

At the regular meeting of the Giles County Board of Supervisors held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at 3:00 PM in the Giles County Maintenance Building located at 315 N. Main Street, Pearisburg, the following members were present unless noted absent.

Jeff Morris	Chair (Central District)
John C. Lawson, Jr.	Vice-Chair (Western District)
Perry Martin	Eastern District
Paul "Chappy" Baker	At-Large Supervisor
Richard McCoy	At-Large Supervisor
Chris McKlarney	County Administrator
Catherine Ballard	Finance Director
Jon Butler	Emergency Services Coordinator
Richard Chidester	County Attorney
Gracie Howard	Board Secretary

CALL TO ORDER/INVOCATION

Mr. Morris called the meeting to order, and Mr. McKlarney offered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

***Mr. McCoy motioned to approve the January 22, 2026, minutes as presented. Mr. Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote as follows:
Voting Yes: Mr. Baker, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Martin, Mr. McCoy and Mr. Morris***

VDOT REPORT

Mr. David Clarke reported that crews had a productive start to January, completing shoulder repair work on Big Stony near Norcross Road, where the shoulders had become heavily rutted. He noted that the pipe extension on Cascades was finished, and work had finally begun on installing a long-planned chain-link fence along a sidewalk in Pearisburg. Most of the fence posts have already been set, and the remaining work will continue soon. He explained that VDOT crews have also completed patching and grading as weather permitted until winter conditions arrived. Over the past couple of weeks, their efforts have shifted primarily to weather-related tasks. He added that conditions are gradually improving and the night-shift crews may be able to return to daytime schedules within the next day or so.

Mr. Baker reported significant road deterioration on Route 61 near Route 675 by the solar panels, noting numerous potholes in a curved section that he believes requires approximately 30 to 50 feet of new asphalt on both sides of the road. He also noted the need to repair guardrails along an extended creek area and asked whether a nearby entrance belonged to the pipeline or to Buffalo Road. He asked whether a previously

reported pothole about 500 yards past the area had been repaired. Mr. Clarke responded that he had driven to look at the area and did not see a pothole but would check again to confirm.

Mr. Baker also requested that road crews avoid pushing snow back across residents' driveways when plowing, noting that his own driveway had been blocked and frozen over, making it difficult and hazardous to enter or exit. He emphasized that many older residents face the same problem and that clearing the plowed snow from driveways would take only a few extra seconds but would significantly improve safety. He thanked the staff for considering the concern.

Mr. McCoy reported that Sinking Creek Road is in poor condition along the Dry Creek section, where the pavement is breaking apart and showing alligator cracking similar to issues previously seen on Wilburn Valley Road. He also noted potholes on the eastbound onramp to Route 460, explaining that many of these problems are becoming more visible as snow is pushed back but cannot be repaired until the snow has fully cleared. He acknowledged that a significant amount of pothole repair will be required once conditions allow.

Mr. Martin began by thanking the crews for their long hours managing snow removal and expressed appreciation to VDOT and Jon Butler for their collaboration in rescuing a dog, noting that such behind-the-scenes efforts often go unnoticed. He reported drainage issues along River Road between Eggleston and Bear Springs, explaining that several areas have longstanding problems affecting the roadway, likely due to clogged cross pipes. He also mentioned additional drainage concerns on Olean Road (Route 628), noting that resident Paul Cass can identify specific problem spots. Mr. Martin requested removal of brush on Cider Hill Road in Clover Hollow, warning it may wash back into a culvert during the next heavy rain. Finally, he reported that a school bus driver requested a "Watch for Turning Vehicles" sign on Mountain Lake Road near a blind turn onto Zell's Mill to help improve safety for buses pulling out. He closed by again thanking VDOT crews, remarking that local roads compare very favorably to those in neighboring areas.

Mr. McKlarney thanked the VDOT crew for their efforts during the recent storm and commended Roger Simpkins for maintaining strong communication, often texting late into the night for several consecutive days. He noted that Simpkins coordinated closely with County crews and offered support on numerous calls, even providing a truck for EMS access when needed. Mr. McKlarney emphasized the cooperative relationship and expressed appreciation for the teamwork. He added that once the snow clears, there will be plenty of additional tasks to address.

SCHOOL BOARD REPORT

Dr. Campbell shared brief details about an upcoming quarterly newsletter and an enrollment summary, noting both are still in draft form. He expressed appreciation to County employees and VDOT for their work during recent winter weather, and thanked Mr. Butler for ongoing communication that helps guide decision-making. He explained that weather has forced around fifteen calendar adjustments this year, including closures and virtual days, and emphasized that decisions are made with student and staff safety as the top priority. Despite the disruptions, he remains hopeful the school year can conclude as originally scheduled due to the longer school day allowing absorption of many missed days.

Dr. Campbell reported that enrollment remains steady at 2,099 students as of January 1, with continued growth in out-of-county virtual enrollment. Work on the division's comprehensive and strategic plan is progressing, with nearly 200 parent survey responses showing useful patterns. The goal is to have the plan ready for adoption by the May Board meeting. Dr. Campbell also noted ongoing construction efforts and commended John Ross for his management of those projects. He closed by offering to answer any questions and expressing appreciation for the Board's support.

Mr. McKlarney noted that Dr. Campbell is developing a dashboard for the Board of Supervisors, the School Board, and the public. The dashboard will provide updates on construction progress, calendar changes, and other ongoing matters. Dr. Campbell is refining the tool before making it fully available.

OLD BUSINESS

CROSS AVENUE WATER PROJECT UPDATE

Mr. McKlarney informed the Board that the County has received a \$600,000 grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development, to support the Cross Avenue water extension project. While the grant does not cover the full construction cost, the County is exploring additional funding options, value-engineering approaches, and the possibility of completing some work in-house and through force-account labor. He noted this grant award represents an important first step toward moving the project forward.

NEW BUSINESS

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR H 585 AND SB 154

Mr. McKlarney presented a request for the Board to issue a letter of support for Virginia House Bill 585 and Senate Bill 154, which would allow animal control officers to receive the same retirement and benefit provisions as police officers under the LEOS program. He explained that the County's cost would be approximately \$2,000 annually, or \$1,000 per eligible employee. He noted that the County's two animal control officers responded to a high volume of calls, including 1,500 service calls last year, 641 of which involved

law enforcement or child protective services. Because animal control officers frequently encounter potentially dangerous situations and often leave the field for police jobs with better benefits, he stated that adopting these changes would improve recruitment and retention. He recommended that the Board approve the letter of support.

Mr. Baker motioned to approve the letter of support. Mr. McCoy seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote as follows: Voting Yes: Mr. Baker, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Martin, Mr. McCoy and Mr. Morris

PAYMENT OF WARRANTS

Mr. Baker motioned to approve FY 2026 warrants in the amount of \$1,483,295.00, and Mr. McCoy seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote as follows: Voting Yes: Mr. Baker, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Martin, Mr. McCoy and Mr. Morris

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. McCoy motioned to go into executive session as permitted by Virginia Code 2.2-3711 A (7) Legal Counsel for mitigation of dilapidated property, (29) Contracts for Wheatland Eco Park, (1) Personnel for three resignations in the Maintenance and Public Works Departments. Mr. Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 rollcall vote as follows: Voting Yes: Mr. Baker, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Martin, Mr. McCoy and Mr. Morris

Mr. McCoy motioned to return to open session, and he certified that in the closed session just concluded, nothing was discussed except the matter or matters (1) specifically identified in the motion to convene in closed session and (2) Lawfully permitted to be discussed under the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information act cited in that motion. Mr. Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 rollcall vote as follows: Voting Yes: Mr. Baker, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Martin, Mr. McCoy and Mr. Morris

VOLUNTEER SHORTAGES

Mr. Lawson noted a recent increase in social media activity related to volunteer recruitment and asked about current volunteer levels in the County. Mr. Butler confirmed that volunteer numbers remain critically low, though not worse than in previous months. Mr. Lawson suggested that the recruitment campaign should emphasize that continued shortages may require shifting to a paid service, which would increase costs for the county. Staff agreed to discuss incorporating this message into the campaign.

Mr. McCoy added that other counties have already faced similar shortages and moved to paid staffing, noting that this trend reflects a broader challenge in maintaining adequate volunteer levels.

ADJOURN

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next Board of Supervisors meeting will be held on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 6:30 PM. The meeting will be held at the Giles County Maintenance Building located at 315 North Main Street, Pearisburg, VA.

APPROVED:**Chair** _____**ATTEST:**

Clerk