

**MINUTES
BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PRE-AGENDA MEETING**

The Burke County Board of Commissioners held a pre-agenda meeting on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, Burke County Services Building, 110 N. Green Street in Morganton, N.C. The meeting was streamed live on the County's YouTube channel, BurkeCountyNC, and it was broadcast on the local cable systems. The agenda, in its entirety, was posted to the County's website, www.burkenc.org, several days prior to the meeting as usual. Those present were:

COMMISSIONERS: Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
Scott Mulwee, Vice Chairman
Randy Burns
Johnnie W. Carswell

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Phil Smith (Out of town.)

STAFF: Brian Epley, County Manager
Margaret Pierce, Deputy County Manager/Finance Director
J.R. Simpson, II, County Attorney
Kay Honeycutt Draughn, Clerk to the Board

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brittain called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and expressed condolences for the passing of Vice Chairman Mulwee's mother-in-law.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: To approve the agenda as presented.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Randy Burns, Commissioner
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Randy Burns, and Johnnie W. Carswell
ABSENT:	Phil Smith

PRESENTATIONS

MOW - PRESENTATION ON MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM

Lana Lowder, Nutrition Coordinator, Burke County Senior Services, presented an overview of the Meals on Wheels program. Highlights of her presentation were as follows:

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Meals on Wheels   Client Testimonial "I don't know what I would do without these meals, they are such a great help. It is so nice to see the volunteers everyday, I don't get to see many people anymore". -Carolyn Davis (GH)	March for Meals Community Champions Week is March 18-22, 2024  
Frozen Program January 2020-February 2024 ▶ CARES Act ▶ Families First Act (FFCRA) ▶ Supplemental Nutrition Fund ▶ ARPA 	Meals on Wheels Referrals • Please go to www.burkenc.org there will be a link to a referral form • You can also call or email Lana Lowder Contact Information Lana Lowder 501 N. Green St. Morganton, NC 28655 lane.lowder@burkenc.org 828-430-4147 Donations ➢ Cash or Check sent to Burke Senior Center ➢ Make checks payable to Meals on Wheels Interested in Volunteering? ➢ Visit Burke Senior Center ➢ Call or Email Lana Lowder

Ms. Lowder also provided a handout with additional information, which reads as follows:

 Burke County Senior Services Burke County Nutrition Services Fact Sheet History of Nutrition Services in Burke County Burke County Department of Social Services (Adult Services Unit) received the Nutrition Program from Blue Ridge Community Action around 1998/1999. On July 1, 2007, the Nutrition Program was moved under the supervision of Burke County Senior Services where it remains to this date. Funding <table border="0"> <tr> <td colspan="3">Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Home Delivered Meals</td> <td>\$143,753</td> <td>Includes 10% local match</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Congregate Meals</td> <td>\$8,841</td> <td>Includes 10% local match</td> </tr> </table> Home Delivered Meals (also known as Meals on Wheels) is available Monday – Friday and is currently serving 72 clients (this number changes daily due to illnesses, hospitalizations, rehabilitation in a rehab facility, or other). There are 13 routes located throughout the County that are delivered by over 150 volunteers and staff: Burke Senior Center (Morganton) Pick Up Site • Salem- Hwy 84 W community • Oak Hill- Hwy 181 community • Buena Vista- East Morganton to Drexel • Morganton 1- Lenoir St. to Sanford Dr. • Morganton 4- Old NC 18 community to Mull Elementary • Morganton 5- Valdese Ave to E Union St. Valdese Congregate Pick Up Site • Drexel- S Main St. Oakland Ave. • Valdese 1- Praley St SW to Laurel St NE • Valdese 2- Church St to Enon Rd • Rutherford College- Eldred St. SE to Malcolm Blvd also down Hwy 70 E East Burke Senior Center (Hildebran) Pick Up Site • Rhodhiss- Rhodhiss Rd, Hwy 70 E, Mt. Harmony Rd. • Hildebran- Old NC 10, Wilson Rd, Hickory Airport Rd. Wilkes Grove Baptist Church (George Hildebran) Pick Up Site • George Hildebrand- Wilkes Grove Church Rd, George Hildebrand School Rd Congregate Nutrition Program- Serves seniors the same nutritious hot meal Monday – Friday <u>onsite</u> at the Teachers Cottage in Valdese. There are currently 10 participants registered with a daily average attendance of 7. 501 North Green Street ~ Morganton, NC 28655 ☎ Burke Senior Center (828) 430-4147 ☎ East Burke Senior Center (828) 397-3397 📍 Nutrition Program (828) 430-4147	Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG)			Home Delivered Meals	\$143,753	Includes 10% local match	Congregate Meals	\$8,841	Includes 10% local match	Additional Funding – received during the COVID-19 Pandemic were utilized to serve Frozen meals to participants in the outer lying areas of the County. These participants are also on the Home Delivered Meals waitlist. Grants serving frozen program: Totaling \$379,584- Served a total of 53,839 meals from January 2020 to February 2024. • CARES Act: \$89,489 • Families First Act (FFCRA): \$76,313 • Supplemental Nutrition Fund: \$44,622 • ARPA: \$169,160 Waiting List There are currently 527 people on the waiting list in Burke County and this number continues to increase daily.
Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG)										
Home Delivered Meals	\$143,753	Includes 10% local match								
Congregate Meals	\$8,841	Includes 10% local match								

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Carswell raised queries about the program's transition to County administration, recalling its prior management under Blue Ridge Community Action. He then commended the Meals on Wheels program and

expressed frustration that there is such a huge waitlist. He requested that County Manager Epley investigate how the program came to be run by the County and how the Board can expand the program and make it better. Mr. Epley noted that every county does it differently but if it is a priority of the Board, the budget can be increased to further help to fund the program. He estimated that to add 28 additional hot meals to the route would cost approximately \$50,000, and to fund the frozen meal program, formerly funded by COVID-19 grants, would cost roughly \$13,000 - \$15,000 a year. Roxanne Powell, Senior Services Director, detailed the waitlist's prolonged nature and explained the screening tool's need-based prioritization. She outlined logistical challenges hindering hot meal program expansion, citing time and food safety constraints. Commissioner Carswell sought clarification on program criteria, prompting Ms. Powell to reaffirm age, residency, and homebound status prerequisites. Chairman Brittain queried about how the COVID-19 funding became designated for the Meals on Wheels program and the potential for reallocating funding to the program, but Ms. Powell noted that every program funded by the Community Block grants all have waiting lists. Commissioner Carswell wanted to know if there were any administrative fees from WPCOG for the services provided to the County, but Ms. Powell was not sure. Commissioner Burns inquired about the seniors' utilization of tax deferment / reduction opportunities. Ms. Powell suggested integrating tax-related discussions into the mandatory annual in-person assessment and the 6-month reassessment conducted via phone. She also highlighted the Tax Department's annual outreach to the Senior Center to educate seniors about potential tax deductions. Commissioner Carswell raised a question about congregate meals, sparking a brief discussion delving into the specifics of the matter.

There being nothing further, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

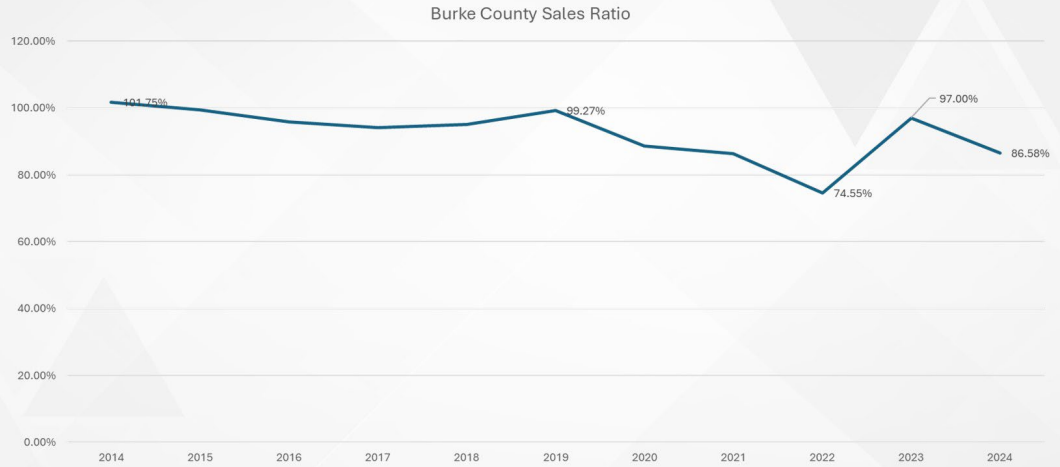
TAX - DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, presented a departmental update. Highlights of his presentation were as follows:

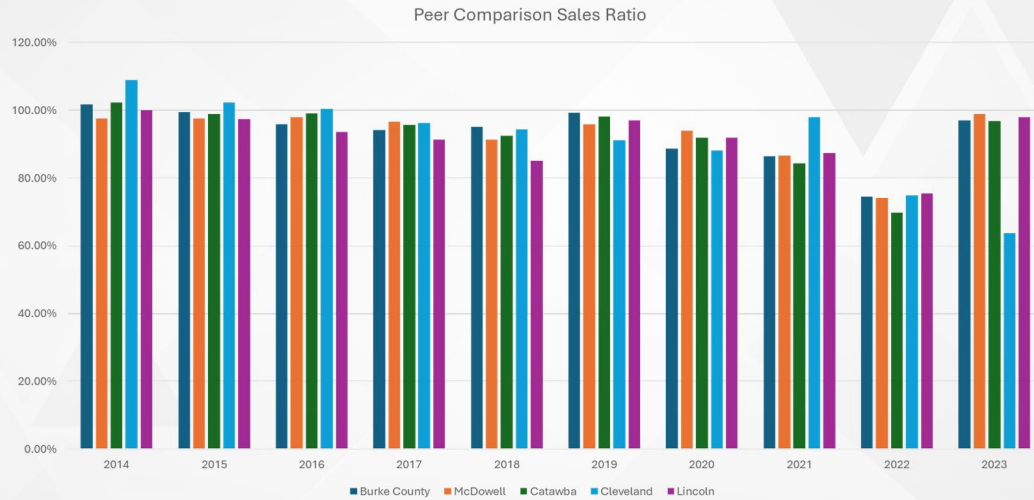
TAX ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OPERATIONAL UPDATE Burke County, NC March 5, 2024 BURKE COUNTY ALL ABOUT ADVANCING	DISCUSSION TOPICS • Real Estate Market Trends • In House Taxing Data Reviews & Audits • Improving Collection Rate • On Site Software Training • Inter Departmental Collaboration with Register of Deeds Certification
MARKET TRENDS & SALES RATIOS	

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POST REVALUATION - SALES RATIO



POST REVALUATION - SALES RATIO



IN OFFICE - DATA REVIEWS & AUDITS

FILE REVIEW & AUDITS

Present Use Value

Elderly

Disabled Veterans

Exempt Public / Private



County staff are collectively reviewing all samples of tax accounts that operate under a current exemption to ensure continued compliance with NCDOR regulations.

FILE REVIEW & AUDITS

G.S. 105-277.1 Elderly/Disabled Homestead Exclusion • Partial exclusion program • Permanent residence of the owner, who must be 65 or older, or totally and permanently disabled • Maximum income for owner (and spouse) determined by statute (\$29,600 for 2018) adjusted annually based Social Security cost of living index • For assessment purposes, the appraised value is reduced by either \$25,000 or ½ the appraised value of the residence, whichever is greater

G.S. 105-277.1C Disabled Veteran Homestead Exclusion Partial exclusion program • Permanent residence of the owner, who must be a qualifying veteran (or unmarried surviving spouse) • Qualifying veteran: – Separated from service honorably or under honorable conditions – Certified by the VA as having a service-connected, total and permanent disability as of January 1 of the year of application – If deceased, either died with the disability or as the result of a service-connected condition • For assessment purposes, the appraised value is reduced by \$45,000



FILE REVIEW & AUDITS

There are three (3) uses which can qualify under PUV:

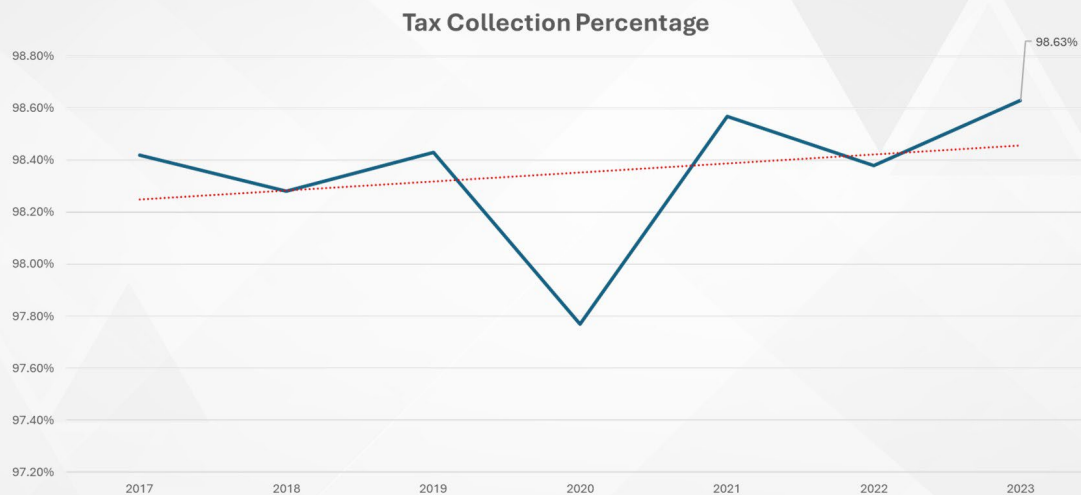
- Agricultural
- Horticultural
- Forestry

The property owner must submit an application to be enrolled in PUV. Once property is approved and enrolled, the difference between the market value tax and the PUV tax is deferred. When a property comes out of the PUV program, the taxes deferred for the current and three (3) previous years are immediately due and payable, with interest.



TAX COLLECTION RATE

IMPROVING COLLECTION RATE



ON SITE SOFTWARE TRAINING

ON SITE SOFTWARE TRAINING

Expert Training by Farragut - March 13, 2024:

Leverage Farragut's extensive expertise to empower our tax department with in-house training on maximizing software capabilities.



Optimizing Software Utilization:

Enhance efficiency and proficiency within our tax team as Farragut provides targeted guidance to unlock the full potential of our software tools.



DEED CERTIFICATION

DEED CERTIFICATION

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION
WITH THE REGISTER OF DEEDS

Roles:

- **Tax Department:** Verifies tax info, identifies liens.
- **Register of Deeds:** Examines and records deeds

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Accuracy:** Validation of tax data improves deed certification.

Risk Mitigation:

- **Fraud Prevention:** Joint checks from both departments reduce fraudulent risks.

THANK YOU

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. Mr. Bridgers addressed Commissioner Carswell's inquiry regarding Farragut's training progress. County Manager Epley highlighted the goal of monthly onsite training. Mr. Bridgers noted that the Tax Department is preparing for the 2027 tax revaluation, which would be done in-house unlike prior years. There being nothing further, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

BOC - RECOGNITION OF THE EAST BURKE HIGH SCHOOL CHEER TEAM (PLACE HOLDER)

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, requested recognition of Coach Sabrina Baker and the East Burke High School Varsity Coed Cheerleading Team for their NCCCA State Championship win on January 20, 2024, for the Non-Tumbling D2 Division.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

BOC - PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH AS NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Chairman Brittain requested the approval of a proclamation declaring the month of March as National Social Work Month and recognizing all the good those in the social work field do for the Burke County community.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments and then inquired as to the availability of Korey Fisher-Wellman, DSS Director, or his staff for the regular meeting. Clerk Draughn highlighted that Mr. Fisher-Wellman was unable to attend the regular meeting. Chairman Brittain requested Clerk Draughn reach out to confirm who from DSS would be available to attend the regular meeting. There being nothing further, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS – NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

CLERK - APPOINTMENT TO COUNCIL ON AGING, SEAT NO. 12

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, requested the appointment of Linda Shamblin to fill vacant Seat No. 12 on the Council of Aging to complete an unexpired term ending November 30, 2026.

12	Vacant	A	
		TE	11/30/2026

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

CLERK - APPOINTMENT TO BURKE CO. SMART START (PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN)

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, reported that Julia Terrell was the DSS Designee on the Burke County Smart Start, Inc. (Burke Partnership for Children) Board of Directors until her recent retirement from Burke County. An application from Thadd Hodge at DSS was received to complete the remainder of a term ending June 30, 2024.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

HEALTH/OPIOID-VENDOR SELECTION FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER RFQ

Dr. Katie Varnadoe, Human Services Planner, reported she was currently representing the County at the 2024 Overdose Fatality Review Forum in Atlanta, GA and appreciated the Board allowing her to present this item via Zoom. On December 18, 2023, Burke County Public Health initiated a search for proficient consulting firms to facilitate and provide consulting services for

evaluating the regional ecology, offering recommendations for addressing identified regional needs, and aiding in the establishment of regional partnerships. The request for qualifications (RFQ) concluded on January 31, 2024, with four (4) submissions received. Following a thorough review and scoring process in accordance with Burke County Finance's requirements, the Fletcher Group, Inc. is the recommended vendor for this service.

BID #:			
2024-0131			
PROJECT:			
Consulting Services for Regional SUD Evaluation RFQ			
Vendor:	Contact:	Phone:	Email:
Fletcher Group Inc	David Johnson	606-657-4662	DJohnson@fletchergroup.org
TriWest	Cassie Morgan	314-606-2882	cmorgan@triwest.net
Community Education Group	Lee Storrow	828-337-6573	lstorrow@communityeducationgroup.org
Addiction Abatement, Inc	Mark York	754-802-7955	Mark@addictionAbatement.org

Budgetary Effect: None. The funds will be allocated from the Dogwood Grant Trust Fund not to exceed the awarded amount of \$275,000.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Carswell expressed his satisfaction with the recommendation of the world-renowned Fletcher Group. There being nothing further, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

JCPC - APPOINTMENT TO JCPC SEAT NO. 12

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, relayed that JCPC Seat No. 12 is for a student under the age of 18 and is currently vacant. An application was received from Henry Beall, a student at Freedom High School. The unexpired term ends June 30, 2025.

12	Student < 18		A	
			R	
			TE	6/30/2025

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

TAX DEPT. - TAX COLLECTION REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2024

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, presented the Tax Collection Report for February 29, 2024, as follows:

Category	Annual Budget	Amount Collected YTD	% Collected	Balance to Collect
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Property Tax	\$52,699,577.00	\$51,901,501.52	98.49%	\$798,075.48
Motor Vehicle Tax	\$6,200,000.00	\$3,577,252.75	57.70%	\$2,622,747.25
Current Year Taxes	\$ 8,899,577.00	\$55,478,754.27	94.19%	\$3,420,822.73
Delinquent Taxes	\$700,000.00	\$537,119.06	76.73%	\$162,880.94
Penalty & Interest	\$329,000.00	\$301,198.70	91.55%	\$27,801.30

The Tax Levy is the total property tax value not including motor vehicles times the tax rate. This amount changes monthly with the addition of discoveries, other changes, or corrections, and when Public Utility Values are added, typically during September.

Category	Tax Levy	Amount Collected YTD	% Collected	Balance to Collect
Property Tax	\$53,835,708.69	\$51,901,501.52	96.41%	\$1,934,207.17

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

TAX DEPT. - RELEASE REFUND REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2024

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, presented the Tax Release Report for February 29, 2024, as follows:

Tax System Refunds and Releases			
Report Amount	Rebilled Amount	Net Release	Refund Amount
\$12,416.96	\$321.11	\$12,095.85	\$0.00

VTS Refunds Over \$100	
	Refund Amount
VTS Adjustments	\$183.06

*Note: The net release amount is a result of the reported amount minus the rebilled amount.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

TAX DEPT. - ORDER TO ADVERTISE 2023 DELINQUENT REAL PROPERTY TAXES

John Bridgers, Tax Administrator, relayed that pursuant to N.C.G.S. §105-369, the Tax Collector shall report to the governing board the total amount of unpaid taxes for the current fiscal year that are liens on real property.

Under this statute, the Board orders the Tax Collector to advertise these tax liens on all unpaid real property. Also, a notice must be sent to the owner of record. This notice shall be sent at least 30 days before the advertisement is to be published, to the last known address. These notices state that the owner's name will be advertised if taxes are not paid in full by Friday, March 31, 2024. The Tax Office mailed these notices in February 2024.

Category	Tax Levy	Amount Collected YTD	% Collected	Balance to Collect
Property Tax	\$53,835,708.69	\$51,901,501.52	96.41%	\$1,934,207.17

Category	Annual Budget	Amount Collected YTD	% Collected	Balance to Collect
Property Tax	\$52,699,577.00	\$51,901,501.52	98.49%	\$798,075.48
Motor Vehicle Tax	\$6,200,000.00	\$3,577,252.75	57.70%	\$2,622,747.25
Current Year Taxes	\$58,899,577.00	\$55,478,754.27	94.19%	\$342,822.73
Delinquent Taxes	\$700,000.00	\$537,119.06	76.73%	\$162,880.94
Penalty & Interest	\$329,000.00	\$301,198.70	91.55%	\$27,801.30

This Delinquent Tax Notice, which is required to be sent before advertising in the newspaper, also serves as the Debt Setoff (DSO) Notice for Burke County. The Debt Setoff Notice is featured on the front page and is further explained on the reverse side of the document. This notice gives taxpayers 30 days to pay their delinquent taxes and avoid Burke County intercepting their North Carolina Income Tax refund.

Chairman Brittain opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.

ITEMS FOR DECISION – NONE

REPORTS

Chairman Brittain asked Board members to submit their reports to the Clerk for inclusion in the regular agenda packet. He issued reminders for several upcoming meetings, events and County Office closures. He also encouraged citizens to spay or neuter pets and to adopt or foster a pet from Animal Services. Further, Chairman Brittain encouraged citizens to not litter, to pick up trash and to cover their loads during transit to the landfill or convenience centers. Further, areas in need of cleanup can be identified using the Community Beautification tab on the County's website.

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS – NONE

ACTION ITEMS – NONE

ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 3:43 p.m.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Scott Mulwee, Vice Chairman
AYES:	Jeffrey C. Brittain, Scott Mulwee, Randy Burns, and Johnnie W. Carswell
ABSENT:	Phil Smith

Approved this 21st day of May 2024.


Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
Burke Co. Board of Commissioners

Attest:


Kay Honeycutt Draughn, CMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board