

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

The Burke County Board of Commissioners held a pre-agenda meeting on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, Burke County Services Building, 110 N. Green Street, Entrance E, in Morganton, North Carolina. 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. Pursuant to Resolution No. 2024-17, adopted and effective on August 20, 2024, the Burke County Board of Commissioners conferred upon itself all the power, duties and responsibilities of the Board of Health and the Social Services Board. Those present were:

COMMISSIONERS: Phil Smith, Vice Chairman
Brian Barrier
Mike Stroud

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman (Business trip.)
Randy Burns (Sick.)

STAFF: Brian Epley, County Manager
Margaret Pierce, Finance Director/Deputy County Manager
Destin Hall, Wilson, Lackey, Rohr & Hall P.C. (late – arrived at 3:07 p.m.)
Kay Honeycutt Draughn, Clerk to the Board

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. and noted a quorum of the Board was present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: To approve the agenda as amended: moved Consent Item No. 5 (Appointments to the Child Protection Child Fatality Prevention Team) to Decision Item No. 3.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Brian Barrier, Commissioner
AYES:	Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, and Mike Stroud
ABSENT:	Jeffrey C. Brittain and Randy Burns

PRESENTATIONS

WPCOG - TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Averi Ritchie, GHMPO / WPCOG Transportation Planning Manager, noted that the presentation she has is extensive, but she summarized the key topics that she plans to discuss during her presentation at the regular meeting. The topics Ms. Ritchie intends to cover are as follows:

- The role of the MPO and its federally mandated planning documents.
- Key partners and the roles of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC).

- Policies for integrating bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure into highway projects.
- The transportation project prioritization and application process with NCDOT.
- Funded projects in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), including highway, bicycle, pedestrian, rail, and aviation.
- Funding opportunities for various transportation modes.
- Updates on Morganton's flex route transit system and microtransit service.
- Long-range transportation plans and recommendations.
- Project updates, including construction timelines and right-of-way acquisitions.
- Developments in the Asheville-to-Salisbury passenger rail project.
- The relationship between transportation planning and general land use planning.

Vice Chairman Smith thanked Ms. Ritchie for coming to present to the Board.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM - PRESENTATION OF FY 23 - 24 AUDIT

Brian Epley, County Manager, stated that at the regular meeting, the County's independent auditor, Alan Thompson, CPA, Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams, & Co., P.A., will present an overview of the Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024 Audit Report. This presentation will provide a comprehensive review of Burke County's financial statements, compliance with state and federal regulations, and overall fiscal health. Key findings and recommendations, if any, will be highlighted during the presentation. As required by North Carolina General Statutes, the audit has been submitted to the Local Government Commission (LGC) for review and approval.

The presentation was originally scheduled for the January meeting but was postponed due to inclement weather at the request of the auditors.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM - UPDATE ON INTERBASIN TRANSFER

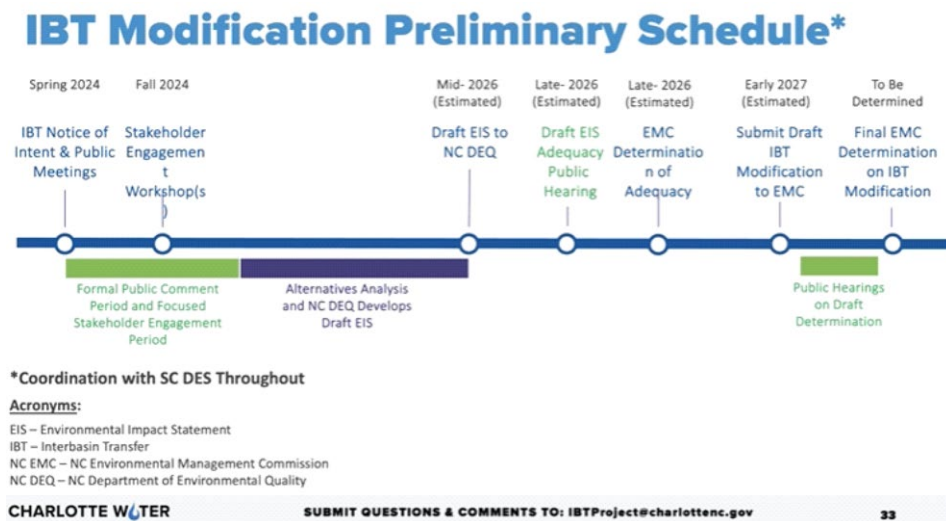
Hugh Sandoe, Budget Strategy and Performance Analyst, reported that Anthony Starr, WPCOG, would be presenting an update to the Board at the regular meeting and explained that Charlotte has a request to increase its water transfer capacity from the Catawba River Basin to the Yadkin-Pee Dee Basin. This request, if granted, would allow Charlotte to withdraw up to 33 million gallons per day, nearly doubling its current allowance and approaching the total daily water usage of several surrounding communities, including Morganton, Lenoir, Catawba County, Hickory, and Valdese. This request raises concerns about the potential impact on the local regional water availability, future growth, and sustainability. In response, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments formed a committee with representatives from Catawba and Caldwell counties and local municipalities to develop a strategy for addressing this request. The committee has been monitoring Charlotte's community meetings and preparing for the official environmental impact report, expected in Spring 2026, which will be reviewed by the state for approval, modification, or denial. Mr. Sandoe reiterated that Mr. Starr would provide an update at the regular meeting.

Information from the agenda packet:

Charlotte Water, the largest public water and wastewater utility in North

Carolina, currently holds an Interbasin Transfer (IBT) certificate permitting the transfer of up to 33 million gallons per day (MGD) from the Catawba River basin to the Rocky River basin. This certificate, issued in 2002, was projected to support regional water demands through 2030. In response to significant population growth and increased water demand in the greater Charlotte area, Charlotte Water has initiated the process to modify its IBT certificate. The proposed modification seeks to increase the transfer limit to 63 MGD to ensure a reliable water supply for the next 30 years. The modification process is comprehensive and involves multiple steps, including public engagement and environmental assessments. Charlotte Water submitted a Notice of Intent for the modification in February 2024 and subsequently held a series of public scoping meetings between May and July 2024 across various locations, including Hickory, Charlotte, Albemarle, Camden, Florence, Morganton, and Rock Hill. These meetings aimed to inform the public and gather feedback on the proposed IBT modification.

The proposed timeline presented during the Charlotte Water IBT public meeting at Rock Hill on July 29, 2024, was as follows:



Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

WPCC – PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL DATA FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DEC. 31, 2024

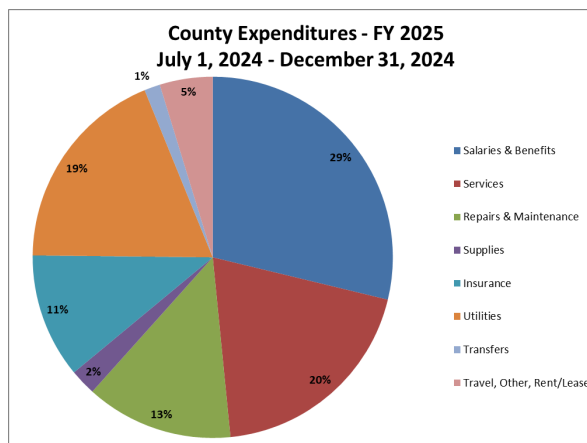
Due to a scheduling conflict, Sandy Hoilman, Chief Financial Officer, WPCC, was unable to present the financial data at the pre-agenda meeting. Vice Chairman Smith announced that Ms. Hoilman will present this item at the regular meeting. Information from the agenda packet:

An overview of the College's financial data will be presented at the regular meeting for the period ending Dec. 31, 2024.

FY 2024-2025 SUMMARY AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024									
	STATE			COUNTY			INSTITUTIONAL		
Summary of Revenues	BUDGET	ACTUAL	REMAINING	PGLT	ACTUAL	REMAINING	BUDGET	ACTUAL	REMAINING
State Appropriations	16,857,464	8,373,546							
Add. Allocations (detail below)	2,324,624								
County Appropriations				3,046,882	1,523,441				
Rent & Interest Income				13,500	15,172				
Institutional Funds							6,704,572	4,082,905	
Total Budgeted Revenues	19,182,088	8,373,546	10,808,542	3,060,382	1,538,613	1,521,769	6,704,572	4,082,905	2,621,667
Summary of Expenditures									
Institutional Support	3,380,144	1,960,558	58%	269,183	233,871	87%	258,740	30,220	12%
Curriculum Instruction	7,708,419	3,586,700	47%				594,000	336,903	57%
Non Curriculum Instruction	2,380,614	973,324	41%				251,000	52,190	21%
Academic Support	1,566,451	728,080	46%				500	-	0%
Student Support	3,449,461	732,048	21%				831,500	1,331,629	160%
Plant Operations & Maint.				2,791,199	1,256,798	45%			
Proprietary / Other							977,214	641,871	66%
Student Aid							3,791,618	2,203,242	58%
Capital Outlay (excluding Capital Improvements)	696,999	249,578	36%						
Total Budgeted Expenditures	19,182,088	8,230,288	10,951,800	3,060,382	1,490,668	1,569,714	6,704,572	4,596,055	2,108,517
		42.9%	57.1%		48.7%	51.3%		68.6%	31.4%
ADDITIONAL FUNDING DESIGNATED FOR APPROVED PROJECTS									
Customized Training Projects	48,644								
Apprenticeship/NC reversion	(25,948)								
Perkins Carryforward	25,273								
Hurricane Relief	1,858,771								
Enrollment Growth	417,884								
Total Other	2,324,624								
For Year Ending June 30, 2025									
Total College Budget							\$	28,947,042	
Total Expenditures							\$	14,317,011	49.5%
Fund Balance: County Funds									
Fund Balance, Beginning July 1, 2024								648,692	
Current Operating Cash								47,945	
Current Fund Balance								696,636	
									23%

Western Piedmont Community College
 County Expenditures by Category
 FY 2025 - Actual Expenditures - July 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2024

Salaries & Benefits	428,842	28.8%
Services	293,114	19.7%
Repairs & Maintenance	197,202	13.2%
Supplies	34,919	2.3%
Insurance	166,498	11.2%
Utilities	278,063	18.7%
Transfers	21,202	1.4%
Travel, Other, Rent/Lease	70,828	4.8%
	1,490,668	100%



RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

HEALTH - LOCAL HEALTH DIRECTOR RECEIVES DOGWOOD AWARD

Ashley Jarrett, Assistant Health Director, reported that Danny Scalise, the Local Health Director, was awarded the Attorney General's prestigious Dogwood Award for 2024. This award celebrates individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to improving the lives and well-being of North Carolinians. She requested that Mr. Scalise be recognized at the regular meeting.

Vice Chairman Smith opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Stroud

commended Mr. Scalise for his hard work.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

AS - PET OF THE MONTH

Kaitlin Settlemyre, Animal Services Director, stated that staff will present a dog and cat in need of their "forever" home at the regular meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS – NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

BCPS - PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL DATA FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DEC. 31, 2024

Keith Lawson, Finance Officer, BCPS, in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement approved by the County and the Board of Education, presented BCPS' quarterly financial reports for the 2024 - 2025 budget year, showing the application of the County's local funding as follows:

BCPS						
Estimated Revenues						
2024/2025						
	Annual		Dec YTD			% of Budget
	Previous	Current Fcst	Previous	Current	% Change	Received
State	92,712,082	94,566,324	46,246,889	48,320,065	4.5%	51.1%
Federal	18,813,895	13,325,000	11,546,026	4,950,499	-57.1%	37.2%
Local	19,157,406	19,372,740	9,714,222	9,801,825	0.9%	50.6%
Charter Schools	842,594	877,260	285,778	323,175	13.1%	36.8%
Fines & Forfeitures	242,447	206,554	144,835	166,860	15.2%	80.8%
Receivables	36,995	31,463	30,933	47,015	52.0%	149.4%
Special Revenues	5,486,330	5,541,193	3,501,865	4,108,557	17.3%	74.1%
Total	\$ 137,291,749	\$ 133,920,534	\$ 71,470,548	\$ 67,717,996	-5.3%	50.6%

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BCPS									
Local Financials by Purpose & Function Level									
2024/2025									
Expenses	'21/'22	'22/'23	'23/'24	'24/'25					Total
				Budget	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Regular Instructional Services	5,647,012	5,521,972	8,342,293	8,215,648	912,307	3,153,953			4,066,260
Instructional Support	10,197,710	10,283,484	10,865,457	11,665,620	3,497,237	2,740,014			6,237,251
Other Governmental Units	759,694	692,840	895,393	1,095,489	26,928	351,550			378,478
Revenues Over/(Under)	(170,801)	100,077	176,296	(488,740)	715,756	(1,058,870)			(343,114)
Grand Total	\$ 16,433,615	\$ 16,598,373	\$ 20,279,439	\$ 20,488,017	\$ 5,152,228	\$ 5,186,647	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,338,875
% of Annual Budget									50.5%
Revenue									
Burke County	15,435,254	15,593,566	19,157,406	19,372,740	5,054,646	4,747,179			9,801,825
Charter Schools	613,951	709,442	842,594	877,260	7,854	315,321			323,175
Fines & Forfeitures	371,986	241,513	242,447	206,554	43,852	123,008			166,860
Schools' Receivables	12,424	53,852	36,995	31,463	45,876	1,139			47,015
Grand Total	\$ 16,433,615	\$ 16,598,373	\$ 20,279,442	20,488,017	5,152,228	5,186,647	-	-	10,338,875

Vice Chairman Smith opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Barrier asked Mr. Lawson whether the loss of federal COVID funding would have an impact on any programs or staff that were hired using those funds. Mr. Lawson informed him that Burke County Public Schools did not make any recurring commitments with the temporary funding. The last department affected was the school nursing program, where four (4) nurses were employed under ESSER funding; however, their assignments ended in September 2024, and now the district has no ongoing commitments beyond ESSER funding. Commissioner Stroud inquired about Burke County's per pupil funding. Mr. Lawson explained there has been a budget increase in per pupil funding due to the hard work of County Manager Epley and that the County's ranking has improved, but that he did not have that number offhand.

Vice Chairman Smith asked for further clarification on where the increase in spending came from. Mr. Epley explained that in 1983 and 1985, the NC General Assembly passed special legislation affecting only Burke County, restricting about 1.5 cents of sales tax revenue solely for school capital projects, specifically for junior high schools. Later, legal challenges in 2005 and 2008 addressed certain triggers in the legislation. After Mr. Epley was hired, he found this restriction and pointed out that it was illogical, as the county ranked 99th in the state for operational school funding (\$16.3 million) while sitting on \$37.5 million in largely unused capital funds. Meanwhile, the county faced operational struggles, such as large class sizes and stagnant teacher supplements. Working with legislators, the County successfully had the outdated legislation repealed, allowing capital funds to be reallocated to operational needs.

Mr. Epley also noted that other districts made poor financial decisions by hiring staff using temporary ESSER funds, which he compared to ARPA funds—one-time federal infusions that ultimately contributed to inflation. BCPS, however, wisely used ESSER funds for non-recurring expenses like HVAC improvements. Since the legislation was repealed, the Board of Commissioners has prioritized reducing class sizes and increasing teacher supplements, raising school funding by 25% and improving the county's education ranking from 99th to 96th or 97th in the state. Mr. Epley responded to a clarifying question from Vice Chairman Smith. There being no further discussion, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

TDA - FINANCIAL UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DEC. 31, 2024

Ed Phillips, CEO, TDA, in accordance with Session Law 2007-265, HB 78, reported TDA's quarterly receipts and expenditures as follows:

BURKE COUNTY TDA December 31, 2024		BURKE COUNTY TDA BUDGET TO ACTUAL JULY 1, 2024-DECEMBER 31, 2024			
		Income	Budget	Actual	Available Balance
Assets	1014 First Citizens Bank		\$ 850,000	411,751.24	\$ 438,248.76
	1015 NC Capital MGMT Account		\$ -	10,284.74	\$ (10,284.74)
	Total Checking		\$ 50,000	19,682.60	\$ 30,317.40
			\$ 25,000	2,473.24	\$ 22,526.76
		Total Income	\$ 925,000	444,191.82	\$ 480,808.18
Liabilities	2000 Accounts Payable		\$ 8,500	8,950.00	\$ (450.00)
	2050 City of Morganton - Payable		\$ 225,000	127,430.02	\$ 97,569.98
	2075 Town of Valdese - Payable		\$ 2,500	955.00	\$ 1,545.00
	2100 Payroll Liabilities		\$ 4,800	2,625.00	\$ 2,175.00
	Total Liabilities		\$ 191,250	92,644.03	\$ 98,605.97
	3900 Retained Earnings		\$ 106,250	51,468.90	\$ 54,781.10
	Net Income		\$ -	19.95	\$ (19.95)
	Total Equity		\$ 30,000	19,391.66	\$ 10,608.34
			\$ 4,000	3,650.12	\$ 349.88
			\$ 275,000	203,737.56	\$ 71,262.44
			\$ 1,000	432.23	\$ 567.77
			\$ -	2,363.42	\$ (2,363.42)
			\$ 30,000	15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
			\$ 4,200	706.03	\$ 3,493.97
Equity	3900 Retained Earnings		\$ 7,000	3,371.21	\$ 3,628.79
	Net Income		\$ 20,500	6,492.97	\$ 14,007.03
	Total Equity		\$ 15,000	2,368.26	\$ 12,631.74
			\$ -	249.81	\$ (249.81)
Total Liabilities & Equity		Total Expense	\$ 925,000	541,856.17	\$ 383,143.83
		Net Income	\$ -	-97,664.35	\$ 97,664.35

Mr. Phillips noted that hotels have remained full since Hurricane Helene, primarily housing contract workers, railroad repair crews, insurance adjusters, and other industry professionals, alongside leisure travelers attending weddings and events. While occupancy tax dipped in early October, it rebounded to set all-time records for October and November, with November up 98% year-over-year. December collections are also on track for a record high. The average daily hotel rate rose about 10% from \$100 in 2023 to \$111 in 2024, reflecting strong demand. Visitor Center walk-in traffic was up 70% from January to September before declining sharply after the hurricane. However, visitor numbers began recovering in late December and stabilized in January. The post-storm period saw a shift in visitor demographics, with many arriving to assist with recovery efforts.

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

TDA - RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

Ed Phillips, CEO, TDA, reported that the Linville Falls Visitor Center was heavily damaged and deemed a total loss, with infrastructure repairs not expected to be completed in 2025. The Linville Falls Campground was also damaged, and its reopening date is uncertain. The Linville River Picnic Area suffered severe damage and will remain closed throughout 2025. Access to the Linville Falls overlook from the U.S. Forest Service gravel parking lot on Old NC Highway 105 is closed due to trail damage, though the parking lot itself is intact. Partial openings are not feasible due to heavy equipment use and safety concerns. The Blue Ridge Parkway is also closed in the affected area.

The Blue Ridge Parkway Association, which supports repairs and promotion of the parkway, has requested county commissioners endorse a resolution advocating for funding and strategic implementation of the Blue Ridge Rising Action Plan. The parkway generates approximately \$1.4 billion in visitor spending and \$1.8 billion in economic output. The Blue Ridge Parkway is the most visited national park in the U.S., with 17 million visitors last year. The resolution does not request county funding, only support for repairs and improvements.

Vice Chairman Smith opened the floor for questions or comments; there being none, this item was moved without objection to the next meeting. Budgetary Effect: None.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.
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The proposed resolution reads as follows:

RESOLUTION
SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR REPAIRS AND STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE BLUE RIDGE RISING ACTION PLAN ALONG THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

WHEREAS, the Blue Ridge Parkway traverses 469 miles from Afton Mountain in Virginia to the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina and unites these two states' unique mountain cultures and identities with a world-renowned national park that celebrates the places, communities, and people along the Parkway; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ridge Parkway is the most-visited unit of the national park system, attracting nearly seventeen million visitors each year and contributing significantly to the local and regional economies in Virginia and North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Parkway generates approximately \$1.4 billion in visitor spending and \$1.8 billion in total economic output for the 1,799,000 residents of the surrounding corridor of 29 counties, seven independent Virginia cities, and numerous municipalities in North Carolina and Virginia, including the Jonas Ridge and Linville communities of Burke County; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation serves as the sole official philanthropic partner to the Blue Ridge Parkway, advocating for necessary funding and resources for the Parkway's maintenance, preservation, and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ridge Rising Action Plan provides a roadmap for the sustainable management and enhancement of the Parkway, ensuring that it continues to serve as a vital resource for environmental education, recreation, tourism, and community connection; and

WHEREAS, Tropical Storm Helene has caused catastrophic damage and loss of life for several communities in western North Carolina and southwest Virginia, including those communities adjacent to the Parkway; and

WHEREAS, Linville Falls, located at Milepost 316 on the Blue Ridge Parkway and recognized as Burke County's most visited tourist destination, is closed indefinitely due to damage caused by Hurricane Helene; and

WHEREAS, repairs are critical to preserving the safety and accessibility of the Parkway and its adjacent communities, which is essential for their economic wellbeing; and

WHEREAS, collaboration among local, state, and federal governments is critical in this response and imperative to secure the necessary funding and policies that will sustain and benefit the communities surrounding the Blue Ridge Parkway; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a coalition composed of elected officials and community representatives will enhance advocacy efforts and foster a unified regional voice for the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Burke County Board of Commissioners endorses and supports the following:

1. Funding for Repairs: Urging state and federal governments to prioritize and allocate funding for repairs along the Blue Ridge Parkway to ensure its continued safety and accessibility;
2. Implementation of the Blue Ridge Rising Action Plan: Advocating for the full funding and implementation of the Blue Ridge Rising Action Plan to enhance visitor experience, preserve natural resources, and promote sustainable tourism along the Parkway;
3. Collaboration and Support: Calling upon local, state, and federal officials to collaborate with the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and other stakeholders to secure resources and policies that benefit the Parkway and its surrounding communities; and
4. Coalition Creation: Supporting the formation of a coalition of elected officials and community representatives dedicated to advocating for the Blue Ridge Parkway, ensuring that the needs and voices of the communities along the corridor are effectively represented.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to relevant local, state, and federal entities, as well as the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, to demonstrate our unified support for the Parkway and its vital role in our communities.

AS - PROCLAMATION DECLARING FEBRUARY AS SPAY & NEUTER MONTH

Kaitlin Settlemire, Animal Services Director, requested approval of a proclamation declaring February as Spay and Neuter Awareness Month in Burke County and encourages all citizens to spay or neuter their pets, support local spay and neuter initiatives, and spread awareness about responsible pet ownership.

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM - APPROVAL OF BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 9 - \$329,871

Brian Epley, County Manager, requested approval of Budget Amendment No. 9 for \$329,871, which recognizes state funding received from the NC Department of Health.

BUDGET AMENDMENT NO. 9			
REVENUES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
100-50000-01-439117	AA 117 Revenue	\$329,871	
EXPENSES			
ACCOUNT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	INCREASE	DECREASE
100-50000-20-569117	AA 117 Expenses	\$329,871	
Purpose: Burke County is receiving funding from the NC Department of Health to recruit, retain, support, train, and strengthen the public health staff and workforce system. This funding will be used to offset existing costs, expand staff training and retention, and workforce planning efforts. A detailed spending plan is provided.			
A copy of these amendments shall be furnished to the Budget Officer and the Finance Officer of the County to be kept on file for direction in the disbursement of funds.			

Budgetary Effect: \$329,871 of additional unbudgeted revenue will be allocated to the above projects.

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

TAX DEPT. - TAX COLLECTION REPORT FOR JANUARY 2025

Namrita Nelson, Property Valuation Manager, presented the Tax Collection Report for the period ending January 31, 2025, as follows:

Category	Amount Collected YTD	% Collected	Balance to Collect
Property Tax	\$51,634,093.25	94.23%	\$3,159,085.75
Motor Vehicle Tax	\$3,238,290.04	63.79%	\$1,837,953.96
Current Year Taxes	\$54,872,383.29	91.65%	\$4,997,039.71
Delinquent Taxes	\$393,383.73	56.20%	\$306,616.27
Penalty & Interest	\$203,761.07	61.98%	\$125,238.93

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	\$70,250,389.11	\$51,634,093.25	73.5%	\$18,616,295.86

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

TAX DEPT. - RELEASE REFUND REPORT FOR JANUARY 2025

Namrita Nelson, Property Valuation Manager, presented the Tax Release and Refund Report for the period ending January 31, 2025, as follows:

VTS Refunds Over \$100	
	Refund Amount
VTS Adjustments	\$210.44

WELBORN, CLAUDIA SUZANNE	MORGANTON, NC 28655	0081791040	Situs error	1/10/2025	01	TAX	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
					57	TAX	(\$238.05)	\$0.00	(\$238.05)
					57	VEHICLE FEE	(\$20.00)	\$0.00	(\$20.00)
					27	TAX	\$47.61	\$0.00	\$47.61
								Refund	\$210.44
								Refund Total	\$210.44

Tax System Refunds and Releases			
Report Amount	Rebilled Amount	Net Release	Refund Amount
\$11,778.31	\$4,557.60	\$7,220.71	\$0.00

*Note: The net release amount results from the reported amount minus the rebilled amount.

Bill #	Taxpayer Name	Bill Date	Operator ID (Name)	Release Date	Orig Bill Amount(\$)	Release Amount(\$)	Bill Amount after Release(\$)
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Adjustment							
0024020680-2024-2024-0000-02-REG	COOPER, WILLIAM RYAN	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/6/2025	619.16	619.16	0.00
0024020680-2024-2024-0000-03-REG	BUFF, TERRY RAY	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/6/2025	360.92	88.00	272.92
Subtotal					980.08	707.16	272.92
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Deceased							
0000005123-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	HILL, NANCY LYNN	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/30/2025	685.52	685.52	0.00
0000085119-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	FOOTHILLS PLUMBING	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/16/2025	12.87	12.87	0.00
Subtotal					698.39	698.39	0.00
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Duplicate Billing							
0000015185-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	CARSWELL, JUDY	7/15/2024	AMANDA CONLEY	1/14/2025	1,065.92	329.74	736.18
0024025776-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	SMILEMAKER ENTERPRISES LLC	7/15/2024	KAYLA BURGESS	1/6/2025	140.50	15.12	125.38
0024025776-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	SMILEMAKER ENTERPRISES LLC	7/15/2024	KAYLA BURGESS	1/6/2025	125.38	15.12	110.26
Subtotal					1,331.80	359.98	971.82
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Not in Burke County							
0024021331-2023-2023-0000-00-REG	HAYWOOD OIL #508	7/3/2023	LINDA WILBUR	1/22/2025	265.62	265.62	0.00
0024021331-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	HAYWOOD OIL #508	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/22/2025	292.17	292.17	0.00
0024021333-2023-2023-0000-00-REG	HAYWOOD OIL #508	7/3/2023	LINDA WILBUR	1/22/2025	72.40	72.40	0.00
0024021333-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	HAYWOOD OIL #508	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/22/2025	79.64	79.64	0.00
Subtotal					709.83	709.83	0.00
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Release LFUF							
0000021731-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	JAYNES, PRESLEY D	7/15/2024	AMANDA CONLEY	1/13/2025	1,663.25	88.00	1,575.25
Subtotal					1,663.25	88.00	1,575.25
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Sold/Traded							
0024052234-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	STILWELL, TIMOTHY SCOTT	7/15/2024	LINDA WILBUR	1/22/2025	22.99	22.99	0.00
Subtotal					22.99	22.99	0.00
TAX DISTRICT: BURKE COUNTY RELEASE REASON: Value Change							
0000033241-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	CARSWELL, JAMES	7/15/2024	AMANDA CONLEY	1/17/2025	1,501.89	1,142.91	358.98
0024052737-2024-2024-0000-00-REG	VIZCARRA, MICHAEL ALAN	7/15/2024	AMANDA CONLEY	1/2/2025	4,870.08	3,491.45	1,378.63
Subtotal					6,371.97	4,634.36	1,737.61
Grand Total					11,778.31	7,220.71	4,557.60

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

CLERK - APPOINTMENTS TO THE BURKE CO. PLANNING BOARD

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, reported that Seat No. 1, representing the East on the Burke County Planning Board, was previously held by Beth Heile. As she did not seek reappointment, the removal of her name from the roster was requested in accordance with her wishes. Seat No. 2, representing the East, was also vacant. The terms are for three (3) years. Applications are on file for Chase Billow, Shawn Freeman, and Carroll Lewis.

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CM / BDI - BURKE BUSINESS PARK: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

Brian Epley, County Manager, reported that in December of 2024, the legislature modified funding originally allocated in October of 2023 for an economic development grant of \$35.8 million for the Great Meadows Industrial Park.

Mr. Epley gave an overview of the history of the grant, which was divided into two (2) parts: \$22 million in unrestricted funds and \$13.8 million restricted for water and wastewater infrastructure. BDI has an option to purchase the property through 2033 for \$32 million, but the available unrestricted funds and grants are not enough to cover that cost or kick off development. A proposal to create more flexibility with the funds so they can be used to drive meaningful economic development, job creation, and tax-based investments in Burke County was considered and approved by state legislatures in December of 2024 granting flexibility for \$20 million of unrestricted funds to be used for constructing shell industrial buildings in Burke Business Park. The remaining \$2 million in unrestricted funds and the \$13.8 million for infrastructure remain unchanged.

To manage the project, the General Assembly required a project management agreement between BDI (the grant holder) and Burke County. Mr. Epley requested the approval of this agreement, which outlines a joint decision-making process for aspects such as selecting an architectural firm, general contractor, building specifications, and site selection.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CLERK - APPOINTMENT TO THE CPCFPT (CHILD PROTECTION CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION TEAM)

Kay Draughn, Clerk to the Board, reported that Seat No. 7 (At-Large No. 4) on the CPCFPT is

vacant. An application from Dillon Smith is on file and an additional application was received today. This request was to make an appointment to Seat No. 7 to complete the remainder of a 3-year term ending April 30, 2027.

Vice Chairman Smith 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 FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

DSS - MONTHLY OPERATIONAL REPORT

Korey Fisher-Wellman, DSS Director, presented a monthly operational report for January 2025 as follows:

February 4, 2025



BURKECOUNTY
ALL ABOUT ADVANCING

SOCIAL SERVICES

DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

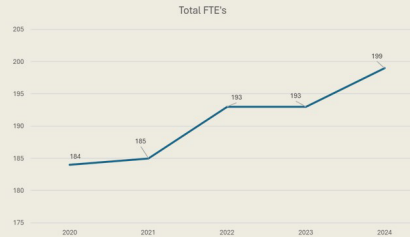
Presented by Korey Fisher-Wellman



PERSONNEL



THE BURKE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES HAS AN FTE ALLOCATION OF 199 POSITIONS. THIS HAS GROWN SUBSTANTIALLY OVER THE PAST FIVE (5) YEARS – SPECIFICALLY FOLLOWING A STAFFING ANALYSIS IN 2019. WE ADDITIONALLY ADDED SIX (6) FTES IN 2023 FOLLOWING THE APPROVAL OF MEDICAID EXPANSION IN DECEMBER 2023.



THE DEPARTMENT HAS FIFTEEN (15) PART TIME STAFF WHICH INCLUDE: ONE (1) INCOME MAINTENANCE CASEWORKER, ONE (1) FOSTER CARE SOCIAL WORKER, ONE (1) CPS SOCIAL WORKER, TWO (2) CPS CLERICAL STAFF, AND TEN (10) AFTER HOURS SUPPORT SPECIALIST.

Current Open Positions:

Position Title	Position #:	Status
IMC II	51369	Conditional Offer
IMC III	51815	
IMC I	51358	Final Offer
IMC II	51365	Conditional Offer
IMC II	51785	Final Offer
IMC II	51653	
IMC III Lead worker	52045	
IMC III	51342	
IMC III Lead worker	51901	
IMC III	51786	
IMC III Lead worker	51394	
IMC II	51898	
IMS II	52046	
SW IA&T	51438	Conditional Offer
SW IA&T	51864	Final Offer
SW IA&T	51866	Final Offer
SW IA&T	51440	Final Offer
SW III	51867	Conditional Offer
SWS III	51788	Conditional Offer
SW III	51904	Final Offer
SWS III	51426	Conditional Offer
SW IA&T	51441	
SW III	51467	
SW IA&T	51777	
SW IA&T	51905	
SW IA&T	51442	
SWIA&T	51432	
SWS III	51422	
SWS III	51908	

Hirings and Separations Report December 2024

• Separations:

- Total = 9
- Voluntary Resignation = 9

Number of Hirings:

- Total = 6
- Part Time Processing Assistant IV = 2
- Social Worker III= 1
- Accounting Tech IV= 1
- Income Maintenance Caseworker I = 1
- Income Maintenance Caseworker II = 1

OPERATIONS

IN 2017 THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSED 2017-41, SECTION 3.3 THAT REQUIRED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH AN AGREED UPON MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE STATE DHHS AND ALL NC COUNTIES. THE MOU HAS 13 SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE METRICS. SEE BELOW FOR CURRENT STATE OF BURKE COUNTY BY METRICS:

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES				
		MOU MEASURE	95%	95%
ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	APT TIMELINESS RATE- REGULAR	APT TIMELINESS RATE-EXPEDITE	RECEIPT TIMELINESS RATE
12,193	6,312	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved
WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES				
ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	MOU MEASURE	95%	95%
			APPLICATION TIMELINESS	RECEIPT TIMELINESS RATE
109	66		Achieved	Achieved
MEDICAID		MOU MEASURE	90	90
			95	
TOTAL MEDICAID RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES		REPORT CARD MAD	REPORT CARD OTHER
28,351	22,121		Achieved	Achieved
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE				
		MOU PERFORMANCE MEASURE	85%	85%
SA ACTIVE CASES			SAA TIMELINESS APPLICATIONS	SAD TIMELINESS APPLICATIONS
250			Achieved	75%
ENERGY PROGRAMS				
		MOU PERFORMANCE MEASURE	95%	95%
CIP APPLICATIONS PROCESSED		LEAP APPLICATIONS PROCESSED		% PROCESSED TIMELY-NO SOURCE 1 DAY
35		229		93%
% PROCESSED TIMELY-WITH SOURCE 2 DAYS				
ACHIEVED				
CHILD CARE SUBSIDY				
		PERFORMANCE MEASURE	95%	
ACTIVE CASES		APPLICATION TIMELINESS		
450		Achieved		

- A FOLLOW UP MANAGEMENT EVALUATION AUDIT WAS COMPLETED FOR FNS AND ENERGY PROGRAMS. BURKE COUNTY HAD NO FINANCIAL PAYBACKS.
- THE ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS FOR FNS STARTED OVER. THE CLIENT WILL BE ABLE TO RECEIVE 3 MONTHS OF BENEFITS.
- MEDICAID WAIVERS FOR HELENE ARE EXPECTED TO END 02/28/2025.

- Started the disaster programs 01/15/2024.
- County has not received additional CIP funding.
- Approved 157 LIEAP applications in December; giving \$52,600 in benefits.

ECONOMIC SERVICE UPDATE

Page 15

ECONOMIC SERVICE UPDATE

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES								
			MOU MEASURE	95%	95%	95%		
	ACTIVE RECIPIENTS	ACTIVE CASES	APPLICATIONS TAKEN	APP TIMELINESS RATE- REGULAR	APP TIMELINE SS RATE- EXPEDITE	RECERT TIMELINESS RATE	RECERTS COMPLETED	FNS EBT BENEFITS
JAN	11,544	5994	771	97%	100%	97%	495	1845044
FEB	11,505	5971	612	95.82%	100%	98.87%	620	1814316
MAR	11,370	5912	538	92.62%	99.01%	98.43%	511	1811615
APR	11,248	5882	603	98.60%	95.00%	98.40%	500	1798182
MAY	11,292	5886	567	98.30%	96.88%	98.47%	523	1802439
JUN	11,216	5,853	573	98.96%	95.00%	98.86%	525	1795500
JUL	11,138	5,799	556	96.38%	93.75%	98.73%	555	1772168
AUG	11,155	5792	579	99.53%	95.20%	99.26%	539	1791212
SEP	11,199	5814	525	99.51%	98.26%	98.28%	406	*
OCT	11,503	5975	731/6302	98.54%	94.23%	72.63%	285	3230130
NOV	11,981	6206	394	100.00%	97.81	67%	739	2962954
DEC	12,193	6312	346	97.62%	98.15%	100%	356	2016823

CHILD WELFARE UPDATE

- **Currently there are 175 children experiencing foster care and 290 open CPS Cases**
 - Average caseload is 18 per worker
- **January 2024 - December 2024 a total of 1,619 CPS reports were received**

- **December Foster Care Data**
 - 4 children entered care
 - 5 children exited care
 - 4 through adoption
 - 1 through reunification
- **December CPS Screening Data**
 - 93 Total Reports
 - 21 Screen outs
 - 72 screen ins

ADULT SERVICES UPDATE

- **Guardianship - 57 wards**
Contracted Wards -17
- **SAIH (*Special Assistance In-Home*) - 51**
State caseload is 25-30, there is only one SAIH SW
- **CAP (*Community Alternatives Program*)**
145 currently with the ability to hold up to 188 or more. - there are 5 CAP workers currently each carrying about 29 at this time.

EMERGING ISSUES

State/County MOU Update

MOU Overview: In April 2024, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) sent the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for State Fiscal Years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026, in accordance with Session Law 2017-41. This MOU outlines performance measures for various social services programs, including Energy, Work First, Food and Nutrition Services, Child Welfare, Adult Protective Services, Special Assistance, and Child Support. These measures are critical for ensuring program effectiveness and compliance with state and federal laws.

Challenges & Pause: The ongoing impacts of the pandemic, Medicaid unwinding, Medicaid Expansion, Tailored Plans, and workforce shortages have created significant barriers for counties in meeting the performance expectations outlined in the MOU. Recognizing these challenges, NCDHHS implemented a statewide pause on issuing corrective action or development plans. This pause was in place to give counties time to address external barriers and make necessary procedural adjustments.

State/County MOU Update

Corrective Action Process: Starting in January 2025, NCDHHS will implement the corrective action process outlined in Session Law 2017-41. If counties fail to meet MOU performance measures for three consecutive months or five months within a 12-month period, they will be required to enter a joint corrective action plan within 60 working days. For annual performance measures, failure to comply for two consecutive years will trigger this process. This corrective action framework aims to ensure compliance and continuous improvement in social services delivery.

Pause for Hurricane-Impacted Counties: The corrective action process will be delayed for the 25 counties most impacted by Hurricane Helene, which remain under a federal state of emergency. These counties will not face formal performance improvement plans or corrective actions while the state of emergency is in effect. However, their performance will continue to be monitored, and data will be shared to support necessary improvements in service delivery.

Performance Measures

Energy Programs:

•**Crisis Intervention Program (CIP):** Counties must process 95% of applications for households without heating or cooling within one business day and for those with a past-due or final notice within two business days. These measures ensure timely relief for individuals facing immediate energy crises.

Work First:

•Counties must process 95% of Work First applications within 45 days and recertifications within 60 days before the certification period ends, ensuring timely assistance to eligible families.

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS):

•Counties must process 95% of expedited FNS applications within 7 days and regular applications within 30 days, ensuring timely access to benefits. Recertifications must also be processed on time each month.

Child Welfare - Foster Care:

•Counties must ensure 95% of foster youth have a monthly face-to-face visit with a social worker to ensure child safety and family engagement.

Performance Measures

Adult Protective Services (APS):

•Counties must complete 85% of APS evaluations involving abuse or neglect within 30 days and exploitation cases within 45 days to protect vulnerable adults.

Special Assistance (SA):

•Counties must process 85% of Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) applications within 45 days and Special Assistance for the Disabled (SAD) applications within 60 days, ensuring timely support for eligible individuals.

Child Support Services:

•**Paternity Establishment:** Over 50% of paternities for children born out of wedlock must be established.

•**Court Orders:** Over 50% of child support cases must have a court order establishing support obligations.

•**Collections:** At least 40% of current child support must be paid, and at least 40% of arrears cases must receive payments.

FY 25-26 Budget Prep

- January 9th Department Head Meeting & Budget Kickoff
- All budget packets and documents have been delivered and are in process development
 - Personnel
 - Operations
 - Capital
 - DSS also has to await State funding templates to complete proforma
- DSS is a phase IV county department
- Prior Year Budget Review Process – How are we performing now?

Account	Description	3rd PP-FINAL 6/30/2022	2nd PP-FINAL 6/30/2023	PY 1 Actual 6/30/2024	PY Original Budget 6/30/2024	Original Budget 6/30/2025	UNADJ 12/31/2024
Group : [Y4]	Restricted Intergovernmental						
Total [Y4]	Restricted Intergovernmental	\$ (12,068,366)	\$ (12,792,502)	\$ (12,295,013)	\$ (13,872,430)	\$ (13,829,078)	\$ (4,942,898)
Group : [Y5]	Permits and Fees						
Subtotal [Y7]	DSS Fees	\$ (77,704)	\$ (98,488)	\$ (138,656)	\$ (43,000)	\$ (47,934)	\$ (63,604)
	Total Revenue	\$ (12,146,070)	\$ (12,890,990)	\$ (12,433,669)	\$ (13,915,430)	\$ (13,877,012)	\$ (5,006,502)
Group : [X-52000]	DSS Admin						
Total [X-52000]	DSS Admin	\$ 11,717,744	\$ 12,950,363	\$ 16,204,739	\$ 13,274,520	\$ 16,939,766	\$ 7,950,464
Group : [X-52010]	DSS Work First						
Total [X-52010]	DSS Work First	\$ 12,683	\$ 16,921	\$ 15,842	\$ 24,000	\$ 18,300	\$ 13,110
Group : [X-52015]	DSS Adult Day Care						
Total [X-52015]	DSS Adult Day Care	\$ 10,575	\$ 11,600	\$ 10,600	\$ 10,630	\$ 10,630	\$ 3,450
Group : [X-52030]	DSS Community Alternatives						
Total [X-52030]	DSS Community Alternatives	\$ 55,967	\$ 28,411	\$ 40,468	\$ 65,840	\$ 43,000	\$ 13,524
Group : [X-52040]	DSS Food Stamps						
Total [X-52040]	DSS Food Stamps	\$ 16,980	\$ 16,578	\$ 18,034	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 8,395
Group : [X-52050]	DSS Special Assistance Adult						
Total [X-52050]	DSS Special Assistance Adult	\$ 517,452	\$ 518,860	\$ 594,716	\$ 575,000	\$ 522,724	\$ 248,611
Group : [X-52060]	DSS Adoption Assistance						
Total [X-52060]	DSS Adoption Assistance	\$ 481,505	\$ 505,880	\$ 632,858	\$ 636,750	\$ 614,889	\$ 264,605
Group : [X-52070]	DSS Foster Care						
Total [X-52070]	DSS Foster Care	\$ 3,901,940	\$ 3,107,235	\$ 2,994,536	\$ 3,535,000	\$ 2,627,000	\$ 1,131,027
Group : [X-52090]	DSS Medicaid						
Total [X-52090]	DSS Medicaid	\$ 8,380	\$ 14,775	\$ 4,363	\$ 6,000	\$ 10,000	\$ (162)
Group : [X-52100]	DSS Services for the Blind						
Total [X-52100]	DSS Services for the Blind	\$ -	\$ 8,797	\$ 9,070	\$ 8,400	\$ 9,432	\$ -
Group : [X-52110]	DSS Crisis Intervention						
Total [X-52110]	DSS Crisis Intervention	\$ 1,269,019	\$ 709,248	\$ 530,104	\$ 816,905	\$ 746,799	\$ 202,762
Group : [X-52120]	DSS Independent Living						
Total [X-52120]	DSS Independent Living	\$ 270,877	\$ 90,008	\$ 82,189	\$ 100,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 47,357
	Total Expenditures	\$ 18,263,122	\$ 17,978,676	\$ 21,137,519	\$ 19,071,045	\$ 21,640,540	\$ 9,883,143

Vice Chairman Smith opened the floor for questions or comments. Commissioner Barrier asked Mr. Fisher-Wellman about the allocation and spending of LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program) emergency funds. Mr. Fisher-Wellman confirmed the funding was significant but had a short-term allocation period, with the state monitoring spending and will reallocate any unused funds to other counties. Commissioner Barrier inquired about how the funds were being distributed and whether all available money had been used. Mr. Fisher-Wellman responded that progress had been made, particularly in energy and rental assistance, but the Child Welfare Essential Services fund had been more challenging to allocate due to strict criteria. He noted that Adult Services was working on projects, including storm damage recovery, to use large portions of the funds. Amanda Grady, Assistant DSS Director, provided more details on economic services spending.

Ms. Grady stated that they have been proactive in distributing funds, especially since Crisis Intervention and Low-Income Energy Assistance funds have been depleted. Consequently, DSS has prioritized disaster funds, already spending approximately \$200,000, which is half of the available amount. Significant progress has also been made in rental assistance, though she did not have the exact figure on hand. The State of North Carolina inquired whether Burke County wanted to reallocate unused funds, but DSS declined, believing there was still a local need. Ms. Grady emphasized that while they want to help others, DSS' priority is ensuring Burke County residents benefit from the funds before considering reallocation.

Commissioner Barrier asked about the ongoing foster care placement crisis and what efforts had been made in the past 90 days to recruit more foster families. Mr. Fisher-Wellman responded that there is always a need for more foster homes, and efforts are ongoing to recruit families by attending community events and offering more frequent licensing classes. However, he clarified that the crisis primarily stems from a shortage of higher-level care facilities, such as psychiatric treatment centers and specialized treatment-based placements. This shortage is beyond local control, leading to situations where children must sleep in offices due to a lack of appropriate

placements.

Mr. Fisher-Wellman posited several theories as to why there was a period of high turnover in the DSS Department in response to a question from Vice Chairman Smith. Vice Chairman Smith then extended his gratitude to the DSS staff for all their hard work. There being no further discussion, Vice Chairman Smith opened the floor for a motion.

Motion: To accept the report as presented.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Mike Stroud, Commissioner
AYES:	Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, and Mike Stroud
ABSENT:	Jeffrey C. Brittain and Randy Burns

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS – NONE

Vice Chairman Smith asked Board members to submit their reports to the Clerk for inclusion in the regular agenda packet. He issued reminders for the upcoming BOC meetings and community events. He also invited youth groups to sign up to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at Commissioners' meetings, encouraged citizens to spay or neuter their pets, as well as cover their loads when transporting waste to the landfill.

ACTION ITEMS – NONE

ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn at 4:12 p.m.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Brian Barrier, Commissioner
AYES:	Phil Smith, Brian Barrier, and Mike Stroud
ABSENT:	Jeffrey C. Brittain and Randy Burns

Approved this 21st day of April 2025.


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

Attest:


 Kay Honeycutt Draughn, CMC, NCMCC
 Clerk to the Board