

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
APRIL 02, 2015**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on April 02, 2015, 6:00 pm, Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Mark Jones, Vice Chair
Charles Elders, Commissioner
Vicki Greene, Commissioner
Boyce Deitz, Commissioner

Chuck Wooten, County Manager
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
J. K. Coward, Jr., County Attorney

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

AGENDA: Chairman McMahan amended the agenda by deleting Revolving Loan Procedures. Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Agenda. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

PROCLAMATION: Chairman McMahan read a Proclamation honoring Southwestern Community College's 50th Anniversary.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

PROCLAMATION: Chairman McMahan read a Proclamation declaring May as Relay for Life Month.

Motion: *Commissioner Elders moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

PROCLAMATION: Chairman McMahan read a Proclamation declaring April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Motion: *Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

MINUTES: Commissioner Elders moved to approve the minutes of a Work Session of March 17, 2015 and a Regular Meeting of March 19, 2015. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(1) COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

(a) Commissioner Greene stated that four of the five Commissioners and the County Manager attended a North Carolina County Commissioners' Association meeting in Cullowhee the evening before. Counties from Transylvania west were in attendance. The counties share a lot of the same issues and problems.

(b) Commissioner Jones stated that he enjoyed the North Carolina County Commissioners' meeting in Cullowhee. He also enjoyed today's tour of Drexel as well.

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

(a) January 2015 Unemployment Rate: The county unemployment rate increased to 7.0% in January 2015. This is identical to the unemployment rate for January 2014; however, it is 2.5% higher than the December 2014 rate of 4.5%. According to information released by the NC Department of Commerce, unemployment rates increased during January in 98 of the 100 counties in North Carolina. It appears this increase is attributable to a reduction in employees who worked during the holiday season and in the construction industry as the result of adverse weather conditions. The lowest rate of 4.5% was in Buncombe County and the highest rate of 14.5% was in Graham County.

(b) Senate Bill 369: This bill would reclassify the local option sales tax to a state sales tax and would redistribute the sales tax based on a per capita basis rather than a point of sale basis. The counties with the most retail sales would suffer the biggest loss. Jackson County would be almost revenue neutral; however, the municipalities would see significant increases in sales tax revenue. Presently, sales tax is distributed on a % of tax base allocation while the proposed legislation would be on a per capita basis. There is much discussion about this proposal and there will be a lot more negotiations before a bill is placed into law.

(c) FY 15-16 Budget Hearings: He and Darlene Fox, Finance Director have held individual meetings with all department heads. They will be discussing the budget requests for education and library at our April 21st work session. Hopefully, most of the review work will be completed by the work session as they move toward a budget for FY 15-16.

(d) House Bill 255 – Building Codes: This bill would change the threshold for obtaining a building permit, eliminate the preliminary plan review for residential housing projects, and hold inspectors accountable for their work. This bill has some opposition from NCACC since the general belief is that it is better to identify problems at the planning stage rather than during the construction phase.

(e) Proposed Cullowhee Planning Standards and Fire Districts: The mailing to individual property owners has gone out and the public hearings are scheduled. Cullowhee Planning Standards – April 23rd, Cashiers and Highlands Fire Districts – April 30th

(f) Proposed Modification to Tax Levy: He has been notified by the UNC School of Government about recent federal actions that disallow the assessment of local property taxes on any improvements to real property on tribal lands. Heretofore, Jackson County had identified approximately \$27.2 million in tax value for improvements to real property (motels, restaurants, gift shops, etc.) that were owned by non-tribal members and were therefore subject to Jackson County Ad Valorem taxes. The loss of this value from our tax bases equates to approximately \$76,000. Presently, the county can tax business personal property located on the boundary that is owned by non-tribal members and our current tax value is approximately \$4.7 million. He has been contacted by the NCACC and Representative Queen indicating that Cherokee has proposed a local bill to effectively remove the authority of local governments to tax anything on the boundary. Eliminating both of these revenue sources will reduce our local Ad Valorem taxes by approximately \$85,000 per year. These funds have been used to partially offset county services that are provided to residents of Jackson County who live on the boundary but are not subject to local property taxes. Examples of these services are the Jackson County Public Schools, SCC, environment health inspections, local elections, and solid waste disposal.

(g) Upcoming meetings:

- April 16th – Regular Commissioner Meeting
- April 21st – Commissioners Work Session
- April 23rd – Cullowhee Public Hearing
- April 30th – Cashiers/Highland Public Hearing
- May 6th – County Assembly Day – Raleigh
- May 7th – Regular Commissioner Meeting – Canada Community Center
- May 19th – Commissioner Work Session
- May 21st – Regular Commissioner Meeting

Chairman McMahan stated that a tentative meeting date had been set for the animal shelter hearing for May 4th at 6:00 p.m.

Informal Comments by Public:

(a) Marie Leatherwood of Sylva stated that she disagrees with using tax dollars for the Drexel property.

(b) John Leopard of Tuckasegee stated that he disagrees with the way the fire tax in the Cashiers-Glenville area is being proposed. He believes it should be put on a ballot for the citizens to vote on.

(3) SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY FUNDS ALLOCATION: Mr. Wooten stated that this item has been previously discussed and the resident superior court judge has requested the county take the appropriate steps to provide better security for Justice Center. Commissioners have already approved actions to purchase equipment and relocate certain fences to start the first steps on the exterior parts of the building. The next step is to provide a single point of entry to the Justice Center. Everyone will come into one door and go through a bag screening machine and magnetometer that will be staffed by the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Odell Thompson, Architect, has been working on a solution to move forward on the single point entry. In essence, the front doors will be replaced and new doors will be installed. A small wall will be constructed to separate the entrance and exit and a new exit door will be installed. The new space will accommodate about 40 people. If a large group arrives at the same time, the checkpoint process could be slowed. After speaking to several contractors, Mr. Thompson has estimated the cost to be \$80,000. At this time, the Commissioners' approval is needed to fund these items from contingency and move forward with identifying a contractor to complete the work by July 1st.

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to authorize the County Manager to move forward with engaging a contractor to begin the work on the single point of entry with funds from contingency. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(4) COUNCIL ON AGING:

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to appoint Ruth McConnell to serve a three year term on Council on Aging and to appoint Joanne Luker to fill the unexpired term of Stella Parker. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

Press Conference.

CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Greene moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

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

There being no further business, Commissioner Deitz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Attest:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Approved:

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman