

**MINUTES OF A
SPECIAL WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MARCH 07, 2019**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Work Session on March 07, 2019, 1:00 p.m., Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Road, Cashiers, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair
Mickey Luker, Commissioner
Ron Mau, Commissioner
Gayle Woody, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC: Sheriff Chip Hall thanked the Board for the action they took that completed the financial process necessary for a School Resource Officer for Summit Charter School. He was taking applications and the Commissioners made the funding available to move this forward in the Sheriff's Office budget.

(2) VISION CASHIERS' ACTIVITIES: Paul Robshaw of Vision Cashiers thanked the Board for coming to Cashiers. He bought a home in Cashiers four years ago and wanted to be involved to help keep Cashiers as great as it was. The Village Conservancy was a 5013C public charity that had done marvelous things in the area. Last year, with the help of a lot of people, they put together Vision Cashiers and took over the Village Conservancy so that they could operate under the protection of a public charity and raise money as needed by using charitable donations. The group now had 14 members that really wanted to get things done.

He introduced other Vision Cashiers Members in attendance: Irv Welling, Chairman of Vision Cashiers; Dr. Walter Clark, Chairman of the Highlands-Cashiers Health Foundation and Leader of the Vision Cashiers Health and Wellness Initiative; and Charlie Tickle, Chairman and CEO of Daniel Corporation and currently redeveloping High Hampton.

Mr. Robshaw presented:

(a) Who are we? Vision Cashiers "Improving tomorrow...Today!" Over 220 caring volunteers (40% year-round residents), working under a public charity, who want to engage in defining and creating the destiny of Cashiers, North Carolina.

(b) To accomplish a task, it took:

- Authority
- Power
- Influence

(c) Leadership Cashiers: Mr. Welling stated they had been working on this for the last year or so. They had a group that had explored and done focus groups. They had an opening retreat with 14 people from Cashiers and a few from WCU. The program was about informing and getting people motivated to get into leadership. The program would go through September, but the benefits were long term.

Mr. Robshaw presented:

(d) Initiatives:

- Education: At Vision Cashiers, they were dedicated to improving the opportunities for the children. Many residents do not know the variety of offerings Cashiers provided and they were out to communicate that. They invited the Board to learn more and engage in this initiative.
- Health and Wellness: Dr. Clark stated they had a task force for health and wellness with 61 people involved with 40 being medical doctors. As Chairman of the Foundation Board, that was now a public charity, they could help develop for the betterment of the community. One item they had was a tract of land they owned between Highway 107 and Highway 64 that contained eight acres. They were proposing a state of the art health park containing:
 - Annual physicals
 - Urgent Care Center
 - Medical Clinic
 - PT track
 - Physician Assistant School
 - Eye Clinic-exams and glasses
 - Weight Reduction Clinic
 - Diagnostic Clinic
 - Dental Clinic
 - Psychiatrist and Therapy
 - Substance Abuse Clinic
 - Free Clinic/Indigent Care
 - Helicopter Landing Site

Mr. Robshaw presented:

- Broadband/cell service:
 - Fiber to the home
 - High speed wireless in town
 - Under negotiation:
 - Contract to install: cost 1/3 of total paid by POA. \$500-\$1,000
 - Service: \$125-\$150/per month. 1 Gigabit up and down. No need for Direct TV, phone.
 - Benefits: future proof
- Natural Resources – preserve and expand green space
- Crime prevention: They had 3,500 people in a database and they were sending out messages over a period of eight weeks:
 - See something, say something...
 - Keep your home in your hands...
 - Simply safe and secure...
 - Safety is all about you...
 - Protect your valuables...
- Housing – for managers, teachers nurses:
 - Rent guaranteed by employer
 - Employer would be the tenant
 - Some rent subsidized by employer
 - Two and three bedroom duplexes:
 - 900-1,350 SF
 - \$900-\$1350 rent
 - Initially 54 units, could expand
 - Limited Partnership: Employer offered equity participation

- Workforce Development: Mission - Develop and fill a workforce pipeline that flowed in from the surrounding communities. Maintain the consistent influx of talent by establishing a placement hub and peer support system. Initiatives:
 - Survey all employers to identify their needs
 - Create a job search connectivity service
 - Develop a community site for employees to congregate, study
 - Utilize club facilities for training in the offseason
 - Establish key segment leaders to coordinate searches
- Pedestrian safety: Sidewalks provide many benefits:
 - Safety: consumers feel safer having a protected walkway
 - Mobility: enable consumers to move easily and directly
 - Healthier communities: generate exercise and contribute to mental well being
 - More productive: they make it easier to get around
 - Increased sales: encourage people to walk and browse
 - Reduce vehicle accidents
 - Curbs protect pedestrians from vehicles
 - Drainage managed
 - Increase the number of trips made while walking
 - Make motorist operations safer and capacity increased

Mr. Robshaw stated they had been working with the County Manager, County Attorney, NCDOT, and many others to create a model that would work in the Cashiers area. There were some mandated sidewalks that came as a result of the county and planning council creating a sidewalk mandate for any change of use property in the commercial district of Cashiers. They were trying to create sidewalks, pathways and greenways to make Cashiers a walkable community. He presented three proposed phases for what they wanted to do with sidewalks, pathways and greenways.

Chairman McMahan stated it was a great plan and vision. It embodied a lot of different aspects of Cashiers. It was about the future and what they could become and at the same time protect what was there.

Commissioner Mau thanked them for 220 supporters working on this, that was a lot of work that had gone into this and he appreciated that. The topics were pretty well aligned with the Comprehensive Plan. What were they requesting that day and what were the next steps?

Mr. Robshaw stated they really needed the Board support, they were not asking for money. They were going to try to do this by getting the property owners to pay for a big part of it and then raise money through the public charity. What they really needed was the authority and power the Board had. They needed the County Manager to have the power to sign a document that enabled the county to take over the sidewalks once they built them. It had to be done according to county and state standards and approved. Once the sidewalks were paid for and done, they needed to get the liability and maintenance off of the owner and put it on a county body. The County Manager needed the Board's authorization to do that. The County Manger already had this, as he understood, to act and sign documentation with regards to what they passed with the Cashiers Planning Council on having sidewalk as they currently existed, but he did not have it with the volunteer initiative.

Mr. Adams stated conversations had been taking place between the county, NCDOT and Vision Cashiers. They had Brian Shuler, NCDOT Engineer in the audience. Mr. Shuler was the engineer working on the specifications and requirements that NCDOT would have regarding how the sidewalks would need to be built out. Vision Cashiers was working on Phase 1 and the actual engineering documents with NCDOT at that point to get the sidewalks approved for construction. That process was still going on. If Vision Cashiers was able to build out the sidewalks in accordance with NCDOT regulations, the question would be, would the county assume ownership, control and maintenance.

Under the current ordinances, the Board of Commissioners already authorized the County Manager to sign off on NCDOT third party agreements for the county to assume ownership and maintenance of sidewalks and they had done that in multiple areas. This was different as he did not have the authority to assume sidewalks under this proposal. In the near future, this item could come before the Board to discuss, if they were willing to take ownership of Phase 1 after it was built out to NCDOT standards.

Mr. Robshaw stated that if the county did not take responsibility, they were stopped because they would not go to property owners with liability and maintenance of the sidewalks.

Chairman McMahan stated that if past performance was an indication of how the future would go, if they looked at county governments and at what Jackson County had done over the last couple of years with partnerships trying to provide sidewalks and to assume the liability and maintenance, it was really uncharted waters because a lot of county governments did not do that. Sidewalks were primarily a municipal function, but they recognized in the county, being mobile from a pedestrian standpoint was very important and there were a lot of great benefits.

As they tried to enhance and create additional greenway opportunities, they recognized that sidewalks could be part of a greenway. If they could provide safe access for folks to move from one point to another, it was a good thing to have sidewalks, so they had assumed those liabilities and maintenance issues with several rural areas outside the municipal boundaries. It was a new concept and not many other counties were doing that, but they felt it was important. They had done it before and he did not see it would be any different with this scenario.

Mr. Adams stated there were two parts to the conversation. Was the county willing to take ownership after a design had been put forth that was acceptable by NCDOT. So there were really two places for approval.

Consensus: *Staff to proceed forward to draft a resolution to grant the County Manager that authority, to be placed on a future agenda for consideration.*

Commissioner Deitz stated he thought sidewalks were very important and they were important throughout the county.

Commissioner Woody stated that affordable housing was a big concern of hers throughout the county as well.

The Board took at 15 minute break.

Chairman McMahan called the meeting back to order.

(3) UPDATE ON HORSEPASTURE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT: Dan Harbaugh, TWSA Executive Director, presented:

(a) TWSA – What They Do:

- TWSA’s primary responsibility was to be a good steward of the water resources of the county.
- Own and operate public water and sewer systems in the service area.
- Partner to promote the economic viability of the service area.
- Partner to address public and environmental health issues in the service area.
- Operate to the benefit of the ratepayers.

(b) TWSA’s role in Cashiers:

- TWSA was a regional water and sewer authority. Part of their mission was to meet the needs for such services, where feasible.
- In Cashiers, TWSA owned and operated a wastewater system and operated under contract a water system for the county.
- The need for both types of services drove the decisions for the future.

- Site acquired in 2016:
 - Phase 1 – 125,000 GPD
 - Phase 2 – 250,000 GPD
 - Phase 3 – 496,000 GPD

(c) Current Project Budget – Phase 1: Horsepasture River WWTP and Collection System Improvements: \$9,498,200

- Golden Leaf Grant \$460,800
- USDA-RD Grant (26.5% of offer) \$1,745,000
- USDA-RD Loan (2.125%) \$4,832,000
- TWSA \$2,460,400
- Annual debt service projected at \$177,694

(4) CASHIERS WATER SYSTEM: Mr. Harbaugh presented:

(a) Representative calculated natural water budget for Cashiers:

- 84 inches total precipitation per year
- 41 inches evaporation
- 7 inches overland runoff
- 43 inches total runoff
- 36 inches ground water recharge
- 36 inches ground water runoff

(b) Jackson County Water System:

- Two wells, but drawdowns indicate connectivity of source water (well interference)
- Ten current customers
- Some seeking new connections
- Existing customers seeking expansion of current allocations
- Consolidation Study September 2018
- Possible consolidation was pending review approval by the Board of Commissioners and TWSA Board
- Other developers and city center looking at becoming part of a consolidated system for both supply and customers
- Primary water supply needed would be:
 - Fire protection
 - Reliable supply

Mr. Adams stated that this system was not capable of any real significant expansion. What they had attempted to do was work with existing customers as they felt they had some obligation to those existing customers. As built, the system was not capable of any real expansion.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that was typical of many small, rural Hydrotech systems that did not have elevated storage.

(c) Consolidation Study September 2018 considered two options:

- Groundwater distribution wells \$11.77M
 - Phase 1 \$4.938M C, \$53,465 O, 250 Cust.
 - Phase 2 \$2.821M C, \$124,040 O, 330 Cust.
 - Phase 2 \$3.409M C, \$216,000 O, 430 Cust.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that Cashiers Lake was not a viable supply as it did not meet the requirements for them to be able to draw water out of it and treat it and put it into a public system because of growth around it.

- Surface water – Glenville \$19.49M
 - No phasing, operating costs +/- 2x GW, plant must be staffed to be running
- Phase 1:
 - \$4.938M C
 - 250 Customers
 - \$53,465 Operating Costs
 - \$173,334 Debt Service Costs
 - \$49,380 Capital Reserves
 - \$276,179.35 Projected Annual Costs
 - \$23,014.95 per month
 - \$92.06 Avg/Customer (consumption based SO variable)

Mr. Adams stated that in order for the system to be self-sufficient, there would need to be a significant amount of new customers come on line.

(d) Storm water:

- Because of the topography and the soil structures, the surface waters running off the plateau were very vulnerable to storm water pollution.
- TWSA was not directly involved in storm water, but this issue had impacted the community:
 - River impacts
 - High level storm water regulations
- Encourage community to begin a program to promote storm water best management practices.

(e) Water and Sewer Authority:

- Partner with L.G's
- Develop capacity
- Operate and maintain
- Replace
- Expand service area
- Revenues:
 - Ratepayers
 - Grants and loans
 - Contributions

(f) Local Governments:

- Promote health and welfare of community
- Encourage orderly growth
- Revenues:
 - Taxes
 - Fees
 - Special districts

(g) Expansion

- Wastewater treatment capacity expansion:
 - TWSA capital investment
 - Request for county O&M assistance as customer base grows
- Water system service area expansion:
 - TWSA would work to identify funding sources, but five year payback in consolidation agreement
 - Request for county assistance on capital and O&M costs as customer base grows

- TWSA would be looking at legal options for revenues:
 - Mandatory connections
 - Available charges
 - Special service district, etc.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that next steps included the next week he would meet with the Chamber of Commerce Board to begin to reach out to the community to set up meetings to gauge interest.

Mr. Adams stated that because of timing and permitting issues, they had been waiting on the numbers from Horsepasture to have the conversation about potential participation from county government and why would they treat water different than sewer.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that regarding the Cashiers WWTP and Collection System, it was anticipated that requested contributions towards O&M to be \$109,000 from the county and that would be reduced over five years to a future zero dollars. That may be lower if they had a lot of customers come on so that the operating costs would go down. At the earliest, the end of the 2021 would be when a contribution would be asked from the county.

Mr. Adams stated next year's discussion would start developing county participation in the development of a public water system through application for grants and in participation in operating revenue shortfalls until growth in customer base occurred. TWSA would need to go through community meetings to find out what the customer base would be. If they started making assumptions that they would not have 250 customers the first year, then TWSA would look for assistance with capital and operating cost.

If the county agreed there were a couple of concepts. The county had the ability to do service districts to come up with additional revenue. There were other items such as special assessments and other ways to generate revenue specifically from the area that did not necessarily impact the rest of the county. If they found that there was not going to be enough customers to support the water system, then if the county was willing to proceed forward with some type of supplement and if they were willing to talk about additional revenue sources, this was where it would intertwine with the Horsepasture conversation, then he thought all of the cost could be combined together.

Mr. Harbaugh stated that other benefits of a public system would also include having a fire protection system in place, where insurance rates would go down.

Mr. Adams stated the purpose of the discussions that day was to provide information to the Board.

Commissioner Luker stated that if the need was there and it was demonstrated during the public meetings, then they also had to take into the realization the economic impact that it would have on the county itself as a revenue generator on the tax base.

Consensus: *Continue working and having a dialog on the subject. Bring this item back to a work session for further discussions by the Board in the future.*

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Luker seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman