



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

**Rutherford County  
Board of Commissioners  
Minutes of February 2, 2026**

**Monday, February 2, 2026 6:00 P**

**I. Call to Order**

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Chairman King called the February 2, 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**

Rutherfordton Town Manager Doug Barrick 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**

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Ms. Lori Hardin spoke regarding the proposed overdevelopment of land in the Bill's Creek community. She expressed concern about the potential construction of approximately 300 homes on a limited number of acres and noted that the existing Mobile Home Park ordinance does not specifically address this type of development. Water availability remains a significant concern for Ms. Hardin.

Spindale Town Manager Scott Weber spoke on the retirement of County Manager Steve Garrison, noting that it is rare to find a colleague who is also a true friend and mentor. He expressed gratitude to Mr. Garrison and thanked the Board for its leadership in having Mr. Garrison serve as County Manager.

Rutherfordton Town Manager Doug Barrick thanked his friend Steve Garrison, reflecting on nearly 11 years of working together. He stated that Mr. Garrison's leadership had been a valuable learning experience and that he would be greatly missed.

Rutherfordton Mayor Jimmy Dancy thanked Mr. Garrison on behalf of the citizens of Rutherford County.

County Manager Garrison expressed his appreciation to all those who spoke for their kind remarks and stated that he had the privilege of working with a phenomenal team throughout his tenure.

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### **III. Consent Agenda**

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**Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the Consent Agenda. 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

**Consent Agenda Items approved were:**

- A. ID-26-4381 Minutes of January 5, 2026 County Commissioners' Meeting**
- B. ID-26-4383 Tax Refunds and Releases**
  - Refund amount totaling \$2,870.06
  - Releases greater than \$100 totaling \$7,736.25
  - Releases less than \$100 totaling \$901.95
  - (A copy of these tax refunds and releases is typed in the Minute Book.)

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### **IV. Commissioners/Appointments**

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- A. ID-26-4379 Appointment to Foothills Workforce Development Board**

A vacancy exists on the Foothills Workforce Development Board.

**Commissioner Benfield moved to advertise the vacancy, accept applications, and make an appointment following acceptance of applications. 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

**V. New Business**

**A. ID-26-4384 Budget Amendments**

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  
February 2, 2026**

	Expense	Revenue
<b>GENERAL FUND</b>		
Repairs & Maintenance - Toms Street Bldg	\$ 160,000	
Insurance Proceeds		\$ 160,000
*Anticipated insurance proceeds for repairs and replacement equipment due to water damage		
College - Capital Improvements	\$ 371,384	
Contribution from College Capital Reserve		\$ 371,384
*Various ICC Improvements including IT HVAC, Maintenance Bldg & Student Center fire alarm upgrades, LLC Aeon unit and cooling tower replacement, and Library camera/hardware install and cable/jack install		
<b>COLLEGE CAPITAL RESERVE</b>		
Transfer to General Fund	\$ 371,384	
Reserved for Future Projects	\$ (371,384)	
*Various ICC Improvements including IT HVAC, Maintenance Bldg & Student Center fire alarm upgrades, LLC Aeon unit and cooling tower replacement, and Library camera/hardware install and cable/jack install		

**B. ID-26-4385 Signature Cards Update**

Finance Director Roach said in accordance with NCGS 156-25 (b), signature cards for all county bank and investment accounts will need to be updated. She presented a resolution designating the Deputy County Manager as an authorized signer until such time as a new County Manager is appointed.

**Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the resolution designating the Deputy County Manager as an authorized signer until such time as a new county manager is appointed. 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

**Resolution**

**Whereas**, NCGS 159-25(b) requires that all checks or drafts on an official depository shall be signed by the finance officer of the county and countersigned by another official of the local government designated by the governing board, and

**Whereas**, the County Manager who is now countersigning checks is retiring effective February 3, 2026;

**Now, therefore, be it resolved** that the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners does hereby designate Danny Searcy, Deputy County Manager, to countersign checks or drafts of Rutherford County, and to be an authorized signer for all account signature cards for Rutherford County's bank and investment accounts, including NCCMT and STIF.

In accordance with NCGS 159-28.1, the use of facsimile signature machines and signature stamps or similar devices in signing the preaudit certificate on contracts, purchase orders, and checks is authorized.

Be it future resolved that this resolution shall become effective beginning February 3, 2026.

Adopted February 2, 2026.

**RES 26-043**

**C. ID-26-4376 Addition of New Placard to NCDOT County Welcome Signs to Recognize Lynk Robotics Club**

Planning and Public Works Director Danny Searcy advised that the Board adopted a resolution at the September 8, 2025 meeting which approved the County Manager working with the County Attorney, Planning Director and Finance Director to negotiate the terms and conditions of an agreement with NCDOT for the installation of *Home of Lynk Robotics Club 2024 & 2025 State Champions* on the County US HWY 74 Welcome to Rutherford County signs. The resolution was forwarded to North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

NCDOT has advised that the resolution does not mention there being a maximum of 3 years that the sign may be installed. Also, the wording of the sign has changed slightly to read "Home of LYNK Robotics 2024, 2025 State Champions". The County will need to update the resolution to specify a maximum installation of three years for the dated sign, as well as, approve the wording change on the sign. An updated resolution was presented for the Board's consideration.

**Commissioner Haulk moved to approve the updated 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

**A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE  
CREATION OF NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
SIGNS**

**WHEREAS**, Rutherford County LYNK Robotics Club has been named 2024 and 2025 State Champions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners adopted a Resolution Authorizing the Creation of North Carolina Department of Transportation Signs at its regular meeting on September 8, 2025 for the purpose of requesting North Carolina Department of Transportation signs on all current "Welcome to Rutherford County" signs honoring this accomplishment; and

**WHEREAS**, Rutherford County staff and North Carolina Department of Transportation have worked together to create the template for such a proposed sign; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has Standard Practice guidelines for Optional "Welcome To" Signs that require additional language be included in the Resolution.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY APPROVES THE FOLLOWING:**

1. That, Rutherford County confirms the Resolution Authorizing the Creation of North Carolina Department of Transportation Signs adopted at the Regular Meeting of September 8, 2025;
2. That Rutherford County will remain the fiscal agent for the \$9,854.27 required to pay for the signs;
3. That the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners will provide all necessary information to the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
4. That, the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners approves the verbiage (Home of LYNK Robotics 2024, 2025 State Champions) on these signs and the hanging of them below the current "Welcome to Rutherford County" signs; and
5. That this dated sign message be for a maximum installation of three (3) years as required by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Adopted and approved this the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2026.

**RES 26-044**

**D. ID-26-4375 Report on 2025 Real Property Tax Liens and Request to Advertise Real Property Tax Liens**

A report on the 2025 real property tax liens was presented by Revenue Director Lawson. He advised that a list of these liens is available on the Revenue Department page on the county website.

Director Lawson also requested approval to advertise the unpaid taxes one time in the local newspaper between March 1 and May 31, 2026 pursuant to NCGS 105-369(c) and approval of the Charge to Collect.

**Vice Chairman Toney moved to accept the report on real property tax liens. 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.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Haynes and seconded by Commissioner Haulk to approve the advertisement of unpaid taxes during the period between March 1 and May 31, 2026. The vote on the motion was.**

**Ayes:** Commissioner King, Commissioner Toney, Commissioner Benfield, Commissioner Haynes, and Commissioner Haulk.  
**Noes:** None

**Vice Chairman Toney moved to approve the Charge to Collect. 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

**State of North Carolina Rutherford County**

**ORDER OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH G.S105-321**

**TO: RICHARD LAWSON, TAX ADMINISTRATOR**

You are hereby authorized, empowered, and commanded to collect the taxes remaining unpaid as set forth in the 2016 thru 2025 tax records filed in the office of the Tax Collector, and in the tax receipts herewith delivered to you in the amounts and from the taxpayers likewise therein set forth. You are further authorized, empowered, and commanded to collect the 2016 through 2025 taxes charged and assessed as provided by law for the adjustments, changes, and additions to the tax records and tax receipts delivered to you which are made in accordance with law. Such taxes are hereby declared to be a first lien on all real property of the respective taxpayers in Rutherford County. This order shall be a full and sufficient authority to direct, require and enable you to levy on and sell, any real or personal property, and attach wages and / or other funds, of such taxpayers, for and on account thereof, in accordance with law.

You are further authorized to call upon the Sheriff to levy upon and sell personal property under execution for the payment of taxes.

Within available funds in the budget ordinance and personnel positions established, the Tax Collector may appoint employees and they have authority to perform those functions authorized by the Machinery Act of Chapter 105 of North Carolina General Statutes and other applicable laws for current and previous years' taxes.

Adopted this the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2026.

**E. ID-26-4382 Political Sign Policy**

A proposed amendment to the *Policy on Political Signs and Campaigning - County Property* recommended by staff, including the Directors of Elections and Planning and Public Works, was presented for the Board's consideration. Staff had discussed the need to amend the existing *Policy on Placement of Political Signs on County Property and Campaigning in Rutherford County Offices* due to the relocation of both the Elections office and early voting in the new Government Services Center. The Board of Elections is statutorily responsible for governing certain aspects of the voting process at this location, including establishing the required buffer zone. Other aspects, however, are covered by policy governing County property and determined by the Board.

**Vice Chairman Toney moved to approve the amendment to *the Policy on Political Signs and Campaigning – County Property*. 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

**Policy on Placement of Political Signs on County Property  
and  
Campaigning in Rutherford County Offices**

**A. Campaigning in Rutherford County Offices**

(1) Those seeking public office are welcome to visit Rutherford County Offices and introduce themselves to County employees and our guests so long as their visit is not disruptive to County operations or hinders the ability of the public to access services. Candidates may wear political advertisements on their clothing that identifies them and the office they are seeking, but no political material (such as cards, flyers, etc.) are to be distributed on county owned or controlled property except as permitted at voting locations as specified below.

(2) The County wishes to ensure as many members of the public have the ability to park their vehicle at each polling location as possible. In furtherance of this policy, those seeking public office and their supporters are permitted to stand in County owned or controlled parking lots but must remain beyond the statutorily required buffer zones during early or election day voting and they must not impede the flow of traffic or parking.

(3) Pop-up tents or similar erected structures are not permitted on any County owned or controlled parking lot.

(4) As the Rutherford County Administrative Office Building located at 289 North Main Street in Rutherfordton (the "CAB") is used by staff and visitors conducting County business, political candidates and their supporters are encouraged, but not required, to park at a location other than the CAB parking lot.

(5) At the Rutherford County Government Services Center located at 145 College Avenue (the "GSC"), housing multiple County offices serving citizens and visitors in addition to those wishing to vote, political candidates and their supporters shall be required to park their vehicles at designated parking spots on the north side of the parking lot.

**B. Placement of Political Signs on County Property**

Rutherford County supports the rights of free speech of its employees, its citizens and of the general public. However, in the interests of having County offices and workplaces free from distraction, harassment, and disruption, and to prevent the appearance of support or opposition to any political candidate or issue in an environment where such support or opposition may be inappropriate, no Political Signs are permitted within or without any building or facility used for County purposes nor upon any real property owned or leased by Rutherford County (herein "County Property") except as specifically set forth herein:

(1) "Political Sign" means any sign, flyer, handbill, advertisement (including electronic) that is intended for public display in any manner and that advocates for political action, including but not limited to any endorsement of either support or opposition for any issue or for a candidate for political office.

(2) Any Political Sign otherwise in compliance with this Policy may be placed only in the following locations on County Property:

(a) At the CAB, ONLY in the planter and the grass near the sign for the CAB located between the parking lot and sidewalk on the west side of North Main Street.

(b) At any Convenience Center location outside the fence between such fence and any adjacent right of way of public or private road, as relevant. No Political Sign shall be placed upon or attached to any fence at any Convenience Center nor within such fence.

(c) At the GSC, housing the Board of Elections, ONLY in one or the other of the following locations for a maximum of one (1) sign at GSC:

(i) In the grass area outside DOT or municipal setbacks on the western side of the entrance driveway from Main Street.

(ii) In the grass median on the north side of the entrance driveway from College Avenue. Any Political Sign placed at this location must be in conformity with the requirements of this Policy set forth herein, with the policies of North Carolina Department of Transportation, and with N.C. Gen. Stat. §136-32(d), including the following: No Political Sign shall: (A) be closer than five feet (5') to the pavement of any road or drive; (B) be higher than 42 inches above the edge of the pavement of the road; (C) be larger than 864 square inches; (D) be more than 36 inches in either width or height; (E) obscure or replace another sign nor obscure motorist visibility.

(d) At any County Property at which voting occurs, either as a voting place for a precinct pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §163-128 or for early voting.

Political Signs placed on any County Property must be placed outside any relevant Buffer Zone pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §163-166.4 and shall be limited to any grassy or unpaved location of the relevant County Property that is located within four (4) feet of the right of way of public road. No Political Sign on any County Property shall be placed upon any tree or upon any structure, including, but not limited to, any fence, sign, or building.

(3) Political Signs on County Property must observe the following specifications:

(a) No more than one Political Sign for any issue or candidate shall be placed on the same tract of County Property except for the GSC, where no more than one Political Sign for any issue or candidate shall be placed at each of the two (2) designated locations.

(b) No Political Sign shall be larger than three (36) inches in width by thirty-six (36) inches in height.

(c) No Political Sign shall obscure motorist visibility within any public vehicular area, nor at any intersection with driveway, private road or public road.

(d) Political Signs may be placed on County Property no sooner than thirty (30) days prior to the Election Day for which they were made and must be removed from County Property no later than seven (7) days after that Election Day for which they were made. These dates are not based on any period of early voting, which shall have no effect on this policy.

(e) Any Political Signs must follow the laws of the State of North Carolina regarding any public right of way.

(f) No Political Sign shall obscure or replace another Political Sign.

(g) Any Political Sign in violation of any part of this Policy will be removed and held by the County for seven (7) days for the owner of said Political Sign to pickup, after which time any such Political Signs will be appropriately recycled or otherwise disposed of by the County.

(4) In the event that the County Property is located in any municipality, any such Political Sign shall comply with any relevant municipal ordinance.

This policy shall be subject to any and all applicable state and federal laws.

Adopted this the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2026.

**F. ID-26-4377 Resolution Awarding Detective Julie Greene's Side Arm and Badge**

Chief Deputy Randy Greenway requested that the Board approve a resolution in accordance with G.S. 20-187.2 awarding Detective Julie Greene's service side arm and badge to her for the sum of \$1.00. Detective Greene began her career with the Rutherford County Sheriff's Department on April 7, 2000 and is retiring March 1, 2026. During her years of service, she served as a Detention Officer, a sworn Deputy with the Warrants Division, a Deputy Sheriff assigned to the Patrol Division, a member of the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT), and as a detective with the Sheriff's Office's Criminal Investigative Division. Detective Greene also served as a member of and led the Sheriff Office's Honor Guard. Chief Greenway said in all these positions, Detective Greene served each assignment with upmost honor and integrity.

**Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the resolution awarding the service side arm and badge to Detective Julie Greene for the sum of \$1.00. 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

**Resolution Acknowledging the Service of  
Detective Julie Greene  
and Awarding Her Service Side Arm and Badge to Him**

**WHEREAS**, Detective Julie Greene has served in law enforcement in Rutherford County from April 7, 2000 to March 1, 2026; and

**WHEREAS**, **Detective Greene** served honorably and with integrity in her positions as a Detention Officer, a sworn Deputy with the Warrants Division, a Deputy Sheriff assigned to the Patrol Division, a member of the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT), and as a detective with the Sheriff's Office's Criminal Investigative Division. Detective Greene also served as a member of and led the Sheriff Office's Honor Guard.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Rutherford, in accordance with NC General Statute 20-187.2, do hereby award Detective Greene her service side arm (Glock, Model 48 MOS, Serial Number BWMP926) and badge in exchange for the consideration of \$1.00.

Approved this the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2026.

**RES 26-045**

**VI. Closed Session**

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**A. ID-26-4380 Closed Session – Personnel NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6)**

**At 6:45 P.M. Commissioner Benfield moved to go into Closed Session for a discussion regarding personnel. The County Manager, the Clerk to the Board, the Human Resources Director, and the County Attorney, would be included in the session. 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

**6:45 P.M. - The Board went into Closed Session.**

**7:20 P.M. - The Board returned to Regular Session.**

Chairman King requested that he be excused from the upcoming issue.

**Commissioner Haulk moved to excuse Chairman King from the item of business which he requested. 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

At 7:21 P.M. Chairman King left the meeting.

**Commissioner Haynes made a motion to appoint Chairman Bryan King as the Interim County Manager pursuant to N.C. General Statute 153A-84 and to approve and enter into the Employment Agreement and authorize the Vice Chairman to negotiate and to execute. Commissioner Haulk seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:**

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

**Excused:** Commissioner King

**Noes:** None

**At 7:22 P.M. Chairman King returned to the meeting.**

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### **VIII. Adjournment**

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**At 7:24 P.M. Commissioner Haynes made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Haulk seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was:**

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

**Noes:** None

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Chairman, Board of Commissioners

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Vice Chairman, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Clerk, Board of Commissioners