

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
OCTOBER 03, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on October 03, 2023, 6:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman  
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair  
Mark Jones, Commissioner  
John W. Smith, Commissioner  
Tom Stribling, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager  
Debra Bechtel, Interim County Attorney (Via Zoom)  
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) **PROCLAMATION: FIRE PREVENTION WEEK**: Chairman Letson read a Proclamation declaring October 8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> as Fire Prevention Week. Commissioner Bryson moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Michael Forbis, Fire Marshal and Captain Brandon Green, Savannah Fire Department, were present to accept the proclamation.

Captain Green invited the Commissioners to join staff and many volunteers for Fire Prevention Week activities in the schools over the next two weeks.

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

(3) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Smith moved to approve the minutes of a Work Session of September 12, 2023; a Public Hearing (Transit) of September 19, 2023 and a Regular Meeting of September 19, 2023, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**: None.

(5) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**:

(a) Commissioner Jones stated he appreciated everyone who spoke and shared information at the public hearing regarding consolidation of human services.

(b) Commissioner Stribling stated he and his wife attended the AWAKE event at Bear Lake. There was a great turnout with lots of items auctioned. It was a great event.

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

**(7) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:**

(a) Karl Nicholas stated his disapproval of Commissioner Smith's comments about members of the gay community. When he took his oath of office, he vowed to serve all the citizens of the county.

(b) Tom Downing stated there were requirements the county had to follow when receiving federal money, including to not discriminate against anyone. The Health Department and DSS received federal grants. If they combined the two boards, those employees were covered and they could not discriminate against them.

(c) Dana Tucker reiterated her opposition to the consolidation of the Health Board and DSS Board.

**(8) HUMAN SERVICES CONSOLIDATION:** Mr. Adams stated this was a continuation of conversations previously held in multiple meetings with the Board. The notice published for the public hearing allowed for all options to be considered within the statute. If the Board wanted to move forward with either of the Options 1, 2 or 3, it would require the adoption of a resolution, as specified in the statute. If the Board wished to proceed forward, he would recommend to continue conversations at the work session.

Chairman Letson stated he thought the Board heard what they needed to explain better and then make a decision. He thought they had good goals and objectives, but maybe they had not voiced them enough at that point. Moving the item to the work session would allow more time to elaborate. He felt they needed to get more information for Options 2 and 3 and how the process would look. He felt they should push this to the work session for more general discussion to answer some of the questions and move forward or table.

Commissioner Bryson stated unfortunately, he was unable to attend the September work session and he had some questions.

Commissioner Smith stated he thought they should move the item to the work session for further discussions.

Commissioner Stribling stated the Board heard what everyone had to say about this issue at the public hearing and no one spoke in favor of consolidation.

Chairman Letson stated he thought the next step would be to discuss it further at the work session to state the goals and objectives and what the policy would actually look like so they could make a decision.

Commissioner Bryson asked if consolidation would open the door to compete with other counties on pay or was it just state and county policy?

Commissioner Smith stated moving under the county system gave them more flexibility versus the state.

Mr. Adams stated part of the State Human Resources Act required a salary plan with required separations between grades and functions. Currently, if they tried to target certain positions, it caused a chain reaction to raise salaries they did not intend to raise. There were multiple ways to approach this conversation.

There were federal requirements if they went away from the State Human Resources Act. The county's Personnel Policy addressed the vast majority and there was a salary plan in place he believed would meet federal standards. Substantially Equivalent was another avenue to take portions of the State Human Resources Act, but would have to be approved by the state and be monitored on an annual basis. Going away from the salary plan with the State Human Resources Act would generally give more flexibility with the pay scale.

Commissioner Bryson stated since prior discussions about consolidation, he had heard people were leaving the Department of Social Services for more pay in other counties. They needed to be able to compete with other counties, keep current employees and bring on new employees.

Mr. Adams stated it was a targeted issue with child welfare. The county had multiple operations dealing with pay issues. Any time they focused on a particular department it would bring up potentially other issues. There were significant restraints on Social Services with a significant amount of stress on employees with the 24-hour coverage. The Board reacted and was providing supplements. There were more issues above and beyond pay causing turnover and issues at DSS.

Commissioner Bryson stated in response to comments made, for him, this issue did not come up over a billboard. As a County Commissioner, he served all people of the county. The Health Department should be neutral. He did not believe there should even be a billboard for the Health Department, it was a waste of tax dollars, in his opinion. That was how he felt and where he stood.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Smith moved to proceed forward with further discussion of Human Services Consolidation at the October 10<sup>th</sup> work session. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(9) 2024 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE:** Mr. Adams presented the 2024 Holiday Schedule for consideration of approval, per the personnel policy:

<b>2024 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE</b>		
<b>Holiday</b>	<b>Observance Date</b>	<b>Day of Week</b>
New Year's Day	January 1	Monday
Martin Luther King Jr.	January 15	Monday
Good Friday	March 29	Friday
Memorial Day	May 27	Monday
Independence Day	July 4	Thursday
Labor Day	September 2	Monday
Veterans Day	November 11	Monday
Thanksgiving	November 28, 29	Thursday, Friday
Christmas	December 24, 25, 26	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the 2024 Holiday Schedule, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(10) ORDINANCE DECLARING TEMPORARY TRAFFIC REGULATION FOR THE GREENING UP THE MOUNTAINS 5K COUNTY EVENT:** Mr. Adams stated the Recreation and Parks Department had set April 27, 2024 for the annual Greening Up the Mountains 5K event. The NCDOT rules and regulations required the Commissioners adopt an ordinance approving the event. There would be no road closures and no public hearing was required.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Smith moved to adopt the Ordinance for the Greening Up the Mountains 5K event, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(11) SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** Commissioner Stribling nominated Jack Debnam to serve. Commissioner Smith nominated CY Wang to serve.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Stribling moved to appoint Jack Debnam to fill an unexpired term on the Southwestern Community College Board of Trustees. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(12) TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD:** The Transit Advisory Board recommended the appointment of German Vivas to serve.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Jones moved to appoint German Vivas to serve a three-year term on the Transit Advisory Board. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

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

(14) **CLOSED SESSION:**

**Motion:** *Commissioner Stribling moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal and G.S.143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman Letson called the regular meeting back to order and stated no action was taken in closed session.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Mark A. Letson, Chairman