

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MAY 23, 2019**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Work Session on May 23, 2018, 8:30 a.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Mickey Luker, Commissioner (via speaker phone)	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
Ron Mau, Commissioner	
Gayle Woody, Commissioner	

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order and stated that this was an opportunity for the Board to hear from the non-profits that had made requests during the budget cycle. This would be an overview to provide additional information to the Board as they evaluated the budget before making decisions.

(1) **AWAKE CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER**: Renee Coward, Executive Director of AWAKE, stated that they had expanded services exponentially in the last five years. That did not reflect an increase in the number of child abuse cases, she believed that it reflected an increase in the amount of services provided to those children. In the past year, they increased in the number of forensic interviews provided by 53% and 152% in the number of children’s medical evaluations. This was primarily due to hiring a nurse practitioner, which had proven invaluable in that they could give immediate services to children.

Primarily, their funds came from Victims of Crime Acts, which were fine-based funds that she could apply for. She could apply for those funds because she was an accredited agency, which meant they passed very rigorous standards. Since they were reimbursement based, the monies from the county were incredibly important.

Informational item.

(2) **HERE IN JACKSON COUNTY, INC.**: Destri Leger, Robert Cochran and Marilyn Chamberlin were present for this item.

Ms. Leger stated that she was a resident of Jackson County, the Regional Lead for the Western North Carolina Homeless Coalition and the Founder and Current Board President of HERE in Jackson County, Inc. She wanted to introduce the agency and a proposal to provide temporary shelter services and case management services to the homeless population group in Jackson County.

HERE in Jackson County and the county government had a very unique opportunity to enter into an innovative partnership to address the county’s issue of homelessness. Their proposal was unique as they were a startup agency and they were in the developmental stage. The partnership they were proposing with the county was not one they had an example to model after. They believed they had an opportunity to show the rest of the state what county government could do if they collaborated with nonprofits to resolve an issue.

The mission of HERE (Housing, Equality, Resources and Education) was to end homelessness throughout the county. They planned to accomplish this mission by providing:

- Emergency shelter
- Housing focused case management services
- Administer rapid rehousing short-term rental assistance

They were also seeking to provide a permanent home for the homeless program, so that they may increase the funding stream and resources for the program, which would increase services and positive outcomes for those experiencing homelessness. They planned to operate the current hotel model while planning to move toward the year-round hybrid brick and mortar model.

HERE was formed and incorporated in 2018, but they had not yet achieved nonprofit status. HERE was chosen as the Student Learning Project for WCU Social Work Class in the spring. The class provided a community assessment on homelessness and did a portion of the application. The remainder of the application would be completed and submitted by June 30th. Through their partnership with Harris Regional Hospital, they had been granted the use of an office in the Eastgate Plaza at no cost.

They were also beginning to establishing relationships with community partnering agencies. Homelessness and housing were issues that affected every other quality of life factor, including access to jobs, health care, mental health and substance abuse recover, public transportation, education, child care and access to healthy food. Because housing and homelessness affect all of these elements it would be vital to bring all of the partners to the table.

Their current board of directors: Destri Leger, Monica Frizzell, Marilyn Chamberlin, Kelly Brown, Mary Kay Crisp and Robert Cochran. Collectively, the board members had over ten years of experience with the local and state coalitions to end homelessness. HERE was formed with the express intention of addressing the local gap in homeless services. They left the board small with the intention of the county, a seed funder, to have the opportunity for input on growth.

The county lacked an agency with a focus on homelessness. Services and programs had remained limited and the county remained the largest funder of the homeless program. Their strategy that having a local agency dedicated to providing the services was the best position, moving forward to grow the homeless program and providing the attention it deserved. Their goal was to be not only reactive, but also proactive. They wanted to avoid homelessness, shorten the length of time people spent homeless and they wanted to prevent returns to homelessness.

Temporary emergency shelter was an important factor, but the main focus would be housing focused case management services. They would be using the Housing First philosophy, which was data driven. The primary goal was to find permanent housing for the client quickly and continued support after then had been relocated.

As the agency would grow, expanding staff capacity remained a forefront concern. In the past, very limited staff was dedicated to the program. During the 2018-19 season, Mr. Cochran was the only employee working in the program. Because of this, services remained limited and the program maintained a waiting list. Clients did not receive the same level of support offered by programs with multiple case support personnel and data they had been able to collect on local homelessness had been limited. They believed they could address the concerns by employing a minimum of two case managers and one full-time office support personnel.

They hoped to work collaboratively with the government, local community resources and statewide partners to increase their capacity and develop programming. In meeting with the county manager and Ms. Fox, it was made abundantly clear to them that zero county dollars would be given to them until they had a cash flow and money management plan that satisfied the Commissioners, County Manager and Finance Director. Their funding stream would include community, state and federal. Their goal was that in three years they would receive county funding at a level proportionate to other county funded programs.

One option that had been presented was to contract with the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH). NCCEH's proposal included capacity building, fund development and assistance in establishing a community-wide response system to address homelessness. Another financial aspect of their development that was in progress was the budget. They used the hotel model budget prepared by the Jackson County Task Force on Homelessness and presented it as a basis of their budget. As they developed their plan and increase the board to include other community stakeholders, the budget would continue to evolve. They anticipated that the requested county funds would be utilized primarily for hotel room expenses and would also be used to supplement the proposed salaries with the remainder being paid for through community grants and local support.

There were negative impacts if the homeless program was not funded, even for one year. Homelessness was an expensive problem. The most expensive places people ended up were the county jail and the emergency room, both of which were extremely expensive alternatives compared to housing and shelter. The school system would have to provide their own resources in assisting children experiencing homelessness. Social Services, the Health Department and faith based agencies would see a significant increase in homeless individuals and families seeking assistance.

They did not have all of the answers that day, but that was not their goal. Their goal was to start a conversation to keep going and do this timely because they wanted to pick this up and do it that year. With the county's support was the only way they could do that.

Mr. Cochran stated he wanted to give context in terms of the funding year. They needed to be tentative in terms of what housing services would be next year. At that point, he did not believe they could guarantee any specific level of service. They needed to determine what resources they were able to garner and then begin to make their plan and expectations. There were grant cycles that they had to be mindful of. The county's funding was the foundation for applying for other grants. The timeframe for the grants would be early to mid-July. This was an issue that needed early attention so that they could begin to apply for the rest of the funding to scope out what could be accomplished next year. It would be unsustainable to continue at the level of staffing they were at that year, from his perspective.

Dr. Chamberlin stated that she was currently writing grants for communities for homelessness across the country and they were writing \$50,000 to \$75,000 proposals, but this would depend on what they brought in locally.

Informational item.

(3) APPALACHIAN WOMEN'S MUSEUM: Cathy Busick thanked the Board for the support they had given and their continued support. They had a successful Airing of the Quilts with 500 people attending. They would be doing the tour of homes with the Arts Council and were open every Saturday.

The roof that was put on in 1908 was at the end of its life. They had been patching to prevent the leaks. They did get an estimate to replace the roof and this was why they requested additional funding. The estimate was for \$18,000 and they had one more coming in.

Informational item.

(4) COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: Ken Torok and Patrick McGuire were present for this item.

Mr. Torok presented a proposed budget for the Opioid Campaign:

- Salary for facilitator working 16 hours per week for 8 weeks: \$1,920
- Four banners \$150 each: \$600 total
- 5,000 tri-fold pamphlets: \$1,000
- 160 radio ads: \$1,440
- Four morning talk shows: \$0
- Public service announcements: \$0
- Cost recording PSA's: \$200

- Newspaper ads: \$2,180
- Four billboards: \$1,540
- Artwork for tri-folds: \$300
- Total: \$9,180

Since their last presentation to the Board and they were able to say they had the support of the Commissioners, they moved forward at WCU with the Center for the Study of Free Enterprise. The date for the roundtable was going to be October 3rd. They already had a lot of interest. They could not fill out a grant, so they were looking to the county to figure out how they could do this. They would have to get another nonprofit to apply for a grant.

Chairman McMahan stated that there may be an opportunity to pick up in-kind costs such as pamphlets, but it would be more challenging on the salary item. If the facilitator was mainly coordinating, maybe someone else would be able to provide that service. There may be potential opportunities with county staff that could assist or maybe an intern. He wanted to look at all of the options.

Informational item.

(5) WNC COMMUNITIES: Roger Wiggins requested the Board’s support for the upcoming year. He stated that WNC Communities regional livestock center was probably their largest project, which was a collaborative effort between several counties and organizations. They recently reached \$100mil in sales that had passed through that center.

WNC Communities had been around for 60 years in various forms. They had an honor awards program for communities and there were several communities in Jackson County that won awards that year. Also, the Hemlock Restoration Initiative was an important part of WNC Communities. With WNC Ag auctions, Jackson County farmers had received \$88,000 over a period of time. They had over \$12,000 scholarships last year to 13 students. They primarily were involved in supporting farmers and rural Western North Carolina. They had an initiative coming up soon with the expansion of the WNC Farmer’s Market, which was also a collaborative effort. They maintained primarily through contributions from the counties.

Informational item.

(6) COMMUNITY TABLE: Paige Christie, Director and Charles Easton, Chairman were present for this item.

Ms. Christie thanked the Board for the help they already gave earlier in the year with the roof.

- Meals served 27,160
- Grocery boxes 8,776
- Individuals served 4,399 - 1,267 were children under the age of 12
- 1,400 different families served
- 13,400 volunteer hours

In the last year, they worked with Manna on a program where they bring an entire truck and they let people take as much as they could carry. It was mostly produce and milk type products. They were also going to Manna’s Produce Pod a few times a month to bring back fresh produce. They believed that would help them get more healthy foods into the community and this did not cost them anything.

They were working with the Language Department at WCU to translate their entire website into Spanish to make sure they were giving access to a part of the population that may not know what they did.

Mr. Easton stated that the Community Table Board of Directors wanted to thank the Commissioners for what they did. Donations were down because of changes in the tax laws, they were getting much less than they did before.

Commissioner Mau stated there was a bill that was read on the floor of the House 18 months ago. Congressman Walker of District Six had a bill to address the donations with the standard deduction. Everyone needed to reach out to congress about the issue.

Informational item.

(7) ARTS COUNCIL: Lena Woods and Justin Allman were present for this item.

Mr. Allman stated he was the President of the Arts Council of Jackson County. He thanked the Board for their support and the office space they had. With the \$10,000 grant that was provided the last fiscal year, they were able to double the art supplement funds to Jackson County Public Schools. They hoped to continue this for the upcoming fiscal year as well.

For the fourth year, the Arts Council brought in \$9,000 in programs from the NCAC, which brought the largest attendance to-date to one of their functions of 650 students. In the rotunda gallery space at the historic courthouse, they had kept a constant rotation of local artists for display all year long. They also had multiple concerts and recitals in the community historic courthouse.

In the upcoming year, they were organizing events and programs for the southern and northern parts of the county. With the new Arts and Cultural Center being built in Cashiers, they hoped to bring amazing artists from all of the county to show their work and gain recognition. They were going to increase their multi-cultural endeavors throughout the county by reaching out to the Hispanic, African-American, Asian and Native American populations. They hoped to give out \$10,000 in sub-grants to community organizations providing arts programs. They would get an NCAC grant for the JAM Program, which taught children 3rd – 12th grades and the Early College, how to play traditional Appalachian music on traditional instruments. They would also use a portion of the funds to maintain the grand piano and administrative costs.

Informational item.

(8) UNITED CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES: Kathy Cross stated she was proud to say they opened on June 2, 1989 and were still going strong. She thanked them for supporting them last year and for their consideration. The main goals of the organizations were to prevent homelessness by helping with utility bills, rent and medical assistance to try to keep them in their home. They also helped people after a house fire with items needed. The people they served the most were unemployed, underemployed or seniors with slow monthly benefits. They worked closely with all agencies in the area.

Their numbers last year did not increase from the previous year. They counseled with every family that came in and some families were able to begin to support themselves after a period of time. They had approximately 27 new families each month, but lost about that many as well.

They had a great year with contributions last year. Some funds were earmarked for projects they had not completed yet, such as the DOT sidewalk project. 60.4% of the income went to the clients. Salary expenses were about 28% and 11% went to insurance and office supplies.

Informational item.

(9) CASHIERS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: Stephanie Edwards, Executive Director and Mary Lanning, Board President were present for this item.

Ms. Lanning stated she appreciated the opportunity to present an incremental grant funding request of \$5,000 to support community signage. They were there representing the members of the Cashiers Area Chamber. She also presented an endorsement letter of the funding request from the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority.

They had designed Glenville and Cashiers destination signs to create a visual statement of identity and introduction to the unincorporated communities. The incremental funding would expand the southern county wayfinding program developed by the Chamber, which included the design, manufacture and installation of distinctive designation signs reading “Cashiers Elev. 3,484”, “Glenville Elev. 3,494” and “Sapphire Elev. 3,176”.

Four signs had been installed to date. This funding would support the planned addition at the northernmost Glenville site to replace the existing sign. The total cost for all signs was estimated to be \$27,868. The Chamber spent \$14,398 to date on the project, including funding through a previous Jackson County Tourism Development Authority grant and received an additional \$4,820 in-kind support.

Informational item.

(10) WATERSHED ASSOCIATION OF THE TUCKASEGEE RIVER (WATR):

Ken Brown, Executive Director stated the proposed grant was to continue characterization of water quality problems throughout the Tuckasegee River basin, focused planning and sampling of Savannah Creek.

(a) Tasks:

- Task 1: Following the Tuckasegee River characterization plan, WATR would regenerate the sampling.
- Task 2: Working in partnerships with the Division of Environmental Quality staffers to develop a Savannah Creek Watershed Action Plan.
- Task 3: Getting county citizens involved with small stream restoration trainings.

(b) Proposed Budget: \$20,000

- WATR Staff \$12,000
- Interns \$3,000
- Sampling tests and equipment \$3,800
- Travel \$1,000
- Miscellaneous costs \$200

(c) Partnerships and cooperative groups:

- Town of Sylva
- Dillsboro Township
- Appalachian Women's Museum
- EBCI
- American Rivers
- Mountain True
- French Broad Riverkeeper
- Mainspring
- Haywood Waterways Association
- Department of Environmental Quality

Informational item.

(11) WEBSTER ENTERPRISES.: Joe Rigdon, CEO, stated that Webster Enterprises was founded in 1976 by a group of concerned parents that wanted a better life for their disabled adult children. They were a 5013c non-profit with a mission to provide job skills training and job opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment, disability or disadvantage. They supported their mission through manufacturing efforts concentrating on medical devices and custom sewing.

What they did:

- They provided services to individuals in Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties.
- Focus on soft skills training that transcends to job opportunities.
- Provide employment skills training and on the job follow up support.
- Work with local high school students in preparation for employment through Pre-Employment Transitional Services (PETS).
- Prepare young adults with significant disabilities for success in integrated, competitive employment (PROJECT SEARCH).
- Volunteer outreach services in communities.
- 65 plus employees worked in integrated manufacturing settings in Webster and Sylva to support the mission.

Mr. Rigdon stated that the PETS Program was in the third year. In year one, they provided services to 27 high school students. In year two, they provided services to 150 high school students. They worked in six high schools in Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties. They thought the numbers would double next year. Their goal was to house a job coach in the school system.

Mr. Adams stated that he had previously discussed with Mr. Rigdon about the VR Program of putting a job coach in the school. He was working with them as far as a cash flow issue. The grant process was a reimbursement process for them, so they were exploring the Revolving Loan Fund Program that the county had. They were hopeful that this could be considered a workforce development type situation. If it could fit within the Revolving Loan Fund Program, this could be an issue that came back before the Board.

Informational item

(12) JACKSON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: Julie Spiro, Executive Director, stated that they had two offices, one in Sylva and one in Dillsboro and were in their 94th year. She distributed material to the Board and presented a video of some of the highlights of the past year showing their accomplishments. With the help of the county's financial support and the partnerships they had with other local leaders and agencies, they would continue to give back to the community.

Informational item.

(13) SOUTHWESTERN CHILD DEVELOPMENT: Sheila Hoyle, Executive Director; Dr. Marilyn Chamberlin, Director of Operations and Development; and Vicki Lewis, Nursing Supervisor, were present for this item.

Ms. Hoyle stated that they were proud to have been doing business in the Jackson County since 1972. There had been many projects over the years where the Jackson County Government had funded for them. It had been a very long, strong and prosperous relationship with the county. They operated primarily in the seven western counties of Region A, but also had contracts with 11 of the Western North Carolina Counties. Their primary goal had always been to work with low income children and their families so that parents had high quality childcare while working.

The three requests were the same that were funded last year. They were asking for the same amount of county participation to help maintain the Family Resource Center, the Nurse Family Partnership and the Christmas Connection.

Ms. Lewis stated that the Nurse Family Partnership was a national program that served first time, lower income mothers. The clients entered the program at or below 28 weeks in their pregnancy and then were followed until their infant was two years of age. They were at capacity with 95 clients. They had a great opportunity and saw great results. The largest site was Jackson County. She provided information to the Board.

Dr. Chamberlin provided a report on the Christmas Connection. They served 751 children and 413 families. They had increased their in-kind donations and partnered with an organization in Asheville that received a large number of donations from stores.

Informational item.

(14) DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS: Fred Underwood and Paul Taylor were present for this item.

Mr. Underwood stated their Chapter supported Haywood, Jackson and Swain Counties. He had been the Commander for nearly 11 years. Veterans needed help and they had needy veterans everywhere. They also supported veterans that were not disabled. He requested more funds from the county so they could stay ahead of the game in supporting the veterans. He thanked them for the support they had given them.

Mr. Taylor stated that the amount veterans in the three counties and veterans passing through, had been very large. They were proud of their membership and all the work they did. They were also going to help the ROTC's in schools, but Jackson County did not have an ROTC in the high school. They did have two to three requests every week.

Informational item.

(15) MOUNTAIN MEDIATION SERVICES: Rebecca Herbers and Sharon Phelan were present for this item.

Ms. Herbers stated she was the rising Chair of the Board of Directors and former staff person. Mountain Mediation was a non-profit organization founded in Swain County in 1994. Since inception it had expanded to provide services to the seven westernmost counties. Their primary services included mediation, facilitation and training. They charged a fee of \$60, which was 1/3 of the cost it took to set up and conduct a mediation. They were offering their services to the court to pull off cases where they could make a difference.

In Jackson County in the last six months, the court referred 104 cases and they mediated 73, which was 70% and 85% of those were resolved. They also provided youth services and had just concluded Bullying Preventing Training at Scott's Creek Elementary School with 175 students. They wanted to do this throughout the school district. They also provided district court mediation, family mediation and businesses.

Informational item.

(16) HABITAT FOR HUMANITY MACON/JACKSON: Rick Westerman, Executive Director, stated that they recently relocated their store in Jackson County and they partnered with different groups every month. That Saturday they would have the Library out to discuss summer programs. Previously, they had Michael Forbis, Fire Marshal out to discuss smoke detectors. They were trying to get their name out to get clients. The funds they got from the county were used for repair jobs and they were planning to build a new house starting August. The average wheel chair ramp they built cost \$2,500. They relied on donations and grants to keep their mission going. They also partnered with other organizations and were heavily involved in Jackson County.

Informational item.

(17) MOUNTAIN PROJECTS: Dawn Neatherly; Kayla Loftus; Margaret McRae; Betty Morris; Janie Crews and Vicky Robson were present for this item.

(a) Circles of Hope – Sylva: Ms. Neatherly stated she had been there since November as the Coordinator. Last year, they estimated that by the end of 2019 they would be serving 25 families. As of that day, they had 27 and still had another class to start. They felt they were on track to having 35 active families by the end of the year. They were growing faster than they anticipated. Over the past four years they had 45 families that began the program and 61% completed the training and moved into the ally phase. Most remained and became volunteers and allies in the program. They helped their clients gain employment and see salary increases, which helped them come off of services. Their goal was to have their clients come off of all assistance programs and become self-sufficient.

Mr. Adams stated that the request for Sylva Circles of Hope had gone from \$20,000 to \$49,000 with the understanding that the \$49,000 was mainly providing salary for two professional staff.

Ms. Loftus stated that she was a circle leader and was now fully off government assistance. She now had a full time position with medical insurance benefits. She came from generational poverty and she was the first to be out of poverty and she was very proud of that, Circles of Hope made that possible.

(b) Circles of Hope – Glenville-Cashiers: Ms. Robson stated their request was for \$15,000 for salary for a part-time coordinator. They had been working with Mountain Projects and the Sylva Chapter for about one year.

Ms. Morris stated that they had a huge issue with poverty in the southern end of the county also and they had some wonderful partners. They had two churches that had offered space for them to meet.

Mr. Adams stated there were several other Mountain Projects Programs. Patsy Davis, Executive Director was unable to attend the meeting.

Informational item.

(18) ADDITIONAL NONPROFITS:

Mr. Adams stated that all nonprofits were invited to attend. There were some that chose not to attend but asked to pass along information:

(a) Barium Springs Children's Hope Alliance expressed their appreciation to the Commissioners for their continued support.

(b) Highlands Community Child Development Center expressed their appreciation for continued support.

(c) Jackson County Athletic Hall of Fame was very appreciative for the Commissioners' support over the years.

(d) REACH of Macon County wanted to express their appreciation.

(e) The State of Franklin also gave thanks for their support.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman