

**MINUTES OF A
REGULAR MEETING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
FEBRUARY 04, 2016**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on February 04, 2016, 6:00 p.m., 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
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

(1) **AGENDA**: Chairman McMahan amended the agenda by adding: an item for Scotts Creek Watershed Study Request and an item for Southwestern Child Development Commission Appointment. He deleted the Joint Committee with the Health Board Appointments. Commissioner Greene moved to approve the amended Agenda. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(2) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes of a Retreat Work Session of January 19, 2016 and a Regular Meeting of January 26, 2016. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(3) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman McMahan stated he traveled to Raleigh to attend the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Environmental Steering Committee Meeting. It was a good meeting with an opportunity to discuss storm water management, which was very critical in the county. Also, another topic discussed was concerning electronics recycling, which is important for this county since there was a community college and university to collect old electronic devices from. There was a lot of dialogue about that process and a study was underway that would provide suggestions on how the process can be streamlined for counties. At the time, there were not many funds for counties to address this issue.

(4) **COUNTY MANAGER REPORT**: Mr. Wooten reported:

(a) **Building Permit Statistics**: Overall, the activity in the Office of Inspections and Code Enforcement exceeded that of January 2015. At the same time, the permits for new residential construction declined from 9 to 6 and the permits for renovations increased from 6 to 13. The total permitting activity increased from 93 in 2015 to 101 in 2016.

(b) **ABC Board**: Revenues continue to increase as total sales for the six months of the fiscal year increased by 5.45% or \$218,516.54. There was a good possibility that the balance of the start-up loan provided by the county will be paid in full by the end of the current fiscal year. This would happen while maintaining distributions of profits at the agreed upon level. Once the loan had been repaid, it was his understanding that the Board would like to consider some improvements to the Sylva store.

(c) **Local Sales Tax Collections**: The NCACC reported that the December 2015 sales tax collections increased by 5.74% over November 2015 sales. The collections would be distributed in February 2016.

(d) **Revaluation:** Notices were mailed on Monday, February 1st and most, if not all should be delivered by the end of the week. The Tax Administration office has not received many inquiries yet; however, they expect the traffic to pick up next week. The early responses have been focused more toward the values being less than anticipated.

(e) **Frank Allen Road:** This road continues to have flooding issues every time there was a rain event. As previously discussed, it appears the bottom of the Cashiers Lake had been raised over the years from silt and other material flowing into the lake. NCDOT studied the situation as well as a group of engineering students from Georgia Tech and both reached consensus that the flooding on Frank Allen Road was the result of water not being able to flow freely into the lake. They understand the current property owner has engaged engineers to make application to dredge the lake and he was attempting to facilitate a meeting with the owner or their agent to discuss the plans.

(f) **Goodson Property:** They were moving forward with the purchase of this property. The owner agreed to mitigate the asbestos tile on the basement level and remove the underground oil tank. The tenant vacated the house and demolition had begun. The survey and title work had been complete and a closing date would be set once the main level of the house was removed.

(g) **Sale of County Property:** Offers to purchase received for three parcels of property that had been transferred to the county as the result of tax foreclosure action, had been advertised. The contiguous property owners were notified in writing that an offer had been received and accepted by the county subject to the upset bid procedures.

(h) **Capital Projects:** A list of proposed capital projects had been provided to Commissioners to begin thinking about the priorities they would assign to each project. He asked that they review and complete the rankings by February 16th to expedite the discussion about establishing project priorities at the February 16th work session.

(i) **Upcoming Meetings:**

Monday, February 8, 2016 – Smoky Mountain Mental Health Update

Thursday, February 11, 2016 – Cullowhee VFD Public Meeting on USDA Loan Application

Tuesday, February 16, 2016 – Work Session beginning at 10:00 am

Thursday, February 18, 2016 – Regular Commissioner Meeting at 6:00 pm

Wednesday and Thursday, February 24th and 25th – Needs Assessment for Animal Shelter

Wednesday, April 13, 2016 – NCACC District Meeting – Waynesville Country Club – 5:30 pm

Wednesday, May 18, 2016 – NCACC Legislative Day – Raleigh

(5) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC:** None

(6) **NEIGHBORS IN NEED:** Bob Cochran, Department of Social Services Director and Neighbors in Need Board Member, recognized members of the Neighbors In Need Board that were in attendance: Kristi Case, Co-Chair of the Cold Weather Shelter Committee; Kristina Smith, Member of the Cold Weather Shelter Committee; Linda Faulk, Neighbors In Need Community Representative; Ginger Hill, Co-Chair of the Cold Weather Shelter Committee; Judy Annis, Neighbors In Need Co-Chair; Barbara Hamilton, Neighbors In Need Board Member; and Monica Frizzell, Neighbors in Need Board Member.

Mr. Cochran stated they previously had conversations about their budget running low on funds for the cold weather shelter and there was a significant concern in the community. He appreciated Chairman McMahan talking to them about the situation and being willing to assist, if needed. They had their major fundraiser for the year, Charlie's Challenge and raised \$10,103 from the community. Also, other donations from January totaled \$2,822 and remaining cold weather shelter funds in the account were approximately \$2,200, totaling \$15,125. With the funds raised, they now felt they had enough funds to get through the remainder of the season.

Looking at next year, they would need approximately \$35,000, at a minimum, to operate the cold weather shelter, using the current hotel based model and another \$15,000 for heating assistance. They would be trying to generate approximately \$50,000 for the next year. They recognized that as a private, non-profit organization, they had the responsibility to pursue the funds as best they could themselves, but they appreciated the county's support.

They would like to include the Commissioners in future conversations about long-term planning. The vast majority of the people they help had been victims of the economic decline, with a 23.5% poverty rate in the county, at that time. He thanked the Commissioners for their willingness to have the conversation and hopefully they could begin to map out some long term strategies and contingency plans. They wanted to aim high and have a permanent shelter, if possible. But if not, they wanted to do what they could, as they have done in the last few years, to meet the needs.

Chairman McMahan stated that when they spoke a couple of weeks ago, they thought there may be a need to appropriate funds to assist the organization in making it through the rest of the winter season. It was his understanding that the money that was raised through Charlie's Challenge and other donations collected in January really went towards providing for the budget next year. It would be unfair to pull from those funds when there was really a deficiency in the current year. Is the deficiency for this year potentially \$12,000-15,000?

Ms. Case stated that they were currently only serving one individual, but the needs fluctuate from day to day, so it was hard to give a firm number. But they had estimated they would probably need around \$15,000 to get through the end of the season.

Chairman McMahan stated that Commissioners had a lengthy discussion in the past year when they were exploring options for a permanent solution and were unable to move forward. At that time, he stated they would continue the program as it was to meet the needs and if there was a deficiency, he would be willing to meet that need. He felt a need did exist, as they did not know what the weather would be for the rest of the season. If they made an appropriation at that time and all of the funds were not used, they would go towards next years need. This was a temporary solution and discussions were needed for a long term solution.

Motion: *Chairman McMahan moved to appropriate \$15,000 to Neighbors In Need, from the contingency fund to meet the current need. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(7) ANNUAL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT: Rob Hawk, Director, presented the 2015 Program Impact Report:

(a) Executive Summary: Cooperative Extension identified ten major program areas to work in during 2015:

- Natural resources conservation and environmental sustainability;
 - Healthy eating, physical activity and chronic disease risk reduction;
 - Profitable and sustainable agriculture systems;
 - Urban and consumer agriculture;
 - Safety and security of food and farm systems;
 - School to career - youth and adult;
 - Volunteer readiness;
 - Family financial management skills; and
 - Leadership development and community development.
- Educational programs in these state objectives led to significant impacts for the citizens of the county during 2015.

In 2015, the Extension Advisory Council meet once with an attendance of four members. This meeting occurred in November, 2015. These meetings provided an excellent time to allow the Extension staff to share with the community leaders the extension work within the county for the past six months and what lies ahead for the next 6 months, in regards to programming. Staff listened to feedback from leaders on how the Extension can help further with educational programming and technical assistance.

The council members liked the work that the Extension Center was doing, stated that they were meeting the demands of the public with the extension programming.

(b) Agriculture and Horticulture Extension Agent Christy Bredenkamp, did an outstanding job in 2015 providing 36 major educational programs, while also providing technical assistance with:

- Profitable and sustainable agriculture systems;
- Local food systems;
- Safety and security of food and farm systems; and
- Urban and consumer agriculture.

