

The Hoke County Board of Commissioners convened for a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Monday January 5, 2026 in the Commissioners Room of the Pratt Building.

PRESENT:

Chairman James Leach
Vice Chairman Harry Southerland
Commissioner Tony Hunt
Commissioner Allen Thomas, Jr.
Commissioner Mary Blue McCollum

ALSO PRESENT:

County Manager Letitia Edens
Assistant County Attorney Megan Chavis
Clerk to the Board Shanetta Smith

ABSENT: None

Chairman James Leach opened the meeting with a quorum. Commissioner Thomas led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Invocation.

1. Adoption of Agenda

Hoke County
Board of Commissioners

227 N. Main Street
Raeford, North Carolina
28376



January 5, 2026
7:00 P.M.

Commissioner's Room
Pratt Building

A G E N D A

PLEDGE & INVOCATION: Commissioner Allen Thomas, Jr.

ITEM

- 1. Adoption of Agenda**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Planning Matters: Public Hearing:**
 - a. Application for Rezoning RZ-25-3 submitted by Raeford Development/Rhetson Companies to rezone a property at 14099 HWY 15-501. The property is more specifically identified by the Hoke County Tax Records of PIN #584780001002 the request is to rezone a portion of the RA-20 Residential Agricultural District to Highway Commercial (HC) **The Planning Board unanimously recommended approval.**
- 4. Consent Agenda**
 - a. Approval of Board of Commissioners Meeting Regular Minutes December 15, 2025
 - b. A Memorandum of Agreement for a Resolution by the County of Hoke to Direct the Expenditure of Opioid Settlement Funds
 - c. Finance: Budget Amendments
 1. Animal Control
 2. Register of Deeds
 3. Courthouse Project
- 5. Hoke County Sheriff's Office – Sheriff Roderick Virgil**
 - a. Budget Amendment
 - b. Axon Contract
- 6. Presentation of the Troop 410 Eagle Scout Project – Jesse Wimberley, NC Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association Coordinator**
- 7. Manager's Report**
 - a. Recognition of Hoke County Health Director Helene Edwards
- 8. Chairman's Report**
- 9. Adjourn**

Motion: Upon motion made by Commissioner Hunt and second by Vice Chairman Southerland, the Board unanimously approved adopting the agenda.

2. Public Comment

Jennifer Posey Powell (accompanied by Carrie Posey) requested a tax reassessment of her 13-acre property, due to significantly lower valuations for comparable nearby parcels. The Board clarified that while the Board of Equalization window had closed, they would grant permission for Tax Administrator Daphne Dudley to reopen the case for reassessment.

Ken Turner expressed appreciation for the Board's service and praised upcoming reappointments. He commended the Board's ongoing efforts and public service.

Kathy Leandro shared a personal and emotional story about her dog "Yoda," recently euthanized after extensive medical care. Ms. Leandro praised shelter staff for their professionalism and urged the Board to take immediate action on the long-delayed animal shelter project, emphasizing the needs of both animals and community members who cannot afford costly care.

3. Planning Matters: Public Hearing:

- a. Application for Rezoning RZ-25-3 submitted by Raeford Development/Rhetson Companies to rezone a property at 14099 HWY 15-501. The property is more specifically identified by the Hoke County Tax Records of PIN #584780001002 the request is to rezone a portion of the RA-20 Residential Agricultural District to Highway Commercial (HC) **The Planning Board unanimously recommended approval.**

Hoke County Board of Commissioners

January 5, 2026

Public Hearing

- A. Application for Rezoning RZ-25-3 submitted by Raeford Development/Rhetson Companies to rezone a property at 14099 HWY 15-501. The property is more specifically identified by the Hoke County Tax Records of PIN #584780001002 the request is to rezone a portion of the RA-20 Residential Agricultural District to Highway Commercial (HC) **The Planning Board unanimously recommended approval.**

**Application for Rezoning Permit RZ-25-3
Raeford Development/Rhetson Companies**

TO: Hoke County Board of Commissioners
FROM: Jacqueline Lowery, Zoning Clerk
DATE: January 5, 2026

SITE LOCATION: 14099 Hwy-15-501

CURRENT ZONING: RA-20 Residential-Agricultural District

PROPERTY INFORMATION: PIN 584780001002

TOTAL SITE ACREAGE: 21.212 acre(s)

PROPOSED ZONING: Highway commercial (HC)

APPLICANT'S REQUEST:

Application for Rezoning RZ-25-3 submitted by Raeford Development/Rhetson Companies to rezone a property at 14099 HWY-15-501. The property is more specifically identified by the Hoke County Tax Records of PIN#584780001002 the request is to rezone the RA-20 Residential Agricultural District to Highway Commercial

STAFF COMMENTS: The previous business located on the property Southeastern Tool & Dye it was established in 1979 according to tax records. The current property owner wishes to use the business for light manufacturing which will require rezoning to Highway Commercial.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Barring any new evidence presented during the public hearing, staff recommends the board

Staff recommends approval of Rezoning RZ-25-3

REZONING GUIDELINES:

The following policy guidelines have been established to guide in the decision-making process for general use rezoning. The zoning amendment shall not receive approval

- A. The proposal will place all property similarly situated in the area in the same category, or in appropriate complementary categories.

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DocuSign Envelope ID: F1DA8615-0967-4A15-9532-628C020017BC

DEC 11, 2025



Hoke COUNTY PLANNING & ZONING
Post Office Box 1556-423 E. Central Avenue
Raeford, NC 28376
910-875-8407 – Fax 910-875-1072

Application for Rezoning

Permit # RZ- 25-3
Date: 10/15/2025

Fee: \$250.00

PIN(s) # 584780001002
ADDRESS: 14099 HWY 15-501
TOWNSHIP: 5
SUBDIVISION AND LOT # _____
FRONTAGE: 1,082' +/- DEPTH: Varying - 352' +/- (northern property line)
up to 1,279' +/- (southern property line) ACREAGE 21.212
CURRENT ZONING: RA-20
PROPOSED ZONING: Highway Commercial (HC)

I, the undersigned, do hereby make application to and petition the Hoke County Planning Board and Board of Commissioners to change the zoning map of the Hoke County as requested herein. In support of this application, the following facts are presented above.

LANDOWNER INFORMATION

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name: Raeford Development Company, LLC
Signature: [Signature]
City, State, Zip: Raeford, NC 28376
Contact Number: 910-684-5353
(Broker: Carolina Summit Group
George Manley)

Name: Rhetson Companies, Inc.
Signature: [Signature]
City, State, Zip: 2075 Juniper Lake Rd., West End, NC 27376
Contact Number: 910-944-0881

PLANNING BOARD MEETING (7:00PM) _____
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS (7:00PM) _____
STAMPED LEGAL ENVELOPES NEEDED: _____



Hoke County Planning & Zoning
423 E. Central Ave
Raeford, NC 28376
910-875-8407-Fax 910-875-1072

Legal Notice

December 23, 2025

Dear Property Owner:

This letter serves to notify you of a Public Hearing to be held before the Hoke County Board of Commissioners on Monday, January 5, 2026 at 7:00 pm in Pratt Building located at 227 N. Main Street, Raeford, NC

Application for Rezoning RZ-25-3 submitted by Raeford Development/Rhetson Companies to rezone a property at 14099 HWY-15-501. The property is more specifically identified by the Hoke County Tax Records of PIN#584780001002 the request is to rezone the RA-20 Residential Agricultural District to Highway Commercial

If you would like to comment on the application, you may attend the Public Hearing on January 5, 2026 at 7:00 pm. If you cannot attend the Public Hearing, you may forward written comments to my attention. Any written comments should be sent to arrive before January 5, 2026 at the following address: Hoke County Zoning Department, P.O. Box 1556, Raeford, NC 28376

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office at (910) 875-8407.

Sincerely,

Jackie Lowery, Interim Planner

Attorney Jessica Bowers presented on behalf of Rhetson Companies, Inc. Attorney Bowers noted the Planning Board voted unanimously on December 11, 2025 an approval recommendation. She stated the request is consistent with the county's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, as the area is designated for economic development. She reported that a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment found no environmental concerns and noted that a septic permit had been issued on November 5, 2025. She stated the project would improve the property, benefit the tax base, and be less intensive than past uses.

