

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 03, 2024**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on September 03, 2024, 6:00 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, 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) **PROCLAMATION: FIREFIGHTER, RESCUE SQUAD AND FIRST RESPONDER WEEK:** Chairman Letson read a Proclamation declaring September 8th – 14th as Firefighter, Rescue Squad and First Responder Week. Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Todd Dillard, Emergency Management Director and Michael Forbis, Fire Marshal, were present to accept the proclamation.

(2) **PROCLAMATION: OPIOID AWARENESS MONTH:** Chairman Letson read a Proclamation declaring September as Opioid Awareness Month. Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Anna Lippard, Deputy Health Director, was present to accept the proclamation.

(3) **AGENDA:** Chairman Letson requested to add two items: Budget Ordinance Amendment and Greenway Property with Project Ordinance Amendment. Commissioner Smith moved to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(4) **MINUTES:** Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of August 20, 2024, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(5) **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:** Chairman Letson stated there were a lot of sports going on throughout the county. He encouraged citizens to support these kids who had worked hard to compete and have fun.

(6) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS:**

(a) Commissioner Stribling stated he and his wife attended to the “Pop a Cork” annual fundraiser at Castle Ladyhawke. Crystal Jones, AWAKE Executive Director and her team did an amazing job planning and organizing. They raised over \$70,000, making it the highest ever. He thanked all the sponsors and community members who shared the love of AWAKE for their mission to help child abuse victims.

(b) Commissioner Smith stated his wife's family had a family reunion at Mark Watson Park. He heard several good comments about the new paving.

(7) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:** None.

(8) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:** Dr. Lynn Dillard stated she served on the Board of Education, but was speaking solely as a member of the community on behalf of Blue Ridge School. After hearing several complaints, she visited Blue Ridge School. She was heartbroken to see water dripping throughout. She addressed this issue and several other work orders with the Board of Education and School Administration. The buildings were owned by the county, so the county was responsible for the maintenance of the buildings. She requested support for these issues and to come up with a solution.

Commissioner Jones requested Mr. King state the normal course of action for maintenance project funding requests.

Mr. King stated the county had a fiduciary responsibility for the maintenance of the building, but it was up to school system to take care of the maintenance issues asking the county for the funding. During the budget process, the school system should make a budget request.

(9) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED BASED CAPITAL FUND GRANT APPLICATION:**

Dr. Dana Ayers, Superintendent, reported the RFQ for the Fairview project opened on August 20th and would close on September 20th. Also, after the Board of Commissioners funded the no-cost lunches and breakfasts for all students, they had served 4,000 extra meals after the first 12 days of school.

She presented a Needs Based Capital Grant for a traditional middle school. They had applied for grants in the last three cycles for other projects, but were not awarded. In their research, they learned consolidation and new building projects were being addressed.

The first number they received for a traditional middle school was \$140 million. She requested to apply for the Need Based Grant for a traditional middle school with a new number from recent construction projects in the state of between \$50-70 million. The grant required a 15% commitment, or about \$8 million, from the Board of Commissioners of the full amount applied for.

They hoped to build the middle school for a total of \$60 million. Land would also have to be purchased, which was not a part of the \$60 million total. She noted Blue Ridge would not be affected by the middle school. Grants would be announced in October. If awarded, they would have to break ground within 24 months.

General discussions were held.

Chairman Letson stated he was for the middle school program. He did have concerns about transportation needs for students.

Commissioner Stribling stated he thought a middle school was needed.

Commissioner Jones stated he had concerns about issues at Blue Ridge School, such as cafeteria staff, roof leaks, grades being combined and other minor issues. He thought they should fix what they had before building something new. Since Blue Ridge was not going to be part of the traditional middle school, he wanted to see the entire maintenance needs for Blue Ridge, so they could make a decision.

Traditionally, it had always been a gentlemen's agreement with the Commissioners who were serving their last months in the term to get feedback from incoming Commissioner since they would be making the decision.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Bryson asked Darlene Fox, Finance Director, if the funding would be available in Articles 40 and 42 when the match would be needed.

Ms. Fox stated \$8 million would be in those funds, which would not be needed until FY26-27.

Commissioner Bryson asked if plans had been made to address the concerns at Blue Ridge School?

Dr. Ayers stated Blue Ridge was getting a roof on the Blue Ridge Early College side.

Commissioner Bryson stated his main goal was to see the other schools repaired and updated. He requested a verbal commitment to address other school needs and upgrades.

Dr. Ayers stated he had her commitment. The Blue Ridge roof was already on the schedule to be repaired.

