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**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**     May 12, 2026

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

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

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

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 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**

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

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Reese attended Alexander County Schools Legislative Day in April, where he spent time with School Board members and visited local school facilities. He also attended the National Day of Prayer event at Courthouse Park last week, which brought together many pastors and elected officials to pray for one another and for our country.

Chairman Yoder invited everyone to attend the Charters of Freedom dedication ceremony at Courthouse Park this Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM. During the event, a time capsule will be sealed and is scheduled to be opened on September 17, 2087 in celebration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Constitution.

## **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Commissioner Reese made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jerrell Miller, a resident of Sterling Road, requested a meeting and additional time to discuss the Sterling Road CDBG Project. He explained that his grandmother initially signed an easement agreement, but after learning more details about the project, decided she did not want the state-required turnaround placed in her front yard. Mr. Miller said he was willing to accept the current offer in exchange for his signing of an easement, but he wants his grandmother to be satisfied with the final arrangement or possibly receive compensation if an alternate turnaround location cannot be identified.

## **ALEXANDER COUNTY SCHOOLS PRESENTATION**

Dr. Bill Griffin, Superintendent of Alexander County Schools, gave a slideshow presentation highlighting recent accomplishments, challenges, and future goals for the School System as follows:

- A Legislative Day was held last month and members of the General Assembly were invited to tour local schools before concluding the day with a presentation on the state of Alexander County Schools.
- The district's new logo and branding was unveiled last summer. The updated emblem retained the traditional "A" while an arrow was incorporated to symbolize the district's "north star" and commitment to continued growth. The star in the design represents the district's "gold star standard." Griffin said the new mission statement was "Building a Legacy of Excellence," while the vision statement was "The Educational Choice for Every Child."
- Upon Dr. Griffin's arrival during the 2024-2025 school year, he was immediately faced with a significant budget shortfall. During a school tour in the fall of 2024, he met with employees to discuss ways to improve the budget and become more fiscally responsible. He noted that the district's fund balance had declined from \$2,896,038 in 2017-2018 to \$1,095,984 in 2024-2025, with auditors projecting only one more year of available fund balance if changes were not made. Dr. Griffin said the Board of Education and administration had to "right the ship" quickly, despite some unpopular decisions. The goal for the first year was to use zero fund balance and by the end of the 2024-2025 year, that goal was met and the School System and funding was also added back into reserves.

- A total of 41 positions has been captured over the last two years through a combination of reductions in force and attrition. He shared two NCDPI graphs showing efforts to align staffing levels with student enrollment. One graph showed teacher positions compared to average daily membership (ADM) from 2012 to 2025. Student enrollment decreased from 5,466 students in 2012 to 4,201 in 2025, while the number of teachers became much higher beginning in 2018. He pointed out that the two intersected again in 2025 for the first time since 2017. A second graph comparing all staff positions to ADM showed staffing remained below ADM until 2018 before climbing significantly higher until recent reductions. Dr. Griffin felt the data demonstrated the district was following through on its commitments.
- More than \$3.5 million was secured within a year through financial improvements and grants. Dr. Griffin said the district moved from losing \$800,000 annually to saving approximately \$1.19 million through budget improvements and operational changes. East Alexander Middle School was one of only 15 schools statewide to receive a \$1.8 million GoldenLEAF grant to improve instruction and programming. He also discussed the transition of Ellendale Elementary into the Ellendale School of Innovation, which has already experienced a 21 percent increase in enrollment. Alexander County Schools was also selected as one of 8 western NC districts to participate in the High Country STEM initiative, supported by the Science and Math Technology Center. Additional grants secured included 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers funding (\$120,000 over 3 years), EWIC Innovation grants for CTE (\$65,000), a Homebuilding Tech grant (\$20,000), and a Harbor Freight Tools grant (\$50,000).
- NC Superintendent Mo Green visited East Alexander Middle School on April 20<sup>th</sup> as part of his statewide tour of GoldenLEAF grant recipient schools.
- Dr. Griffin said he has been working closely with legislators regarding teacher pay, also noting that earlier today, state budget negotiations reached an agreement that included raises for teachers. He thanked local legislators for listening to concerns.

Members of the Board thanked Dr. Griffin and the Board of Education for their leadership along with efforts to improve the district's budget.

### **StRAP FUNDS STREAM DEBRIS REMOVAL SPONSORSHIP**

Pamela Bowman, Soil & Water Director, announced that the Alexander County Soil & Water Conservation District had been awarded additional funds from the NC Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (StRAP) for stream debris removal. This latest round of StRAP funding will focus on streams damaged by Hurricane Helene. The cap amount of \$526,000 was requested and \$516,000 was ultimately received. Ms. Bowman felt 6-8 stream sites totaling more than 30,000 linear feet could be mitigated, depending on bid amounts.

The Soil and Water Conservation District will administer the program directly rather than contracting the work out. Up to 15 percent of construction costs can also be used to purchase

needed supplies and equipment. Ms. Bowman emphasized that no local match was required and all expenses would be fully reimbursed by the state. In addition, she mentioned that the USDA would assist with streams containing beaver dams by trapping the beavers and removing the dam debris, which could lower project costs since those services would not be included in the bid package.

Ms. Bowman also informed the Board that since Tropical Storms Eta and Zeta in November 2020, the County had received 4 rounds of funding for stream debris removal totaling \$853,000. Through those efforts, 15 sites have been completed and 36,303 linear feet of debris removed from local streams. She also presented slides showing several of the most recently completed stream projects.

Commissioner Reese asked how many streams were left to clear. Ms. Bowman responded that 10 to 15 sites remained after the current projects were completed.

Commissioner Reese made a motion for Alexander County to serve as sponsor for the StRAP funding with 100% reimbursement from the State. Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS #26 - #28**

Justin Mundy, County Manager, reviewed the purpose of Budget Amendments #26 - #28 as follows:

Budget Amendment #26 – To increase:

- the Register of Deeds budget to cover estimated expenses for the remainder of FY 2026 for payments required by the state and to reflect revised revenue projections.
- the JCPC budget for FY 2026 discretionary funding awarded to the Aspire JCPC Program.
- the Detention Center budget for estimated medical supplies and inmate medical bills for the remainder of FY 2026, including recent medical bills totaling approx. \$14,000, \$18,000, and \$21,000.

Budget Amendment #27 – to:

- increase the EMS budget to cover estimated expenses for the remainder of FY 2026 for medical billing services and increased retirement expenses due to more full-time employee hours.
- transfer funds from the Governing Body budget to the EMS budget for fees associated with the architectural services contract for the EMS Station #2 Expansion Project.
- transfer funds from the Public Buildings / Maintenance budget to the Library budget to complete a paving project at the main library in the current budget year.

Budget Amendment # 28 – To increase the Landfill budget to cover estimated tire recycling and disposal expenses for the remainder of FY 2026.

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to approve Budget Amendments #26 - #28. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Tax Abatements & Adjustments (\$4,969.76) and Tax Refunds (\$3,014.12) for March 25 – May 3, 2026.
- B. Minutes from the April 6, 2026 Regular Meeting and April 20, 2026 Budget Work Session.
- C. Board / Committee Appointments – Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.
- D. Line-Item Transfer Report for April 2026.
- E. Resolution opposing modifications to county property tax authority.
- F. Resolution to commit fund balance for the year ending June 30, 2026.
- G. ALS Awareness Month Proclamation.
- H. Renewal of agreement with Institutional Medical Services, PLLC and IMS Correctional Healthcare, LLC for inmate medical care services.
- I. Interlocal agreement with the Town of Taylorsville for Sterling Road condemnation costs.
- J. Records Retention and Disposition Schedule for the Register of Deeds.
- K. Alexander County JCPC Revised Funding Plan for FY 2025-2026.
- L. Request from Sheriff Chad Pennell to surplus the following firearms to be traded for new Sig AR-15 Model M400 rifles at Lawman’s Firearms – Colt Model M4LE (Serial #LEO20939), Colt Model M4LE (Serial #LEO20915), Colt Model M4LE (Serial #LEO22076), Colt Model M4LE (Serial #LEO21008), Colt Model Match (Serial #405140), Stag Model 15 (Serial #334965), Stag Model 15 (Serial #334966), and Stag Model 15 (Serial #334967).
- M. Personnel Policy Revisions – Definitions, Probationary Pay Increase, Probationary Period, Promotion, Bonus Time, Overnight Lodging, Performance Evaluation, Payment of Annual Upon Separation of Employment, Weather Leave, Leave Without Pay, Alcohol Use, Alcohol Possession, Flexible Work Practices, and Counseling Sessions.

Commissioner Reese 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)(5 & 6) CONTRACTUAL & PERSONNEL**

Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to enter into Closed Session at 6:51 PM to discuss contractual matters and personnel issues pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5 & 6). Commissioner Herman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Lail made a motion to adjourn at 7:47 PM. Commissioner Reese seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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Larry G. Yoder, Chairman

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Jamie M. Starnes, Clerk to the Board