

Greg Edds, Chairman
Jim Greene, Vice-Chairman
Daniel Lancaster
Judy Klusman
Craig Pierce



Aaron Church, County Manager
Sarah Pack, Clerk to the Board
John W. Dees, II, County Attorney

Rowan County Board of Commissioners

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

August 4, 2025 – 3:00 PM

J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROOM

J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROWAN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

PRESENT:

Greg Edds, Chairman
Jim Greene, Vice-Chairman
Daniel Lancaster, Commissioner

ABSENT:

Judy Klusman, Commissioner
Craig Pierce, Commissioner

County Manager Aaron Church, Assistant County Attorney Eli Hardin, Clerk to the Board Sarah Pack, and Finance Director Anna Bumgarner were also present. County Attorney Jay Dees was absent.

Call to Order

Chairman Edds called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Chaplain Michael Taylor provided a solemnizing prayer. Chairman Edds lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Edds recognized new Assistant County Attorney Eli Hardin.

Consider Additions to the Agenda

Chairman Edds noted that one item would be added to the Regular agenda: Schedule a Public Hearing on August 18, 2025, for Project Granite (Consent Item N). Budget Amendment 02-55 is being added to Consent Item B. He noted that the grant application and updated draft resolution had been provided for Consent Item M.

Consider Deletions From the Agenda

There were no deletions from the agenda.

On motion of Greene, seconded by Lancaster, the Board voted 3-0 to add the aforementioned items to the agenda.

Consider Approval of the Agenda

On motion of Lancaster, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 3-0 to approve the agenda as amended.

Consider Approval of the Consent Agenda

On motion of Greene, seconded by Lancaster, the Board voted 3-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as amended, as follows:

A. Consider Approval of the Minutes - 07/21/2025 Regular Meeting

B. Budget Amendments, as follows:

4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to roll over from FY25 for P.O. 25000638 (DSS Vector)	\$1,998
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to cover Q4 FY25 ABC Bottle Tax	\$5,000
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to cover increase in Forest Services appropriation increase	\$4,414
4125- Finance	Recognize reserved funds FY25 for the Library	\$80,096
4125- Finance	Recognize reserved funds FY25 for the Nature Center	\$2,721
4125- Finance	Recognize reserved funds FY25 for ACOLA	\$30,078
5100- Health Department	Decrease WIC Grant Funding for Breastfeeding for FY26	\$573
5100- Health Department	Decrease REACH Grant funding and reallocate funds from salary to other exp accounts	\$46,937
5100- Health Department	Decrease Grant funding for Teen Pregnancy Prevention program	\$11,900
4125- Finance	Recognize reserved funds FY25 for Animal Services	\$18,352
4125- Finance	Recognize reserved funds FY25 for Sheriff Office	\$272,371
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to roll over PO 25000532 from FY25	\$4,964
4125- Finance	Adjust budget for Occupancy Tax due to trend	\$3,000,000
4125- Finance	Reverse out Re-Entry Council Grant	\$15,000
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to tax assessors for 2027 Reval -contract 25494	\$828,817
4125- Finance	Recognize reserved funds FY25 for Cooperative Extension	\$55,613
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to roll over PO 25000646 for crossroads in risk fund	\$11,006
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to roll over contract 25382 for Moseley Architects	\$114,388
4125- Finance	Appropriate funds to cover carry over of HD Project funds	\$15,339,839

C. Sole Source - Overdrive FY26-30

D. GRANTS: Approve ROCOC to submit grant application to First United Church of Christ Foundation

- E. GRANTS: Approval requested to apply for FY26 Scrap Tire Disposal Grants
- F. GRANTS: Approve funds awarded from the NC Scrap Tire Disposal Account
- G. Sole-Source - Teleflex FY26 - 30
- H. Additional Vehicle Purchase - Health Department
- I. Sole-Source Magnet Forensics FY26-30
- J. Schedule Legislative Hearing for Z 11-24 for August 18th 2025
- K. Local Re-entry Council funding
- L. Schedule Public Hearing for Commercial Property Assessed Capital Expenditure (CPace)
- M. GRANTS: Approval to apply for STBGP grant
- N. Schedule a Public Hearing on August 18, 2025, for Project Granite (**Agenda Addition**)

Public Comment Period

Chairman Edds opened the floor for Public Comment and closed it after everyone wishing to speak had done so.

Bobby Kemp, 250 Chalk Maple Road, said he is concerned about veterans, elderly, disabled, and youth residents in Rowan County. He shared statistics about poverty in the county. There are people struggling to pay taxes. He discussed resources and programs available in the county for impoverished residents. He advocated for making assistance requests of State representatives.

Chairman Edds made a citizen-requested announcement that College Night Out will be held at Bell Tower Green Park on August 28, 2025, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Legislative Hearing: Z 05-25 – Miller Family Farm/Patterson Farms AO Request

Ed Muire, Planning and Development Director, said representatives from the Miller Family Farm located on Weaver Road and Patterson Farms, Inc. located on Caldwell Road, have submitted petitions to have the Agricultural Overlay (AO) applied to portions of land used in their farming operations. In 2023, ZTA 01-23 was adopted to resolve questions related to whether certain agritourism activities were subject to local zoning rules. He listed the requirements.

The Planning Board conducted a courtesy hearing for the Z 05-25 request and forwards a favorable recommendation to the Commission, supported by the following Statement of Reasonableness and Consistency: Z 05-25 is consistent with the West Area 1 and 2 Land Use Plan and the Working Agricultural Lands Plan and reasonable and appropriate based on the following:

- The request enhances the continued vitality of an active multi-generational farm.
- Enables Agri-Tourism and other limited commercial uses in a way that preserves the bona fide farm and promotes rural character.

The Miller Family Farm is a third-generation farm that encompasses over six hundred (600) acres of owned and rented land for row crops and vegetable production. Their farm grows soybeans, wheat, corn, hay for their beef cattle and approximately forty (40) acres of vegetable

crops to sell at their country store and local farmers markets. Vegetables include strawberries, green beans, tomatoes, sweet corn and a variety other vegetables.

In addition to four (4) family members working full-time on the farm, operations also employ four (4) H-2A employees and up to four (4) part-time employees to operate the seasonal country store (mid-April thru September) located at the intersection of Miller and Weaver Rd. The country store opened in 2010 and offers consumer sales of their farm products while in-season; bagged wheat, deer corn, wheat straw and hay are available for year-round purchase.

The Miller Farm has been home to the Maze of Terror Halloween-themed trail and haunt for the past twelve (12) years. It takes at least fifty (50) people to set-up for opening and can employ up to eighty (80) part-time employees to operate during the September – October season. The event has routinely sought and received a Permit to Exceed the amplified noise standards of the County's Noise Ordinance. Part of the rationale for seeking the Agriculture Overlay (AO) is to preempt the biennial temporary use and noise permitting requirement as an agritourism activity while also having other retail and recreation opportunities to diversify their farm economy. Mr. Muire summarized the AO Boundary request for Miller Family Farms.

Patterson Farms Inc. was established in 1919 and can trace its roots back to the late 1800s in this area of western Rowan County and now totals approximately thirteen hundred (1300) acres. In total, their farm grows approximately five hundred fifty (550) acres of strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, bell pepper, eggplant, pumpkins and other seasonal vegetables. Some cattle, goats, llamas, donkeys, chickens, are raised for school group education and agritourism visitors to experience.

Including Patterson family members, the farm employees twenty-five (25) full time employees and three hundred (300) seasonal workers staggered from March until peak period in July. Most seasonal workers are finished at the end of October. Rationale for requesting the AO designation is to continue to expand the agritourism offerings currently existing at the Caldwell Road site. Mr. Muire reviewed the AO Boundary request.

Mr. Muire explained the zoning analysis for the Miller and Patterson sites. He explained how the request fits with the Western Area Land Use Plan. He described the purpose and intent of an agricultural overlay, described the compatibility of uses, and touched on the conditions in the vicinity of both properties.

At 3:22 p.m. Chairman Edds opened the Public Hearing and closed it after no one wished to speak.

Vice-Chairman Greene commented on the value of both family farms as community partners.

On motion of Edds, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 3-0 that Z 05-25 is consistent with the West Area 1 and 2 Land Use Plan and the Working Agricultural Lands Plan and reasonable/appropriate based on the following:

- *The request enhances the continued vitality of an active multi-generational farm.*

- *Enables Agri-Tourism and other limited commercial use in a way that preserves the bona fide farm and promotes rural character.*

On motion of Greene, seconded by Lancaster, the Board voted 3-0 to approve Z 05-25.

PE 06-25: Jody Burleyson

Aaron Poplin, Planning Technician, said Jody Burleyson is requesting a permit to exceed for a meet and greet/ concert, at the Shrine Club, 6480 Long Ferry Rd, on High Rock Lake. The meet and greet/ concert is to introduce people to Jody Burleyson who is running for Sheriff. The event is scheduled from 5 PM to 10 PM on August 16th 2025 and is expected to draw around 150 people.

At 3:26 p.m. Chairman Edds opened the Public Hearing and closed it after no one wished to speak.

On motion of Lancaster, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 3-0 to approve PE 06-25.

PE 07-25: Rod Weaver

Shane Stewart, Assistant Planning and Development Director, said Rod Weaver is requesting a permit to exceed the amplified noise ordinance standards for a live music event on Saturday, September 6, 2025, between 3:00 PM and 10:00 PM on his property at 4860 Patterson Road, China Grove (Parcel ID 223-003). According to information provided by Mr. Weaver, the event will feature live music from “a few select artists” and food trucks with a goal “to support numerous charities and give back to our community, including veterans.”

At 3:29 p.m. Chairman Edds opened the Public Hearing and closed it after no one wished to speak.

On motion of Greene, seconded by Lancaster, the Board voted 3-0 to approve PE 07-25.

FSW 02-25: Robert Oakley

Aaron Poplin, Planning Technician, said Robert Oakley is requesting a family subdivision waiver to allow a family subdivision to be conveyed to a family member that does not meet the definition of an immediate family member. The property for the proposed subdivision is located off Burchette Dr. further referenced as tax parcel 381-034. Robert Oakley plans to receive the new lot from his aunt Sandra Lambert. Parcel 381 034 does not have frontage on a state-maintained road, making a minor subdivision not possible. The only remaining option to divide the parcel is via family subdivision. A family subdivision will allow the creation of a new lot using Burchette Dr. and Country Place Dr. which give access to Eller Rd. Mr. Poplin reviewed the required criteria.

At 3:31 p.m. Chairman Edds opened the Public Hearing and closed it after no one wished to speak.

On motion of Lancaster, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 3-0 to approve FSW 02-25.

Vaya Health Update

Zack Shepherd, Vaya Health Community Relations Regional Director, gave an update on Vaya Health. Vaya Health is a public managed care organization (MCO) that prioritizes wholeperson health. We manage Medicaid, federal, state, and local funding to connect the people we serve to health care services and supports.

- Vaya Total Care: Manage mental health, substance use, I/DD, TBI, physical health, and pharmacy services, as well as Long-term Services and Supports, for Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Medicaid Direct: North Carolina's health care program for Medicaid beneficiaries who are not enrolled in managed care plans. Vaya is responsible for managing mental health, substance use, I/DD, and TBI service.
- Tailored Plan: Manage mental health, substance use, I/DD, and TBI services for individuals without insurance – or too little insurance – who are eligible for care funded by the state of North Carolina or other public funds.

In Rowan County, Medicaid Direct serves 5,022 people while the Tailored Plan serves 4,353 for a total of 9,375 served. Mr. Shepherd said the NC General Assembly Budget is still in progress. There are a few key areas of concern:

- No funding for Healthy Opportunities Pilot
- No new Innovations Waiver Slots
- No TBI Waiver slots for proposed expansion
- Proposed Single-Stream Funding reductions: House - \$30 million, Senate - \$15 million. If \$30 million statewide, would mean Vaya Health would be reduced by approximately \$6 million.

Monitoring of the Federal Budget and Impact on Health, Behavioral Health and Social Determinant of Health Programs will continue. The NCDHHS announced December 1st, 2025 as the “go-live” date for the state-wide BCBS Child and Family Specialty Plan Waiver.

There are a number of Healthy Opportunities Pilot Challenges:

- Current budget proposals from the House and Senate of the North Carolina General Assembly do not include funding for Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP) services after June 30, 2025.
- The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) is legally and financially obligated to provide advance notice to contracted health plans and service providers if HOP funding will not be available.
- Effective July 1, NCDHHS is stopping 1) all new service authorizations and 2) existing service delivery for all HOP services until further notice.
- Vaya will not accept new HOP enrollments or new HOP authorization requests after 5 p.m. Friday, June 6.
- Existing authorized HOP services will not be delivered after July 1, possibly sooner. Staff will be notified if the date changes.
- No other Medicaid benefits or services are affected by this change.

Mr. Shepherd noted the following regional and county projects and network development:

- Hope4NC Grant

- Free and anonymous for all residents in affected communities
 - Individual and group crisis recovery outreach
 - Public education
 - Community networking and support
 - Assessment, referral, and resource connection
 - Team Leaders, Crisis Counselors, and Community Liaison/Resource Linkage staff in each region
 - No health plan required for grant supports
- Hurricane Helene Impacted Counties in Western NC
 - Vaya's CCP is serving 22 of the 25 impacted counties in WNC. Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rowan, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians spans Jackson and Swain Counties.

Update/Report on High Rock Lake Dredging

Chairman Edds briefly explained the history of High Rock Lake and the importance of completing dredging work.

Craig Powers, Director of Engineering and Environmental Services, introduced Brian Weyer and Corry Platt from Geosyntec Consultants, who gave a presentation on the dredging at High Rock Lake. Mr. Weyer explained the focused reaches of the project and pointed out areas of historical sediment accumulation. There is sufficient water depth downstream of the study reaches. He showed several maps of the feasibility study locations, the sediment sampling locations, and the bathymetric survey footprint. Multiple elevations were considered, including 617 feet and 615 feet. Elevation 617 restores navigable water depth, whereas Elevation 615 restores the lake bottom closer to its original depth.

Hydraulic and mechanical dredging methodologies are both practical and applicable. He explained how Geotubes, dewatering basins, GeoPools, and filter presses could be used. Chairman Edds asked for an explanation of the soil survey findings and Mr. Weyer explained.

A number of sites around the lake were identified for upland material management. He explained how the site (which must be at least six acres) was selected. There is an approximately 270 acre mud flat area with existing islands. He explained how in-water material relocation would affect this area. Mr. Weyer explained a Practical Alternatives Matrix and described the top three feasible scenarios. These included Scenario A – In-Water Material Relocation, Scenario C – Geotubes, and Scenario D – GeoPools.

Vice-Chairman Greene asked if Scenario A would benefit the citizens the most and Mr. Weyer said that is most likely.

He explained and compared the Engineer's Opinion of Probable Costs. He said the Primary Recommended Alternative is Scenario A, which utilizes lake dead space and is the least costly due to reduced upland site costs, but is potentially the most challenging permitting option. The

Secondary Recommended Alternatives were Scenarios C and D, both of which utilize upland DMMA, have different geotextile dewatering options that are flexible and scalable, and are capable of handling large volumes of material.

He reviewed current recommendations and the next steps for the project. Scenario A is the Preferred Alternative. There are permitting discussions to be had with multiple agencies. Funding sources and timing must be determined. Full Removal or Phased Removal will depend on funding availability. Phased Removal could move the project forward without requiring Full Removal funding.

Chairman Edds asked about the partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and asked for additional details about the project. Mr. Platt said the permitting would be a challenge. With the amount of material, a dedicated discussion with associated agencies is warranted due to cost differentials. He described ways to reduce cost in consideration of permitting challenges.

Chairman Edds questioned if any hydrology would be changed in the mud flat region and Mr. Weyer said no. Chairman Edds asked about the anticipated rise and Mr. Weyer said it could be up to 4 or 5 feet. Chairman Edds asked about preservation of the land and Mr. Weyer explained the berm and surrounding geography and how they would be affected by major flows.

Chairman Edds asked about a timeline for the project and Mr. Weyer said it would likely take multiple years with a year for the design phase and two years for construction. Chairman Edds clarified the next steps to move the project forward.

Chairman Edds explained the importance of this project and said there are many issues that need to be addressed. Mr. Weyer said issues stem from the fact that this lake is 100 years old. There are sedimentation issues leading to water quality problems, unnavigable waterways, and other large issues for Rowan and surrounding counties. Mr. Platt said there are potential flooding risks and changes to the land as the lake changes over time.

Board Appointments

Chairman Edds explained that the At Large seat on the Rowan Rescue Squad had recently been changed from a Commissioner seat.

On motion of Edds, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 3-0 to appoint Meredith Smith to an At Large seat on the Rowan County Rescue Squad.

On motion of Lancaster, seconded by Greene, the Board voted 3-0 to make the following appointments to the Home and Community Care Block Grant Advisory Committee:

- *Heather Kincel – Ruffy Holmes Senior Center – Lead Agency*
- *Micah Ennis – Rowan County DSS – Funded Provider*
- *Beth Huber – Trinity Living Center – Funded Provider*
- *Valerie Steele – Rowan Transit System – Funded Provider*
- *Alexandra Fisher – Meals on Wheels Rowan – Funded Provider*

Adjournment

At 4:19 p.m., on motion of Greene, seconded by Lancaster, the Board voted 3-0 to adjourn.

Sarah Pack, CMC, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board