



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

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

**Monday, March 2, 2026
6:00 PM**

I. Call to Order

Chairman King called the March 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

Rutherford County Board of Commissioners led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Agenda Approval

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

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

II. Public Comments

Mr. Chuck Landever, a resident of the Bill's Creek area and President of the Bill's Creek Community Center, expressed concern regarding discussions about proposed tiny home developments and large-scale housing projects in the Bill's Creek area. He stated that companies are currently in the planning stages of purchasing property to install approximately 600 tiny homes. He voiced his apprehension about the potential overburdening of local infrastructure, including roadways, water systems, and emergency medical services (EMS).

Ms. Pam Swan reiterated the unease previously expressed. She emphasized that high-density housing in a rural area would place significant stress on existing resources. Residents value their rural

community and are deeply concerned about increased traffic, public safety, and especially the impact on water availability. Ms. Swam highlighted the proposal of approximately 600 tiny homes in one concentrated area and the number of additional residents who would rely on local resources. She requested that opposition to the project be entered into the public record.

Mr. Jason Toney addressed the Board regarding the transition of commissioners. He expressed appreciation to the outgoing commissioners for their service to the community.

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-26-4404 Minutes of February 2, 2026 County Commissioners' Meeting**
- B. ID-26-4409 Tax Refunds and Releases**
 - Refund amount totaling \$6,588.40
 - Releases greater than \$100 totaling \$20,706.14
 - Releases less than \$100 totaling \$760.78
 - (A copy of these tax refunds and releases is typed in the Minute Book.)

IV. Commissioners/Appointments

A. ID-26-4407 Audit Report

Deputy County Manager/Finance Director Paula Roach introduced Mr. Travis Keever of Gould Killian, CPA who provided information on the Rutherford County financial audit for year ending June 30, 2024.

Mr. Keever said an unmodified (clean) opinion was issued on the June 30, 2024 financial statements. No material weakness in internal control over financial reporting, and no instances of material noncompliance with laws and regulations were reported.

A single audit was performed over several major federal and state grant programs. A clean opinion on compliance was issued.

The Local Government Commission extended the normal December 31 due date to February 12 due to the Federal shutdown last fall/winter which delayed the release of the Federal compliance supplement. The due date was missed by about 3 weeks simply due to the volume of audit work required to audit the federal and state grant expenditures that were incurred by the County.

The General Fund revenues were:

Ad Valorem Taxes	60%
Local Option Sales Tax	10%
Restricted Intergovernmental	14%
Other	16%

Expenditures by Function

General Government	12%
Public Safety	31%
Education	27%
Human Services	12%
Other	7%

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Toney and seconded by Commissioner Haynes to accept the audit. The motion carried by the following vote.

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

Noes: None

V. Commissioners/Appointments

A. ID-26-4402 American 250 Rutherford County Proclamation

Deputy County Manager/Public Works and Planning Director Danny Searcy told the Board that an American 250 NC Committee has been formed in Rutherford County to plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States and North Carolina's integral role in that event. Planning is currently underway for that historic celebration. A resolution was presented for the Board's consideration proclaiming the year of 2026 as the 250th Anniversary of the United States of American in Rutherford County.

Vice Chairman Toney 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

Proclamation

WHEREAS, the year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, a historic milestone that honors the courage, vision, and sacrifice of those who established our nation; and

WHEREAS, the America250 initiative invites communities across the country to reflect on our shared history, celebrate our achievements, and inspire future generations to uphold the principles of liberty, justice, and democracy; and

WHEREAS, Rutherford County, North Carolina, proudly joins in commemorating this significant occasion, recognizing the contributions of our citizens to the growth and prosperity of our city, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, this anniversary provides an opportunity to honor the ideals that unite us, to engage in civic dialogue, and to reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive future for all;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bryan A. King, Chairman of the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners, do hereby proclaim the year **2026 as the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America in Rutherford County** and encourage all residents to participate in activities and events that celebrate our nation's history and heritage.

Adopted this the 2nd day of March, 2026.

PROC 26-001

B. ID-26-4414 Resolution Honoring National Vietnam War Veterans Day 2026, America 250, and The Visit of the Wall that Heals

Deputy County Manager/Director Searcy also presented Resolution Honoring National Vietnam War Veterans Day 2026, America 250, and The Visit of the Wall that Heals for the Board's consideration.

Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the resolution as presented. 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

A RESOLUTION HONORING NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY 2026, AMERICA 250, AND THE VISIT OF THE WALL THAT HEALS

WHEREAS, March 29, 2026, marks National Vietnam War Veterans Day, designated to honor the more than three million Americans who served during the Vietnam War, with the date chosen to commemorate March 29, 1973, when the last United States combat troops departed Vietnam and American prisoners of war were returned home and to acknowledge that many veterans returned home to a divided nation without recognition, gratitude, or welcome home extended to veterans of other conflict; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Rutherfordton recognizes that remembrance is not only an act of reflection, but a responsibility to ensure that the service and sacrifice of veterans are honored, acknowledged, and carried forward for future generations; and

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WHEREAS, the year 2026 coincides with America 250, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States and providing a meaningful opportunity for communities across the nation to reflect on service, sacrifice, and the enduring cost of freedom; and

WHEREAS, Rutherford County has been selected as the only stop in North Carolina on the 2026 national tour of The Wall That Heals, to be hosted November 12–15, 2026 at Isothermal Community College in Spindale, North Carolina, spanning Veterans Day and representing a milestone of national and local significance; and

WHEREAS, The Wall That Heals bears the names of 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War, whose names are forever inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., bringing their stories home to the communities from which they came and offering a place of remembrance, education, and healing; and

WHEREAS, ten service members from Rutherford County, known as our Hometown Heroes, lost their lives during the Vietnam War, and their names are forever inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and reflected on the panels of The Wall That Heals, representing courage, sacrifice, and love of country; and

WHEREAS, the Rutherford County Hometown Heroes are:

Douglas Grant Bailey	U.S. Army	Home of Record: Rutherfordton
Steve Lewis Camby	U.S. Marine Corps	Home of Record: Spindale
Henry Harrison Ford Jr.	U.S. Marine Corps	Home of Record: Rutherfordton
Gaston David Godfrey	U.S. Marine Corps	Home of Record: Forest City
Earl Marshall Hayes	U.S. Army	Home of Record: Spindale
John Mitchell Hicks	U.S. Army	Home of Record: Rutherfordton
Jimmy Leroy Johnson Jr.	U.S. Army	Home of Record: Rutherfordton
Steve Edwin Lowery	U.S. Army	Home of Record: Forest City
Michael Ray Smith	U.S. Marine Corps	Home of Record: Spindale
Michael Ray Street	U.S. Army	Home of Record: Rutherfordton; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Rutherfordton recognizes with particular gratitude and reverence Douglas Grant Bailey, Henry Harrison Ford Jr., John Mitchell Hicks, Jimmy Leroy Johnson, Jr., and Michael Ray Street, who listed Rutherfordton, North Carolina, as their home of record, and whose lives, service, and sacrifice are forever part of this community's history; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Rutherfordton honors all Rutherford County Hometown Heroes equally, acknowledging that every life given in service to this nation matters and that each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy worthy of remembrance; and

WHEREAS, the In Memory Program honors Vietnam veterans who returned home and later passed away, ensuring that their service and sacrifice continue to be acknowledged and remembered alongside those whose names appear on The Wall; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Rutherfordton recognizes the importance of encouraging community participation, volunteerism, and engagement in The Wall That Heals exhibit as an opportunity to educate, remember, and extend a long-overdue "Welcome Home" to Vietnam Veterans and their families;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of Rutherfordton hereby honors National Vietnam War Veterans Day 2026, expressing its deepest gratitude to all Vietnam Veterans for their service, sacrifice, and perseverance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town formally recognizes and supports the visit of The Wall That Heals to Rutherford County in November 2026 as an event of national and local significance, aligned with America 250 and Veterans Day, and encourages residents to attend, volunteer, and participate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town honors by name and remembrance the ten Rutherford County Hometown Heroes whose lives were lost during the Vietnam War, ensuring their sacrifice is never forgotten and their legacy endures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town acknowledges the importance of the In Memory Program and encourages families to participate so that all who served in Vietnam and later passed away may be honored and remembered, ensuring their legacy endures for future generations; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution stands as a symbol of the Town of Rutherfordton's commitment to remembrance, gratitude, and healing—affirming that while the welcome home may come decades later, it is offered with sincerity, respect, and enduring gratitude of a hometown that believes every life given in service to this nation matters and will never be forgotten

Adopted this 4th day of March 2026.

RES 26-006

C. ID-26-4405 Appointments to Transit Advisory Board

Transit Director Kerry Giles asked that the Board approve the appointment of three applicants to fill the three vacancies on the Transit Advisory Board that must be filled by certain classifications. Ms. Sharon Robbs has applied and could qualify under the Public Human Service Agency for both Mental Health and Housing Authority. Though Ms. Robbs has an address in Shelby, NC, she is a housing specialist with Partners' Behavioral Health and covers three counties which includes Rutherford County. Ms. Brittany Lawrence has submitted an application for the TAB and would represent Davita Dialysis which is one of the agencies recommended by North Carolina Department of Transportation. Ms. Nubia Sprouse has also submitted an application for the TAB. She is a translator for Rutherford County Schools and works with families who transport with Transit. She would fit a category under "Community Organization.

Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the appointment of Ms. Sharon Robbs to the Transit Advisory Board to a term ending June 30, 2029, Ms. Brittany Lawrence to a term ending June 30, 2029, and Ms. Nubia Sprouse to a term ending June 30, 2029. 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-26-4399 Appointment to Foothills Workforce Development Board

A vacancy exists on the Foothills Workforce Development Board. This vacancy which requires that the appointee represent rehabilitation had been advertised and applications had been accepted. Mr. Jackie Godlock applied for appointment. She would represent the appropriate category.

Commissioner Haulk moved to approve the appointment of Ms. Jackie Godlock to the Foothills Workforce Development Board to a term ending June 30, 2027. 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-26-4401 Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation

Ms. Susan Epley of the Social Services' Department advised that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a tradition formally established in 1983 after decades of efforts by children's advocates who pushed to create and change laws to protect those most vulnerable in society. She asked that the Board proclaim April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Rutherford County.

Vice Chairman Toney moved to approve the proclamation. 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

IV. New Business

A. ID-26-4406 Budget Amendments – March 2026

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

Vice Chairman Toney 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		
March 2, 2026		
	Expense	Revenue
GENERAL FUND		
Professional Services - Revaluation Contract	\$ 809,950	
Fund Balance Appropriated		\$ 809,950
*contract amendment requested to include residential parcels to keep the 2027 revaluation project on schedule		
Toms St - Building Repairs/Maintenance	\$ 100,000	
Insurance Proceeds		\$ 100,000
*additional insurance for building damage and contents replacement		
College - Capital Improvements	\$ 489,716	
Contribution from College Capital Reserve		\$ 489,716
*Various ICC Improvements including administration building flooring replacements, campus parking lot resurfacing and to complete welding air compressor project and LLC HVAC repairs		
COLLEGE CAPITAL RESERVE		
Transfer to General Fund	\$ 489,716	
Reserved for Future Projects	\$ (489,716)	
*Various ICC Improvements including administration building flooring replacements, campus parking lot resurfacing and to complete welding air compressor project and LLC HVAC repairs		

B. ID-26-4410 Amendment to Revaluation Service Contract for 2027 Revaluation

Tax Assessor Richard Lawson told the Board that due to recent staff turnovers in order for the revaluation for 2027 to remain on schedule, it is recommended that the County amend the April 2025 contract with Vision Governmental Solutions (previously known as WamplerEanes Appraisal Group) for commercial property and expand the scope of work to include residential property as well. The amendment would add related Residential Property Services for an estimated 55,573 parcels at \$14.57 per parcel for an additional estimated cost \$809,950. The amendment is contingent upon a budget amendment to be presented also at the March meeting.

Vice Chairman Toney moved to approve the contract with Vision Government Solutions and authorize the Interim County Manager, the Finance Officer, the Clerk to the Board, and other County officials to sign and execute all documents in support of this action. Commissioner Benfield seconded the motion.

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

C. ID-26-4408 Resolution to Transfer Light Transit Vehicle to Isothermal Community College

Transit Director Kerry Giles said Rutherford County Transit is requesting approval to transfer one 25-foot Light Transit Vehicle (LTV) to Isothermal Community College. Transfers to a state agency are allowable under NCDOT disposition guidelines. Although Transit typically sells surplus vehicles to generate local match funds for replacements, this request represents a strategic exception. ICC has established a new CDL training program that provides a valuable workforce development opportunity. The program will allow Transit to send current and prospective drivers, as well as members of the public, to obtain their CDL license, helping address the ongoing driver shortage. This transfer supports a mutually beneficial partnership to strengthen the local transportation workforce. The vehicle has met its NCDOT-defined useful life requirements, and a replacement 25-foot LTV has already been received and placed into revenue service. A resolution approving the transfer was presented for the Board's consideration.

Commissioner Benfield moved to approve the resolution. 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 Approving Conveyance of
Property to Isothermal Community College**

WHEREAS, Rutherford County owns a 2018 25-foot Light Transit Vehicle ("LTV") with Vehicle Identification Number 1FDFE4FS9JDC32565 formerly used by Rutherford County Transit; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 160A-274 authorizes Rutherford County to exchange with, lease to, lease from, sell to, or purchase from any other governmental unit any interest in real or personal property upon such terms and conditions as the governmental unit deems wise, with or without consideration; and

WHEREAS, Isothermal Community College has established a new educational program to train individuals to qualify for a commercial drivers license; and

WHEREAS, this new program will train a workforce eligible to drive Rutherford County Transit vehicles for the benefit of the Rutherford County citizens of which the County has experienced a shortage in recent years; and

WHEREAS, Isothermal Community College is in need of a Light Transit Vehicle for purposes of training and educating students of this new program; and

WHEREAS, this particular LTV has already met its useful life requirements for Rutherford County Transit as defined by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, has been replaced by a new LTV and is surplus to the needs of Rutherford County, and has already been confirmed by NCDOT for this potential transaction; and

WHEREAS, Rutherford County has determined that it is in the best interest of the Rutherford County to convey the LTV to Isothermal Community College and deems it wise to do so for no consideration.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY RESOLVES THAT:

1. Rutherford County hereby conveys to Isothermal Community College the 2018 25-foot Light Transit Vehicle having Vehicle Identification Number 1FD4E4FS9JDC32565.
2. The property herein described shall be conveyed for no consideration.
3. The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Rutherford County, working with the County Attorney and County staff, is authorized to execute all documents necessary to convey the property in the manner authorized by this Resolution.

ADOPTED this the 2nd day of March, 2026.

RES 26-007

V. Adjournment

At 6:59 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

Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Vice Chairman, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Clerk, Board of Commissioners