

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
NOVEMBER 19, 2024**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on November 19, 2024, 6:30 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman	Kevin King, County Manager
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair	John Kubis, County Attorney (Via Zoom)
Mark Jones, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
John W. Smith, Commissioner	
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) PLAQUE PRESENTATIONS: Chairman Letson recognized Commissioner Mark Jones and Commissioner Tom Stribling. Commissioner Jones served as Jackson County Commissioner from 2006 to 2016 and from 2020 to 2024. Commissioner Stribling served as Jackson County Commissioner from 2020 to 2024.

Appreciation plaques were presented to Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Stribling and wall plaques were unveiled for each.

Chairman Letson thanked them both for their service.

Commissioner Bryson thanked them both for their service. It had been an honor and a privilege to work with both of them. He appreciated them putting politics aside and putting the county first.

Commissioner Smith thanked them both for being professional.

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

(3) MINUTES: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes a Regular Meeting of November 05, 2024. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Chairman Letson thanked Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Stribling for their service and for the friendships they had. He wished them the best.

(5) COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

(a) Commissioner Stribling thanked everyone in the county for trusting him and he hoped he did a good job.

(b) Commissioner Jones stated he had been thinking about the trust the citizens put into each of the Commissioners to spend their dollars wisely and to move forward with projects. He was thankful for the trust he had received over the years. He had worked with 13 Commissioners and four different boards. Once they became Commissioners, they put politics asides and they worked for the citizens. He appreciated the opportunity.

(6) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: Mr. King thanked Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Stribling for their public service and the support they had given to him over the last several months.

He reported on the following projects:

(a) Aquatics Center: In the process of completing the punch list. Staff had been trained in all the functions of the systems. A tentative grand opening would be December 7th.

(b) Center for Domestic Peace: Project was moving forward. Sub-footers had been installed along with all stormwater drainage. Foundation, rough-in plumbing, electrical and other utilities were being prepped for the building pad. The elevator vault had been dug and was being installed.

(c) Cashiers-Glenville Recreation Splash Pad: The bid opening would be held on November 21st at 2:00 p.m.

(d) Whittier-Qualla Park: The bid opening would be held on November 21st at 2:00 p.m.

(e) Department on Aging: The assessment of the building was completed. The project would go out to bid in January.

(f) Canada Fire Department and Community Center: Staff working on a funding plan. Plan modifications continued. Architect would complete construction drawings.

(g) Justice Center and Administration Building: Staff working on a funding plan.

(h) Fair Grounds: RFP out for demolition and construction of the building. Working on the water tower issue, which would not be feasible to rehabilitate.

(i) Greenway: Continuing to look at funding mechanisms and expansion.

(j) School Projects: Projects would be discussed in January with a Capital School Plan.

(7) INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC: None.

(8) CONSENT AGENDA:

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for October, 2024 and two Budget Ordinance Amendments for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for approval.

(b) Brandi Henson, Tax Collector, presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for October, 2024, for approval.

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(9) AUDIT REPORT: Matt Braswell of Martin, Starnes & Associates, presented: 2024 Audited Financial Statements:

(a) Audit Highlights:

- Unmodified opinion
- Cooperative staff
- No findings or questioned costs
- No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies
- 2024 Property tax revenues: \$47,328,037
- 2024 Collection rate: 99.14%
- 2023 Property tax revenues: \$45,836,451
- 2023 Collection rate: 99.26%

(b) General Fund Summary:

- 2024 Revenues: \$96,045,564
- 2024 Expenditures: \$86,045,024
- 2023 Revenues: \$92,191,710
- 2023 Expenditures: \$80,032,851

(c) Fund Balance: Serves as a measure of the county's financial resources available. Five classifications of governmental fund balances:

- Non-spendable. Not in cash form.
- Restricted. External restrictions (laws, grantors).
- Committed. Internal constraints at the highest (Board) level does not expire, requires Board action to undo.
- Assigned. Internal constraints, lower level than committed.
- Unassigned. No external or internal constraints.

(d) Total Fund Balance General Fund

- 2022: \$38,307,037
- 2023: \$49,994,142
- 2024: \$53,756,235
- Increase in unassigned Fund Balance: \$3,762,093
- Unassigned Fund Balance 2024: 43.3%
- Unassigned Fund Balance 2023: 43.9%

(e) Top Three Sources of Income:

- Property Tax:
 - 2024: \$47,328,037
 - 2023: \$45,836,451
- Other Taxes and License:
 - 2024: \$23,923,648
 - 2023: \$23,537,191
- Restricted Intergovernmental:
 - 2024: \$8,751,934
 - 2023: \$8,202,860

(f) Top Three Expenditures:

- General Government:
 - 2024: \$17,198,217
 - 2023: \$13,466,643
- Public Safety:
 - 2024: \$23,240,925
 - 2023: \$23,155,132
- Human Services:
 - 2024: \$18,824,072
 - 2023: \$17,826,575

Informational item.

(10) **FIREWORKS DISPLAY REQUEST**: Tony Elders, Director of Permitting and Code Enforcement, requested approval of an application received from the Chamber of Commerce for a fireworks display scheduled for November 30th in downtown Sylva.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Fireworks Display request, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) OUR STATE OUR HOME HOUSING PROGRAM GRANT: Michael Poston, Planning Director, stated the nImpact Initiative was a public policy organization housed at the UNC-School of Government launched in 2017. Their vision was to partner with civic leaders and diverse stakeholders to help improve lives in all 100 of the state's counties. Carolina Across 100 was launched by the UNC Chancellor's office in 2020 in an effort to partner with North Carolina Communities in recovering from the impacts of Covid-19. Previous programs included: Our State, Our Work; Our State, Our Wellbeing; the Tar Heel Bus Tour; and Rural Pharmacy Health Initiative.

The fifth installment of the Carolina Across 100 was the Our State, Our Homes program. In this program, nImpact would select a cohort of 18 communities across the state that were interested in working across sectors to improve access to and availability of affordable housing options. The project had an 18-month completion timeframe.

nImpact would partner with the Development Finance Initiative to provide technical assistance to the selected cohort communities. Each community was asked to develop a core team to lead the work program. Jackson County's core team would be made up by Michael Poston, Planning Director; Tiffany Henry, Economic Development Director; LeNay Shuler Southwestern Commission/Southwestern HOME Consortium; and Pasty Davis, Executive Director of Mountain Projects. The Core Team committed to attend five trainings at UNC during the 18-month process to learn about housing strategies to bring back to the communities. They would also be working with local stakeholders in the community to develop strategies to address affordable housing.

There was no cost to the county other than staff time. The program would cover travel expenses for the Core Team to attend trainings and would also provide a stipend for a program manager. Applications were due on November 22nd. Communities would be notified of acceptance into the program by the end of the year. They expected the 18-month cohort to begin in early 2025. He requested the Board's approval apply for the Our State, Our Homes Program.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to approve staff applying for the Our State, Our Homes Program, as requested. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) BOARD OF COMMISSIONER COMPENSATION: Mr. King stated this item was discussed at the previous meeting. North Carolina General Statute 153A-28 allowed for adjustments to Board of Commissioner compensation during the adoption of the budget. This would be a good topic for the next budget cycle. Staff would work on an analysis of commissioner compensation in similar sized counties in North Carolina for comparison and future discussions.

General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(13) COUNCIL ON AGING: A recommendation was submitted by the Department on Aging.

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved to appoint Jana Fulton to serve an unexpired term on the Council on Aging. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: A recommendation was submitted by Nick Breedlove, JCDA Executive Director.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to appoint Peter Evers to serve a two-year term and Robert Jumper to serve a one-year term as Chair on the Tourism Development Authority. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

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

(16) **CLOSED SESSION:**

Motion: Commissioner Bryson moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal, G.S.143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property and G.S.143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Chairman Letson called the regular meeting back to order and stated no action was taken in closed session except the approval of the closed session minutes. He congratulated the new Transit Director, Teresa Moore.

There being no further business, Commissioner Jones moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman