

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALAMANCE COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS FOR ALAMANCE COUNTY**

**June 2, 2025, 6:30 PM
Alamance County Historic Courthouse
1 SE Court Square
Graham, NC 27253**

Board Members Present: Chairman John Paisley Jr
Commissioner Pamela Thompson
Commissioner Ed Priola
Commissioner Kelly Allen

Board Members Absent: Vice-Chair Steve Carter

CALL TO ORDER - COMMISSIONER ALLEN

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - COMMISSIONER ALLEN

Meeting recessed from 6:33 pm to 6:43 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Allen stated that an amendment to the consent agenda was proposed to add Gary Jackson's reappointment as item 6.a.2 and to allow Commissioners' Comments after the approval of the agenda.

Commissioner Allen spoke on the importance of funding for law enforcement, EMS, the Alamance County Rescue Unit (ACRU), and the continuing work of the health department. She mentioned that while she was proctoring at Haw River Elementary, one of the water fountains had fallen off the wall, and maintaining school facilities was important to her.

Commissioner Priola referred to a slide in the manager's recommended budget presentation that detailed the worst-case scenarios based on a zero tax increase. He continued that some of the county managers' suggested cost reduction options included the animal shelter and closing three library branches. Commissioner Priola stated that none of the County Commissioners had called for closing the libraries. He explained that the discussion centered on whether some of the library branches could be supported by the municipalities in which they were located.

Commissioner Thompson spoke that she was glad to see everyone who had come out to the meeting. She emphasized the importance of people speaking about what they think is important

in the budget. Commissioner Thompson mentioned that she received many emails from county residents.

Chairman Paisley advised the audience that no Commissioners had mentioned closing the libraries. He explained the county manager was asked to include an option for a budget with a zero tax increase. He thought some changes were needed at May Memorial Library. He stated that he received approximately 50 phone calls regarding the homeless individuals gathering at the May Memorial Library. He was asking the Burlington Police Department to step up patrols at May Memorial and reiterated that none of the Board members favored cutting the libraries.

Moved by: Commissioner Allen

Seconded by: Commissioner Priola

APPROVED AS AMENDED

PROCLAMATIONS

Proclamation: DadFest Day

Commissioner Kelly Allen presented a proclamation in recognition of DadFest to Christopher Bullard, DadFest Organizer.

Moved by: Commissioner Allen

Seconded by: Chairman Paisley

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by: Commissioner Allen

Seconded by: Commissioner Priola

APPROVED AS AMENDED

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

Alamance County Senior Services Committee - Lori Lafferty

Jury Commission – Gary Jackson

Plat Review Officer Resolution - Jon H. Grace, Keyshawn J. Haith, and Terri Burns

Approval of the following individuals to serve as Review Officers for Alamance County: Jon H. Grace, Keyshaw J. Haith, and Terri Burns.

Accounts Receivable Reconciliation - County Landfill

Inmate Health Monitor Sole Source Purchase Approval - Sheriff's Office

Interlocal Health Department Agreement

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Minutes of May 19, 2025

Public Hearing FY2025-2026 Manager's Recommended Budget *(Each Speaker Will Have Up to 3 Minutes)

Stuart Smith, Mebane resident, said that the county needed to allow the tax rate to meet the needs of the county. Mr. Smith asked the county to do as much as it could to meet the school superintendent's budget, and fund county employees the full 3% cost of living adjustment.

Traci Street, Mebane resident, said the county needed to stand up for its greatest resource, which was kids. She stated that a key indicator of a child's academic performance was based on access to a rich print environment in early childhood. She said taking away the libraries would take away a child's possibility of this access. Ms. Street urged the board to consider what kids needed.

Cindy Brady, Burlington resident, said the Family Justice Center (FJC) of Alamance County had received national recognition and awards. She continued that the evolution of the FJC brought more efficiency, communication and coordination among individual agencies. She stated that FJC personnel were necessary to investigate, document and process cases of domestic violence. Ms. Brady mentioned that 13,260 victims had utilized the services of the FJC since it opened.

Tyler Whitley, Mebane resident, urged the Board not to underfund the schools and the library system. He continued that reduced funding that resulted in closing library branches created barriers for people trying to improve their lives. Mr. Whitley said he supported the recommended 1.59 cent property tax increase.

Christopher Mauney, Chief of the Alamance County Rescue Unit, said he was there as a voice for the hundreds of men and women ready to answer the call, no matter the danger. He stated that the rescue unit stretched every dollar, took care of equipment with care, partnered with state and national agencies to stay current with practices and did more with less. Chief Mauney asked the Board to continue funding the rescue unit.

