

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 08, 2020**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a work session on September 08, 2020, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair
Mickey Luker, Commissioner (via Zoom video conferencing)
Ron Mau, Commissioner
Gayle Woody, Commissioner
Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) 2021 TAX REAPPRAISAL: Tabitha Ashe, Tax Administrator, presented: 2021 Reappraisal:

(a) Reappraisal: The process of updating real property values to reflect fair market value as of January 1, 2021.

(b) Fair Market Value: The most probable price a property would bring in an open and competitive market. A hypothetical sale.

(c) Why perform a reappraisal:

- Required by NC General Statutes: North Carolina law requires all counties to reappraise real property at least once every 8 years.
- Equity and fairness: Reappraisal reestablishes the fairness of the tax burden between properties, which typically change in value at different rates by location and property type.

(d) Reappraisal cycles: 2000, 2004, 2008, 2016, 2021, 2025

(e) The county had property owners from all 50 states except Nebraska and many countries. There were 17 townships in the county with 386 neighborhoods.

(f) Parcels:

- Taxable parcels 97.65%
- Exempt parcels 2.35%
- Taxable real property value 88.94%
- Exempt real property value 11.06%
- Vacant 44.84%
- Residential 51.60%
- Commercial 3.56%
- Vacant by value 15.93%
- Residential by value 72.405
- Commercial by value 11.06%

(g) Reappraisal Staff:

- 4 Field Appraisers
- 1 Office Appraiser
- 1 Contracted Reappraisal Coordinator
- 8,844 field reviews
- 31,159 office reviews

- (h) Schedule of values, standards and rules:
 - Requirement of NC General Statute 105-317
 - Two Schedules:
 - Used in appraising real property at its true value
 - Used in appraising present use value
 - Must be approved before January 1 of the year they were applied.
- (i) Proposed Timeline:
 - September 1st: Submit proposed 2021 Schedule of Values, Standards and Rules to Board of Commissioners
 - October 6: Hold public hearing on proposed Schedule of Values
 - October 13: Adopt Schedule of Values
 - January 1: Effective date of 2021 reappraisal
 - February 1: Mail reappraisal notices
- (j) 2025 Reappraisal Essentials:
 - New appraisal software. Current software 40+ years old.
 - Pictometry Aerial Imagery.
 - Two additional field appraisers

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(2) STATE OF TOURISM INDUSTRY: Nick Breedlove, Tourism Development Executive Director, stated that over the past six months, the hospitality industry experienced significant and profound losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those losses were still being felt and would be for quite some time. The TDA staff in early March shifted duties from marketing and promotion and worked to help mitigate losses and support the hospitality industry and the residents. While they had been and remained diligently working on the recovery of the hospitality sector, they wanted to share their efforts since March and the current state of the Tourism Industry in the county.

During March, April and May, they experienced losses of \$95,855.72 in Occupancy Tax compared to the prior year's same period of collections. Last year, those three months amounted to 18.64% of the annual collections. This year, those three months amounted to 11.56% of annual collections. Modeling based on last year's U.S. Travel Association annual spending, they lost at a minimum of \$14,579,580.40 in direct visitor spending in the county on lodging, food service, recreation, transportation and retail.

The JCTDA in early March, ceased all advertising and public relations campaigns and immediately began budget exercises to drastically cut spending from its budget. The resulting move saved over \$150,000 in planned expenditures (primarily advertising) through the remainder of the year. With not knowing how the pandemic would affect travel and without any nationwide historical trends other than 9/11 and the 2008 recession, they slashed budget projections entirely, projecting \$0 in revenue for the remainder of the fiscal year.

In actuality, they collected for overnight stays in March \$34,404.69, April \$15,854.63 and May \$76,044.67. For June stays, they collected \$187,832.18. June's figures were the largest June in JCTDA history, the second-highest month of collections in the 96-month collection history.

Prior tax collections in July for June overnight stays:

FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
\$119,152.80	\$135,881.68	\$122,421.68	\$187,832.18

In analyzing June stays, they noticed a significant increase in bookings for Vacation Rentals both Airbnb and VRBO. The Airbnb figure for June bookings was more than double last year. They only began receiving VRBO receipts last October, so they did not have a comparable period. With \$36,487.44 received from Airbnb at a 4% tax rate, that represents \$912,186 in Airbnb bookings that occurred in June.

They budget process, completed in May and passed in June, budgeted conservatively for this fiscal year. The TDA budget for FY 20-21 was \$872,100 compared to last year's budget of \$1,203,579, a decrease of 27.54%. With the surge of June stays, which they did not account for, they were able to place those funds into the TDA fund balance. Those funds would not be utilized in compliance with the TDA's Fund Balance Reserve Policy, passed in November 2019, which required them to keep a fund balance in an amount equivalent to 30% of the current fiscal year's operating costs. The fund balance reserves would help maintain a sufficient cash flow should they see any disruptions in the current fiscal year due to COVID-19 or other causes.

Other destinations were not seeing travel return as quickly as the county. All national research from Destination Analysts, Longwoods and other firms, showed travelers were primarily seeking to escape crowded cities and visit rural destinations and National Parks, which positioned the county perfectly for capturing that pent-up demand. With this opportunity also came a challenge to ensure the safety of the residents and visitors throughout the process.

Between early March and July, they sent out 27 emails to their partners throughout the county, including restaurants, retail, employers, key industry stakeholders, accommodations and more. Those 27 messages kept all of their partners informed on regulations, best practices, national trends and ways to keep themselves, the community and visitors safe.

A total of 27 communications/emails were opened 34,785 times, and people clicked on resources, links, and guides contained in the emails a total of 7,693 times. They held a Lodging Industry Forum with best practices for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting. While many chain hotels receive advice from their corporate office, specific guidelines for vacation rentals were not yet available. They had over 90 accommodations in attendance at this session.

They focused heavily on what they could do to support businesses at a time they needed it the most. They had many individual requests for signage, financial aid, business counseling, PPE and the list goes on. They worked daily since March to connect people with resources. The TDA staff, Chamber leaders Stephanie Edwards and Julie Spiro, Small Business Centers, Economic Development, along with their Board of Directors, worked daily and continually, in order to mitigate losses and provide support for the businesses.

The JCTDA created www.LoveJacksonNC.com and corresponding social media campaigns to encourage patronage of local businesses in March and April when they needed it the most. Following the creation of the website, they also created a 'Virtual Tip Jar' where community members could electronically tip out of work and displaced restaurant workers. The page was viewed over 5,000 times before they forwarded the website to the 'What's Open' page on their main website.

He served on the North Carolina Tourism Industry Recovery Working Group alongside fifteen state leaders, including Senator Rick Gunn, Senator Chuck Edwards and Senator Ralph Hise. Through their collective efforts and Senators introducing the bill, the state legislature appropriated a total of \$15 million for Tourism Industry Recovery in two separate appropriations. As part of that \$15 million, TDA's throughout the state were eligible for funding to help them advertise through the state tourism office Co-op program.

While they worked hard to support the local hospitality industry, they took a very deliberate and phased approach to safely and responsibly bring back visitation and advertising. Bringing visitors back was like threading a needle. They started in early spring with the message of together in spirit - dream now and plan later. Safety was paramount in everything they did.

In March, they had their Visitor Guide ready to print prior to when COVID-19 hit. They waited a few weeks, used language sensitive to large events and crowds and only printed a fraction of the guides they normally would print for the entire year. Now that they had a better grasp of how to safely promote travel, their partners, lodging, restaurants, etc. next month, they would reprint 25,000 more copies that have all the latest research, imagery, changes to the destination (as a result of COVID- 19) to invite visitors to come safely and responsibly.

He authored a \$208,000 Federal EDA CARES Act Grant application and worked with Finance Officer Darlene Fox to submit the application. They were awaiting a decision expected mid-September. He also worked with Trout Unlimited and Best Western Hotel to author and submit a Blue Ridge Parkway-Deer Park Water Sustainability grant for \$2,500 and they were to hear back.

JCTDA Staff since March, participated in 147 total Zoom and GotoWebinars focused on recovery for their partners. This was in addition to their Executive and Full Board TDA meetings. Both he and Sales and Marketing Manager Caleb Sullivan earned their CVENT Event Management Technology and Hospitality Solutions Supplier Certification during the pandemic.

The TDA created two new print products often requested by visitors - a Motorcycle Guide for Jackson County and a guide to Accessible Attractions in Jackson County. As a result of the Accessibility Guide, they were asked to lead a session at Destinations International Annual Conference, which they did in July and had several hundred attendees learn how they got started in creating the guide.

Website Traffic to DiscoverJacksonNC.com: While traffic was down in 2019 from March to May, it had been significantly up year over year in the past three months. They implemented two new Artificial Intelligence tools during the COVID-19 pandemic to help answer Visitor Questions. The one implemented on their Facebook answered almost 500 visitor questions in just four months. The one implemented on their website was shown to 76,097 visitors and 2,440 started a conversation with it.

In Social Media, they had impressive results with implementing live videos to inspire visitors during the lockdown. Mr. Sullivan, who did their social media, filmed a ‘Waterrock Knob Sunrise,’ ‘Hike up Whiteside Mountain’ and ‘Sunrise from Cashiers,’ all of which were broadcast live. The three videos collectively received 46,781 Views and 4,895 Engagements.

Year to date, they received significant free promotion on Google (separate from their paid placements) as part of the Google Destination Marketing Organization partnership they established with Google last year. They had 401,881 Impressions and over 35,278 Engagements with Google posts. They surpassed 200,000 followers on Facebook and 18,000 on Instagram this year (9.1% year over year growth).

They also created a social media campaign to encourage people to ‘Hang in There’ during the pandemic and partnered with ENO Hammocks to giveaway one free hammock a week from May to September 25 on their Instagram page. They had thousands of entries and people were excited about the promotion. Mr. Breedlove now served on the Main Street Sylva Association promotions committee and alongside Mr. Sullivan helped to update the outdated map and refresh it with up-to-date business information.

Informational item.

(3) NCDOT SAFETY STUDY: Mr. Breedlove stated that during peak usage in summer and fall, both the TDA and the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce field numerous complaints and safety concerns along NC 107 and US 64 in Cashiers. The two areas that continually come up in complaints were Silver Run Falls and Rhodes Big View Overlook. For many years, they had seen increased usage and as a result, they frequently heard concerns from people in the community.

Both the TDA Board of Directors and Cashiers Area Chamber Board of Directors would like the county to request that the appropriate parties examine both of these sites and conduct a safety study to examine long-term improvements that could be made. The Silver Run Falls site was under the US Forest Service jurisdiction, but some of the issues would also need to be conveyed to the NCDOT, so a joint letter may be appropriate. Since these studies were often years out and the implementation of strategies from the studies took planning and funding, they thought it was an opportune time to look toward the future and begin these discussions.

Commissioner Woody requested to add one other location. It was off Whiteside Cove and it was called Little Sliding Rock. The parking was just along the road and the traffic backed up there as well. In the interim, could signs be added stating “congested area”.

Mr. Breedlove stated that was a site they did hear complaints about, but not as many that year. That was also US Forest Service Land. They would welcome a study on that as well, if feasible.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next agenda for consideration.*

(4) EROSION CONTROL JURISDICTION: Tony Elders, Permitting and Code Enforcement Director, stated that Mr. Adams asked him to put this together as the Board was interested in requesting the state to allow local governments to enforce erosion control on state projects.

In the year 2000, Jackson County was granted permission from the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission to operate a Delegated Local Program to enforce the provisions of the Sedimentation and Pollution Control Act within the boundaries of Jackson County. The county continued to operate the Delegated Local Program under an official Memorandum of Agreement with the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission (Commission).

The county continued to expand its Delegated Local Program with additional staffing and training activities. The local program had been recognized by DEQ staff as one of the strongest programs in the western part of the state, if not the entire state. They had the expertise and capability to supervise large projects within the county by making site visits and inspections on a weekly, if not a daily basis. The regional office of the Commission was an hour and a half drive away. Their staffing levels do not allow them to make site visits and inspections on nearly as frequent a basis for large projects.

Appendix L of the Memorandum of Agreement between Jackson County and the Commission referenced the Sedimentation and Pollution Control Act to define the enforcement jurisdiction of the Commission. G.S. 113A-56(a) referenced within this Appendix stated: "The Commission shall have jurisdiction, to the exclusion of local governments, to adopt rules concerning land disturbing activities that were:

- Conducted by the state.
- Conducted by the United States.
- Conducted by persons having the power of eminent domain other than a local government.
- Conducted by a local government.
- Funded in whole or in part by the State or the United States."

G.S. 113-56(b) stated: "The Commission may delegate the jurisdiction conferred by G.S. 113A-56(a), in whole or in part, to any other state agency...". Due to the large number of state projects and public/private partnership projects within the county recently and the inability of the regional office of the Commission to provide adequate on-site supervision of these projects, Jackson County would like to request that the statute be amended to allow the Commission to delegate the jurisdiction of enforcement of the Sedimentation and Pollution Control Act and associated rules for these state projects and state funded projects to the Jackson County Delegated Local Program Staff.

Mr. Adams stated that he proposed the letter be recrafted in a way that was sent to as a goal to NCACC. They were also trying to get state law to be crafted for this to occur. As Commissioner Mau had mentioned, the way this would be written would be local options.

Commissioner Mau stated that otherwise, some counties may look at this as being an unfunded mandate or see this as the state saying they had to do something that could hurt the ability of this to pass.

Mr. Adams stated that technically, the state would be allowing the county to enforce state law. It was the state authority that they were dealing with.

Mr. Elders stated that to be a delegated local program, they had to adopt an erosion control ordinance.

Commissioner Woody stated that she appreciated that the local inspections were so well done. She thought this resolution would allow them to have local inspections going on, which was their goal.

Mr. Adams stated that he recommended they craft a letter to legislators asking them for this change and craft more generalized language to be part of their goals to NCACC.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting for consideration.*

The Board took at recess at 2:04 p.m.

Chairman McMahan called the meeting back to order at 2:15 p.m.

(5) HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND ANIMAL RESCUE CENTER ENERGY EFFICIENCIES: Chad Parker, Public Works Director, was present for this item

(a) Mr. Adams stated this was a response to have a generalized discussion with the Board about energy efficiencies at the new health department building and the proposed animal rescue center. The two projects were approached differently since the health department was a larger administrative space, which was deemed appropriate to bring in energy efficiency design assistance from Duke Energy. They brought Duke Energy in to do an assessment of the building and make recommendations for energy efficiencies.

Mr. Parker shared the summary of selected strategies. The heating and air system accounted for 41% of the total savings modeled. Also, a portion came from the following areas:

- Mechanical
- Architectural
- Electrical
- Service Water Heating
- Plug Load

The simple payback analysis showed that the Duke Energy Incentive helped reduce the incremental costs associated with the energy conservation strategy investments in the building, resulting in a payback of 3.2 years.

(b) Mr. Adams stated that they had a lot of opportunity with that much administrative space, so they took the time to go through and get the full report done by Duke Energy. He had the architects to put together a list of energy efficient features for the new Animal Rescue Center:

- LED Lighting throughout
- Automatic lighting controls using occupancy sensors for interior lighting and photocells lighting control panels for exterior
- Use methane gas from existing landfill for building heat, domestic hot water and radiant flooring heating
- Energy efficient HVAC equipment
- A number of low flow plumbing fixtures
- Energy efficient building envelop, including glazing and wall assemblies

These were not only recommendations from Duke Energy, a lot of the things in the plan were also standard energy efficient guidelines that they would try to follow. All of this information could be found at the county website.

Informational item.

(6) TEMPORARY STAFFED RECYCLING CENTER OPERATIONS: Mr. Parker was present during this item.

Mr. Adams stated that as they had discussed, they were currently out to bid for the Animal Rescue Center. The Health Department would be at the next regular meeting to discuss the animal counts with the Board. This discussion was regarding if they proceeded forward with the rewarding of the bid for the Animal Rescue Center, how would they provide services for SRC on a temporary basis.

As the Board was aware, they were looking for places for permanent locations, but that was an ongoing discussion. Whether it be discussions with the Town of Dillsboro and other issues had delayed the moving of the facility to a permanent location.

He proposed a temporary solution. The road would have to be utilized by the contractor on a daily basis. As they continued the development of the site, the SRC would be saved and the kilns would be relocated to that site. During construction, they would need to reserve the back 1/3 of the property to start placing and building the kilns. They proposed to build a fence with a double gate to allow the overall project to continue, but leave the area open for public use of the dumpsters. There would be some conflicts and occasions where they would need to alter the hours of operations or temporarily close the facility for days at a time. The alternative would be to find a temporary location elsewhere, which would potentially be a significant cost and not provide as much functionality.

Mr. Parker stated that they would have to move the electronics and the swap shop during this time. All else would be available at that site.

Commissioner Mau asked if there would be signage to warn people when it would be shut down and that there would be no electronics accepted at that site?

Mr. Parker stated that they could do that when the contractor let them know.

Mr. Adams stated that when they went out for the pre-bid conference, this was something they put in the contract that they had to work with them on. Hopefully, they could come out with a more comprehensive plan of how often and for how long it would have to be closed down.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Woody stated that it was her understanding, that the kilns had been used almost exclusively by WCU and they built those kilns. She had reached out to Dr. Erin Tapley, of the WCU Art Department, and they were willing to build those kilns. They were just wood-fired kilns run by the students.

Mr. Adams stated that was not in the bid. It was a set aside amount of money. That could be decided even after the bid was done and awarded to the contractor. They could also decide if they wanted to try and repurpose any of the material, but that may be difficult to do so.

Informational item.

(7) COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER: Thad Rhoden, Architect, McMillian, Pazdan, Smith and Ethan Ward Intern Architect, McMillian, Pazdan, Smith were present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated that he requested that McMillian, Pazdan, Smith (MPS) discuss with the Board that the Community Service Building Project had ran into additional issues with the site. He referred to portions of an email from Mr. Ward on September 3rd: “If all 2,000 tons of stone base are used on site, this work will be around \$90,000.00...The \$90,000.00 does not include any of the site remediation to remove unsuitable soil...The current rough estimate for that work is around \$30,000.00...”

Basically what had occurred, was that they had run into multiple unsuitable soil areas on the site. Also, once the pavement was peeled up, they did not have enough gravel. The Board was also aware of the underground storage tank issue they had dealt with. Once he received the email, his response was that at that point, he did not have enough money budgeted to continue with the additional issues.

Mr. Rhoden stated that there had been a series of unforeseen items, as far as existing conditions related to the concrete slab and under the slab that affected the inside scope that contributed to the early-on change orders. He shared the change order log for the project with the Board.

The beginning of starting to uncover some issue was with Change Order #6 (COR #20), which was the start of the storm drainage system at the high side of the site near the Board of Education. As they were digging, they stopped because there was free flowing water underneath, which was identified by the Geotech and Civil Engineer as an underground spring.

Mr. Adams stated that there were no real major changes. He thought they were fortunate with the building when they exposed everything. They did not run into structural or roof issues with the building itself other than the shaft walls. In a renovation project, he thought everything was going fairly well until they ran into this site.

Mr. Rhoden stated that when the first stormwater structure was starting to be installed was when they found the water that was free flowing, which was the first change order to remove the soils and come back in with stone. When they started tracking down into the parking lot, they connected that pipe to other stormwater structures and they started uncovering additional unsuitable soils. Because there had been a lot of discussion about soils in this project, there was soil remediation in relation to the storm drain system. Then there was soil remediation as it related to the parking lot where they extended it to gain additional spaces.

Also, the Board was aware of the issue when they were digging and found contaminated soil. In that area, they had storm drainage being installed that needed over excavation and additional French draining. Most of that had been identified in change orders as storm drainage remediation. The contaminated soils had to be removed and there was a sizable underground storage tank that needed to be abandoned. Most recently, as they started to excavate to put in the parking lot, running from the bottom to the top, soils that were unsuitable, that were too soft to be installed. That was the \$30,000.00 written in the email.

In addition to that, as they started taking up the parking lot, it was discovered that it had been paved over more times than thought. The thickness of the asphalt was larger than anticipated. To bring the parking lot to the design elevation to get positive drainage and flowing water where it needed to go, additional stone was needed to meet that. The final number was the inclusion of heavy duty asphalt in front of the dumpster. They had found in that area an undocumented pipe, they put in heavy duty asphalt around it where the trash truck would be coming in to reinforce the area.

Mr. Adams stated that the change order log showed a total of \$199,831.63. At that point, along with the additional months they were paying rent of \$10,000.00 plus utilities, they were going to be out of funds.

Chairman McMahan stated that the short of it was that they needed approximately \$200,000.00 to make up the difference to pay for the change order requests. They would need to take it out of contingency or out of fund balance.

Ms. Fox stated that it would be fund balance.

Commissioner Deitz asked Mr. Rhoden what other surprises they would have.

Mr. Rhoden stated that they were concluding the stormwater system installation. They were really not uncovering anymore conditions. This should be it because the repaving of the area east of the building should be the last of the scope.

General discussions were held.

Chairman McMahan stated that they had heard staff talk about taking the funds out of fund balance to make up the difference. They were already behind schedule and wanted to do this as quickly as possible. They did not have a lot of options.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting for consideration.*

(8) BILLBOARD LEASES: Mr. Adams stated that this was an item that was previously discussed at the last work session and was brought back to a regular board meeting. At that point, they had received information from Claude Dicks, President and General Manager of Allison's Outdoor Advertising, regarding proposed solutions and Allison's acceptance policy. Since this was new information, the Board decided to consume the information and bring the item back to the work session for further discussions.

The four solutions discussed with the Board previously were:

- Extend the lease or renegotiate the current lease with no restrictions
- Renegotiate the lease with restrictions similar to the current restrictions
- Sell the property
- Terminate the lease

After further research, he wanted to discuss the four solutions. He would not recommend selling any property located near the Emergency Management Center, as the billboards were located in key areas. If they ever wanted to move them, they could use the property. The property located in Sylva, he thought they would run into minimum lot size issues. He did not think selling was an option. Also, as he was having conversations with Mr. Dicks, he discovered that there were two more billboards that had not been a part of their conversation that was part of the Emergency Management Property.

From a staff standpoint, he did not see any value of leasing the billboards to anyone. The amount of money they were talking about \$2,200 per year was not worth the time and effort being put into deal with trying to decide what was appropriate content on the billboards. He would not recommend proceeding forward with leases.

If the Board wished to move forward with the leases, they would need to decide if they wanted a lease where they controlled the content with restrictions. His final recommendation would be if they chose to move in that direction, he would still recommend they terminate the lease and give a six months' notice. Then, Allison's would have six months to come back with an appropriate offer to keep the billboards. It was to Allison's benefit to continue the leases "as is", especially since they were paying \$50 per year for one of the billboards.

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought that was the point to take away. No matter what they decided they wanted to do as a Board, they needed to terminate the leases. That would at least put them in the six-month realm to decide if they wanted to have further discussions going forward.

Commissioner Woody asked if Ms. Baker thought that was appropriate?

Ms. Baker stated that she did. It would give them all of the options and it would start the time rather than waiting.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Luker stated that he agreed to let the leases run out.

Commissioner Mau stated that he did not have a problem cancelling the leases because they needed to be renegotiated. But then, get rid of the language and let Allison's manage them how they saw fit. If they took the language out, then staff would not have any additional time.

Chairman McMahan stated that when Ms. Baker presented a month ago, about it being on the county's property, even if Allison's managed the sign. Was there a way for them to put a disclaimer on the billboards?

Ms. Baker stated that she was sure they could, whether anyone saw it or it made a difference or not. That was the public forum discussion, which had to do with how close it was to the building, how closely associated was it with county property. Also, it was with how it was used. If they started giving it away to nonprofits for free space, then they would start to open it up to the public forum. But, if it was completely commercial, where they had the lease with Allison's receiving the revenue and not putting messages on there was what kept it from being a public forum and kept it commerce.

Mr. Adams stated that for future conversations, he would point out where the billboard was located near the Emergency Management Center. It was flat and near a storage yard they had currently. If the billboard was removed, he thought the county would be using the property for a public purpose.

Chairman McMahan stated that they had not received an actual proposal from Allison's. Maybe they go ahead and send notice they wanted to cancel the contract and let it expire in six months. That would place the burden on Allison's to reach out to the county. If the Board decided they wanted to continue to allow the billboards to be in existence on county property, the burden would be on Allison's to reach out to the county for the favorable language they all could agree with. They would have six months to work it out.

Mr. Adams stated that he mentioned one option would be to lease without restrictions, would they have to follow any other guidelines?

Ms. Baker stated they would have to follow anything that was the law, but unless the county placed restrictions, it would follow Allison's policies like any other billboard.

Mr. Adams stated that the only way he could come up with a fair price for the leases, the Board would have to authorize him to spend money to have someone come in and determine a fair price.

Commissioner Mau stated he would just want to know what Allison's was paying for a similar billboard in lease payments in the county.

Ms. Baker stated that they could do some research on that.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting for consideration.*

(9) NCACC GOALS: Mr. Adams stated that he provided the Board with a summary of the process for submitting goals and a copy of last year's goals.

(a) Last year, the goals were as follows:

- 1. Seek legislation, funding and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and underserved areas and residents of the state.
- 2. Seek additional revenue sources, including a statewide bond and lottery proceeds, to equitably address statewide public school and community college capital challenges.
- 3. Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction to all counties. Oppose efforts to divert to the state, fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams.
- 4. Support provision of state resources to ensure county ability to provide essential public health, behavioral health and social services, with specific consideration to the challenges of incarcerated persons, the continued county role in behavioral health governance and programs addressing substance use disorder, throughout Medicaid transformation.
- 5. Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under NC General Statute 115C-431(c) that allows a local school board to file suit against a county board of commissioners over appropriations to the local board of education's capital outlay fund.

(b) These were the top five, but there were other priorities under the following:

- Health and Human Services
- Public Education
- General Government
- Tax and Finance
- Justice and Public Safety
- Environment
- Agriculture

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought it was important to note that while the top five were very important goals, there were a lot of other goals listed under the subsections. At the Goals Conference, the top five were chosen with all 100 counties voting to rank. These really impacted people statewide.

If they put forth a goal, it would come under the Environment Committee. If they submitted the goal based on what Commissioner Woody had suggested, it would go through the Environment Committee, where it would be heard there. They would then vote to rank it in their list and it would be forwarded on to the Goals Committee and the Board of Directors before it went to the Goals Conference. It was a long, lengthy, very detailed involved process to get where they would eventually approve these at a Goals Conference.

Commissioner Woody stated that one thing she learned from being involved in the process, even if it was not one of the top five goals, if it was presented as a goal and accepted, if they, as individual Commissioners, would contact one of the legislators and cite this as one of the goals of the NCACC, it carried more weight. She thought that was important as they advocated for the local concerns.

Chairman McMahan stated that he heard staff at the Association say they used this for steering. They focused on the top five and devoted the majority of their efforts on the top five, but in their discussions with legislators, if something came up in another category, by having these approved goals, they could reference it as an important goal in a committee.

Mr. Adams stated if it was a goal of the Board to take over the erosion control, he would present it to the Board on Tuesday to vote to authorize the Chairman to submit for the county. It could be submitted by resolution or a letter from the Chairman representing the Board as a whole. Any goals they wanted to identify, he would write up and present it Tuesday. The letter then would be submitted to the Association.

Commissioner Mau stated that the Environment Goals from last year were written very generally, which he understood. Number one may be a model for what a goal would look like. It stated to seek legislation to restore county authority over solid waste management. They could possibly state "seek legislation to provide the opportunity for county authority over sediment erosion.

Mr. Adams asked if there were other goals they wanted to add. He had heard broadband, if they wanted to reiterate that. He would generalize those and submit them to the Board in that form.

Commissioner Woody stated that they could add the one about broadband as well, especially in light of Covid-19 closing the schools. It had really highlighted the lack of universal broadband in the county.

Chairman McMahan stated that he was totally in support of anything with broadband and he felt that was one of their number goals. There would be so many people that would advocate on behalf of that, not that it hurt to reiterate the goal, but he thought the uniqueness of the other goal was that they may be the only county to submit that goal. He thought everyone would be overwhelmingly in favor of broadband. He requested that Mr. Adams work up a letter to provide detail that someone on a committee would understand why this was their goal.

Informational item.

(10) MONUMENT ALTERATIONS: Chairman McMahan stated that Mr. Adams had been doing research about what potentially could be done. They were not dealing with something simple as it was a stone base and there were issues with what they could and could not do.

Mr. Adams stated that the research that had been done was that it was going to be better to cover rather than try and remove the flag. When dealing with the stone, they could do sandblasting, but from what he understood, it could not be deep letters. They may have to get into more cutting than sandblasting. Also, it depended on the thickness of what they were trying to remove as to how well they could remove it on stone.

Going back to the charge of removing the flag and the wording, the recommendation would be to cover it up with plaques. Maintenance looked at it and they had been researching the different types of plaques that could cover everything. He thought they had come up with a solution to do what had been directed by the Board.

Now, they were going through a process of what the language would be on the plaques. The Board had discussed identifying soldiers who died in the Civil War both Confederate and Union. That, along with covering up wording and the flag was as much direction as he had gotten at that point. He was now looking for direction from the Board about how they wished to proceed forward to come up with the details of language for the plaques. He thought there would be a lot of room on the plaque to cover the flag and also on a plaque that would go around the base.

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought this was a decision the Board needed to make. A lot of times, they asked committees to draft things, but he thought it may be easier for the Board to do this. He envisioned a large plaque over the flag that would contain a summary of the history of not only the county's involvement in the Civil War, but include the history of the monument as well. It would state when the county was formed and the Civil War was the first war the county fought in. It would list the names of the troops and particular points of history relevant to the Civil War and that time period.

It could state notable people or groups that served and highlight the fact that there were people that served in the Union Army. They could highlight the entire picture of the county's involvement from a southern and northern perspective. They could then tell the story of how in 1915 residents raised the money and the rededication that happened in 1996. They could paint a picture of both the history of the monument and the history of the county's Civil War involvement. If they wanted to put names on the plaques below, they would have enough room for that. Those were just his initial thoughts.

Commissioner Mau stated that he received an email indicating that the Chairman had met with some folks from reconcile Sylva. It was his understanding that at that meeting, relocation was discussed and was not necessarily off the board based on everyone's reaction to that meeting. If that was the case, he did not know why they were even talking about modifications.

Chairman McMahan stated that he did not mention that.

Commissioner Mau stated that he thought he would ask because their impression was that it was still a possibility, so he may want to clarify that with some of the people that were in attendance.

Chairman McMahan stated that the four individuals that were there questioned whether or not they had the authority to go in and alter the statue. He quoted what Ms. Baker had shared with them from the School of Government. Also, they asked why had they not done anything as of yet and he let them know it was on the agenda for that day.

They asked if they would relocate it and he stated that the same law they were using as justification for altering the statue said the only way they could ever relocate it would be to a site of equal prominence, which did not exist. At the end, he stated that his whole conversation with them was he thought there were other opportunities for further discussions about ways they could recognize and celebrate diversity and make the community a better community for neighbors working with neighbors. He thought they needed to be exploring those options instead of talking about the statue because it was not an issue any more. That was how he left it with them after about an hour of discussion.

Commissioner Woody stated that in that email, it did offer some suggestions of working for some reconciliation in the community with very specific things, which she thought was helpful. She wanted to explore how they could add a statement of unity emphasizing that now they were one nation.

Chairman McMahan stated that he agreed with that.

Commissioner Deitz stated that as far as he was concerned he would be satisfied with blank slate. General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams stated that they had several solutions they thought they could appropriately cover, leaving it blank or decoratively cover it so that it would look good and last a long time. Was there anything to be put on the plaques? If not, he could start going down the path of how to cover it up as quickly as possible.

Chairman McMahan stated that going back to the meeting he had with the four individuals, surprisingly enough, they objected to them altering the statue. They preferred they left it alone, which he thought was interesting since the Town of Sylva passed a resolution banning the display of the Confederate flag with that being the most prominent part.

Commissioner Mau stated that he heard a lot of people say why would they want to degradate their family member's tombstone, which was what a lot of people said it represented to them.

Chairman McMahan stated that they would continue to discuss it as a group. He and Commissioner Woody would attempt to put in writing some words to propose.

Commissioner Luker stated that he looked forward to what suggestions he would make for the plaque.

Informational item.

(11) OTHER BUSINESS: Commissioner Mau stated the legislature passed a law that schools were going to be funded at the same level regardless of enrollment.

Chairman McMahan stated that he was pleased to see that they were also paying for the meals. No kids had to pay now.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman