BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS **ALEXANDER COUNTY**
REGULAR MEETING March 2, 2026 **STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

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

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Monday, March 2, 2026 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Herman said he attended a Fire Chief's meeting on February 19, noting that fire departments were currently working on their budgets. In addition, a junior firefighter training day is scheduled in May at the Alexander County Fire Training Facility.

Chairman Yoder, Vice-Chairman Lail, and County Manager Justin Mundy discussed the NACo Legislative Conference held last week in Washington D.C. They felt the trip was productive, as they met with U.S. Senator Ted Budd and U.S. Representative Virginia Foxx about several needs in Alexander County. Chairman Yoder and Mr. Mundy also placed a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on behalf of Alexander County citizens.

Vice-Chairman Lail highlighted the potential impacts of H.R.1 (the One, Big, Beautiful Bill) on NC counties in the areas of Medicaid and SNAP / Food and Nutrition Services such as additional

caseloads due to verifications requirements changing from annually to twice per year. He emphasized that NC is one of 10 states that administer SNAP at the county level and one of 9 that manage Medicaid.

Chairman Yoder recognized Patrick Creech, Planning Director, for his appearance on *Jeopardy* on February 27. The County's Facebook post announcing Mr. Creech's selection garnered approx. 70,000 views. He also congratulated the ACHS Varsity Lady Cougars basketball team who won the 2nd Round NCHSAA 6A State Playoffs on February 26.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke during the Public Comment Period.

NCACC DISTRICT MEETING INFORMATIONAL VIDEO

The Board viewed a short video by Wallace Nelson, NCACC President, who encouraged attendance at upcoming district meetings as well as the first Presidential Forum on March 27th in Raleigh where the topic of healthcare and rural hospitals will be discussed.

COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STUDY REPORT

Pamela Bowman, Soil & Water District Director, advised that a grant received through the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund in December 2024 was used to conduct a Cost of Community Services Study in Alexander County. She introduced Dr. Jeffrey Dorfman, NCSU Professor of Agriculture and Resource Economics, who explained that county budget data from the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 was used to categorize revenues and expenditures by land uses to determine how much each category generates and uses in County services. Specifics included:

- Residential land uses generate $0.88 in revenue for every $1.00 in county services provided, resulting in a $5.1 million shortfall. Commercial and industrial properties generate $1.03 for every $1.00 in services, producing a modest $180,000 surplus. Farm and forest lands provide the strongest return, generating $4.25 for every $1.00 in services and contributing a $2.7 million surplus.

- The "break-even" home value, which is the value needed for a home to generate enough tax revenue to cover its share of county services, is $170,000. Because most new homes exceed that value, new construction generally covers its operating costs.

- The number of public-school children in a household significantly increases service costs, as public education accounts for about 15% of General Fund expenditures. A home with one child in public school would need to be valued at approximately $356,000 to fully cover costs, while a home with two children would need to be valued at about $583,000.

Overall, the study showed that Alexander County was financially well-positioned to manage future growth, with commercial development and farmland helping offset the cost of residential services. The study also confirmed that balanced growth, including continued commercial development and preservation of farmland, would be key to maintaining stable tax rates as the county grows.

ALEXANDER COUNTY RECOVERY COURT ABSTRACT & REQUEST

Rob Young, District Court Judge for District 32, requested permission to apply for grant funding for a proposed Alexander County Recovery Court Program to address substance use disorders and its impacts on the community. This program is one of two initiatives that emerged from the Substance Use Disorder Prevention Coalition, the first being the Alexander County Post Overdose Response Team.

He reported that Alexander County had a higher statistical rate for drug-related crime versus other counties of the same size at $42 per year per resident, $19 more than the national average, bringing the estimated cost of drug-related crime in Alexander County to $1,533,210 per year. The goal of the Recovery Court Program is to not only save County dollars, but also reduce crime by providing participants with a full continuum of care, community resource support, intensive supervision, and comprehensive care management. The program will be supported through a collaborative effort of local providers, law enforcement, the court system, and NC Division of Community Corrections.

Julie Walker from The Cognitive Connection, an integrated care and wellness resource in the Unifour, was also present to discuss specifics related to possible grant funding ranging between $750,000 and $1 million for a period of 3 to 5 years. A 15% match is typically required; however, in-kind matches may be accepted if specific criteria are met. Judge Young will return before the Board if any grant funding is awarded.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the request to apply for grant funding for the Alexander County Recovery Court Program. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #24

Justin Mundy, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendment #24 as follows:

Budget Amendment #24 – To:

- budget for a second round of grant funding from the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.
- increase the Senior Center budget for a Senior Medicare Patrol grant from the Senior Health Insurance Information Program for fraud prevention activities.

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #24. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Tax Abatements & Adjustments ($4,559.62) and Tax Refunds ($1,094.41) for January 23 – February 22, 2026.
B. Minutes from the February 2, 2026 Regular Meeting.
C. Board / Committee Appointments – Equalization & Review Board, Council on Aging, Region E Long-Term Care CAC, Farmland Preservation VAD Board, and Library Board.
D. Line-Item Transfer Report for February 2026.
E. Request to surplus a 1975 Chevy C60 dump truck – VIN #CCE625V110693 with unknown mileage, a 1986 Chevy 3500 dump truck – VIN #1GBHC34WXGS186627 with 177,422 miles, a 2000 Chevy 3500 truck – VIN #1GBHK33R2YF503437 with 222,054 miles, a 1994 homemade trailer – VIN #NCX786799, a 2014 homemade trailer – VIN #NCX1208788, a 2024 Iconic Elements truck bed storage box, a 2012 Ford Focus – VIN #1FAHP3E25CL399717 with 55,681 miles and bad transmission, and miscellaneous blowers, weed eaters, and other grounds keeping tools.

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 7:01 PM. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board

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CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD **ALEXANDER COUNTY**
REGULAR MEETING March 2, 2026 **STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

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Josh Lail, Vice-Chairman
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The Alexander County Consolidated Human Services Board held a regular meeting on Monday, March 2, 2026 in Room 103 of the CVCC / Alexander Center in Taylorsville, North Carolina.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Yoder called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

Billie Walker, Health Director, reviewed the following:

- Current Vacancies (Accreditation G.5.2) – Ms. Walker described current vacancies within the Health Department. There is still a need for an ophthalmologist on the CHS Advisory Committee as well as a nurse and a public member. Staff vacancies include a Behavioral Health Licensed Clinical Social Worker and an unpaid intern. The new School-Based Dental Health Coordinator started today.

- FY 2027 Budget – staff attended a budget kick-off meeting on February 11, 2026 and FY 2027 budget requests were submitted on Friday, March 6, 2026 as required.

- Fee Approvals (Accreditation I.2.1) – Ms. Walker requested a policy revision that would allow the Health Department to modify fees when notified of changes in supply costs without seeking Board approval beyond the standard annual adjustment process. This revision was recommended by the state consultant during recent training.

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the policy revision. Vice-Chairman Lail seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. Walker requested approval of updated fees for Environmental Health services, immunizations, and lab services.

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to approve the requested fee updates. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

- Accreditation Updates – an in-person visit will be conducted this fall as part of the accreditation process. The Health Department will be utilizing a new dashboard that has reduced the number of required benchmarks from 147 to 41. The current numbering system will also switch to letters.

- Annual Board Training & Public Health Policy Review (Accreditation G.3.1 and G.3.2) – Ms. Walker presented the annually required CHS Board training to provide important information about the Board's rule-making duties and advocacy roles, while also keeping them updated on emerging governance and public health issues. The Board was provided copies of all policies by email to review prior to tonight's meeting which included the CHS Board Operating Policy & Procedures (Adm. 3.02), CHS Board / BOCC / Advisory Committee Member Orientation Policy (Adm. 3.03), and CHS Board Policy on Policies (Adm. 3.05). Signatures were required on the CHS Board Annual Review Acknowledgement Statement and BOCC Annual Review Guide.

- 2025 Community Health Assessment (Accreditation B.2.1 and A.1.2) – Kaitlyn Graves, Health Educator, presented the 2025 Community Health Assessment. She gave a review of the process and how it fulfills Accreditation benchmarks and state requirements. This is a process that is required for all local health departments at least every 4 years. The CHA reviews the health needs of the community by analyzing primary and secondary data, and receiving community feedback via surveys, focus groups, or key informant interviews if needed. This process invites community partners to review survey & data results to assess the greatest health needs of the community. Once complete, the CHA identifies factors affecting the health of the population and determines ways to address them. Ms. Graves went on to discuss the wins from the previous CHA and how the process for this CHA occurred.

  There were 1,101 viable responses to the survey, which is a higher turnout than normal. These were representatives of our population, except for the male population, resulting in completion of a male focus group. The CHA survey was distributed through local newspapers, radio stations, businesses, social media, churches, and many more. She informed the Board that the 2025 CHA was now complete and would be submitted to the state on March 1, 2026. Ms. Graves presented the results of the 2025 CHA as follows:

  - Measles has become a growing concern due to the rising number of cases across North Carolina. Although Alexander County has not reported any exposures or cases, staff members are closely monitoring the situation and making preparations.

- Areas of success included improvements to Bethlehem Park, which supports the Healthy Living priority identified in the 2022 CHA by encouraging physical activity. Additionally, overdose cases declined from 152 in 2023 to 78 in 2025.

- At risk populations include adults and youth in need of mental health services, individuals with limited transportation, low income and uninsured, and non-English speaking.

- Pancreatic cancer has risen into the top 5 most common cancers in Alexander County and adult obesity have now exceeded the state average. Diabetes now ranks 8th among the top 10 leading causes of death, while heart disease and cancer hold the 1st and 2nd positions respectfully.

- The top identified health priorities were healthy living (physical activity and nutrition) and mental health. Strategic planning will begin soon to develop programs and initiatives that align with these focus areas.

Ms. Graves followed up with information on the Strategic Plan for 2026-2029. The requirements for Healthy Alexandrians Task Force are to approve the Strategic Planning priorities and goals for 2026-2029. Once there is a determination on the priorities/goals, this will be brought to the Board for review and comments.

Questions/Comments from the Board regarding the CHA:

1. Chairman Yoder and Commissioner Pennell asked questions related to suicide rates in Alexander County. Ms. Graves and Ms. Walker explained that, because an external firm (DellaRe) was used for data collection, this information was not immediately available but could be obtained and provided to the Clerk to the Board for distribution to the commissioners.

2. Chairman Yoder asked why pancreatic cancer was now listed separately rather than being included under the General Cancer category. The response was that the change reflected an increase in cases of this specific type of cancer within the population.

- Committee Reports – The Healthy Alexandrians Task Force meets quarterly to assist with the CHA process, strategic planning, and community health improvement planning. Because overdose rates in the county have declined significantly and substance abuse was not identified as a priority in the Community Health Assessment, the SUD Coalition was dissolved and restructured as the SUPPORT Coalition, which is now led through the PORT Program. The Health Department also received funding from the state to transition the Child Fatality Prevention Team into a local team

- Community Outreach – Ms. Walker discussed community outreach events for February through August 2026.

DSS REPORT

Keri Jerrell, DSS Director, reported the vacancy rate for the past month at 11% and there have been 3 new hires in CPS and two in Economic Services. Positions are open in Child Welfare, APS, and Economic Services and the department is seeking volunteer drivers for the Meals on Wheels Program. Current stats included 47 children in foster care, 6 in the Links Program, 3 in the 18-21 Program, 6 foster homes and 3 more in the licensing process, 4 adoptions completed and 3 in progress, and 14 adult wards. Foster care specifics included two reunifications, 7 granted guardianships, 9 parental relinquishments, 3 closed cases with one more anticipated, 6 relief of efforts and plan changes (3 in adoptive homes), and 5 pending relinquishments (children in DSS custody since 2019).

Vice-Chairman Lail asked how many of the 47 children in foster care were placed within the county. Ms. Jerrell responded that the majority were placed in other counties, largely because Alexander County does not have any therapeutic foster homes.

Ms. Jerrell also echoed Vice-Chairman Lail's earlier comments related to H.R.1 and its impacts on staff and the County budget. She explained that effective October 1, 2026, the federal cost share for Food and Nutrition Services will reduce from 50% to 25%, leaving counties responsible for 75% of administrative costs. New work requirements for participants could also impact benefits and each state's payment error rate must remain below 6%. For Medicaid, the federal reimbursement rate will remain at 75% with counties paying 25%. New work requirements for participants will take effect in January 2027 and the review period will also change to twice per year.

Commissioner Pennell requested a list of services provided by DSS, including their associated costs and whether each service is mandated by federal or state requirements.

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

Vicki Martin, Assistant Senior Center Director, stated that AARP is on-site at the Taylorsville branch and dance aerobics has been added. The Bethlehem branch now offers hearing screenings and mammograms and the Stony Point branch has added card playing and a new art display. Upcoming events include a shred-it event and Operation Medication Drop, Derby Day, Senior Celebration, Unifour Senior Games, gardening class, tie-dye t-shirt class, and a craft fair / yard sale/ farmer's market event. Several day trips are planned to include Cody Creek, Carolina Pie Company, Billy Graham Library, and the NC Zoo. To date, 86 contacts related to Medicare drug plans have been made since January with a savings of $110,258. The total savings for 2025 was $880,156.

CLOSED SESSION – N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3, 4, & 5) ATTORNEY/CLIENT PRIVILEGE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & CONTRACTUAL

Commissioner Reese made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 7:56 PM to allow for attorney/client privilege and to discuss economic development and contractual matters pursuant to

N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3, 4, & 5). Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Yoder made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 PM. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board