Leslie Prince, Mebane resident, said the rescue unit assisted law enforcement with evidence recovery, the rescue's canine unit assisted when someone went missing, and the rescue unit was trained in search and recovery. She continued that the rescue unit stabilized vehicles and cut cars to get someone out in an emergency. Ms. Prince said that the rescue unit members made sacrifices and the least the county could do was support them.

Dawson Wall, county resident, said he was there due to the proposed rescue unit, school and library cuts. Mr. Dawson stated that these were vital services.

Morgan Baker, Burlington resident and teacher, said that as a teacher she saw the daily impact of underfunded schools. She continued that schools were understaffed. She said students who were not reading by the third grade were four times more likely to drop out. Students who dropped out were three times more likely to be incarcerated. Ms. Baker said funding schools and libraries prevented crisis.

Debra Scott, President of Alamance Friends of the Library, said that the library system was ingrained in the county. She asked the Board how a change in library funding from county to the cities would affect programs and the mobile library. Ms. Scott said that public libraries were for all the county people and not just for people in the cities.

Meredith Peffley, Executive Director of Crossroads, said Crossroads had received county funding for about three years. She stated Crossroads provided essential services to victims that had experienced sexual assault, human trafficking and or child maltreatment regardless of a person's ability to pay. Ms. Peffley said lack of government funding would hinder services.

Richard Smith, said library services did not generate revenues, but cultivated ideas. He stated that libraries were one of the few places people were not expected to spend money. Mr. Smith said withdrawing support for the libraries would weaken one of the few remaining bulwarks against social media, reduced apathy and A.I. enabled ignorance.

Robert Alvis, Graham resident, said the Alamance County tax rate was lower than surrounding counties. He stated that he wanted his kids to go to safe schools full of qualified caring adults. Mr. Alvis said that the Board should consider equal priority for emergency services to be on time with students arriving to school on time.

John Tudor, Graham resident, questioned how shifting library funding to local municipalities would affect the county residents that did not live in a town or near a library. He stated that the county needed to fund things that enriched the community. Mr. Tudor said that the county could afford to fully fund the public libraries.

Abbey Gurley, Mebane resident, said that she was shocked and disappointed that some members of the Board had recommended defunding the libraries. She stated that she questioned defunding a library branch that served a population in Mebane that had doubled in size since its renovation. Mr. Gurley said that feedback of the Mebane library had a 98% positive review rating.

Sandy Ellington-Graves, Board of Education Chair, said that ABSS ranked 89th in North Carolina for local spending in per pupil expenditures. She mentioned that the county website stated that education was of primary importance. Ms. Ellington-Graves said that the Board had the opportunity to show the community that education was important. A commitment to fund

ABSS would show an investment that reflected the strength of the county and the value of its people.

Avery Pickard, Burlington resident, advocated for better funding for the school system. She stated that proper funding was vital for proper student success. Ms. Pickard said that the Board should reconsider any cuts or pauses to benefits for county employees.

Reagan Gural, Alamance Chamber President, said that she supported a balanced tax framework that was fair, efficient, and transparent. She stated that she supported the adoption of sufficient, effective policies and investments that cultivated a skilled workforce. She continued that ABSS ranked 89th in North Carolina in per pupil spending. Ms. Gural said that Alamance County deserved strong investments in education, infrastructure and the county's future; they were the foundations of a forward looking community.

Ryan Moffitt, Burlington resident, said that the Alamance County that he knew invested in itself. He stated that there was not a more important investment of county dollars than ABSS. Mr. Moffitt said that the Board should fully fund ABSS.

Sandra Cooke, Haw River resident, said that a funding reduction would mean a \$500 reduction in per pupil spending by ABSS. She stated that county property owners could apply for tax exemptions or exclusions. Ms. Cooke asked if the county could increase the property tax rate and also increase tax exemptions.

Griffin McClure, Graham resident, said the proposed budget was a drastic decrease in per pupil funding in ABSS and charter schools. He stated that a sales tax referendum was a viable way forward. Mr. McClure said that he hoped the Board finds solutions and finds pride in making the county better.

Tracey Grayzer, Impact Alamance President, said that the proposed county budget did nothing to move the county forward. Instead of strengthening the community, the county was proposing unnecessary and devastating cuts to public schools and many other services. Ms. Grayzer said that the Board was the architects of the county and should build on the strong foundation that was laid by leaders before them.

Nicole Lester, Mebane resident, said that the county barely used 21% of its budget for public schools. She stated that several studies showed that communities that invested in public education and public libraries drastically reduced crime. Ms. Lester urged the Board to fund the public schools and public libraries.

Bob Byrd, former County Commissioner, said he supported ABSS and shared that he was part of Vision Alamance that helped craft the goals for public education in Alamance County. He stated that the county could fully fund the ABSS budget request and still be competitive and reasonable in the tax rate. He said Alamance County's property tax rate was the 18th lowest in the state. Mr. Byrd asked the Board to fully fund the ABSS budget request.

Greg Scott, Burlington resident, said that his father was the county manager in the 1980's. He stated that his father was never asked to prepare two budgets, one with no tax increase and one that met the bare minimum. His father was asked to prepare a budget that met the needs of the county. Mr. Scott said that his father's legacy was all over the county and asked the board where would theirs be.

Sheriff Terry Johnson, said that he intended to fight hard for the employees and citizens of Alamance County. He stated that the time had come where there was no choice, but to implement a tax increase or make cuts to the budget. He said that the 2023 census showed that Alamance County was the fastest growing county in North Carolina. Sheriff Johnson said that the Board held the future of the elderly people, children and the entire county.

Jackie Fortner, Alamance County Sheriff's Office, said he was there on behalf of Alamance County employees in reference to their longevity pay. He stated that county employees must be employed for over 5 years before they received this pay. He said that that cutting employee benefits saved a little bit of money, but the county lost qualified and loyal employees. Mr. Fortner asked the Board to reconsider and not cut longevity pay for Alamance County employees.

Brenda Pattison, Mebane resident, said that she supported a tax increase, but did not support when county government grew and took over private sector activities. Ms. Pattison stated that there was no reason why there could not be a no tax increase budget.

Dan Ingle, Board of Education Vice-Chair, said that the county needed to raise property taxes. He stated that the county had a great school system. Mr. Ingle asked that the Board take what he said to the heart.

Josh Shumate, NC Association of Rescue and EMS Commander, said that the Alamance County Rescue Unit offered highly specialized rescue capabilities that included technical rope rescue, swift water rescue, trench rescue and wilderness search operations. He stated that there were few rescue organizations in the state as widely respected and well known as the Alamance County Rescue Unit. Mr. Shumate urged the Board to take into consideration the services provided by the rescue unit.

Walter Allison, county resident, said that the county had one of the least funded school systems in the state. Mr. Allison said that the county needed to fund the school system for the sake of the children.

Tom Stern, county resident, urged the Board to fully fund the ABSS budget and keep the libraries a county funded system. He stated that inadequate funding caused ABSS to lose staff, hindered replacing staff, and critical positions remained vacant. He continued that these practices undermined the superintendent's efforts, burned out existing staff and hurt the students. Mr. Stern said that by keeping the library system a county funded system, the county could assure that every county resident had equal access to the libraries.

Mandy Moore, Burlington resident, said the county should stop the cuts to the schools. She stated that students deserved consistent full-time support from a school nurse, school social worker and school counselor. Ms. Moore urged the Board to stop these dangerous cuts now.

Blair Helms, Mebane resident, said that every dollar spent now on the school system could lead to future cost savings. He stated that a 7.5 cent property tax rate would be \$20 a month for each county resident. He asked the Board to have a plan if the county lost federal and state low wealth funding.

Brody Cameron, Ossipee resident, said that the county was woefully underfunded and unprepared for significant events. He stated paramedics and EMTs were unhappy with the compensation and treatment they were receiving. Mr. Cameron said that Alamance County was not ready if a disaster occurred.

Tasha Miles, Elon resident, said that money being used toward upgrading the courthouse should be used for the schools and public libraries. She stated that citizens needed to think about the children and make them feel more supported. Ms. Miles asked the county to reconsider fully funding ABSS and public libraries.

Levon Barnes, Mebane resident, said that the county's future hinged on the investment in public education, libraries and community services. He stated that when the county short-changed schools it sends a message that a whole generation does not matter. Mr. Barnes said that if the only options the county offered was to either cut from schools or raise taxes, then it was a failure of vision and planning from the county.

Janna McGrit, Eli Whitney resident, said that she was disappointed with the proposed ABSS cuts. She stated that the proposed cuts would make Alamance County fall into the bottom ten for North Carolina counties in per pupil spending in schools. Ms. McGrit said that additional staff was needed to support students with special needs.

Raven Ford, Elon resident, said she was there to advocate for an increase in the schools system budget and continued support for the libraries. She stated she probably would not have graduated high school and been able to practice consistent study habits without library resources. Ms. Ford said that the Board could approve a budget that showed that they cared not just in words, but in action.

Brianna Young, Burlington resident, said she was concerned with the potential funding cuts to the school system and libraries. She stated that budget cuts may be a short-term solution that leads to long-term problems. Ms. Young asked the Board to do everything they could to keep the school and libraries fully funded.

Joseph Floria, student, said that teachers at his school helped him thrive. Mr. Floria pleaded with the Board to find a way to figure out how to fully fund ABSS.

Camille Mikkelsen, Haw River resident, said that she was concerned with the 19% cut to the ABSS budget. She stated that the county was in a crisis, and that the \$90 million general fund money could be used now. Ms. Mikkelsen said that she supported a tax rate increase to fully fund the budget.

Windy Lampson, Burlington resident, said that she was worried, because the proposed budget would cut \$11.7 million from schools, a 19% reduction from last year. She stated that the county had the power to control funding for local supplements, support positions, transportation, facilities, and student safety in schools. Ms. Lampson said that schools were not asking for luxuries, schools were asking for what they needed to function.

Denise Neaveux, Mebane resident, said she was there to speak about students with disabilities. She stated that her older sister with significant disabilities was well served by public schools and would not have been accepted by private schools. Ms. Neaveux said that underfunding public schools were felt the most by kids with disabilities and their families.

Henry Vines, Snow Camp resident, said he supported a zero property tax increase. He stated that people were in tears because they were afraid that they would not be able to pay property taxes. Mr. Vines asked the Board to take into consideration and give the citizens a break.

Katie Graves, Eli Whitney resident, said she was concerned about the future of public education in Alamance County. She stated that without adequate funding and resources, the county would continue to lose strong educators in the classroom. Ms. Graves said that children should be the greatest investment.

Sawyer Jones, student, said he was there to speak on behalf of the entire student body of ABSS. He stated that cutting funding for ABSS risked undoing progress that the county worked hard to build upon. A well educated community was a strong one, it attracted new businesses and created a strong workforce. Mr. Jones asked the Board to listen to students and stop playing politics.

Valerie Mason, county resident, said she was concerned about the proposed budget cuts to ABSS, the rescue unit and public libraries. She stated that public funding for education and essential workers was crucial. Ms. Mason asked the Board to rethink the proposed budget cuts.

Chairman Paisley seconded by Commissioner Allen moved to close the public hearing.

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Homestead Presentation - Brad Fowler, Tax Administrator

Brad Fowler, Tax Administrator, discussed the Homestead program, which was a property tax relief program for the elderly population. The Homestead program had an application process that ran from January 1 to June 1 of each year. If someone applied after that date, there could be a legal mechanism used by the Board of Equalization and Review where those applications could be approved. An individual had to be at least 65 years of age and a deeded owner of the property

as of January 1 in the year they were applying for the program. An applicant's income could not exceed \$37,900; that number changes each year as social security funding increases. A qualified person receives either 50% off their tax bill or \$25,000 off their tax bill, whichever was greater.

The Circuit Breaker program was a deferral program that was not used widely throughout the state. The program has zero county residents currently in the program. The program expanded the income to \$56,850, and taxes are limited to 5% of an individual's income. Upon death or sale of their property, the heir or seller has to pay back 3 years of taxes plus interest, if enrolled in the program.

Mr. Fowler said that the expansion of the Homestead program was shot down by state legislators in previous years. He thought that this year, with the support from the County Commissioners Association, the General Assembly, tax officials, and private entities that helped support tax offices, the expansion of the Homestead program would make headway.

He stated that Senate Bill 349 had already passed in the State Senate, and he was looking for it to pass in the State House. The bill raised the income threshold for a married couple to 115% of its current rate of \$37,900. He continued that the bill removed the deferment of taxes in the Circuit Breaker program and allowed a co-owner to participate in the program, even if the other owner did not. Mr. Fowler estimated that in Alamance County, it would bring 300 more households into the Homestead program; there were 2,004 currently in the Homestead program.

Interlocal Agreement with Burlington for shared CAD Dispatch Software - Bruce Walker, Assistant County Manager

Bruce Walker, Assistant County Manager, said that the current 911 Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) software was outdated and nearing the end of a 20-year life. He stated that the county was collaborating with the City of Burlington prior to COVID to find a replacement solution that would improve efficiency, public safety, and cost effectiveness. Alamance County and the City of Burlington hired a National Public Safety Group (NPSG) for the needs assessment and procurement. The NPSG managed the project, so that the county could be ready for a successful launch in 2027. Mr. Walker said that countless staff from multiple local municipalities and county governments had reviewed the process.

He said that the interlocal agreement between Alamance County and the City of Burlington outlined the rules of costs, data sharing and decision making related to the rollout of the shared 911 CAD software. The agreement had to be approved before the county signed the contract. Alamance County would serve as the Primary Public Safety Answering Point, the City of Burlington would be secondary, and a community partner in the agreement. Mr. Walker said that the expected go-live timeline was 24 to 30 months from the point that the county signed the contract.

He continued that the 911 dispatch was being consolidated into one system, one server, one backup, one map, and one dataset. Hardware and software costs would be divided proportionally

between Alamance County and City of Burlington based on an average of annual calls dispatched over the past three fiscal years. The City of Burlington had secured \$963,000 in federal aid in 2024. He stated that the City of Burlington qualified, because they were working together with the county. He said that the NC 911 Fund provided funding for the county.

Mr. Walker stated that once the interlocal agreement was approved by Alamance County and the City of Burlington, the county could finalize the contract with Hexagon for the new shared 911 CAD software system. Once the agreement was in place, a more detailed contract could be brought to the Board.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Presentation: “Trends in County Spending” – Commissioner Priola

Commissioner Priola said he had a zero tax proposition. He stated that he was disappointed with the county manager's budget proposal. He continued that in the budget proposal for fiscal year 2022-2023, the budget included 6-year trends of the proposed tax increases. In fiscal year 23-24, a 4-year trend, in fiscal year 24-25, a 2-year trend, and in fiscal year 25-26, a 2-year trend. He said that this was emblematic of a problem with a lack of transparency. He stated that long-term trends were not presented for the Board's observation, and he believed this was a problem for the Board's decision-making.

He said that county spending was 74% higher than a decade ago, the inflation rate was 35% over the same period, and the population growth was 19% over the same period. Commissioner Priola stated that the combined inflation rate and population growth did not equal county spending.

He stated that the per capita personal income in Alamance County was 42% higher in 2023 than in 2015. He stated that county spending increased by 62% over the same period.

Commissioner Priola stated that it was not a property tax revenue or a sales tax revenue problem. He said that property tax revenues over the last ten years had grown by 77%. Revenue from the sales tax over the last ten years had grown by 91%. He stated that these massive increases outpaced inflation.

He said that the problem was not that people were taxed too little, the problem was that the county spent too much.

Commissioner Priola stated that the median home value sold in April 2025 was \$328,134, and the average annual property tax bill was \$1,591.00, representing a \$52 increase. He stated that it was too much for folks who could not afford it. He said that 26.7% of households in Alamance County were cost-burdened.

He stated that \$4 per month was the maximum Medicaid copay in North Carolina, and 32% of the county's population was in the Medicaid program. He continued that 12.5% of the county's population lived in poverty, 11.2% of the population was disabled, and 17.3% of the population was over 65 years old. Commissioner Priola stated that these were the folks who struggled to pay for food or medicine, and these were the people with fixed incomes who could not afford a tax increase.

Commissioner Priola asked whether county employees were underpaid. He stated that the average annual salary for county employees was \$59,472. Private sector employees in Alamance County earned an average of \$51,573. He noted that county government employees were not underpaid; they earned approximately \$8,000 more than their private sector counterparts.

He said that executive compensation was off the charts, the county was paying nearly a million dollars for the senior management. He continued that, across the board, merit pay meant that everyone got merit pay. Overstaffed departments, such as the libraries, had 61 employees across the four branches. He said that there had been problems with abrupt resignations, corruption, and criminal investigations. He stated that the county had weak oversight.

Commissioner Priola said that some of the ideas that he liked the Board to introduce were to cut merit pay from 3% to 2%. He added that, among other things, the county could save \$4.2 million, which would leave the property tax rate unchanged. He said that the county could keep the property rate unchanged, it simply required the will to lead.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Thompson thanked everyone for coming out.

Commissioner Allen said the Sheriff's department, EMS and ABSS were important to her. She said the health department and rescue unit provided a very important service. She stated that she did not want pet adoption to go from no kill to kill. She said that this was her 16th budget. Commissioner Allen mentioned that anyone could call her anytime.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Paisley, seconded by Commissioner Allen, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:41 PM.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board