

# Ashe County

150 Government Circle  
Jefferson, NC 28640



## Meeting Minutes - Final

Monday, May 4, 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 May 4th, 2026 Regular Session meeting of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners to order at 9:00 am.*

**Present:** 4 - Chairperson Todd McNeill, Vice Chairman Jerry D. Powers, Commissioner Mike Eldreth and Commissioner Russell Killen

**Absent:** 1 - 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 Killen made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice Chairman Powers seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

[PRES 26-62](#) Reinstatement of Salary & Longevity for David Gambill (Law Enforcement)

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Employment History for David Gambill](#)

[MIN 26-11](#) April 6th, 2026 Executive Session Minutes

[RES 26-5](#) Resolution Appointing Plat Review Officer - Josh Bare, E911 Coordinator

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Resolution Appointing Plat Review Officer - Josh Bare](#)

**IV. Adoption of Agenda**

*Going into the adoption of the agenda Commissioner Eldreth requested to be added to the agenda to address a concern raised by convenience center employees. Chairman McNeill suggested the concern could be handled under Commissioner Comments, but agreed to place Commissioner Eldreth at the end of the agenda. Also, Chairman McNeill shared that he'd spoke with Jen Green that morning regarding a budget-related agenda item that had been on the agenda. Chairman McNeill stated that a meeting is scheduled between Watauga, Allegheny, and Ashe to continue the budget conversation for Health Departments and that Presentation "26-65" will be removed from today's meeting and pushed to a later meeting. Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Eldreth seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Adopted**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

## V. Public Comment

Chairman McNeill opened the floor for the public comment portion of today's meeting at 9:04 am.

Lou Zeller (Glendale Springs) referenced a May Day march in Raleigh of approximately 10,000 people opposing tax cuts for wealthy corporations and advocating to "fund the future." He criticized the legislature for failing to pass a state budget for over two years and questioned what was being "hidden." He cited more than \$18B in tax cuts benefiting corporations/wealthiest residents and noted the corporate income tax rate is set to drop to zero in four years. He argued reduced investment has left North Carolina 50th in school funding and criticized expansion of private school vouchers. He stated vouchers cost taxpayers over \$625M last year and are projected at \$551M annually into the next decade, asserting public schools lose funding and vouchers mostly subsidize families already in private schools. He asked the commissioners what they would do about these issues.

Dr. John Morrow (West Jefferson; family physician, retired public health director; Ashe member on the Board of Health) emphasized county budget constraints but made two points. He praised the Appalachian District Health Department as among the best in the state, citing his experience across NC health departments and COVID-era work with the state health department and the CDC Foundation. He commended Health Director Jen Green and staff for being creative and frugal, including becoming a federally qualified health center and leveraging multiple grants to improve services across three counties. He stressed COVID-19's human and economic toll and warned future pandemics are likely and could be worse. He urged the commission to do what they can to help the health department continue its work and maintain readiness as the county's "front line of defense."

Charles Stafford (Fleetwood), representing Down Home, proposed a "constructive reset" on Ashe County's minimum housing standards ordinance (Chapter 150). He said the ordinance is based on 1975-era language with outdated/unclear references that create confusion in application and enforcement. He argued this leads to inconsistency and gaps that can allow unsafe living conditions to persist, framing the issue as safety (fire hazards, electrical issues, health/safety threats), not politics. He advocated for clearly applying standards to all rental housing types (mobile homes, apartments, duplexes, single-family rentals). He proposed cleaning up and clarifying existing language, correcting outdated references, improving how concerns are reported/handled, and including reasonable mitigation approaches so issues can be fixed. He asked the commission to review the proposed amendments, engage the inspections department and county attorney, and move the work forward through the normal process.

Steve Trinkle (Todd), on behalf of Riverview Community Center, thanked the county for support during recovery over the last ~20 months, noting ongoing work with FEMA and efforts to secure outside funding.

He said they were starting replacement of the fire detection system and thanked multiple county staff for assistance (including Fire Marshal Josh Steelman and others mentioned by name). He noted progress with insurance and said Riverview expects to submit a budget amendment request and a change order.

Chief Master Sergeant Toby Heisley (retired; Jefferson) announced the launch of the Ashe Community Land Trust (Ashe CLT) to create attainable/affordable workforce housing. He described the CLT model: the trust retains ownership of land and uses a 99-year ground lease; local families buy fair-priced homes on leased land and can build

equity while maintaining affordability for future buyers. He said the organization is volunteer-run and donations go to the mission; first-year goals include recruiting a "Founding 100" members (via dues or sweat equity/volunteer hours), seeking land donations, and offering "Community Land Trust 101" classes. He invited the public to the inaugural Ashe CLT Benefit fundraiser on June 5 and directed people to the organization's website for more information.