Commissioner Jones asked Ms. Fox where the funds would come from to purchase property for the middle school? Those funds could be needed much sooner than FY26-27.

Ms. Fox stated they could use Capital Reserve funds, borrow money or a combination of different categories. With the sales tax money they were able to add approximately \$5 million per year, which included Article 46.

Motion: *Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Public Schools Need Based Capital Fund Grant Application and commit the local matching portion of 15% or \$8 million for a traditional middle school, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) SCHEDULE OF VALUES FOR REVALUATION 2025: Tabitha Ashe, Tax Administrator, presented the statutory proposed Schedule of Values for 2025. All counties were required to adopt a Schedule of Values to be effective at the beginning of each revaluation year. She requested a public hearing be scheduled on October 1, 2024 at 5:55 p.m.

General discussions were held.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to set a public hearing for 2025 Schedule of Values for Revaluation on October 1st at 5:55 p.m. to be held at the Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, as requested. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) DARK FIBER PROJECT WITH BALSAM WEST: Mr. King stated this item was discussed at the work session. He presented a contract with Balsam West to purchase two strands of fiber between all county buildings for a total of 71.78 miles. The cost would be \$223,950 for the first year, then maintenance annually. With this new technology, savings to the county would be approximately \$300,000 per year. He requested permission to sign documentation to start the project. He would present a Budget Amendment in October.

General discussions were held.

Motion: *Commissioner Bryson moved to authorize the execution of the Balsam West contract for the fiber project, as requested. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) FIREWORKS DISPLAY REQUEST: Mr. King presented a request from Tony Elders, Director of Permitting and Code Enforcement, for approval of an application received for a fireworks display scheduled for October 4th at Castle Ladyhawke in Tuckasegee.

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

(13) BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: Ms. Fox presented a Budget Ordinance Amendment to for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, for approval.

***Motion:** Commissioner Smith moved to approve the Budget Ordinance Amendment, as presented. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(14) PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: Ms. Fox presented a Project Ordinance Amendment accepting a Tourism Development Authority Grant in the amount of \$745,000 to be used for land acquisition for the Greenway.

***Motion:** Commissioner Stribling moved to approve the Project Ordinance Amendment in the amount of \$745,000, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(15) GREENWAY PROPERTY ACQUISITION: Ms. Fox presented the Maturo property for consideration to purchase for the Greenway in the amount of \$745,000 for 17.45 acres (PIN#7650-41-9030 and PIN#7650-51-2005) off University Heights Road.

***Motion:** Commissioner Jones moved to approve the purchase of the Maturo property containing 17.45 acres, in the amount of \$745,000, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

Commissioner Bryson noted the Tourism Development Authority Grant of \$745,000 would be used to purchase the Maturo property.

(16) ORDINANCE O2024-01 DECLARING TEMPORARY TRAFFIC REGULATION FOR THE YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL HAYRIDE COUNTY EVENT: Mr. King stated the Youth Arts Festival set September 21, 2024 as the date for the annual Hayride for a Youth Arts Festival event. The NCDOT rules and regulations required the Commissioners adopt an ordinance approving the event. There would be no road closures and no public hearing was required.

***Motion:** Commissioner Stribling moved to adopt Ordinance O2024-01 for the Youth Arts Festival Hayride, as presented. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(17) ORDINANCE O2024-02 DECLARING TEMPORARY TRAFFIC REGULATION FOR THE VETERANS ASSEMBLY DAY 5K COUNTY EVENT: Mr. King stated the Veterans Department set November 09, 2024 as the date for the first annual Veterans Assembly Day 5K event. The NCDOT rules and regulations required the Commissioners adopt an ordinance approving the event. There would be no road closures and no public hearing was required.

***Motion:** Commissioner Bryson moved to adopt Ordinance O2024-02 for the Veterans Assembly Day 5K event, as presented. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(18) ORDINANCE O2024-03 DECLARING TEMPORARY TRAFFIC REGULATION FOR THE GREENING UP THE MOUNTAINS 5K COUNTY EVENT: Mr. King stated the Recreation and Parks Department set April 26, 2025 as the date for the annual Greening Up the Mountains 5K event. The NCDOT rules and regulations required the Commissioners adopt an ordinance approving the event. There would be no road closures and no public hearing was required.

***Motion:** Commissioner Smith moved to adopt Ordinance O2024-03 for the Greening Up the Mountains 5K event, as presented. Commissioner Bryson seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(19) PRESS CONFERENCE: None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman