



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

## **Rutherford County**

### **Board of Commissioners**

#### **Minutes of Special Meeting on May 13, 2025**

**Monday, May 13, 2025  
5:00 PM**

#### **I. Call to Order**

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Chairman King called the May 13, 2025 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.

##### **A. 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. New Business**

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##### **A. ID-25-4154 Budget Workshop**

Chairman King advised that the Board had received the budget recommendation of the County Manager at the May 5, 2025 meeting. He asked for comments from the Board regarding the recommendation which included a 11.5 cents tax increase.

Vice Chairman Toney stated his opposition to the tax increase. He recommended that staff review requests and provide a budget that did not include an increase.

Commissioner Benfield was in agreement with Vice Chairman Toney. He said he had not approved a tax increase in his eleven years on the Board and had even supported lowering the tax rate in two budgets. Therefore, he could not support a tax increase.

**Minutes of Rutherford County Commissioners' Special Meeting on May 13, 2025**  
**Page 2 of 3**

Commissioner Haulk was not in favor of a tax increase. He asked that the Board of Education, Isothermal Community College, and County departments reduce their requests.

Commissioner Haynes did not want taxes to increase but asked that emergency services, schools, and Sheriff's Department be adequately funded without a tax increase. Determining cuts in budgets would be a start.

Chairman King reminded that the County and the state are still under a State of Emergency. Helene had an impact on everyone, and some citizens are having to spend personal funds to fix the disaster that occurred to them. There is a lot of difference between budget requests and needs. Funding is not available for all requests this year. The Chairman asked staff to come back with Plan B that can be considered at the next budget workshop.

Commissioner Haulk pointed out that most departments had presented a 4%-7% increase whereas several had over a 40% increase. It made sense to him to look at those first. He said safety concerns should be a top priority.

The Board also discussed sales tax funds which are trending downward by about \$1,000,000 less than last year; however, final numbers will not be known until early October.

County Manager Steve Garrison asked that the Board review budget requests of fire departments which had recently been received. Several departments have requested an increase in their tax rate.

Finance Director Paula Roach said there will be a shortfall of approximately \$54,000 in the budget of the Cliffside Sanitary District; however, the Local Government Commission has given the financial responsibility back to the district. It will be hard for those residents using the sanitary district resources to cover the shortfall.

Chairman King pointed out that the County was able to begin debris removal from Helene quickly because of the fund balance that was available; however, it is uncertain when the funds expended will be reimbursed by FEMA and there are needs that are arising.

Commissioner Haulk said presently the County has a \$47,000,000 fund balance; however, there is approximately \$44,000,000 committed.

Commissioner Haynes called attention to salaries which he said need careful consideration. The Sheriff's Department had requested an 8% salary increase. He reported that the Town of Forest City's salaries have increased by 11%.

Chairman King mentioned that the Sheriff's Department had started marking off items requested in their budget.

Commissioner Haulk brought up a \$500,000 grant from Representative Tim Moore's office that can be used.

County Manager Garrison said staff would begin working on crafting a budget with no tax increase and would provide this to the Board.

**III. Adjournment**

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**At 5:33 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

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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