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Time Posted: _____

Posted By: Pat Parris

Witnessed By: _____

**MINUTES OF A
JOINT WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS and
CHEROKEE INDIAN TRIBAL COUNCIL
HELD ON
JULY 31, 2012**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a joint Work Session with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Council on July 31, 2012, 1:00 p.m., Harrah's Cherokee Casino, Brio Tuscan Grille Dining Room, 777 Casino Drive, Cherokee, North Carolina.

Present: Jack Debnam, Chairman
Doug Cody, Vice Chair
Charles Elders, Commissioner
Mark Jones, Commissioner
Joe Cowan, Commissioner

Chuck Wooten, County Manager
J. K. Coward, Jr., Co. Attorney
Pat Parris, Clerk to Board

Chairman Debnam called the Joint Work Session to order and thanked everyone for the opportunity to be part of a historic occasion – the first joint meeting in county history and looks forward to working together to strongly improve the County's relationship with the Tribe.

Michell Hicks, Principal Chief, welcomed everyone and introduced the nine Tribal Council members who were present. He stated the Tribe's goal is to create a strategy with the County. The Tribe is interested in transportation, infrastructure, jobs, and has invested in BalsamWest for fiber optics.

(1) US HWY 441 CORRIDOR: Gerald Green, Planning Director, gave a brief update of the ordinance and stated public meetings are scheduled on August 16, 23 and September 6 at the Smokey Mountain Elementary School concerning the proposed amendments.

Chief Hicks suggested that sidewalks be built along the U. S. 41 Corridor for pedestrian traffic and that DOT be requested to build medians in the highway in addition to planting flowers along the highway.

Mr. Green stated there is a need to work on the greenway program plan in order to tie it onto the reservation.

Chief Hicks stated that the ball fields host approximately 30 tournaments each year which brings a lot of people into the area. The Tribe has firm commitments to bring housing close to the golf course and needs a better understanding of the restrictions for development and will possibly need waivers because eventually the property will go into a Trust. He stated there are some concerns with the wastewater treatment system. The Tribe requires that any new businesses in the area must connect to the system.

Mr. Wooten stated that TWSA has a 10 year plan and was supposed to have started operating the new system after 3 years and anticipated it could operate on at least a break even basis; however, in order for that to happen customers are needed. The County's main purpose for involvement in the project was for service to Smokey Mountain Elementary School.

(2) **JACKSON COUNTY AIRPORT:** Mike Schoonover, Jackson County Airport Manager, stated that because of live dealers at the casino, he is getting calls from air taxi services interested in ferrying customers from the airport to the casino. The travel time from the airport to the casino is approximately 30 minutes. The airport will accommodate all single and twin engine planes, most single engine prop-jets and many twin engine prop-jets.

Commissioner Jones stated the airport receives funding from DOT (80% federal dollars) which requires a 20% match from the County. The County continues to provide match funding through the budget and contributes all maintenance, grounds, and housekeeping services.

Commissioner Cody stated the airport is viewed as having a big economic development impact to the County.

(3) **GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD:** David Huskins, consultant, stated the railroad is a family owned corporation. The Tribe would like for GSMR to build a railroad track into Cherokee in addition to a track into Cherokee County. GSMR officials have shown an interest in talking with the County and the Tribe about expansion.

(4) **MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS:** A recommendation was made that mutual aid agreements for law enforcement, emergency management, ambulance service, and fire protection be entered into by both entities.

(5) **FUTURE MEETINGS:** Both governing boards recommended that semi-annual meetings be scheduled.

CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Cody moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman Debnam called the regular meeting back to order and stated no action was taken in closed session.

There being no further comments, Commissioner Cowan moved to adjourn the work session Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the work session adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Patsy C. Parris, Clerk to Board

W. J. Debnam, Chairman

