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MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
AUGUST 12, 2025
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All Board Members, County Manager Warren Cabe, Deputy Clerk Tammy Keezer, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, and County Attorney Eric Ridenour were present, as were a number of county employees, media, and citizens.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(A) Ms. Keezer announced that county offices will be closed on Monday, September 1, 2025, in observance of the Labor Day holiday.

(B) Ms. Keezer shared that Macon County Maintenance and Parks and Recreation Department employees were recognized on August 12, 2025, for the outstanding work done at the Veterans' Memorial Park.

(C) Mr. Cabe announced a Public Hearing is scheduled for September 9, 2025, for the purpose of considering whether the Board of Commissioners would adopt the health department as a department within the county pursuant to NCGS 153A-77.

(D) Mr. Cabe reported that the Board of Health voted at their last meeting to meet monthly instead of every other month, so their next meeting will be August 26, 2025, at 6:15 p.m.

(E) 828 Treasure Quest fundraiser for KIDS Place - Alisha Ashe, Executive Director of Kids Place, Kellie Burns, Event Coordinator, and Lee Cloer with 828 Vibes provided an overview of the fundraiser, which will be held on Saturday, October 11, 2025.

(F) Mr. Cabe announced that the Community Funding Pool funding application is live on the web page.

(G) Mr. Cabe said the Highlands School renovation project is on schedule, and that the Franklin High School (FHS) parking lot should be paved by the end of the week, and that the FHS project is also on schedule

(H) Mr. Cabe reported that the Board of Education wants to schedule a joint meeting in the near future.

(I) Mr. Shields announced that the LBJ Job Corps painted the eagle at the Veterans Memorial Park and was recognized at the Veterans Memorial Park this morning.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Young requested all in attendance rise and a moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Commissioner Antoine, the pledge to the flag was recited.

PUBLIC HEARING(S): None

ADDITIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA: Commissioner Shearl requested to add item 10E under Old Business, Discussion on Operations of Solid Waste, and item 10F under Old Business, Update on Animal Services, to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: **Vickie Sanders** spoke about Burningtown-Iotla Fire Department (BIFD) membership, training, and the open house event. She said they have done everything that has been asked of them, and she hopes the community continues to have the BIFD. **Matt Jackson** spoke about the Board of Health and said to fix the problems, but do not tear down the whole structure. Focus on real solutions and not overreach. **Betsy Baste** said Animal Control Officers do not have enough force in issues with animal abuse and neglect, but if they were employees of the Sheriff's Department. The officers could do more. She stated that she wants to advocate for the Pawsitive Animal Volunteers who want to take over the shelter.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, the board voted unanimously to approve the agenda, as adjusted.

REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS:

PRESENTATION AND UPDATE ON CENTER OPERATIONS AT LBJ JOB CORPS - Vickie Sutton, Academic Manager, gave an overview of the LBJ Job Corps center and programs offered. Keith Bowers, Business Liaison, spoke about career readiness and transition to the workforce.

PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT - HR and Safety Director Tammy Keezer introduced the Macon County Human Resource staff. HR Analyst Nina Parrott shared a PowerPoint presentation about the new real-time application process.

OLD BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION ON ADDITION TO VETERANS MEMORIAL AT THE NANTAHALA COMMUNITY BUILDING/LIBRARY - Nantahala Community Member Susan Carpenter shared a PowerPoint presentation of the vision for an additional, larger memorial. She requested permission from the board to move forward. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, for Ms. Carpenter to proceed with the design and purchase as requested. The vote was unanimous.

DISCUSSION ON USE AND OCCUPANCY OF MULTI-USE ROOM AT NANTAHALA COMMUNITY BUILDING AND LIBRARY – Mr. Cabe indicated there was information in the agenda packet regarding the lease proposed by the Nantahala Community Development Club (NCDC), which includes a standard one-year lease option and a per-day lease option. Attorney Ridenour explained both lease options and said he hoped the per-day lease option would be acceptable to the state bingo authority. NCDC Chairman Steve Bigos said he was happy with the one-year lease and that NCDC cut the fee in half, and added the fee schedule in the version he provided. Commissioner Shearl commented that the lease stipulates the facility is to be used for community activities, and that reserving the facility for a private individual or family should not take priority over a community activity. Commissioner Breeden said he thinks the cleanest idea is to do the daily lease because the community club meets only once a month, with the library taking over the calendar. Librarian Abby Hardison said the library space is limited, library staff are present six days a week, and they have to rely on someone from the NCDC to come in and grant them access to the space, making it difficult to plan. She said that having freedom of access would be beneficial to them in planning community activities more easily and frequently. Commissioner Young said we have discussed this for two months, and we need to make a decision. He indicated that two things must happen for him to support the lease: the library must have a key, and he would like to see claw-back provisions in the lease. Commissioner Antoine said he agrees with the terms Commissioner Young presented. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to enter into a lease on a per-day basis, with the building open to the library, the library maintaining the schedule, and the library having a key to the building. In the discussion, Attorney Ridenour inquired about specific days and times required by the NCDC for Bingo, which was followed by Mr. Bigos' suggestion to disregard the lease and bingo, and instead let the library operate as it has been. Mr. Cabe said that if the NCDC does not have a lease, they cannot charge a fee for a building they do not own or lease, nor can the county provide the supplies. Commissioner Breeden withdrew his motion, stating that we do not need a lease and will operate as usual, with the library having a key for access to the NCDC side to conduct programs they have scheduled on the calendar. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Young, to enter into a one-year lease with NCDC, with the library having a key, a clawback clause, and a fee schedule. After further discussion, Attorney Ridenour clarified the lease details and said he would amend the lease for approval. The vote was 4-1 with Commissioners Shearl, Young, Antoine, and Shields in favor of the motion, and Commissioner Breeden opposed.

UPDATE ON BURNINGTOWN-IOTLA FIRE DEPARTMENT - Fire Marshal Jimmy Teem gave an update on inspections, membership, deficiencies, and probation status. Commissioner Shearl provided an update on the events that occurred during a recent drill, noting that there was significant resistance to the drill. He described the intent of the drill and how it is supposed to operate, and indicated that Cowee Volunteer Fire and Rescue has covered the calls in the BIFD district for the last 18 months, so the insurance rates are not impacted. Commissioner Shearl said he has no proof that BIFD can handle its district. Chief Kenneth McCaskill provided an update indicating that reports are completed on Thursday nights, and there are currently no deficient reports in the computer system. He spoke about the inspection drill and how he felt it put his community in danger. Commissioner Antoine said he realizes this is a highly emotional issue, that he views it as a safety issue, and stated that he is not hearing that if lives are on the line, they can be saved. Commissioner Shearl referred to a probationary period for members, as per their bylaws, stating that a number of the members on their roster are on probation and therefore cannot participate in calls. Chief McCaskill said those bylaws were suspended ten weeks ago, and every member has the appropriate turnout gear. He said the department was eligible to come off probation in December, but they had a missed call around the first of January, so the probation started over. Chief McCaskill said there are communication system issues, and they do not get all calls. After further discussion, Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to suspend the contract for BIFD. A discussion ensued about the process for contracting with another department for coverage and taking over the BIFD district, as well as merger options. The vote was 2 to 3, with Commissioners Young and Shearl in favor of the motion, and Commissioners Shields, Antoine, and Breeden opposed. Commissioner Shearl inquired whether Cowee Volunteer Fire and Rescue is still obligated to respond to calls for the BIFD district, and Mr. Cabe clarified that BIFD is still under probation, but that the decision would be made by the board. Cowee Volunteer Fire and Rescue Assistant Chief Larry Pickens said they are unwilling to cover the calls without compensation because they have already done so for 13 months. There was a unanimous board consensus to leave BIFD on probation with monthly updates provided.

At 9:07 p.m., Chairman Young called a five-minute recess and reconvened the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON EXPANDED ACCESS TO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES THROUGH REGULATED ON- AND OFF-PREMISES SALES – Mr. Cabe said there was a draft resolution in the agenda packet, and that if the board were to decide they wanted to move forward, they would need to approve that resolution. He said Attorney Ridenour would also need to know which election ballot the board wanted to put the resolution on. Attorney Ridenour said if the board wanted to allow liquor sales, the County would have to operate an ABC store and put that on the ballot as well. Otherwise, beer and wine sales would be covered. He explained the resolution and the ballot process. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shields, to adopt a resolution for a referendum for on- and off-premises sales to be included on the 2026 general election ballot [Attachment 1]. The vote was unanimous.

UPDATE ON SOLID WASTE - Mr. Cabe informed board members that he and the Interim Director have been working through the process, that some processes were already in place to look at Cell 2A and 2B, hauling, etc. He said the engineers put this out to bid, and the cost estimates were above what the predictions were, and that he has asked the engineers to go back to the lowest qualified bidder to validate the bid and see if we could split off Cell 2A, as well as some other options he had discussed with Interim Director Jaimie Picou. Mr. Cabe indicated that the rough estimate for hauling is $ 5,000 per day, plus tipping fees. He noted that with the construction project now expected to be about a month behind schedule, he thinks we should release an RFP for hauling that includes the tipping fees. Mr. Cabe hopes to have more information at the September meeting.

UPDATE ON ANIMAL SERVICES – Mr. Cabe said we had one proposal to the RFP from a volunteer group requesting to operate the animal shelter, and that he had sent it to the Board of Health members. He said it will take some time to review the improvement requests in the proposal and that he needs to gather some people to have a more in-depth discussion, possibly arriving at an answer by the September meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION REGARDING SWAIN COUNTY AND MACON COUNTY PROPERTY BOUNDARY – Tax Administrator Abby Braswell said she was requesting approval for a geodetic survey of the county line between Macon and Swain County and explained the process. She said there are nine houses that are going to be affected. Attorney Ridenour gave a shout-out to the Tax and Mapping departments in both Macon and Swain for their work in making this happen. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to approve the joint agreement as requested. The vote was unanimous.

Consideration of Revision to Article VI, Section 2 of the Macon County Personnel Policy Regarding Hospital and Medical Insurance Upon Retirement – Mr. Cabe said he is supposed to be working on a salary and benefit study, but there is a policy that we want board input on, and he thinks a change in this would help with recruitment. He said we are proposing ten consecutive years with Macon County to be eligible for health benefits for mid-career folks upon retirement, to help with recruitment, but we are open to suggestions. He said there is a cost associated with this change, but we cannot determine that at this time because there are constant changes in how long people stay, how many people come, etc. Mr. Cabe said if this is approved, we can come back and review based on the impact. Commissioner Breeden said he likes the ten years and noted that we had discussed this for recruitment and retention, and the financial offset is probably pretty close. Commissioner Breeden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to approve the revision as presented. The vote was 4-1 with Commissioners Breeden, Antoine, Shields, and Young voting in favor of the motion, and Commissioner Shearl opposed.

DISCUSSION ON EVALUATION OF ROOF REPAIR NEEDS AT SCC MOBILE CLASSROOMS – Planning, Permitting, and Development Director Joe Allen said during the budget process, there was discussion about roofing for the SCC mobile classrooms, and the board had requested he conduct an evaluation. Mr. Allen stated that the roofs need repair and provided pictures showing some of the issues. He also shared three quotes he has obtained, indicating that the total cost will be around $14,819, which is significantly lower than the original request by SCC, which was $40,000. Mr. Cabe clarified that payment for the repairs is the responsibility of SCC. Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to approve the roof repairs as recommended. The vote was unanimous.

CONSENT AGENDA: Upon a motion by Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented, which includes: (A) Minutes of the July 8, 2025, regular meeting, (B) Budget Amendments #10-36, (C) Renewal of Franklin Chamber Contract, (D) Renewal of Highlands Chamber Contract, (E) Reapproval/Reaffirm NC Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement, (F) Approval of Revised Voluntary Shared Leave Policy, (G) Approval of Revised Personnel Records Policy(H) Tax releases for the month of July 2025 in the amount of $1,746.00, (I) Monthly ad valorem tax collection report – no action necessary.

APPOINTMENTS:

Macon County Board of Health (3 seats) – Mr. Cabe stated that there were two resignations on the Board of Health at their last meeting, and we immediately posted the vacancies. He said this did not allow a lot of time to receive applications, but we brought the applications we received. Mr. Cabe talked about the vacancies and the concern that the Board of Health maintain a quorum. There was some discussion about Commissioner Shearl serving as a voting member of the Board of Health in a liaison capacity, and Commissioner Breeden was appointed as a non-voting liaison; however, the board could appoint Commissioner Breeden to a vacant general public seat if they chose. Commissioner Shearl made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Antoine, to appoint Commissioner Breeden as a voting member filling the optometrist/general public vacancy. The vote was unanimous. Commissioner Young requested that we reopen the applications for two to three weeks, and Commissioner Breeden asked that we vet the physician currently serving on the board in a general public seat to determine if he qualified for the vacant physician seat.

CLOSED SESSION: At 10:14 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session as allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney regarding pending litigation. At 10:20 p.m., upon a motion by

Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to come out of closed session and return to open session.

ADJOURN: With no other business, at 10:23 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Shearl, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Warren Cabe	Josh Young
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board	Board Chair

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MACON

RESOLUTION REQUESTING A REFERENDUM ON THE SALE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IN MACON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

WHEREAS, the Macon County Board of Commissioners acknowledges that citizens and local businesses may benefit from expanded access to alcoholic beverages through regulated on- and off-premises sales;

WHEREAS, the Macon County Board of Commissioners recognizes the public interest in authorizing the regulated sale of certain alcoholic beverages throughout the county;

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statutes §18B-600 authorize counties to call for a local referendum to determine whether the sale of malt beverages (beer) and unfortified wine (containing not more than 16% alcohol by volume) shall be permitted;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Macon County Board of Commissioners hereby formally requests that the Macon County Board of Elections place on the ballot for the November, 2026, general election a referendum to determine whether the sale of **malt beverages and unfortified wine** for both **on-premises and off-premises consumption** shall be authorized throughout Macon County, in accordance with applicable North Carolina law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution shall be delivered by Clerk to the Board of Commissioners to the Director of the Macon County Board of Elections.

ADOPTED, at the August 12, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners.

Josh Young, Chairman,
Macon County Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

Warren Cabe, Macon County Manager
(Official Seal)

Attachment 1