Rhetson Companies provided the Commissioners with a packet to review during the discussion. **This packet is on file with the Office of the Clerk to the Board.**

Matt Williams of Rhetson Companies added that the existing structures are sound and would undergo interior and exterior renovations, significantly improving the site's appearance. He stated that the residential structures would be renovated for company-related lodging. He indicated that if approved, the company would proceed immediately with permitting and aim to have the operation active by early June.

Chairman Leach opened the floor for public comment on the rezoning request. No one came forward to speak.

Motion: Upon motion by Vice Chairman Southerland and second by Commissioner Hunt, the Board unanimously approved closing the public hearing.

Motion: Upon motion by Vice Chairman Southerland and second by Commissioner Hunt, the Board unanimously approved Rezoning Request RZ-25-3 as presented.

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Board of Commissioners Meeting Regular Minutes December 15, 2025

The official minutes of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting held on December 15, 2025 is on file in the Office of the Clerk to the Board and available on the County's official website.

- b. A Memorandum of Agreement for a Resolution by the County of Hoke to Direct the Expenditure of Opioid Settlement Funds

**A RESOLUTION BY THE COUNTY OF HOKE
TO DIRECT THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS**

WHEREAS Hoke County has joined national settlement agreements with companies engaged in the manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing of opioids.

WHEREAS the allocation, use, and reporting of funds stemming from these national settlement agreements and bankruptcy resolutions (“Opioid Settlement Funds”) are governed by the Memorandum of Agreement Between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation (“MOA”), the Supplemental Agreement for Additional Funds from Additional Settlements of Opioid Litigation (“SAAF”), and SAAF-2;

WHEREAS Hoke County has received Opioid Settlement Funds pursuant to these national settlement agreements and deposited the Opioid Settlement Funds in a separate special revenue fund as required by section D of the MOA;

WHEREAS section E.6 of the MOA states that, before spending opioid settlement funds, the local government’s governing body must adopt a resolution that:

- (i) indicates that it is an authorization for expenditure of opioid settlement funds; and,
- (ii) states the specific strategy or strategies the county or municipality intends to fund pursuant to Option A or Option B, using the item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to identify each funded strategy; and,
- (iii) states the amount dedicated to each strategy for a specific period of time.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, in alignment with the NC MOA, SAAF, and SAAF-2, Hoke County authorizes the expenditure of opioid settlement funds as follows:

1. First strategy authorized

- a. Name of strategy: Collaborative Strategic Planning
- b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
- c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A to the MOA: 1
- d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$25,500
- e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date January 5, 2026 through End date June 30, 2026
- f. Description of the program, project, or activity: Tia Hart Community Recovery will support collaborative strategic planning efforts focused on addressing opioid misuse, substance use disorder, overdose prevention, and related community impacts. Through coordinated facilitation, stakeholder engagement, and staff support, Tia Hart will convene public safety agencies, healthcare providers, behavioral health professionals, community organizations, and individuals with lived experience to develop and implement data-informed strategies. These activities will include structured planning sessions, needs assessments, resource mapping, and the alignment of local prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm-reduction initiatives. All efforts will be conducted in accordance with the activities outlined in Exhibit A of the MOA and are designed to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, improve service coordination, and enhance long-term community recovery outcomes.
- g. Provider: Tia Hart Community Recovery Organization

2. Second strategy authorized

- a. Name of strategy: Evidence-based Addiction Treatment
- b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
- c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A to the MOA: 2
- d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$800,000
- e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date January 5, 2026 through End date June 30, 2027
- f. Description of the program, project, or activity: Hoke County proposes the construction of a dedicated treatment facility to expand access to evidence-based addiction treatment services for individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD) and co-occurring substance use and behavioral health disorders.

This project directly supports the implementation of evidence-based addiction treatment consistent with the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) national practice guidelines. The facility will serve as a hub for the delivery of comprehensive treatment modalities, including:

- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) utilizing FDA-approved medications such as buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone;
- Behavioral counseling and therapy;
- Linkages to community-based recovery support services and wraparound care;
- Coordination with justice-involved populations through diversion and re-entry treatment programming.

Scope of Work:

The project will involve the planning, design, and construction of a facility that will house multiple service components required for the effective treatment of OUD, including:

- Clinical treatment space for MAT and outpatient services;
 - Counseling rooms for individual and group therapy;
 - Administrative offices for care coordination and intake;
 - Community engagement and education space;
 - Secure storage and dispensing areas for MAT medications;
 - Facilities designed for ADA accessibility and regulatory compliance.
- g. Provider: Hoke County

3. Third strategy authorized

- a. Name of strategy: Recovery Housing Support
- b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
- c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 4
- d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$30,500
- e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date January 5, 2026 through End date June 30, 2026
- f. Description of the program, project, or activity: Will support recovery housing activities consistent with Exhibit A of the North Carolina Opioid Settlement Memorandum of Agreement by expanding access to safe, stable, and recovery-oriented housing for individuals impacted by opioid use disorder. Activities will include planning, coordination, and support for recovery housing initiatives such as a Tiny Home Pilot Program and related housing assistance designed to promote housing stability and long-term recovery. Through collaboration with behavioral

health providers, housing partners, and local stakeholders, TIA Hart Community Recovery will help reduce relapse and overdose risk by addressing housing as a critical component of recovery support services in accordance with allowable uses outlined in Exhibit A.

g. Provider: Tia Hart Community Recovery Organization

4. Fourth strategy authorized

a. Name of strategy: Early Intervention

b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A

c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 6

d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$150,000

e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:

Start date January 5, 2026 through End date June 30, 2026

f. Description of the program, project, or activity: Focuses on delivering targeted education and awareness training to schools, houses of worship, and other community-based organizations. Through on-site workshops, program staff provide teachers, school personnel, and faith-based leaders with practical tools to recognize early warning behaviors and respond appropriately. By increasing the confidence and competence of frontline community members, the program enhances the overall ability to identify individuals in need of support before concerns escalate. This proactive, community-centered approach strengthens public safety and promotes long-term prevention through early intervention.

g. Provider: Branjusnic Educational Consultants

Adopted this the 5th day of January, 2026.


James A. Leach, Chair
Hoke County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:


Shanetta Smith, Clerk to the Board



- c. Finance: Budget Amendments
 - 1. Animal Control



5202 Raeford Road
 Fayetteville, NC 28304
 (910) 424-9311
 Fax: (910) 424-3318

LINCOLN

Visit us at: www.lafayetteford.com
 E-mail us: parts@lafayetteford.com
 Find LaFayette Ford on Facebook or Twitter!

PICKING TICKET

TERMS: Parts returned for credit must be accompanied by invoice and subject to 20% restocking charge.

DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTIES: All warranties on the products sold hereby are those made by the manufacturer. The seller, LAFAYETTE FORD, INC., hereby expressly disclaims all warranties, either expressed or implied, including any implied warranty of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose, and LAFAYETTE FORD, INC., neither assumes nor authorizes any other person to assume for it any liability in connection with the sale. A Service Charge of 1-1/2% per month (A.P.R. - 18%) will be made on all accounts 30 days past due. Title in the property herein described, and any additions or substitutions, shall remain in the seller's name until paid in full and the purchaser agrees to pay all expenses, charges, and costs, including collection costs and a reasonable attorney's fee, in the event it becomes necessary for seller to place this account for collection. Net, 10 days and of month.

YOUR PURCHASE ORDER	TERMS	INVOICE DATE	INVOICE NUMBER / PG.
Verbal	Net 90 Days'	11/25/25	1

S HOKE COUNTY VEHICLE MAINTENANC
 O PO BOX 210
 D RAEFORD, NC 28376
 T
 O 910-875-8438 910-875-8438

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O

SHIP VIA		SALESPERSON NAME		DRIVER'S INITIALS
Will Call		Mateo Rodriguez		
QTY.	PART NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	BIN	NET	AMOUNT
1/0	JL3Z 7000 F : AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION ASY	EP	4999.00	4999.00
1/1	JL3Z 7000 F-C : JL3Z 7000 F - Core Charge	EP	1000.00	1000.00
ACCOUNT #				5999.00
METHOD				
PARTS				
FREIGHT				
C.O.D. CHARGE				
DATE PRINTED 11/25/25				
TIME 15:29:51				
SALES TAX OR TAX I.D.				419.93
SPECIAL ORDER DEPOSIT				
TOTAL				6418.93
AMOUNT COLLECTED _____				
FORM OF PAYMENT _____				
YOUR SIGNATURE ACKNOWLEDGES RECEIPT OF PARTS.				
X				

