

**MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'  
BRIEFING MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2024, AT 3:00 p.m.**

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met to hold a Briefing Meeting on September 3, 2024, in the first-floor conference room at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m. where and when the following business was transacted.

Present: Chairman Brownie Newman; Vice-Chair Parker Sloan; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Amanda Edwards; Commissioner Martin Moore; Commissioner Jasmine Beach-Ferrara.

Absent: none.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and provided opening statements.

**Continuum of Care Shelter Recommendation**

Lacy Hoyle, Homeless Program Manager provided background and that today's recommendations are in response to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) recommendations regarding shelter. The Continuum of Care issued a Request for Proposals for low barrier shelter capacity and the following three proposals were submitted: 1) Haywood Street Respite with a total request of \$1,621,712; 2) Safe Shelter with a total request of \$1,296,902; and 3) Salvation Army with a total request of \$980,987. Hoyle explained that the next step is for the Board of Commissioners to vote to obligate ARPA funding for shelter projects at the next regular meeting on September 17, 2024.

**Sale of Surplus Real Property**

Michael Frue, Senior Attorney explained that the County has the authority to receive and negotiate offers to purchase its property and that a deposit and offer for the tax value was made for County owned property on Unadilla Avenue in Asheville. He provided the background and next steps for the sale. The Commissioners will review again and vote on a Resolution of Intent for approval of the sale which will also authorize and direct advertisement for upset bids. If there are no upset bids, then upon payment of the purchase price a nonwarranty deed will be delivered making the sale final.

**Enka Recreation – Design Contract and Grant Approval**

Allison Daines, Parks and Recreation Director provided background on the Enka Recreation Destination which has been underdevelopment since 2018. The TDA, MPO and Buncombe County Commissioners have all contributed and significant improvements have been made. Accomplishments of the Enka Recreation Destination project include 3 turf fields, lighting and more. She explained that at the September 17 regular Commissioner's meeting, the Board will vote to 1) accept the TPDF award for the Enka Recreation Destination – Phase II; 2) approve budget amendment for the Enka Recreation Destination – Phase II; and approve the design contract with CDC for Design Services.



**MINUTES OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'  
REGULAR MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2024, AT 5:00 p.m.**

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Board of Commissioners met in regular session on September 3, 2024, in the first-floor conference room at 200 College Street in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5:00 p.m. where and when the following business was transacted.

Present: Chairman Brownie Newman; Vice-Chair Parker Sloan; Commissioner Terri Wells, Commissioner Al Whitesides; Commissioner Amanda Edwards; Commissioner Martin Moore; and Commissioner Jasmine Beach-Ferrara.

Absent: None.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. and provided opening statements.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Moore moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

1. Approval of the August 20, 2024 Regular meeting minutes
2. Approval of the July 2024 Tax Collection Report

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Gay Weberg spoke about the Short-Term Rental (STR) Task Force and requested to have a professional property manager represented on the task force.

Mark Bastin spoke about the STR task force and requested that all core stakeholders, including a professional property manager be represented on the task force.

Randall Blankenship spoke about their concern about pace of STR task force and encouraged the Board to slow this down the process.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Adoption of the Schedule of Values for 2025 Reappraisal**

Keith Miller, Tax Assessor provided background on the 2025 Reappraisal Schedule of Values. He explained that pursuant to NCGS 105-317(C)(3), the Board of Commissioners have final approval of the Schedules, Standards, and Rules (Schedule of Values). The Board held a public hearing at the last meeting and this vote is to approve the Schedule of Values as presented. If adopted, Notice of the order shall be advertised once a week for four successive weeks. He then explained the next steps for property owners.

Commissioner Wells made the motion to adopt the Schedule of Values for the 2025 Reappraisal and to direct staff to publish legal Notice of the final approval of the Schedule of Values. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Edwards, and it was carried unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

## **Budget Amendment to approve appropriation of Medicaid Hold Harmless funds and approval of reallocation of ARPA funds for Broadband Match**

Elizabeth Odderstol explained that Buncombe County participated in the State's Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) program. As part of this process, the State awarded a broadband infrastructure project to Bellsouth Telecommunications for fiber expansion and Buncombe County is required to provide a financial match based on statutory guidance. She explained that additional funds are required above the ARPA allocation due to the State's reconfiguration of funds and that staff have identified two sources to resolve the shortage: (1) Reallocation of ARPA funds and (2) Medicaid Hold-Harmless Funds. Buncombe County has received Medicaid hold-harmless funds from the State, which are unrestricted funds and reflect previously county-owned sales tax proceeds increasing above state Medicaid expenses. \$411,408 is needed to cover the remaining shortage of funds. In 2021, Buncombe County was awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to invest toward recovery from COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts. These funds were awarded on a rolling basis to projects by Commissioners as selected via multiple Request for Proposals (RFP) processes. Additionally, Medicaid Hold-Harmless Funds Buncombe County has received Medicaid hold-harmless funds from the State, which are unrestricted funds and reflect previously county-owned sales tax proceeds increasing above state Medicaid expenses. \$411,408 is needed to cover the remaining shortage of funds. Commissioner Wells clarified the federal funding piece and why this has a funding gap. Commissioner Wells made the motions to 1) approve Reallocation of ARPA funds for Broadband Match; 2) approve the Budget Amendment for Broadband Match; and 3) authorize the County Manager to execute NCDIT CAB MOU for Buncombe-Bellsouth Project. The motions were seconded by Commissioner Whitesides and were carried unanimously.

## **Health Care Update and Proposed Changes**

Larry Reece, Benefit Consultant from USI Insurance Services provided an update about how the County Health plan is doing so far in calendar year 2024; reviewed forecasted costs for calendar year 2025; and made recommendations for plan program cost and design changes for the Board's consideration. He explained that at the six-month mark in the 2024-2025 calendar year, medical and RX claims costs are 4.6% higher than originally forecasted. Considering the balance between protecting a comprehensive health care plan that is experiencing long-term rising costs and the responsibility to be good stewards of public funds, staff proposed that the County cover \$1.4 million of the forecasted \$1.8 million rise in costs while working with health care plan participants to cover the remaining \$400,000. Furthermore, Staff identified potential opportunities for covering this gap though increasing some biweekly premium costs, increasing the Standard Plan co-insurance rate, and by removing Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 (GLP-1) drugs prescribed for weight loss (such as Wegovy) from the plan. He explained that over the past year, the County spent more than \$400,000 on GLPs prescribed for non-diabetic use, making GLPs the County's highest traditional drug expenditure. He further explained that the proposed plan will no longer cover GLP-1 and GIP-GLP1 agonist medications for the purpose of weight loss effective 1/1/25. These medications will still be covered for those members managing diabetes. He explained the factors that were considered when making this decision, which include: over the most recent 12 months, the County Spent over \$495,000 on these prescription drugs; 1 of 3 people stop using GLP-1s for weight loss due to side effects; research on the long term effectiveness of this class of drugs for weight loss is limited at this time; and that patients

seem to regain weight after stopping these medications. He also highlighted that the County Health Plan does cover other weight loss medications including: Phentermine, Qsymia, Benzphetamine, Diethylprop, Lomaira, Contrave, Zenical. The Commissioners discussed the presented data and other relevant findings. The Board requested more information, including co-pay options, options for phasing out or discontinuing coverage, and the associated cost and savings. The discussion was scheduled to be continued at the September 17, 2024 regular meeting.

## **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

- The Board appointed Kirk Richie to the Economic Development Commission
- The Board appointed Bruce Schlesinger to the Land Conservation Advisory Board.
- The Board appointed Nicole Stalling Juvenile Crime Prevention Council and appointed current community member seat, Angel Redmond to the Parks and Rec designee seat.
- The Board requested to hold Tourism Development Authority interviews on September 17 at 2:30 p.m.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

Michael Frue, Senior Attorney advised the Board that there were four matters to discuss in closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) for a potential legal matter; G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) for current litigation related to Buncombe County vs. TeamHealth Eastern Tennessee District 22CVS420 and Brevard, Buncombe County and City of Asheville vs. HCA Western District; G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) for a personnel matter; and G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) for an economic development matter. Frue further advised that staff is looking for direction on these matters and no action would be taken. Commissioner Whitesides made the motion to go into closed session; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Sloan and carried unanimously.