removing a failing farm pond/dam to restore native brook trout habitat, in partnership with the Wildlife Resource Commission and Mountain True. Several dilapidated structures and utility lines were removed to restore the land's natural condition and fit the Parkway landscape. Due to a new federal mandate, CTNC is seeking a letter of support from Ashe County to facilitate the land transfer to the National Park Service.

A template letter of support will be provided, to be placed on county letterhead and signed by an authorized official. The county letter will be bundled with other projects,

passed to the Governor's office for a state letter of support, and then forwarded to the Department of Interior. Vice Chairman Powers asked if this presentation was leading up to a financial ask? Aaron replied that the request is not for financial support; all project funding comes from grants and private foundations. After some discussion the plan is for staff to prepare the support letter, place it on the next agenda, and then officially consider and vote on the matter.

No Action Taken

[PRES
25-138](#)

10:00 AM - ADD ON - Vice Chairman Powers - Property Fraud Protection Senate Bill #423

Vice Chairman Powers spoke on Senate Bill #423 and Property Fraud. Senate Bill 423 aims to make it harder for individuals to steal property by forging deeds and signatures. He said he was encouraged by the Registrar of Deeds office to support the bill, though some participants admit to not knowing all its details.

Chairman McNeill looked up information on the bill and stated the bill passed the North Carolina House unanimously (110-0) on June 18th and was sent to the Senate, but no further action has occurred since June 19th. Vice Chairman Powers said that preventing deed fraud is crucial, with concerns noted about potential black eye for commissioners if not supported. Property fraud through forged deeds is considered a major and growing nationwide risk. Recording a forged deed can cloud a property title and potentially transfer rights of possession. While no specific local incidents were mentioned, suspicious activity was reported by the Registrar of Deeds office, involving persistent inquiries from a caller. Powers stated that fraud prevention insurance is now marketed, often advertised on television, with fees ranging from \$60 to over \$300 annually just for notification services. Other scams involve companies charging for access to publicly available property records, often for unnecessary fees. Chairman McNeill stated that he would email a local senator to request an update on Senate Bill 423's status in the Senate.

No Action Taken

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

GENERAL SESSION

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

Commissioner Killen made the motion to enter into Executive Session at 11:15 am. Vice Chairman Powers seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. Chairman McNeill called the Executive Session meeting to order at 11:15 am. At 12:28 pm Commissioner Killen made the motion to return from Executive Session. Commissioner Greene seconded the motion.

As a result of a portion of the Executive Session meeting Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve pay to Generations Ashe for the third and fourth quarter allocation for FY 25/26. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

[ES 25-15](#)

G.S. 143-318.11(5) Property

[ES 25-16](#)

G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) Confidential Records

X. Adjournment

At 12:29 am Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to adjourn the October 6th, 2025 Regular Session meeting. Commissioner Greene 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