

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
DECEMBER 03, 2024**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on December 03, 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)
	Jenny Lynn Hooper, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
	Michael Jennings, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
	John W. Smith, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) CULLOWHEE REVITALIZATION ENDEAVOR: Matt Tornow, Chair of Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE), presented: Cullowhee River Park:

(a) Collective progress:

- Land acquisition – two properties on Wayehutta Road
- Removal of structures
- Invasive plant species removal
- Ensuring bridge replacement would be conducive to greenway connection to park
- Viability and economic impact assessments
- Community interest assessments

(b) A vision for all: a place for family, calm and commerce

(c) Phase One: \$1 million initial investment:

- Additional parking for commerce and park patrons
- Reservable pavilions
- Event stage
- Event vending pad
- Restrooms
- ADA river access and a wading beach
- Access to the expanded greenway

(d) Economic Impact: a 2014 economic impact study conducted by Syneva Economics, projected the following outcomes of the river park development:

- \$1.6 million new spending annually
- 16 new local jobs
- \$145,000 annual tax revenues

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(2) COMMUNICATION TOWER LEASE AGREEMENT: Mr. King presented a Lease Agreement for the tower site on Kings Mountain. The lease would be for five years starting January 1, 2025. The tower was the county's main site for public safety and emergency communications. The amount for the lease would be \$1,163 for year one, with a 4% increase every year thereafter.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(3) RESOLUTION SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY: Mr. King presented a sample resolution to support the Blue Ridge Park Foundation's request to the State of North Carolina for \$1.5 million to implement the strategies identified in the 2024 Blue Ridge Rising Strategic Plan. The request for support had been sent to all Western North Carolina Counties. There was no request for funds from the county.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(4) OTHER BUSINESS: Commissioner Smith requested to discuss the Boards and Commissions. Several of the boards had expired appointments and vacancies. He wondered if all the boards were needed.

General discussions were held.

Chairman Letson stated they could study the list and revisit the issue at the January work session.

Informational item.

(5) WALK CASHIERS: Paul Robshaw, President of Vision Cashiers, presented: The Cashiers Greenway Ramble:

(a) Vision Cashiers was a nonprofit, volunteer organization that worked with the county to build sidewalks, a dog park and created the Walk Cashiers initiative.

(b) Walk Cashiers was a five-mile trail system with safe lighting, wifi, security and emergency access.

(c) Equinox Environmental study funded by Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation, created a plan for a five-mile network of walkability with an estimated cost of \$10 million.

(d) Urban Land Institute, funded by local organizations and donors, highly recommended to build a robust network of pathways, trails and sidewalks to facilitate and improve walkability within the village core.

(e) Implementation: TDA was invited as a participant, but chose to be a funder. The parties met and obtained agreement and named the following for representation:

- Mark Letson – Jackson County
- Ben Harris – Chamber
- Paul Robshaw – Vision Cashiers

All contractors agreed to do the work for cost. Implementation would be phased with phase one being completed. The plan for phase two had been created.

(f) Source of funds for the \$10 million cost:

- Developers: approximately 50% as they build:
 - Cashiers Lake
 - East Village
 - Cashiers Marketplace
- Initial quiet campaign had \$1.6 million in commitments and expected another \$1.4 million
- Would apply for a \$1.5 million TDA grant
- Requesting \$500,000 from the county

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Bryson asked where the funds would come from if the Board decided to grant the request?

Ms. Fox stated they could take the funds from the CPR Fund.

Commissioner Smith stated it was possible Walk Cashiers may receive more funds in donations than anticipated. He thought there should be a phased approach with the county funds being the last dollars spent.

Consensus: *Discuss this item further during the budget process.*

(6) OTHER BUSINESS: Michael Hopkins, Parks and Recreation Director, stated he wanted to discuss two ongoing recreation projects:

(a) The county received qualifying bids for the Whittier-Qualla Park. The apparent low bidder was Cherokee Enterprises in the amount of \$2,158,633.09 of which 10% was for contingency in the amount of \$196,239.37. They would not be requesting the contingency amount. Equinox's estimate for the project was \$2,613,237. He requested the Board consider this item at the next regular meeting.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(b) They received one bid for the Cashiers Splash Pad from Buchanan and Sons for over \$4 million. Equinox's estimate for the project was just over \$2.5 million. They asked Equinox to do an assessment with the bids and after speaking with Mr. King, they believed the splash pad could be pulled out separately so they could do informal bids.

Chairman Letson stated he did not see a large demand for the splash pad.

Commissioner Jennings stated the comments he heard from residents was they did not want a splash pad, they wanted a pool.

General discussions were held.

Mr. King stated they would split the project out so they could do the portion that was attainable at that time and they could have further discussions about the splash pad versus pool later during the budget process. They would ask Equinox to program the area to see what the possibilities were and what would be attainable at that time.

Informational item.

There being no further business, Commissioner Hooper moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman