

**MINUTES OF A
WORK SESSION
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON
JULY 11, 2023**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Work Session on July 11, 2023, 1:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Mark A. Letson, Chairman
Todd Bryson, Vice Chair
Mark Jones, Commissioner
John W. Smith, Commissioner
Tom Stribling, Commissioner

Don Adams, County Manager
Patrick Scott, Interim County Attorney
Representative (Via Zoom)
Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to the Board

Chairman Letson called the meeting to order.

(1) WCU TOWER SUBLEASE: Todd Dillard, Emergency Management Director, presented a Sublease Agreement between the Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund of Western Carolina University and the county. The lease was for a WCU radio tower on Brown Mountain. He shared a video of the 185-foot radio tower and building on the property.

WCU would allow the county to place sheriff, fire and rescue repeaters on top of the tower. The location was a good spot for a radio site and would take care of both ends of the county. The lease would be for 25-years at a cost of \$10 per year. He believed this would enhance emergency communications in the county.

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams noted Exhibits A and C would be revised in the packets to reflect the exhibits shown during the meeting. This agreement was part of the discussions at the time of the permitting process to ensure the county would be able to be on the tower with emergency services communications.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(2) TOURISM CAPITAL PROJECT REQUESTS: Nick Breedlove, JCTDA Executive Director, stated the Capital Project Fund was a fairly new program they were excited about. JCTDA had two applications submitted for this cycle. The funds for the JCTDA Tourism Capital Project Fund came from tourism generated dollars. The legislation allowed them to spend 1/3 of tax revenues on these capital projects, with the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

He presented two project requests:

(a) Town of Sylva: Bridge Park, a key gathering spot in Sylva, hosted numerous annual events and was set for major improvements as per the Scott's Creek Watershed Action Plan prepared by Equinox Environmental. The renovation project aimed to enhance the park stormwater system, adding new filtering technology and a "Trash Trout" to improve Scott's Creek water quality and make the creek more accessible for recreation.

The revamped park would include 57 parking spaces, two ADA-accessible spots, bio-retention areas, footbridges, a viewing platform over Scott's Creek and an entrance arch. Also, the plan included areas for food trucks, community activities, exhibits and entertainment, as well as updated plantings and landscaping to enhance the park's overall aesthetic appeal.

The improved park was expected to serve as a vital green space, helping to alleviate Main Street congestion and provide a communal space for residents and visitors. It would also add extra capacity for the Farmers Market. Funded partially by ARPA funds from the Town of Sylva, the renovated park would cater to the pandemic's aftereffects and future requirements for outdoor assemblies.

The project aimed to attract more visitors for overnight stays by offering a wider range of events and enhancing the visitor experience, leading to increased tax revenue and spending in Sylva/county. Residents, with increased access to the enhanced park facilities, were expected to invite friends and family, thereby bolstering tourism. The project was shovel-ready, having completed all the necessary documentation in 2021 and was projected to yield significant long-term benefits for both Sylva and the county.

- Project name: Bridge Park Improvements
- Amount requested: \$367,757
- Amount approved by JCTDA \$367,757
- Total project cost: \$785,757
- Funding provided by the Town of Sylva: \$418,000

General discussions were held.

(b) Town of Dillsboro: The Town of Dillsboro planned to build a pedestrian bridge over the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad (GSMR) tracks in Monteith Farmstead Park, repurposing infrastructure left behind by NCDOT during a previous bridge replacement project. This initiative would establish a greenway connecting the park to Mark Watson Park and the town of Sylva, enhancing recreational opportunities and interconnectivity.

The estimated cost for building the bridge was around \$350,000, which would be offset by utilizing the abandoned DOT abutments. GSMR was aware and supportive of the project. The initiative involved collaborative efforts between Dillsboro, Sylva, the county and several non-profit organizations, including the Appalachian Women's Museum and serves as a model for effective cooperation between state, local and private entities.

The greenway would link Dillsboro and Mark Watson, improving the trail system and creating a comprehensive recreational loop. It would also provide extra parking for both towns during crowded events, promoting a healthier, sustainable lifestyle by encouraging active transportation.

In a 2022 workshop, the Dillsboro Board of Aldermen committed \$100,000 towards the project, supplemented by \$100,000 from a North Carolina General Assembly Directed Grant. The board requested the JCTDA consider contributing the remaining necessary funds. The greenway's benefits were expected to reach beyond Dillsboro and Sylva, positively impacting the wider county and region.

JCTDA Notes: The JCTDA approved a funding amount for this project that was lower than the initial request from the Town of Dillsboro, which had requested that JCTDA cover 69% of the project's costs. While the proposed bridge would provide an additional route to Monteith Park, it was worth noting that an existing path through Hometown Place already provided parking access for events in Dillsboro. Moreover, sidewalks from Sylva to Dillsboro were already in place forming a walking route.

The project's completion, though aesthetically pleasing, may not directly contribute to increased tourism, given the limited number of year-round events held at the park, such as the Airing of the Quilts at the Appalachian Women's Museum. Furthermore, there were no current marketing plans to promote this new feature to potential visitors. While the project would undeniably be a valuable addition for residents, offering an extra walking route, it may not rank highly in terms of priority for funding when considering other upcoming projects. According to legislation, projects funded under this program should drive additional visitation from outside of the county.

The JCTDA committed \$125,000 towards the project, contingent upon Dillsboro securing the rest of the required funding by the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2024. The JCTDA’s proposed contribution exceeded the amounts pledged by either Dillsboro or the NC General Assembly. The JCTDA Board acknowledged the project's potential as a community asset but emphasizes the lack of a clear link between its completion and a direct increase in visits to the county, as well as the absence of a marketing plan to fully utilize this project.

Several other potential projects, including the resurfacing of historical discussions about a whitewater park in Dillsboro, promise to significantly boost tourism and were arguably more appropriate recipients of the TCPF funding. With this perspective, it was crucial to strategically reserve funds for high-impact projects that directly enhanced tourism, generated sales tax and attracted visitors to the county. These initiatives should encourage visitor spending in local businesses and promote overnight stays, thus fueling the local economy.

- Project name: Monteith Farmstead Park Greenway
- Amount requested: \$449,000
- Amount approved by JCTDA \$125,000
- Funding provided by the Town of Dillsboro: \$100,000
- NC General Assembly Directed Grant: \$100,000

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(3) SOLID WASTE SUMMARY OF BIDS: Chad Parker, Solid Waste Director, presented the results of the Solid Waste Bids:

(a) Disposal cost at Landfill:

<u>Bidder</u>	<u>Tipping Homer</u>	<u>Tipping White Oak</u>
	<u>per ton</u>	<u>per ton</u>
Republic		\$35.00
Waste Management	\$28.81	
Combination price reduction	n/a	\$33.95
Approx. yearly expenditure	\$1,008,350	\$1,225,000
Approx. yearly expenditure w/ discount	n/a	\$1,188,250
Savings w/ discount	n/a	\$36,750
Current costs	\$27.51	\$962,850

*Prices do not include the NC \$2 per ton tipping fee.

(b) Hauling to Landfill and Recycling Facility:

<u>Bidder</u>	<u>Alt Hauling Homer</u>	<u>Alt Hauling White Oak</u>	<u>Alt Hauling to MRF</u>
Kinsland Trucking	\$720	\$500	660
Approx. yearly expenditure	\$1,224,000	\$850,000	\$138,600
Current costs	\$1,224,000	n/a	\$138,600

(c) SRC Equipment Lease, Hauling and Staffing:

<u>Bidder</u>	<u>Hauling Bid SRC</u>	<u>Equipment Lease Bid</u>	<u>Site Staffing Winter</u>	<u>Site Staffing Summer</u>	<u>Total</u>
Republic	\$55,756.00	\$8,402.74	\$50,464.00	\$53,416.00	
Combination price reduction	\$54,083.32	\$8,150.66	\$48,950.08	\$51,813.52	
Approx. yearly expenditure	\$669,072.00	\$100,832.88	\$353,248.00	\$267,080.00	\$1,390,232.88
Approx. yearly expenditure w/ discount	\$648,999.84	\$97,807.92	\$342,650.56	\$259,067.60	\$1,348,525.92
Savings w/ discount	\$20,072.16	\$3,024.96	\$10,597.44	\$8,012.40	\$41,706.96
Current costs	\$649,596.00	\$96,456.00	\$363,050.80	\$244,963.60	\$1,354,066.40

(d) Combination savings in Hauling and Disposal at White Oak:

<u>Landfill</u>	<u>Tipping (Waste Management or Republic)</u>	<u>Hauling (Kinsland)</u>	<u>Approximate Yearly Expenditure</u>	<u>Approximate Five Year Expenditure</u>
Homer GA (Waste Management)	\$1,008,350.00	\$1,224,000.00	\$2,232,350.00	\$11,161,750.00
White Oak NC (Republic)	\$1,188,250.00	\$850,000.00	\$2,038,250.00	\$10,191,250.00
Savings at White Oak (Republic) for Landfill and Hauling			\$194,100.00	\$970,500.00
Republic SRC Hauling discount			\$41,706.96	\$208,534.80
Total Savings			\$235,806.96	\$1,179,034.80
Current costs (Waste Management)	\$962,850.00	\$1,224,000.00	\$2,186,850.00	\$10,934,250.00
White Oak (Republic)	\$1,188,250.00	\$850,000.00	\$2,038,250.00	\$10,191,250.00
Savings from current contracts			\$148,600.00	\$743,000.00

Mr. Adams noted that within the Request for Proposal, the base contract was established, which allowed for CPI increases. He could not predict what the CPI would be for five years. The first year, the county should see the \$148,600 savings, but future years would be dictated by CPI. Any savings, would stay within the Enterprise Fund.

This item would be brought back to the Board in August, along with the Tire Disposal contract. The goal would be to have all contracts executed by the end of August or early September to be effective January 1st.

General discussions were held.
Informational item.

(4) NCACC ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND VOTING DELEGATE: Mr. Adams stated the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Annual Conference would be held August 24-26 in Wake County. He presented the voting delegate designation form to be submitted by August 21st.

Informational item.

(5) PERMITTING SOFTWARE CONTRACT: Mr. Adams presented a proposed contract with Tyler Technologies, Inc. This item was presented to the Board and discussed during the budget process. The amount of the contract was approved at that time. Former County Attorney Heather Baker worked on this contract previously. Mr. Scott also reviewed the document and there were a couple of changes that would be made prior to the document being presented to the Board for approval.

Mr. Scott stated the changes were as follows:

(a) Page 8, Section F-1 Term. Changes were made regarding what happened upon expiration of the initial term.

(b) Page 11, Section G-6 Insurance. Changes were made to include Cyber Insurance.

Mr. Adams stated those were the two areas they were discussing with the firm to change. Other than those two sections, the proposed agreement matched what was presented to the Board and approved in the budget process.

General discussions were held.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(6) SUBSTANCE ABUSE RECOVERY COORDINATOR AND JAIL BASED SUBSTANCE ABUSE COORDINATOR POSITIONS: Mr. Adams stated the county received a Dogwood Grant for a Substance Abuse Recovery Coordinator Position and the Sheriff received a North Carolina Department of Public Safety Grant for a Jail Based Substance Abuse Coordinator. They were unable to get these positions into the budget document that was passed in June.

He presented positions descriptions:

(a) Substance Abuse Recovery Coordinator:

- Pay Grade 25
- Reports to the County Manager
- This position would coordinate the process of creating an overall masterplan regarding the county's allocation of opioid settlement funds.
- This was a grant funded position for 24 months with full benefits.

(b) Jail Based Substance Abuse Coordinator:

- Pay Grade 24
- Reports to the Sheriff
- This position would provide coordination of a substance abuse recovery program services while a participant (incarcerated person) was in custody and coordinate contracted recovery services once released.
- This was a grant funded position for 24 months with full benefits.

He was awaiting feedback from the Sheriff for the Jail Based position. He requested the Board consider approving these two positions in order to move forward with the advertisement and eventual placement.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(7) MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY: Mr. Adams stated he believed the County Commissioners and the Town of Sylva Commissioners had received emails from Representative Clampitt regarding a potential facility that would house mental health patients. A request had been made to the county and the town to provide a response if they wanted a facility for adult mental health patients in the county.

At that time, Representative Clampitt and the Legislators were working on funding for the build out of a facility in the region because of the lack of beds. The last email received from Representative Clampitt offered to present this concept to multiple elected leaders and bring the provider. He did not have more details at that time.

The need was there for the beds, but this became a community discussion when talking about a regional facility. There were pros and cons to these types of discussions. It was his understanding that Representative Clampitt had received some response from the town about being receptive to listening.

Chairman Letson stated he thought they owed it to Representative Clampitt to continue the conversation, but he needed a lot more information. He thought there was a lot of opposition to this, but he thought they needed to follow the process and hear it out.

Commissioner Stribling stated he agreed.

General discussions were held.

Mr. Adams stated if a meeting was held, it would need to be determined if the Commissioners would attend to only gather information or if they wanted a joint meeting with the town. He would follow up and gather more information.

Informational item.

(8) ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER POSITION: Mr. Adams stated during the budget process, the Board approved a new position for an Animal Control Attendant. There were multiple positions requested, but one was approved by the Board. An Animal Control Attendant would tend to animals in the facility. An Animal Control Officer would go out on calls where there were issues.

There was a request to reconsider the position from an Attendant to an Officer. Both positions started at the same grade. After one year of training, the Officer would move up one grade. For the fiscal year, there would be no grade change or cost change. This was a career path already established.

Commissioner Bryson asked if they were short-handed in Animal Control? He received two phone calls concerning Animal Control issues.

Mr. Adams stated they were short-handed in the transition. Also, the former director recently retired and they had new employees. They were dealing with multiple issues that were being handled. He had direct conversations with Shelley Carraway, Health Director and they were working on these issues.

General discussions were held.

Commissioner Stribling stated he was also contacted and was concerned about no one getting back to a family where a child was bitten by a dog. Why did this family not receive an answer in ten days? If the county needed to hire more people, they needed to get it done.

Mr. Adams stated the only way they could deal with situations was in accordance with the county ordinances. The Board could look at making changes to the ordinances.

Commissioner Smith stated he thought they needed to change the ordinance. He thought it needed to have more teeth.

Chairman Letson stated he thought that was the first step. Then staff would be clear about what they could do and what needed to be done.

Mr. Adams stated Animal Control staff needed to go through training about how to respond appropriately and what occurred.

Commissioner Jones stated with the new facility, it may be time to take a step back and look at changes they may want to talk about. With the funds spent on the new facility, he hoped volunteer organizations would step up and take on some of the attendant needs. He thought that should be open for discussion.

Consensus: *Add this item to the next regular meeting agenda for consideration.*

(9) CLOSED SESSION:

Motion: *Commissioner Stribling moved that the Board go into closed session pursuant to G.S.143-318.11(a)(3) Legal and G.S.143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel. Commissioner Smith seconded the Motion. Motion carried.*

Chairman Letson called the regular meeting back to order and stated no action was taken in closed session except the approval of the closed session minutes.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Stribling seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

Mark A. Letson, Chairman