

**REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JUNE 3, 2013**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on June 3, 2013, 2:00 pm, Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Rd., Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Jack Debnam, Chairman
Doug Cody, Vice Chair
Charles Elders, Commissioner
Vicki Greene, Commissioner
Mark Jones, Commissioner

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

Chairman Debnam called the meeting to order.

AGENDA: Chairman Debnam amended the Agenda by adding ABC Authority. Commissioner Elders moved to approve the amended Agenda. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

MINUTES: Commissioner Greene moved to approve the Minutes of the Work Session and Regular Meeting of May 20, 2013. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

PROCLAMATION: Chairman Debnam read a Proclamation honoring Relay for Life. He commended all participants for their efforts in raising funds for cancer research.

Motion: *Commissioner Cody moved to proclaim the month of June as Relay for Life Month. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

(1) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Chairman Debnam read the following statement: "Last week, District Attorney Bonfoey contacted the County Manager by phone to inquire about whether actions related to the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad were being taken by the Commissioners without a public vote or a public discussion. Mr. Bonfoey was responding to a letter of complaint he had received from a local citizen suggesting the Jackson County Board of Commissioners was operating outside an open meeting and without public discussion. I want to set the record straight. The accusation that this Board would take any official action outside the public view is false and misleading to the general public. This Board prides itself in a position of transparency. Each of us receive public

comments and inquiries and we respond to those on a timely basis; however, all official business of the County is conducted during public work sessions and meetings. It is unfortunate that Mr. Bonfoey had to take time from his schedule to investigate an accusation that had no merit. This Board has not taken any action to provide funds to the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad nor have we entered into any agreement with the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad. We held a public hearing, we received a draft agreement from our attorney, we have discussed the possibility of a partnership with Swain County officials, we have heard about the potential economic impact the train could have on our community, we have heard from various Commissioners about partnership options, and we have heard both comments of support and voices of concern from Commissioners. I'm confident this Board will have additional discussions about a partnership with the GSMR and eventually, a vote or votes will be taken. Ms. Leatherwood, you have consistently berated this Board and our staff through your statements and accusations about the railroad during your public comments and in your letters to local newspapers. This Board respects your freedom of speech; however, we expect you to provide accurate information just as you expect this Board to operate in full public view. If you choose to make future claims about this Board to the District Attorney or to any other government official we expect those accusations to be accurate and to have merit. Our job is to abide by the oath of office that each of us has taken and to represent the citizens of Jackson County to the best of our ability and it is our intent to continue in those efforts".

He read a letter from District Attorney Michael Bonfoey dated May 28, 2013.

(2) COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

Commissioner Greene stated she voted along with three other members of the Board to continue discussions with the GSMR. At no time has she voted on anything other than that nor have the Commissioners been presented with anything to consider or discuss. She attended her first meeting of the Smoky Mountain Mental Health Board. Their efforts continue to add the western highland area to the Smoky Mountain region which would make it a 23 county region and would be a fourth in the state run by one organization.

Commissioner Jones stated that last week he attended a contractor's meeting along with Mr. Wooten, Chairman Henke and Dr. Murray and toured the construction site at the Blue Ridge School. The amount of rain received in the southern end of the county has been extreme; however, construction is still on schedule. The project looks great and blends with the round building configuration from Hwy.107 which was a challenge.

Commissioner Elders stated politics are put aside while the Board is working together on county issues. Business is business and he intends to keep it that way.

Commissioner Cody stated that when he ran for office he never came in for the purpose of personal gain. The Commissioners are working together to try to improve life for everyone in Jackson County and in order to do that, they must negotiate with different people and businesses. The Cashiers recreation center provides services for almost 1,000 members and if that is political payback he will take the credit. In addition, school children have been given a \$10 million expansion at SMHS and a \$1 million expansion at Blue Ridge School and if that is political payback then he will take credit for that also. It is very upsetting for the Board to be consistently badgered by someone throwing out false accusations and lies.

(3) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: Mr. Wooten reported:

(a) **Construction Update:** He attended the monthly construction meeting for the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountain projects on May 30. According to the general contractor, both projects are on schedule. The Blue Ridge project will be completed in early July and the Smoky Mountain project in late December 2013 or early January 2014. The County renovation projects in Dillsboro and Cashiers are taking shape and should be completed prior to the end of June. The Cashiers Recreation Site work is now completed and final inspections and pay applications are being processed.

(b) **Cullowhee Valley School Roof Project:** Official notice to proceed was given by the architect on May 31, 2013. The construction period is 90 days so this project will be completed as school opens in the fall.

(c) **Survey of Internet Service:** Gerald Green and he have worked with Keith Conover in the NC Broadband Office of the NC Dept. of Commerce and a survey will be ready for distribution in the next week or so. The intent of the survey is to identify areas that are under served and areas that are not currently served by local internet providers. Work is underway on a press release to provide an online link to complete the survey instrument and to identify various locations across the county where surveys can be manually completed and returned. The NC Dept. of Commerce will enter the location of the respondents on a county map so it can be determined where the greatest demands and service needs exist. Once that information is in hand, county internet providers will be invited to a meeting to share this information in hopes that a business case can be made to encourage upgrades to existing equipment or installation of new equipment.

(d) **Library Funding:** He will be contacting the county managers in Macon and Swain counties and invite them to a meeting about how the counties can fund the operations of the libraries across the Fontana Regional Library system on an equal basis. For whatever reason, Jackson County has chosen to earmark funds for the Sylva Library and Albert Carlton Library and Fontana has restricted the use of those funds to a specific library. He suggested the two allocations be combined into a single Jackson County library allocation and hold Fontana Regional Library responsible for providing adequate library services to patrons who utilize the facilities and services.

(e) **Unemployment Rate:** He has not received the official notice of April unemployment rates; however, the NC Employment Security website has reported Jackson County's April unemployment rate as being 8.0% which ranks 20th among the 100 counties in NC. This is an improvement from the March adjusted rate of 9.4% which ranked 45th.

(f) **Economic Development:** He has responded to a second inquiry from the NC Dept. of Commerce and provided additional information about the old Tuckaseegee Mills building. This building continues to receive interest as a possible site for a new business looking to locate in western North Carolina. Hopefully, the opportunity will arise to show this building to a prospective a business client and discuss the opportunities that Jackson County can offer.

(g) **Judaculla Rock:** This project is now complete with the recent installation of the interpretative signage. He would like to identify a date later this summer to officially dedicate the project. He will be working to find a date for the event which could possibly be combined with another joint meeting between the Commissioners, Chief and Tribal Council so they can participate in a dedication ceremony. Schedules are difficult and the latter part of August may be the best opportunity to schedule this event.

(h) **Duke Energy River Enhancements:** Chairman Debnam, Commissioner Greene and he spent a day with Duke Energy officials this week touring the completed and proposed site improvements at Lake Glenville and along the Tuckaseegee River. These facilities are great additions to the community by making the river accessible at locations throughout the County which will enhance recreation opportunities and generate economic development. The County may have opportunities for partnerships similar to the Locust Creek river put-in that would allow using some locations to expand recreation in areas that are underserved. Additional information and recommendations will be provided at a future meeting.

(i) **June Work Session:** He would like to schedule a work session during the afternoon of June 17th to address ordinance modifications that have been approved by the Planning Board and to discuss next steps for the Cullowhee planning efforts.

(4) NCACC – EDWIN GILL AWARD: David Nicholson, Outreach Associate, stated Gerald Green, Planning Director, received the Edwin M. Gill Award during the graduation ceremony from the 2012-13 County Administration Course held at the School of Government on April 19th. The award is presented each year to the class member with the most distinguished record. He presented Mr. Green a plaque for his achievement. Mr. Green was one of 98 county and municipal officials who completed the course this year. The Board commended Mr. Green for his accomplishment.

(5) ABC AUTHORITY: David Nolan, Chairman, stated the ABC Board has signed a lease with Mr. and Mrs. Louis Darre of Glenville for a site in Cashiers. The Darres will construct a 4,000 sf building on a portion of a 4.5 acre tract they own on Hwy. 64 across from the entrance to Ingles. The lease is for a term of 10 years with two 5 year renewal options. The building is to be completed within or no longer than 8 months. The time frame is not exactly what was anticipated, but the Authority is of the opinion it is the best option for the long term, especially considering location, quality and cost. The Authority is required by the NC ABC Commission to post a sign on the property stating that it is the future site of an ABC Store with a telephone number if there are questions or comments. The sign should be up by mid-week. After the sign has been displayed for 30 days the NC ABC Commission will visit the site and at its meeting in July either approve or disapprove the site. The Authority should have an approval by mid-July. He thanked Mr. Coward and Mr. Wooten for assisting the Authority to get organized and the support by the administrative staff in Mr. Wooten's office.

(6) RETIRED COUNTY EMPLOYEES INSURANCE PLAN - AMENDED: Mr. Wooten presented an amended policy that applies to all Jackson County employees hired on or after July 1, 2013 in order to be eligible for insurance at retirement. He requested the Board to review the proposed policy and take action at the next regular meeting.

(7) REACH OF MACON COUNTY: Mr. Wooten stated REACH of Macon County has requested an additional \$5,000 for the current fiscal year.

Motion: *Commissioner Elders moved to appropriate \$5,000 from the contingency fund. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(8) NC 107 CORRIDOR STUDY REPORT RESOLUTION (R13-15): Gerald Green, Planning Director, gave an overview of the NC 107 Corridor Study Report. The Regional Transportation Priority Needs List identified improvements to NC 107 as the top regional priority. The recommendations in the report are intended to guide the planning and design for improvements to NC 107. Improvements are identified as a project in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and are scheduled for funding in 2021. He requested adoption of a resolution in support of the recommendations.

Motion: *Commissioner Greene moved to adopt the resolution. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote*

(9) SURPLUS PROPERTY: Mr. Wooten submitted a list of 3 vehicles from the Sheriff's Dept. and requested they be declared surplus and disposed/donated as follows:

2002 Ford Crown Victoria to Canada Fire Dept.

2002 Ford Crown Victoria to SCC

2004 Ford Crown Victoria to SCC

Motion: Commissioner Greene moved to declare the vehicles surplus and disposed of as recommended. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(10) REGION A AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL:

Motion: Commissioner Jones moved to reappoint Martha Chovan, reappoint Nancy Bumgarner as an alternate and appoint Helen Bryson as an alternate, all for 3 year terms on the Region A Aging Advisory Council. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(11) COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR LONG TERM CARE:

Motion: Commissioner Greene moved to appoint Joyce Brooks to fill the unexpired term of Evelyn Austin on the Community Advisory Committee for Long Term Care. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(12) AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD:

Motion: Commissioner Elders moved to reappoint Bryan Bumgarner and Joe Grasty to 3 year terms on the Agricultural Advisory Board. Commissioner Cody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

(13) SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD: Carry over

Public Comments:

Marie Leatherwood of Sylva stated she has filed a legal complaint with the District Attorney that the Board has violated state laws.

Press Conference

There being no further business, Commissioner Greene moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Attest:

Approved:

Patsy C. Parris, Clerk to Board

W. J. Debnam, Chairman

