

**MINUTES**  
**WATAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025**

The Watauga County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting, as scheduled, on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 5:30 P.M. in the Commissioners' Board Room located in the Watauga County Administration Building, Boone, North Carolina.

Chairman Eggers called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. The following were present:

PRESENT:	Braxton Eggers, Chairman
	Todd Castle, Vice-Chairman
	Emily Greene, Commissioner
	Tim Hodges, Commissioner
	Ronnie Marsh, Commissioner
	Nathan Miller, County Attorney
	Deron Geouque, County Manager
	Anita J. Fogle, Clerk to the Board

Commissioner Hodges opened with a prayer and Commissioner Greene led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Eggers presented the March 18, 2025, regular meeting and closed session minutes.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the March 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to approve the March 18, 2025, closed session minutes as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Eggers called for additions and/or corrections to the April 1, 2025, agenda.

County Manager Geouque requested to add the following:

Add under Library Matters:

D. Proposed Uniform Guidance Procurement Policy for NC - Mr. Deron Geouque

After Library Matters:

- Proposed Proclamation Designating April 2025 as “Sexual Assault Awareness Month”
- Proposed Proclamation Designating April 27 through May 3, 2025, as Resilient & Thriving Communities Week

Expand Agenda Item 9 to Tax Matters adding the following items:

- B. Unpaid Real Estate Tax Bills
- C. Proposed Resolution Establishing the Watauga County Board of Equalization & Review
- D. Board of Equalization and Review (E&R) Schedule

Add Boards and Commissions Under Miscellaneous Administrative Matter to include a first reading of Mr. Jeff Greene for the Watauga Medical Center Board of Trustees.

County Attorney Miller requested to add that 29 CVS 117, Lisa Miller vs. \_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_ to be discussed under Attorney/Client.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to approve the April 1, 2025, agenda as amended.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **LIBRARY MATTERS**

### ***A. Proposed Proclamation for National Library Week***

Monica Caruso, Watauga County Library, presented and read a proposed Proclamation for National Library Week.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to adopt the proclamation as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### ***B. Library Renovation Report***

Ms. Monica Caruso stated that plans were now for the Library to renovate the space they have rather than add onto the building. A grant application was submitted and requests have been made to the County through the Capital Improvement Plan to support the project. An estimate has been received from VPC Builders as well. Ms. Caruso introduced Mr. John Arnaud, Architect, who

presented the plan for the renovation. The report was given for information only and, therefore, no action was required.

***C. Proposed Capital Project Ordinance for Library Renovation Project***

County Manager Geouque presented a proposed Project Ordinance for the Establishment and Maintenance of Funds for the Library Renovation Project which was necessary as the project would span more than one fiscal year.

Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the project ordinance as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

***D. Proposed Uniform Guidance Procurement Policy for North Carolina***

County Manager Geouque presented a proposed Uniform Guidance Procurement Policy for North Carolina as required by the grant for the Library renovation project.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Commissioner Eggers, moved to approve the project ordinance as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

**PROPOSED PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING APRIL 2025 AS “SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH”**

Ms. Kellie Bass, Prevention Outreach Manager with OASIS, Inc. (Opposing Abuse with Service, Information and Shelter) presented and read a proposed proclamation naming April 2025 as “Sexual Assault Awareness Month” in Watauga County.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to adopt the proclamation as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

**PROPOSED PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING APRIL 27 THROUGH MAY 3, 2025, AS RESILIENT & THRIVING COMMUNITIES WEEK**

Ms. Jessica Yates, Policy/Prevention Committee with the Watauga Compassionate Community Initiative, presented and read a proclamation naming April 27 through May 3, 2025, as “Resilient & Thriving Communities Week” in Watauga County.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to adopt the proclamation as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### **PROPOSED CHANGE ORDER FOR COMPLEX FENCING REPAIRS**

Mr. Robert Marsh, Watauga County Maintenance Director, requested approval of a change order in the amount of \$14,857 for fence repairs on ball fields. The change order was to allow for the addition of two (2) gates and about forty feet of fencing that was open and would now be enclosed.

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Chairman Eggers, moved to approve the change order from Mountain Fence and Deck in the amount of \$14,857.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA SENATE BILL 248**

On behalf of Ms. Amy Shook, Watauga County Register of Deeds, who had a prior commitment, Commissioner Hodges presented and read a proposed resolution in support of North Carolina Senate Bill 248. The Bill would alleviate the burdens placed on adopted individuals by allowing them to obtain their birth records from their local Register of Deeds.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to adopt the resolution as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES MATTERS:**

#### ***A. Request for Public Safety Radio System Civil, Tower, & Construction Work***

Mr. Will Holt, Emergency Services Director, requested authorization for ETS to perform the civil, engineering, and existing tower assessment work in the amount of \$621,460.25 for the public safety radio system. The scope of work would cover seven towers with the largest expense being the construction of the Rich Mountain tower. Adequate funds were budgeted to cover the expense.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to authorize the expenditure of \$621,460.25 to ETS for civil, engineering, and existing tower assessment work as presented by Mr. Holt.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

## **B. Hurricane Helene Update**

Mr. Will Holt, Emergency Services Director, provided the following Hurricane Helene update:

*“I would like to offer a brief update on the status of recovery in Watauga County from the Emergency Services perspective. Before going any further, I would like to personally express my deep gratitude to the multitude of individuals and organizations that have stepped up to lead the way in various aspects of recovery including rebuilding of our citizen’s personal property and businesses. A few key points:*

- *County staff continue to work with our insurance provider on coverage limits and settlements. We have started to receive determination letters and coverage approvals for several properties with clarification requested on some projects.*
- *Right-of-Way debris removal continues and new debris placement ended March 2<sup>nd</sup>. An extension has been discussed for the ROW process due to the contractor needing more time to remove what is existing in the ROW now.*
- *Waterway and private property debris removal operations with the Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been approved and have begun. Aerostar and TetraTech are leading the intake process, Right of Entry acquisition, and site assessments for the Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) program. Bering Strait is the prime contractor for the actual debris removal work.*
- *Staff completed over 600 assessments on waterways to give multiple State and federal partners access to raw data to determine eligibility for Category A (USACE debris removal), EWP, or other potential programs being discussed. At time of this report, a total of 412 sites have been approved by FEMA. We appreciate the incredible work of our Soil and Water staff and those who partnered with them in this process.*
- *The OSBM/NCEM Private Road and Bridge program has been partially funded through HB47. This program is designed to duplicate the success seen in the southwest part of the State during the 2022 TS Fred floods, however continued funding will be critical to long term success.*
- *Hagerty Consulting is on the ground and working with staff to complete PA projects*
- *As a point of success, DSA and the DRC teams have largely completed their work in Watauga County but will have staff available for any issues that arise. The DRC is transitioning to a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) as FEMA continues to plan for long-term recovery. Teams registered thousands of individuals and helped put more than \$19M at time of report into the hands of our citizens to begin their recovery.*
- *The deadline for organizations to apply for Public Assistance (PA) and individuals to apply for assistance (IA) have both been extended to April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025*

*The Emergency Services Department is grateful for the partnership with our local, State, and federal partners specifically as they focus efforts to get money flowing into our community to restore what was lost and also build an even more resilient future.”*

The report was given for information only; therefore, no action was required at this time.

## **TAX MATTERS**

### ***A. Tax Management Associates, Inc., Business Personal Property Audit Services Contract***

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, requested approval of additional funds in the amount \$23,400 to Tax Management Associates for property auditing services. The amount was listed in the budget as \$2,600 and should have been listed at \$26,000. Once the audits were completed the additional revenue would be received to cover the additional expense. The additional funds would come from the administrative contingency fund.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve the additional amount of \$23,400 to Tax Management Associates for property auditing services.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### ***B. Unpaid Real Estate Tax Bills***

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, requested authorization to advertise the listing of delinquent tax bills that were liens on real property. Mr. Rash stated that, per the County Attorney, he would also check the ad rates with the High Country Press.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to order the Tax Administrator to advertise the liens as requested.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### ***C. Proposed Resolution Establishing the Watauga County Board of Equalization & Review***

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, discussed the scheduling of the FY 2025 Board of Equalization and Review (E&R). The Board may create a special Board of Equalization and Review that will serve this spring. In previous years, the Board of E&R incorporated the County Manager as an alternate member. A proposed resolution was presented for consideration should the Board wish to appoint itself and the County Manager (as an alternate member) to the Board of E&R.

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to adopt the Resolution Establishing the Watauga County Board of Equalization and Review as the five-member County Commissioners, each having one vote, and the County Manager, to serve as an alternate member

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### ***D. Board of Equalization and Review (E&R) Schedule***

Mr. Tyler Rash, Tax Administrator, stated that the recommended convening date for the Board of Equalization and Review was Thursday, April 24, 2025, and the Adjournment was recommended

for Friday, May 9, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. Mr. Rash requested meeting dates for the Board of E&R be set as well.

After discussion, Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to:

- set the convening date as April 24, 2025 at 9:00 A.M. in the Commissioners Conference Room
- set the adjournment date as May 9, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. in the Commissioners Conference Room
- Schedule Board of E&R meeting dates for April 28 & 29, and May 5 & 6, 2025, from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. as needed in the Commissioners Conference Room

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### **MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

#### ***A. Proposed Valle Crucis School Change Order #5***

County Manager Geouque requested approval of Change Order #5 for the Valle Crucis Elementary School in the amount of \$39,488.12. The County Manager stated that the County was still running a negative change order amount and the adoption of this change order will bring the amount to \$246,111.29.

Chairman Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to adopt Change Order #5 for Valle Crucis School as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

#### ***B. Resolution to Partner with The Town of Boone Establishing a Bridge to Link County and Town Properties Located at Brookshire Park and Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex***

County Manager Geouque presented a proposed resolution that supports partnering with the Town of Boone regarding building a bridge at the Brookshire Park and Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex connecting to the Town's property.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Greene, moved to adopt the resolution as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

#### ***C. Resolution to approve North Carolina Cashflow Loan Agreement and Promissory Note***

County Manager Geouque requested approval of a resolution for the North Carolina Cashflow Loan Agreement and Promissory Note. The program would allow the County to use the monies

to front payment of Hurricane Helene damages until FEMA reimbursements are received. The County was currently eligible for \$895,477.60 with a 0% interest rate. The loan was interest free and would be a significant tool in the County's cashflow management.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to adopt the resolution as presented.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

***D. Proposed Amendment to SDR Contract***

County Manager Geouque state that SDR, the County's contractor for right-of-way debris removal, had requested an increase in the "not to exceed" amount of their contract from \$2 million to \$3.8 million. During discussion as to the reason for the large increase in the "not to exceed" amount, Commissioner Marsh expressed concerns that the County would be billed the full amount. County Manager Geouque stated that the projected amount at the beginning of the project was \$5.3 million and Debris Tech was monitoring to ensure that SDR was only billing for time worked.

After discussion, Chairman Eggers, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to approve to increase the "not to exceed" amount by an additional \$1.8 million in the SDR contract for debris removal.

VOTE: Aye-4(Eggers, Castle, Greene, Hodges)  
Nay-1(Marsh)

***E. Public Hearing Request to Allow Citizen Comment on the Potential Repealing of the Fire Appendices***

County Manager Geouque stated that, per commissioner request, a public hearing has been requested for May 6, 2025, to allow for citizen comment on the potential to repeal the fire appendices.

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to schedule a public hearing on May 6, 2025, at 5:30 P.M. to allow for citizen comment on the potential to repeal the fire appendices.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

***F. April Meeting Schedule***

County Manager Geouque recommended, due to the upcoming holiday, cancelling the second meeting in April. Should a meeting be necessary, a special called meeting could be scheduled. If canceled, the next regular meeting would be on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 5:30 P.M.



Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to cancel the April 15, 2025 meeting.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### ***G. Announcements***

County Manager Geouque announced the following:

- Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute (CCC&TI) invites the Board to attend their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sunset Celebration on Tuesday, April 29, 2025 from 5:00 to 7:00 P.M. at the Watauga Campus Student Services Center located on Community College Drive, Boone. Anita will be happy to RSVP on your behalf.
- The UNC School of Government will present an Ethics for Elected Officials course via Zoom on Thursday, May 22, 2025, from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. The course will be live and will be broadcast in the Commissioners' Board Room. The course is required to be taken by all Commissioners by December 2025. A group registration will be done for those who plan to attend in the Board Room and separate registrations will be done for those who will need to view it from a different location. Please let Anita know if you can attend.

### ***H. Boards and Commissions***

County Manager Geouque stated that Mr. Jeff Greene was unanimously approved to be submitted for consideration of appointment to the Watauga Medical Center Board of Trustees. This was a first reading and, therefore, no action was required.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

At 6:46 P.M., Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to enter Closed Session to discuss Attorney/Client Matters, per G. S. 143-318.11(a)(3), including discussion of 29 CVS 117, and Land Acquisition, per G. S. 143-318.11(a)(5)(i).

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

Commissioner Greene, seconded by Commissioner Marsh, moved to resume the open meeting at 7:35 P.M.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

At 7:35 P.M. Chairman Eggers declared a recess.

At 8:19 P.M., Commissioner Greene, seconded by Vice-Chairman Castle, moved to reconvene the meeting.

At 8:19 P.M., Commissioner Marsh, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to re-enter Closed Session to continue to discuss Attorney/Client Matters, per G. S. 143-318.11(a)(3), including discussion of 29 CVS 117, and Land Acquisition, per G. S. 143-318.11(a)(5)(i).

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

Vice-Chairman Castle, seconded by Commissioner Hodges, moved to resume the open meeting at 9:36 P.M.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

### **ADJOURN**

Commissioner Hodges, seconded by Chairman Marsh, moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:37 P.M.

VOTE: Aye-5  
Nay-0

Braxton Eggers, Chairman

ATTEST: Anita J. Fogle, Clerk to the Board