

**MINUTES OF A  
BUDGET WORK SESSION  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
JUNE 08, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Work Session on June 08, 2023, 9:00 a.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	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
Mark Jones, Commissioner (Via Zoom)	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
John W. Smith, Commissioner	
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

**(1) CAPITAL OUTLAY:** Mr. Adams presented items requested versus recommendations for Capital Outlay:

**(a)** Transport Van: Requested for the jail was removed as it would not be ordered until later in the year. It would be in the budget for the next fiscal year.

**(b)** Generator: Moved from Capital Outlay to Capital Improvements.

**(c)** Cashiers Splash: Not included since it would not go out to bid until the fall.

**(d)** Code Enforcement Vehicles: Ms. Fox stated it had been difficult getting any Ford vehicles. Code Enforcement requested Jeep Renegades, which were in stock and could be purchased at a reduced cost.

Mr. Adams stated in the recommended budget, these requested items would be removed. Since the fiscal year started July 1<sup>st</sup>, they always had a transition when they were spending money in June versus July 1<sup>st</sup> and it would depend on when Ms. Fox issued purchase orders. They tried to take care of things at the end of the year or in the budget process. Most of the funds would be moved to contingency.

Throughout the year, as Ms. Fox purchased vehicles, the monies would be moved out of contingency back into a department's budget to be expended. This was process followed until the audit was complete for a final report of the county's finances. Also, prices did change from quotes to actual purchase.

*Informational item.*

**(2) CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS:** Mr. Adams presented items requested versus recommendations for Capital Improvements:

**(a)** General fund:

- Painting: Removed, already accomplished at the jail.
- Generator: Added to this section from Capital Outlay.
- Department on Aging: Placeholder for the roof.
- Dillsboro Complex:
  - Placeholder for temporary fencing. Permanent fencing would be priced out.
  - The trailer on site could be used for storage, not as an office. It would have to be replaced.
  - Add equipment to flare the methane gas from the landfill.

Commissioner Smith requested to look into fencing at the top of the retaining wall at the Animal Rescue Center for added safety.

(b) Conservation, Preservation, Recreation fund:

- Cashiers Recreation total: \$60,000
- Cullowhee Complex total: \$277,800
- Fairview Complex total: \$1,200,000
- Sylva Pool total \$46,000
- Other combined \$514,500
- Greenway fund total \$51,500
- Placeholder for paving at Mark Watson park. He recommended to approach the paving a section at a time.

General discussions were held.

*Informational item.*

(3) **NONPROFITS**: Mr. Adams presented items requested versus recommendations for Nonprofits:

(a) There were two nonprofits he brought back to previous levels:

- The Community Table
- CURVE

(b) All other nonprofits were maintained at the current year's funding.

Commissioner Smith proposed to increase funding to the Christmas Connection to \$7,500.

**Consensus**: *Increase funding to the Christmas Connection to \$7,500.*

Commissioner Bryson proposed to increase funding to United Christian Ministries to \$15,000.

**Consensus**: *Increase funding to United Christian Ministries to \$15,000.*

Commissioner Stribling proposed to increase funding to the At Risk Veterans fund to \$5,000 for general assistance to veterans in the county.

**Consensus**: *Increase funding to the At Risk Veterans fund to \$5,000.*

Commissioner Stribling proposed to increase funding to Rolling Start to \$8,000.

**Consensus**: *Increase funding to Rolling Start to \$8,000.*

General discussions were held.

The Board took a five-minute recess

Chairman Letson called the meeting back to order.

(4) **PERSONNEL**: Mr. Adams presented items requested versus recommendations for Personnel: Recommendations included:

(a) One step (3.15%, 3.00% or 1.5% based on career path) increase for all employees.

(b) 3% Cost of Living adjustment for all employees.

It was recommended that all employees move up one step in the current grade and step plan. This action was necessary to maintain the career path system. Approximately \$1,011,788 was budgeted to implement a one-step increase and a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) included in the proposal.

There were several requests for salary reclassifications and new positions. The classification and compensation study that was approved by the Board on March 15, 2022 and implemented effective January 1, 2022 should allow for the retention of existing personnel. The salary plan would also allow for the recruitment of both inexperienced and experienced personnel. He had not recommended salary reclassifications in this proposal.

(c) The following other personnel recommendations were included in this proposal for a total of 15.5 new positions:

- Housekeeping: 1 Housekeeper to be used for multiple facilities.
- Grounds: 1 General Utility Worker III for new Dillsboro Complex facility.
- Sheriff: 4 Road Patrol Deputies and 1 Detective for drug enforcement.
- Jail: 1 Detention Officer.
- Code Enforcement: 1 50%-time Administrative Assistant II to be used in Cashiers during the new software implementation.
- Green Energy: 1 50%-time Programming Manager.
- Animal Control: 1 Animal Shelter Attendant.
- Social Services: 2 Social Worker IA&T positions to manage caseloads and to implement Safety Organized Practice, a new software system to achieve better outcomes for children and families. These positions were to transition into a new pilot program through the state's Family First Preventative Services Act.
- Social Services: Extend the IMC II-Support Specialist position one additional year. The position was already budgeted and was cost shared with the state.
- Health: Eliminate a Health Educator position that worked solely in Haywood County under a contract with Smart Start.
- Recreation: 3.5 positions were included for the Aquatics Facility. They would be hired on a staggered schedule beginning January 1, 2024. The positions included a Site Manager, Head Lifeguard and 1.5 Administrative Assistant II positions.

Chairman Letson inquired about the holiday pay request from the Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Adams stated if the Board wished to consider holiday pay, he would request this to be evaluated on a countywide basis. There were multiple employees that worked holidays beyond the Sheriff's Office.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Smith requested to consider an additional Drug Enforcement Deputy. He thought there was a real need for this position.

**Consensus:** *Add an additional Drug Enforcement Deputy position in the Sheriff's Office.*

Mr. Adams recommended one Drug Enforcement Deputy. The Board discussed adding a second Drug Enforcement Deputy. Were Commissioners comfortable adding a second Drug Enforcement Deputy?

Ms. Fox noted that with the additional Drug Enforcement Deputy, they would have to consider an additional vehicle purchase.

**Consensus:** *Move forward with the County Manager's recommendation of one Drug Enforcement Deputy and add a second Drug Enforcement Deputy with an additional vehicle.*

Chairman Letson polled the Board asking if every Commissioner was comfortable with all other personnel recommendations?

**Consensus:** *Move forward with all of the other County Manager's personnel recommendations, as presented.*

**(5) SOCIAL SERVICES:** Mr. Adams stated this item was regarding the foster care system and what had occurred at the statewide level that limited placements of children. Since January to June 6<sup>th</sup>, the county housed five children for about 85 nights. The children actually stayed at DSS with DSS employees providing oversight. The children had various levels of needs with higher level needs requiring two people for oversight. There had been issues finding coverage for the children.

He had been in discussion with Cris Weatherford, DSS Director, regarding the issue. This had created a strain on DSS and caused stress. Currently, the employees who provided coverage for the children were paid comp time. He had been approached by DSS to discuss additional compensation for the individuals above and beyond comp time.

At one point, there were discussions about providing stipends to the employees, but discussions transitioned to DSS wanting to discuss true overtime. He did want to recognize the difficulty that had taken place with DSS and how challenging it was. One concept would be an emergency temporary stipend. He was not comfortable approving overtime outside a discussion with the Board.

There had not been a study regionally of best practices or long-term solutions for this issue. He thought there would need to be a process developed where they were able to hire outside resources to mitigate and provide respite to DSS employees. A solution would be additional compensation specific to services related to providing child welfare oversight on off hours. The Board would need to decide the best way forward with additional compensation and with putting funds aside to empower Mr. Weatherford to hire other services to provide respite.

The Board took a ten-minute recess  
Chairman Letson called the meeting back to order.

Mr. Adams stated initially, a stipend was discussed, but a request had been made to consider straight time and a half for overtime. This became a challenge when addressing not only the request from DSS, but the county as a whole.

He provided information put together by Ms. Fox: Foster Care Options for Overtime:

	<b>Weekdays &amp; weekends per shift</b>	<b>Paid hours</b>	<b>Time and one-half overtime amount</b>	<b>Stipend for shift work</b>		
<b>Weekdays</b>	66			\$50 per shift	\$75 per shift	\$100 per shift
2 shifts	132	1056	\$37,905.12	\$6,600.00	\$9,900.00	\$13,200.00
<b>Weekends</b>	24					
3 shifts	144	1152	\$41,351.04	\$7,200.00	\$10,800.00	\$14,400.00
	Totals for 90 day service period	2208	\$79,256.16	\$13,800.00	\$20,700.00	\$27,600.00
	Totals for 12 months		\$158,512.32	\$27,600.00	\$41,400.00	\$55,200.00
	Outside agency at \$25 per hour		\$55,200.00			
	Average salary \$49,765.82 = \$23.93 per hour					

Once an employee reached 240 hours, they had to switch to overtime. There were employees approaching 240 hours. There were social workers who accrued comp time that was not related to this issue. If the Board looked at a stipend, the employee would still accrue time and a half comp time, plus the stipend. At a minimum, he believed the Board should consider moving forward with a stipend program to offset some of the costs.

He wanted to have conversations with DSS about premiums for certain shifts as some were harder to cover than others. A stipend would pay the same rate for the same work as they would not be doing social work. He provided a draft of an Emergency Temporary Stipend Policy for review and discussion.

Chairman Letson requested to research what other counties were doing in comparison. Then, the Board could look at what the best options may be to help with a temporary emergency stipend policy in these situations.

Mr. Adams stated this issue went back to a lack of facilities and access to these types of services. He thought the direction needed to be to explore all opportunities and be willing to discuss. He would do some research and bring the item back to the next meeting for further discussions.

*Informational item.*

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:56 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Mark A. Letson, Chairman