

Draft

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**     July 14, 2025

**ALEXANDER COUNTY**  
**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**PRESENT:**    Marty Pennell, Chairman  
                  Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman  
                  Kent Herman  
                  Josh Lail  
                  Ronnie Reese

**STAFF:**        Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney  
                  Gary Herman, PIO  
                  Jamie Starnes, Clerk to the Board

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, July 14, 2025, in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Pennell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Reese gave the invocation and Commissioner Lail led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Lail said he was pleased that citizens were utilizing Courthouse Park, noting that he and his family recently visited the splash pad.

Vice-Chairman Yoder attended a ribbon cutting for Little Japan in Bethlehem on June 20, 2025.

Commissioner Reese encouraged the community to attend the upcoming concert at Courthouse Park this Saturday, along with the fireworks event at ACHS immediately following. He also expressed gratitude to our law-abiding citizens who work hard each day to provide for their families.

Chairman Pennell urged citizens to check on their neighbors during the current heat wave, especially the elderly.

## **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **\*\*\*SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS\*\*\***

Sheriff Chad Pennell recognized Greg Foster, 911 Communications / EM Director, who was named the 2025 Communications Center Leader of the Year on May 5, 2025 by the NC National Emergency Number Association.

Garrett Huffman, Interim Fire Marshal, recognized Tyler Cornett, Soil & Water Conservationist, who obtained special training to assist several volunteer fire departments with waterpoint certification, which helps reduce ISO ratings.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

William King discussed concerns about his ability to contact his grandchildren and send gifts to them through DSS. He also felt he and his grandchildren had been disrespected by DSS staff and asked the Board to help resolve the situation.

## **PUBLIC HEARING: REZONING CASE RZ-25-01 - BARLOW**

Amy Bucknum, County Planner, presented Rezoning Case RZ-25-01 submitted by Michael Barlow who requested rezoning of approx. 1.2 acres located on Liberty Lane from Residential District Two (R2) to Residential District Two Rural (R2R) to allow placement of a singlewide manufactured home.

After reviewing an aerial map and criteria to be considered when conducting rezoning cases, Ms. Bucknum reported that this property was located in a Rural / Urban Transition Area according to the Future Land Use Plan. Because the surrounding area is primarily residential in nature and public water is available, the rezoning would be considered as appropriate.

The Planning Board held a public hearing on June 12, 2025 to consider this petition and voted unanimously to recommend approval based on consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Bucknum advised that staff had received several complaints related to code violations on adjacent properties owned by Mr. Barlow; therefore, no permits can be issued until the violations are resolved.

After a motion by Commissioner Reese, second by Vice-Chairman Yoder, and unanimous vote, the public hearing was called to order and comments requested.

Public Comment

Nathaniel Shoup reported that the applicant had already placed a mobile home on the subject property without obtaining the necessary permits. In addition, he informed the Board that Mr. Barlowe had damaged his fence with a backhoe after a right-of-way dispute and that Mr. Barlowe's tenants were drug users that had stolen items from his property.

Property owner Michael Barlowe denied Mr. Shoup's allegations and claimed he was unaware that a change in zoning had occurred to his property when he moved the mobile home to the site in February.

Daniel Fogle, nearby neighbor, discussed the unsafe conditions of the mobile homes that Mr. Barlowe rents and felt they should be condemned. He also mentioned a long list of 911 calls to Mr. Barlowe's properties for illegal burns, overdoses, and other issues.

There being no further comments, Commissioner Reese made a motion to close the public hearing. Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, informed the Board that the issue at hand was whether the rezoning request was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, noting that the code violations were a separate issue. He indicated he would coordinate with Planning and Code Enforcement staff to address the violations.

Commissioner Herman made a motion to approve Rezoning Case RZ-25-01. Chairman Pennell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**AMENDED RESOLUTION TO DIRECT THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS**

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, provided a resolution authorizing an increase of \$74,687 to the FY 2026 Post Overdose Response Team budget to cover the costs of adding one new full-time Peer Support Specialist position. The filling of this position was placed on hold until staff could accurately project revenues and expenses of currently authorized strategies through the Opioid Settlement funds. Staff has determined there is sufficient funding to allow expansion of the positions in the PORT Program as previously requested for FY 2026.

Mr. Faulkenberry thanked Director Shannon Childers and all PORT staff members for the assistance they provide to individuals dealing with substance abuse.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the amended resolution adding additional funds to the FY 2026 PORT budget. Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING NC COMMERCE BUILDING REUSE GRANT APPLICATION FOR URGENT CARE FACILITY**

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, explained that this resolution authorized an application to the NC Department of Commerce for an \$80,000 Building Reuse Grant to assist with renovations of a medical facility at the intersection of Highway 16 South and Macedonia Church Road owned by Catawba Valley Medical Center. Urgent Care of Mountain View intends to lease this facility that will provide the only after-hours medical facility in Alexander County. This project will create 8 full-time jobs and a 5% match will be required from the County.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing a Building Reuse Grant application for an urgent care facility. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **HEALTH DEPARTMENT SPECIAL UPDATE**

The following information was presented to the Board:

- ❖ **2024-2025 End of Year Outcome Summary Report** – Billie Walker, Health Director, presented report details and statistics as follows:
  - Review of Public Health Ten Essential Services – all of the activities conducted by the Health Department must fall under one or more of these categories. This information must be reported to the state each year under the Aid to County Report.
    1. Monitoring health status to identify and solve community health problems:
      - Monitoring the opioid epidemic.
      - Monitoring of health and safety in food (restaurants and food establishments).
      - Continual monitoring of communicable diseases.
    2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards:
      - Continual monitoring of communicable diseases.
      - Preparedness planning in community with various partners.
    3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues:
      - Detect and Reflect education event with parents in schools on dangers of SUD and vapes.
      - Educate the schools on dangers of SUD and vaping and Speedway to Healthy.
      - Farmworker Flu Education/Vaccination availability to local farms and farmworkers.
      - Mediterranean diet education for limited English proficient populations with Cooperative Extension.

- STD and teen pregnancy prevention in the schools.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems:
    - Healthy Alexandrians.
    - Participate on the Local Aging Council Team.
    - Participate with the new Multimodal Grant Team.
    - Participate on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.
    - Participate on the School Health Advisory Council within schools.
  5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts:
    - Continual process of annually developing policies and plans (Preparedness).
    - Created a Shelter Plan (to include a Call Down List and schedule for Nursing Staff).
  6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety:
    - Continual process throughout the year.
  7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable:
    - BH (RHA).
    - PORT (MOA for patient transportation).
    - WIC.
    - CMARC/CMHRP.
  8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce:
    - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).
    - Certified Public Health Nurse Course.
    - Environmental Health Specialist Authorization.
    - Ensure all licensed staff are up to date with required trainings and certifications.
    - Extended Enhanced Nurse Role Completion.
    - Public Health Law Training.
  9. Evaluate effectiveness of accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services:
    - Employee Health Clinic Survey.
    - Family Planning Quality Improvement Plan.
    - Patient satisfaction surveys.
    - Review complaints monthly and assess where changes are needed.

10. Research for new insight and innovative solutions to health problems:

- The department continues to look for ways to reach this.
- Workforce Development (Accreditation 24.2/37.6) – the Health Department has a Workforce Development Plan Policy (Adm-5.50) and Staff Orientation, Continuing Education, and Annual Training Policy (Adm-5.45) that are evaluated annually. Staff and the BOCC/CHSB are annually trained as well. Ms. Walker provided the following staffing demographics:
  - Current number of positions – 37
  - Current number of employees – 35
  - Vacancy rate – 5.4%
  - Male – 11.4%
  - Female – 88.6%
  - White – 97.1%
  - Hispanic – 2.9%
  - > 50 years of age – 40%
  - Management Team retention rate / < 10 years from retirement – 57%
  - Employee retention rate / < 5 years from retirement – 16%
  - Comparisons to population of Alexander County given.
  - Baby Boomers (1946-1964) – 5.7 %
  - Generation X (1965-1980) – 54.3%
  - Millennials (1981-1994) – 22.9%
  - Generations Z (1995-2010) – 17.1%
  - Professional Disciplines/Credentials listed.
- Workforce Assessment – looks at demographics and competencies of the workforce along with employee feedback and performance elevations to forecast workforce needs to help build strategies for a stronger workforce.
  - All staff participated in True Color training to see how employees learn and communicate differently.
  - Department Goals:
    - Increase promotion of internal staff/advancement as much as possible with management staff.
    - Succession planning/cross-training staff who are interested in advancement and have the educational background to apply when positions become available.
    - Continue the orientation/staff training system to increase training and professional development (may integrate into NEOGOV or a web-type system in the future).
  - Other Strategies:

- Participation in “Getting to Know” panel discussions to showcase staff expertise, share wisdom and on-the-job experiences to help team members understand job tasks in other areas.
  - Creating a positive work environment by highlighting new employees in a newspaper announcement and employee recognitions at monthly General All Staff Meetings.
- Summary of Services Provided to the Public – Ms. Walker provided the following chart:

2024/2025 Unduplicated Program Numbers	
Program	Count
Behavioral Health	41
Child Health	129
Dental Health	2886
Family Planning	239
Immunizations	841
Maternal Health	41 (positive pregnancy test only)
Primary Care	618
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	175
Tuberculosis	248
Total	5218

In response to several questions asked by Chairman Pennell, Ms. Walker advised that Dental Health, Primary Care, and Adult Health were the most frequently utilized programs, with Dental Health and Primary Health as a year after year scenario. The Health Department offers a sliding fee scale to help lower the cost of services.

Ms. Walker also discussed the Maternal Health Program in relation to inquiries from the Board. She advised that the Health Department no longer had a Maternal Health provider because there were not enough Maternal Health clients to render the program financially viable. This also plays a considerable role in the department’s ability to recruit a new provider who specializes in maternity services.

- ❖ **Bad Debt Write-Off (Accreditation 33.6)** – a list of uncollectable, outstanding client balances is prepared twice a year and presented to the Health Director and the Board per the Alexander County Health Department Fee and Eligibility Policy. The balances approved by the Health Director and the Board will be written off. Currently, the accounts in the areas of Primary Care, Family Planning, Child Health, and Dental Health have outstanding balances that meet the definition of uncollectible totaling **\$1,799.90** for the period of January 1 – June 30, 2025. Ms. Walker explained that per Debt Management Policy and NC Accreditation Benchmark 33 Financial Accountability (33.5 & 33.6), the Health Director has the authority to write-off any bad debt owed Alexander County Health Department with approval by the Board of County Commissioners. The procedures for this process have been followed per policy and the total amount of **\$1,799.90** is being requested for write-off.

Vice-Chairman Yoder asked the percentage of debt to be written off compared to receivables and felt it would be beneficial to show that the debt written off in the past had never been a significant amount. Ms. Walker agreed and provided the amounts written off for the past two years (\$1,239.92 last year and \$2,941.43 the prior year). She will calculate the percentage for this year and provide to the Clerk later this week.

Vice-Chairman Yoder also inquired about the measles outbreak. Ms. Walker said that staff were participating in weekly calls with the state and would be participating in a tabletop exercise in the near future to boost preparedness. There were approx. 20 counties involved in the recent case in NC.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve bad debt write-off as presented. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #1 - #2**

Ben Faulkenberry, County Attorney, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #1 - #2 as follows:

Budget Amendment #1 – To increase the Sheriff’s Office budget for:

- use of \$12,931 in remaining state grant funds for equipment for the armored vehicle to be purchased in FY 2026.
- two NC Emergency Management grant reimbursements received for deputy deployment to other counties in western NC after Hurricane Helene that will be used to purchase additional night vision equipment and a software update.
- two prior year orders that were unable to be filled by the vendors in FY 2025.
- use of Federal Equitable Share funds and State Unauthorized Substance Tax funds in addition to \$150,000 from the Capital Outlay budget to purchase an armored vehicle ordered in FY 2025 with delivery expected in early FY 2026.

Budget Amendment #32 – To increase the DSS budget for remaining balances of APA and CPS advanced state funding received in FY 2025 in response to Hurricane Helene.

Commissioner Herman made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #1 - #2. Vice-Chairman Yoder seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Tax Abatements & Adjustments (\$1,210.99) and Tax Refunds (\$1,509.95) for May 27 – July 6, 2025.
- B. Minutes from the April 7, 2025 and June 2, 2025 Regular Meetings and June 2, 2025 Consolidated Human Services Board Meeting.
- C. Board / Committee Appointments – Tax Collector and NCACC Annual Conference Voting Delegate.
- D. Agreement with Crisis24, Inc. for CodeRED Emergency Alerts.
- E. Resolution to approve the annual bonding of County officials.
- F. DSS Energy Programs Outreach Plan 2025-2026.
- G. Home & Community Care Block Grant SFY 2025-2026.
- H. Renewal of lease agreement for Economic Development Office space on Highway 16 North.
- I. Alexander County Performance Evaluation Policy.
- J. Non-profit funding contracts with Alexander County Partnership for Children, Alexander County Habitat for Humanity, Studio 3 NC, the Bridge Community, and Hiddenite Arts & Heritage Center.
- K. Request from Sheriff Chad Pennell to surplus a Glock 45 9mm (Serial #CBHM876) with Holosun red dot sight (Serial #MS043360) to Lt. Buddy McKinney who is retiring in August 2025.

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3 & 6) ATTORNEY / CLIENT PRIVILEGE & PERSONNEL**

Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:07 PM to allow for attorney/client privilege and to discuss personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3 & 6). Commissioner Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 7:35 PM. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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Marty A. Pennell, Chairman

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Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board