

**MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
MARCH 19, 2018**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing on March 19, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., Justice & Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman
Charles Elders, Vice Chair
Boyce Deitz, Commissioner
Mickey Luker, Commissioner
Ron Mau, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Chairman McMahan called the public hearing to order and stated the purpose was to receive public input concerning a 2017 NC Senate Bill 155 known as the Brunch Bill. The bill would allow for the expansion of alcohol sales for a two hour period on Sunday morning from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The North Carolina General Assembly passed this as law, but gave the responsibility to local governments to enact a local provision for this to take place or not. The Town of Sylva already passed the bill and it had been requested that the county look at the bill for areas outside of municipal boundaries. Another public hearing would be held on April 16th in Cashiers and afterwards, the Commissioners would consider the issue.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

(a) Rebecca Whitmire Fowler of Sylva stated that she completely opposed the bill as she felt it was not in the best interest of the county and she urged the Commissioners to not approve the bill.

(b) Carl Stepp of Sylva stated that he was the Pastor of Yellow Mountain Church in Cashiers and he was concerned about drunk driving and that the bill would lead to hardship.

(c) Mark Stiles of Sylva stated that he was the Pastor of Trout Creek Church. He spoke of a church member and friend that was killed on his way home from church by a drunk driver. He thought it should not be all about a way to make money and officials should represent everyone. His congregation was 100% opposed to the bill.

(d) Austin Frady of Whittier stated that he was the Pastor of the Old Savannah Baptist Church. He felt that the increase of alcohol consumption would result in an increase in crime and alcohol related accidents. He requested that the Commissioners consider religious groups and not just businesses.

(e) Brandon Lewis of Sylva stated that he was the Associate Pastor of Cullowhee Valley Baptist Church. He was concerned about an increase in crime and he did not believe there would be any economic gain to passing the bill.

(f) Bernadette Peters of Sylva stated that she was the owner of City Lights Café located in the Sylva Town limits, where the bill had already passed. In 2012, the public voted to legalize alcohol sales in the county, so she thought the general public probably supported the Brunch Bill as well. She requested the Commissioners put aside their own personal beliefs about alcohol and represent the majority and economic health of the county.

(g) Matthew Nations of Sylva stated he stood 110% against the Brunch Bill and he thought there was no good in it. He urged the Commissioners to vote against the bill.

(h) Reva Lewis of Sylva stated that she was opposed to the Brunch Bill and challenged the Commissioners to think about what their legacy would be.

(i) Caleb Kelly stated he was the Pastor of Tilley Creek Baptist Church. He had been on both sides and had participated with alcohol and had seen the effects of alcohol from serving on the rescue squad. If the bill passed, he would hold the Commissioners responsible if someone was killed in a car accident as a result of it.

(j) Larry Bates stated he was opposed to the Brunch Bill and they elected the officials of the county to represent them and the officials would be held accountable for their representation.

(k) Jared Stevens of Sylva stated he was the Pastor of Piney Mountain Baptist Church. There were an average of two alcohol related car fatalities per year in the county since 2012. Already, they had two that year. He was opposed to the Brunch Bill and stated that the Commissioners were elected to protect the residents not the tourist.

(l) Robert Matthews of Whittier stated he was opposed to the Brunch Bill and that each of the Commissioners would be held accountable for how they voted.

(m) Amy Buchanan stated that she was a member of the Old Savannah Baptist Church and she had seen alcohol tear families apart. She urged the Commissioners to prayerfully consider the bill.

(n) Amanda Buchanan stated that nothing good came from alcohol and that she was opposed to the Brunch Bill.

(o) Kevin Morgan stated that he was an ex-drinker and that if someone was drinking at 10 a.m., most likely they were not going to stop at one drink. He was opposed to the bill.

(p) Denny Wood of Sylva inquired if there was not enough respect for the church, to wait until 12 noon to get a drink. It was not about economic impacts, it was about respect. In five years the breweries would be gone, but they would still be there.

(q) Shane Danner stated he was the Pastor of Cullowhee Valley Baptist Church. He read from the church covenant and encouraged the Commissioners to vote against the Brunch Bill.

(r) Johnny Ray Davis stated that he was opposed to the Brunch Bill and urged the Commissioners to vote against it.

(s) Peggy Stepp of Sylva stated that she was a business owner in the county and she encouraged the Commissioners to find ways to help all business owners not just a few. She was opposed to the Brunch Bill.

(t) Chassidy Buchanan of Sylva stated it was not her job to judge, but she urged the Commissioners to not think about an upcoming election and to vote against the bill.

(u) Josh Holden stated he was the Pastor of Heady Mountain Church. He inquired if the county was in such bad financial shape that it had to allow for two more hours of alcohol sales on Sunday. He was opposed to the bill.

(v) David Blanton of Sylva stated that in his career, he had seen the heartache and lives lost because of alcohol. He urged the Commissioners to vote against the Brunch Bill.

(w) Lisa Junaluska stated that this should make more sense and that she was opposed to the bill.

(x) Jason Stevens of Sylva stated he was the Pastor of Patterson Baptist Church and he worked at Harold's Supermarket, a pillar in the community. Harold's had never sold alcohol in over fifty years and were still in business. He opposed the Brunch Bill and hoped the Commissioners made the right decision.

Commissioner Deitz stated he wanted everyone to know that the Commissioners did not get together and decide they wanted to pass or not pass the bill. The state legislature could have done this themselves, but they put it on local governments to decide. People came to the Board wanting them to do this, it was not any of the Commissioners, but they did have to go through the process. What was great about America and democracy was that everyone's voice was important and everyone could voice their opinion.

There being no further public comments, Commissioner Elders moved that the public hearing be adjourned. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk

Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman