

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MARCH 02, 2015**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on March 02, 2015, 1:00 pm, Justice & Administration Building, Room A227, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Mark Jones, Vice Chair
Vicki Greene, Commissioner
Boyce Deitz, Commissioner
Absent: Charles Elders, Commissioner

Chuck Wooten, County Manager
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
J. K. Coward, Jr., County Attorney

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: Mr. Wooten recognized the following employees for their years of service:

Shelia Clayton	20 Years of Service	Tax Collections
Theresa Junaluska	20 Years of Service	Finance
Lisa Lovedahl	20 Years of Service	Board of Elections
Jennifer Luker	20 Years of Service	Department of Public Health
Darlene Burrell	25 Years of Service	Department of Public Health
Randal Moss	25 Years of Service	Department of Social Services
Tim Thomas	25 Years of Service	Information Technology
Chris Tyson	25 Years of Service	Department of Public Health
Samuel Beck	30 Years of Service	Department of Public Health
Bobbie Rhymer	30 Years of Service	Department of Public Health
Darlene Fox	40 Years of Service	Finance

Clyde "Del" Reid who will be retiring effective March 1st with 16 years of service with Transit.

Informal Comments by Public:

T.J. Walker of Dillsboro stated he is in favor of spurring economic development in the Dillsboro area.

(1) JACKSON NEIGHBORS IN NEED HOMELESS SHELTER: Judy Annis, Vice-Chair Neighbors in Need; Christina Smith, Case Manager DSS; Rick Westerman, Executive Director Habitat for Humanity Macon County; Veronica Nichols, Board Member Neighbors In Need; Tony Elders, Permitting and Code Enforcement Director, participated in the following discussions:

(a) The oversight entity for the shelter will be Habitat for Humanity. The shelter will partner with Mountain Projects, but since they are not willing to have a shelter under them, they will use Habitat Humanity's 501c3 status. Staff will be employees of Habitat for Humanity with funding going to Mountain Projects. Habitat for Humanity will invoice Mountain Projects for staff salaries. The county lease of the building would be with Habitat for Humanity.

(b) Representatives from Habitat for Humanity have revisited the required modifications for the building with the Code Enforcement office. Changing the housing from temporary to full-time requires a sprinkler system be installed. The revised estimate does not include the sprinkler system.

Some of the other modifications included in the estimate:

- Additional shower added
- Laundry facility added
- Ceiling will be lowered with insulation added
- Showers and bathrooms ADA accessible
- Temporary walls to allow for partitions to be placed and moved as needed to create privacy for families

The cost estimate without the sprinkler system is \$20,400.

(c) They plan to be a cold-weather shelter for next season, opening the first week of November through March 31st, serving the citizens of the county. They would like to become a year-round shelter in the future. The shelter would accommodate approximately 22 people and be closed during the day through the week, but open all day and night on weekends. The goal is for people to become self-sufficient in less than 90 days.

(d) Grants will be applied for and administered by Habitat for Humanity. At the last Neighbors In Need meeting, the board voted to give the shelter \$10,000 to begin the process. They have received \$3,000 in private donations and have planned several upcoming fundraisers.

(e) The Town of Sylva has indicated that the Old Rescue Squad Building is zoned to permit shelters and the existing crosswalk would meet the requirements.

(f) A realistic opening date, with renovations would be November 1, 2015.

(g) Safety will be a priority as they partner with the Sheriff's Department in doing criminal background checks and will have zero tolerance for alcohol.

(2) CULLOWHEE PLANNING ORDINANCE: Gerald Green, Planning Director stated that the Cullowhee Community Planning Advisory Committee has recommended adoption of development standards, with a development district map, for the Cullowhee community. The preparation of the development standards and map is authorized by Section 153A-342 of the North Carolina General Statutes. In addition to authorizing counties to adopt development standards for portions of the county, the legislation establishes standards for the area:

- Minimum of 640 acres
- At least 10 separate tracts
- At least 10 separate owners

The Cullowhee Planning Area contains approximately 1500 acres with approximately 400 separate properties and approximately 350 separate owners.

The Advisory Committee worked for almost a year and a half to formulate the development standards, incorporating several opportunities for community input during the process. Community meetings were held prior to the initiation of the effort to determine if the community supported the effort. Based upon comments made at these meetings, the Board of Commissioners appointed the Cullowhee Community Planning Advisory Committee in August 2013 and charged them with the following tasks:

- Determine whether planning is needed in the Cullowhee community.
- Recommend the boundaries of the Cullowhee planning area.
- Determine if development standards are needed for the Cullowhee planning area and, if so, to recommend appropriate development standards.
- Solicit and incorporate community input into their recommendations.

The recommended development standards provided for the Board's consideration are the results of the Committee's efforts. The Committee identified the need and support for managing the growth of the Cullowhee community, identified appropriate boundaries for the Cullowhee planning area and the need for development standards in this area, and incorporated community input into their recommendations. A dedicated website was created for the effort to provide information to community residents, property owners, and others interested in the project. Two community meetings were held to solicit community input on the initial draft development standards, with letters mailed to all property owners in the designated area informing them of the meetings. In addition, individual meetings were held with some members of the community to answer their questions.

Based upon input provided on the initial draft of the development standards, they were revised and the boundaries of the area were adjusted. The revised development standards and map were made available to the community and another community meeting was held to solicit input on the revised draft. The Advisory Committee directed additional revisions to the proposed development standards and adjustments to the map based upon comments received during this comment period. The recommended development standards and map are provided for your consideration.

The proposed development standards would establish criteria for the development and major redevelopment of property located within the designated area. Existing development would not be addressed by the standards and all existing uses could remain. Standards for single family development are minimal and a variety of uses could be made of single family properties, from home occupations to student rentals to bed and breakfasts. Development standards for multi-family residential are more extensive and include standards to assure that adequate infrastructure (water, sewer, transportation) are available to meet the needs of the development. In addition to infrastructure, the proposed development standards address:

- Density
- Lot size and setbacks
- Building height
- Parking and access
- Landscaping and buffers
- Signage

The Cullowhee Planning Area map designates the following districts and identifies their location:

- Single family
- Single Family – manufactured home
- Townhome – Low density multi-family
- Medium density multi-family
- High density multi-family
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Parks/Open Space

In most cases, the designation of the property reflects the current use of the property or the anticipated future use as identified by the property owner.

Chairman McMahan asked that “Modular Home” be added to the definitions list. Commissioners will set a date for a public hearing at the next regular board meeting.

(3) MASTER PLAN FOR WHITTIER DREXEL FURNITURE PROPERTY:

Gerald Green, Planning Director; Rich Price, Economic Development Director; Steering Committee Members: Sarah Thompson, Charlie Myers, Lynn Sprague and Joe Ward were present during discussions. Mr. Green stated that the former Drexel property located in Whittier represents an opportunity for Jackson County, as well as Swain County and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. The approximately 27 acre site, which contains an 82,000 SF building, has been unused for over 4 years. Reuse of the site was made challenging by the identification of the entire property as floodway in the 2010 FEMA Flood Maps. New construction and other activities are prohibited or severely limited by this designation, limiting the opportunities for redevelopment of the property. Vandals were entering the property and removing metal and other items. As a result, the property had become a detriment to the community and a liability for the county.

In mid-2013, a small group of interested persons representing county and regional agencies was convened to discuss potential uses of the property. At this meeting, the potential of the property serving multi-county agricultural needs was identified. The group expanded and became the steering committee that guided efforts to identify options for reuse of the property. Steering committee members are:

Gerald Green, Chair	Rob Hawk
Rich Price	Lynn Sprague
Sarah Thompson	Debra Sloan
Charlie Myers	Rusty Ellis
Brad Stillwell	Barry Stevens

Discussion progressed and the name Smoky Mountain Agricultural Development Station (SMADS) was coined for the initial project. As the discussion continued, broader community needs, including recreation and economic development, were identified. In light of the broader range of needs and the potential of the property to meet these needs, a new name is being solicited.

As various ideas were generated for reuse of the property, it became apparent that a property master plan was needed to assure the proposed uses were compatible and to solicit ideas from the community. Concerns regarding hazardous materials that could have been used in past manufacturing processes led to the realization that an environmental assessment would be necessary. Funds to pay for the master planning effort and the preparation of a Phase 1 environmental assessment were generated through the sale of scrap metal from the site, coordinated and managed by the Jackson County Planning Department, and a grant from the Southwest Planning Commission, applied for by the Planning Department. With these funds, an RFP was issued for the preparation of a master plan for the site and a Phase 1 assessment. Altamont Environmental was selected to undertake this effort. The Phase 1 Environmental Assessment identified no environmental hazards that would limit the use of the site. Two community meetings were held at Smokey Mountain Elementary School to solicit community input and ideas during the planning process. The desires of the community as identified in the community meetings are:

- Agricultural activities and events
- Recreational facilities
- Business development
- Event/activity center

During the master planning process, areas that had been designated as being archeologically significant were identified on the property. It was determined that these areas should be preserved and recognized. As the preparation of the property master plan continued it was realized that the desired uses could coexist with the preservation of the archeological sites if located and managed properly. The property master plan lists the potential uses of the property, identifies locations for the uses, and recommends next steps. The master plan will be presented to the community for comment at a community meeting scheduled for March 3 at Smoky Mountain Elementary School.

Next steps identified in the master plan include the assessment of the condition of the building, developing outdoor recreational facilities, providing for initial agricultural uses, and preserving and recognizing the archeological areas. Each of these is detailed below:

- Building assessment – the existing building is approximately 50 years old, has some roof leaks, and is in need of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system upgrades. While it appears to be structurally sound, an analysis of its structural integrity is needed. An assessment of the building is needed to determine if it is more economical to renovate the existing building or to construct new building(s) to provide the desired facilities. The cost for a building assessment is approximately \$10,000.
- Outdoor recreational areas – a walking trail around the property is the top priority item, with the potential for a community garden. The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina has expressed interest in funding these improvements.
- Agricultural uses – a cattle loading facility, which would enable farmers to bring their cattle to the Drexel site, weigh them, and load them onto a large trailer for the trip to a larger regional facility for sale, has been identified as the first agricultural project at the site. The estimated cost of the facility is \$60,000 and the Community Foundation has expressed an interest in funding this also.
- Archeological area preservation – the entire property has been identified as archeologically significant, with an area of the property identified as a priority archeological site. The preservation of the priority archeological area has been incorporated into the master plan. A more detailed strategy for preserving and recognizing the archeological features of the property is needed. The Cherokee Preservation Foundation has expressed an interest in funding the development of this strategy, and possibly its implementation.

The input of the Board of Commissioners regarding the master plan and the potential uses of the former Drexel site, and direction for the next steps is requested. The initial item on which direction from the Commissioners is requested is whether to undertake the building assessment, using monies in the county's economic development fund. The completion of this assessment and the findings resulting from it will provide information needed to determine the next steps.

Commissioners will discuss funding for a building assessment at an upcoming regular board meeting.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman