



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

**Rutherford County  
Board of Commissioners  
Minutes of February 26, 2026**

**Monday, February 26, 2026  
4:00 PM**

**I. Call to Order**

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Chairman King called the February 26, 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.**

**A. 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. New Business**

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**A. ID-25- 26-2411 Administrative and Board Planning Workshop**

Chairman King opened the discussion regarding the need for a Board Planning Workshop. He emphasized the importance of Commissioners coming together to openly discuss their concerns and priorities in a collaborative setting. He clarified that the workshop would not involve formal votes but would instead serve as an opportunity for each Commissioner to express what issues are most pressing to them.

Chairman King noted that certain capital requests, including the library and EMS station now located in the Henrietta area, had been discussed for many years but was never funded in prior budget cycles. However, he observed that Commissioners have occasionally changed positions after individual discussions with one another as was the case with the building of the library and EMS station. This was accomplished through communication among the Board members. He encouraged open dialogue about where each member stands and the challenges they believe are facing the county.

Key challenges identified by Chairman King included:

1. Courthouse renovation
2. New Sheriff's Office/Professional Law Enforcement Office
3. Detention Center

Public Works and Planning Director Danny Searcy advised that the Sheriff's Office renovations will likely be completed by May. The timeline of the Courthouse renovation is projected to be completed by March of 2027. Construction on the Detention Center will likely start by August of this year.

Chairman King pointed out that funding for the projects has not been finalized, so it is possible that there could be a shortfall on total funding.

Chairman King highlighted the financial pressures anticipated over the next two fiscal years. He noted that state-mandated expenses, including employee health insurance and retirement contributions, continue to increase annually. Funding for Department of Social Services will see changes which will be formidable. It was noted that the county experienced a budget shortfall of \$13 million in the previous fiscal year. He acknowledged that the upcoming budget cycles will be particularly difficult. The stated goal is to position the county for long-term financial stability and success. It is important that the Board work together on meeting the needs that the County will be facing.

Commissioner Haulk expressed significant concern regarding the potential impact on property taxes next year. He noted that the school system did not fully resolve its financial challenges during the previous year, creating uncertainty about future funding needs.

Finance Officer Paula Roach provided an update on FEMA reimbursements related to prior storm events. She reported that the county received a \$17 million deposit the previous week. However, she cautioned that the reimbursement process will continue to be slow moving.

Director Roach also advised that the sales tax growth is projected to be flat in the future. There have been delayed vehicle replacements over the past several years, with ARPA funds being used to offset some vehicle purchases. Other concerns are the loss of interest income, the need to construct the County's next landfill, and new roofs are needed on multiple County buildings.

Vice Chairman Toney said with the possibility of funding for next year not being able to meet the anticipated needs, requests would need to be reduced.

Commissioner Benfield had attended the NACO (National Association of Counties) meeting in Washington recently that was attended by 150 North Carolina representatives. Property tax issues and solid waste matters will require attention in the near future.

Commissioner Haynes expressed his primary concern regarding leadership stability and the need to begin planning for an interim county manager. He stated that he would prefer to begin the hiring process sooner rather than later and would like to have an interim manager in place sometime during the current year.

Chairman King responded that it would be prudent to first gain a firm understanding of the upcoming budget before moving forward with the manager recruitment process.

Human Resources Director Debra Conner provided information on the pool of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. She had reservations regarding whether a candidate from the pool would be the right fit for the County. Commissioner Haulk asked that she find out the number of persons who are currently in the pool.

Vice Chairman Toney said the process could be started after the budget is complete. Chairman King suggested that after potential candidates are narrowed down, a meeting could be held with the incoming Commissioners to interview.

Director Conner said she would begin the advertisement for the position when instructed to do so.

Commissioner Haynes also emphasized the importance of promoting job growth and attracting businesses to the county, particularly in the Highway 221 area. He stressed the need to communicate to the public that the county is actively working to recruit and support business development.

Commissioner Haulk recommended promoting a comprehensive master plan to guide development efforts.

Chairman King stated that work on a master plan is already underway.

Commissioner Haulk asked Director Searcy to explore the feasibility of a solid waste incinerator as a potential revenue-generating option and provide a report.

### **III. Adjournment**

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**At 5:00 P.M. Commissioner Benfield 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