

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
NOVEMBER 15, 2022**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on November 15, 2022, 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 the Board

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

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

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of November 01, 2022, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman McMahan stated that he would reserve comments until the end of the meeting.

(4) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**:

(a) Commissioner Deitz stated that it had been a great last few days. The weather had turned cold and he had a baby calf born that morning. Life was good on the farm.

(b) Commissioner Woody reported that she, along with Chairman McMahan and Commissioner Deitz, attended the Veterans Dinner. The veterans were remarkable people who had served the country so well. It was an honor to recognize them. Mr. Arnold Price, who was 98 years old, was the only World War II Veteran in attendance at the dinner.

(c) Commissioner Stribling thanked Chairman McMahan, Commissioner Deitz and Commissioner Woody for their dedication and all they had done for the county and the employees over the years.

(5) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: None.

(6) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC**: None.

(7) **CONSENT AGENDA**:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for October, 2022 and three Budget Ordinance Amendments for fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, for approval.

Commissioner Deitz stated that Ms. Fox was one of his students when he taught school. He thought she had done a wonderful job and he was so proud of her.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for October, 2022, for approval.

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

**(8) AUDIT REPORT FY21-22:** Matt Braswell of Martin, Starnes & Associates, presented: 2022 Audited Financial Statements:

(a) Audit Highlights:

- Unmodified opinion
- Cooperative staff
- No findings or questioned costs
- No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies
- 2022 Property tax revenues: \$41,944,102
- 2022 Collection rate: 98.98%
- 2021 Property tax revenues: \$38,579,247
- 2021 Collection rate: 98.83%

(b) General Fund Summary:

- 2022 Revenues: \$86,413,491
- 2022 Expenditures: \$74,204,617
- 2021 Revenues: \$79,168,887
- 2021 Expenditures: \$68,567,634

(c) Fund Balance: Serves as a measure of the county's financial resources available. Five classifications of governmental fund balances:

- Non-spendable. Not in cash form.
- Restricted. External restrictions (laws, grantors).
- Committed. Internal constraints at the highest (Board) level does not expire, requires Board action to undo.
- Assigned. Internal constraints, lower level than committed.
- Unassigned. No external or internal constraints.

(d) Total Fund Balance General Fund

- 2020: \$29,353,090
- 2021: \$35,221,830
- 2022: \$38,307,037
- Increase in unassigned Fund Balance: \$3,085,207
- Unassigned Fund Balance 2022: 34.3%
- Unassigned Fund Balance 2021: 30.6%

(e) Top Three Sources of Income:

- Property Tax:
  - 2022: \$41,944,102
  - 2021: \$38,579,247
- Other Taxes and License:
  - 2022: \$22,462,475
  - 2021: \$20,059,368
- Restricted Intergovernmental:
  - 2022: \$8,249,831
  - 2021: \$7,777,711

- (f) Top Three Expenditures:
- Public Safety:
    - 2022: \$20,040,523
    - 2021: \$17,406,455
  - Human Services:
    - 2022: \$17,407,213
    - 2021: \$16,428,512
  - General Government:
    - 2022: \$12,607,360
    - 2021: \$12,017,103

*Informational item.*

(9) **FIREWORKS DISPLAY REQUEST**: Tony Elders, Director of Permitting and Code Enforcement, requested approval for an application he received for a fireworks display for the Chamber of Commerce in downtown Sylva on Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>.

***Motion:** Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the request for fireworks display, as presented. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) **SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT SERVICE SIDEARM**: Sheriff Chip Hall and Chief Deputy Matt Wike were present for this item.

Chief Deputy Wike requested authorization, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 20-187.2, to present service sidearms to Sheriff Chip Hall and Lieutenant Jon Fox. Both would retire from service on December 1, 2022.

He recommended that the price for the sidearms be set at \$1.00. It was recommended that the firearms be declared surplus and be authorized to present the sidearms, as requested. In addition, the Sheriff Office should provide the serial numbers and descriptions of the weapons to the Finance Director for removal from the fixed asset inventory and replace with a new sidearms at no cost to the county.

***Motion:** Commissioner Stribling moved to declare the sidearms surplus for \$1.00 and authorized presenting them as requested. He was directed to provide the serial numbers and descriptions of the sidearms to the Finance Director and replace the sidearms at no cost to the county. Commissioner Deitz seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

Sheriff Hall thanked the Board for the working relationship he had with them over the years. He presented a letter of official notification that he would step aside on November 30<sup>th</sup> going into retirement. His experience working with the Board had been outstanding. He thanked everyone for helping him throughout his time as Sheriff.

(11) **WHITTIER-QUALLA PARK EQUINOX CONTRACT**: Mr. Adams stated that this item was a follow up from the work session. He presented the Whittier-Qualla Park Equinox contract for consideration. He noted that the original amount for the scope of services was \$98,000, but would be approximately \$10,000 more to include the bidding process. The revised amount was \$109,355. This would allow them to proceed forward and start the design work for the facility. Once the bids came in, they would go before the Board for approval.

***Motion:** Commissioner Woody moved to approve the Whittier-Qualla Park contract with Equinox, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) **WHITTIER-QUALLA PARK PROJECT ORDINANCE:** Ms. Fox presented a Grant Project Ordinance for the Whittier-Qualla Park in the amount of \$2,013,525. The revenues for the project:

- CPR Fund \$756,762
- General Fund \$756,763
- Parks and Recreation Trust fund \$500,000
- Total \$2,013,525

General discussions were held.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Woody moved to approve the Whittier-Qualla Park Project Ordinance, as presented. Commissioner Deitz seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(13) **CASHIERS PARK PROJECT ORDINANCE:** Ms. Fox presented a Project Ordinance for the Cashiers Park Project in the amount of \$1,111,691. The revenues for the project were from the General Fund – ARPA Fund reimbursement in the amount of \$1,111,691

***Motion:*** Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Cashiers Park Project Ordinance, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(14) **HARRIS REGIONAL EMS AGREEMENT AMENDMENT:** Mr. Adams stated that Harris EMS previously came before the Board regarding pay and recruitment issues. At that time the Board was looking at all county operations. The Board moved forward to allow for Harris EMS to pay additional salaries to their employees.

He presented an amendment, which was the follow up to include the additional amount. The total to be paid monthly was \$139,949.42. Also, there was a shore up clause in the contract as the payments were based on estimated revenues and expenses.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Harris Regional EMS Agreement Amendment, as presented. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(15) **DECEMBER MEETING SCHEDULE:** Mr. Adams stated that an Organizational Meeting would be held on December 5<sup>th</sup> with a time to be determined. The other December meetings were set already. If the new Board changed meeting dates or times, it would be effective January.

*Informational item.*

(16) **FINAL COMMENTS:**

(a) Mr. Adams stated that he greatly appreciated the opportunity given to him by the Board. There were three Commissioners on the current Board that approved his original contract, Mark, Brian and Boyce, along with Vicki Greene and Charles Elders. They gave him the opportunity to work for the county and he appreciated it. There were three Commissioners on the current Board that extended his contract, Brian, Boyce and Gayle and he appreciated them allowing him to continue in the position. It was his honor to serve and continue to serve Jackson County.

(b) Commissioner Woody stated that it had been an honor serving on the Board. There were so many people she had been able to meet and get to know better. She first came to Jackson County in 1958. It was so important to her that they honor the heritage that was there, but also be wise in preparing for the future, which was what they had been able to do.

There were so many people who reached out to thank her and she appreciated that so much. Before she was elected to serve on the Board, she served the county in many ways, including at the Health Department, as a teacher and a volunteer. She planned to continue serving because it meant a lot to her. It had been an honor and she appreciated it all so much.

(c) Commissioner Deitz stated that he hardly ever missed a day of school, because he really enjoyed his classmates. He enjoyed people and kids. He loved this job, he loved coming to the Justice Center and the people he had gotten to know. That was what he would miss - the people he met and had fallen in love with. He had been so amazed by the employees and how well they did things.

He appreciated the Board. He challenged the remaining Commissioners to not let something happen politically because politics had changed.

(d) Chairman McMahan stated that he brought his son Henry with him to the meeting the other day. This place had been a big part of his life starting back in 1996 before he was elected. He came to work for the county with Planning and Economic Development while he was still in college. He had made a lot of good friends over the years in this building. He worked there almost five years and then he ran in 2002 and won.

To think about all the things, over the last 20 years, he had been able to be a part of when he looked around the county. It was amazing what they had been able to accomplish and were very proud of. But, he thought it came down to the people there and how much they meant to them. He knew what it was like to be a county employee and he made it a goal that when he took that job, he was going to stand up for the county employees.

When it came time for raises or benefits, he took a stand to make sure they got what they deserved because he knew how hard they worked. If they compared how the employees stood with step increases and longevity pay over the years, they did rather well as compared to other jurisdictions and he was very proud of what they had been able to do.

He was out of office for four years from 2010 to 2014 and during that time, he had two kids, who had been the joy of his life. He was going to enjoy getting to spend more time with them. He debated to not run this time, but was encouraged to run. His mother was seriously ill, dying of cancer, he would be there for her. He felt fortunate about the opportunity to go home and be with her.

He had served with 15 Commissioners: Stacy Buchanan, Roberta Crawford, Eddie Madden, Joe Cowan, Conrad Burrell, Mark Jones, Tom Massie, William Shelton, Vicki Greene, Charles Elders, Boyce Deitz, Ron Mau, Mickey Luker, Gayle Woody and Tom Stribling. He could say that he was proud to serve with each one of them. They may not have always agreed, but they always worked for the best interest of the county and he appreciated the opportunity to have served with those folks.

He served with three County Managers: Ken Westmoreland, Chuck Wooten and Don Adams. He appreciated the service with each one of those gentlemen and the work they had done. He served with three County Attorneys: Paul Holt, Jay Coward and Heather Baker. He would always say that probably one of the greatest decisions they ever made as a Board was to hire a full-time County Attorney. He was so proud of the work Ms. Baker had done as their first full-time County Attorney, even being awarded the County Attorney of the Year.

He served with two Clerks to the Board, Evelyn Baker, who was one of a kind and he really enjoyed working with her. When they thought no one could fill her shoes, there was Angie Winchester, one of the most humble individuals he had ever known in his life. At the front desk, there was Pat Parris, Jan Fitzgerald and Kerri Tucker, all great people. Also, Darlene Fox, who just kept on going. He thanked her and thanked so many.

It had been a wonderful journey and he enjoyed every minute of it. As of today, his service with Jackson County would come to an end and this would close a chapter in his life, which had been a very important chapter. He appreciated the Board Members and the friendships they had made.

He did not know Gayle Woody before and now he had a friend that was so close, an awesome prayer warrior and someone he had so much confidence in. Coach Deitz, he was closer to him than some of his own family. He meant a lot to him. He appreciated each one of the Board Members.

(e) Commissioner Jones stated that it had been an honor to serve with each of them and they had done so much for the county. Commissioner Deitz, Commissioner Woody and Chairman McMahan – they made Jackson County better, safer for the citizens with the paid firemen, EMS work, support of the Sheriff’s Office over the years and the list went on and on. Each one of them would be missed, but the county was better because of them.

(17) **PRESS CONFERENCE**: None.

(18) **CLOSED SESSION**:

***Motion:** Chairman McMahan moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(4) Business Expansion. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman McMahan called the regular meeting back to order and stated that no action was taken in closed session except the approval of the closed session minutes.

There being no further business, Commissioner Deitz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Mark A. Letson, Chairman