

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

**June 16, 2025, 6:30 PM
Alamance County Historic Courthouse
1 SE Court Square
Graham, NC 27253**

Board Members Present: Chairman John Paisley Jr
Vice-Chair Steve Carter
Commissioner Pamela Thompson
Commissioner Ed Priola
Commissioner Kelly Allen

CALL TO ORDER - CHAIRMAN PAISLEY

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - COMMISSIONER ALLEN

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Chairman Paisley, moved to add the Hexagon Contract to the agenda.

Commissioner Priola spoke that he did not favor the late introduction of a \$3 million contract to the agenda due to the contract's substantial amount.

County Manager York explained the reason for the delay. Hexagon delayed it, and there was a \$200,000 incentive to sign the contract prior to June 30th.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Chairman Paisley

The amendment of the agenda to add the Hexagon Contract for the 911 CAD system.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Micah Wilkerson, a Snow Camp resident, said he was a parent of two ABSS students. He stated that the ABSS per-pupil spending needed to be put into proper context. He said that per-pupil

spending increased 42% with an ABSS student body population that remained unchanged. Mr. Wilkerson urged the Board not to increase property taxes.

Jaimie McGirt, a Graham resident, said her son had special needs. She stated that 12 staff members and an EC teacher were leaving her son's school. She continued that funding was not sufficient to retain teachers. Ms. McGirt said she would accept a property tax increase.

Laura Stewart, a Saxapahaw resident, said she was a business owner with 20 employees. She asked for a more comprehensive budget plan that set priorities and made cuts elsewhere. Ms. Stewart advocated for a tax increase that prioritized the school system, and libraries.

Henry Vines, a resident of Snow Camp, asked the Board not to raise property taxes. He wanted to address the 3-cent tax increase for the E.M. Holt Fire District, where he resided. He stated that farmers were struggling and did not think the fire department had done its due diligence to cut costs. Mr. Vines asked the Board to reconsider increasing property taxes.

Scott Ward, a county resident, said he heard a lot of talk about cents and wanted to propose common sense. He stated that the county budget needed to be based on the rate of inflation. Mr. Ward said county employees deserved a COLA adjustment and liked the idea of merit pay that went to the top performers.

Joanna Flynn, a Graham resident, expressed support for funding ABSS. She said she was a small business owner and a mother of two. She stated that there was no fluff in the school system's budget. Ms. Flynn said that the county needed to prioritize the county's communal future by fully funding ABSS.

Natasha Albright, a former PTO Vice President, spoke about the programs for her kindergartner and the creativity of the school administrators. She shared a scenario of when a student had a fever and there was no school nurse to assist. She stated that her daughter's school lost the speech pathologist, and bus drivers. Ms. Albright said making more cuts to the already underfunded school system hurt the students and the community.

Brianna Young, a county resident, asked the Board to fully fund schools, libraries, and emergency services. She said cutting funding for ABSS would result in fewer teachers, bigger classes and less support. She stated that cutting library funding would eventually lead to the possibility of closure. She said that cutting emergency services would put lives at risk. Ms. Young urged the Board to act now as the costs would be higher in the future.

Tyler Whitley, a Mebane resident, read an excerpt from a newspaper article regarding comments made by Glen Raven Chairman, Allen Gant. Mr. Gant in his comments advocated for increasing property taxes to invest in the county's growth. Mr. Whitley said that the county would not grow if investments were not made today.

Nerissa Rivera, a Burlington resident, said she did not have kids in the school system, but a quality educational system was a pillar of the community. She stated that if the county did not

fully fund the school system or libraries, it sent a message to county residents that the county did not care. Ms. Rivera said that as a taxpayer, she had no problem paying more in property taxes if it helped support schools, libraries, and EMS services.

Hunter Lubitz, a student, spoke about the resources that have helped him with his school testing. He said that he spent a lot of time in his school's library and loved to read. Mr. Lubitz asked the Board to fund the school system fully, so students like him could thrive.

Jackie Vanhook, a Graham resident and grandmother of an ABSS student, asked the Board why they were considering cutting funding to ABSS. She said cutting funding to ABSS affected the next generation's right to have a good education. Ms. Vanhook said that her organization with community support, provided 3,000 bagged lunches without county funding.

Ryan Moffitt, a Burlington resident, said that ABSS funding should remain a funding priority. He stated that reducing funding to ABSS was unprecedented and not acceptable. Mr. Moffitt stated that ABSS should be fully funded and urged the Board to continue working to meet the school system's needs.

Shawn Francis, a Burlington resident, said he wanted to correct a previous public comment where he said that public records were never responded to, but found out it was. He stated he did not want to see libraries being closed. He said that library staff could be cut. Mr. Francis suggested that there could be room to cut the budget on the courthouse project.

Tracy Lee, a Burlington resident, said she watched the debate on funding non-profits. She stated that she was appreciative of the restored funding to the Alamance County Rescue Unit. She said that she could not understand why the rescue unit was not part of the tax base, as the rescue unit was as vital as fire, police, and EMS. Ms. Lee said that the rescue unit should not be dependent on bake sales and raffles for funding.

Sawyer Jones, a Williams High School student and body president, said he wanted the Board to think about students like him when they voted on the budget. He urged the Board to fully fund ABSS. Mr. Jones encouraged people who did not want a tax increase to teach a class at Williams High School.

Tameka Harvey, Board of Education Member, asked the Board to fully fund ABSS. She stated that continually underfunding ABSS was like a house without a foundation that would eventually fall. Ms. Harvey said that she would support raising property taxes to 7 cents if it would result in taking care of students, teachers, bus drivers and custodians.

Sandy Ellington-Graves, Board of Education Chair, said ABSS was the 15th largest school district in the state, ranked 89th out of 115th in per pupil spending in the state and ranked 34th in local teacher supplements in the state. She stated that local funding had increased, but not proportionately to the county. She stated that ABSS closed the school year with 172 less

positions. Ms. Ellington-Graves said the school board was committed to working with the county to move ABSS forward.

Peter Morcombe, a Graham resident, said people who had been speaking were of special interest. He mentioned that he did not have any children in the school system. He stated that he chose to live in Alamance County due to the lower tax rate. Mr. Morcombe urged the Board not to listen to the activists, but to the ordinary citizens who see taxes going up.

Farrah Kindle, a student at Williams High School, shared her experience with teachers who have been inspirational in her educational journey. She mentioned that one of her teachers left for a higher-paying job to fund her daughter's education. Ms. Kindle urged the Board to fully fund ABSS.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

APPOINTMENTS/ REAPPOINTMENTS

Piedmont Triad Regional Council Workforce Development Board – Derrick Byrd, Randy Perkins, and Kevin Szostak

Budget Amendment 12

Emergency Management- Eno-Haw Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution

TAX REFUNDS

Tax Refunds, Releases, and Exemption-Extensions May 2025

Approval of tax refunds and releases; a copy of the tax refunds is set forth hereafter.

PRESENTATIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Mebane Planning Board Appointment (ETJ Member)

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

Approval of the reappointment of David Scott to the Mebane Planning Board as the county's ETJ member.

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Hexagon Contract

Bruce Walker, Assistant County Manager, stated that signing the Hexagon contract was the final step in approving the new 911 Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) software. The Board had approved the interlocal agreement with the City of Burlington at their June 2nd meeting. Alamance County and the City of Burlington, with the assistance of the National Public Safety Group (NPSG), underwent a thorough and lengthy request for proposals (RFP) process. In July 2024, Hexagon was selected as the best software vendor. He said that the system served as a central hub for all emergency dispatching for the Sheriff, Police, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Services. He mentioned that one of the problems with the current 911 CAD software was that it was almost thirty years old.

The federal grant for the project was \$963,000; the full amount would go towards the costs of implementation. Mr. Walker stated that the county had applied for additional funding for the upcoming year, and the NC 911 Funds contributed to the county's budget. A \$200,000 discount would apply if the Hexagon contract were signed before the end of the fiscal year. The costs for hardware and software would be divided proportionally between Alamance County and the City of Burlington, based on the average annual calls dispatched over the last three fiscal years. The current dispatch divide was 61% for Alamance County and 39% for the City of Burlington. The City of Burlington would be responsible for the annual CAD maintenance fees. Sharing the costs of one system rather than two saved the county and the city significant expenses. Mr. Walker said it was a more efficient and safer system. The county share was \$3.4 million, and the city share was \$2.1 million. The total software implementation costs, including the federal grant, were \$5.5 million.

Once the contract was signed between Hexagon and Alamance County, the operational start would be at the end of the summer. The county was following the successful rollout by Hexagon in Stanly County. Mr. Walker said that the implementation of the new 911 CAD software would span between 24 to 30 months.

County Attorney Stevens addressed why the contract was delayed. He stated that he wanted to make sure it was fundamentally sound and that it protected the county's interest. He added that the county had to make sure that there was support from Hexagon in case there were issues with the software. He said that signing the contract now would take advantage of the \$200,000 incentive.

Commissioner Priola asked Susan Evans, Finance Officer, how this was being paid. Ms. Evans said it was being paid by installment loan proceeds.

Commissioner Thompson inquired about the location of the new 911 CAD system. Mr. Walker stated that it would be in the county building.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

FY25-26 Opioid Settlement Resolution - Ashley Barber, Coordinator for Health Services

Ashley Barber, Coordinator for Health Services, presented a resolution for approval to direct the expenditure of \$590,134.52. She stated that the funds had to be used for opioid abatement activities that minimized the impact of the opioid crisis.

Moved by: Commissioner Thompson

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

APPROVED UNANIMOUS

Resolution Urging the NC Gen Assembly to Reform School Funding

Chairman Paisley complimented County Attorney Stevens on the work on this resolution and asked him to read the resolution.

Chairman Paisley stated that the county had lost total control of county funds being sent to ABSS. He said that the county fully funded county Student Resource Officers (SRO). ABSS chose not to pay SRO's for two months and two sergeants were not paid either. Chairman Paisley said that ABSS appropriated funds to unknown causes.

Dr. Aaron Fleming, ABSS Superintendent, said that ABSS chose to fill in the gap between the SRO state grant and county funds. He said that it was a gap of \$1.3 million that ABSS took out from at-risk state funds to pay for municipal SRO's. He stated that ABSS were trying to use less at-risk state funds.

Commissioner Thompson asked what types of job positions would be funded by at-risk funds. Mr. Fleming said it could go toward additional school counselors, mental health support, social workers and additional teacher assistants.

Vice-Chair Carter asked how many SRO's in neighboring school districts were being funded by the county rather than municipalities. Mr. Fleming said that in some school districts, the Sheriff's Office provided the SRO's. In others, the school districts had their own police force. In ABSS, the municipalities and the county provided the SRO's.

Moved by: Chairman Paisley

Seconded by: Commissioner Priola

Approval of the resolution failed 3-2 with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Allen and Thompson voting against the motion. Chairman Paisley and Commissioner Priola voted in favor of the motion.

FAILED

Construction Manager At-Risk Contract with Samet Corporation - Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager

Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, presented a contract with Samet that chose Samet as the at-risk construction manager. Mr. Baker stated that the county had issued a request for quotes (RFQ) and received four proposals. The county chose Samet based on its experience building a courthouse in Forsyth County. He said that the contract did not settle on a price. Samet would provide estimates as the county worked with an architect and would provide close to real-time maximum cost estimates for design adjustments.

Commissioner Priola inquired about the county's calculation of the total costs for the courthouse project, specifically the \$37 million figure, as opposed to other amounts. He said that the county was not obligated to a particular dollar amount. The county was obligated to have enough courtrooms for the number of judges in the county. Commissioner Priola stated that he was concerned about the labor costs.

Commissioner Thompson said that Samet had done excellent work with Southeast High School.

Vice-Chair Carter said that Samet was one of the top construction companies.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

Approval of the Construction Manager At-Risk Contract with Samet Corporation. The motion carried 4-1 with Chairman Paisley, Vice-Chair Carter, and Commissioners Allen and Priola voting in favor. Commissioner Thompson voted in opposition.

APPROVED

Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Ordinances

County Manager York provided 6 different budget scenarios to the Board.

Commissioner Priola said he wanted to cut to the chase and made a motion for proposed budget adoption of Plan A. Chairman Paisley seconded that motion. Further discussion ensued.

Commissioner Thompson stated that the Board should not rush to make a decision. She mentioned that the Board had plenty of time to make sure it was the right decision.

Commissioner Allen said she could not agree to removing \$10 million from ABSS. She said that withdrawing a reasonable amount from the fund balance, along with a small tax increase, was the fairest way to proceed. Commissioner Allen reiterated that she supported ABSS, the Sheriff's Office, Emergency Services, and the libraries.

Commissioner Thompson discussed what she had requested and then provided some comparisons of other fund balances from neighboring counties. She stated that Guilford County's fund balance was \$8 million, and they were closing 4 schools; Orange County's fund balance was \$13.5 million, and they had just reduced their tax rate. She continued that she could not fund Randolph County's fund balance percentage but they had a property tax rate of 0.50 cents, Forsyth County's fund balance was 17%, and Durham County's fund balance was 12%. Commissioner Thompson stated that using the fund balance would meet the county's needs.

Commissioner Priola stated that it was time to start honoring the promises made to get elected. He said that all 5 Board members were elected as Republicans. He mentioned that this was an opportunity to avoid raising property taxes for those who could not afford it.

Commissioner Allen asked County Attorney Stevens if there was a state statute on whether the county had to meet or increase ABSS's funding every fiscal year. County Attorney Stevens stated that there was no state statute requiring an increase every fiscal year, but it had set a precedent for the ABSS budget request each year.

Vice-Chair Carter sought clarification on whether Plan A would remove \$10 million from the ABSS operational budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026. Rebecca Crawford, Director of Budget and Management Services, confirmed that it was the case.

Chairman Paisley said that ABSS was receiving county funds for operations, and they were spending them elsewhere.

Vice Chair Carter asked County Attorney Stevens what the impact was of reducing \$10 million from the ABSS budget request. County Attorney Stevens said that if the Board and ABSS could not agree on a budget number, then there was a statutory process to mediate that amount. He said that a formula was used to compare last year's budget numbers and help determine this year's budget numbers.

Commissioner Priola informed County Attorney Stevens that the formula was ambiguous. He stated that the school superintendent informed him in an email that ABSS was not using this formula but was instead comparing neighboring counties to determine a budget number. County Attorney Stevens said that in the case of ABSS, if the county could not agree on a budget number, the formula was used to calculate funding. He mentioned that there was no formal litigation process to reach an agreement.

Vice-Chair Carter stated that the county could find itself in a situation where it would be required to mediate.

Chairman Paisley said there was a lot of fluff in ABSS' budget request. He stated that 10.9% of students in the county went to charter schools. Chairman Paisley said that state funding followed the students. He asked why taxpayers should pay money designated by state statute for charter schools back to ABSS, when ABSS was losing students. He stated that the likely scenario was

that the county would need fewer public schools in the future, based on nationwide trends. He mentioned that charter schools were increasing rapidly. He said that ABSS discussed schools being overcapacity. Chairman Paisley cited an article in a local newspaper that schools were not over capacity.

Vice-Chair Carter mentioned that the source for the local newspaper was not ABSS, but rather a third party.

Commissioner Thompson said that funding for charter schools should not flow through ABSS. She emphasized that the Board should not dwell on past issues. ABSS had a new superintendent and a strong school board.

Vice-Chair Carter there was a motion and a second for plan A on the table. He called for the question.

The adoption of Plan A failed in a 3-2 vote, with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Allen, and Thompson voting in opposition. Chairman Paisley and Commissioner Priola voted in favor of the motion.

Vice-Chair Carter proposed a modification to Plan C. He recommended a property tax increase of 4 cents, accompanied by an additional appropriation of \$10 million from the fund balance. Plan C returned \$10 million to ABSS, putting \$8 million toward school capital and \$2 million toward county capital. Two cents of the four-cent property tax increase would fund non-profits, and the remaining two cents would fund ABSS capital.

Ms.Crawford asked for time to prepare the estimated calculations.

Vice-Chair Carter said he was revising his recommendation to modify Plan C. He recommended a property tax increase of 2 cents. \$10 million would be transferred from the school's capital to school operations. \$11.3 million out of the fund balance, from which \$8 million would go to school capital, \$2 million would go to county capital, and \$1.3 million would go to SRO funding.

County Manager York said that would leave the fund balance at around 19.7%.

Vice Chair Carter said that Plan C might eliminate potential liability the county would face from ABSS.

Commissioner Priola said the county found \$10 million miraculously at the last work session and still planned to raise taxes.

Vice-Chair Carter said he did not want to take too much out of the fund balance due to what happened in western North Carolina.

Ms. Crawford reviewed Vice-Chair Carter's recommendations for calculations and after further deliberations, the new proposal was for a 2.5 cent property tax increase. Ms. Crawford said that

this recommendation would put \$10 million from current expenses to ABSS capital and add an additional \$1.3 million.

Chairman Paisley asked about the fund balance percentage. Ms. Crawford said that it would be 20.1%.

Commissioner Priola said that he was going to keep his promise not to raise taxes, said all 5 Board members promised not to raise taxes. He said that the Board raised taxes even though they found \$10 million.

Vice-Chair Carter stated that the county did not just find \$10 million; that money had been there all along. He stated that he did not want the county to be in mediation with ABSS. He acknowledged that there was not enough money to do what ABSS wanted to do. He stated that he was concerned about the citizens who could not afford a tax increase. Vice-Chair Carter stated that there were two programs available to residents with a single-source income that assisted them with their property tax bills.

Chairman Paisley said he wanted to apologize to every county taxpayer if this motion passed. He said that he was hoping the Commissioners would not vote on this to get re-elected. Chairman Paisley stated that he would not vote in favor of this motion.

Moved by: Vice-Chair Carter

Seconded by: Commissioner Allen

Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Commissioner Allen, moved to adopt the following modifications to the recommended fiscal year 2025-2026 budget ordinance. The motion carried 3-2 with Vice-Chair Carter, Commissioners Allen and Thompson voting in favor. Chairman Paisley and Commissioner Priola voted in opposition.

- Increased the property tax rate by 2.5 cents to 49.4 cents
- Increased appropriated fund balance by \$10 million
- Restored funding for Rescue Squad (\$125,000), Family Abuse Services (\$75,000) and Crossroads (\$75,000)
- Restored funding for Burlington-Alamance Airport Authority (\$125,000) and general Economic Development Incentives (\$50,000)
- Restored frozen and eliminated positions at 10 months only
- Transferred \$10 million from ABSS CIP to ABSS Current Expense
- Increased the ABSS's CIP by \$8 million

- Increased County CIP by \$2 million and restored cuts to vehicle replacements, AO Ballfield Phase II, and \$100,00 for county emergency repairs
- Increased ABSS's current expense by \$1.3 million

APPROVED

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

County Attorney Stevens reported that a lawsuit had been dismissed against Chairman Paisley and Sheriff Johnson.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

No report given.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chair Carter, seconded by Commissioner Allen, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

There was no other business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:25 PM.

John Paisley, Jr., Chairman

Alamance County Board of Commissioners

Tory M. Frink, Clerk to the Board