

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, July 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

Vice Chairman Powers called the July 20th, 2026 Regular Session Meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Present: 4 - Vice Chairman Jerry D. Powers, Commissioner Mike Eldreth, Commissioner Russell Killen and Commissioner Wes Greene

Absent: 1 - Chairperson Todd McNeill

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

Commissioner Eldreth led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Greene offered the Opening Prayer.

III. Consent Agenda

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

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[MIN 26-21](#) July 6th, 2026 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [7-20-2026 July 6th, 2026 Regular Session Minutes](#)

[MIN 26-22](#) July 6th, 2026 Executive Session Minutes

[MISC 26-22](#) Monthly Tax Report for June 2026

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Monthly Tax Report June 2026](#)

IV. Adoption of Agenda

With the addition of the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Resolution to the related Public Hearing, Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to adopt the Agenda as amended, seconded by Commissioner Killen. All were in agreement.

Adopted

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

V. Public Comment

Vice Chairman Powers opened the floor for the Public Comment portion of today's meeting at 9:03 am.

Kevin Calhoun from Badger Street in Jefferson complained about extreme noise pollution and drunken revelry associated with an immigrant center and nearby housing. He reported that music often plays from noon until 11:00 PM, rattling windows and disturbing

the neighborhood. County Manager Adam Stumb stated he would follow up with Kevin and coordinate with Jefferson Town Manager Shatley to address the noise concerns.

Dr. Melinda Wanzik, representing the athletic booster club, raised concerns about the deteriorating and non-ADA compliant state of the Ashe County High School softball and baseball fields. She highlighted that the lack of parking and distant bathroom facilities are embarrassing for the conference. Dr. Wanzik is scheduled to meet with the school board in August 2026.

No other comments were offered. Vice Chairman Powers closed the Public Comment portion of the meeting at 9:13 AM.

VI. Presentations

PRES 26-112

9:00 AM - PUBLIC HEARING: Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Funds and adoption of the Resolution for the County of Ashe's Application for CDBG-DR Funding for the Commercial District Revitalization Program

Attachments: [7-20-2026 CDBG-DR Public Hearing Notice](#)

Vice Chairman Powers opened the Public Hearing for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) application at 9:18 am. Judson Blevins from the High Country Council of Governments spoke on the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) application. He stated the county intends to apply for \$8,641,000 for a multi-use path and infrastructure project connecting Paddy Mountain Park, downtown West Jefferson, and US 221 Business. No comments were offered by the citizens in attendance. Vice Chairman Powers then closed the Public Hearing. Judson then asked for action on the Resolution for the County of Ashe's Application for CDBG-DR Funding for the Commercial District Revitalization Program. Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to adopt the Resolution, seconded by Commissioner Greene. All were in agreement.

Adopted

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

PRES 26-111

9:05 AM - PUBLIC HEARING: Title XV: Land Usage, CHAPTER 156: RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS and CHAPTER 159: Ashe County Cemetery Ordinance First Reading

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Title XV- Land Usage, Chapter 156- Residential Subdivisions and Chapter 159 -Ashe County Cemetery Ordinance](#)

Assistant County Manager Nick Farmerie explained two proposed amendments to the county's subdivision ordinance and outlined the purpose of a new cemetery ordinance (first reading). For subdivisions, he noted that the changes would update local standards to match the North Carolina Fire Code by requiring private roads to be 20 feet wide and cul-de-sacs to be 70 feet in diameter. In cases where steep terrain makes a full-size cul-de-sac impractical, the fire marshal and planning director could approve alternative turnarounds such as T-turnarounds. He also described a second amendment that would reduce the minimum lot size from one acre to half an acre for properties served by a public or private community utility system. This subdivision ordinance can be acted on immediately.

Nick then introduced the "first reading" of the proposed cemetery ordinance, developed over the past year with the planning board and cemetery committee, which would regulate maintenance of cemeteries located on private property. Two versions were presented—one approved by the planning board and a tabled version differing mainly in the "Right of Entry" section. Because this ordinance requires additional procedural steps, it cannot be adopted until the next meeting, but commissioners and the public were invited to share their thoughts.

The Public Hearing on the two ordinances was opened by Vice Chairman Powers at 9:20 am.

Judy Bare, West Jefferson took the podium and asked for clarification about the lot size reduction. After some discussion Judy stated that she has problems with reducing the size of lots to a half acre in any portion of the county. In her opinion it would overcrowd the area.

Jerry Brown, a West Jefferson resident and member of the cemetery committee, spoke in support of adopting a cemetery ordinance, explaining that the committee has worked on this effort for several years and believes an ordinance is necessary to protect cemeteries across the county. He emphasized that many historic cemeteries—including those containing veterans from the Revolutionary War onward—are at risk, and that abandoned cemeteries in particular need safeguards. The ordinance would give the county clear enforcement guidelines, help educate property owners about their responsibilities, and prevent damage caused by development and certain farming practices. Brown also highlighted the importance of ensuring public and descendant access to cemeteries regardless of property ownership. He noted that the committee has identified 1,218 cemeteries on the county tax map using GPS coordinates, including one recently rediscovered after more than a year of searching. With an estimated 69,000 graves in the county, Brown said the ordinance is essential for protecting these sites and honoring the people who shaped the community.

Leslie Colvard of the Nathan's Creek community spoke in support of reducing the minimum subdivision lot size, explaining that smaller lots would help lower the cost of housing—an issue facing Ashe County as well as much of the country. He noted that decreasing lot size would make new construction more affordable and accessible. Colvard also emphasized that allowing smaller residential lots could help slow the conversion of farmland into housing developments, preserving more of the county's valuable agricultural land. He concluded by reiterating his support for the proposed change.

The County of Ashe Commissioners deems the proposed amendments to be consistent with the Ashe County Comprehensive Plan (2022), as the proposed amendments are supportive of the Plan's priority of maintaining the County of Ashe's natural resources, rural character and attributes of its people.

Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the text-amendment to Ashe County Ordinance, Chapter 156 - Residential Subdivisions. Commissioner Eldreth seconded the motion. All were in agreement.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[PRES](#)
[26-113](#)

9:07 AM - Patty Gambill, Director Emergency Management - PEAK HVAC Contract for Riverview Community Center

Attachments: [7-20-2026 PEAK Heating & Cooling LLC Proposal and Invoice](#)

Patty presented the Board with the \$249,050 contract for their approval with Peak Heating and Cooling LLC for HVAC repairs at Riverview, funded by insurance proceeds. Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Killen. All were in agreement.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[PRES](#)
[26-114](#)

9:10 AM - Patty Gambill, Director Emergency Management - Budget Amendment / Public Buildings - Riverview Community Center

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Budget Amendment Public Buildings Riverview Community Center](#)

Patty presented a separate \$31,498 budget amendment for Riverview bathroom repairs. Patty also stated that this is from insurance proceeds. Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve the budget amendment, seconded by Commissioner Killen. All were in agreement.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[PRES](#)
[26-117](#)

9:12 AM - Kevin Anderson, Director Parks & Recreation - Tennis Court Project Bids & Budget Amendment

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Budget Amendment Parks & Rec Tennis Association Grant](#)

Kevin Anderson presented an update on the Ashe Park tennis court resurfacing project and requested approval for a budget amendment to carry forward \$116,650 from the previous fiscal year. After last year's unsuccessful bid attempts, the county obtained new quotes from local asphalt companies and professional court-sealing contractors. Anderson explained that Padco Excavating was selected to complete the asphalt and fencing work, which includes milling the existing court, installing a new subbase, performing necessary grading, laying new asphalt, and removing and reinstalling the fence with new posts. For the final sealing and striping, the county chose a contractor affiliated with Sealmaster to apply the finishing coat, add both tennis and pickleball lines, reinstall posts, and provide two new commercial-grade tennis nets. Anderson noted that the total project cost is approximately \$102,000, well within the available budget, and asked commissioners for permission to proceed. After some discussion Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve the budget amendment for \$116,650 for the Ashe Park tennis court resurfacing project. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. All were in agreement.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

[PRES](#)
[26-115](#)

9:14 AM - Tracie McMillan, DSS Director - Energy Programs Outreach Plan, NC Citizen Review Panels Newsletter, DSS Statistics for May 2026

Attachments: [7-20-2026 NC Citizens Review Panels](#)
[7-20-2026 Energy Programs Outreach Plan](#)
[7-20-2026 DSS Statistics May 2026](#)

Tracie spoke with commissioners on her work with the Western Region Citizens Review Panel, explaining that the panel is developing recommendations for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to improve child welfare outcomes. She outlined three statewide priorities: expanding mental health support, addressing health-related social needs that affect family stability, and improving timely court proceedings and permanency planning—an area she hopes to focus on because delays in other parts of the judicial district negatively affect children, even though Ashe County itself performs well. She then presented the annual Energy Programs Outreach Plan, which outlines required methods for informing the public about CIP and LIHEAP assistance. After clarifying that outreach does not involve paid advertising but does require staff time, commissioners approved the plan with a motion from Commissioner Eldreth, seconded by Commissioner Killen, all were in favor. She also reviewed current caseload statistics, noting that adult services now handle roughly twice as many cases as child welfare despite having fewer staff, and that adult cases are becoming more complex and demanding. Finally, she informed commissioners that House Bill 686 will provide North Carolina with \$7.8 million for Medicaid expansion work, with Ashe County receiving \$135,000. She is still determining how the county will access those funds but hopes they will help offset recent losses in food and nutrition reimbursement.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

PRES
26-116

9:30 AM - Patricia Calloway, Executive Director Generations Ashe - HCCBG Block Grant Budget revision for FY 2025-2026

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Generations Ashe HCCBG Older Adults Generations Ashe](#)

The director of Generations Ashe, Patricia Calloway thanked commissioners for supporting the organization in the current budget and presented two items related to the Home and Community Care Block Grant. She first reviewed the final revision for last year's funding, explaining that money was shifted between programs—such as moving funds from adult day healthcare into adult daycare and home-delivered meals—to ensure the full allocation was used. She noted that “at the end of this fiscal year, we still had 122 people in our community on our waiting list for home-delivered meals” and described challenges including limited funding, volunteer capacity, and the difficulty of safely delivering hot meals to remote areas. Commissioners asked clarifying questions, and the revision was approved. She then presented the new fiscal year's block grant budget, emphasizing that the total allocation remains under \$300,000 and has increased only \$27,000 over the past decade despite rising costs for food, liability insurance, and in-home aides. This year's allocation is \$5,000 less than last year, with an additional potential cut expected due to state-level reductions. To adapt, more funding is being directed to home-delivered meals while adult daycare will rely more heavily on other sources such as respite funds, veterans benefits, long-term care insurance, and private pay. Commissioners approved the proposed budget. She also updated them on facility issues, reporting repairs to the sprinkler system, multiple HVAC failures requiring costly replacements, and temporary cooling measures in affected areas. Finally, she confirmed that the assisted living facility remains listed for sale at an asking price of \$4.2 million and that operations there have stabilized significantly over the past year. The votes on the budget for FY25/26 and the proposed budget for 26/27 went as follows: FY25/26

motion to approve made by Commissioner Eldreth, seconded by Commissioner Greene, all in favor. FY26/27 motion to approve made by Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Killen, all in favor.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

PRES
26-118

9:40 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Landfill Change Order #2 (Stephen Crawford)

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Landfill Change Order Summary #2 - Change Order](#)

The landfill engineer, Stephen Crawford presented a change order for \$39,137 to address issues with the leachate collection system in phase two. Older pipes have become oval-shaped and restricted, requiring a reconfiguration of the subgrade slope to ensure proper drainage. After a lengthy discussion Commissioner Greene made the motion to approve the change-order, seconded by Commissioner Eldreth. All were in favor.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

PRES
26-120

9:45 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Audit Proposal

Attachments: [7-20-2026 TPSA & Co PA Section 1](#)
[7-20-2026 TPSA & Co PA Proposal Section 2](#)

The board approved a new audit contract with Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams and Company for approximately \$47,000, as longtime auditor Priscilla Norris is stepping back. Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve the audit contract, seconded by Commissioner Greene. All were in agreement.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and Commissioner Greene

PRES
26-119

9:50 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Retirement Recognition for Gerald Houck

Attachments: [7-20-2026 Retirement Info - Gerald Houck](#)

County Manager Adam Stumb recognized Gerald Houck with deep appreciation as he celebrated Gerald's retirement from Ashe County Government. Adam shared that if the county could keep Gerald, they absolutely would. He spoke about Gerald's constant smile, his easy humor, and the way he brightened the office every single day — whether with a funny story or an update on his latest Goodwill treasure found during lunch.

Adam noted that Gerald has been a steady, joyful presence since he joined the county on July 3, 2017, and that his retirement on July 31, 2026 marks the end of a truly meaningful chapter. He emphasized that Gerald's spirit, kindness, and reliability have made a lasting impact on staff and the community.

Gerald expressed how much he loves everyone he's worked with and how much he'll miss

being here. Adam reminded him that he's always welcome — any day, any time — and that the door is wide open if he ever wants to stop by or lend a hand.

Adam concluded by presenting Gerald with his retirement plaque and card, thanking him sincerely for his service, and wishing him a happy, well-earned retirement.

GENERAL SESSION

MISC 26-23 NCACC Voting Delegate Designee

The board noted that the NCACC Conference is scheduled for August, and a voting delegate is required for the upcoming meeting. It was clarified that Todd should not serve as the delegate due to his position within NCACC. Last year's delegate, Commissioner Wes Greene, recommended his colleague Commissioner Russell Killen to serve as this year's (2026) voting delegate. The recommendation was treated as a formal motion, and Commissioner Eldreth provided the second. With no further discussion, the board voted in favor, confirming Russell as the 2026 NCACC voting delegate.

MISC 26-24 2025 Ashe County Employee of the Year

County Manager Adam Stumb presented the 2025 Ashe County Employee of the Year selection, a program developed and organized by Kelsey, who was credited for her work in creating a meaningful, employee-driven recognition process. Throughout the year, staff nominated coworkers for monthly recognition, and those nominations — written by employees themselves — formed the basis for selecting the Employee of the Year.

Adam shared several comments submitted by staff about this year's honoree, Gerald Houck. Employees praised Gerald for his willingness to help coworkers and the public, his friendly and welcoming attitude, and his reliability — noting he arrives early even in bad weather and keeps the building consistently clean. One nomination highlighted his role as "Santa's helper," bringing joy to children and adults alike. Staff described him as an "unsung hero" who deserves recognition for his hard work and kindness.

Gerald was invited forward to receive a gift basket as part of the award. Adam joked that he hadn't touched anything inside, encouraging Gerald to check with Kelsey to be sure. The board expressed their appreciation for Gerald's service and contributions, and Gerald thanked everyone, promising he'd be back to visit.

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to adjourn the July 20, 2026 Regular Session meeting at 10:43 am. Commissioner Greene seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Approved

For: 4 - Vice Chairman Powers, Commissioner Eldreth, Commissioner Killen and
Commissioner Greene

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