

Posted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time Posted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Posted By: Pat Parris  
Witnessed By: \_\_\_\_\_

**MINUTES OF A JOINT WORK SESSION  
HELD ON  
MARCH 5, 2012**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Joint Meeting with the Town of Dillsboro, Town of Webster, Town of Sylva and Village of Forest Hills on March 5, 2012 at 6:00 p.m., Senior Center, 100 County Park, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present:

County Board of Commissioners:

W. J. Debnam, Chairman  
Doug Cody, Vice Chair  
Charles Elders  
Mark Jones

Town of Sylva:

Maurice Moody, Mayor  
Harold Hensley  
Linda Sossamon  
Chris Matheson

Town of Dillsboro

Mike Fitzgerald, Mayor  
David Jones  
Tim Parris  
Buford Riddle  
David Gates

Village of Forest Hills:

James Wallace, Mayor  
Clark Corvin  
Carl Hooper  
Stephanie Gibson  
Suzanne Stone

Town of Webster:

Larry Phillips, Mayor  
Billie Bryson  
Jean Davenport  
Allan Grant  
Tracy Rodas

Chairman Debnam called the meeting to order and stated the purpose was to discuss economic development and gave a brief history of the JDC/EDC in the past.

Mr. Wooten gave the status of the current EDC structure and provided copies of the Economic Development Commission By-Laws dated April 10, 2007, Memorandum of Understanding executed in 2008, G.S. §158-8, spread sheets detailing financial funding from 2007 to present, 2007 EDC transfer and contribution summary, and a chart showing the equity from the county and municipalities using the annual contribution allocations based upon the current population. He stated it is now time for the governmental entities to evaluate what the next steps should be as they relate to economic development to become active and on how to re-engineer the issue.

Consultants David and Betty Huskins of Ridge Top Associates gave a power point presentation and an overview of the North Carolina Tomorrow Program being used to develop regional economic development plans that will be consolidated into a statewide plan. The proposed steps to organize the local effort include:

1. Reorganize the economic development efforts and align governmental organizations with private businesses and educational institutions in a new partnership of economic resilience.
2. Establish a new partnership with municipalities and the business community with a shared economic development vision moving forward.
3. Conduct a county economic assessment to identify local attributes to both advance and deter economic development.

4. Create an economic profile of the county that highlights its competitive advantage.
5. Develop a 5-year economic development strategy with a shared vision, action plans and benchmarks to measure success.
6. Monitor, evaluate and assist with implementation of the new structure and strategies needed by Jackson County.

Ms. Huskins stated that at the end of the day it is the private sector who creates jobs, not government. The plans are to create a situation to foster growth in the private sector. Public and private partnerships are very important. They have met with the BalsamWest Fiber Net group. There is not another rural area in the world that has the kind of connectivity made available by that company and prospective companies need to be made aware of that asset.

Dillsboro Alderman Gates stated Dillsboro is centrally located and offers a lot of opportunities. Everyone needs to come together and work as a group.

Sylva Commissioner Hensley stated it would be helpful to solicit opinions from prior EDC board members; however, a new organization should be put in place.

Chairman Debnam stated open and constant communication is vital in a reorganization effort. Everything is in place to decide the direction to take. There are a lot of advantages and with David and Betty assistance and guidance, something can be accomplished and time should not be wasted.

Commissioner Cody stated a strict time line should be established for making decisions.

Village of Forest Hills Mayor Wallace stated a catalogue of what the entire county has available is necessary before the process can move forward.

Ryan Sherby, Southwestern Commission Region A representative, stated his role is to fit everything together. The Southwestern Commission has done a study every year since 1975 but is taking a much more robust approach this year.

Mr. Wooten stated that in all likelihood at the end of this process it may be necessary to identify someone to guide and lead economic development efforts. Facilitation needs to take place among the various governmental entities about what the next steps are concerning the EDC structure. Currently it is not active and a decision needs to be made concerning whether to activate it as is, activate it in some other form or in the alternative, dissolve it and decide how to move forward. The key thing is to keep the lines of communication open and make sure everyone feels they are getting the information they need.

Chairman Debnam recommended that a follow up meeting be scheduled within two or three months.

There being no further business, Commissioner Cody moved that the meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

---

Patsy C. Parris - Clerk to Board

---

W. J. Debnam, Chairman