

## Meeting

From A1

told the school board. She proposed adding the additional days to give the fall semester 89 days and spring semester would get 83 days.

The fall semester originally had 94 days in it before Helene.

Making the change also will preserve holiday breaks and keep the last day of school the same, Auton said.

Auton said the change may impact some mid-year students and those who also attend community college. The schools system can

work with individual students to make it work, Auton said.

Board member Wendi Craven, who also is principal of Hickory High School, said it's imperative to get those extra nine days because the semester would be too short, otherwise. It would be too hard for high school teachers to complete courses, Craven said.

Board member Leslie Taylor suggested making Dec. 20 a half-day in the amended calendar, which is what it was in the original calendar.

Jan. 21-22 will become work days for staff and the spring semester will start Jan. 23, according to the changes.

Auton said Sept. 26 and 27 were originally remote learning days, while Sept. 30 and Oct. 1-2 classes were out and Oct. 3-4 and Oct. 7-8 were optional teacher work days.

The change to the calendar will keep Sept. 26 as a remote learning day, but change the other days to regular student instructional days.

With the potential for bad weather later this school year, Auton said they want to preserve the remote learning days.

The board also agreed to move the March 4 and 14 work days to March 20-21. May 30 will be a half day for students.

In addition to making calendar

changes, the board approved employee compensation for the period of the storm's impact, which is allowed by the state.

Keith Lawson, finance director for Burke County Public Schools, said all eligible employees will be credited for a full 7.5 or 8 hours a day for a total of eight days Sept. 27 through Oct. 8.

Actual hours worked during those days by classified staff such as custodians, teacher assistants, maintenance and school office staff will be credited compensatory time for the days and hours staff were able to work, he said.

Lawson said it was everyone's intent for those who were able to

assist during Hurricane Helene and recovery to be recognized and compensated. Work by staff such as teachers, instructional coaches, media coordinators, guidance counselors, instructional technology facilitators, nurses, speech services and others will be managed at the school level by the principals, Lawson said.

Permanent employees, school nutrition employees, temporary employees, some contracted employees, bus drivers, retirees and substitute teachers who were scheduled to work and some others are all eligible, he said.

Board member Don Hemstreet was absent from the meeting.

## Vote

From A1

absentee ballot. So this is my first one," Crawford said. "I'm excited."

Juan, 24, said it's her second election and she's excited to be part of some change. The line of people waiting to vote didn't surprise her and it didn't put her off. She said the first day of early voting just happened to fit with her and Crawford's schedules.

Amanda Harris decided to vote on the first day because she had the day off from work. She wasn't surprised by the long line at the board of elections.

"I think that with the situation in western North Carolina, people were ready to vote, one way the other, for whoever," Harris said.

She said all of her family live in the mountains, including a sister in Burnsville, a brother in Banner Elk, and her mother and aunt in Newland.

Harris said she didn't mind waiting in line to vote.

"I figure we're gonna have long lines the whole time," she said.

Republican voter Debbie Hefner said she wanted to vote on the first day to make sure her vote is counted.

"In case something happens to me, I know I voted," Hefner said. "We want to make sure it's counted."

She hopes this is an election where people feel a patriotic duty



SHARON MCBRAYER, THE NEWS HERALD

Voters wait in a line to cast their ballot on the first day of early voting at Rutherford College Town Hall on Thursday.

to get out and vote.

Norman Russell said people aren't guaranteed another day, so he wanted to vote on the first day to make sure his vote is in.

Michale Durney echoed Russell's sentiment when he said, "You never know what'll happen between now and then. Look at the poor people in western North Carolina. Who knows what's in store for us. So I just want to make sure my vote got in there while I still have two good legs."

Pat and Ransom Beaver are retired and voted on Thursday.

"If you're able to come out early, just come on," Pat Beaver said. "Come on and get it done."

Tamika Garrison voted the first day because she doesn't like to procrastinate and typically votes early during the first week.

"I want to make sure I get it, just in case," she said. "I always vote early."

Garrison said the first time she voted was in 2001 on Election Day.

She said the lines were long, so she wants to make sure she doesn't have to vote on Election Day this year.

"I just want to go ahead and exercise my right and then know that I've done it and I don't have to stress about (it)," Garrison said.

Jim and Elizabeth Furr were waiting in line to vote at the Rutherford College Town Hall early voting site. Jim said he typically votes early.

"I just like to do it to get it over with," Jim Furr said. "And it's more of a kind of a signal that it's important and everybody ought to get out, whether you're Democratic or Republican."

Elizabeth Furr said, "It's the one thing we can do that affects our country. I mean, voting is it. There's very little other stuff you can do."

### Early voting

Early voting ends on Nov. 2. Weekday hours for early voting in Burke County are from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Saturday hours are from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be three Saturdays during the early voting period.

Early voting sites are:

■ Burke County Elections Office, located at 2128 S Sterling St., Morganton.

■ Glen Alpine Town Hall, located at 103 Pitt St., Glen Alpine.

■ Burke County Senior Center, located at 501 N Green St., Morganton.

■ Rutherford College Town Hall, located at 980 Malcolm Blvd., Connelly Springs

■ East Burke Senior Center Library, located at 101 Main Avenue W., Hildebran.

All voters must bring an acceptable form of photo ID to cast a ballot.

For more information about voting in this year's election, call the Burke County Board of Elections at 828-764-9010.

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