

**MINUTES OF A  
WORK SESSION  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
JULY 12, 2022**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on July 12, 2022, 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 (Via Zoom)
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney (Via Zoom)
Mark Jones, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Tom Stribling, Commissioner (Via Phone)	
Gayle Woody, Commissioner	

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) **CITIZENS ACADEMY**: Kerri Tucker, Executive Assistant to the County Manager, was present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated that they were looking to move forward and reinstitute the Citizens Academy. They would be opening the application process and were hopeful to get citizens interested in the program.

Ms. Tucker stated the Citizens Academy would be an eight-week course beginning on Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup> and ending on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. The sessions would be held at various county locations with each session beginning with a meal at 5:00 p.m. with presentations to follow at 5:30 p.m.

Participants would have a great opportunity to familiarize themselves with the county's day to day operations. Applications would be due by August 11<sup>th</sup> and participants would be notified on September 1<sup>st</sup>. Applications would be available on the county website.

Chairman McMahan stated that the academy was put on pause during Covid, but they were glad to have the opportunity to start back. He thought it had been a huge success and he thanked Mr. Adams for starting the program. It had been a welcome in the community to help educate people about government.

*Informational item.*

(2) **NC 107 BUSINESS RELOCATION GRANT PROGRAM**: Tiffany Henry, Economic Development Director and Julie Donaldson, Jackson County Chamber Executive Director, were present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated that this was a proposed program to provide assistance for relocation of businesses being impacted by the NC-107 project.

Ms. Henry stated that NCDOT was moving forward with the R-5600 road project, which would revise the Highway 107 corridor. Together with the Town of Sylva, the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, SCC's Small Business Center, WCU's Small Business Center and Technology Development Center, Southwestern Commission and various County Departments, they had been working to ensure that the businesses impacted would have access to the resources they needed.

At least 35 businesses would need to relocate as a result of this project. They wanted these businesses to know they supported them and wanted the businesses to stay in the county. On behalf of the county, in partnership with the County Economic Development Office and the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, they requested to establish the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce NC 107 Business Relocation Grant Program.

Grant funds would be used for those businesses required to relocate due to the R-5600 project to offset costs not covered to support them in their relocation efforts. The grant would be in the amount of \$50,000.00 to the Jackson Chamber of Commerce for them to administer. Each business would be eligible for up to \$1,000.00. The funds would come from the Economic Development Fund.

Mr. Adams stated this was a good opportunity to move forward and work with the multiple businesses that would be impacted. This program could be distinguished from others. He was not aware of another DOT project that had such a significant impact on multiple operations. He believed this warranted a potential special program.

General discussions were held.

Ms. Baker stated that the funds would come from the Economic Development Fund. These were the funds discussed previously with the All In Jackson Fund that had specific requirements. She and Ms. Henry spoke with a representative at the Department of Commerce and learned they did now have flexibility with the money, but they needed to stay within close parameters. She and Ms. Henry believed that keeping jobs in the county, by supporting businesses relocating, was the closest they would get to the intention of the funds. This was why they felt comfortable to recommend this project.

Also, the county could not implement the program, but the Chamber could do this. The Chamber had a small staff and had their own grant program, so they would have to extend their part-time staff to be able to do this. Some of the funds may go to the Chamber in administrative funds to be able to administer the program. She felt these were two important points for the Board to know before they approved and moved forward with the program.

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams stated that this started when the county was approached by businesses requesting assistance. When relocating, businesses had permitting fees from the town or from Code Enforcement. The county had a long-standing policy to not release solid waste or building permit fees. The grant program would be a way to help with those types of expenses without altering the way the county had to charge for services.

Ms. Henry stated that they wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page as far as the county and town on how they could help these businesses. The Chamber would work with their grant committee on an application for businesses to apply and would reach out to the businesses that would need to relocate.

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

**(3) ARCHITECT FOR RECREATION PROJECTS:** Rusty Ellis, Parks and Recreation Director, was present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated the county went out for Requests for Qualifications of architectural services regrading two parks. One was the Qualla-Whittier Park, which they were waiting on the results from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant application. The second was to start the approved Recreation Master Plan for Cashiers, which included the removal of the pool and the build out of a splash pad.

During the budget process, there was favorable feedback from the Board to move forward with the removal of the pool and the build out of a splash pad. The response received was from Equinox and they would look to move forward with a separate contract for each of the two projects.

Mr. Ellis stated that Equinox had been working with the county since 1996. Some projects within the county included:

- Judaculla Rock Restoration Program
- Savannah Park
- Cashiers Recreation Master Plan
- Dillsboro Heritage Park Plan
- Ramble Greenway Masterplan Implementation
- Bridge Park
- Scotts Watershed Plan
- Dillsboro Shoreline Restoration Plan

He, along with Michael Hopkins, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director and Eric Farmer, Cashiers Glenville Recreation Center Site Manager, met with the Cashiers Community Council to let them know the process and that they were moving forward upon the Board's approval. The council was in agreement to start with Phase One of the plan. On the Qualla-Whittier Park, they should hear about the results of the PARTF Grant in October or November.

Mr. Adams stated that the Board approved the budget that included the architectural cost associated with the splash pad. They would need a consensus from the Board to move forward and then they would bring the contract for the splash pad back to the Board. Also, they planned to bring a contract to the Board in October when they found out the status of the PARTF Grant for the Qualla-Whittier Park.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he thought a splash pad would be a great idea for Sylva also. He asked Mr. Ellis about the status of a skate park?

Mr. Ellis stated that they were still trying to find property and they were working with the Town of Sylva.

General discussions were held.

**Consensus:** *Move forward with the Cashiers Recreation Master Plan Splash Pad project and bring a contract to the Board, as requested.*

**(4) CENTER FOR DOMESTIC PEACE LEASE:** Ms. Baker stated that REACH of Macon County ended ten-years of providing service to Jackson County for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault as of July 1<sup>st</sup>. A couple of years ago, REACH passed the Domestic Violence Services to the Center for Domestic Peace (CDP) and were sharing office space with them until July 1<sup>st</sup> when they handed over the Sexual Assault Services and Human Trafficking Services to CDP.

REACH of Macon County sent a letter terminating their interest in the lease as of this time, since it was no longer needed. CDP wished to continue their office space at this location in a county building just below the Library. Since it would be a lease to a nonprofit, it could be for a longer term than one year. This lease was proposed to be for three years and nine months to get it back to a June 30<sup>th</sup> end date in a fiscal year. The lease would not begin until October 1<sup>st</sup> since there was a 30-day notice requirement.

If the Board decided to move forward and grant this lease to CDP, they could call for a notice to be published in the newspaper. After 30 days had passed, the Board could then take action. Under the County Manager's authority, Mr. Adams had signed a short-term lease from July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> to allow time for this lease to move forward.

Mr. Adams stated that if all worked out appropriately, the three-year lease would work out correctly for CDP to have a new facility to move into.

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

**(5) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER ARCHITECT CONTRACT:** Mr. Adams presented a proposal from Clarknexsen for the Center for Domestic Peace. Mountain Projects agreed to donate property on Plum Street for this project. The proposal was based on the preliminary site layout discussed with a new building that would serve as the location for domestic violence victims and would be approximately 7,000 square feet. The construction budget and construction contingency were approximately \$3.5 million.

The budget for the project was \$4,098,995 with an additional \$125,000 for planning and project administration for a total budget was \$4,223,995. The county received a \$2,111,998 grant from Dogwood. The 50% match of \$2,111,998 would come from county funds. It was decided to use the savings from ARPA in order to fund the match.

He presented the proposed contact schedule:

- Programming 45 days
- Schematic Design 60 days
- Design Development 60 days
- Construction documents 90 days
- Bidding and contract preparations 30 days
- Construction 300 days

The proposed fee was \$330,000 over the life of the project with an estimated actual construction cost of \$3,500,000. He presented the AIA contract for the Board's consideration. The county did go through a Request for Qualifications process and Clarknexsen was chosen to be the architectural firm for the project.

They had until November 2025 to complete this project on the Dogwood Grant timeline. The Dogwood Grant had been approved and the county dollars had also been approved. The next step after approval of the contract would be moving forward with the planning phase of the project.

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

**(6) 116 CENTRAL STREET PROPERTY:** Mr. Adams stated that the county owned property located at 116 Central Street, which had been vacant since the TDA moved locations. He had some potential county uses for the property, but they did not work out. He had been approached by a nonprofit and private businesses interested in the property. It was a small space of less than 800 square feet and would be difficult for the county to utilize.

He did believe it was an important property and if they decided to lease it out, they would do so to an appropriate party as it was a main corridor coming into Sylva. He asked the Commissioners to think about this property and let him know if they had ideas.

*Informational item.*

**(7) OTHER BUSINESS:**

**(a)** Commissioner Woody stated that she attended the Seeds and Soil Conference that WCU Chancellor Dr. Kelli Brown held at WCU in June. It was for nonprofits about how they interacted in the community and it provided an opportunity for them to network. There was a panel including WCU Professors and nonprofit members that worked together to provide internships and expert research. It was a wonderful event.

*Informational item.*

**(b)** Commissioner Woody stated that she learned that Dr. Albert Kopak, who worked with WCU's Criminal Justice Program, recently joined the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) as a research scientist specializing in substance use and criminal justice issues. Dr. Kopak had been collaborating with the Jackson County Sheriff's Office for the past few years to document the needs of people who used drugs and had been admitted to the detention center.

As an engaged county resident, with information related to potentially effective program options, he would be willing to share his local and current research with the Board. She requested to invite Dr. Kopak to an upcoming work session to share what he had found through his research. This may give the Board a start to look at how they could be most effective in using the opioid funds.

*Informational item.*

(c) Commissioner Deitz stated that he recalled that when he came on the Board there was some controversy about the fireworks and they did not have fireworks at that time. As a Board, they decided it was important to have fireworks for the community. It was amazing how many people came out for the fireworks show on July 4<sup>th</sup>. It made him feel good that they were doing something that people were taking advantage of to enjoy.

Chairman McMahan noted that they would also be doing the holiday fireworks show again in December in downtown Sylva.

*Informational item.*

There being no further business, Commissioner Deitz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman