

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

**Rutherford County  
Board of Commissioners  
Minutes of May 11, 2026, Meeting 2**

**Monday, May 11, 2026  
6:00 PM**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman King called the May 11, 2026, special 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.**

**B. Agenda Approval**

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

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

**II. New Business**

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**A. ID-26-4480 Budget Workshop**

Chairman King began the discussion regarding the recommended 2026-2027 budget for Rutherford County. The tax rate is recommended to remain the same at 45.4 cents. It is projected that approximately \$10,000,000 will be budgeted from fund balance in order to balance the 2026-2027 budget. The County is collecting interest on approximately \$4 million in grant funds that will eventually be repaid; however, the interest earned will be retained by the County. Chairman King pointed out that a balanced budget is required to adopt the budget ordinance.

Finance Director Paula Roach stated that though \$10,000,000 is budgeted from the fund balance, most County departments typically return 3–4% of their budgeted funds each year. Approximately \$12 million was budgeted for amendments in the 2025-2026 budget, but actual spending will likely be closer to \$7 million. Property tax revenue can only be budgeted based on a percentage of the prior year's collections. The County generally collects approximately \$1 million more than projected annually.

Director Roach also stated the County will work with the County's financial advisor to establish a formal fund balance policy for discussion at the June meeting

Some possible savings and cost drivers are:

- The two largest areas requiring budget amendments were out-of-county inmate housing and foster care housing
- Significant savings have occurred in health insurance costs due to employee turnover.
- Insurance costs overall are trending significantly higher.
- Software updates continue to increase annually. Information Technology Director Jai Doherty stated most vendors are increasing costs by 3–4% per year.
- Dues and subscriptions increased primarily because of training and organizational memberships.
- Fuel costs were discussed. Departments will transfer funds internally if additional fuel funding becomes necessary.
- Funding is included for a potential second primary election runoff if needed.

Commissioner Haulk asked whether the County had considered assigning someone to communicate community needs, particularly regarding foster care, by visiting churches and community organizations to raise awareness.

Other noted items of discussion were:

- Chairman King stated that the new lock system at the jail should help reduce inmate housing costs.
- Vice Chairman Toney asked why \$1.5 million for revaluation funding was budgeted in one year. Director Roach responded that Helene-related funds had been received, and the County is setting aside the funding.
- Vice Chairman Toney asked about the jail pay phone line item, which staff confirmed is a revenue source.
- Sheriff's Office administration building utilities were budgeted at approximately \$35,000 for water, power, and gas. Staff noted some costs may eventually be reimbursed to the County, and estimates will improve after the building has been occupied longer.
- Vice Chairman Toney questioned why adding two new positions would not reduce overtime costs. Commissioner Haynes explained the positions are investigative detective positions.
- Fire Marshal/Emergency Management overtime costs are lower because employees are utilizing compensatory time instead of overtime payouts.
- Vice Chairman Toney asked for information regarding School Resource Officers and the previously proposed committee. Commissioner Haynes stated it had been difficult finding individuals willing to serve on the committee.

Commissioner Haulk asked whether County systems were cloud-based. IT Director Doherty responded that approximately 95% of systems remain in-house. While cloud options were evaluated, staff believes in-house systems are more secure.

Discussion regarding departmental budgets:

- The County attempts to maximize the lifespan of vehicles before replacement.
- Vice Chairman Toney asked about plans for the old Library building. Staff stated Department of Social Services employees would relocate there, and the County plans to charge rent in hopes of recouping approximately half of the associated costs.
- Vice Chairman Toney also asked about the old Veterans building. Staff stated Guardian ad Litem and Juvenile Justice programs will occupy the building following restroom updates. This will reduce rental expenses currently being paid elsewhere.
- Commissioner Haulk asked about the Senior Center's request for \$500,000. Danny Searcy advised the initial request was approximately \$430,000, but no recommendation was made. Approximately \$30,000 is budgeted for building needs as necessary.
- This is the first full year for Animal Control operations. An increase was requested and recommended, and a new vehicle was included for the department.
- DSS foster care costs have increased by approximately \$1.2 million.
- Food stamp program participation is increasing, creating another unfunded mandate.
- When Commissioner Haynes inquired about family reunification services, Director Roach explained the program helps parents get back on track in order to reunite families.

Commissioner Haulk asked about issues involving drug testing. DSS Director Tiffany Dodd explained that drug-related concerns are considered neglect cases. Under a new law, DSS must send information to the Sheriff's Department, which then determines whether further action is necessary. The drug testing agency has been unwilling to testify in certain cases due to the time and travel required. Chairman King also noted that many new employees lack the expertise necessary to testify effectively in these cases. According to Commissioner Haulk, using an approved outside agency for testing and testimony would make sense. Commissioner Haulk stated that he would contact the Sheriff regarding the issue.

Vice Chairman Toney discussed the Solid Waste Fund that is recommended to cease as an enterprise fund and become a county department. Future operations will become more structured. Solid Waste Director James Kilgo stated regional landfills are filling up, but the County should remain in good standing for several years as long as disposal partners continue accepting Rutherford County waste.

Commissioner Haynes pointed out the coroner budget item of approximately \$120,000. Director Roach noted it is an estimate for medical examiner expenses. The State's billing for autopsies is currently approximately eight months behind.

Director Roach said staff will continue working on a fund balance policy for presentation in June.

The consensus of the Board was that no additional budget workshop meetings would be necessary.

**IV. Adjournment**

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**At 7:23 PM Commissioner Benfield made a motion to adjourn. 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

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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