

**MINUTES OF A
RECONVENED WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
FEBRUARY 24, 2016**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Reconvened Work Session on February 24, 2016, 1:00 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A227, 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) **WATR UPDATE**: Roger Clapp, Executive Director presented WATR Report:

(a) Challenges:

- Litter. Age old problem, now seems worse than ever.
 - 2015 WATR and partners collected 4.2 tons of trash and debris.
 - Fired up by Lisa Muscillo and Swain Clean.
 - Assist Base Camp Cullowhee with Tuckasegee clean up to expand walking clean-ups.
 - Attitude adjustment. Recommend “Keep NC Beautiful”.
- Fecal coliform. Update on recurring problem.
- Mud. Turbidity and suspended sediment degrades the best resource.
 - Working with Permit and Inspection Office.
 - Identify upstream sources.
 - Get system of responses: soil and water, letters to landowners, education and help, working with HOAs.
 - Landowner maintenance and restoration.
 - Continue RESCI trainings.
- Habitat. Stream and stream banks are interconnected, property responsibilities.

(b) WATR approach:

- Direct action. Pickups and public awareness.
- Monitoring. Assessing problems and encouraging citizen scientists.
- Restoration. With emphasis on landowner solutions.
- Youth programs.
- WATR discovery trails, Monteith Farmstead Park. Center for mountain stream education and stewardship.
- Working with partners.

(c) Sampling Scotts Creek by WATR, analysis by TWSA for Fecal coliforms.

(d) Sampling Scotts Creek to show increases of mud in the Tuckasegee River.

(e) Education:

- RESCI core erosion and sediment control training, March 2015 and 2016.
- Tuckasegee River walking clean up scheduled for April 3, 2016.
- Building a training system called H2O Pro.

- Youth education, traditional Cherokee fish harvest.
 - Held 7th annual fish harvest.
 - Thanks to Jim Allman.
 - Released thousands of Sicklefin Redhorse Fish.
- WATR discovery trails, Monteith Farmstead Park: Started work in 2010 and trails are growing, with many partners and volunteers.

Chairman McMahan stated the testing was done at one site, which was a combination of a lot of water coming from different watersheds into the river. The water may be unclean in a particular location, but it may not be unclean in other areas as you travel up the different creeks. Commissioners were working to facilitate a community meeting to continue the dialogue that will hopefully turn into action for roadside and stream litter pickups.

Informational item only.

(2) COUNTY MANAGER JOB PROFILE: David Nicholson, Outreach Associate for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, stated he served the 49 western counties in the state and was a former county manager. He could assist Commissioners with searching for a county manager and be involved in the process as much as they wanted or as little as then wanted. The NCACC offers this as a free service.

Creating a job profile is very important. It would give the Commissioners an opportunity to think about what attributes they were looking for in a county manager. They may find a candidate that they are comfortable with, but may not fit the job profile exactly. This will be a tool to help them through the process. Also, it would be important to ask Mr. Wooten to give a status report on any major projects that were ongoing across the county. This would be an invaluable tool for the incoming county manager so that they would have a good basis of what was going on in the county.

Danielle Wittekind, Human Resource Director, stated that she had collected job profiles from other counties over the past two years and she has been keeping tabs on current openings across the state as they may be competing for some talent. She has also contacted county managers or human resource directors in Macon, Haywood, Henderson and Cherokee for copies of their county manager contracts for information regarding salaries and benefit packages, etc.

Mr. Nicholson stated they needed to decide where they wanted to place an ad for the position. There were several options including locally, with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, North Carolina League of Municipalities, larger newspapers and even with the ICMA Job Center. It would take a couple of weeks to get the advertisement together, so they should start receiving applications around the first of April.

Mr. Nicholson asked Commissioners to rank the importance of different attributes they were looking for in a county manager:

- Education
- Experience
- Years of top management experience
- Skills and past performance
- Availability

Based on the Commissioners responses, Mr. Nicholson summarized that it appeared Commissioners were on the same page as far as what they wanted in a county manager. It was important to them that the candidate have at least a Bachelor's Degree and although a Master's Degree was not required it was preferred. Having more than five years' experience was not as important and would open the pool to more candidates. They wanted a person to build a strong relationship with the board and be knowledgeable in finance. Being well-rounded and able to work well with department heads was also important.

The next step will be for Ms. Wittekind to begin work on the ad. Also, Commissioners needed to decide how involved they wanted Mr. Nicholson to be in the process.

Consensus: *Continue to work with Mr. Nicholson through the process of hiring a county manager. Ms. Baker to prepare a confidentiality agreement between the county and Mr. Nicholson.*

(3) CAPITAL PROJECTS: Mr. Wooten presented the Capital Projects Priority List.

(a) Cullowhee Fire Department: Chairman McMahan stated that while the Cullowhee Fire Department was a capital project and was being considered in that year's budget, it is not on the list because it is not a project they would fund directly. The Commissioner had agreed and came to a consensus that they were supportive of seeing the project move forward and they assisted the Cullowhee Fire Department with applying for a loan with USDA, which had been favorable. The county would need a line item in the budget in coming years to pay the building payment, like they have done for other departments. They already had a sufficient amount of funds to cover those kinds of expenses and potentially the payment. That is one of the reasons why it was not on the list.

Commissioner Greene stated that a payment would not be due on the Fire Department until a year after it was occupied. Also, she understood that there were almost \$200,000 in the current budget that they would use for site prep in that fiscal year to remove dirt. The dirt would then need to surcharge and they would fund the balance of the site work from next year's budget.

Mr. Wooten stated the Commissioners decided to wait to see if the application with USDA was approved or denied. They had received an email from USDA stating that if the Board took action or advised them that the county was willing to assume responsibility for the debt service payment, it appeared that the application would be approved.

Consensus: *Submit a letter to USDA that the county would assume responsibility for the annual debt service payments in the sum of \$157,605 in connection with the loan applied for by the Cullowhee Fire Department in the amount of \$3.5 mil with a 40 year term at 3.25% interest. Also, they want to move forward with funding the initial phase of the site work and will fund the balance after the first of the fiscal year.*

(b) The following items have already been discussed and Commissioners were supportive of moving forward:

- Renovations to Cashiers Inspection Office: Update office to include ADA restrooms, covered accessible entryway, improvements to energy efficiency and roof repairs. Estimated cost \$175,000. Funds available in the FY 15-16 Budget.
- Renovations to Skyland Services Center for Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water: Renovate remaining space formerly used as retail space by the original owner. Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water would have space for current and foreseeable future needs. This would free up space they currently occupy in the Community Services Center that could possibly be renovated for Inspections/Code Enforcement and Planning. The plans as drawn would have 1,497 square feet of undesignated space and space for a commercial kitchen. Estimated cost \$2,032,946 (includes \$150,000 allowance for commercial kitchen equipment and \$74,370 for other furniture and fixtures). Funds available in the FY15-16 Budget.

(c) Commissioners ranked the current project list as follows:

- One: Health Department: Acquire property and construct new health department (38,000 square feet \$250 per sq. ft.). Estimated cost \$9,500,000
- Two: Animal Shelter: Acquire property and construct a new animal shelter. This is a preliminary estimate until the needs assessment is conducted. Estimated cost \$2,500,000
- Three: Community parks and greenway expansion: Provide funds to complete the Savannah Community Park, Qualla Community Park and have a reserve for future greenway expansions. Estimated cost \$250,000.

- Four: Renovations to courtroom space and technology: Completely renovate existing courtroom, provide new furniture and updated technology. Renovate existing law library space into small court room. Estimated cost \$1,000,000.
- Five: Improvements to parking lot at Department on Aging and add additional parking at DSS: The existing gravel parking lot adjacent to the Heritage Dining Room would receive drainage, curb and guttering and pavement. This is the primary parking for all special functions held in the Heritage Dining Room. Additional parking for DSS staff would be provided. Estimated cost \$275,000.
- Six: Renovate Old Rescue Squad Building: This building would be converted into a public meeting space and multi-purpose space for community use. In addition, the earth bank behind the building would be stabilized and the outside of the building would be enhanced. Estimated cost \$400,000.
- Seven: Green Energy Park Arts Building Phase 1: Renovate a portion of the existing steel structure to add 2,557 square feet for space to accommodate potters, glazing/spray area, kiln area and restrooms. Estimated cost \$443,000.
- Eight: Indoor swimming pool: This project is the number one item on the Recreation Advisory Committee's priority list and was number one on the recreation survey. Estimated cost \$2,500,000.

(d) Jackson County Schools five year capital plan: Mr. Wooten stated that in January, 2015, Cort Architectural Group evaluated all existing structures of the public school system and identified the critical facility needs of the entire system as well as the athletic improvements at Smoky Mountain High School to complete the master plan of that campus. The projects totaled \$14,618,094 and \$1,686,528 was provided in the FY 15-16 budget, leaving an unmet need of \$12,931,566. Of this amount, approximately \$3.2 mil is allocated for athletic improvements at Smoky Mountain High School.

- Roofing / Renovations / HVAC \$7,503,252
- Athletic facilities \$3,205,000
- Testing, fees and contingency \$1,607,217
- Emergency reserve \$616,097

Chairman McMahan stated they had discussed using funds from the sales and use tax that was designated to be used for school needs, as a payment on a loan where they would borrow the money needed to make the repairs.

Consensus: Staff to continue to look at the possibility of borrowing funds to see if there would be sufficient funds available for debt service.

(e) Southwestern Community College Master Plan: Mr. Wooten stated below are the needs as identified in priorities established by the SCC Board of Trustees:

- New Health Sciences Building and Balsam Renovations \$21,314,000
- New Library, existing Library renovations, Oaks Hall renovations and additions and new maintenance building \$9,200,270
- Firing range improvements and Summit renovations \$622,000
- Campus signage \$250,000

Mr. Wooten stated that the unknown was the bond issue on March 15th. That would potentially bring \$7.1 mil to SCC. SCC did have two projects in Macon County that they needed to address, but Macon County would have to match those projects with an estimated amount of \$450,000, but they did not have a commitment from Macon County at that time. If they did not go forward with the Macon projects, SCC would pledge the full \$7.1 mil to the Jackson County campus as part of the cost associated with the Health Building.

Chairman McMahan stated they had discussed the Local Option Sales Tax Referenda. In 2007 legislation passed by the N.C. General Assembly gave to counties a local-option, quarter-cent sales tax. The sales tax (G.S. 105-535) must be approved by voters in a referendum before it can be adopted by a county. For the period November 7, 2007, through November 4, 2014, 106 referendums on the quarter-cent sales tax were held in 66 counties. Of those 106, 29 were approved. Commissioners could consider this option when thinking about capital projects, especially as it relates to public schools and the community college. This could be a consideration to put out to the citizens of the county to decide if they would support this option as it could be a permanent funding source to meet the capital needs of the public schools and SCC each year. It would potentially be \$1.1 mil annually that could be used to pay debt service, etc. Since there would be a countywide election on June 7th, they could consider placing this on the ballot, if it were allowed to be added. Commissioners could make a formal request to the Board of Elections, at the March 3rd regular meeting, to place this item on the ballot and let the citizens decide.

(4) EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLAN AMENDMENT: Danielle Wittekind, Human Resource Director presented:

(a) Scenario: A Jackson County employee is approaching retirement and the individual's age and years of service meets eligibility guidelines for county paid insurance in retirement. The employee's spouse/dependent also works for the county but he/she will not be eligible for continued insurance in retirement because of the required years of service (not enough).

(b) Under current Policy: Coverage for eligible dependents may be continued but cannot be added after retirement of employee. The retiring employee would have to add the spouse/dependent to their coverage prior to retirement paying applicable premiums and the employee who is not retiring would waive coverage at that time because they cannot be covered twice under the plan. These monthly premiums would be paid by the retiree to the county on a monthly basis.

Child Coverage: \$227.94/mo.
Children Coverage: \$339.20/mo.
Spouse Coverage: \$339.20/mo.
Family Coverage: \$471.49/mo.

(c) If Policy was modified: The retiring employee would be allowed to add his/her spouse/dependent after retirement if the spouse/dependent is a vested Jackson County employee. The retiring employee would have the opportunity to add the dependent/spouse to their coverage if the individual lost coverage under the group plan as an employee and he/she was vested. The retiree would be responsible for the monthly premiums.

(d) Jackson County Retired Employees' Insurance Plan original approval: January 18, 2001, amended date: July, 2013 (amendments in bold).

Amended Policy Applies to all Jackson County Employees hired on or after July 1, 2013

Requirement for Insurance:

- I. Regular Employees enrolled in Local Government Retirement System:
 1. Attainment of 60 years of age and accumulation of **20 cumulative vesting credit years with Jackson County.**
 2. Accumulation of **15 cumulative vesting credit years with Jackson County** for any employee eligible for disability retirement insurance coverage.
 3. Any age and accumulation of 30 cumulative vesting credit years with **20 of 30 vesting credit years with Jackson County.**
- II. Law Enforcement employees enrolled in the Local Law Enforcement Officers Retirement System:
 1. Attainment of 55 years of age and accumulation of **20 cumulative vesting credit years with Jackson County.**
 2. Accumulation of **15 cumulative vesting credit years with Jackson County** for any employee eligible for disability retirement insurance coverage.
 3. Any age and accumulation of 30 cumulative vesting credit years with **20 of 30 vesting credit years with Jackson County.**
- III. Additional provisions for all employees:

1. The employee must be an active employee at the time of retirement to be eligible for the benefit.
2. The retired employee remains on the regular plan until eligible for Medicare when coverage is changed to a Medicare supplement.
3. Coverage for eligible dependents of retired employees may also be continued, but dependents may not be added after the retirement of the Jackson County employee ~~unless except in the case where the retiree's dependent is a vested Jackson County employee at the time of the retirement (5 years Jackson County LGERS contributions) and covered under the plan at the time of the retirement;~~ these dependents ~~could~~ may be added upon termination of coverage as an employee *if the dependent/employee is vested with five (5) years Jackson County LGERS contributions and covered under the plan at the time the dependent/employee's coverage terminates.* The retired employee must pay the **full current** cost for dependent care.
4. Coverage for a surviving spouse and eligible children of a deceased employee may remain on the policy. The surviving spouse must pay the **full current** cost for dependent care.

Consensus: *Make the proposed change effective July 1, 2016 going forward.*

(5) SELF FUNDED EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLAN: Mr. Wooten stated that at the February 16th work session, Crescent made a presentation regarding the county's health plan. Chairman McMahan had presented a list of employees that were having certain issues with the plan. Ms. Fox has gone through the list and they believed that all had been addressed. They had their quarterly meeting with Crescent earlier that day and they had more substantial health costs in the year than they had in previous years. It is still early to know if they would be recommending a rate increase. Hopefully by April 1st, they should have a good idea of where they stand and as part of the budget process, they would bring that item back to the Commissioners.

Informational item only.

(6) GLENVILLE COMMUNITY CENTER: Mr. Wooten stated that at the February 16th work session, Glenville Community Center made a presentation and requested the county's help with funding for making improvements to the community center. They were asking for \$15,000 from the county and they would be matching \$15,000.

Consensus: *Commissioners supported the improvements to the Glenville Community Center and would place this item on the March 3rd agenda for consideration.*

(7) SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT SECURITY CAMERAS: Sheriff Hall stated that a request had been made in the 2015-16 budget for a comprehensive security camera upgrade for the detention center. The aging detention center is utilizing outdated technology to capture video. The initial request was for \$136,000, which was a low estimate. The low bidder on the project came in at \$251,000. At the February 16th work session, the Commissioners requested an estimate to upgrade the cameras in the courtrooms as well. That estimate was approximately \$9,000.

Consensus: *Commissioners supported the security camera upgrades for the Sheriff's Department and the courtrooms and would place this item on the March 3rd agenda for consideration.*

(8) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Chairman McMahan moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(5) Real Property. Commissioner Elders 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 Jones seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Attest:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Approved:

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman