State of North Carolina

Minutes

County of Madison

The Madison County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. at the Madison County Board of Education Central Office, 5738 US Hwy 25/70, Marshall, North Carolina.

In attendance were Chairman Matt Wechtel, Vice-Chairman Jeremy Hensley, Commissioner Bill Briggs, Commissioner Alan Wyatt, and Clerk Mandy Bradley. Commissioner Michael Garrison joined the meeting at 5:03 p.m. and County Manager Rod Honeycutt joined the meeting at 6:23 p.m., respectively. County Attorney Donny Laws was not in attendance.

Chairman Wechtel called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Item 1: Madison County Public Schools Emergency Preparedness and After-Action Review

Members of the Madison County School System including Board of Education Chair Karen Blevins, members Keith Ray, Barbara Wyatt, John Bratz, and Tyler Coates; Superintendent Dr. Will Hoffman; and Assistant Superintendent Lisa Gahagan joined the meeting to provide information regarding the school's emergency preparedness and after action review.

Superintendent Dr. Will Hoffman presented a power point presentation and answered questions from members of the Board. Information discussed included storm preparation, timeline of events and impact of the Helene event, school response and relief operations, community collaboration, and proposed strategies and assets to improve response during future emergencies.

Additional information was provided by members of the Board of Commissioners, Interim Emergency Management Director Daniel Porche, and County Manager Rod Honeycutt regarding assets deployed during the event, response, collaboration with the school system, and the County's Emergency Operation Plan in conjunction with the school.

Discussion regarding the information was had by the Board and County staff as well as the school system. (Attachment 1.1)

Item 2: Adjournment

Upon motion by Commissioner Wyatt and second by Commissioner Garrison, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:38 p.m.

This the 17th day of December 2024.

MADISON COUNTY

Matt Wechtel, Chairman
Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Mandy Bradley, Clerk

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MADISON COUNTY SCHOOLS

TIMELINE FOR HURRICANE HELENE

SEPTEMBER 23, 2024

WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 25, 2024



Madison County Schools
will be CLOSED
Thursday, September 26, 2024
and Friday, September 27, 2024
due to the forecast for severe rainfall
and wind event predicted
to hit our area beginning this
afternoon and over the next 48 hours.

September 26 will be an optional teacher work day
and September 27 will be an annual leave day.

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Hurricane Helene had a profound impact on Madison County, with significant damage particularly in the Hot Springs and Marshall areas due to historic flooding of the French Broad River and the Forks of Ivy and Bend of Ivy areas due to flooding to the Ivy River. Madison County Schools played a central role in the recovery effort, especially in Hot Springs, where the elementary school became a critical hub for relief operations. Our commitment to supporting the entire county was unwavering throughout the event.

Timeline of Events:

- On Friday, September 27th the French Broad River and the Ivy River experienced unprecedented flooding in Hot Springs and Marshall, causing widespread damage.
- Hot Springs Elementary School was converted into the primary distribution site for essential supplies, meals, and town operations.
- Power outages across Madison County disrupted daily life, and the school system helped secure emergency resources like generators, lighting, and wellness supplies.
- Madison County Schools worked with local officials to ensure the safe return of students, providing health and wellness support as cleanup efforts continued.
- Collaboration between county leaders and the school system was critical to managing the crisis and offering relief to impacted communities.
- We have been honored to be a part of the Hurricane Helene Recovery. MCS was able to help our community during this event in the following ways:
- To provide a space for an Emergency Shelter at Central Office, MECHS and the Wellness Center
- To provide thousands of gallons of fuel from our transportation department that not only fueled safety vehicles from Madison County and across NC, but generators for cell towers, and retirement centers.

- Child nutrition opened our pantries and freezers to provide vital food and supplies for those in need in heavily impacted areas.
- In Hot Springs the school was the central hub of support for the community, operating as a critical distribution site for families who were essentially cut off for days. The school and our school system administrators and teachers provided guidance and logistical support and managed incoming resources. Food was served daily from our cafeteria, essential supplies were delivered and housed in our gymnasium, Town Hall operated from our school offices, and FEMA applications, National Guard, and World Kitchen services were coordinated by school system administration.
- Each of our schools were used a places to gather resources, clothing, services, a place for line crews to stay working to restore power in our county and neighboring. We continue to house close to 50 linemen at Mars Hill Elementary School.
- Our maintenance department loaded supplies, helped with food delivery, and set up mobile generators.
- Principals, counselors, social workers, and teachers did wellness checks on each student and made sure that resources were readily available for impacted families.
- We knew that from Day 1 our main objective was safely reopening our schools. We were able to successfully and safely reopen schools on Wednesday, October 16. School routines are important because they help students feel safe, comfortable, and in control of their environment.

Timeline of Hurricane Helene Events

September 23, 2024
Notified senior staff and Board of a developing storm; began monitoring with Deanna Ponder and the NWS.

September 24, 2024
Attended NWS update: two storms expected, causing saturated soils and heavy rain. Communicated weather updates to staff and collaborated with neighboring counties.

September 25, 2024
Cancelled school for Thursday and Friday. Directed staff to secure buildings, with maintenance preparing for storm impact.

September 26, 2024
Collaborated with county on shelter logistics. Marshall designated as main shelter for Madison County. Confirmed available fuel reserves.

September 27, 2024
As Helene hit, maintained contact with school staff and assessed minimal damage. Power outages cut most communication.

September 28-29, 2024
Coordinated with Tammy Cody at the shelter, provided food and supplies for stranded people, set up central office for staging, and began supplying Hot Springs Elementary for relief operations. A message went home to staff and families alerting them that schools would remain closed until further notice, but that I would update them on progress on Tuesday, October 1. These messages also alerted staff and families on how to acquire resources through the county, how to contact me directly, or receive help if needed.

September 30 - October 1, 2024
Schools remained closed. Supported community and school wellness checks, began planning to reopen, and collaborated on resource distribution, including converting MHS into a clothing distribution site. A message went out to staff and families closing schools through the end of the week with another update to parents and staff coming on Friday, October 4 by 4:00.

October 2-3, 2024
Continued emergency meetings. Planned school reopening for October 14, with shelters supported and logistics coordinated. Arranged temporary lodging for linemen at Mars Hill Elementary.

October 4-6, 2024
Issued closure updates to families and staff. Coordinated supplies to Hot Springs Elementary and managed volunteer efforts in Marshall cleanup. National Guard support was arranged but ultimately unused.

October 7-9, 2024
B-Ks reopened, with further support in Hot Springs. Identified and addressed sewage and sanitation issues impacting schools, working with county and state officials.

October 10, 2024
Finalized plans for reopening schools on a 2-hour delay starting October 16, following OTWD on October 14-15.



Brush Creek Elementary
collecting donated supplies for families

adison County Schools

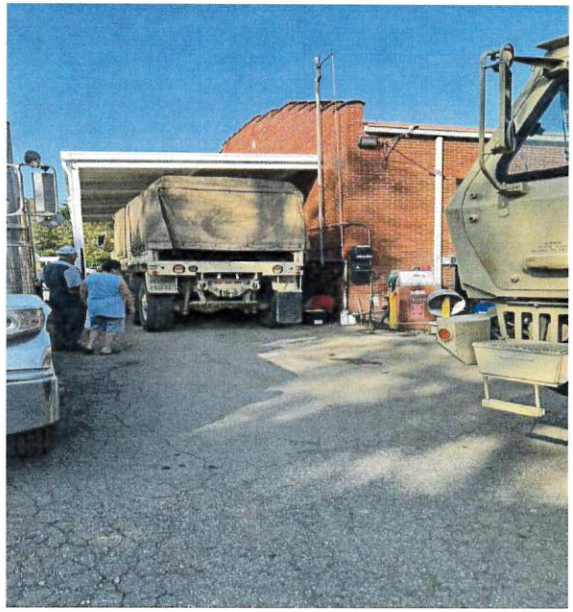
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Mars Hill Elementary
provides area for FBEMC utility crews



Hot Springs Elementary School serves as a distribution site for supplies



MCS Transportation Dept fueling the National Guard tanks and emergency vehicles

Madison High School
Madison Early College High School



Madison High School
serves as a distribution site filled with donated supplies
for our families and community

Mars Hill Elementary School
Provided Gym for Out of Town Lineman



Collected Supplies





Madison High School
Distribution Site for Donated Supplies

