

Cherokee County Board of Commissioners
Special Called Meeting Agenda
May 4, 2026
5:30 P.M.

- I. Call to Order by Chairman**
- II. Invocation**
- III. Pledge**
- IV. Ethics Statement** “Members of the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners are reminded and advised of their duties under state law and the Cherokee County Code of Ethics Resolution, as such may pertain of their personal actions and actions of the board”.
- V. Adopt Agenda**
- VI. Presentation of County Manager’s Recommended FY 27 Budget**
- VII. Resolution to Increase Room Occupancy Tax from 4% - 6%**
- VIII. Application for an Economic Development Administration Grant to Assist the County with Developing and Economic Development Strategy**
- IX. Animal Control Work Session**
- X. Adjourn**

**RESOLUTION TO LEVY AN ADDITIONAL TWO PERCENT (2%) ROOM
OCCUPANCY TAX**

WHEREAS, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners was authorized by Chapter 1055 of the Session Laws of the 1983 North Carolina General Assembly to levy a room occupancy tax and establish a Tourism Development Authority.

WHEREAS, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners was authorized by Session Law 2008-33, House Bill 2783, Subsection (a) to levy an additional three percent (3%) room occupancy tax and make other administrative changes.

WHEREAS, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners was authorized by Session Law 2008-33, House Bill 2783, Subsection (b) to levy an additional three percent (3%), in addition to the three percent (3%) tax authorized by Subsection (a).

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2011, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners determined that it was in the best interest of Cherokee County to levy an additional one percent (1%) room occupancy tax, which increased the occupancy tax of three percent (3%) to four percent (4%).

WHEREAS, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners is authorized, pursuant to Session Law 2008-33, House Bill 2783, to levy a room occupancy tax of no more than six percent (6%) of the gross receipts derived from the rental in Cherokee County of any room, lodging, or similar accommodation subject to sales tax under G.S. 105-164.4.

WHEREAS, on April 14, 2026, at a duly called meeting, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners voted to hold a public hearing on May 4, 2026, for the purpose of receiving public comments on the matter of increasing the room occupancy tax by two percent (2%).

WHEREAS, following a public hearing on May 4, 2026, the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners determined it is in the best interest of Cherokee County to levy an additional two percent (2%) room occupancy tax, for a total room occupancy tax of six percent (6%).

WHEREAS, the Tourism Development Authority shall use all the occupancy tax proceeds for the promotion of travel and tourism and tourism-related expenditures, as authorized under the uniform provisions.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners hereby find that it is in the best interest of Cherokee County to levy an additional two percent (2%) room occupancy tax, for a total room occupancy tax of six percent (6%), effective July 1, 2026.

Adopted, this 20th day of April 2026.

Alan Bryant, Chairman

From: Becca Scott <becca@southwesterncommission.org>

Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 3:18 PM

To: Paul Worley <pworley@tricitycc.edu>; Aaron Patton <apatton@tricitycc.edu>; Randy Wiggins <randy.wiggins@cherokeeconomy-nc.gov>; Silas Shields <silas.shields@cherokeeconomy-nc.gov>

Subject: EDA Application for Economic Development Strategy

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Good Afternoon, All,

I've been working with Paul and Aaron to put together an application for an Economic Development Strategy for Cherokee County, and I wanted to start an email thread that can help us get this application submitted. I'm going to send a list of all the required documents and then what we need from you all for each document (several are review-only; one is signature only).

1. Impact and Engagement Narrative (DRAFTED, NEEDS YOUR REVIEW)
2. ED900 General Application Form (DRAFTED, NEEDS YOUR REVIEW)
3. CD-511 (NEEDS YOUR SIGNATURE)
4. Letter of Commitment from Cherokee County (TEMPLATE ATTACHED, NEEDS TO BE ON COUNTY LETTERHEAD AND SIGNED)
5. Budget Form (DRAFTED, NEEDS YOUR REVIEW)

I'm currently drafting a letter of support template that can be used to collect additional letters of support, and Aaron is working on getting one from the EDC. We will also submit a

letter from the Southwestern Commission that says it aligns with our regional Economic Development Strategy that is supported by EDA.

Lastly, we will need someone from the County to create an account in EDA's grant portal (EDGE). Whoever is the signatory authority for the County (Randy?) would make the most sense, because you'll be the only one who can actually submit the application through the portal. Silas can also have an account, but only the signatory authority can submit. You can also add me as a team member to the portal, and I can send an email with instructions if that's better for you all.

I apologize for the long email! And if you all received a version of this email earlier, it was sent accidentally-- there is apparently a combination of keys that will send an email for you, and I managed to find them accidentally.

Thanks,

Becca Scott

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Southwestern Commission

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Section 1 Executive Summary

Project Title: Cherokee County Comprehensive Economic Development Readiness and Resilience Strategy

Summary of Overarching Plan

Cherokee County, North Carolina, seeks support to develop a new comprehensive economic development plan that reflects current economic conditions, recent disaster impacts, and long-term recovery needs. The County's earlier planning efforts helped attract major employers such as TEAM Industries, Sioux Tools, and Moog Inc., but the current plan is now outdated and does not fully address today's challenges. Those challenges include transportation and logistics limitations caused by the County's mountainous geography, infrastructure vulnerabilities highlighted by Hurricane Helene, continued exposure to economic concentration risk, and the need to better align future industry recruitment with workforce realities.

The proposed project will produce a modern, actionable strategy to guide Cherokee County's next phase of economic growth and resilience, and it is expected to include the following items:

- Comprehensive economic and workforce analysis
- Industry cluster identification and targeting strategy
- Infrastructure and site readiness assessment
- Transportation and logistics evaluation
- Risk and resilience planning
- Marketing and business recruitment strategy
- Implementation roadmap with measurable benchmarks

Cherokee County has proactively invested in its future by acquiring 27 acres of property and initiating development, including infrastructure improvements, road access, and site preparation. This presents a unique opportunity to align a new economic development strategy with available, ready-to-develop industrial assets.

Proposed Goals

The primary goals of the project are to:

- Diversify Cherokee County's economic base beyond a narrow historic focus on traditional manufacturing
- Enhance economic resilience to natural disasters, infrastructure disruption, and external economic shocks
- Strengthening alignment between targeted industries and existing and emerging workforce capabilities
- Leverage existing assets, including the County's industrial site and established employers
- Develop disaster-responsive strategies that improve continuity of operations and long-term economic stability

Proposed Geographic Region

The project will serve Cherokee County, North Carolina, within the Southwestern Commission's Region A. The County is a rural mountain county in western North Carolina and is part of the broader regional recovery environment described in the 2025 CEDS update following Hurricane Helene. The specific applicable FEMA disaster declaration reference is [TBD].

Section 2 Readiness Pathway

2A. Preparedness for Future Disaster Recovery Funding

The proposed activities will prepare Cherokee County to compete for and implement future disaster recovery funding by giving the County a current, evidence-based, and implementation-oriented economic development strategy tied directly to post-disaster resilience and long-term recovery. In the past, the County has important economic assets and demonstrated recruitment success, but its current planning framework no longer fully reflects changing market conditions, workforce needs, or the lessons learned from Hurricane Helene.

This readiness project will improve Cherokee County's future competitiveness for disaster recovery resources in several ways. First, it will identify and prioritize strategies that reduce economic vulnerability associated with geographic isolation, transportation constraints, and infrastructure fragility. Second, it will strengthen the County's ability to define fundable projects by clarifying industry targets, site needs, infrastructure gaps, resilience priorities, and implementation steps. Third, it will create a more current and measurable roadmap that can be used to support future grant applications, capital planning, site development, and recovery-oriented economic development initiatives.

The project is especially important because the 2025 CEDS update for Region A emphasizes that western North Carolina communities have become more focused on reducing vulnerabilities, building infrastructure redundancy, and designing projects that both protect communities and support target industries after Hurricane Helene. Cherokee County's proposed planning effort is consistent with that regional direction and will better position the County to pursue recovery and resilience funding tied to infrastructure, workforce, and economic development needs.

2B. Anticipated Future Disaster Recovery Funding

This project is intended to improve Cherokee County's readiness and competitiveness for future funding related to:

- Disaster recovery and economic resilience planning
- Infrastructure resilience and site readiness
- Transportation, logistics, and access-related improvements
- Workforce development and economic adjustment initiatives
- Future economic development implementation funding tied to strategy outcomes

2C. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Cherokee County is committed to continuing to engage the community and stakeholders throughout this planning process. The need for a comprehensive economic development plan was identified through regular meetings and input with local stakeholders and industry partners who are aware of local economic development conditions and the existing gaps that exist that would prevent successful development of the County's newly-acquired 27-acre asset.

The stakeholder groups that are likely central to the project are:

- Cherokee County government
- Existing major employers

- Economic development leadership
- Workforce and training partners
- The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Regional planning and development entities within Region A

If available, we need a documented stakeholder engagement process, list of meetings, surveys, interviews, or formal input summaries.

Section 3 Strategy Development

What questions will the project seek to address?

The proposed project will examine the key economic development and recovery questions facing Cherokee County as it updates its comprehensive economic development plan in light of current conditions and recent impacts of disaster.

The project will seek to address the following questions:

- How can Cherokee County diversify its economic base to include industries that are less dependent on transportation access and more resilient to natural disasters?
- What industries are the best fit for Cherokee County given its mountain geography, workforce profile, infrastructure conditions, and available industrial assets?
- How can the County better align future recruitment and development efforts with its existing and emerging workforce capabilities to support sustainable, well-paying jobs?
- What infrastructure, transportation, and logistics barriers most limit competitiveness, and what strategies can reduce those barriers?
- How can Cherokee County better leverage its 27-acre industrial site and other existing assets to support future business recruitment and expansion?
- What vulnerabilities were highlighted by Hurricane Helene, and how should resilience, contingency planning, and continuity of operations be incorporated into future economic development efforts?
- What implementation steps, benchmarks, and priorities are needed to turn the updated strategy into an actionable roadmap for future investment?

This planning effort is intended to resolve several important knowledge gaps. Cherokee County's earlier plan was successful in recruiting employers such as TEAM Industries, Sioux Tools, and Moog Inc., but the current plan is outdated and no longer fully addresses the County's changing economic environment. The County now faces a different mix of opportunities and risks, including a major gaming employer, a newly-established artificial intelligence facility, transportation limitations associated with its geography, and increased awareness of infrastructure vulnerability following Hurricane Helene. The project will provide a current framework for evaluating those realities and translating them into a more resilient and competitive economic development strategy.

How will the completed plan prepare your organization and/or community to apply for and/or implement future disaster recovery funding?

The completed plan will prepare Cherokee County to pursue and implement future disaster recovery funding by providing a current, evidence-based roadmap with clear priorities, implementation steps, and measurable benchmarks. It will help the County identify fundable projects, strengthen need justification, align local priorities with the Southwestern Commission's CEDS, and improve readiness for future, implementation-oriented investments in resilience, infrastructure, workforce development, and strategic site development.