

Ashe County

150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, March 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**

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 Greene led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Killen offered the opening Prayer.

III. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Killen made the motion to adopt the March 3rd, 2025 Agenda. Commissioner Greene seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Adopted

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

IV. Consent Agenda

[MIN 25-8](#) February 17th, 2025 Regular Session Minutes

Attachments: [3-3-2025 February 17th, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)

[APP 25-5](#) Planning Board Reappointment for Kelly Carson

V. Public Comment

Darlene Sekerak, from Grassy Creek spoke saying "I am president and spokesperson for the Democratic Women of Ashe County. We are here to express our outrage at Judge Jefferson Griffin, a current Judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals, and his relentless challenge to rewrite the outcomes of the November election for a seat on the NC Supreme Court. He wants to overturn his 734-vote loss to Justice Allison Riggs. In his effort to win, he is shamefully seeking to throw out the lawful votes of over 60,000 voters across NC. And in this process, he has also targeted 78 members of our community, our neighbors, saying that their votes should not count for his race. The state election board and a federal judge have dismissed Griffin's argument that missing driver's license or Social Security numbers should invalidate votes. State election officials have made clear that there are many legitimate reasons for this information to be missing. North Carolina law requires that people verify their identity as these voters have done. Yet Griffin has tied up the courts in one appeal after another for four months and continues to drag out this process preventing the certification of Justice Riggs' election. The idea that a candidate who loses an election can select subgroups of voters who voted legally and whose votes counted for other races, should not count for his race simply so he can win, makes a mockery of our democracy. Who does that? How can we trust a judge who does that? Our objection is not partisan. Members of our community who are caught up in this attack on our right to vote include 14 democrats, 30 republicans, 33 unaffiliated, and 1 libertarian. These 78 registered voters did nothing

wrong. They are innocent members of our community participating and meeting their civic responsibility by voting. We have no idea how any of these individuals voted, but they have every right to have their votes counted for this Judicial seat.

This election is the only election across the entire United States that has not yet been certified because of Griffin's persistent and hollow court filings and appeals. From the perspective of many, this is part of a systematic process to gain partisan control of the courts, a branch of government that by design should be non-partisan and impartial. We should all be outraged. We want to thank North Carolina Senator Phil Berger, the Senate President Pro Tempore, for his rebuke of this travesty and hope that other elected officials and individuals will have the courage to follow his lead. We need to speak out for our neighbors and condemn all efforts to undermine the fundamental tenant of democracy - our right to vote in free and fair elections."

Dick Greenwood, Lansing spoke saying "I am the Interim Chair of the Ashe County Democratic Party. I concur with Darlene Sekerak's statement and, for both of us, would like to thank our local Board of Elections, staff, and volunteers for working diligently to make sure we have fair, friendly, and accurate elections here in Ashe County. In my remaining time, I would like to read the names of 40 of the 78 Ashe residents whose votes Justice Griffin would have thrown out."He then read list of 40 names.

Ben Massey from Grassy Creek spoke saying "I'd like to continue reading the remaining names." and he completed reading the list.

VI. Presentations

[PRES 25-31](#) 9:04 AM - Danny Houck, Chief Deputy ACSO - Surplusing Equipment

Attachments: [3-3-2025 ACSO Email Request](#)

Danny Houck, Chief Deputy ACSO was present today to request that the County surplus an old speed radar machine and offer it to Haywood County. After some discussion Commissioner Eldreth made the motion to approve surplusing the old radar machine and giving it to Haywood County. Commissioner Killen seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

[PRES 25-32](#) 9:08 AM - Tracie McMillan, DSS Director - Disaster Case Management

Tracie McMillan, DSS Director and Alyssa Triplett, DSS Disaster Case Management were present today to discuss the achievements of Disaster Case Management. Alyssa spoke on the 45 households that have been transitioned into campers to date. Tracy stated that no FEMA trailers have been sent to Ashe County. There are 67 households actively engaged in Disaster Case Management. Alyssa said they are currently working actively with 67 households. She also said that out of 427 households assessed for unmet needs, 258 of them have successfully had their needs met. Tracie also stated that funding will continue for Disaster Case Management through a grant with NCWorks.

No Action Taken

[PRES 25-33](#) 9:15 AM - Adam Stumb, County Manager - Introduction of Community Development Director / Assistant County Manager

Adam Stumb, County Manager introduced Nick Farmerie who is now the new Community

Development Director and Assistant County Manager. Nick is a graduate from Appalachian State University and previously worked in the Village of Alamance. He has now relocated here to live in Ashe County.

PRES 25-30 9:20 AM - Lonnie Jones, Cemetery Committee - Discussion on NC Cemetery Laws

Attachments: [3-3-2025 NC Cemetary Laws](#)

Lonnie Jones, Jerry Brown and other members of the Cemetery Committee were present today to discuss NC Cemetery Laws. Also via video from Raleigh, NC Office of State Archaeology Melissa Timo. Others present were Sheriff Phil Howell, John Kilby, County Attorney, Chris Lambert, Tax Administrator and others. Topics discussed were possibly writing to let land owners know that there is a cemetery on their property that might be impacted by certain activities and that the cemetery may not have been listed on their deed. It has been recorded with the city/county/state/genealogy society/library/etc. here: (coordinates, map, etc.).

Any facts known about the cemetery- ex. size, age, community, type of cemetery, etc. To make sure they don't run into issues, know that all cemeteries are protected under NC general statutes. Inform land owners that activities like removing or burying headstones, dumping debris, allowing equipment or live stock to damage, etc. can be class H or class I felonies. A lengthy discussion was held and Cemetery committee members had photos of graves/cemeteries that had sustained damage from landowners here in the county. Melissa Timo from the Raleigh, NC Office of State Archaeology gave a lengthy presentation on the issue and her role. The biggest goal moving forward will be for commissioners to create County Ordinances to protect Ashe County Cemeteries. Sheriff Howell spoke on creating the ordinance, drafting letters to land owners and that for law enforcement it is key that proof be provided that land owners "knowingly, willingly & maliciously" destroyed cemeteries, grave stones, etc. Other county ordinances in this regard are going to be looked at, Cemetery Committee members are to get with Melissa Timo and bring an ordinance draft back to commissioners. All were in agreement that steps need to be taken.

No Action Taken

GENERAL SESSION

VII. Commissioner Comments

VIII. Announcements

IX. Executive Session

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Killen made the motion to adjourn the March 3rd, 2025 meeting at 11:45 AM. Commissioner Eldreth seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Approved

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

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