

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
APRIL 09, 2024**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on April 09, 2024, 1:00 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, Interim County Attorney (Via Zoom)
Mark Jones, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board
John W. Smith, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
Tom Stribling, Commissioner	

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SPECIALTY PLAN: Shelly Foreman, Western Region County Relations Representative, Vaya Health, stated on February 7, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Children and Families Specialty Plan (CFSP). This was a single statewide Medicaid managed care plan for children, youth and families served by the child welfare system. Vaya Health (Vaya), in collaboration with Partners Health Management (Partners), would be applying to be the statewide contractor for the CFSP.

Vaya and Partners had deep relationships working with local DSS, counties, providers, hospitals and other stakeholders working to support children and youth in the child welfare system. Vaya pioneered the model of embedding care managers in local DSS offices and today both Vaya and Partners embedded care management in the 47 counties they collectively served. Embedded care management was at the heart of NCDHHS' design for the CFSP. Vaya and Partners already developed and implemented that model.

Vaya and Partners had more than a decade of experience administering NC Medicaid managed care plans as LME/MCOs covering a full array of behavioral health, substance use disorder and intellectual/developmental disabilities services to children, adolescents and adults. Through a synergistic partnership, Vaya and Partners looked forward to building on the 50-year legacy of North Carolina area programs and continuing both organizations' long-term commitment to key factors associated with positive outcomes for children and families involved with the child welfare system.

(a) Key Factors:

- Timely access to screenings, assessments and services
- Coordination of care
- Family and caregiver engagement
- Appropriate use of psychotropic medications

The CFSP contractor would be responsible for managing NC Medicaid health plan services statewide to children and families engaged with the state's child welfare system. While Vaya would serve as the singular contracted entity, the collaboration between Vaya and Partners would allow Vaya to leverage the individualized services and long-term relationships already established across the 47 counties in the two geographically contiguous regions.

By working together, Vaya and Partners would be able to operate a statewide health plan that would minimize administrative barriers to timely access to appropriate and quality care, while continuing to meet the specialized needs of communities throughout the region.

(b) Children and families served by the CFSP would benefit from Vaya's and Partners' unique strengths and shared values:

- Established relationships with an in-depth knowledge of local communities
- Innovative and successful approaches to serving children in foster care, their caregivers and families of origin
- Proactive and inventive efforts to support prevention, family preservation and permanency
- Existing embedded care management services in 47 local Departments of Social Services for children and youth in the child welfare system
- Access to an existing statewide provider network
- Robust Systems of Care with community-based organizations
- Collaborative approach to statewide expansion built on existing knowledge and experience serving the child welfare population
- Commitment to the public system of service management
- Dedication to the well-being of individuals and local communities
- Stakeholder involvement and the critical input of individuals with lived experience
- Fiscal responsibility
- Innovation

The expertise and insight into community needs and North Carolina's existing service continuum for children and families, plus both organizations' long-standing commitment to addressing systemic barriers and challenges, made Vaya, with the support of Partners, uniquely qualified to implement the CFSP.

(c) She presented a template support letter to Secretary Kinsley for the Board to consider.

General discussions were held.

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

(2) **CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES:** Tiffany Henry, Economic Director and Ann Bass, ARC Community Economic Development Planner for NC Department of Commerce, were present for this item.

Ms. Henry stated last year, the county entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with NC Department of Commerce through Creating Outdoor Recreation Activities (CORE). Also, present in the audience were many of the members of the Work Group.

Ms. Bass presented CORE:

(a) Technical Assistance program to assist communities across the state to leverage the out of doors for increased economic opportunity and benefit.

(b) Asset based Outdoor Recreation Economy Development Planning:

- CORE: Economy around all aspects of human powered recreational activities undertaken in nature based environments.
- Main Street: Preservation and redevelopment of historic assets as basis for economic growth.
- Other asset economies: Craft/arts/culture, health + wellness, education, local food...

(c) US Outdoor Recreation Economy: 2022 BEA Economic Impacts:

- \$1.1 trillion impact: 2.2% of US GDP, 3.2% of US employees
- Sector GDP 4.8% growing faster than overall economy 1.9%
- Largest industries: Retail trade, entertainment/food & hospitality, manufacturing

- (d) NC Outdoor Recreation Economy: 2022 BEA Economic Impacts:
 - \$14.6B fully 2% of state GDP
 - NC Outdoor Recreation (OR) employment increased 5.9% = 2.9% of all employees in NC, 147,000 jobs
- (e) Work group survey priorities: most important benefit to be gained from OR assets:
 - 100% increased revenue for existing businesses developing a skilled outdoor workforce
 - 92% attracting new outdoor business and industry improving quality of life for full/part-time residents
- (f) Planning process:
 - Opportunities
 - Challenges
- (g) The Strategic Plan: Jackson County was the Western NC home basecamp and natural escape with a diverse outdoor recreation scene providing unique experiences.
- (h) The Work Plan:
 - Home basecamp + natural escape:
 - Increase trail connectivity between towns and recreation assets
 - Participate in Pinnacle Park planning
 - Develop a county stewardship council
 - Explore and encourage new recreation hospitality options
 - Expand + Develop a diverse outdoor recreation scene:
 - Pursue development of Whitewater Park at Dillsboro former dam site
 - Expand trail experiences for longer stays, unique, notable experiences
 - Convene and nurture an outdoor social network
 - Further develop unique, personal experiences for all
 - Establish youth outdoor council
 - Develop riverfront family outdoor activity centers and events
 - Develop new, small group experiences
 - Information sharing, experience branding, targeted marketing:
 - Develop county outdoor brand with targeted marketing
 - Develop and install outdoor recreation information kiosks
 - Design and implement directional signage program
 - Develop a social media monitoring program
- (i) Three sites on the Tuckasegee:
 - Dillsboro River Park 446 N. River Road:
 - Endorsed whitewater park, class II-III rapids, visible from highway, amphitheater or slope
 - Revisit Heritage Park plan for trails and family activities
 - Utilities did not serve south side
 - Drexel at Whittier Industrial site 271 Clearwood Drive:
 - Floodway/plain determination holding site hostage
 - Best stretch of Tuck for safe, family contact
 - Group very excited about creating family river day and events destination with cleanup for safety only
 - Cullowhee River Property 74 Wayehutta Road
 - Existing plan by CURVE + dam notch funding + greenway
 - Opportunity to create WCU riverfront downtown recreation area
 - DOT roundabout land + island
 - Base Camp Cullowhee for equipment
 - Greenway heading north + community gardens expansion

- Work continues, implementation:
 - Three sites information and interest
 - Sylva CORE plan folded into the Work Group
 - Building Outdoor Communities process
 - Stewardship Council held inaugural meeting April 3
 - Progress on Greenway connections
- (j) Next steps:
 - Receive Commissioner comments/feedback on draft plan
 - Adopt the CORE plan and extend directives to empower the Work Group to implement
 - Assign and direct leadership
 - Assemble partners by Work Plan Actions/Tasks
 - Technical assistance available
 - Continued support from NC Commerce/Rural Development
- (k) Appendix to the CORE Report
- (l) Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies August 2023 Report

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(3) **BROADBAND**: Ms. Henry presented Broadband Update:

- (a) Current funded Broadband projects:
 - Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF):
 - FCC Program, awards determined through reverse auction
 - \$16.9 million award to Charter/Spectrum
 - 11,128 locations awarded in the county
 - 6-year total project timeframe
 - NC Growing Rural Economics with Access to Technology (NC GREAT) Grant Program:
 - NC Program managed through NCDIT Office
 - Jackson County had two awards:
 - 1,156 locations awarded to Charter/Spectrum \$4,497,486
 - 636 locations awarded to Balsam West \$2,431,130.90
 - 2-year total project timeframe
- (b) Charter/Spectrum progress update:
 - RDOF 1,223 address activated
 - NC Great 330 addresses activated
 - Some initial delays with permitting reported, but back on track
 - RDOF completion projected by 1Q28
- (c) Balsam West GREAT Grant update:
 - In the engineering development/build phase
 - On track to meet 2-year timeline
- (d) Next Broadband grant program: Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) Grant Program:
 - Program kickoff by NCDIT January 2024
 - County collaborates with NCDIT to identify project area and scope
 - Project posted on NCDIT website as an RFP
 - Qualified providers respond and compete for project
 - County reviews responses with NCDIT and selects provider
 - Max of \$8 million grant per county per year
 - CAB represents a potential opportunity to advance projects not funded in the current round of GREAT grants

- (e) CAB Project matching funds:
 - Direct ARPA Funds received by county: \$8 million or more
 - Broadband provider responsibility: Up to 30%
 - County responsibility: Up to 35%
 - State responsibility: Up to 35%
- (f) CAB eligibility:
 - County must review eligible locations established by NCDIT
 - Select priority areas or grouping
 - Work with NCDIT to develop project scope
 - 4,675 total eligible locations in the county
- (g) Next steps:
 - BOC to provide formal match funds commitment to NCDIT, identify an “up to amount”
 - Once match amount was determined, proposed project scope could be identified
 - NCDIT would prepare the Scope of Work and publish RFP
 - County to identify up to two representatives to serve on the Evaluation Team to review responses to RFP
 - Funds only utilized if grant awarded and final grant agreement executed
 - Take the NC Broadband Survey

General discussions were held.

Consensus: Ms. Fox to research possible funds available for the project. The Board would continue further discussions.

(4) FY 2024-2025 BUDGET REQUESTS: Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented a summary of requests from departments. In the next couple of weeks, she and Mr. King would meet with departments to discuss the details of the requests.

- (a) Capital Outlay Detail Total Equipment: \$3,115,820
- (b) Capital Improvements Detail: \$1,316,299
- (c) Conservation, Preservation, Recreation Fund: \$3,092,400
- (d) Greenway Fund: \$140,000
- (e) Personnel Changes total additional increases: \$1,315,466 (above step and COLA)
- (f) Nonprofit Grant Applications received to date: \$2,152,167 (\$1,500,000 from Mountain Projects for the Webster Village Partnership)

General discussions were held.

Informational item.

(5) OTHER BUSINESS: Commissioner Bryson presented a request letter from the Caney Fork Community Development Council. They had funding needs beyond the annual allocation of \$1,500 for building repairs and bills. They requested an additional \$6,000.

Ms. Fox stated funds in the amount of \$6,425 were available in the CDC Improvement Fund.

Commissioner Bryson stated he also wanted to discuss increasing the \$1,500 annual allocation to the Community Development Centers throughout the county.

Commissioner Jones noted it was going to take major funding for the Canada Fire Department/Community Building to get the fire department up to standards and to utilize the community center for the public.

Consensus: Add the Caney Fork Community Development Council \$6,000 request to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.

Chairman Letson welcomed Mr. King to his first meeting.

Mr. King stated he was excited to be there and thanked the Board for the opportunity. He looked forward to working with the great folks in the county.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman