

**MINUTES OF A
BUDGET WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JUNE 01, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Work Session on June 01, 2021, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

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

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order. Darlene Fox, Finance Director was present for this meeting.

(1) RESCUE SQUADS: Chairman McMahan stated that he had requested Mr. Adams and Ms. Fox put together numbers with the continuation of the discussions they had been having regarding Emergency Services. They were looking to provide additional support to the fire departments with a fund set aside to help incentivize the membership. In doing that, they wanted to also make sure they did not forget the two rescue squads.

He had conversations with the Unit One Rescue Squad Chief and Mr. Adams had conversations with the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad. They had looked at the fire departments, but the rescue squads were also struggling. There was a need to make sure the folks at the rescue squads were getting the same level of opportunities as the fire side. He had requested that staff look to see if there were funds available and options for what the Board could do.

Mr. Adams stated this was going off the premise that both of the rescue squads would receive one full-time employee and they would receive some type of pay-per-call. This was similar to what was being requested for the fire departments. The Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad had come before the Board and requested help to fund an additional building regarding their needs. They also had an ongoing lawsuit, which had been settled.

They were continuing to have conversations regarding the property where they were proposing to locate a building. At that point, the rescue squad was looking at alternative solutions and would be in conversations over the next year about how and where the next facility should be located. The need for the facility was for response time. The current facility was located next to Blue Ridge School.

The funds for this in the amount of \$147,687 had been budgeted for three years and this money was being reserved at that point for that conversation. If and when the rescue squad came back to the Board to communicate facility needs, the county had committed to assist them. He did not believe they would be able to come back within the next fiscal year with a true plan to borrow money. They would have another year of this money being budgeted, but not being expended. These monies could be available to be reallocated elsewhere for a single year.

The potential costs associated with the two positions, which would be classified at the same grade as the Fire Service Coordinator position, would be \$108,597. He shared the actual call counts used to estimate how many people would show up per call. They believed \$12 per call with an average of five people per call would be approximately \$35,000. The overall cost would be approximately \$143,597. At that point, they still had \$147,687 allocated for debt service payment, which would be available for next year. When the rescue squad came back and asked for a facility, they would have to make up these costs elsewhere. The only other alternative would be to look at additional revenues or look to cut expenses.

Chairman McMahan stated he appreciated the work of staff to put this together. It met exactly what he had requested. Personally, he felt comfortable utilizing the existing fund that had been set aside for rescue services to pay for this expense. The funds were part of an overall budget increase the Board adopted and stated the money would be set aside for emergency services. While it would not be utilized immediately for a rescue squad building payment, it was still in the same thought process as it would be going toward providing emergency service response in the communities. They would be keeping with what they said when they adopted that for the budget cycle previously.

He felt hopeful that Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad would move forward with a building, but they had some challenges. They were still trying to think about what they wanted in the future and what would be best for their organization. He was committed 100% to helping them as he was a few years ago when they signed the letter of intent in support of them. He would be willing to do the same in the future. This would give them an opportunity to have time to be thoughtful and work through the planning stage to come up with a good plan.

Commissioner Jones stated he was in agreement also. On Friday, he and Mr. Adams had a taste of the lack of response time in Cashiers with traffic. The location of the new facility would be strategically closer to Sapphire, 107 South and 64 West. That was important because there was not a way for emergency vehicles could get through the traffic. He thought it was important to show support.

Commissioner Woody stated that the annual rescue calls were steady, but really increased in 2020. She thought that was a reflection of the population increase and people staying there as opposed to being seasonal.

Chairman McMahan stated that one of the service areas these individuals with the rescue squads provided was technical, which required an extensive amount of training, prep and maintenance. They were overloaded like everyone else trying to find ways to continue to provide the service, which was why they were reaching out for help.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Move forward to include this request in the budget.*

(2) GENERAL BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:

(a) Mr. Adams stated that regarding the question Commissioner Woody had about how many Jackson County families were served by Habitat for Humanity, all the noted families served on the application were in Jackson County.

Informational item.

(b) Mr. Adams noted an item in the proposed budget on page 21: “Engineered Option 30% of Fee Subject to Change”. This was the only other fee schedule change that was being proposed. The basis of what the Health Department was attempting to do was that the \$95 did not appropriately reflect the amount of time they spent on those types of permits. They were allowed to charge up to 30% of the cumulative total of the fees for that type of process. This was also approved by the Health Department Board.

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(c) Mr. Adams provided the Board with an updated Summary of Costs. The general fund proposal was \$71,666,678, which was a look at all of the proposed funds and costs. When they were all added up, it appeared that there was a \$95,457,640 budget being proposed, but that was not the case because there were monies that transferred between the funds, such as the Solid Waste Fund. In the actual total proposed budget, they had to remove the transfers.

An article was put out by Smoky Mountain News where the transfers were not appropriately reflected, which overinflated the bottom total budget amount. It was reported in the news that the budget increased from the last budget by 17.5%, which was not correct. There was a 7.69% difference in the overall budget.

Ms. Fox stated that the transfers included general fund transfers to other funds. The amount was \$8,200,623, which included the transfers to school capital reserve, the county's capital reserve fund, debt payments, clean water, real property revaluation and emergency telephone. That number was listed as inter-fund transfers.

The self-insurance fund was expensed from the other funds and was budgeted separately. Those numbers were in two places, so they had to be deducted also, which was \$7,475,994. The debt payment on SCC Health Sciences Building was transferred from the school capital reserve fund to the debt service fund, which was an additional \$838,138.

Mr. Adams stated that they wanted to provide this information to the Board and newspapers.

Commissioner Woody stated that the budget, without duplication was \$78,942,885, was that correct?

Mr. Adams stated that was correct. Also, when people talked to them about property taxes, that was \$71,666,678, because the other funds had different potential revenue sources.

Commissioner Jones stated that the sales tax for school capital reserve fund last budget was \$427,000 and this budget was \$1,000,088. There was a piece of the budget that looked skewed and that was one of those areas.

Ms. Fox stated that was correct, the sales tax had increased.

Chairman McMahan stated later that day, they would hold a formal public hearing to give them a chance to hear comments from the general public. Afterwards, staff would work to put the budget in order.

Mr. Adams stated that it was proposed that the budget be adopted on June 15th at the 1:00 p.m. meeting. There was a regularly scheduled work session on June 8th.

Commissioner Jones requested Mr. Adams go over the percent situation before the public had a chance to give comment.

Commissioner Woody expressed her appreciation for the work staff had done.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Woody moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman