

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
AUGUST 17, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on August 17, 2021, 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
Mark Jones, Commissioner
Tom Stribling, 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) **PLAQUE PRESENTATIONS**: Chairman McMahan stated that it was always an honor and a privilege to recognize former County Commissioners. The county identified all former County Commissioners with a plaque displayed in the board room. The county had a great legacy of good public servants that worked hard and worked together in cooperation, in a nonpartisan way, to support so many important issues and aspects of county government.

At that time, they had plaques to unveil for former District Three Commissioner Ron Mau, who served from 2016 to 2020 and former District Four Commissioner Mickey Luker, who served from 2016 to 2020, who were in attendance. Also, they unveiled an updated plaque for former District One Commissioner Charles Elders, who served from 1994 to 1998 and from 2010 to 2018, who was unable to attend.

He requested that Mr. Adams unveil each plaque.

Former Commissioner Luker stated it was a great honor to serve the citizens of Jackson County.

(2) **PROCLAMATION: FIREFIGHTER, RESCUE SQUAD AND FIRST RESPONDER WEEK**: Commissioner Jones read a Proclamation declaring September 5th – 11th as Firefighter, Rescue Squad and First Responder Week. Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **PROCLAMATION: OPIOID AWARENESS MONTH**: Commissioner Stribling thanked Sheriff Hall and all the Deputies for all the hard work they had accomplished in the last few weeks, it meant a lot. He read a Proclamation declaring September as Opioid Awareness Month. Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **AGENDA**: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(5) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of August 3, 2021, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(6) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: None.

(7) COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

(a) Commissioner Woody stated that she had the privilege of representing the county at the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Convention in Wilmington. She went to some very good workshops and there was a lot of information provided. They discussed the opioid settlement money that was coming and she commended Ms. Baker for diligently keeping them up to speed on that information.

Also, the convention was an opportunity to bring people together in a microcosm of the state. There was a lot of representation of different ethnicities, races, areas of the state and political persuasions. Everyone was unified in the desire to serve the people of the state and of their counties. She was pleased to participate and represent the Board.

(b) Commissioner Jones thanked all the folks that picked up trash on the 13th and 14th with “Cleaning Up the Mountains”. On the way to the meeting, he saw an improvement in the county and he commended all of the volunteers.

(c) Commissioner Stribling thanked Chip Hall, the Deputies, the Rescue Squad, Qualla and Sylva Fire Departments and everyone involved with what was thought to be a person in the river on Monday. Thankfully, it ended up not being someone. He had never seen the river as high in his 20 years of living there. He thanked all of them for their hard work and support.

(8) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: Mr. Adams reported:

(a) **July 2021 Zoning and Building Permits:** He provided a report that listed the zoning district (if applicable), the owner/business name, the work permitted and the location of the project. The Planning Department issued one commercial zoning permit and one renovation/addition zoning permit in July. Code Enforcement issued one commercial permit and three renovation/addition permits in July.

(b) **2020 Census:** The 2020 Census information was starting to be released. The NC State Demography Office and the US Census Office would be organizing the data over the next couple of months. The Planning Department would also be collecting and organizing the data. A comprehensive presentation would be provided to the Board at the September 14th work session.

(c) **Compensation Study:** Evergreen Solutions, LLC had been selected to conduct the county’s compensation study. The goal was to have recommendations to the Board of Commissioners by December, 2021. Evergreen Solutions, LLC was a firm based out of Florida with extensive national experience. They also had extensive experience in North Carolina, including Buncombe, Haywood and Transylvania Counties.

(d) **Citizens Academy:** The county received ten applications for the citizen’s academy, but they needed additional participants. He extended the deadline for applications until September 2nd. The goal was to have a minimum of 20 participants.

(e) Construction Projects:

- **Animal Rescue Center/Green Energy Park:** The project was 25% complete through July. Rain caused significant delays in completing items such as retaining walls, storm sewer and walking paths. Other delays were related to material delivery. The metal building package was not scheduled to be delivered until October or November. These items were pushing the potential substantial completion to be in March or April, 2022, which was weather and material dependent.
- **The Fairview Concession Stand:** The project was out to bid and a pre-bid meeting would be held onsite on August 24th at 3:00 p.m. Bids would be due by 11:00 a.m. on September 15th at the Cullowhee Recreation Center.
- **Justice Center Administration Building:** The Request for Qualifications for Architectural Services had been issued. Interested firms had until 5:00 p.m. on September 3rd to submit their responses.

Commissioner Jones asked when Evergreen would be finished with the Salary Study?

Mr. Adams stated that their goal was to have recommendations to the Board in December with an implementation timeline of hopefully sometime in January.

(9) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC: None.

(10) CONSENT AGENDA:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for July, 2021 and one Budget Ordinance Amendment for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for July, 2021, for approval.

(c) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Settlement Report for July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 for approval.

Motion: *Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) ARPA GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE: Ms. Fox stated this was for the funds from the American Rescue Act of 2021. This would appropriate a budget for those funds. The total Project amount would be \$8,534,441 and the revenues would be from CSLRF Funds.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the ARPA Grant Project Ordinance, as presented. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion.*

Discussion:

Commissioner Jones asked if items 1-5 listed on the document were listed by priority or were they all equal?

Ms. Fox stated they were all equal.

Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(12) CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE – SCHOOL SAFETY PROJECT: Ms. Fox stated the amount for the project was \$7,409,447 and the revenues were anticipated from the School Capital Reserve Fund 19 for \$3,400,000 and from the School Capital Reserve Fund 21 for \$4,009,447.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Capital Project Ordinance – School Safety Project, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(13) CAPITAL RESERVE RESOLUTION R21-28: Ms. Fox stated the resolution authorized the appropriation of the funds from the School Capital Reserve Fund 19 in the amount of \$3,400,000 and from the School Capital Reserve Fund 21 in the amount of \$4,009,447. Also, it authorized the transfer of \$7,409,447 from the Capital Reserve Fund to the Capital Project Fund.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Capital Reserve Resolution R21-28, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) SHERIFF'S OFFICE SERVICE SIDEARM: Sheriff Chip Hall requested authorization, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 20-187.2, to present a service sidearm to Stephen Kim Hooper, who recently retired. The Sheriff recommended that the price for the sidearm be set at \$1.00. It was recommended that the firearm be declared surplus and the Sheriff be authorized to present the sidearm, as requested. In addition, the Sheriff should be directed to provide the serial numbers and descriptions of the weapon to the Finance Director for removal from the fixed asset inventory and replace with a new sidearm at no cost to the county.

The Board of Commissioners provided \$5.00 to the Sheriff for the purchase of the sidearm.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to declare the sidearm surplus for \$5.00 and authorized the Sheriff to present it as requested. The Sheriff was directed to provide the serial number and description of the sidearm to the Finance Director and replace the sidearm at no cost to the county. Commissioner Woody seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(15) SHERIFF'S OFFICE CANINE RETIREMENT: Sheriff Hall stated that Jax, a Sheriff's Office canine, ended his career with the Sheriff's Office on May 11th. Previous discussions were made in reference to his retirement and what to do with him since he would no longer be fit to continue as a canine law enforcement officer, due to continuing health concerns.

He requested for control of the canine to be placed with the handler, Deputy Sergeant Megan Rhinehart. Sergeant Rhinehart had been an excellent handler and had cared for Jax day in and day out. In previous instances of retired law enforcement canines with the Sheriff's Office, all of those canines were transferred to their owners at no cost. He found that to be an excellent solution to not burden Sergeant Rhinehart and to show respect for the dedication the canine officer had given.

Motion: *Commissioner Woody moved to accept the request by the Sheriff, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(16) SHERIFF'S UPDATE: Sheriff Hall noted that as Commissioner Stribling stated earlier, yesterday they had a large number of volunteers and public safety officials on the river. They put a valiant effort into trying to make sure there was no one in the river. He appreciated their efforts. There was a large presence and a large number of public safety officials, not only from Jackson County, but also from EBCI, Mission Hospital sent a helicopter and NC Highway Patrol sent personnel. There were a lot of resources to make every effort to make sure no one was in the river.

Also, he wanted to give an update on the early water releases from Duke Energy. They were able to cut the releases in half that day, so the river had gone down about 18 inches from last night until that morning. They were hopeful that the early releases would allow storage at the Duke Energy facilities with all the rain headed that way.

He knew that Todd Dillard, Emergency Management Director, would have been at the meeting to update the Board, but the State Office of Emergency Management activated an Urban Search and Rescue and Swift Water Rescue Team. They were staging at WCU in case anything developed from the approaching storm.

Informational item.

(17) REPORT TO THE CITIZENS: Mr. Adams stated that Matthew Wilson was his intern from Western Carolina University. He had requested that professors at Appalachian State and Western Carolina identify excellent students who hoped to be in the management field one day. He received recommendations from WCU and the MPA Program for Mr. Wilson and he found that Mr. Wilson was the best of the applicants.

He started the internship program two years ago and the benefits were twofold. One was that as a manager, he tried to contribute back to his profession and develop future managers, not only in the county, but in the state. In return, they tried to develop a useable, user friendly Report to the Citizens.

For the last couple of years, interns would come in and visit the departments and with the approval of the departments, put together a Report to the Citizens. He believed this was a valuable resource to the community. He had received a lot of positive feedback from the departments. Each time Mr. Wilson visited the departments, he prepared by reading information about the operations. He went into the departments with questions and showed respect to Department Heads and helped produce a good product for the county.

Mr. Wilson stated that he was an MPA student at WCU and he was given the great opportunity to prepare the Third Annual Edition of the Report to the Citizens, which would seek to inform the citizens of the county government services and increase transparency. He presented a condensed version of the report with several departments featured. He did enjoy his experiences with all of the departments he met with and admired all of the work they did for the people of the county.

(a) The report provided:

- A new cover photo of the Library, which was provided to him by Nick Breedlove, TDA Director.
- In the Letter from the County Manager, he added his information and a new photo, also provide by Mr. Breedlove.
- The Table of Contents page was broken down by function. He noted that there were two new additions to the report: Tourism Development Authority under Economic Development and the Sheriff's Office.
- The Organizational Flow Chart remained the same, with enhanced resolution to be more readable.
- He updated the Board of Commissioners photo to include the two newest Commissioners. The photo was "clickable" to redirect to the Commissioners page on the county website for more information.
- The Board of Commissioners Mission Statement remained the same.

(b) Economic Development: He emphasized the important work that Tiffany Henry, Economic Development Director did for the county and the department's goals. He also emphasized the county's attractiveness as both a tourist destination and as a place where people wanted to work. One of Economic Development's focuses was to support small businesses. He featured the various partners they worked with in order to achieve that goal.

- Explore Jackson County, NC Map.
- Culture and history.
- Outdoor Adventures
- Buy Local Campaign

(c) Department of Public Health section included:

- Departmental Goals for FY2021-2022
- Environmental Health – Animal Shelter Statistics
- Clinical Services: Included a visual breakdown of services.
- Covid-19 and vaccines.
- Health Education with added visual aids.
- Safe Routes to School: encouraged school aged children to bicycle to and from school.
- Smart Start Program
- Nutrition Services
- Diabetes Self-Management and Education Support

(d) Sheriff's Office section included: This was a newly added section. He thanked Major Queen for helping him get this section completed. He shared the various subdivisions of the Sheriff's Office:

- Mission Statement
- Departmental Goals for FY 2021-2022
- Administration
- Patrol
- Investigations
- Civil Process
- Detention
- Courts/Justice Center Security
- School Resource Officers (SROs)
- Shop with a Cop

- Crime Prevention and Awareness
- (e) Parks and Recreation Department section included:
 - Mission Statement
 - Departmental Goals for FY 2021-2022
 - Recreation Centers
 - Updated Fee Schedule
 - Parks and Picnic Shelters
 - Community Pools
 - Future Aquatic Center
 - Fun 4 Kids Day Camp
 - British Soccer Camp
 - Contact Information

Mr. Wilson thanked the Board of Commissioners and Mr. Adams for allowing him the opportunity to intern at the county. The numerous Department Heads and County Employees he had worked with deserved a special “thank you” as well. His experiences at the county had left a deep impression on him. The numerous lessons would serve him well as he was soon to begin what he hoped to be a long and successful career in public service.

Commissioner Stribling stated that he thought he did a great job.

Commissioner Woody stated that she had read three of these reports, but this edition was far and away the most impressive. The writing was very well done and very user friendly. The pictures he used enhanced the content and she could not say enough about how well done it was. As a representative of the county, she would be so proud to show this to anyone.

Chairman McMahan stated that Mr. Wilson had done a great job. It had been a tremendous pleasure and honor to have him work at the county and to serve. When he saw him, he was always working hard and it showed with the level of work he had done, it was impressive.

Commissioner Deitz thanked Mr. Wilson for all he had done, the report was great. He knew he would do well in the future. He was very articulate and presented himself very well, which would pay off down the road.

Chairman McMahan noted what an excellent report this was and that the Board was extremely pleased with it.

Motion: *Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the third annual Report to the Citizens, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(18) FINAL BID FOR TRACT 1 SOAPSTONE DRIVE: Ms. Baker stated that on June 1st, the Board approved the initial bid from Agrevive, Inc. of \$4,079.40 for Tract 1, Soapstone Drive, containing 5.65 acres (PIN #7632-32-6502). The offer was upset and the final bid was for \$8,000.00 from Michael Harris. This had been advertised for ten days with no further upset bids. She requested approval of the final bid, which was \$8,000.00.

Motion: *Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the offer for the final bid of \$8,000.00 from Michael Harris, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(19) GLENVILLE-CASHIERS RESCUE SQUAD – RESCUE SERVICES COORDINATOR POSITION

Mr. Adams stated that this was an item from the work session. The Board approved two new full-time positions for the rescue squads. They received a request from Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad to receive the funds directly so that they could employ this position, in lieu of this being a county position. They had the capability to do this since the county contracted with them to provide EMS services, so they already had payroll services set up.

***Motion:** Commissioner Jones moved to approve the request from Glenville-Cashiers, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(20) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Stribling moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman