

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
APRIL 11, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on April 11, 2023, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	Patrick J. Scott, Interim County Attorney Representative
Mark Jones, Commissioner	Representative, Via Zoom
John W. Smith, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) SOLID WASTE - REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: Chad Parker, Public Works Director, provided a brief overview of the Request for Proposals for multiple Solid Waste contracts. Since there was no landfill in the county, everything was transferred. The only landfill in the county closed in the mid-90's. For the last 20 plus years, the county transferred garbage to a site in Homer, Georgia.

Mr. Adams stated Solid Waste was big business for the county. They wanted to explain the services provided in the county and notify the Board, the public and potential vendors of this long-term process.

Mr. Parker stated the county had eight Staffed Recycling Centers (SRCs) throughout the county that accepted household garbage. They also had a gray box to accept furniture items and a metal box. The county had a dual stream recycling program, which included fiber (paper) and containers (bottles and cans). Most sites, except Dillsboro, accepted electronics. They also accepted oil, antifreeze and batteries.

Mr. Adams stated that the SRCs were contract and would part of the bids going out. In the past, the county had multiple contracts for Solid Waste. Over the past few years, they started the process to consolidate the contracts so contractors could bid in scale. This was done in the hopes of getting more people interested.

Mr. Parker stated that Republic Services currently provided services for employees, the hauling services to the Transfer Station and leased equipment for the SRCs. In the current year, the budgeted amount for the service was \$973,500 and the equipment lease was \$107,800.

Mr. Adams stated that part of the bid would include someone to operate the SRCs, provide the equipment and transportation from the site to the Transfer Station. Also, part of this contract was the construction debris accepted at the Cashiers SRC.

The Transfer Station was located off of Mineral Springs Drive in Sylva. All of the general garbage and recyclables and construction debris were taken to the Transfer Station. Other materials were also taken directly at the Transfer Station, such as construction debris and by private haulers in the county. Then, general garbage and construction materials that were taken to Homer, which was approximately 90 miles from the county facility.

Potentially, there was another landfill interested in submitting a bid through Republic Services in Haywood County. The bidding could be separate or combined. On the bids, the landfills would provide tipping fees, the charge per ton for garbage and construction materials.

Mr. Parker stated that in the current year budget, the landfill fee paid to Homer was \$919,100. Currently, the fiber and container recyclables went to Asheville Curbside Recycling, where they separated everything out. There was approximately a 7% residual.

Mr. Adams stated at that point, they were not looking to bid out recycling because it was dictated by the market. Those prices were very volatile, so they needed to have the flexibility to move that contract when necessary versus a five or ten-year contract.

Mr. Parker stated that USA Tire, the only contractor available to them in the state, provided the county with trailers at the Transfer Station. The trailer was then hauled to the USA Tire facility. USA Tire also paid individuals to pick up used tires from tire shops around the county and take them to the Transfer Station.

Mr. Adams stated they were not bidding out where the tires were taken to, but they were currently paying USA Tire for the transportation service and the cost had started to dramatically change. They would look to see if there was interest in that service.

Mr. Parker stated that metal was not taken to the Transfer Station. It was taken directly to Metalwood, located off Skyland Drive in Sylva, which was operated by Kinsland. He did not see a reason to bid that service since there was not another facility in the county, that he was aware of, that would be able to accept the metal in the same way.

Mr. Adams stated regarding transportation, they would either be transporting general garbage and construction debris to Homer or to Haywood County. They transported recycling to Asheville and they had the tire transport to Concord. They were bidding all of those transportations.

Mr. Parker stated, in summary, one contract would be hauling from the SRCs to the Transfer Station, which would include staffing of the sites and equipment they would lease. This would also include picking up from the recycling containers at the schools and county facilities. Then, there would be the hauling from the Transfer Station to the landfill. Also, they would have the recycling hauling from the Transfer Station to Asheville. There would also be a contract for the landfill service between the county and the landfill. There would be a scrap tire services contract as well.

Mr. Adams stated that the contracts would be ending at the end of 2023. In order to give people appropriate opportunity to gear up to provide the service, they were looking to go out to bid soon.

Commissioner Stribling asked how long the contracts would be for?

Mr. Parker stated that typically, they would be for five years with an extension.

Commissioner Smith stated there were several options besides using a landfill. In the last couple of years, they had come up with very clean incinerators with small footprints. Obviously, this was not part of this conversation, but could be something they could look at going forward.

Mr. Adams stated not within the contract period, but as they started evaluating those, they needed to include that in the long-term plan. Since the county did not have a landfill, whoever they did business with would insure the county had accessibility for as long-term as possible to buy capacity.

He noted that when bids were submitted, the county also had to evaluate the companies. They wanted to be fair and open, but the provider also had to show a good history for consistency and longevity to provide service.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Jones stated that the Enterprise Fund paid the hauling and the contract services at the SRCs. That fund came from the Solid Waste Fee on the tax bills. In the last year, the Board had to make adjustments to increase the Solid Waste Fee on the tax bill to cover increased gas prices and other costs associated. The Enterprise Fund had to be self-sustaining. The Board had to raise the Solid Waste Fee on two to three bedroom homes, which were the bulk of homes in the county. If there were savings from the new contracts, he would request to consider lowering the Solid Waste Fee.

Commissioner Bryson asked why the county did not have a landfill? He had that question asked of him about why there was not an area in the county to take their own trash? Why did they ship it out?

Mr. Adams stated that the landfill in the county was closed in the 90's. During this time, there was a change in state laws of how landfills were operated. After evaluating the new regulations, all communities had to make a decision and most opted to move toward transferring versus buildout. With the massive increase in costs to build a landfill associated with the new regulations, along with the political nature of the topic, where no one wants a landfill near them, the county closed the landfill.

Mr. Parker stated that in 1999, the county had an agreement with a neighboring county to use their landfill. The agreement fell apart and the county had to make a decision quickly on what to do with their waste. Transferring was much easier, as far as a facility. They looked to accept a C and D landfill at the time, which did not require a liner, but they could not find a location. They had a Transfer Station during that period of time. In 2003, they decided to funnel everything through the Transfer Station. They built a new, much larger, Transfer Station in 2009.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Jones stated that current contracts ended in December, would it be better to have future contracts on the fiscal budget timeframe?

Mr. Adams stated if they knew what the additional annual cost would be before July 1, then it would be beneficial. This was a complex issue and they were trying to get ahead so the low bidder could appropriately prepare themselves. It would take several weeks for staff to vet the contracts to make sure they were making the recommendations to best fit the needs of the county. Since these were multi-year contracts, they would all be brought back to the Board for consideration.

Informational item.

(2) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER: Mr. Adams provided the information previously discussed with the Board and the updated proposed site plan on Plum Street.

(a) Updated Site Plan: After going through the planning process with the Center for Domestic Peace, it was determined that they needed an 8,200 SF facility. Adding this additional space made the rooms bigger and allowed for two additional rooms for a total of ten resident rooms. The proposed square footage was 8,270 and the estimated total cost was \$4,649,778.00, which was higher than the original budget presented with the 7,000 SF facility.

(b) Capital Projects Fund 44: Project Authorization:

- Revenues: \$4,348,995.00:
 - Dogwood Health Trust \$2,174,497.50
 - American Rescue Plan Act \$2,174,497.50
- Expenditures: \$4,348,995.00:
 - Planning – Homeless Shelter \$ 28,500.00
 - Planning/Architect – CDP \$ 330,000.00
 - Construction CDP Facility \$3,990,495.00

(c) Letter from Dogwood: The letter amended the Dogwood Health Trust's October 21, 2021 grant letter, which authorized a grant to the county to support the homeless shelter and domestic abuse shelter. Dogwood agreed to provide additional funding to support the construction of the domestic abuse shelter. The amendment revised the grant amount from \$2,174,497.50 to \$2,348,997.50, an additional \$174,500.

Mr. Adams stated the request would be for the Board to consider accepting these additional funds, move forward with the 8,200 SF facility and move forward to match the \$174,500 grant from the American Rescue Plan Act funds.

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

(3) GREAT GRANT AGREEMENT: Mr. Adams provided the latest version of the Grant Agreement showing the changes that were made. He referred them to Exhibit J that stated the county would contribute \$300,000 in matching funds to Spectrum Southeast, LLC as part of this project. The county would use ARPA Revenue Replacement funds for this match. The \$300,000 was intended to assist/match in funding for a minimum total project cost of \$4,497,486 that would serve a minimum of 1,156 locations in the county.

The funds would be mailed or wired to Spectrum Southeast, LLC, within 30 days after the Grantee completed the Scope of Services as described in Exhibit B of the agreement and the Grantee/NCDIT provided the county with evidence that NCDIT approved the Grantee's final claim as described in Exhibit F. The Grantee would request that NCDIT notify the county of this final claim approval. The Grantee would also request that NCDIT provide the county a copy of the Final Report Form for the End of Construction Period as described in Exhibit F.

The request would be for the Board to consider approving the final three-party agreement with Exhibit J, as presented.

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

(4) FY 23-24 BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY AND BUDGET SCHEDULE: Mr. Adams stated this item was a summary of requests from departments. In the next couple of weeks, he and Ms. Fox would meet with departments to discuss the details of the requests. They would bring the changes back to the Board in May.

Ms. Fox presented requests from each department:

(a) Capital Outlay Detail: Total Equipment \$2,393,325

(b) Capital Improvements Detail: Total Capital Improvements \$7,753,800

(c) Personnel Changes: Total additional increases \$1,555,609

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams presented:

(d) Remainder of the approved Budget Calendar:

April 11 Regular Commissioner Work Session –summary of all new requests- 1:00 pm

April 17–April 28 Manager / Finance Budget Meeting with Departments and Agencies

May 1-May 5 Finance Officer inputs changes from Manager/Finance Budget Meetings

May 8-May 12 Manager finalizes recommendations / Finance/Manager finalize budget recommendations presentation

May 9 Regular Commissioner Work Session – Capital Projects, update on new requests- 1:00 pm

May 16 Regular Commissioner Meeting – Manager's Recommended Budget- 6:30 pm

May 23 Special called budget work sessions to hear presentations if needed

(safety, education, non-profits, other departments)- 9:00 am

There would be two weeks left in May that could be utilized, if needed

June 6 Regular Commissioner Meeting – Budget Public Hearing - 6:00 pm

June 8-9 Special called budget meetings as needed to make final adjustments- 9:00 am

Work Session on June 13th at 1:00 pm

June 20 Adoption of budget- 6:30 pm

Informational item.

(5) NCDHHS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SPECIALTY PLAN: Mr. Adams stated that he and Chairman Letson served on the Regional Vaya Board. The information presented was regarding the proposed North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) Children and Families Specialty Plan Policy. This was not a new concept being debated and discussed as it came up last year.

The policy was centered around child welfare issues, how they were handled through Social Services and how the children were able to get access to mental health and/or other services needed. When a child's care came under the responsibility of Social Services, placement of children had become extremely difficult. It had become a debate about was this a local issue (i.e. Social Services), a mental health issue (i.e. Vaya) or a state issue.

In his opinion, it was an issue of both the state and access to services. He thought most of what they were discussing did not address issues they were dealing with. Currently, children and family services through Medicaid were handled through Vaya. State dollars flowed through Vaya and Vaya's responsibility was to help find services needed for these children. Vaya could not provide the services, they had to contract out for the services.

The state was coming out with a potential plan to have a single point of services statewide instead of regional services. Instead of social services dealing with Vaya, they would deal with a larger company. This was where Vaya did not agree and he would not recommend this either. The state was considering going through this type of process and receiving Requests for Proposals.

A portion of Vaya's Talking Points stated: "Why a Statewide Plan is Not the Right Solution: It did not solve the primary challenges affecting this population: lack of foster care families, provider workforce shortages, bed availability, funding shortfalls".

Vaya requested that Chairman Letson write a letter, on the county letterhead, to oppose the plan from the state that would be going to a single provider. Vaya believed they could do a better job because they were a regional program and already had established connections. He provided a letter from Vaya Health Regional Board to Secretary Kody H. Kinsley, which he and Chairman Letson voted for.

He provided a letter of response from NCDHHS written to the LME and MCO's. It defended the process of going to a single provider by stating what was currently being done was not good enough. The letter stated the data showed that significant change was still needed:

- From December 2022 through February 2023, 71 children were waiting for clinical care in emergency departments or DSS office/housing.
- Since 2021, they had seen no improvements in the number of children and adolescents going to the Emergency Department.
- Across the state, inpatient stays for children and adolescents had become longer since 2021.
- Length of stay also increased since 2021.
- Since 2020 they had seen a decrease in the number of children served in Treatment Foster Care.
- They had seen a notable decrease in spending.
- Readmission rates had increased.
- 2021 customer service had received more than 100 complaints from families about children not receiving appropriate access to care.

He thought these were important factors and elements that needed to be improved on, but there were not enough service providers or facilities to send the children to. He thought the state was not investing in the appropriate areas.

Chairman Letson stated that it did not matter what provider the money was given to if there was not a place they could get the kids to. It served no purpose to change until that infrastructure was in place.

Commissioner Smith stated that several years ago, North Carolina passed a law that funds were given per child that could be given to some of these places. Several nonprofits that were providing these services closed down because they could no longer afford to provide services.

Chairman Letson stated that Vaya was in 36 counties, which included the western part of the state. If they removed that piece, they would get redistributed to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Gastonia, Raleigh and the Triangle, so they were hurting themselves by not keeping it at a regional level.

Mr. Adams stated the request from Vaya was for the Board to approve a letter written to the Secretary. It was actually intended to go to the Secretary, the Governor and all legislators to oppose this process for some type of single-point provider. Vaya requested authorization by the Board for Chairman Letson to sign the letter opposing the Bill.

He provided a sample letter for review. If the Board wanted to move forward with a letter opposing the Bill, he recommended to add language that additional funding needed to be provided and to go back and address the real issue of a lack of beds and services.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Mr. Adams to draft a letter with his recommended added language and add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(6) OTHER BUSINESS: Ms. Fox stated that since Covid, the county had difficulty getting new vehicles. The Sheriff's Office had preordered vehicles and she previously brought a budget amendment to the Board for two vehicles. Last week, five more vehicles were delivered. Those would be part of the eight the Sheriff's Office requested in next year's budget. She would request to appropriate funds from Fund Balance to cover the cost of the vehicles in the amount of \$210,035. The equipment cost would be funded next year.

Mr. Adams stated that the Sheriff's Office had an annual replacement plan for all of their vehicles, replacing eight per year. Eight vehicle replacements per year were based on the number of people in the Sheriff's Office. If they moved forward with the budget amendment, they had other conversations to be held with the Sheriff that may impact these numbers.

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

There being no further business, Chairman Letson adjourned the meeting at 2:32 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman