



**Rutherford County Office Building
289 N. Main Street
Rutherfordton, NC 28139**

Rutherford County

Board of Commissioners

Minutes of January 5, 2026

**Monday, January 5, 2026
6:00 PM**

I. Call to Order

Chairman King called the January 5, 2026 meeting of the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners to order.

Present: Chairman Bryan King, Vice Chairman Alan Toney, Commissioner Michael Benfield, Commissioner Hunter Haynes, and Commissioner Donnie Haulk.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Deborah Keller and Mr. Lazarus Margolin led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Agenda Approval

Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the agenda. Vice Chairman Toney seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

II. Public Comments

Ms. Dana Davis, an employee of the Rutherford County Social Services' Department, spoke to the Board regarding problems in this department which has resulted in a mass exodus of employees. Ms. Davis asked if salaries of those employees could be used for retention bonuses for those employees who remain.

Ms. Deborah Keller introduced herself as an Independent candidate for County Commissioner. She will be collecting signatures for the next while in order to have her name on the upcoming ballot. This is required for those who are Independent candidates.

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Ms. Anita McKinney said the employees who have remained at DSS are having to assume all the work that must be done. The staff is not compensated enough for the level of work required.

Ms. Ashley Earle who is a supervisor in Child Protective Services at DSS said all four of her employees left during August and September 2025. Caseloads are higher than they should be which is very stressful.

At the request of Commissioner Haulk, Social Services Director Delores Hunt addressed the Board regarding the aforementioned issues.

Ms. Hunt said life balance is an issue because the department is mandated to provide 24/7 services. A study is underway that will be presented to County Manager addressing salaries of employees.

III. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice Chairman Toney seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

Consent Agenda Items approved were:

- A. ID-25-4353 Minutes of December 1, 2025 County Commissioners' Meeting
- B. ID-25-4354 Minutes of December 11, 2025 Special County Commissioners' Meeting 1
- C. ID-25-4355 Tax Refunds and Releases
 - Refund amount totaling \$2,071.69
 - Releases greater than \$100 totaling \$783.47
 - Releases less than \$100 totaling \$169.64
- D. ID-25- 4205 Rutherford County Regionalization Study Report

IV. Commissioners/Appointments

A. ID-25-4360 Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting

Chairman King recognized Finance Director Paula Roach and her staff. The County received notification that the County's CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 qualified for the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. This is the County's thirty-sixth consecutive year to achieve this award.

B. ID-25-4359 Appointment to Forest City Board of Planning and Adjustment Representing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

A vacancy occurred on the Forest City Board of Planning and Adjustment as a representative of the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

In 2004 the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners deferred the appointment of members to this board to the Town of Forest City. In the meantime, the Forest City Unified Development Ordinance has been updated, and the updated ordinance does not address deferment.

The vacancy was advertised, and applications were accepted. Ms. Linda Greene applied for appointment. At their December meeting, the Forest City Council approved the appointment of Ms. Greene by the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners.

Vice Chairman Toney moved to appoint Ms. Greene to the Forest City Board of Planning and Adjustment Representing the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to a term ending June 30, 2028. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

C. ID-25-4358 Appointment to Farmland Preservation Advisory Board

Two vacancies exist on the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board due to time limitations. Mr. Richard Washburn has applied to fill one of the terms on this Board. Vacancies on this board have been advertised and applications accepted.

Commissioner Haynes moved to appoint Mr. Richard Washburn to the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board to a term ending December 31, 2028. Vice Chairman Toney seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

D. ID-25-4357 Appointment of Chairman of 2026 Board of Equalization and Review

Appointments to the 2026 Board of Equalization and Review are current; however, a resolution adopted by the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners in 2017 states that each year the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners shall designate a member of the current Board of Commissioners so appointed as chairperson of the Board of Equalization and Review. Commissioner Benfield was appointed as a member of the Board of Equalization and Review.

Vice Chairman Toney moved to appoint Commissioner Benfield as Chairman of the 2026 Rutherford County Board of Equalization and Review. Commissioner Haynes seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

E. ID-25-4367 Resolution Regarding Plat Review Officers

County Attorney Richard Williams told the Board that North Carolina General Statute 47-30.2 requires the Board of Commissioners to appoint plat review officers whose responsibilities include reviewing land plats to determine whether these plats meet recording requirements. A request was received that the Board approve a resolution appointing Doug Barrick (Rutherfordton), Wendy Burch (Rutherfordton), and Will Stroupe (Spindale) as Plat Review Officers for Rutherford County,

Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the resolution. Commissioner Haynes seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute §47-30.2 requires the Board of Commissioners of Rutherford County to adopt a resolution to designate one or more persons as a Review Officer to review each map or plat required to be submitted for review before the map or plat is presented to the Register of Deeds for recording; and

WHEREAS, each of the individuals named herein are experienced in mapping and land records management and qualified to serve as a Review Officer and it is desired that each be so appointed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners appoints Doug Barrick, Wendy Burch and Will Stroupe, pursuant to N. C. Gen. Stat. §47-30.2, as Review Officers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each plat review officer so appointed shall review all plats (except as exempted by statute) prior to recording, and if the plats meet the statutory requirements for recording, affix to the plats a certificate in substantially the following form:

State of North Carolina
County of Rutherford

I, _____, Review Officer of Rutherford County, certify that the map or plat to which this certification is affixed meets all statutory requirements for recording.

Review Officer

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the County of Rutherford has caused this instrument to be signed in its corporate name by its Chairman, attested by its Clerk to the Board, and its corporate Seal affixed, this 5th day of January, 2026.

COUNTY OF RUTHERFORD

By: _____
Bryan A. King, Chairman

Attest:

Hazel Haynes, Clerk to the Board

RES 26-041

V. New Business

A. ID-25-4363 Budget Amendments – January 2026

Finance Director Paula Roach presented budget amendments for the Board's consideration.

Commissioner Haulk moved to approve the budget amendments. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

**Budget Amendments
January 5, 2026**

	Expense	Revenue
GENERAL FUND		
Sheriff - Shop with a Cop	\$ 8,549	
Sheriff - Pink Patch Project	\$ 191	
Sheriff - Donations		\$ 8,740
*donations received		
Sheriff - Equipment Purchased with Seizure Funds	\$ 10,991	
Unauthorized Substance Tax Distributions		\$ 10,991
*distributions received		
Detention - Inmate Education	\$ 2,000	
Detention - Donation		\$ 2,000
*donation received to provide inmate education to support workforce readiness and reduce recidivism		
Library - Audio Visual Supplies	\$ 1,335	
Library - Donations		\$ 1,335
*donations received for Yoto players		
DSS FUND		

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	Expense	Revenue
Disaster Adult Essential Services Program	\$ 15,000	
Disaster Child Welfare Essential Services Program	\$ 100,000	
Disaster Adult Essential Services Program Revenues		\$ 15,000
Disaster Child Welfare Essential Services Program Revenues		\$ 100,000
*additional funding received		
GRANT FUND		
Sheriff - Equipment	\$ 6,652	
Gateway Wellness Foundation		\$ 6,652
*grant to purchase AED equipment for four road patrol vehicles		
Sheriff - STAR Program	\$ 330	
Sheriff - Donations STAR Program		\$ 330
*donations received to support STAR program		
DEBT SERVICE FUND		
Debt Service Payments	\$ 4	
Fund Balance Appropriated - County Debt Service		\$ 4
*appropriate debt service payments for Year 1 of NC TS Helene Cash Flow Loans		
TS HELENE DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY FUND		
TDA Welcome Center Contents and Improvements	\$ 185,142	
OSBM Grant - TS Helene Capital Grants		\$ 185,142
*grant received for TDA contents and renovations		

B. ID-25-4356 Budget Calendar 2026-2027

Finance Director Roach also presented a proposed budget calendar for the 2026-2027 budget.

Vice Chairman Toney moved to approve the calendar as presented. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

C. ID-25-4364 Firefighters Monument

Chairman King said the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc., is requesting the County's consent to relocate the Firefighters' Monument it owns from the Courthouse to its permanent location at ICC near the Emergency Services Training Center. The Association has paid for all costs for the monument and will pay for the move. There is no more space at its current location. The North Carolina Historical Commission approved the new site on June 10, 2025. A resolution approving the relocation of the monument was provided for the Board's consideration.

Vice Chairman Toney moved to approve the resolution. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

A Resolution to Approve Relocation of Firefighter's Monument

WHEREAS, in 1973, the Rutherford County Volunteer Fireman's Association (subsequently renamed as the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association), a North Carolina non-profit corporation, was organized for the purpose of coordinating and assisting all volunteer fire departments in Rutherford County, to promote the welfare, training, and equipping of all firefighters, and assist and support firefighters in Rutherford County in their efforts to serve the public, and which was reorganized in 2016 as the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc., a North Carolina non-profit corporation, which continues the same functions and duties, and which assumed the ownership of all assets of the Association; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association raised funds and paid for the creation of a monument "in memory, honor and tribute of the numerous citizens of this county who now serve and who have served in the past in the fire service throughout" Rutherford County (the "Firefighters Monument") for placement in a location suitable to honor firefighters in Rutherford County; and

WHEREAS, until such time as suitable location specific for firefighters with space to honor additional names in the future could be identified, established and completed, the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association requested the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners permit the placement of the Firefighters Monument on the lawn of the Rutherford County Courthouse on land owned by Rutherford County; and

WHEREAS, it was the intent of the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association to continue and maintain ownership of the Firefighters Monument and to relocate the Firefighters Monument to a suitable site to honor current and future firefighters in Rutherford County once such a site could be identified; and

WHEREAS, on May 3, 2004, the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a motion to "support a monument on the courthouse lawn which would be placed there by the Firefighters' Association to honor those who have served in the fire service of Rutherford County" contingent upon approval of the design and placement of the monument; and

WHEREAS, on June 10, 2004, John Condrey, the County Manager, reported those plans had been shared with and approved by the Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, on July 22, 2004, the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association purchased the Firefighters' Monument from Riverhill Monument Company, Inc., for its creation and placement on the courthouse lawn no later than October 3, 2004; and

WHEREAS, the Firefighters' Monument was subsequently placed on the courthouse lawn; and

WHEREAS, it was the agreement of the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association and Rutherford County for the Firefighters Monument to remain the property of the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association (now the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc.) and

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for it to be placed on the courthouse lawn until such time as the Firefighters Monument could be relocated to a more suitable site with sufficient space to honor current and future firefighters but this agreement was never reduced to writing; and

WHEREAS, the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association never presented the Firefighters Monument as a gift and Rutherford County never accepted the Firefighters Monument as a gift but both the County and the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association (now the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc.) have always recognized and continue to recognize the monument as being the sole property of the Rutherford County Firefighters' Association; and

WHEREAS, the courthouse lawn is no longer suitable for the Firefighters Monument since the existing monument no longer has space to engrave the names of any additional firefighters the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc., may seek to honor; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the Rutherford County Emergency Services Training Facility (the "Training Facility") was completed and opened on the campus of Isothermal Community College for the training of firefighters and other emergency responders in Rutherford County; and

WHEREAS, the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc., has identified the proper and prominent location it has long desired for the Firefighters Monument on a central circular drive on the campus of Isothermal Community College, the same college where the Training Facility is located and where firefighters and other emergency responders, their families and loved ones, and the general public can provide the memory, honor and tribute due to those citizens who have protected the public through fire protection services, and where space for the honoring of additional firefighters will be provided; and

WHEREAS, the new location for the Firefighters Monument is of similar prominence, honor, visibility, availability and access to the general public and of greater prominence to those wishing to honor firefighters than its present location on property serving the state court system because of the new location's public prominence on a highly attended campus hosting public events and concerts, its ability to honor future firefighters with space for additional monuments and plaques, and due to its proximity on the same campus to the Training Facility in which firefighters and other first responders visit in the line of duty and to which their friends and loved ones and the general public associate with the courage and service of firefighters in Rutherford County; and

WHEREAS, the new location for the Firefighters Monument is also located within Rutherford County the same as its current location; and

WHEREAS, on June 10, 2025, the North Carolina Historical Commission unanimously approved the relocation of the Firefighters Monument from the lawn of the Rutherford County Courthouse to the campus of Isothermal Community College, along with the space necessary to place an additional monument necessary to honor new and additional firefighters; and

WHEREAS, all funds for the creation of the Firefighters Monument, for its placement at its temporary location on the courthouse lawn, for the new permanent location for the monument on the same campus of Isothermal Community College as the Training Facility, and for the cost of its relocation were and will be paid by the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY THAT, the request of the Rutherford County Firefighters Association, to which the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc., has succeeded, to remove the Firefighters Monument from the lawn of the Rutherford County Courthouse for the purpose of relocating the monument to the campus of Isothermal Community College as

previously approved by the North Carolina Historical Commission is hereby approved.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY THAT the 2004 agreement between Rutherford County and the Rutherford County Firefighters Association, to which the Rutherford County Fire/Rescue Association, Inc., has succeeded, for the Firefighters Monument to continue to be owned by the Association and for Rutherford County to agree for the Firefighters Monument to be relocated to such location and at such time as shall be requested by the Association, is hereby ratified.

ADOPTED this the 5th day of January, 2026.

RES 26-042

D. ID-25-4362 Renewing Agreement with CSG Forte

Information Technology Director Jai Doherty presented an auto renewing agreement with CSG Forte for payment processing and collection service for the Board's consideration. This would work in collaboration with OpenGov which is the newly purchased inspection software for Building Inspections.

Commissioner Haulk moved to approve the contract. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

VI. Closed Session

A. ID-25-4366 Personnel NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6)

At 6:43 P.M. Commissioner Benfield moved to go into Closed Session for a discussion regarding personnel. The County Manager, the Clerk to the Board, and the County Attorney, would be included in the session. Vice Chairman Toney seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

6:43 P.M. - The Board went into Closed Session.

6:50 P.M. - The Board returned to Regular Session.

Commissioner Haynes moved to acknowledge receipt of the written notice dated December 5, 2025 by Mr. Steve Garrison to terminate his Employment Agreement without cause effective February 3, 2026. He further moved that pursuant to Section 11.B. of said Agreement and by vote of the Board of Commissioners, Rutherford County waives the requirement of written notice being at least 120 days in advance and accept the effective date as February 3, 2026. Vice Chairman Toney seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

VII. Adjournment

At 6:55 P.M. Vice Chairman Toney made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:

Ayes: Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes and Commissioner Haulk.

Noes: None

Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Vice Chairman, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Clerk, Board of Commissioners