

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JULY 13, 2021**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on July 13, 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
Kerri Tucker, Executive Assistant to County Manager

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) PEDESTRIAN AND GREENWAY PLAN: Michael Poston, Planning Director and Kristy Carter of Transportation Planning and Design, Inc., were present for this item.

Mr. Poston stated that a few years ago, a request was made to the Board to apply for a grant with DOT to allow the county to enter into a 70/30 cost-share pedestrian plan. The grant was awarded to the county with DOT managing the grant funds and the process. DOT assigned TPD and Ms. Carter to assist the county with the grant.

Ms. Cater presented: Jackson Walks:

(a) Plan Purpose:

- Where do people want to go by foot? Identify the key location that the county pedestrians want to go.
- How do they connect those places? Identify the facilities and standards to connect key locations.
- How do they build the network? Identify priority projects, costs and funding opportunities.
- How do they build a pedestrian friendly county? Identify programs and policies to promote walking.

(b) Goals:

- Improve safety for all.
- Create a prioritized list of projects.
- Prioritize connections of schools and colleges.
- Promote inclusiveness and equity.
- Provide opportunities for physical activity and improved health.

(c) Why this plan?

- A vision for pedestrian connectivity.
- Positions the county for future funding.
- Supports local multimodal goals.
- Cost Share and Betterment.

(d) Pedestrian planning at the county scale: Most counties do not plan at this level. Jackson County was special. Urban areas with no municipalities (441, Cullowhee, Cashiers).

- (e) Project Development Process:
 - Survey and public meetings
 - Potential projects
 - Field work and data / local knowledge and context
 - Initial project list
 - Survey / public meetings
 - Final project list
- (f) Engagement Activities:
 - Most virtual
 - Two project surveys
 - Five steering committee meetings
 - 12 focus group meetings
 - Engagement with county Greenway Committee
- (g) Survey #1:
 - Most participants currently walk for recreation and fitness.
 - People use Greenways more often if they were more connected.
 - If it was more convenient or felt safer, respondents of the survey would like to walk more for recreation and socialization.
 - 10% said they had physical limitations that made walking difficult.
 - People also desired: lighting, enhanced crosswalks, audible signals, improved ped signage, flat trails with benches, accessible parking, restrooms, landscaping, trees and separation from traffic.
- (h) Focus group conversations: NAACP, Here, Transit, WCU, Town of Sylva, NCDOT, Department on Aging, The Community Table and more.
- (i) Survey #2:
 - 429 ranking total.
 - Recommended segments were nice, but crossings were important.
 - Connections and access were critical: schools, recreation sites.
 - All perspectives.
- (j) Planning considerations:
 - Nodes of pedestrian activity / urban areas.
 - All ideas captured; top ideas prioritized.
 - Crossing prioritized with segments.
- (k) Project Development Process:
 - First Round: 140 plan projects; 53 community lines; 457 location specific comments.
 - Remove duplicates and refine: 120 projects.
 - Steering committee and field work: 52 presented, 15 added after field work.
 - Prioritization grouping: 67 projects, 10 projects for cutsheet development.
- (l) Prioritization Step 1:
 - Safety: 15 points
 - Connectivity/Accessibility: 20 points
 - Feasibility: 25 points
 - Public feedback: 20 points
 - Equity: 20 points
- (m) Prioritization Step 2:
 - Geographic spread (two projects per region).
 - One sidewalk project, one non-sidewalk project.

(n) Total projects:

- 122 linear projects: 10 priority, 55 secondary, 57 additional.
- 34 crossing projects.

(o) Top Ten: US 441 Westside Sidewalk, Smokey Mountain Elementary Connector (Phase 1), Mark Watson Park to Dillsboro Road Sidepath, Mill Street Sidewalk Gaps, Webster Road Sidewalk Gaps, Buchanan Loop Connector, Campus Sidewalk Gaps Central Drive, Cullowhee Valley School to N. Country Club Road, Cashiers Crossroad Sidewalk I (Wendy's to Crossroads), Crossroads Sidewalk to United Community Bank.

(p) Life cycle of an active transportation project:

- Master Planning.
- NCDOT: Prioritization and programming and local feasibility planning.
- Construction design.
- Site control/ROW.
- Funding sources, operations and maintenance plan, design features
- Permitting.
- Construction documents.
- Construction bidding.
- Construction.
- Maintenance and programming.

(q) Other recommendations:

- Transit improvements.
- Programming:
 - 5E: education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering, evaluation.
 - Safe routes to school.
 - Partnerships.
- Pocket parks: places for kids.
- Parks with trails in rural areas: geographic equity.

(r) Policy recommendations:

- Sidewalk requirements with development.
- Incentive thresholds for trails.
- Pedestrian paths from parking areas.
- Sign regulations.
- Key pedestrian streets.
- Sidewalk acceptance.
- Ramp construction and sidewalk checklists.
- Grievance procedure.
- Maintenance programs.

Mr. Poston stated that they would request that the Board to consider formal adoption of the plan to help close out the grant funding, which would be ending in the next few months.

Mr. Adams stated that they would follow up regarding eventually adopting the plan. A link would be created online to view the full 150-page plan. He encouraged everyone to review the details of what had been presented. He noted that the plan being presented could be funded in multiple ways.

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(2) MEDICAID TRANSFORMATION AND VAYA UPDATES: Shelley Foreman, Vaya Health Community Relations Regional Director was present for this item.

Ms. Foreman presented: Medicaid Transformation Overview:

(a) Who and what was Vaya Health: Local government agency that manages publicly-funded services and supports for individuals facing challenges with MHSUIDD needs in a 23-county “catchment area” of WNC.

They were a local political subdivision of the state of North Carolina originally known as an “area authority” and now referred to as a “local management entity/managed care organization” (LME/MCO).

(b) Three distinct health plans:

- A MH, SU and IDD health plan for individuals who have a qualifying type of Medicaid based in one of the 22 counties. They managed the plan under a contract with the NC Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to the NC 1915(b) Medicaid Waiver.
- A MH, SU and IDD health plan for eligible individuals who were uninsured or underinsured. Because this plan was supported with state, local and federal block grant funds (not Medicaid), there was no entitlement to these services and funding was limited.
- A home and community based services and supports health plan for individuals with I/DD. This plan was pursuant to the NC 1915(c) “Innovations” Waiver.

(c) House Bill 403-Medicaid Managed Care:

- Added Secretary’s concept of BH/IDD Tailored Plans that would cover integrated physical health, pharmacy, BH and IDD services for complex, high-risk population.
- Added mild to moderate BH population to scope of Standard Plans – list of services included inpatient, OPT, crisis and some SUD – overlap with enhanced services.
- Established assessment and transition process for members moving between plans.
- Excluded some Medicaid benefits from Standard and Tailored Plans.
- Established a Tribal option for Enrolled Members of the EBCI / Federally Recognized Tribes.

(d) Goals of Medicaid Transformation:

- Deliver whole-person care.
- Unite communities to address member needs and deploy cost-effective solutions.
- Transition to provider-based care management at site of care.
- Improve member experience.
- Reduce provider administrative burden.
- Support a healthier North Carolina.
- Address unique needs of historically marginalized populations.

(e) Prepaid Health Plans: Managed care plans, which were called Prepaid Health Plans (PHPs) in North Carolina, would be paid capitated payments by DHHS to manage the care of eligible Medicaid and NC Health Choice beneficiaries. There would be three types of PHPs:

- Standard plans
- Tailored plans
- Tribal options

(f) Statewide Standard Plans:

- Ameri-Health Caritas North Carolina, Inc.
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina
- UnitedHealthcare of North Carolina, Inc.
- WellCare of North Carolina, Inc.
- Open Enrollment: March 15 – May 14, 2021
- May 15th NC would auto enroll members who had not chosen a plan
- Grace period for plan changes by members

- (g) Jackson County by the numbers:
 - 9,008 current Medicaid eligible residents
 - 8, 174 Estimated Medicaid members moving to Standard Plans in July
 - 834 estimated Medicaid members staying with Vaya after July Standard Plan launch
- (h) Vaya RFA Win Themes:
 - A Win Theme was the reason why Vaya should be awarded the RFA.
 - Should convince potential customers (DHHS) that they would meet the RFA deliverables.
 - Included proof points that differentiated Vaya from competitors.
 - Overall theme: Proven results and visionary leadership.
 - Improving member experience and outcomes.
 - Embracing and promoting integrated, whole person care.
 - Building and sustaining cost-effective, community based system of care.

Ms. Foreman presented: Vaya Health Budget and COVID-19 Funding Information:

- (a) Sources of Funding:
 - Medicaid funds: 79.4%
 - County funds: 0.7%
 - Single stream funds: 10.7%
 - Other state funding from division: 4.9%
 - Federal funding: 3.7%
 - Other revenue sources: 0.6%
- (b) Members needing care, receiving care and funding:
 - Medicaid:
 - Persons in need of services: 43,245
 - Persons receiving services: 34,909
 - Funds expended in tens of thousands: \$29,426
 - Uninsured/Underinsured:
 - Persons in need of services: 30,513
 - Persons receiving services: 17,513
 - Funds expended in tens of thousands: \$8,118
- (c) Managing within the state funding allocation for uninsured:
 - \$52.5 million cuts since 2016.
 - Anticipated 2021 \$4.8 million single stream cuts.
 - Hardwire single stream programmatic changes made in Q4 2020 for full year savings.
- (d) Vaya COVID-19 provider stabilization: total support now exceeded \$26 million.

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(3) FOOD SERVICE AND KITCHEN MANAGEMENT SERVICES: Eddie Wells, Department on Aging Director; Patrick McCoy, Detention Center Captain; and Matt Eubanks, Vice President of Skillet Kitchens were present for this item.

Mr. Adams stated this item had been discussed previously. He presented a proposed contract for food service and kitchen management. The contract was for a term of three years and included a clause to negotiate CPI on an annual basis. The contract also included a termination clause and insurance requirements.

He noted the pricing sheet for the Jail and the Department on Aging. When the proposal was submitted to the Board, there was one price based on the number of meals. They requested a sliding scale if the county purchased more meals, the price would be less. He presented the detail of services that would be provided. Also, he presented a detailed list of kitchen equipment that the county would maintain and/or replace through the life of the contract.

Mr. Eubanks stated that he had been working with Mr. Adams, the Department on Aging and the Jail for several months through this process. They managed 35 kitchens in four states, including the counties to the west. They had a large presence in the area feeding about 9,000 inmates, which added up to about 175,000 meals per week. They were well qualified in the area with backup support.

Commissioner Jones asked about the number meals served to Aging and the Jail?

Mr. Wells stated that at that time, they were at about 190. They felt confident they would save money and would expect to go to higher numbers served.

Mr. McCoy stated they served almost 200 meals per day. Their maximum capacity was 72 inmates. Commissioner Deitz asked if they bought and used local foods?

Mr. Eubanks stated their vendor was based out of Georgia. They did all the buying and delivering for them. They did have the ability to buy local produce, but it did have to be USDA approved.

Mr. Adams stated that this contract would become effective October 1st and they would work with their current vendor to transition.

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

Chairman McMahan called for a five-minute recess.

Chairman McMahan called the meeting back to order.

(4) PUBLIC SCHOOLS SECURITY UPGRADES: Dr. Dana Ayers, Public Schools Superintendent and Jake Buchanan, Public Schools Deputy Superintendent, were present for this item.

Mr. Buchanan stated that in the spring of 2018 there was a school shooting in Parkland, Florida that had ripple effects throughout the country and impacted the kids in Jackson County. One of the ways shown was they lived through seven bomb threats over the course of two months. All of those bomb threats came down to children who were hurting. Many of the children in the community lived in a world of chaos and it was a cry for help.

One of his proudest moments of being a Jackson County resident and being involved with Jackson County Public Schools was when students from Blue Ridge Early College, Jackson County Early College, The Community School and Smoky Mountain High School organized amongst themselves and requested their presence. They stated they wanted to speak to the School Board and the County Commissioners because there were things they expected from the community to be safe.

From that, there were two things that happened. One was that they needed more mental health support. The Legislature in the State of North Carolina had failed the children by not appropriately funding mental health support for the children. However, in conjunction with the School Board's request, the Jackson County Commissioners funded six additional school counselors and it had been highly successful. They felt very good about that component and were utilizing their Covid funds to support and expand that program to extend services. They were structuring it in a way to have funding for the next six years.

The second part of the request was to have single entry points entrances at all of the schools. The traffic in and out of the schools would be funneled through one or two entry points that would be highly controlled and secure. When most of the schools were built, the trend was for the kids to go outside between classes to get fresh air from one building to another, which made them difficult to secure.

There was a lot of collaboration on the plans from Emergency Management, the Fire Chiefs and the Sheriff's Office to work through and come up with a solution. He presented a summary of each contract as follows:

(a) Smoky Mountain High School (A):

- Base Bid \$2,505,000.00
- Alternate No. 1 \$43,000.00
- Alternate No. 2 \$0.00
- Total Contract Award Bid Package 1: \$2,548,000.00

- (b) Fairview Elementary School (B):
 - Base Bid \$1,820,000.00
 - Alternate No. 1 \$54,300.00
 - Alternate No. 2 \$0.00
 - Total Contract Award Bid Package 2: \$1,874,300.00
- (c) Blue Ridge School (C):
 - Base Bid \$1,750,000.00
 - Alternate No. 1 N/A
 - Alternate No. 2 \$0.00
 - Total Contract Award Bid Package 3: \$1,750,000.00
- (d) Smokey Mountain Elementary School (D):
 - Base Bid \$850,000.00
 - Alternate No. 1 N/A
 - Alternate No. 2 \$0.00
 - Total Contract Award Bid Package 2: \$850,000.00
- (e) Summary:
 - Smoky Mountain High School Bid Package A \$2,548,000.00
 - Fairview Elementary School Bid Package B \$1,874,300.00
 - Blue Ridge School Bid Package C \$1,750,000.00
 - Smokey Mountain Elementary School Bid Package D \$850,000.00
 - Total Contract Award for Bid Packages A, B, C, D \$7,022,300.00
 - In addition to construction contracts, were project costs including construction contingency, testing services, architectural and engineering services and other costs.
 - Total additional funding required: \$7,409,447.00
- (f) The company Buchanan and Sons had the low bid for all four of the projects.

Mr. Adams stated they bid the project out once and only received one bid. They were not legally able to open the one bid since they were required to get three bids in the first round. The Board of Education went through a second bidding process where Buchanan and Sons submitted a bid on all four projects and was the low bidder on all four projects. H and M Constructors was the other bid received, which they submitted only bids on two of the projects. At that point, that was the history of the bidding process.

General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(5) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: Commissioner Deitz moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(1) Privileged Information, G.S.143-318.11(a)(8) School Violence Response Plan and G.S.143-318.11(a)(9) Anti-Terrorism Plans. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Chairman McMahan called the regular meeting back to order and stated that no action was taken in closed session. They would now take back up the public discussion of the previous item.

Mr. Adams stated that the total amount needed to proceed forward with the safety projects was \$7,409,447.00. Regarding the sales tax, 40% of Article 40 and 60% of Article 42 were mandated to go to the school systems for capital purposes. Those funds could only be expended with the agreement between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education.

The Article 46 Sales Tax was the ¼ Cent Sales Tax that was passed by referendum by the voters and was designated for educational purposes, at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners. The initial funds expended from this sales tax went to the SCC Health Sciences Building.

He provided information to the Board regarding sales tax and total funds available for educational capital purposes:

<u>Sales Tax</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>Total</u>
Article 46 Fund 19	\$2,107,930.50	\$1,160,510.20	\$1,279,492.59	\$1,403,471.59	\$5,951,404.89
Article 40, 42 Fund 21	\$2,735,148.01	\$1,278,114.75	\$1,497,576.30	\$1,727,081.00	\$7,237,920.06
	\$4,843,078.52	\$2,438,624.95	\$2,777,068.89	\$3,130,552.59	\$13,189,324.95
		\$7,281,703.47	\$10,058,772.36	\$13,189,324.95	

Mr. Adams stated that they believed the project would run over more than one fiscal year, so there was the ability to fund this project. It would obviously take up all of their capital capacity regarding remaining construction items. This was a priority project for the Board of Education and they understood this could delay other capital priorities they had.

The choices for the Board of Commissioners were if the Board wished to proceed forward with the request from the Board of Education for the safety project, the action would be to agree to utilize Articles 40 and 42 Sales Tax for this purpose and dedicate the remaining amounts in the Article 46 Sales Tax. The other choice would be to delay the project and try to rebid at a later time.

After the bids were received, they had 30 days, in accordance with the bidding procedures, to move forward and agree with the low bid and begin working on the contract or there would be financial consequences if they waited until later.

Chairman McMahan stated the Board would need to take action at the July 20th regular meeting.

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

(6) CITIZENS ACADEMY: Mr. Adams stated they were starting back up the Citizens Academy with Ms. Tucker helping to lead the way in this effort. The program would be an eight-week course beginning on Thursday, September 9th at 5:30 p.m. to October 28th. He provided information regarding applications and an overview of the program.

Informational item.

(7) FIRE COORDINATOR POSITION OPERATING HOURS: Mr. Adams stated that Commissioner Deitz mentioned this item before the budget was passed. Commissioner Deitz had asked if the additional Fire Coordinator Position would provide more coverage at the stations. He requested that Michael Forbis, Fire Marshal, speak with each department to provide a summary of their intentions. Most departments would have the individuals working standard work weeks Monday-Friday with the idea of having more coverage. Canada Fire Department may attempt to shift their schedules with ten-hour work days.

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought Canada Fire Department was a unique situation. Their ambulance was responding from Sylva, so they were talking about as much as a 45-minute response time. Already, their paid person was EMT Certified and potentially the person they were looking at was an EMT. Their goal was to try and have an EMT person at the station seven-days a week so that there would be a person medically trained to respond and be available in that community.

At Balsam, they were less than five-minutes from the hospital, so that was not as big a deal for them from an ambulance standpoint. He ran their call totals and one year of calls, they ran 243 calls with 63% being between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Only 27% were in the evening hours or at night. Their thought was to divide that up so they had full coverage during the day when they had the most calls to make sure they had coverage during the daytime hours. Also, when they would do testing, it would be a great benefit since it required more than one person. The hours would be flexible depending on what was going on.

Informational item.

(8) CONRAD BURRELL ROAD NAMING: Commissioner Jones stated they did have the additional support letter for this item from the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce, which had 470 members in that organization. They also already had a letter from SCC and from the family. They received the \$2,000 required payment as well.

Consensus: Add this item to a future meeting agenda for consideration.

(9) OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Chairman McMahan provided to the Board information regarding Closing North Carolina's Health Insurance Gap. They were hopeful to have Casey Cooper, CEO of Cherokee Hospital and Steve Heatherly, CEO of Harris Regional Hospital at the July 20th regular meeting. The Swain County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution for this issue.

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

(b) Commissioner Jones stated that SCC would be offering free tuition in the upcoming academic year. Through a one-time program, SCC would not charge tuition or fees to students for the 2021-22 academic year. The SCC Promise Initiative provided new students as well as those already enrolled with free tuition and fees with the following criteria:

- Complete 21-22 free application for Federal Student Aid
- Enroll in a minimum of six hours
- Complete the SCC Promise Application

Informational item.

(c) Commissioner Woody stated that on Monday, July 26th at 5:30 p.m., the Southwest Commission would hold their annual celebration. They would provide a barbeque dinner at a location in Franklin, to be announced.

Informational item.

(d) Commissioner Woody stated that on Friday, July 16th, 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., WCU was hosting the Community Partnership Networking Day. In light of the ARP funds available for grants, should they survey folks at the event about what their request for funds would be and what would be their plans?

Mr. Adams stated he would place this item on the August work session.

Chairman McMahan stated they could state that these funds would be available and it would be a request process.

Mr. Adams stated that the key would be to remind everyone that there would be rules associated with the funds as it related to the ARP monies. A request for proposals would need to be put together for nonprofits. A requirement would be that the funds would be used in Jackson County.

Informational item.

(e) Commissioner Woody stated that on Tuesday, July 27th there would be a dedication for the Dr. Jerry Wolfe Memorial Highway.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Jones moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman