

Regular Session, August 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.
Catawba County Board of Commissioners

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The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, August 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., in the Board of Commissioners Meeting Room, 2nd Floor, Catawba County Justice Center, 100 Government Drive, Newton, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Randy Isenhower, Vice-Chair Austin Allran, and Commissioners Robert C. Abernethy, Jr., Barbara G. Beatty, and Cole Setzer.

Also present were County Manager Mary S. Furtado, Assistant County Manager Paul Murray, Assistant County Manager Adam Lindsay, County Attorney Jodi Stewart, and County Clerk Dale Stiles.

1. Chair Randy Isenhower called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., noting a quorum was present.
2. Vice-Chair Austin Allran led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Commissioner Cole Setzer offered the invocation.

4. Vice Chair Allran made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Board's Regular Meeting of August 3, 2026. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Recognition of Special Guests:
Chair Isenhower welcomed everyone present.
6. Public Comments.
James Michael McRee came forward and spoke about Catawba Valley Community College, the Vietnam War and the Soldiers Reunion. Kenyon Kelley came forward and requested the monument on the grounds of the 1924 Courthouse be removed. Sherrill Watkins came forward and spoke against diversity, equity, and inclusion, issues with the Polio monument in Hickory, and requested the monument on the grounds of the 1924 Courthouse not be removed. Joey Heath came forward and spoke about the Soldiers Reunion and the new school year.
7. Consent Agenda.
County Manager Mary Furtado presented the following six items under the consent agenda. Chair Isenhower asked if any commissioner wished for the item to be broken out of the consent agenda for individual consideration. None was requested.

a. The Finance and Personnel Subcommittee recommended the Board of Commissioners appropriate \$48,000 in available fire district fund balance to the Bandy's Crossroads Fire Department for the one-time purchase of firefighter personal protective equipment (PPE) and portable radios.

Historically, each fire department maintains its own fund balance, which is carried forward from year to year unless appropriated by the Board of Commissioners. Fund balances are generated when fire tax revenues exceed budgeted expenditures during a fiscal year.

County practice has allowed departments to utilize up to 90 percent of their available fund balance for major capital projects or other one-time expenditures, including facilities, apparatus, and equipment purchases. The remaining 10 percent is retained to address unforeseen expenditures that may arise during the fiscal year.

Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – \$30,000

The requested funding will provide complete sets of new personal protective equipment for six (6) firefighters. Current industry standards establish a 10-year service life for firefighter turnout gear. Replacing expired PPE ensures firefighters remain equipped with gear that meets current safety standards and provides the highest level of protection during emergency operations.

Portable Radios – \$18,000

The requested funding will replace eight (8) portable radios assigned to fire apparatus. After evaluating operational needs and the significant cost of purchasing new radios, the department determined that refurbished portable radios provide the best value. The refurbished units include a two-year warranty and will improve communications reliability while maximizing available funding.

Bandy's Crossroads Fire Department currently has an available fund balance of \$225,635. If this request is approved, the department will retain \$100,098 in available fund balance, providing adequate financial reserves for future needs while addressing critical equipment replacement.

b. The Finance and Personnel Subcommittee recommended the Board of Commissioners accept and appropriate the Soil & Water Conservation Commission's grant funds in the amount of \$375,000 to remove stream debris blockages in the county; and authorize the County Manager to execute the required grant agreement.

The General Assembly awarded \$36.1 million in grant funds in 2022 for a new program to reduce flooding across the State's waterways by removing vegetative debris and debris blockages, with another \$24.2 million was awarded in 2024. Catawba County Soil & Water Conservation received \$475,012 between the

two grant allocations. To date we have completed five projects totaling \$371,377 with another project planned that will finish out our 2024 funds.

Recently, the General Assembly has approved the allocation of funds to address sites that were affected by Hurricane Helene in September of 2024, with Catawba County being classified as a medium-need county. The Catawba Soil & Water staff identified three sites and requested \$550,000 along the Henry Fork River, Southfork River and Clarks Creek. Of those sites, the Southfork River and Clarks Creek sites were approved for funding in the amount of \$375,000. The Henry Fork River site was not approved by the state because it didn't have any blockages, only scattered debris.

Supplemental Appropriation

Revenue:

285-320050-630954	Streamflow Rehab (StRAP Grant)	\$375,000
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Expense:

285-320050-849054	Transfer to General Fund	\$375,000
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c. The Finance and Personnel Subcommittee recommended the Board of Commissioners approve reallocation of \$219,000 in previously appropriated funds from existing Hickory City Schools capital projects to support emergent project needs, as requested by Hickory City Schools.

As part of the FY2027 budget request, Hickory City Schools requested reallocation of \$219,000 in previously existing project funding to support emergent needs associated with other projects. These existing projects are now complete, and funding is no longer needed to support those projects. This reallocation would allow for the previously approved funding to support new and urgent needs with no new funding requested at this time. The breakdown for this reallocation is below.

The two projects requested to receive realigned funds are the Jenkins Elementary Playground Improvements and the Oakwood Elementary Kitchen Drainage Improvements.

Jenkins Elementary

Hickory City Schools informed County staff the Playground Improvement project is the second phase in the HCS long-range playgrounds plan. The structure at Jenkins Elementary has advanced deterioration, and several parts have been replaced in the past 6 years. Further component replacement is no longer feasible. No new funding was provided for this project in FY2027. There is a balance in this project of \$63,989 from previously funded phases of the project. Total cost of the current phase of the project is \$265,989.

Oakwood Elementary

In addition to the needs at Jenkins Elementary, Hickory City Schools is requesting to reallocate existing project funds towards Kitchen Drainage Improvements to address issues including the existing loading ramp area for the 1953 Oakwood Elementary School cafeteria building, which is extremely constrained and antiquated, and failed internal components in the existing 2-gallon grease trap in the kitchen. \$129,000 in new funding was approved with the FY2027 budget. There has been no funding for this project in prior years. Total cost of the project is \$146,000.

Existing Project	Project Number	Amount to be Reallocated	New Project	Project Number	Current Funding	New Funding
Southwest Primary Renovations	32109-3-07	\$17,000	Oakwood Elementary - Kitchen Drainage Improvements	32108-3-05	\$129,000	\$146,000
SUBTOTAL		\$17,000				

System-Wide Furniture & Equip	32150-4-09	\$53,000	Jenkins Elementary - Playground Improvements			
System-Wide Painting	32150-3-30	\$48,000		32150-3-29	\$63,989	\$265,989
Security Upgrades	32150-3-19	\$101,000				
SUBTOTAL		\$202,000				
TOTAL		\$219,000				

TRANSFER*From:*

420-750100-865200-32109-3-07	Southwest Primary Renovations	\$17,000.00
420-750100-865200-32150-4-09	System-Wide Furniture & Equipment	\$53,000.00
420-750100-865200-32150-3-30-	System-Wide Painting	\$48,000.00
420-750100-865200-32150-3-19	Security Upgrade	\$101,000.00

To:

420-750100-865200-32108-3-05	Kitchen Drain Improvements	\$17,000.00
420-750100-865200-32150-3-29	Playground Improvements	\$202,000.00

d. Staff recommended the Board of Commissioners approve 18 releases totaling \$51,159.51, three refunds totaling \$321.51, and 63 Motor Vehicles Bill adjustments / refunds totaling \$6,615.18 requested during the month of July.

North Carolina General Statute 105-381(b) states upon receipt of a taxpayer's written request for release or refund, the taxing unit's governing body has 90 days to determine whether the taxpayer's request is valid to either approve the release or refund of the incorrect portion or to notify the taxpayer in writing that no release or refund will be made.

During the month of July Tax Office staff have checked records and verified the legitimacy of 18 releases totaling \$51,159.51, three refunds totaling \$321.51, and 63 Motor Vehicle Bill adjustments / refunds totaling \$6,615.18.

Common reasons for the refunds, releases, and adjustments include change in values and months, change in situs, businesses closing / being sold, clerical errors, reinstatement of elderly exclusions upon verification, adjustments due to late submittals and duplicate billings, and pro-ratio of tax bill amounts to account for mid-year transfers of ownership.

e. Staff recommended the Board of Commissioners approve a resolution to retire drug interdiction K-9 Loki and transfer ownership of Loki to K-9 handler Jeremy Graham.

Loki is a drug interdiction K-9 owned by Catawba County and operated by the Catawba County Sheriff's Office. He has performed his duties diligently for 7 years. Loki is almost 10 years old and is no longer physically able to perform law enforcement duties. Loki was specifically trained in certain law enforcement procedures and may behave unpredictably and perhaps aggressively because of such training unless he is under the care and supervision of his trained handler. Loki's trained K-9 handler is Jeremy Graham, and he possesses the necessary expertise to manage and care for Loki and provide a safe and suitable home for retirement.

Adoption of the resolution, pursuant to NCGS 160A-266(d), would allow the Catawba County Sheriff's Office to retire and transfer ownership of Loki to his handler Jeremy Graham upon Deputy Graham's accepting

custody of Loki, agreeing to keep Loki retired, and assuming all liability and responsibility for the care of Loki for the remainder of its life.

The following resolution applies:

RESOLUTION 2026-19
AUTHORIZING THE RETIREMENT OF
K-9 "Loki"

WHEREAS, Drug Interdiction K-9 "Loki" has been a great benefit to Catawba County for 7 Years; and

WHEREAS, Loki retired from service effective June 1, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Loki was specifically trained in certain law enforcement procedures and may behave unpredictably and perhaps aggressively as a result of such training, and therefore presents a potential threat to the general public health and safety if presented for sale to, or adoption by, the general public; and

WHEREAS, such risk is not present when Loki is under the care and supervision of trained and qualified individuals; and

WHEREAS, Jeremy Graham, a K-9 handler, possesses the necessary expertise to manage and care for Loki, providing a safe and suitable home for retirement; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners finds that Loki should be retired and ownership transferred to Jeremy Graham, so that he may provide a safe and suitable home for retirement, in recognition of Loki's period of dedicated service and due to the additional training and responsibility which is required; and

WHEREAS, G.S. 160A-266(d) permits the Board of Commissioners to authorize the transfer of ownership of Loki to Jeremy Graham, upon Jeremy Graham accepting custody of Loki, ensuring Loki remains retired, and assuming all liability and responsibility for the care of Loki for the remainder of its life.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners authorizes the transfer of ownership of K-9 Loki to Jeremy Graham, effective August 17, 2026, or upon the execution of the Assumption of Liability and Release.

ADOPTED, this the 17th day of August 2026.

f. Staff recommended the Board of Commissioners appropriate \$65,000 in revenue from the sale of County-owned land located at 245 East N Street, Newton to the existing General Renovations capital project.

On July 20, 2026, the BOC authorized staff to initiate the upset bid process for disposal of the 2.53-acre County-owned parcel located at 245 East N Street in Newton, based on an offer to purchase from Ashure Ministry, Inc. The upset bid period has closed, and Ashure Ministry, Inc. was the successful bidder.

Staff requests the land sale proceeds from this transaction be deposited into the existing General Renovations capital project to supplement resources available to address County-wide maintenance and renovation needs in County-owned buildings and facilities. Recent history suggests that, over the course of a given year, there will be emergent or emergency facility needs, including critical repairs or renovations, exploration of property acquisition, etc., for which these funds would be useful.

Supplemental Appropriation

Revenue:

410-460100-692254

Proceeds-Sale of Land

\$65,000

Expense:

410-460100-988000-11018

General Renovations

\$65,000

The consent agenda items came in the form of a motion by Chair Isenhower, which carried unanimously.

8. Other Items of Business. None.

9. Manager's Report. None.

12. Attorney's Report.

a. Staff requested the Board of Commissioners approve the purchase of the real property located at 334 Southwest Boulevard, Newton, for \$1,600,000.00 and appropriation of the funding necessary to complete the transaction.

The County has entered into a purchase agreement with County Wide Insurance Agency Inc. for the purchase of the subject property, the former Western Steer in Newton, subject to the seller being able to clear certain title issues, for a purchase price of \$1,550,000.00. The property is strategically located at the corner of 321 and Hwy 10 and provides access to the County's existing parcels and flexibility for growth to expand public facilities, services, or infrastructure without being constrained by surrounding development.

A title search has been performed and staff reviewed due diligence documents, including a Phase I and survey. The examination period expires August 18th, with a closing date required prior to September 3rd. As the closing statement has not been finalized, staff is requesting \$50,000 in funds as a buffer to ensure all of the transaction costs are covered.

Supplemental Appropriation

Revenue

110-190050-690100	Fund Balance Appropriated	\$1,600,000
410-460100-695110	Transfer from General Fund	\$1,600,000

Expense

110-190900-995410	Transfer to General Capital Projects	\$1,600,000
410-460100-987000-11019	Facilities Master Plan	\$1,600,000

Commissioner Barbara G. Beatty made a motion to approve the purchase of the real property located at 334 Southwest Boulevard, Newton, for \$1,600,000.00 and appropriation of the funding necessary to complete the transaction. The motion carried unanimously.

The following resolution applies:

RESOLUTION No. 2026-20
Resolution Authorizing Purchase of Real Property

Whereas, North Carolina General Statute §153A-158 authorizes a county to acquire real property for use by the county or any department of the county; and

Whereas, County Wide Insurance Agency Inc. ("Seller") owns approximately 4 acres at 334 Southwest Boulevard, Newton, as described in Deed Book 1605, Page 915, Catawba County Registry, Parcel # 373019722362 ("Property"); and

Whereas, Catawba County ("County") and Seller have engaged in negotiations for the conveyance of parcel to the County; and

Whereas, the parties have reached an agreement on the terms of the conveyance.

Now, therefore, the Catawba County Board of Commissioners resolve:

1. Pursuant to the executed Purchase Agreement and amendments thereto, the Board approves the purchase of the Property for the sum of \$1,550,000.00.
2. The County Manager is authorized to execute the necessary documents to complete the purchase of the Property.

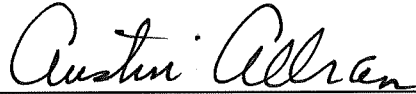
Adopted the 17th day of August, 2026.

b. Staff recommended the Board authorize the County Manager to approve the short-form complaint prepared by the Plaintiffs' Executive Committee, upon consultation with the County Attorney, adding the Pharmacy Benefit Manager defendants and the related claims to the County's lawsuit.

In the opioid litigation, the Pharmacy Benefits Manager's ("PBM") motion-to amend process began more than two years ago and became one of the most contested proceedings in the opioid MDL's history. The PBMs filed extensive opposition, raising numerous legal and procedural objections. The Court concluded that plaintiffs (County) showed good cause to amend their complaint. Judge Polster ordered the Plaintiffs' Executive Committee to prepare a proposed short-form amended complaint to allow eligible subdivisions to add PBM claims without preparing separate, lengthy amended complaints. Subdivisions, including Catawba County, need to approve the amended complaints in order to add the PBM defendants.

Commissioner Robert C. Abernethy, Jr., made a motion to approve the short-form complaint prepared by the Plaintiffs' Executive Committee, upon consultation with the County Attorney, adding the Pharmacy Benefit Manager defendants and the related claims to the County's lawsuit. The motion carried unanimously.

13. Adjournment. No further action was taken. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beatty which unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.



Austin Allran, Vice-Chair
Catawba County Board of Commissioners



Dale R. Stiles
County Clerk