

**MINUTES OF A JOINT MEETING OF  
THE COUNTY OF JACKSON, TOWN OF DILLSBORO,  
TOWN OF SYLVA, TOWN OF WEBSTER AND  
VILLAGE OF FOREST HILLS  
HELD ON OCTOBER 17, 2016**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Joint Meeting with the Town of Dillsboro, Town of Sylva, Town of Webster and Village of Forest Hills on October 17, 2016, 6:00 p.m., at the Department on Aging Center, Heritage Dining Room, 100 County Services Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

<u>County Board of Commissioners</u>	<u>Town of Dillsboro</u>	<u>Town of Sylva</u>	<u>Town of Webster</u>	<u>Village of Forest Hills</u>
Brian McMahan, Chairman	Mike Fitzgerald, Mayor	Lynda Sossamon, Mayor	Tracy Rodes, Mayor	Kolleen Begley, Mayor
Mark Jones, Vice Chair	David Jones	Greg McPherson	Larry Phillips	Carl Hooper
Charles Elders	Beauford Riddle	Mary Gelbaugh	Billie Jo Bryson	Ron Mau
Vicki Greene		Barbara Hamilton	Danell Moses	
Boyce Deitz		David Nestler		
Don Adams, County Manager		Amanda Murajda, Clerk		
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk				
Jan Fitzgerald, Executive Assistant				

County Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order.

**(1) COUNTY UPDATE:** Chairman McMahan recognized members in attendance: Vice Chair Mark Jones, Commissioner Charles Elders, Commissioner Vicki Greene and Commissioner Boyce Deitz. County staff in attendance: Clerk to the Board Angie Winchester, Executive Assistant to the County Manager Jan Fitzgerald, Register of Deeds Joe Hamilton, Planning Director Mike Poston, IT Director Tim Thomas and County Manager Don Adams.

Also in attendance was the former Mayor of Sylva Brenda Oliver and TWSA Board Member Joe Ward.

Mr. Adams stated he appreciated the warm welcome he had received from everyone. He was excited to be in Jackson County and looked forward to working with all of the municipalities, TWSA and the TDA.

Chairman McMahan stated that the county was working on several projects, one of which was Freedom Park. The project was currently in the construction stage and there would be an announcement in the future for a ribbon cutting ceremony date. Also, the Board of Commissioners had initiated steps to bring back the Municipal Grants Program. The county would provide \$20,000 in the budget so that they could partner with and help municipalities on small projects. Municipalities could submit an application for consideration and the Commissioners would create a process to evaluate applications and award funds for projects at the first of the year.

**(2) TOWN OF SYLVA:** Mayor Lynda Sossamon recognized members in attendance: Commissioner David Nestler, Commissioner Greg McPherson, Commissioner Mary Gelbaugh, Commissioner Barbara Hamilton and Clerk to the Board Amanda Murajda.

Mayor Sossamon provided the following updates:

(a) They were getting new way finding signs that should arrive in December, which was provided from an ARC Grant that they had for several years.

(b) They were working with the Department of Rural Assistance - NC Department of Commerce on an economic development plan. She requested that everyone to go online and take a survey about Sylva.

(c) They were working on the traffic change on Mill Street and they would have a work session regarding this on October 27<sup>th</sup>.

- (d) The trees on Main Street would be replaced that fall or early spring.
- (e) They applied for an electric vehicle charging station grant from Duke Energy, which they would find out the results in December.
- (f) They received the Clean Water Trust Funds Grant for watershed assessment. They would be looking at Scotts Creek and its watershed to see how they could improve it. That process would take about one year.
- (g) The Sylva Police Department would be getting a canine unit.

**(3) TOWN OF WEBSTER:** Mayor Tracy Rodes recognized members in attendance: Commissioner Larry Phillips, Commissioner Billie Jo Bryson and Commissioner Danell Moses.

Mayor Rodes provided the following updates:

- (a) They were in the homestretch of working to update their Land Use Plan, with the future goal of updating their 2012 Zoning Ordinance.
- (b) They also had a sidewalk maintenance project on the agenda in the future.
- (c) They were gearing up for Halloween, which was a big event for Webster and Safe Kids would be there with them again.
- (d) In February, they were planning a community appreciation event to increase resident involvement.
- (e) Physical changes in Webster were the roundabout and the opening of R5000. They wanted to see more people use the connector and she thought it may help to get the public used to taking the shortcut by adding a Webster sign on 107 and/or a Cullowhee sign on Webster Road.

**(4) TOWN OF DILLSBORO:** Mayor Mike Fitzgerald recognized members in attendance: Alderperson David Jones and Alderperson Beauford Riddle.

Mayor Fitzgerald provided the following updates:

- (a) They would be having another restaurant in Dillsboro in the next few months.
- (b) Their new issue was parking.
- (c) They had new street signs, which was funded out of their budget.
- (d) They were working on a comprehensive plan with the Department of Commerce, partially because of their access problem and being fragmented.
- (e) Upcoming events included the usual Halloween trick-or-treat events, the luminaries and the Pottery Festival.

**(5) VILLAGE OF FOREST HILLS:** Mayor Kolleen Begley recognized members in attendance: Councilmember Ron Mau and Councilmember Carl Hooper.

Mayor Begley provided the following updates:

- (a) Both their Council and Planning Board continued to work on updating their ordinances and they had recently incorporated conditional zoning into their ordinances.
- (b) They had worked with the Sheriff's Department and their municipal attorney to ensure proper ordinance enforcement.
- (c) They had been working with a teacher and students at SCC to create a new logo for Forest Hills.
- (d) They were utilizing their website more to support transparency.
- (e) The University Inn hotel that was located in Forest Hills, had recently changed ownership. The new owner had started renovations.
- (f) The Cullowhee Farmers Market continued to be held in Forest Hills on Tuesday evenings through the season.
- (g) That past summer, they held their first "meet your neighbor" event.

**(6) TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TDA):** Nick Breedlove, Executive Director recognized TDA Chairman Robert Jumper and TDA Representative Vicki Greene. Mr. Breedlove presented the TDA Update:

**(a)** The TDA Board is made up of fifteen members:

- Group One: (5) Lodging Properties – south Jackson County; (3) medium properties – 25 rooms and up, (1) B&B, B&B Inn/Country Inn-25 rooms or less; and (1) Home Rental/Condo/Timeshare/Vehicular Campsite (if they collect tax).
- Group Two: (5) Lodging Properties – north Jackson County; (3) medium properties – 25 rooms and up, (1) B&B, B&B Inn/Country Inn-25 rooms or less; and (1) Home Rental/Condo/Timeshare/Vehicular Campsite (if they collect tax).
- Group Three: (3) Retail/Tourism related business representatives to include (1) from south Jackson County, (1) from north Jackson County and (1) Jackson County At-Large.
- Group Four: (1) representative from the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce and Executive Director from the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce. The Executive Director will be an ex officio member with no term limit.
- Group Five: (1) representative from the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Executive Director from the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce. The Executive Director will be an ex officio member with no term limit.

**(b)** Budget:

- FY 16-17 budget - \$900,000.
- Tax rate 4%, estimating \$22.5 million in lodging sales.
- Largest portion of budget goes to Advertising and Promotion \$292,600 followed by \$157,860 for Visitor Center operations.
- Funds are used to market the county and bring visitors and tourists to the area for overnight stays.
- Positive outlook for future tourist spending in the county

**(c)** Tourism tax relief 2015 tourism tax relief on county households: As a result of taxes generated by tourist spending in the county, each of the 26,709 households pay \$667 less in local and state taxes. In other words, if tourism did not exist, each household would have to pay \$667 more in state and local taxes to replace the taxes generated by tourist spending.

- State tax receipts – \$9,790,000
- Local tax receipts – \$8,040,000
- $\$17,830,000 / 26,709$  households = \$667.57 in tourism tax relief.

**(d)** TDA 2016 Accomplishments:

- Instituted Chamber Visitor Logs to better understand the visitor profile. Currently in month four; will present analysis of six months of data in 2017.
- Promoting environmental sustainability on all print materials through “Leave No Trace” seven principles and link to [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org).
- Established JCTDA photo library with image assets of the county and its offerings. Worked with local photographers to purchase authentic Jackson County images.
- Created JCTDA news library with all past news coverage of TDA activities from all area papers dating back to 2012.
- Director has held over 150 meetings this year with local, regional, state and southeast tourism leaders. Held one-on-one meetings with every regional TDA director, and have had several meetings with the state tourism office (VisitNC).
- JCTDA sponsored and held first regional TDA directors dinner & social gathering in Sylva (very well received).
- Instituted ‘Special Projects Policy’ to fund tourism-related enhancement projects in the county that fall outside of advertising support.
- Revised and streamlined Grant process.

- Analyzing data to make better, smarter and more targeted marketing decisions (Smith Travel Research, Social Media data, Google Analytics and Chamber Visitor Logs along with Festival attendance demographics).
  - Will hold first planning retreat for TDA in November, 2016.
  - Worked with the NCDOT and Cashiers Area Chamber to get increased safety signage along U.S. 64 near the Shadow of the Bear.
  - The JCTDA provided festival support through its Director to both Greening up the Mountains and Mountain Heritage Day.
  - The JCTDA is collecting visitor demographics at festivals now to determine where attendees are coming from.
  - Assisted with Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and Biltmore Gracious Hospitality customer service training for local businesses.
  - Working with Rawle Murdy (ad firm) to conduct a post-visit survey to understand why people came here and what will bring them back.
- (e) 2017 total solar eclipse - [www.NCEclipse.com](http://www.NCEclipse.com):
- The JCTDA and Southwestern Community College along with dozens of stakeholders are planning for the Total Solar Eclipse in 2017. They established the county as a prime viewing spot for the eclipse; [www.NCEclipse.com](http://www.NCEclipse.com) to learn more.
  - Several subcommittees working on this event: education, events, public awareness/PR & public safety
  - Designated eclipse viewing sites in the county:
    - Cashiers-Glenville Recreation Center
    - Recreation Center
    - Mark Watson Park
    - Sylva's Bridge Park
    - East Laporte Park
    - Cashiers Village Green
    - Recreation Field – Sapphire Valley Resort
- (f) Professional engagement:
- VisitNC State Tourism Conference
  - Henderson County TDA annual meeting
  - Buncombe County TDA annual meeting
  - STS Marketing College (named class of 2018 president)
  - JB Media Internet Marketing Seminar
  - Tennessee Blizzard
  - Winter Chautauqua Sports Tourism Conference
  - WNC: LEAD 2015 + 2016
  - Rural Counts Regional Leadership Conference
  - REDI Homegrown Leaders
  - VisitNC Regional Listening Session
  - Two tourism immersion trips with Sen. Richard Burr's regional representative Colton Overcash
  - Upcoming: DIY Tourism Marketing with Chris Cavanaugh (Nov 2016)
  - WNC: TOURISM 2017 (Feb 27, 28, 2017)
  - Interviews: WLOS, WHNS, WRGC, WCQS, Local News Media
  - Presentations: MSSA, Dillsboro Merchants Association, Municipal Leaders, WCU classes, Sylva Rotary, Cashiers Rotary

**(g) Public relations – Pineapple PR:**

- Working with JCTDA Director, there has been an increase in press releases generated on behalf of JCTDA:
  - 2015 – 10
  - 2016 – 24 (140% increase)
- Additionally, local media coverage has increased, sharing the TDA’s efforts with the community. Local media coverage of JCTDA activities:
  - 2015 – 23
  - 2016 – 57 (148% increase)

**(h) Earned media:**

- Earned Media Coverage, or publicity is one of the most trusted and credible forms of media used to generate awareness for the county. It carries the unbiased third-party endorsement of an independent expert- the writer, editor, blogger or broadcast anchor – who is recommending the destination and sharing their experience. In addition, these stories can live on long past the immediate impact of advertising and gain additional “legs” as content for social and digital (web) platforms further spreading the word.
- Pineapple PR efforts generated 74.8 million impressions for the county in FY 15-16 with a total editorial value of \$3.3 million
- Pineapple Public Relations has secured a number of national publicity hits that feature the county and its partners. The national coverage resulted in 13 placements that generated 90.4 million viewers. Highlights of this coverage include: SouthernLiving.com, WeatherChannel.com, FoodNetwork.com, Taste of the South and RootsRated.

**(i) Editorial value of placement:** In two months, exposure to 61,724,221 potential traveler. Publicity Value: \$6,195,127.

- Washington Post – Circulation: 545,813 | Publicity Value: \$1,549,147
- The Week – Circulation: 572,432 | Publicity Value: \$40,485
- SouthernLiving.com – Circulation: 2,266,960 | Publicity Value: \$1,612,331
- The Boston Globe – Circulation: 13,946,814 | Publicity Value: \$1,464,330
- Food Network – Circulation: 19,619,420 | Publicity Value: \$294,285
- Outside Magazine – Circulation: 828,535 | Publicity Value: \$54,648
- Local Palate – Circulation: 23,891 | Publicity Value: \$103,500
- Weather.com – Circulation: 23,920,356 | Publicity Value: \$1,076,400

**(j) FAM Trips 11 Journalists to the county in 2016.**

**(k) Social media:** 1 million interactions by 962,900 unique users with a reach of 30,200,000

- Twitter followers increased by 100% from 534 to 1069
- Instagram followers increased by 314% - from 1,259 to 5,212
- Facebook fans increased by 54.39 percent from 85,530 to 132,051

**(l) Chamber of Commerce:**

- Jackson County Chamber of Commerce walk-ins: 10,333
  - Dillsboro Visitor Center walk-ins: 2,697
  - Telephone Inquiries: 2,970
  - Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce walk-ins: 3,122
  - Telephone Inquiries: 2,301
  - The JCTDA this fall engaged Asheville-based Magellan Strategy Group to study the Chamber relationships and contracts and recommend best practices. Chris Cavanaugh (Magellan) also determine fair metrics for measuring and compensating services. Magellan will assess how the Chamber/JCTDA relationship can be strengthened, improved and built upon.

- (m) Marketing: New Creative Campaign RawleMurdy (Charleston, S.C.):**
- The county selected Charleston, S.C.-based RawleMurdy to program its advertising and marketing, beginning in FY 16-17.
  - This year, trending more toward digital ad placements to maximize, assess and measure ROI.
  - Theme for creative campaign is “The Great Escape”, centered around outdoor recreation and activities.
    - New tourism campaign will appear first in the Official NC Travel Guide and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation guide.
    - Campaign utilizes local scenery and people in photos/video. Twelve locations, 2 days, video & photo – 60+ models.
    - One minute tourism video will debut in select online locations
      - 10/15-second segments for social media
- (n) New Website – DiscoverJacksonNC.com:**
- Launch date est. Oct. 31; built around the mobile experience – not just mobile friendly, but mobile first.
  - Our visitors will have more content than ever before about the rivers and lakes, fishing, arts and culture, golfing, rafting, cycling, the brewery trail and more.
  - Designed not only for tourists but also residents who want information about things to do in the Mountains. Event calendar for the entire county.
  - Built around mobile experience (not a secondary consideration). They went with a mobile-responsive website rather than an application for greater adoption and use. Functions easily and only takes a few clicks to find content.
  - Accommodations and restaurants can login and update all their information on the new website as often as they’d like.
- (o) TV and film:**
- Filmed Dirty Dancing in Cashiers at High Hampton Inn
  - Filmed Three Billboards Outside Ebbing Missouri in Sylva
  - Filmed Anglers & Appetites – 2 episodes aired on Fox Sun and Fox Sports South (~518,600 viewers)
  - Filmed segment for Duke Energy’s Illumination Series on Outdoor Recreation
  - Working with RawleMurdy to develop plans for promoting these feature films
  - Will update film locations and photos for FilmNC (state film office) in 2017
- (p) Tourism Statistics for Jackson County 2015 data, released Aug. 2016:**
- 13.77% increase in occupancy tax collections from FY 2014-15 to FY 2015-16
  - Up 11.49% for first two months of current fiscal year
  - Smith Travel Research hotel data for a roughly one month period ending Sept. 10 showed occupancy was up roughly 19% over the same period last year
  - Expenditures \$175,920,000 (\$171,160,000 in 2014)
  - Expenditures percent change from 2014/15 - 2.80%
  - Payroll \$41,530,000
  - Payroll percent change from 2014/15 - 7.10%
  - Employment 1,710 jobs
  - Employment percent change from 2014/15 - 3.10%
  - State Tax Receipts \$9,790,000
  - State Tax Receipts percent change from 2014/15 - 6.80%
  - Local Tax Receipts \$8,040,000
  - Local Tax Receipts percent change from 2014/15 - 3.70%

- (q) Statistics about Jackson County visits Source: STR, 3 year study of Hotel Sales\*:
  - Highest occupancy months: July – 71.7% and October – 67.9%
  - Average Daily rates (top months): October - \$117.56 and August - \$106.87
  - Most popular days of the week to stay overnight: Saturday, Friday, Thursday
- (r) Tourism jobs and impact to economy: If it not for tourism jobs, unemployment would rise to 14.9%
  - Tourism Jobs 2014 - 1,660
  - Tourism Jobs 2015 – 1,710
  - YOY increase of +2.8%

There being no further business, Chairman McMahan adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk  
Jackson County Board of Commissioners

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Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman  
Jackson County Board of Commissioners