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2. Register of Deeds

**AMENDMENT TO THE HOKE COUNTY BUDGET ORDINANCE
2025/2026
Amendment**

Section 1 of the Hoke County Budget Ordinance, pertaining to the General Fund operations of the County, shall be amended as follows:

Increase/(Decrease) Appropriations:

Register of Deeds 10,000

\$ 10,000

Total

Section 2 of the Hoke County Budget Ordinance, pertaining to the General Fund operations of the County, shall be amended as follows:

Increase/(Decrease) Revenues:

Register of Deeds Revenue 10,000

\$ 10,000

Total

This amendment:

- To increase Register of Deeds revenue for additional service charge revenue.

Funding Source: Additional Revenue in Service Charges

Submitted: 01-05-2026



Respectfully Submitted by:

Dennis Ferguson
Assistant Finance Director

Approved by: *John Edos*
County Manager

3. Courthouse Project

AMENDMENT TO THE HOKE COUNTY BUDGET ORDINANCE

2025/2026

Amendment

The Hoke County Budget Ordinance, pertaining to the Administrative Project Fund operations of the County, shall be amended as follows:

Increase/(Decrease) Appropriations:

Expenditure 2,200,033

Total \$ 2,200,033

The Hoke County Budget Ordinance, pertaining to the Administrative Project Fund operations of the County, shall be amended as follows:

Increase/(Decrease) Revenues:

Revenue 2,200,033

Total \$ 2,200,033

This amendment:

- To reflect interest earned on Court House Grant funds

Funding Source: Interest earned

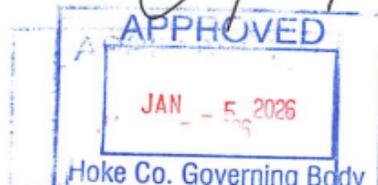
Submitted: 01-05-26

Respectfully Submitted by:

Debra Ferguson
Assistant Finance Director

Approved by:

John J. Eders
County Manager



Motion: Upon motion made by Commissioner Hunt and second by Commissioner McCollum, the Board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda items A, B, C, 1, 2, and 3.

- 5. Hoke County Sheriff's Office – Sheriff Roderick Virgil**
 - a. Budget Amendment



Office of the Sheriff

Hoke County Sheriff's Office
Roderick C. Virgil, Sheriff

429 East Central Avenue
Raeford, NC 28376

PO Box 300
Raeford, NC 28376

Phone (910) 875-5111
Fax (910) 875-2034



To: Letitia Edens, County Manager, Hoke County Commissioners & Finance

From: Sheriff, Roderick Virgil

Date: December 23, 2025

Re: Updated Agenda Request

I, Sheriff Roderick Virgil, am requesting to be added to the next agenda for the next Commissioners' meeting, held on Monday, January 5, 2026, in reference to a budget amendment. I would like to move money from our N.C. Asset account into our Capital Outlay. As of today, the attorney has just approved the Axon contract and we would like to add it to the agenda, as well, if possible. (See attachments)

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Roderick C. Virgil
Roderick C. Virgil
Sheriff

cc:
James Leach, Chairman
Harry Southerland, Vice-Chairman
Tony Hunt, Commissioner
Allen Thomas, Commissioner
Mary McCollum, Commissioner

HOKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
BUDGET REVISION FORM

Adjustment Explanation: Vehicle purchase BAJR: _____
(Finance use only)

REVENUE LINE ITEM

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT TO BE ADJUSTED +/-	CURRENT BUDGET	AMENDED BUDGET
323220-433000	NC Asset Forfeiture	(15,000)	20,000	5,000
323220-499100	F/B Appropriated	25,800	-	25,800
				-
				-
				-

EXPENDITURE LINE ITEM

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT TO BE ADJUSTED +/-	CURRENT BUDGET	AMENDED BUDGET
324316-520000	Supplies and Material	(3,000)	5,000	2,000
324316-549950	Drug Investigations	(7,000)	15,000	8,000
324316-550000	Capital Outlay	20,800	-	20,800
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-
				-

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RECOMMENDED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT RECOMMENDED</p> <p><u>Ladyka J. Polow</u> (COUNTY MANAGER NAME)</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> SIGNATURE</p> <p><u>1/5/2025</u> Date</p>	<p><u>Hoke County Sheriff's Office</u> (DEPARTMENT HEAD NAME)</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> SIGNATURE</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> (FINANCE OFFICER NAME)</p> <p><u>1/6/2026</u> DATE</p> <p>DATE SUBMITTED TO FINANCE</p>
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AMENDMENT TO THE HOKE COUNTY BUDGET ORDINANCE

2025/2026

Section 1 of the Hoke County Budget Ordinance, pertaining to the General Fund operations of the County, shall be amended as follows:

Increase/(Decrease) Appropriations:

113910-491005	Lease Liability Issued	\$271,616
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Section 2 of the Hoke County Budget Ordinance, pertaining to the General Fund Operations of the County, shall be amended as follows:

Increase/(Decrease) Revenues:

114310-550000	Capital Outlay	\$271,616
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This Amendment:

- Appropriates \$271,616 for Axon lease/subscription per GASB 87/96.
Funding Source: Lease proceeds

Submitted: 12/23/2025

Respectfully Submitted by:

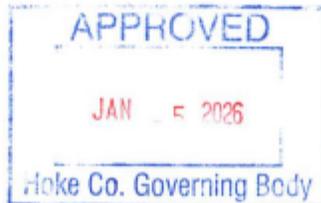


 Garvin Ferguson, Asst Finance Director

Approved by:



 Letitia Edens, County Manager



The Sheriff's Office Budget Amendment is incorporated into the minutes and referenced as Appendix A.

b. Axon Contract

The Axon Contract is incorporated into the minutes and referenced as Appendix B.

Finance Director Ko-Tang Cha Moses explained due to lease reporting requirements, the full contract amount of approximately \$271,660 must be recognized in one fiscal year under accounting standards. Approval of both the contract and the corresponding budget amendment was required.

The Board voted on 5b to keep the correct order of sequence of approval.

Motion: Upon motion made by Vice Chairman Southerland and second by Commissioner Hunt, the Board approved the Axon contract unanimously.

Motion: Upon motion made by Vice Chairman Southerland and second by Commissioner McCollum, the Board unanimously approved the budget amendments.

6. Presentation of the Troop 410 Eagle Scout Project – Jesse Wimberley, NC Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association Coordinator

Mr. Jesse Wimberley, Coordinator for the NC Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association, appeared before the Board and provided an update on activities at the Community Forest. Mr. Wimberley then introduced Mr. Quinton Douglas, an Eagle Scout candidate, who presented his proposed Eagle Scout service project for the Community Forest.

Mr. Douglas stated that his Eagle Scout project would consist of constructing and installing approximately fifteen informational posts throughout the Community Forest. He explained that the posts would provide educational and informational content for visitors utilizing the forest for hiking, walking, biking, and running. Mr. Douglas advised that the project is expected to take approximately two months to complete and that he would be responsible for planning the project, coordinating volunteers, organizing materials, and ensuring the work is completed safely and properly. He further stated that the project would provide a meaningful and lasting benefit to the community and respectfully requested the Board's approval and signature to proceed in fulfillment of the final requirement toward achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

The Quinton Douglas Eagle Scout Project is on file in the Office of the Clerk to the Board.

Motion: Upon motion made by Vice Chairman Southerland and second by Chairman Leach, the Board unanimously approved the Eagle Scout service project proposed by Mr. Quinton Douglas and adopted the project as part of the official records of Hoke County.

7. Manager's Report

- a. Recognition of Hoke County Health Director Helene Edwards



One Hundred Seventeenth
FALL COMMENCEMENT

Friday, December the Nineteenth
Two Thousand Twenty-Five
Williams Arena at Minges Coliseum
Greenville, North Carolina

Doctor of Public Health

- Aaliysha K. Brown..... Eudora, AR
 Doctoral Dissertation Area: Public Health
“Empowering Communities Through Data: Assessing Low-Cost Air Quality Monitors to Advance Environmental Health Equity in Greenville, North Carolina”
 Dissertation Director:
 Sinan Sousan, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, Brody School of Medicine
- Lentz Dorcelly Miami, FL
 Doctoral Dissertation Area: Public Health
“The Role of Hydro-Climatic Factors and Socioeconomic Determinants Influencing Major Waterborne Disease Incidences in Virginia, USA”
 Dissertation Director:
 Lok R. Pokhrel, MSc, MS, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, Brody School of Medicine
- Helene F. Edwards..... Greenville, NC
 Doctoral Dissertation Area: Public Health
“Beyond Technology Adoption: Exploring the Impact of Public Health Employees’ Perceptions and Usage of Patient Portal to Advance Digital Health Equity”
 Dissertation Director:
 Doyle Cummings, PharmD, Professor, Department of Public Health, Brody School of Medicine
- Keila L. Marlin..... Salisbury, NC
 Doctoral Dissertation Area: Public Health
“Assessing Collective Impact in a Community Health Worker Initiative: A Local Health Department’s Multilevel Approach to Collaboration”
 Dissertation Director:
 Huablin Luo, PhD, Professor, Department of Public Health, Brody School of Medicine
- Dekoda Murphy..... West Point, GA
 Doctoral Dissertation Area: Public Health
“Impact of Covid-19 Lockdown on Ambient Air Pollution (PM2.5, PM10, and Ozone) and Respiratory Health (Asthma and COPD): Analyzing Regional Trends and Sociodemographic Disparities in North Carolina from 2020-2022”
 Dissertation Director:
 Sinan Sousan, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, Brody School of Medicine
- Pamela D. Peele..... Greenville, NC
 Doctoral Dissertation Area: Public Health
“Exploring the Business Case for Magnet Status: Comparison of Medicare Spending per Beneficiary and Average Cost per Discharge Among North Carolina Hospitals based on Geographic Location, Bed Size, Time of Trend Measures, and Healthcare System Association Status”
 Dissertation Director:
 Annette Greer, PhD, Professor, Department of Bioethics and Interdisciplinary Studies, Brody School of Medicine

County Manager Letitia Edens addressed the Board and stated that she had been in regular communication with Ms. Edwards over several years regarding her educational goals. Ms. Edens explained that Ms. Edwards had previously shared her intention to return to school to pursue a doctoral degree in public health and had worked diligently toward that goal while continuing her full-time employment with the County.

Ms. Edens further stated that Ms. Edwards recently completed her doctoral program and has earned her Doctorate in Public Health. She commended Ms. Edwards for her perseverance, discipline, and commitment, noting that achieving a doctoral degree while maintaining full-time professional responsibilities reflects a significant level of dedication and determination.

Dr. Helene Edwards addressed the Board and expressed her gratitude for the recognition. She stated that her employment with Hoke County, which began in

2000, motivated her to pursue advanced education in public health in order to better serve the County's residents. She explained that she entered the doctoral program during the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledged the challenges associated with that period. Ms. Edwards further stated that her research focused on increasing patient awareness and empowerment through the use of technology, including telehealth, to assist individuals in managing their medical information and communicating effectively with healthcare providers.

County Manager Edens reiterated the County's commitment to supporting employees who seek continued education and professional growth and thanked Ms. Edwards for following through on her goal. The Chair congratulated Ms. Edwards on her achievement and stated that the Board looks forward to formally recognizing her again once her diploma is framed and available for presentation.

8. Chairman's Report

Chairman Leach had no comments at this time.

9. Adjourn

Motion: With there being no further business to come before the Hoke County Board of Commissioners, and upon motion made by Commissioner Hunt and second by Commissioner Thomas, the Board unanimously adjourned the meeting.

/JL/

James Leach, Chairman

/SS/

Shanetta Smith, Clerk to the Board