Samantha Lafferty (Warrensville), president of Ashe CLT, highlighted the organization's 501(c)(3) approval, noting the application was approved in 18 days. She emphasized the all-volunteer nature of the effort, framing the work as long-term "legacy" building to keep Ashe County livable for working families, and encouraged volunteering, donations, and word-of-mouth support.

Seeing no movement from those in attendance Chairman McNeill closed the floor for public comment at 9:31 am.

## VI. Presentations

[PRES 26-63](#) 9:05 AM - Chris Lambert, Tax Administrator - Untimely AV-56 Application for Wildlife Conservation Program under North Carolina General Statute 105-277.15.

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Untimely AV-56 Application Info](#)

Chris Lambert presented an untimely application to enroll property in the Wildlife Conservation Program (administered through the PUV program), noting applications were due in January. Steven Lambert identified the family property (1597 East Buck Road) and explained it has been in the family since around 1958 and was recently gifted to them by his mother-in-law. Steven shared he already participates in the wildlife program with land in Gaston County and wants to enroll this property due to perceived benefits for both landowner and wildlife. Chris clarified the application is late; enrollment could proceed for next year, but not for the current year.

Chairman McNeill stated that during their eight-plus years, the board has never accepted late applications due to fairness and legal consistency (concern that accepting one would obligate accepting others and reopen past denials). Vice Chairman Powers acknowledged the merits of the wildlife work but indicated they would oppose accepting a late application. Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to deny the late application to remain consistent with past practice. Commissioner Eldreth seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval. The applicants were encouraged to apply again in January of next year, with an expectation it would be straightforward.

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

[PRES 26-64](#) 9:10 AM - Patty Gambill, Emergency Management Director - Riverview Community Center Electrical System Installation Contract and Budget Amendment

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Riverview Community Center Electrical Installation Documentation](#)

Patty requested approval of a \$167,660 contract with B&G Plumbing and Electric to install a new electrical system at Riverview Community Center. The project was put out as an RFP and two bids were received; B&G was the lowest bidder. A standard contract

was included in the meeting packet; staff invited questions.

The board confirmed procurement guidelines were followed and the project was properly advertised. requested approval of a \$167,660 contract with B&G Plumbing and Electric to install a new electrical system at Riverview Community Center. The project was put out as an RFP and two bids were received; B&G was the lowest bidder. A standard contract was included in the meeting packet; staff invited questions. The board confirmed procurement guidelines were followed and the project was properly advertised. Motion made by Commissioner Killen and seconded by Commissioner Eldreth to approve the contract with B&G Plumbing and Electric; approved by the board. A motion was made by Commissioner Eldreth and seconded by Vice Chairman Powers to increase the Department of Public Buildings appropriation from \$4,458,291 to \$4,654,721. The \$196,430 increase would be funded from Wright Flood Insurance proceeds received February 14, 2025, currently residing in general fund fund balance.

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

[PRES 26-65](#) 9:15 AM - Jennifer Greene, AppHealth Director/CEO - AppHealthCare Needs and Budget Request

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Email Request](#)

PRESENTATION REMOVED

[PRES 26-66](#) 9:20 AM - Nick Farmerie, Assistant County Manager & Community Development Director - N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund's Helene Recovery Fund Project Agreement

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund's Helene Recovery Fund Project Agreement](#)  
[05-04-2026 Splash Pad, Smartplay-Centre & Shelter Images](#)

Nick along with Keven Anderson, Director Parks & Rec announced Ashe County was awarded \$300,000 from the Helene Recovery Fund (a sub-allocation of the Part F Parks and Recreation Trust Fund) for the Family Central splash pad project. The grant is 1:1 matching funds, and staff requested a motion to accept the grant funding / approve the related contract. Staff noted the sub-allocation was \$4M across 16 Helene-impacted counties, and Ashe County capturing \$300K was significant. Planning started about a year ago, including vendor outreach to cover the splash pad plus two additional amenities with one vendor.

Selected vendor: Carolina Parks and Play (main office: Cary, NC), credited for helping meet pricing and project needs.

Proposed amenities at Family Central:

40' x 40' polygon shelter to be built where the old brick concession stand was demolished, overlooking the ballfields (intended for family/church/business gatherings and weather shelter during events).

Splash pad located in the flat area near the current/new concession stand area.

Toddler-focused playground near the concession area, complementing the existing higher/older-kid playground; features include small slides and themed elements (e.g., fire truck / small houses). Splash pad size: 50' x 30' (1,500 sq ft), with sports-themed elements (baseballs, soccer balls, basketballs) and a dump bucket.

Intended operating season for local climate: roughly Memorial Day to Labor Day, with annual winterization.

Water/sewer: site is on town water and sewer (not a well); staff emphasized collaboration

with the Town of Jefferson. Estimated consumption reference: Allegany County's similarly sized splash pad uses about 1.2 million gallons/year (daily rate not provided). Water use notes: the system is not continuous; water runs when users activate/engage features. Drought operations: staff indicated they would follow Town of Jefferson and administration direction, including shutting down during severe drought. Drainage: water would drain via the pad's drains into the town system/water treatment (not a regenerating/recirculating system).

Controls/security: discussion included timers/electronic controls (e.g., preventing operation late at night) and the ability to configure activation delays to reduce rapid repeated triggering; Kevin noted there are cameras at the site. Accessibility/safety: highlighted as suitable for disabled/EC kids; surface described as poured concrete with a slip-resistant rubberized surface, with low liability reported by peer communities. The board heard the staff recommendation and approved via motion made by Vice Chairman Powers and second by Commissioner Killen; vote carried in favor.

Timeline discussed: 3-year window to spend the funds; goal to spread costs across ~2 years, with installation targeted around 2028.

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

**RES 26-6**

9:25 AM - Nick Farmerie, Assistant County Manager & Community Development Director - RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FROM THE ASHE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR THE RIGHT-SIZING OF NC 221 BUSINESS FROM FOUR LANES TO THREE LANES

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Resolution Rightsizing NC 221 Buisness from Four Lanes to Three Lanes](#)

Nick presented a resolution supporting NCDOT initiating a traffic study of US 221 Business (the four-lane segment between West Jefferson and Jefferson) because the roadway crosses two jurisdictions.

Staff explained DOT wants formal support from all affected parties before investing time and resources into the study. The study would determine whether traffic demand warrants keeping four lanes or implementing a "road diet" (three lanes with a center turn lane and repurposed space such as a pedestrian/bike area via restriping).

Clarified that the resolution does not obligate construction; it authorizes data collection/analysis and DOT would return with findings. Board members expressed confusion about why the county is being asked for input on a DOT road, but acknowledged both towns have pursued pedestrian-safety improvements for years. Commissioner Eldreth made a statement about whether the effort is tourism-driven; Chairman McNeill emphasized the intent is traffic calming and pedestrian safety (not bicycle tourism), and that "bike lane" markings may effectively function as a wide shoulder for multiple users. Commissioner Killen made the motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Eldreth seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

**Adopted**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

**RES 26-7**

9:30 AM - Nick Farmerie, Assistant County Manager & Community Development Director - A RESOLUTION OF THE ASHE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS COMMITTING SUPPORT FOR STAFF EFFORTS TO PURSUE THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF

TRANSPORTATION BETTER UTILIZING INVESTMENT TO LEVERAGE DEVELOPMENT (BUILD) GRANT PROGRAM IN THE 2027 GRANT CYCLE.

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Resolution USDOT Build Grant Program 2027 Grant Cycle](#)

*Nick requested approval of a second resolution supporting county staff time to pursue a 2027 USDOT BUILD grant (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development), described as large and complex and likely requiring a year of effort. Rationale for collaboration: small communities lack dedicated grant-writing capacity compared with larger cities, so the towns and county aim to pool effort to submit a competitive application.*

*Nick described an informal committee operating for ~3 months involving the two town managers, COG staff, county staff (including Adam), and Jordan Sellers (Blue Ridge Conservancy) to prepare the application. Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve the resolution. Vice Chairman Powers seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.*

**Adopted**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

[PRES 26-68](#) 9:35 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Ashe County Courthouse HVAC Quote

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Courthouse HVAC Quote](#)

*Adam stated that the buildings HVAC system is 25 years old, and the team recently had trouble with the chiller.*

*One compressor is failing/dying, but the chiller is still running for now. Equipment procurement has long lead times (estimated 6–7 months), creating timing risk heading into summer. Contingency discussed: hope for a cool summer; worst case is renting a supplemental chilling unit if the existing system can't keep up. He said they are working with Daikin to source the new chiller and replacement/upgrade internal building equipment.*

*BAS (Building Automation System) control upgrades would modernize controls by replacing older pneumatic dampers/controls with electronic systems. Current adjustments are labor-intensive (maintenance staff use ladders and ceiling access to make small damper adjustments). Electronic controls are expected to reduce drastic temperature differences between floors and between east/west sides of the building. Cost estimates shared: chiller approximately \$242,000; BAS control upgrades approximately \$319,000. Funds are available due to conservative budgeting; project would likely span the current and next budget year. Adam said that the chiller delivery could take 6–7 months after ordering; physical replacement is expected to be relatively quick. Installation is ideally planned for fall/cooler months to minimize disruption. Some building shutdown may be required during installation, but specific impacted areas are not yet known. Chiller location clarified: outside in the fenced area between the building and the jail, near the generator, which should simplify installation logistics. It was noted that the project is already budgeted and procurement is complete. A motion was made by Commissioner Eldreth to proceed, and it was seconded by Vice Chairman Powers. The group indicated agreement ("all in favor" with confirmations).*

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

[PRES 26-69](#) 9:40 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Riverview Community Center Roof Replacement Change Order

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 Riverview Roof Replacement Change Order 1](#)

*Adam along with Steve Trinkle spoke on the Riverview Community Center roof project findings. Adam stated that during removal of the existing roof/shingles, damaged/rotted plywood was discovered that needs replacement. Five plumbing/septic vent pipes had been covered over and were not routed through the current roof. Background context: the building used to have a flat roof; when a pitched roof was added, it was installed over the existing vents. When opened (after being covered for ~30 years), the area was notably smelly, reinforcing that vents had been terminating in the attic. The proposed change order total: \$10,265. Motion to approve the \$10,265 change order was made by Commissioner Eldreth.*

*Seconded by Commissioner Killen. All were in favor by show of hands.*

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

[PRES 26-70](#) 9:45 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - NC Tri-Share Child Care Program

**Attachments:** [05-04-2026 NC Tri-Share Child Care Program](#)

*Adam opened for Kelsey Wagoner, HR Coordinator who led the discussion about NC TriCare Childcare. Kelsey stated that NC Tri-Care is a state childcare cost-sharing program where the employee pays 1/3, the employer pays 1/3, and the state pays 1/3. Intended for working people who don't qualify for traditional childcare subsidy but still need help; eligibility is 185%–300% of the federal poverty level (by household size). County interest was driven by employee engagement survey feedback showing childcare costs affect hiring/returning from leave, increasing hours, changing jobs, attendance, and tardiness. Program is a pilot with flexibility: the county can start or stop participation at any time if outcomes aren't beneficial. Employees must apply and qualify; participation is not automatically "given." County plans to recommend budgeting for 5 children in the upcoming fiscal year as an initial sample. Local daycare costs were estimated at ~\$900–\$1,200/month; employer share would be ~\$300–\$400 per child per month. For 5 children, estimated county cost discussed as about \$1,500/month. HR (Kelsey) and Adam would manage/oversee participation; employer can pause an employee's participation if there are disciplinary issues until resolved. Adam stated that the County needs to sign up through a third-party administrator called "Tutris," which serves as the middleman for payments between the county, state, childcare centers, and parents. The agreement presented was noted as \$0 cost at this stage; commissioners gave an informal thumbs-up to proceed with signing.*

*Budget decision on how many children to fund (and related selection parameters) will be handled during upcoming budget discussions.*

**No Action Taken**

[PRES 26-71](#) 9:50 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Project Updates

*Adam stated he'd like to make project updates a monthly agenda item since the details go beyond quick announcements. Landfill expansion: pre-construction meeting held April 15; notice to proceed and contracts signed; Baker Construction has started clearing on the right side upon entering, leading toward the new bowl/cell. Landfill operations: public*

should use caution entering/exiting due to increased trucks, equipment, traffic; delays/road closures were discussed but the goal is to avoid them as much as possible. Environmental Services Building: slightly behind the landfill project but still on schedule; contracts signed; projects will no longer align timing-wise going forward. Groundbreaking: aiming for early to mid-May at the health site; needs to be placed on the calendar amid other upcoming ceremonies. EMS base: still early; kickoff meeting planned this week with McGill to set schedule and next steps. Animal control facility: deliverables received late last week (site drawing showing a potential site, plus a budget for grading, utilities, transportation, driveway); Adam and Nick will review and then bring to the board. HVAC: intent to start soon; chiller to be ordered this week to minimize disruptions to office, court, and county operations.

**No Action Taken**

## GENERAL SESSION

### [PRES 26-77](#) ADD-ON Commissioner Eldreth - Water Coolers at Convenience Centers

Commissioner Eldreth shared feedback from convenience center workers requesting a water fountain/cold water access in their buildings. Workers are often on 12-hour shifts and said the buildings get extremely hot, so cold drinking water would help. Because staff handle trash, having water available would also help them wash their hands and keep facilities cleaner. Rental estimate discussed: \$9.50/month to rent a cooler per site. Chairman McNeill called for a vote ("All in favor?"), indicating the motion was moving forward. All were in agreement to move forward with the request.

### VII. Commissioner Comments

### VIII. Announcements

### IX. Executive Session

### X. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Powers made the motion to adjourn at 10:45 am. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

**Approved**

**For:** 4 - Chairperson McNeill, Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth and Commissioner Killen

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**Todd McNeill, Chairman**

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**Missy Seivers  
Clerk to the Board**