

# ADOPTED

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Gaston County Board  
of Commissioners

GASTON COUNTY

COMMISSIONER'S COURT

NORTH CAROLINA

MARCH 24, 2026

The Gaston County Board of Commissioners (BOC) met in Regular Session at 6:02 pm on March 24, 2026, in The Harley B. Gaston, Jr. Public Forum, Gaston County Courthouse.

Chairman Chad Brown presided with Commissioners Bob Hovis, Vice-Chairman; Jim Bailey, Cathy Cloninger, Allen R. Fraley, Tom Keigher and Scott Shehan in attendance.

Others present included Matthew Rhoten, County Manager; David Goldberg, County Attorney; and Donna S. Buff, Clerk to the Board.

Upon request of Chairman Brown, Commissioner Hovis led those assembled in the Invocation and Commissioner Cloninger led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Brown announced the BOC would address Citizen Recognition first on the Agenda.

### **Citizen Recognition**

The following individuals spoke in support of the Board of Education's funding request: Mr. Ray Cloyd, County School Teacher, Gastonia (NC); Ms. Brittany Elkin (Gastonia, NC); Mr. Joshua Caleb Winburn, Gastonia, NC.

The following individuals spoke in support of removing the Confederate monument from the Courthouse: Ms. Narria Philpott (Gastonia, NC); Ms. Debbie Clay (Bessemer City, NC); Ms. Dionna Graham (Mt. Holly, NC), Vice-President of the NAACP – Gastonia Branch 5394B; Dr. Tatia Prieto (Charlotte, NC); Reverend Thomas Gillespie (Lowell, NC).

Mr. Joshua Brown, Mt. Holly, NC, addressed the Board regarding fire service operations, highlighting improvements in ISO ratings among County fire departments, ongoing challenges related to water supply and adequate staffing. He also referenced results from a citizen survey conducted by the Firefighters Association.

Mrs. Mary Lou Hamlin, Stanley, NC, shared the loss of her husband, pets, and home in a December 28<sup>th</sup> fire, and expressed gratitude to the Lucia-Riverbend and nine other volunteer fire departments for their response. She voiced concerns about the lack of available water during the incident and urged the Board to include funding in the budget for emergency response training, equipment, and staffing to strengthen fire protection and prevent similar losses in the future.

Ms. Lisa Chatman of Huntersville, NC, daughter of Mrs. Mary Lou Hamlin, described the response scene citing limited water supply, which hindered firefighting efforts. She urged the Board to address funding and improve staffing and resources to strengthen fire protection and prevent similar losses.

Chairman Brown stated the Schools Superintendent would address the Board.

### **Dr. Morgen Houchard, Gaston County Schools Superintendent Re: FY25-26 Budget Shortfall**

Dr. Morgen Houchard, Schools Superintendent, addressed the Board to present a significant budget shortfall and to request financial assistance from the County. He stated that Gaston County Schools, like many districts across North and South Carolina, are experiencing serious budget

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deficits that are hindering daily operations. The North Carolina General Assembly has not yet approved a comprehensive state budget for FY2025–2026, resulting in reduced revenue and ongoing financial uncertainty. In September 2025, two months into the school year, the district experienced a \$7.2 million reduction in Low Wealth Supplemental Funds from the State, with no relief plan provided. These funds had been budgeted to support faculty, staff, and school operations. He further noted that inflation over the past five years has significantly increased operational costs. Additionally, the expiration of ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funding in September 2024 eliminated a critical funding source that had previously supported student services and staffing needs, although those needs persist.

He explained that in response to anticipated budget constraints, they initially eliminated 83 positions (69 school-based and 14 Central Office). At that time, the Board of Education was provided pre-audit information indicating the budget was aligned with revenues and expected to balance. However, four months into the school year, it was determined that the information provided was inaccurate. Following the reduction in force, the district identified additional state-allotted positions across several program areas (including non-instructional, mental health, classroom, and enhancement teachers).

Additional cost-saving measures were implemented, including a Central Office hiring freeze in November 2025 affecting 34 positions, with those resources redirected to school-based needs. In December 2025, a system-wide hiring freeze was enacted for all positions except those required by law or deemed critical (e.g., bus drivers and exceptional children's staff). On March 1, 2026, the district implemented a spending and purchasing freeze, requiring Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent approval for all non-contractual expenditures.

He reported that Hurd, Isenhour, Lopes LLC (HIL Consultants) were engaged to review the current financial status. The consultants identified a cash flow issue resulting from expenditures exceeding both available revenues and allotted positions. They attributed the shortfall to reduced low-wealth funding, insufficient inflationary funding, the expiration of ESSER funds, and staffing levels not aligned with declining financial resources. After all cost-saving measures, they projected a 2.1% budget shortfall, totaling approximately \$10 million. Dr. Houchard stated that cash flow over the next three months is at a critical level. He formally requested a \$10 million transfer from the County's fund balance to allow the Schools to complete the fiscal year without further operational disruption and to continue supporting students and staff.

Dr. Houchard acknowledged full responsibility for the situation, stated he understood the magnitude of the request and the position it places on the Board, and expressed regret that the circumstances required such action. He affirmed his commitment to ensuring this situation does not recur and emphasized his pride in the school system and appreciation for the community's support of public education. He urged the Board, as an education partner, to assist in this request.

Chairman Brown advised that each member had a copy of a Board Action for Non-Consent that he would introduce later during approval of the Business Agenda to appropriate the funds.

Commissioner Brown - Police Department - Proclamation - To Proclaim March 23-27, 2026 as First Responder Wellness Week (Adopted under Consent Agenda)

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Commissioners Brown and Hovis invited first responders to the podium, joined by Police Chief Stephen Zill and Officer Jonathan Marr. Commissioner Hovis read the Proclamation recognizing March 23–27, 2026, as First Responder Wellness Week.

Chief Zill accepted the Proclamation and, on behalf of County Police and all first responders, expressed appreciation to the Board of Commissioners and the Manager's Office for their continued recognition and support. He noted that first responders routinely face significant challenges and exposure to traumatic situations in the course of their duties, and while they willingly accept these responsibilities, the support of County leadership makes those challenges more manageable.

Public Hearing - RE: Commissioner Brown - Building & Development Services - Zoning Map Change: Conditional District REZ-25-01-28-00212, Farrokh Ghassemi (Applicant); Property Parcel: 175091, Located at 13460 Lucia Riverbend Hwy., Mount Holly, NC, Rezone from the (R-1) Single Family Limited Zoning District with US and CH Overlays to the CD/(C-3) General Commercial Conditional District with US and CH Overlays

Chairman Brown announced the Public Hearings as advertised, explained the procedures to be used, and called for the motion to enter into Public Hearing.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Hovis and seconded by Commissioner Shehan, the BOC unanimously entered into Public Hearing.

Chairman Brown introduced Ms. Jaime Lisi, Planner II – Building and Development Services, for comments.

Ms. Lisi advised REZ-25-01-28-00212 is a conditional district rezoning request for parcel 175091 at 13460 Lucia Riverbend Hwy; the Applicant/Property owner, Farrokh Ghassemi, is requesting to conditionally rezone from the (R-1) Single Family Limited Zoning District with US and CH Overlays to the CD/(C-3) General Commercial Conditional District with US and CH Overlays.

She reviewed aerial, orthophoto, zoning, and adjacent property owners' maps and advised the *aerial map* depict the property is located north of Mt. Holly's city limits; *orthophoto* map depict the parcel is located directly across the street from Mt. Holly firehouse and behind Mt. Island Charter School; the parcel is currently being used as a contractor's office/equipment storage yard which use is not permitted within the (R-1).

The request originated in March 2022 from a Code Enforcement complaint regarding operation of a contractor's business on a residential lot; since that time, the Applicant has sought to rezone the property to bring it into compliance with County regulations.

The *zoning map* depicts the parcel as surrounded by residential zoning with pockets of commercial and industrial in the vicinity; white areas on map are Mt. Holly's jurisdiction; *adjacent property owners' map* lists those notified about tonight's Public Hearing; a sign was placed on the site on March 9<sup>th</sup>.

For public input, the case has been added to the Planning and Zoning current cases page on [EngageGaston.com](https://www.engagegaston.com); no questions or concerns were posted as of today; staff received one call for site plan clarification but no concerns were shared during the conversation.

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The lot is served by municipal water, private well and septic system.

Per NCDOT's current STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program), there are no funded transportation projects in the immediate vicinity.

The CTP (Comprehensive Transportation Plan) shows recommended pedestrian facilities along Lucia Riverbend Hwy. which are unfunded at this time.

The site plan depict a proposed contractor's office and equipment/ storage yard, parking areas and type D buffers on the side and rear of property; meets all required setbacks for CH overlay district; since the property is adjacent to a residential zoning district, a 30' setback is required along the rear property line.

Staff reviewed Supplemental Regulations in the UDO (Unified Development Ordinance) as follows:

- *Section 8.3.11 - Contractor's Office and Equipment/Storage Yard* which requires a Special Use Permit (SUP) if the outdoor storage area is greater than five acres; it is approximately 1500SF
- Definition of Contractor's Office and Equipment/Storage Yard and underlying zoning district for the proposed (C-3) district
- *Section 7.5 – Table of Uses*, Conditional District definition, confirming this is a permitted use in the underlying (C-3) zoning district.

The Applicant is requesting relief from lot grading and width requirements as no site alterations are proposed; parking regulations require 16 spaces for this use; Applicant has proposed 10 spaces; ADA compliant parking space will be paved while remainder of site will remain graveled.

The Gaston County TRC (Technical Review Committee) reviewed project on February 18<sup>th</sup> and advised EMS, Natural Resources and Building Services had no comment.

Environmental Health has record of the septic system but not the well; Applicant is working with them to update the records and confirm the well/septic complies with the proposed commercial use.

The Planning and Zoning Board heard the request at its March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting and recommended approval with the provision that the type D buffer be extended an additional 55' towards the road (front portion of property); however, staff finds the 6' fence located in front yard is not consistent with the established residential character of surrounding properties; if the Board chooses to require the additional buffer, staff can work with Applicant to meet the type D buffer requirements with a combination of the options excluding the fence.

The parcel is located in *Area 3: Northeast Riverfront Gaston* small area plan of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP).

The future land use definition is *Gateway Center* which needs to be concentrated around NC 16 and Catawba River crossing for commercial purposes associated with high traffic volume as the existing conditions do not lend itself to future residential or mixed use development.

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The application, as presented, aligns with the CLUP due to its commercial use and potential to increase job opportunities; this concludes the presentation; available to answer any questions BOC may have; Applicant has a short presentation for BOC.

Chairman Brown called for comments from the Applicant.

Mr. Farrock Ghassemi (Applicant) stated that he has lived on Lucia Riverbend Highway for approximately 30 years, near the subject property, and was speaking on behalf of Earth America, a locally owned, licensed, and experienced landscaping and irrigation company operated with his brother and explained that the request is to rezone the property for use as a contractor's office and equipment yard for parking company vehicles and equipment. He noted that the business employs approximately six employees, with occasional increases during seasonal demand. He emphasized that the operation would not generate retail traffic. Employees would arrive in the morning, park personal vehicles, and depart in company vehicles to job sites, returning in the evening; the property would remain vacant overnight. Lucia Riverbend Highway includes a variety of existing commercial uses and that, in his opinion, the proposed use would be consistent with the area and have less impact than other commercial or retail operations along that corridor, particularly due to the absence of evening activity.

Mr. Ghassemi indicated a willingness to comply with conditions, including installation of fencing or other measures, to appropriately buffer and distinguish the property from adjacent uses. He thanked the Board for its consideration.

Chairman Brown called for citizen comment; hearing none, called for questions from the BOC.

Commissioner Shehan asked if any bulk materials, mulch or pine needles would be stored on site; if traffic would be increased bringing materials in.

Mr. Ghassemi responded there are some staging materials (plants, etc. ) for jobs; any mulch or pine needles would be loaded onto trailer and taken to jobsite; traffic would not increase using company vehicles to bring in materials.

Commissioner Shehan referred to the Site Plan and asked if the UDO required 16 parking spaces on a lot this size and why was 10 being considered.

Ms. Lisi responded 10 was considered because of space limitations.

Commissioner Shehan clarified this does not meet the standards in the UDO.

Ms. Lisi responded, "that is correct, it would not meet the Code"; they are asking for relief of that requirement.

In response to Commissioner Bailey, Ms. Lisi stated the property is currently being used as a construction site.

Commissioner Bailey inquired how long the business had been operating at the location without the appropriate zoning approval and whether the applicant had intended to seek rezoning only after being cited.

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Mr. Ghassemi responded that the business had been operating at the site for approximately six to seven years and stated that efforts to rezone the property had been underway for roughly four of those years.

When Commissioner Bailey asked if the rezoning was only pursued after enforcement action, Mr. Ghassemi acknowledged that it may appear that way but explained that when the property was purchased, it had previously been used as a commercial painting business. He stated that the lack of earlier rezoning was due to a misunderstanding of zoning requirements and was not intentional.

Chairman Brown expressed concern that the site plan did not address potential hazardous materials (e.g., fertilizers or similar substances). He stated a preference that, if such materials are present, the applicant include a secured enclosure (e.g., concrete or block) as a condition to protect surrounding properties. He also inquired about compliance with parking requirements, specifically whether the site could accommodate the 16 spaces required by code.

Mr. Brian Sciba, Assistant County Manager, responded that he had not reviewed the site plan in sufficient detail to determine the reason for the requested parking relief, noting it could be due to site constraints such as topography. He advised that staff could further evaluate the request and that the Board has the authority to require compliance or deny the requested deviation.

Chairman Brown noted the importance of maintaining established standards and expressed concern that reducing requirements, particularly parking, could limit the Board's ability to uphold standards intended to guide development and asked for assurance that adequate parking would be provided.

Mr. Sciba explained that conditional districts are designed to allow flexibility and facilitate negotiations between applicants and the County. He further noted that, over time, parking standards have evolved, as earlier requirements were often arbitrary and resulted in excessive impervious surfaces. Staff may support reductions in required parking (e.g., from 16 to 10 spaces) if it can be demonstrated that the reduced number adequately serves the use and avoids issues such as overflow parking or environmental concerns. He added that such considerations are being addressed as part of the ongoing Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) rewrite.

Chairman Brown requested that if the rezoning is approved, staff will continue working with the applicant to address outstanding concerns and ensure appropriate site compliance.

Chairman Brown called for additional comments; hearing none, declared the Public Hearing closed.

Chairman Brown recapped the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval via a 10-0 vote finding it *to be reasonable and in the public interest, consistent with the goals of the Comp Plan as it will facilitate commercial development and generate additional employment opportunities at the Gateway Center on NC 16.*

Chairman Brown called for a motion to approve.

Commissioner Keigher introduced a motion to approve the rezoning request and Commissioner Fraley provided the second.

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Commissioner Hovis acknowledged the rezoning request included the parking space relief from 16 to 10 spaces. He suggested that the motion should also include a modified condition for the use of additional landscaping or plantings in lieu of a six-foot fence, consistent with staff's recommendation, and offered a friendly amendment to that effect.

Commissioner Keigher accepted the friendly amendment to his motion.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Keigher and seconded by Commissioner Fraley, the BOC approved **2026-081**, upon consideration of the map change application, public hearing comment, and recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board and Planning staff, finds:

- 1) The map change request is consistent with the County's approved Comprehensive Land Use Plan as it will facilitate commercial development and generate additional employment opportunities at the Gateway Center on NC 16.

The Commission considers this action to be reasonable and in the public interest, based on: Planning Staff and Planning and Zoning Board recommendation and compatibility with existing land uses in the immediate area. Therefore, the map change request for property parcel: 175091, to be rezoned to the CD/(C-3) General Commercial Conditional District with US and CH Overlays, is hereby approved, with the modified condition for the use of additional landscaping or plantings for screening in lieu of a six-foot fence, consistent with staff's recommendation. Approval also includes the requested UDO relief reducing the required parking spaces from sixteen (16) to ten (10). To be effective with the passage of this Ordinance.

- 2) The County Manager is authorized to make necessary notifications in this matter to appropriate parties.

The vote carried as follows:

Ayes: Commissioners Brown, Cloninger, Fraley, Hovis, Keigher  
Nays: Commissioners Bailey, Shehan

Public Hearing - RE: Commissioner Shehan - Building & Development Services - Zoning Map Change: Conditional District REZ-25-11-19-00236, TKC Land Development II, LLC (Applicant); Property Parcel: 146880, Located at 5113 Union Rd., Gastonia, NC, Rezone from the (R-1) Single Family Limited Zoning District with (US) & (CH) Overlays to the (CD/C-1) Light Commercial Conditional District with (US) and (CH) Overlays

Chairman Brown introduced Ms. Peyton Wiggins, Land Development Manager – Building and Development Services, for comments.

Ms. Wiggins advised REZ-25-11-19-00236 is a conditional rezoning request from TKC Land Development II, LLC to rezone 1.5 of 4.97 acres of parcel 146880 on Union Rd., Gastonia, from the (R-1) Single Family Limited Zoning District with (US) & (CH) Overlays to the (CD/C-1) Light Commercial Conditional District with (US) and (CH) Overlays; the property owner is Kay Tallent.

She reviewed aerial, orthophoto, zoning and adjacent property owners' map and advised the *aerial map* depict the parcel is located south of Gastonia city limits in southern portion of County; *orthophoto map* outlines entire parcel (in blue) however the request is for 1.5 acres located in front right corner.

Per environmental features, the site is relatively flat; there is no flood on the property.

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The *zoning map* depict (R-1) with surrounding (R-1) to the left and rear; across Union Rd. and directly adjacent on right side of property is (C-3) General Commercial; this has been a commercial pocket along Union Rd.

The *adjacent property owners'* map depict those parcels (in gray) that received mailed notices for tonight's Public Hearing; this slide shows the information of those that were notified.

Per Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), for conditional rezoning requests staff noticed all properties within a 200' buffer of the site; notices were mailed on March 9<sup>th</sup> and a sign was placed on site same day; as of this afternoon, Planning staff has not received any calls or emails inquiring about the request.

The Site Plan includes the construction of a 10,640SF Dollar General retail store; proposed building will meet all required setbacks; the site complies with the general buffer requirements outlined in Chapter 11 of UDO; parking is provided in front and side yards; additional site features include designated dumpster location, monument sign and loading area for store operations.

The site plan meets required setbacks for CH overlay district which are stricter than underlying (C-1) zoning district; the property is adjacent to a residential district requiring a 30' setback along the left and rear property line; a 25' setback is shown along the right property lines since the adjacent zoning is (C-3).

Staff reviewed supplemental regulations in UDO as follows:

- *Section 8.2.32 – Retail*, outlines supplemental regulations for the retail use; in this case, no regulations applied for a retail establishment within this district or this store size
- *Section 11.3.2 – Buffer yard requirements*, requires a Type D buffer between commercial and residential properties which must be located on the commercial site.

The Applicants are proposing a Type D buffer – option 1 along the left side and rear of property lines; there is a small portion of the buffer that carries over on the right property line which is not required by the UDO since it would be commercial next to another commercial district; however, given the residential homes within the commercial district, the Applicants carried over the buffer to screen the commercial site from the nearby single-family dwellings.

Staff also reviewed definitions for retail use, underlying zoning district for the proposed (C-1), conditional district and Section 7.5 - Table of Uses.

The proposal include one requested area of relief; Section 10.5 – Parking Requirements requires 43 (parking) spaces for a 10,640SF retail store; due to other site plan features, the Applicants are requesting a reduction of 43 to 33 spaces; this request is supported by Dollar General Corporate for general operations (letter of support was attached to BOC's staff packet).

The site will be served by public water and a septic system; Union Rd. is an NCDOT owned and maintained roadway.

The Gaston County TRC (Technical Review Committee) reviewed the request on February 17<sup>th</sup> and received no comments from Building Inspections.

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Natural Resources stated the site will require full erosion control and storm water plan at time of permitting.

Environmental Health noted a registered cemetery (Evans Cemetery) is located on subject property near area associated with the rezoning request; the conditional rezoning site plan shows a general buffer area around cemetery based on available information at this time; a condition of approval has been added requiring the exact location of cemetery to be surveyed and confirmed prior to issuance of a zoning permit; per state requirements, the minimum 15' setback must be maintained between cemetery and any development.

If the survey location differs from what is shown on site plan, the layout may be adjusted administratively at time of permitting to insure compliance with all applicable setbacks and regulatory requirements.

The GCLMPO (Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization) reviewed the request and advised according to the 2026-2035 STIP (State Transportation Improvement Plan) there are no funded transportation improvement projects in immediate vicinity of site; there is a widening project for Union Rd. within the MPO CTP (Comprehensive Transportation Plan) which has not received funding at this time.

For the record, the Applicant is recommending the following conditions of approval: *a subdivision plat must be processed prior to issuance of zoning permit; the proposed septic field location may be adjusted during construction document review as needed. Final placement shall be coordinated with and approved by Gaston County Environmental Health and must be finalized prior to issuance of zoning permit; the Applicant shall provide a survey confirming the exact location of cemetery prior to issuance of zoning permit. Based on confirmed location, the final site plan may be administratively revised as necessary to comply with all applicable setback and regulatory requirements provided the overall intent and layout of the approved conditional rezoning site plan is maintained.*

The Planning (and Zoning) Board added a condition of approval – *a decorative 4' tall aluminum fence shall be installed around Evans Cemetery in accordance with the approved buffer boundary upon confirmation the cemetery is located on the subject property.*

For public input, the case was added to the Planning and Zoning Current Cases page on [www.EngageGaston.com](http://www.EngageGaston.com) ; as of today, there has been no questions or concerns posted about the project.

The site is located in *Area 4: The Garden Gaston/Southeast Gaston* small area plan of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP).

Its future land use designation is *Rural Center (Rural centers are those rural community areas that serve a specific purpose for the immediate need.)*

Staff finds the application, as presented, is consistent with the goals in Rural Center future land use designation as it would serve neighborhood needs.

The Planning (and Zoning) Board heard the request at its March 2nd meeting and recommended approval with its added condition by a 10-0 vote; this concludes the presentation; Applicants are here to answer any questions.

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Chairman Brown called for comments from the Applicant.

Mr. Knox Campbell with TKC (The Keith Corporation), 4500 Cameron Valley Pkwy., Charlotte (NC), advised he was present to answer any questions; appreciates the BOC time and consideration.

Chairman Brown called for citizen comment and for questions from the BOC; hearing none, declared the Public Hearing closed.

Chairman Brown recapped the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval via a 10-0 vote finding it reasonable and in the public interest and consistent with the goals of the CLUP as it will serve a commercial purpose for the immediate area, as envisioned by the rural area.

Chairman Brown called for a motion to approve.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Shehan and seconded by Commissioner Hovis, the BOC approved **2026-082**, upon consideration of the map change application, public hearing comment, and recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board and Planning staff, finds:

- 1) The map change request is consistent with the County's approved Comprehensive Land Use Plan as it will serve a commercial purpose for the immediate area, as envisioned by the rural center future land use designation.

The Commission considers this action to be reasonable and in the public interest, based on: Planning and Zoning Board recommendation and compatibility with existing land uses in the immediate area. Therefore, the map change request for property parcel: 146880, is hereby approved as conditioned {Exhibit A}, effective with the passage of this Ordinance to be rezoned to the (CD/C-1) Light Commercial Conditional District with (US) Urban Standards and (CH) Corridor Highway Overlays.

- 2) The County Manager is authorized to make necessary notifications in this matter to appropriate parties.

Exhibit A  
Conditions of Approval  
REZ-25-11-19-00236

- A subdivision plat must be processed prior to the issuance of the zoning permit.
- The proposed septic field location may be adjusted during construction document review as needed. Final placement shall be coordinated with and approved by Gaston County Environmental Health and must be finalized prior to the issuance of the zoning permit.
- The applicant shall provide a survey confirming the exact location of the cemetery prior to the issuance of a zoning permit. Based on the confirmed location, the final site plan may be administratively revised as necessary to comply with all applicable setback and regulatory requirements, provided the overall intent and layout of the approved conditional rezoning site plan is maintained.
- Planning and Zoning Board's Additional Condition: A decorative four (4) foot tall aluminum fence shall be installed around Evans Cemetery, in accordance with the approved buffer boundary, upon confirmation that the cemetery is located on the subject property.

The vote carried as follows:

Ayes: Commissioners Bailey, Brown, Fraley, Hovis, Keigher, Shehan  
Nay: Commissioner Cloninger

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Public Hearing – RE: Commissioner Brown – Building & Development Services – Zoning Map Change: REZ-26-01-06-00239, Catawba River Investments, LLC (Applicant); Property Parcel: 213896, Located on Drywall Dr. and Mountain Island Rd., Mount Holly, NC, Rezone from the (R-1) Single Family Limited Zoning District with (US) Overlay to the (I-2) General Industrial Zoning District with (US) Overlay

Chairman Brown introduced Ms. Peyton Wiggins, Land Development Manager – Building and Development Services, for comments.

Ms. Wiggins advised REZ-26-01-06-00239 is a general rezoning request from Catawba River Investments, LLC (Applicant/Owner) for parcel 213896 to rezone 113.79 acres parcel from the (R-1) Single Family Limited Zoning District with (US) Overlay to the (I-2) General Industrial Zoning District with (US) Overlay.

She reviewed aerial, orthophoto, environmental, zoning and adjacent property owners' maps and advised the *aerial map* depict that the properties are within the northeast portion of County, northeast of Mt. Holly city limits; *orthophoto map* depict the site in blue; an active rail line runs along the western boundary of site; properties to the north, south and east are vacant and owned by City of Mt. Holly and Duke Energy; many of the surrounding properties and subject site contain electric utilities rights-of-way (r-o-w); there are other various miles of Carolina Thread Trail and mountain biking trails surrounding the site.

She reviewed image of existing easements on the property; nearby uses include two manufacturing facilities, water treatment plant, Mt. Island Park and Riverbend Recycling Center; residential homes are located further west on N. Main St.

The *environmental map* depict the site has significant changes and elevations throughout property; a flood area is located along eastern portion of site.

The *zoning map* depict the property and surrounding properties are zoned (R-1); parcels in white fall under Mt. Holly's zoning jurisdiction.

The adjacent property owners' map depict the property owners who received mailed notices for the Public Hearing; notices were mailed on March 9th and a sign was placed on site same day per NCGS; staff has not received any calls or emails about the request; referenced the information of those that received notices.

The site will be served by a private well and septic system; currently, there are two points of access for the site; Drywall Dr., a private drive, is along southern portion of site; Mountain Island Rd., an NCDOT roadway, is along northern portion of site.

The Gaston County TRC (Technical Review Committee) reviewed the request on February 17<sup>th</sup> and have no comments at this time.

The GCLMPO (Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization) provided comments and the full letter was provided in BOC's packets for more detail.

Per NCDOT 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), there are no funded transportation improvement projects in immediate vicinity of site.

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According to the 2050 MTP (Metropolitan Transportation Plan) a natural-surface trail in Mountain Island Lake Park connecting Drywall Dr. to Dutchman Ave. is included but remains unfunded at this time.

The property falls within *Area 3: Riverfront Gaston/Northeast Gaston* small area plan (of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP)).

Its future land use designation is *Suburban Development* which consist of significant single-family residential areas that exist around commercial pockets representing a suburban center.

Staff finds the application, as presented, is consistent with the goals and future land use designation found with the COMP plan as it will increase job opportunities and commercial activity.

The Planning and Zoning Board heard the request at its March 2nd meeting and recommended approval via an 8-1 vote; this concludes the presentation.

Chairman Brown called for comments from the Applicant.

The applicant thanked the BOC for its consideration; advised they have owned this property eight years; worked with the County EDC and Mr. Black, City of Mt. Holly EDC Director, in presenting the site as a future economic driver in the County and region; one of the major hurdles has been the zoning classification; given the site's location to National Gypsum, Freightliner and the rail line, the highest and best use for the site would be industrial.

Chairman Brown called for citizen comment and for questions from the BOC; hearing none, declared the Public Hearing closed.

Chairman Brown recapped the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval via an 8-1 vote finding it reasonable and in the public interest and consistent with the goals of the COMP Plan as it will increase job opportunities and commercial opportunities as envisioned by the Riverfront Gaston Small Area Plan.

Chairman Brown called for a motion to approve.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Keigher and seconded by Commissioner Shehan, the BOC unanimously approved **2026-083**, upon consideration of the map change application, public hearing comment, and recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board and Planning staff, finds:

- 1) The map change request is consistent with the County's approved Comprehensive Land Use Plan as it will increase job opportunities and commercial opportunities, as envisioned by the Riverfront Gaston Small Area Plan.

The Commission considers this action to be reasonable and in the public interest, based on: Planning and Zoning Board recommendation and compatibility with existing land uses in the immediate area. Therefore, the map change request for property parcel: 213896, is hereby approved, effective with the passage of this Ordinance to be rezoned to the (I-2) General Industrial Zoning District with (US) Overlay.

- 2) The County Manager is authorized to make necessary notifications in this matter to appropriate parties.

Chairman Brown announced the Public Hearings had concluded.

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Chairman Brown recognized NASCAR Champion (Dennis Hamlin) for supporting his Mother (Mrs. Mary Lou Hamlin) tonight and moved to the next item of business.

**Agenda Revision/Approval**

Chairman Brown advised he would be adding the School's funding request to the Non-Consent Agenda.

- Added/ Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Approve a Certificate of Need (CON) for Lowell Fire Department for Purchase of New Engine in the Amount of \$900,000.00 to be Financed with Civic Federal Credit Union – V – Consent Agenda, T.
- Added/ Commissioner Brown - Public Works - To Award the Procurement and Installation of Two Yamaha 250 Outboard Motors for Gaston County Police Departments 2014, Workskiff Force Protect – V – Consent Agenda, U.
- Deleted from Non-Consent/ Commissioner Brown - Public Works - Adoption of an Ordinance Reforming Parking Regulations on County-Owned Property - Chapter 16 of the Gaston County Code of Ordinances – VI., A.
- Deleted From Non-Consent/ Commissioner Brown - Office of Capital Improvements - To Authorize the County Manager, or His Designee, to Execute a Professional Services Contract with ESP Associates, Inc. for Special Inspections and Materials Testing for the Gaston County Courthouse 5th Floor Upfit Project – VI., C.
- Deleted From Non-Consent/ Commissioner Brown - Office of Capital Improvements - To Award a Construction Contract and Authorize the County Manager, or his Designee, to Execute said Contract with Cinderella Partners, Inc. for the Administrative Annex Upfit Project in the Amount of \$1,740,335.80 – VI., D.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Keigher and seconded by Commissioner Hovis, the BOC unanimously approved the Agenda of March 24, 2026 with changes as noted above.

**Approval of Minutes**

On motion introduced by Commissioner Hovis and seconded by Commissioner Keigher, the BOC unanimously approved the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 27, 2026.

**Consent Agenda**

On motion introduced by Commissioner Hovis and seconded by Commissioner Keigher, the BOC unanimously approved the Consent Agenda as follows:

**2026-084 Commissioner Hovis - County Manager - To Accept Departmental Budget Change Requests as Information as follows:**

ENTRY DATE	DEPT. NAME	ACCOUNT	DR/CR	AMOUNT
02/03/2026	Building & Dev. Service	1000-BDS-233-00000-000000-000000-0000-07-540015-G0116	C	8,815
02/03/2026	Building & Dev. Service	1000-BDS-233-00000-000000-000000-0000-07-510001-G0116	D	8,533
02/03/2026	Building & Dev. Service	1000-BDS-233-00000-000000-000000-0000-07-520015-G0116	D	282
02/04/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530023-18084	C	375
02/04/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530023-18084	C	650
02/04/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-274-00000-Hope4H-000000-0000-05-520019-	C	10,000
02/04/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530023-	D	375
02/04/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530030-	D	650
02/04/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-274-00000-Donatn-000000-0000-05-520019-	D	10,000
02/05/2026	Tourism	2005-TRM-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-07-540004-	C	653,000
02/05/2026	Tourism	2005-TRM-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-07-540005-P2412	D	653,000
02/06/2026	Emerg. Mgt & Fire Services	1000-EMG-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520005-G0111	C	1,478
02/06/2026	Emerg. Mgt & Fire Services	1000-EMG-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520001-G0111	D	1,478
02/09/2026	Parks & Recreation	1000-PRK-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-04-530023-	C	1,140
02/09/2026	Parks & Redreation	1000-PRK-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-04-530020-	D	1,140
02/10/2026	Health	1000-HLT-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530052-22000	C	25,000
02/10/2026	Non-Departmental	1000-NDP-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-530015-G0089	C	3,626
02/10/2026	Non-Departmental	1000-NDP-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520005-G0089	C	800

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02/10/2026	Non-Departmental	1000-NDP-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520007-G0089	C	3
02/10/2026	Emerg. Mgt & Fire Services	1000-EMG-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520005-G0111	C	1,617
02/10/2026	Health	1000-HLT-253-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530052-	D	25,000
02/10/2026	Non-Departmental	1000-NDP-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520002-G0089	D	1,841
02/10/2026	Non-Departmental	1000-NDP-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520020-G0089	D	588
02/10/2026	Non-Departmental	1000-NDP-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-560001-G0089	D	2,000
02/10/2026	Emerg. Mgt & Fire Services	1000-EMG-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520001-G0111	D	1,617
02/11/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-ChPrkg-0000000-0000-01-530020-	C	1,000
02/11/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530010-	C	6,000
02/11/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520011-	C	6,000
02/11/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520002-	C	2,000
02/11/2026	Finance	1000-FIN-140-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-570006-G0117	C	9,690
02/11/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-ChPrkg-0000000-0000-01-530013-	D	1,000
02/11/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530013-	D	12,000
02/11/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520001-	D	2,000
02/11/2026	Finance	1000-FIN-140-00000-21Cent-Year002-0000-01-570006-G0117	D	9,690
02/12/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530023-18084	C	125,400
02/12/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-291-29102-000000-000000-0000-05-530010-G0122	C	146
02/12/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530030-	D	125,400
02/12/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-291-29102-000000-000000-0000-05-520005-G0122	D	146
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530015-	C	59,110
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530015-	C	35,000
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530023-	C	50,000
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530021-	C	6,000
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530010-	D	59,110
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530012-	D	35,000
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-381-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530023-	D	50,000
02/16/2026	Solid Waste Services	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-000000-0000-08-530024-	D	6,000
02/17/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-520020-	C	50
02/17/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520001-	C	250
02/17/2026	Emerg. Mgt & Fire Services	1000-EMG-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520001-G0111	C	1,617
02/17/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-530052-	D	50
02/17/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520013-	D	250
02/17/2026	Emerg. Mgt & Fire Services	1000-EMG-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-520020-G0111	D	1,617
02/18/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520011-	C	1,000
02/18/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-520011-	D	1,000
02/19/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-520020-	C	200
02/19/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-530052-	D	200
02/23/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-520012-	C	100
02/23/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530027-	D	100
02/24/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-270-00000-WIOA00-WIOAdit-0000-05-560014-	C	200
02/24/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-270-00000-WIOA00-WIODWkr-0000-05-560010-	C	200
02/24/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-270-00000-WIOA00-WIOYuth-0000-05-560001-	C	200
02/24/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-270-00000-WIOA00-WIOAdit-0000-05-520012-	D	200
02/24/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-270-00000-WIOA00-WIODWkr-0000-05-520012-	D	200
02/24/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-270-00000-WIOA00-WIOYuth-0000-05-520012-	D	200
02/25/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-520020-	C	41
02/25/2026	Parks & Redreation	1000-PRK-360-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530004-	C	11,094
02/25/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-290-29001-000000-000000-0000-05-530052-	D	41
02/25/2026	Tax	1000-TAX-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530004-	D	420
02/25/2026	Health	1000-HLT-253-00000-000000-HighHit-0000-05-530004-	D	1,160
02/25/2026	Public Works	1000-PWK-191-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530004-	D	5,645
02/25/2026	County Police	1000-GPD-200-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-530004-	D	1,455
02/25/2026	Library Services	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-04-530004-	D	1,494
02/25/2026	Health	1000-HLT-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530004-	D	870
02/25/2026	GEMS	1000-EMS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-02-530004-	D	50
02/26/2026	Library Services	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-04-520018-G0156	C	61,481
02/26/2026	Library Services	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-04-520002-G0156	D	5,000
02/26/2026	Library Services	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-04-520020-G0156	D	56,481
02/27/2026	Tax	1000-TAX-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-530038-	C	4,000
02/27/2026	Tax	1000-TAX-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-01-520012-	D	4,000
03/03/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-272-00000-CGSPrg-0000000-0000-05-510005-18524	C	5,180
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530029-LASER	C	1,157
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530013-	C	2,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510003-	C	12,270
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510100-	C	4,600
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510102-	C	4,700
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-270-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510100-	C	12,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-270-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510102-	C	42,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-271-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510103-	C	95,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-271-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-510102-	C	30,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-271-00000-000000-Interpr-0000-05-530015-	C	3,900
03/03/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-272-00000-CGSPrg-0000000-0000-05-510100-18524	D	520
03/03/2026	Community Support Services	1000-CSS-272-00000-CGSPrg-0000000-0000-05-530010-18524	D	4,660
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-000000-0000-05-530023-RICOH	D	1,157

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03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-530023-	D	2,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510103-	D	16,870
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-000-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510101-	D	4,700
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-270-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510007-	D	12,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-270-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510001-	D	42,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-271-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510001-	D	95,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-271-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510007-	D	30,000
03/03/2026	Social Services	1000-DSS-271-00000-FostCr-CNotMet-0000-05-560008-	D	3,900

**2026-085 Commissioner Keigher - DHHS - Health Division - To Appropriate Federal Grant Funds Received from the NC Department of Health and Human Services - State Office of Child Fatality Prevention Branch for the Child Fatality Case Reporting and Prevention Program (\$1,756) per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Prof Services-Child Fatality	1000-HLT-254-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-530010-GCFRP	\$1,756.00
Federal Grant Rev-Child Fatality	1000-HLT-254-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-410000-GCFRP	\$(1,756.00)

**2026-086 Commissioner Keigher - DHHS - Health Division - To Accept and Appropriate Local Grant Funds Received from Partners Health Management (\$2,871) per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Bldg Rental-Hlth Equity Summi	1000-HLT-250-00000-000000-HESummt-0000-05-530027-L0014	\$2,871.00
Other Grant Rev-Hlt Eqty Summt	1000-HLT-250-00000-000000-HESummt-0000-05-445006-L0014	\$(2,871.00)

**2026-087 Commissioner Keigher - DHHS - Social Services Division - Proclamation - To Proclaim the Month of March 2026 as National Social Work Month**

**2026-088 Commissioner Keigher - EDC - To Authorize an Application to the NC Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division Building Reuse Grant Program Application on Behalf of Project Helms Deep as follows:**

WHEREAS, Project Helms Deep is considering an investment that will result in net new taxable value at an existing manufacturing facility in Gaston County; and,

WHEREAS, the firm intends to create at least 30 new jobs over five years in Gaston County; and,

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute §158-7.1 authorizes a County to undertake an economic development project by providing grants for the location of industry; and,

WHEREAS, the Gaston County Board of Commissioners finds that it is in the best interests of the County to assist Project Helms Deep in completing a NCDOC Rural Economic Development Division Building Reuse Grant Application. The required local 5% match will be the previously approved Local Investment Grant; and,

WHEREAS, this will potentially increase property and sales tax revenue based upon Project Helms Deep choosing to expand its manufacturing operations in Gaston County; and,

WHEREAS, the Gaston County Board of Commissioners desires to support this manufacturing operations so as to induce the company to provide good job opportunities and capital investment which will enhance the County's ability to attract additional business and industry.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners authorizes the Economic Development Commission to execute any documents necessary to complete this NCDOC Rural Economic Development Division Building Reuse Grant Application on behalf of Project Helms Deep.

**2026-089 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Accept as Information the February 2026 Property Tax Refunds Less than \$100. These Tax Refunds Should Be Recorded in the Board's Minutes. (Total NCVTS Refunds - \$1,488.14) as follows:**

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TAXPAYER NAME	AMOUNT	TAXPAYER NAME	AMOUNT
<b>FEBRUARY 2026 REFUNDS</b>			
AL SHUKOOR, HAIDER TAWFEEQ SALIH	\$44.17	MCNEELY, ZACKERY BRENT	\$51.23
AL SHUKOOR, HAIDER TAWFEEQ SALIH	\$43.51	MORROBEL, DANIEL THOMAS	\$30.20
ALEXANDER, ANDREW CHARLES	\$31.08	OBERMILLER, MATTHEW JOSEPH	\$73.05
BALLARD, MICHAEL AVERY	\$22.63	PAGAN, FRANCES BARBER	\$27.12
CUNANAN, DANIEL MACAHILAS	\$17.37	REESE, DAVID BERNARD TALMADGE	\$67.27
DAVIDSON, CHARLES EDWARD	\$11.24	ROSS, KAREN RUFF	\$12.51
ELLIOTT, CLINT DWAYNE	\$67.52	SAGE, JOHN TIMOTHY	\$19.13
ELLIS, ROBERT J	\$11.59	SARGENT, H BROMLEY	\$97.53
GIGANTE, ROBERT VINCENT	\$70.72	SERRANO GRANADINO, NATHALY GABRIELA	\$14.94
HOAK, DANIEL SHANE	\$77.80	STUMP, MICHAEL LEE	\$70.84
HOUGH, MICHAELA MEGAN	\$33.23	THOMAS, JERRY LEE	\$32.99
HOWE, MELISSA NICOLE	\$56.01	VEIN EASTRIDGE, MARY JEAN	\$14.22
HOWELL, DANIAL FRANK	\$56.77	VILLALOBOS, JOSE MANUEL LEON	\$17.94
JENKINS, STEVEN PATRICK JR	\$86.93	WALKER, MATT CONLEY	\$67.45
LEWIS, WARREN LEE	\$17.80	WETHINGTON, WENDY DUNCAN	\$7.33
LAIL, JOHN WESLEY	\$92.00	WILLIAMS, TAMEKA FOLONDA	\$41.97
LOVE, GARRY PHILMORE	\$35.70		
MCCURRY, KIM SAUNDERS	\$66.35	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,488.14</b>

**2026-090 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Approve the Current Year Audit Contract With Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. (Base Contract of \$118,400 and Includes Additional \$37,500 for Potential Major Programs Over 2 Included in the Base Contract) (Total Contract \$157,900)**

**2026-091 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Appropriate Asset Forfeiture (\$304,803.61) and Controlled Substance Tax (\$340,528.15) Reserved Fund Balances as of June 30, 2025 per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Fund Balance Appropriated	2020-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	(304,803.61)
Asset Forfeitures	2020-GPD-000-00000-0000000-0000000-0000-02-530043-AFJPD	212,051.32
Asset Forfeitures	2020-GPD-000-00000-0000000-0000000-0000-02-530043-AFTPD	31,166.20
Asset Forfeitures	2020-SHF-000-00000-0000000-0000000-0000-02-530043-AFTSH	57,998.17
Asset Forfeitures	2020-SHF-000-00000-0000000-0000000-0000-02-530043-AFJSH	3,587.92
Fund Balance Appropriated	2025-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	(340,528.15)
Controlled Substance Tax	2025-GPD-000-00000-0000000-0000000-0000-02-530045-CSTPD	286,186.66
Controlled Substance Tax	2025-SHF-000-00000-0000000-0000000-0000-02-530045-CSTSH	54,341.49

**2026-092 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - Transfer Fire District Fund Balance, as of June 30, 2025, to Unified Fire Protection Service Fund (\$585,415.83) per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Fund Balance Appropriated	2035-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	(585,415.83)
Transfer to Unified Fire Svc	2035-NDP-000-00000-TrfxTo-0000000-0000-98-582036-	585,415.83
Transfer from Fire Districts	2036-NDP-000-00000-TrfxFr-0000000-0000-98-482035-	(585,415.83)
Fund Balance Appropriated	2036-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	585,415.83

**2026-093 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Approve a Certificate of Need (CON) for South Point Fire Department for Purchase of New Engine in the Amount of \$1,100,000.00 to be Financed with First National**

**2026-094 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Approve a Certificate of Need (CON) for North Gaston Fire Department for**

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**Purchase of 3 Apparatuses in the Amount of \$1,185,000.00 to be Financed with United National**

- 2026-095 Commissioner Shehan - Financial and Management Services - Grants (DHHS/Shelter) - To Accept and Appropriate Additional Grant Funds from the North Carolina Division for Women and Youth - Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) Program for the FVPSA Core Grant for The Cathy Mabry Cloniger Center for FY2026 (Year 2 - \$93,101.97 with a County Match of \$18,620.39) per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Federal Grant Rev-FY25 FVPSA	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-410000-G0144	(93,101.97)
Salaries-FY25 FVPSA Core Award	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510001-G0144	62,264.68
FICA-FY25 FVPSA Core Award	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510100-G0144	4,715.62
Retirement-FY25 FVPSA Core Awd	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510101-G0144	8,953.62
401K Contr-FY25 FVPSA Core Awd	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510102-G0144	3,113.24
Health Insur-FY25 FVPSA Core A	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510103-G0144	11,123.32
Dental Insur-FY25 FVPSA Core A	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510104-G0144	241.80
Life Insur-FY25 FVPSA Core Awd	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-510105-G0144	107.90
Client Supplies-FY25 FVPSA Core	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-Year002-0000-05-560018-G0144	2,581.79
Salaries	1000-CSS-273-00000-000000-0000000-0000-05-510001-	(18,620.39)
Salaries-FY25 FVPSA Core Award Match	1000-CSS-273-00000-Gmatch-Year002-0000-05-510001-G0144	18,620.39

- 2026-096 Commissioner Keigher - Library - To Accept and Appropriate Libraries Strengthening Connections Grant (\$30,000) per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Federal Grant Rev-StrengthgCon	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-0000000-0000-04-410000-G0170	(\$30,000)
Furn/Equip<\$5K-StrengthgConnec	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-0000000-0000-04-520020-G0170	\$29,500
Software Rental-StrengthgConne	1000-LIB-000-00000-000000-0000000-0000-04-530029-G0170	\$500

- 2026-097 Commissioner Brown - Police Department - To Approve the Interlocal Agreement Providing for Telecommunications Dispatch and Public Safety Computer Support for the Town of Dallas Police Department**

- 2026-098 Commissioner Brown - Police Department - Proclamation - To Proclaim March 23-27, 2026 as First Responder Wellness Week**

- 2026-099 Commissioner Cloniger - Public Works - To Authorize the Purchase of Buffer Property Adjacent to the Gaston County Landfill, Located at 1455 Alexis - High Shoals Road, Dallas NC (PID 200983) for \$345,000 as well as Associated Closing Costs and Direct the County Attorney to Draft Any Necessary Documents and Authorizes the County Manager, or Designee, to Execute Said Documents for Closing Purposes per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Future Capital Expenditures	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-0000000-0000-08-540009-21012	(350,000.00)
Buffer Prop Acquisition - Land	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-0000000-0000-08-540004-BfPrp	31,050.00
Buffer Prop Acquisition - Bldg	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-0000000-0000-08-540005-BfPrp	313,950.00
ProfSvc:CaptlProj-BufferPropA	6000-SWS-380-00000-000000-0000000-0000-08-540016-BfPrp	5,000.00

- 2026-100 Commissioner Brown - Public Works - To Approve the Reallocation of Budgeted Capital Funds to Operating Funds to Pay for Required Maintenance and Emergency Repairs (\$580,000) per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Other Improv & Cap Outlay	4005-PWK-192-00000-000000-0000000-0000-01-540006	(580,000.00)
Transfer to CIF Fund	4005-NDP-000-00000-TrfxTo-0000000-0000-98-584000-	580,000.00

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Transfer from Capital Fund	4000-NDP-000-00000-TrfxFr-0000000-0000-98-484005-	(580,000.00)
Transfers to General Fund	4000-NDP-000-00000-TrfxTo-0000000-0000-98-581000-	580,000.00
Transfer from CIF	1000-NDP-000-00000-TrfxFr-0000000-0000-98-484000-	(580,000.00)
Various Repairs	1000-PWK-192-00000-000000-0000000-0000-01-530023-18084	580,000.00

**2026-101 Commissioner Brown - Register of Deeds - To Appropriate Restricted Automation Preservation Fund Balance for 1 New Full-Time Position (\$134,360) and Approve the Carry Forward of Available Funds as of 6/30/26 per Budget Change Request:**

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Fund Balance Appropriated	1000-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	(134,360.00)
Salaries (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510001-	87,168.00
FICA (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510100-	6,668.00
Retirement (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510101-	13,040.00
401K Contribution (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510102-	4,359.00
Health Insurance (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510103-	19,000.00
Dental Insurance (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510104-	375.00
Life Insurance (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-510105-	250.00
Furn/Equip<\$5K (Automtn Fds)	1000-ROD-000-00000-AutoFd-0000000-0000-01-520020-	3,500.00

**2026-102 Commissioner Fraley - Tax Collections - Pursuant to G.S. 105-381, the Tax Collector Requests that the Listed February 2026 Tax Refunds be Made. (Releases and Refunds - \$13,799.32; Overpayments - \$7,492.17; VTS Refunds - \$1,173.53; Grand Total - \$22,465.02) as follows:**

TAXPAYER NAME	AMOUNT
<b>February 2026 RELEASES AND REFUNDS</b>	
Corelogic Centralized Refunds	\$826.07
Murray, Lorraine	\$2,369.97
Moore, Karen Kay P	\$973.75
Corelogic Centralized Refunds	\$666.74
Hubbard, David	\$1,336.94
Inthirath, Tieng	\$1,144.56
Meeks, Eddie	\$1,144.28
Goodson, Donna	\$861.80
Rainey, Phyllis	\$490.62
Corelogic Centralized Refunds	\$481.05
Helton, Sybil R.	\$1,834.37
Stepp, Donna S	\$574.77
Lauricia Sr, James E	\$451.80
Corelogic Centralized Refunds	\$321.30
Corelogic Centralized Refunds	\$321.30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$13,799.32</b>

<b>February 2026 OVERPAYMENTS</b>	
Itani LLC Dirk Tanis	\$218.30
Messick, Susan	\$200.00
PreVatt, Gary Martin	\$110.85
Steele, Jackie Ray	\$127.74
Clicklease	\$108.99
Sellers, Jerry Lee	\$113.52
Lewis, Lawrence S	\$3,354.95
RR Renovations Group, LLC	\$100.48
Patel, Udayan	\$1,057.67
Halk, Rena	\$841.12
Kelly, Mary	\$301.75
Norman, Karrie	\$148.75
Norman, Karrie	\$227.28
Peeler, Sherry B	\$100.00

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Sherrill, Scott Taylor	\$480.77
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,492.17</b>
<b>February 2026 VTS REFUNDS</b>	
Cox, Ryan Townsend	\$138.00
Disla, Jose Miguel	\$203.91
Duckworth, Boone McNeely Jr	\$155.81
Lincoln County Tax Office	\$284.63
Lincoln County Tax Office	\$169.51
Prater, David Vernell	\$221.67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,173.53</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$22,465.02</b>

- 2026-103 Commissioner Hovis - Financial and Management Services - Finance - To Approve a Certificate of Need (CON) for Lowell Fire Department for Purchase of New Engine in the Amount of \$900,000.00 to be Financed with Civic Federal Credit Union**
  
- 2026-104 Commissioner Brown - Public Works - To Award the Procurement and Installation of Two Yamaha 250 Outboard Motors for Gaston County Police Department's 2014, Workskiff Force Protect (MarineMax East, Inc. - \$106,708.86 Quote)**

Non-Consent Agenda Items

- DELETED Commissioner Brown - Public Works - Adoption of an Ordinance Reforming Parking Regulations on County-Owned Property - Chapter 16 of the Gaston County Code of Ordinances**
  
- 2026-105 Commissioner Brown - Office of Capital Improvements - To Award a Construction Contract and Authorize the County Manager, or his Designee, to Execute said Contract with W.C. Construction Company, LLC for the Courthouse 5th Floor Upfit Project in the Amount of \$12,103,097 and Appropriate \$9,500,000 from the Community Investment Fund; and Approve the Reimbursement Declaration**

On motion introduced by Commissioner Keigher and seconded by Commissioner Hovis, the BOC unanimously approved **2026-105** awarding a construction contract and authorizing the County Manager, or his designee, to execute said contract with W.C. Construction Company, LLC for the Courthouse 5th floor upfit project in the amount of \$12,103,097 and appropriating \$9,500,000 from the Community Investment Fund; and approving the reimbursement declaration per Budget Change Request:

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Fund Balance Appropriated	4000-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	(9,500,000.00)
Transfer to Gen Govt Capital	4000-NDP-000-00000-TrfxTo-0000000-0000-98-584005-	9,500,000.00
Transfer from CIF	4005-NDP-000-00000-TrfxFr-0000000-0000-98-484000-	(9,500,000.00)
Building and Improvements	4005-PWK-192-00000-CourtF-0000000-0000-01-540005-P2406	9,500,000.00

DECLARATION OF OFFICIAL INTENT  
TO REIMBURSE CERTAIN EXPENDITURES

I, Kyle Sutherland, Finance Director of the County of Gaston, North Carolina (the "County"), having been designated by the Board of Commissioners for the County (the "Board") pursuant to a Resolution (2006-154) passed by said Board on April 13, 2006 as a person authorized to declare official intent on behalf of the County to reimburse certain expenditures with the proceeds of tax-exempt debt to be issued or incurred by the County, DO HEREBY DECLARE, on behalf of the County, as follows:

1. The County has determined to pay the cost of acquiring, constructing, improving and equipping courthouse facilities for the County (the "Project").
2. Certain moneys advanced or to be advanced by the County to pay such expenditures (the "Expenditure") are available only for a temporary period and it is and will be necessary to reimburse the County for the Expenditures from the proceeds of one or more tax-exempt financings of the County in the form of one or more installment financings that are expected to be authorized by the Board (collectively, the "Tax-exempt Financings").
3. The County intends to reimburse itself with the proceeds of the Tax-exempt Financings for the Expenditures. The County reasonably expects on the date hereof that it will reimburse the Expenditures with the proceeds of the Tax-exempt Financings.
4. Each Expenditure was or will be (a) of a type properly chargeable to a capital account under general federal income tax principles (determined in each case as of the date of the Expenditure), (b) a cost of issuance with respect to the Tax-exempt Financings, (c) a nonrecurring item that is not customarily payable from current revenues or (d) a grant to a party that is not related to or an agent of the County so long as such grant does not impose any obligation or condition (directly or indirectly) to repay any amount to or for the benefit of the County.
5. The maximum principal amount of the Tax-exempt Financings expected to be entered into with respect to the Project is \$9,500,000, plus such additional amounts, if any, as shall be determined to be reasonably necessary for the funding or payment of costs of entering into the Tax-exempt Financings.
6. The County will make a reimbursement allocation, which is a written allocation by the County that evidences the County's use of proceeds of the Tax-exempt Financings to reimburse an Expenditure, no later than 18 months after the later of the date on which the Expenditure is paid or the Project is placed in service or abandoned, but in no event more than three years after the date on which the Expenditure is paid. The County recognizes that exceptions are available for certain preliminary expenditures, costs of issuance, certain de minimis amounts, expenditures by small issuers (based on the year of issuance and not the year of expenditure) and expenditures for construction projects of at least five years.

WITNESS my hand this \_\_\_\_\_ day of March, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kyle Sutherland  
Finance Director

**DELETED Commissioner Brown - Office of Capital Improvements - To Authorize the County Manager, or His Designee, to Execute a Professional Services Contract with ESP Associates, Inc. for Special Inspections and Materials Testing for the Gaston County Courthouse 5th Floor Upfit Project**

**DELETED Commissioner Brown - Office of Capital Improvements - To Award a Construction Contract and Authorize the County Manager, or his Designee, to Execute said Contract with Cinderella Partners, Inc. for the Administrative Annex Upfit Project in the Amount of \$1,740,335.80**

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**2026-106 Commissioner Bailey - Office of Capital Improvements - To Approve a Qualifications Based Selection and Authorize the County Manager, or His Designee, to Execute a Professional Services Contract with Indigo River Architecture and Engineering of NC, P.C. (IRAE) for the South Point Access Police Boathouse**

On motion introduced by Commissioner Bailey and seconded by Commissioner Hovis, the BOC unanimously approved **2026-106** approving a qualifications based selection and authorizing the County Manager, or his designee, to execute a Professional Services Contract with Indigo River Architecture and Engineering of NC, P.C. (IRAE) for the South Point Access Police Boathouse.

**2026-107 Commissioner Brown – County Manager - To Appropriate General Fund, Fund Balance to Provide Gaston County Schools with One-time Operational Funding (\$10,000,00)**

Chairman Brown introduced the item regarding the appropriation of General Fund balance to provide one-time operational funding to Gaston County Schools. He invited Schools Superintendent Dr. Morgen Houchard to the podium and deferred to Commissioner Hovis for opening remarks.

Commissioner Hovis stated that more than 30% of County property tax revenues are allocated to public education, underscoring the County's significant investment in the school system. He noted that Dr. Houchard, Board of Education (BOE) Chairman Josh Crisp, and Vice Chair Dot Cherry had engaged in discussions with the Board of Commissioners (BOC) to help clarify newly identified financial challenges. While acknowledging the seriousness of the situation, Commissioner Hovis expressed support for the funding request, emphasizing that the County has too much invested in its students and school system to allow the issue to persist through the end of the fiscal year.

He cautioned that the BOC must maintain consistency in how it treats all departments when addressing budget matters outside of adopted budgets. He highlighted the strong working relationship between the BOC and BOE over the past five years, noting that open dialogue and collaboration have improved significantly. He further stated that the County has been a good steward of taxpayer funds and that the County Manager had confirmed the proposed action would not jeopardize the County's financial position or debt obligations. He added that there is an expectation that the funds could be repaid to the County in the future through a mutually agreed-upon method, although no formal plan has yet been established.

Commissioner Hovis remarked that while the request is unprecedented locally, similar situations have occurred elsewhere in the state. He referenced discussions with a Forsyth County Commissioner, where a comparable funding shortfall had been addressed through cooperation between the county and its board of education. He indicated that much of the current shortfall was internally driven rather than solely attributable to state actions, noting that the BOC had already committed \$3.5 million in bond funds to address a portion of the issue. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the continued cooperation between the BOC and BOE and made a motion to move the request forward.

Commissioner Shehan commended Dr. Houchard for identifying the issue early and asked that he outline the plan to prevent a recurrence.

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Dr. Houchard explained that staff began planning for the upcoming fiscal year in late fall and early winter, anticipating reductions based on allotments and financial conditions. He stated that the Schools have already begun "right-sizing" operations, including evaluating staffing levels, positions, and potential school consolidations. He further advised that HIL Consultants (Hurd, Isenhour, Lopes LLC) had been engaged to assist with financial analysis and planning. The firm will work with the district through the current fiscal year and into the next to ensure improved financial controls and accuracy. He noted that the firm has experience working with numerous agencies and is currently assisting multiple school systems facing similar challenges. Dr. Houchard emphasized that additional oversight layers are being implemented as part of the next budget development process.

In response to a follow-up question from Commissioner Shehan regarding the potential impact if funding were not approved, Dr. Houchard stated that layoffs would need to begin immediately, with approximately 100 positions affected as early as that week and potentially up to 400 positions in total. He emphasized that the situation had reached a critical point, particularly in ensuring payroll obligations through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Commissioner Bailey stated that while the County's primary responsibility is funding capital needs, the current request involves the use of local taxpayer funds to offset state funding shortfalls. He acknowledged initial hesitation but ultimately expressed support, citing the importance of retaining teachers and supporting the workforce. He noted concerns regarding the State's failure to adopt a budget in recent years and emphasized the need to invest in teachers to prevent attrition.

Commissioner Keigher asked for clarification on whether the requested action could delay a future school bond referendum.

Dr. Houchard confirmed that he would not oppose such a delay if it allowed the Schools to stabilize operations through July 1.

Commissioner Keigher also noted that future Board composition could change following upcoming elections, potentially impacting future decisions.

Commissioner Cloninger expressed that the situation was unfortunate but commended the Schools for acknowledging the issue. She emphasized the Board's responsibility to act in the best interest of citizens and taxpayers, noting the importance of supporting students, teachers, and the overall community despite the difficulty of reallocating funds.

Commissioner Hovis reiterated that, while the BOC has no statutory obligation to address the shortfall, there is a moral responsibility due to the broader impact on the County, including economic development and workforce recruitment.

Chairman Brown thanked Dr. Houchard and the BOE for their transparency and efforts in identifying the issue. He emphasized the Board's commitment to supporting teachers, noting that in addition to the previously approved \$3.5 million in bond funds, the County provides over \$9 million annually in teacher supplements, which compound over time. He acknowledged the difficulty in providing additional funding to state employees when similar increases are not always feasible for County employees.

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He stated that the proposed appropriation represents a short-term measure to ensure continuity through the end of the fiscal year and to avoid significant layoffs. He expressed hope that the State would address its budget situation, noting that the lack of a state budget since 2023 has contributed to financial uncertainty. He further indicated that the action would impact other County priorities, including previously planned courthouse improvements, but emphasized the importance of maintaining financial stability and continuing progress on capital needs. He concluded by thanking all parties for their collaboration in reaching a solution.

Chairman Brown called for a motion to approve.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Hovis and seconded by Commissioner Shehan, the BOC unanimously approved **2026-107** appropriating General Fund, Fund Balance to provide Gaston County Schools with one-time operational funding in the amount of \$10,000,000 per Budget Change Request:

Account Description	Account Number	Amount
Fund Balance Appropriated	1000-NDP-000-00000-FBApro-0000000-0000-99-490000-	(10,000,000.00)
Additional Subsidies	1000-000-000-00000-School-0000000-0000-03-570011-	10,000,000.00

**Appointments**

On motion introduced by Commissioner Fraley and seconded by Commissioner Brown, the BOC unanimously reappointed Mr. Colby Heffner to the **Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)** to a term ending January 31, 2029.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Hovis and seconded by Commissioner Cloninger, the BOC unanimously reappointed Mr. Robert Lancaster to the **Nursing Home Community Advisory Committee** to a term ending March 31, 2029.

On motion introduced by Commissioner Keigher and seconded by Commissioner Hovis, the BOC unanimously appointed Ms. Reese Barnett to the **Health and Human Services Board** to an unexpired term ending June 30, 2028.

**Commissioners’ Committee Reports**

Commissioner Keigher reported that Gaston College’s Rhinos men and women softball and baseball teams are in the national finals of all junior colleges nationwide; as of yesterday, the men were 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> in the country and the women were 9<sup>th</sup>.

**County Manager’s Report**

The County Manager provided a brief update on the FY27 budget development process, expressing appreciation for the Board of Commissioners’ engagement and participation throughout. He advised that the proposed budget will be presented at the April 28 meeting for the Board’s consideration and for public review.

The County Manager also commended the Board for its deliberate efforts over time to strengthen the County’s Fund Balance, noting that it was at a low point approximately ten years ago. He stated

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that these actions have positioned the County to respond effectively to unforeseen circumstances and economic fluctuations, including the action taken during the meeting to support Gaston County Schools. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the Board's leadership and indicated he looks forward to formally presenting the budget.

**County Attorney's Report**

No report.

**Other Matters**

Commissioner Hovis referenced a recent Board of Education meeting, noting it was an inspiring opportunity to hear from the team's coach, a Gaston County native, who shared his personal and professional journey. He highlighted the coach's experience as a teacher, principal, superintendent in two districts, and interim superintendent in Gaston County, as well as the strong respect demonstrated by his players. Commissioner Hovis encouraged the public and fellow Commissioners to view the meeting online.

Chairman Brown also congratulated Oshauna Holland of Stuart Cramer High School for setting a new state scoring record in women's basketball. He advised that both Ms. Holland and the Hunter Huss team will be formally recognized by proclamation at a future meeting.

In response to a discussion that occurred at the 3/10/26 BOC Work Session regarding the formation of an ad hoc committee, Chairman Brown announced he had selected Commissioners Shehan, Fraley, and Hovis to work with Assistant County Manager Brian Sciba, to review the Board of Commissioners' Rules and Procedures. He asked all Commissioners to review the current procedures provided at their seats.

**Adjournment**

By unanimous consent, Chairman Brown adjourned the Regular Meeting of March 24, 2026 at 7:47 pm.

(All aforementioned documents are on file with the Clerk to the Board.)

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Chad Brown, Chairman  
Gaston County Board of Commissioners

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Donna S. Buff  
Clerk to the Board

SEAL