Her programs in these areas impacted 1,478 (21,537 non-face-to-face) individuals directly by increasing their working knowledge of best agricultural and horticulture production practices to increase net farm incomes and help build the local food systems for the county, along with good horticulture practices:

- The numbers included 901 for profitable and sustainable agriculture systems \$20,101 net income gains realized by the adoption of best management practices, including those practices related to nutrient management, conservation, production, cultivars, pest management, business management, and marketing;
- 17 for local food systems;
- 126 for safety and security of food and farm systems; and
- 434 for urban and consumer agriculture \$211,048 in value of produce grown for home consumption was estimated.

Programs ranged from:

- Master Gardener (MG), Christmas trees, blueberry and grapes beginner bee;
- Home orchard, growing ginseng, pesticide certifications, pests of trees and shrubs;
- Composting; soil testing; fall gardening;
- Many other subjects related to agriculture and horticulture; and
- 80 pesticide applicators were certified and 24 re-certified. 16 MGs re-certified.

CED Robert Hawk provided 8 livestock educational programs:

- Amazing Grazing/Pasture Management \$350 net income gains by producers adopting extension-recommended best management practices with the Amazing Grazing demonstration improved pastures;
- Soil testing; Beef Quality Assurance (BQA);
- Tree shelter belts and weed control in pasture for cattle herd and health management through the Jackson, Macon and Swain (JMS) Cattlemen's Association, which he served as the Chair of the Education Committee in 2015. BQA training in January 2015 had 9 cattlemen certified with 4 of these new certifications. Christy had 16 MGs donate 379 hours for 337 clients valued at \$8,391. Individuals from the county and surrounding communities participated in this disposal day in which 246 containers totaling 1,726 pounds of old pesticides were collected. The cost for pesticide disposal averages at \$7.50/pound, which makes the savings to the citizens of the county worth approximately \$12,945. In addition, over 300 empty pesticide containers were collected and recycled in a proper manner saving the county in landfill disposal fees.

(c) Community Development: 177 community leaders gained assistance from the Extension Center, which was included work through extension programs, extension clubs, working committees and technical assistance. In October 2015, Savannah, Balsam, Caney Fork and Pumpkintown Community Development Clubs (CDCs) participated in the Annual Jackson CDC Awards program. A total of \$2,025 Award Monies were granted to these 4 CDCs to help with their programming needs. The Extension still works closely with the CDCs to provide financial and educational support. The Smoky Mountain Agriculture Development Station (SMADS-old Drexel plant) Steering Committee held a follow-up Community/Public Outreach meetings in March, 2015 to report back to the public the SMADS Master Plan in the fall from the Altamont Engineering, Inc. CED Robert J. Hawk provided much leadership with the SMADS initiative and helped facilitate the outreach meetings with the help of CED Doug Clement.

Since August 2015, the SMADS Project died with the disapproval of the plan by the Commissioners; however, some of the farmers are still seeking approval. The cattle facility that was planned at the Drexel site started to focus on a location in Swain County. The new NC Hospitality and Pride program was embraced by CED, who became certified and did one program in November 2015 with one business participating.

(d) Natural Resources Conservation and Environmental Sustainability programs through the Extension impacted 431 residents, which was primarily through educational programming during the Annual Soil and Water Conservation (SWCD) Conservation Field Days (April 2015); Leopold Education Program Training-(LEP) (August 2015); Conservation Christmas Tree (November 2015) and the Beaver Management Assistance program (BMAP)-6 helped in county, along with technical assistance on ponds, wildlife nuisance questions and nature based school programs. These two programs taught youth and teachers about conservation stewardship and how to appreciate and enjoy their natural environment. Provided 3 major educational programs in this area of natural resource conservation, which included the School Conservation Field Days; LEP and Conservation Christmas Tree. \$350 was awarded from Jackson Paper Manufacturing to purchase tree seedlings for the SWCD Conservation Field Days.

(e) 4-H Youth Development. 4-H Agent Heather Gordon, provided many diverse programs (138+) under the "Leadership" philosophy of building youth to become effective citizens of the community for the future. Her programs directly provided leadership to 1,696 youth in the county in 2015. The 4-H program in 2015 included:

- 4-H Cloverbuds;
- Science 4- Life Club;
- Explorers Club;
- Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program;
- Youth Leadership Council;
- Sewing Bee;
- 4-H Summer Camp and day Camp; and
- Homeschooler and Scotts Creek Presentations.

In 2015, Heather Gordon secured several purposeful and significant grants for her programs:

- \$7,500 from the NC Arts Council Traditional Arts;
- \$1,200 from the Jackson County Arts Council for the Jackson County Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program JAM, which is an after-school program that provides young people instruction and performance opportunities in Mountain Heritage Music on traditional Appalachian instruments. Grants totaled \$8,600 for her JAM program; and
- 306 volunteers donate 1,039 hours for 732 clients valued at \$23,003, which are outstanding figures for the 4-H program.

(f) Family and Consumer Science (FCS) Agent Sherrie Peeler has worked with 1,273 individuals, which benefited from programs:

- Healthy eating, physical activity and chronic disease risk reduction;
- Family financial management (3);
- 4 under school to career and 14 for volunteer readiness/ECA (241) during 2015;
- Sherrie has held 59 programs ranging from quilting;
- NC Safe Plates;
- 4-H sewing bee;
- Cleaning/laundry;
- Cooking;
- Sewing;
- ECA Clubs;
- Food preservation;
- Nutrition;
- Recipes;
- Family financial management; and
- Volunteer readiness.

- 58 ECA volunteers donated 392 hours for 337 clients for a total value of \$8,391, which is a major increase from 2014.
- 21 food industry workers became NC SafePlates (Serve Safe type program)
- 75 Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HAACP) under the program.
- 12 4-H youth participated in two sessions of day camp. STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math skills were applied to the three day sewing camp.
- 26 youth increased their fruit and vegetable consumption their physical activity with the "Glow, Grow, Go" program.
- FCS and 4-H integrated some programs in 2015 as the reports indicate.

(g) Cooperative Extension made 47,920 total educational contacts in 2015, which included 5,806 face-to-face contacts and 42,117 non-face-to-face contacts. Give or take a few, about 356 extension educational programs came from the Extension Staff in 2015. Mass Media (newspaper; radio and social media) is a large part of the Extension educational process, in which 97 newspaper articles had a circulation of 1,271,350. Extension Center received \$35,400 in grants, gifts and donations to help the citizens of the county with educational programs to enhance their lives greatly.

All the accomplishments listed gave the real impact of the county work in 2015. Volunteer activity in 2015 included 396 volunteers with 1,855 volunteer hours benefiting 1,429 individuals totally a dollar value of \$41,070, which are increases from 2014.

The Extension held two all day staff retreats for 2015. The first was a "Team Building" exercise in May, when the entire extension staff of Jackson and Swain pitched in to help one of the staff with much needed landscaping and exterior home repairs. The other retreat was on December 2nd when the entire staff again pulled together, from both extension centers and developed craft decorations for the Swain 4-H Christmas parade float, which won first place in the Swain County Christmas parade float contest.

Chairman McMahan stated that he appreciated everything that Cooperative Extension does. The programs that are delivered in the community have an impact on people's lives. He wanted to see more people take advantage of the programs, especially when they move into the new Skyland Services Center and they had more opportunity to advertise and grow the programs. He and Commissioner Jones had been discussing ways to invest and grow the communities in the county and he asked Mr. Hawk to come back to a work session in the spring to give more information about community development.

Commissioner Jones inquired if Mr. Hawk had been in contact with Tiffany Henry, SCC Director of Small Business Training, about her agricultural business endeavor.

Mr. Hawk stated they were closely tied to the Appalachian Farm School project and had helped to get it started a year ago. SCC was providing the instruction and Extension was doing the marketing and helping on the production end.

Commissioner Greene stated she understood that the cattle load out equipment may be located in Swain County on TVA owned property and she thought that seemed to be a good place, as it would serve the far western counties, she thought it was a better choice than the Drexel property.

Mr. Hawk stated that the Bryson City Alderman leased the land from TVA. They were going to lose the grant if they did not solidify a location, so they have done that, but it still had to be approved by TVA.

Informational item only.

(8) **SCOTTS CREEK WATERSHED STUDY REQUEST:** Town of Sylva Commissioner David Nestler stated that they were applying for a grant through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. The grant would pay for a comprehensive plan to look at the entire Scotts Creek watershed reporting what is polluting the creek and what they can do to clean it up. Scotts Creek starts on Balsam with numerous headwaters that come together and flow along Skyland Drive, through downtown Sylva, Dillsboro and then into the Tuckasegee River. It is by far the most polluted waterway in the county and it flows through two downtowns. They feel the creek could be a tremendous economic asset, but as is, it was too polluted to be used. What could be a tremendous economic value is a liability and a poor reflection of the environmental values in the county.

They requested all the stakeholders play a role in cleaning the creek. They would be applying for an \$85,000 plan, which the grant would pay 80%. The plan looks at the entire watershed, identifies pollutants, causes of pollutants and ways to fix it. The 20% cash match would be \$17,000. Another estimate, if they only looked within city limits to make an assessment, would be \$50,000 and the cash match would be \$10,000. He requested that the county help with the \$17,000 so that the entire watershed could be analyzed.

Chairman McMahan stated that he had spoken with Tom Massie, Western Field Representative for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and he provided details that they do not deal with the straight piping, waste water issue. It will be more focused on sediment, erosion and areas that are deficient in the stream that could be fixed and identify areas where sediment may be coming into the stream. The study would only identify needs and if in the future, the county, town or individual property owners wanted to apply for a Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grant to help fix the problem, they would refer back to the study, which would be valid to show problems exists. The study is needed to move forward in the future to address issues.

Mr. Wooten stated that there were some residual funds from past water projects that the county had been involved in. There would be enough funds if the county wanted to contribute \$7,000 towards the project and not have an impact on the general fund.

Commissioner Greene stated that this was a county issue as well as a town issue. She hoped they looked at this as an opportunity to identify issues with Scotts Creek.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he lived in the watershed for 61 years and that it was a large watershed that went all the way to the Blue Ridge Parkway and went through many areas in the county. They needed to look at storm water problem areas and erosion. They also needed to make sure they educate the public about the study, making it known what type of issues they were looking for as they had several industries and agricultural businesses in the county along Scotts Creek.

Chairman McMahan stated this would impact a lot of people and they need to make sure they get the message out that they are trying to identify areas and they want to help make sure the creeks and watersheds in the county stay clean.

Mr. Wooten stated they would need a timeline associated with the grant.

Motion: *Commissioner Greene moved to appropriate 7,000 towards the cost of the study of the Scotts Creek watershed out of the Clean Water Fund. Chairman McMahan seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(9) AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT ORDINANCE: Michael Poston, Planning Director, stated that the Planning Department had worked with the Agricultural Advisory Board to amend Article 7 of the Agricultural District Ordinance, titled “Certification and Qualification of Farmland”, to allow smaller acreage farms to participate in the Voluntary/Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts.

The current standards require that an applicant either participate in the Tax Office’s Present Use Value (PUV) program or be eligible to participate. The most limiting factor in that standard is that one of the PUV program requirements is that an applicant has 10 acres or more (can be in contiguous tracts) in farm use to be eligible to participate.

The Agriculture Advisory Board has identified a need to be more flexible in the qualification criteria in order to include smaller farming operations in the county. The Agricultural Advisory Board has received interest in the program from smaller farming operations and believes that this proposed amendment will enhance their ability to incorporate all of the county’s farms into the Voluntary and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts. The proposed amendment replaces the use of the PUV program with the State’s definition of farming found in G.S. 106-581.1 and having a conservation plan for the farm land prepared by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The Agricultural Advisory Board recommended the adoption of the following proposed amendment to the Board of Commissioners at their January 28, 2016 meeting:

Amend Article 7. – Certification and Qualification of Farmland as follows:

Sec. 7.1 – Criteria.

To secure county certification as qualifying farmland in the Voluntary/Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District a farm must meet all of the criteria set forth herein:

(a) It must ~~participate in the farm present use value taxation program established by G.S. 105-277.2 through 105.277.7 or be otherwise determined by the county to meet all the qualifications of this program set for in G.S. 105-277.3~~ *be actively engaged in agriculture as that word is defined in G.S. 106-581.1 and has a written conservation plan as determined by the Agriculture Advisory Board.*

Motion: *Commissioner Deitz moved to adopt the Agriculture District Ordinance Amendment as presented. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(10) RESOLUTION R16-01 CONNECT NC: Mr. Wooten presented a resolution in support of Connect NC, a \$2 billion bond campaign for education, agriculture, parks and water and sewer.

Motion: *Commissioner Elders moved to adopt the Connect NC Resolution R16-01. Commissioner Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(11) PLANNING BOARD:

Motion: *Commissioner Greene moved to appoint Julie Painter as the At Large Four appointment with a one year term on the Planning Board, term to expire December 31, 2016. Commissioner Elders seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(12) SOUTHWESTERN CHILD DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Jones moved to appoint Kim Elliot to a term on the Southwestern Child Development Commission. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

(13) PRESS CONFERENCE: None

There being no further business, Commissioner Elders moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Greene seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman