

**MINUTES OF A  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE JACKSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON  
MAY 05, 2020**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Regular Session on May 05, 2020, 6:00 p.m., Justice and Administration Building, Room A201, 401 Grindstaff Cove Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present: Brian McMahan, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Mickey Luker, Commissioner (via speakerphone)	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
Ron Mau, Commissioner	
Gayle Woody, Commissioner	

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order and stated that a tragedy occurred that day in the county. A young male in his early 20's fell in a waterfall in the Cashiers area near the North Carolina – South Carolina state line. During the effort to rescue him, Eldon Jamison, a member of the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad had an accident and lost his life.

Mr. Jamison was a long-time member of the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad. He wanted to offer his thoughts and prayers to the Jamison family and to the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad. That was a strong family in that community and that department meant a lot to the county and he knew they were all grieving that night. He requested to have a moment of silence for the young man that had potentially lost his life and for the loss of Mr. Jamison.

A moment of silence was observed.

Chairman McMahan stated that because of the rescue efforts, there were several people missing from the meeting that would normally be a part of the agenda.

**(1) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS WEEK AND PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL DAY PROCLAMATION:** Commissioner Mau read a Proclamation declaring May 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> as Law Enforcement Officers Week and May 15<sup>th</sup> as Peace Officers Memorial Day. Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

**(2) PROCLAMATION HONORING OLDER AMERICANS:** Commissioner Deitz read a Proclamation to proclaim May as Older Americans Month. Commissioner Deitz moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

**(3) PROCLAMATION FOR PURPLE HEART COUNTY:** Commissioner Woody read a Proclamation to declare Jackson County as a Purple Heart County. Commissioner Mau moved to approve the Proclamation. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

**(4) AGENDA:** Commissioner Mau moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

(5) **MINUTES**: Commissioner Woody moved to approve the minutes of a Regular Meeting of April 07, 2020. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Mau noted that had been unable to review the minutes, but agreed to move forward with approval. If he had changes, he would bring those back at a future meeting.

Motion carried.

(6) **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**: Chairman McMahan welcomed Mr. Adams back and stated it was good to have him back. He also thanked Ms. Baker as she had done a tremendous job as Acting County Manager over the last several weeks.

(7) **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**:

(a) Commissioner Deitz stated that they were glad to have Mr. Adams back. He thanked Ms. Baker for all of the work she had done. They were very fortunate that Mr. Adams recovered and they were very fortunate to have someone that could step in. He commended the citizens and businesses of the county the way they had conducted themselves during this time.

(b) Commissioner Woody offered her condolences to former Commissioner Charles Elders in the loss of his brother. It was so such a hard thing, especially during that time when they had difficulties grieving together. Her prayers went out to that family.

(c) Commissioner Mau also offered his condolences to the Elders family.

He reported that the TWSA Horsepasture River Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion was still moving forward and was expected it to go out to bid in September. He was aware of some recent projects in the region where engineer's estimates had been overpriced by as much as 30% in some cases, so maybe they would get a good price on the project.

Other comments he wanted to make, a lot of which came from things he had been hearing back from people in the public about how things had been handled, good and bad. He thought they all needed to be made aware of these. He thanked Ms. Carraway, Mr. Dillard and the Sheriff for all that they were doing. All of Jackson County staff was doing a great job to fight through the emergency, but there were things people had called him about, which was really where all the comments were from – things people called him about or comments he read on social media.

When they would get into a crisis, they would start finding things they would want to fix, look at and potentially improve. A question he received a lot during the crisis was "Who were the people of Jackson County supposed to be hearing from? Was it the Sheriff, Emergency Management or the Health Department?" They were putting things out every day, but people did not know where to turn.

He received comments related to that of "Who was responsible for some of the decisions that the Health Department made?" Technically, the way they were structured, that went to the Health Board. He went to their website and they had not even met the whole time, that he was aware of. There was no record of minutes or meeting times, which was an issue that people had expressed to him that according to the law, the Health Board was supposed to be the ones looking after the public welfare and health and they did not appear to be doing anything.

Commissioner Woody stated that she was on the Board of Health. Ms. Carraway had reported to them and asked them for feedback through email, so she was communicating with them. As far as the authority to do those things she was doing, those came from the State Department of Health. She was directly responsible to them. If he wanted to answer the people that asked who was making those decisions, basically it was the state and it filtered to Ms. Carraway.

Commissioner Mau stated that they understood and that was not the question. They were wondering about who was guiding the communication and that sort of thing. The structure was set up so that the Health Board was where she reported to.

Commissioner Woody stated that they had a Zoom meeting scheduled, with a flexible date at that time, but they were responding.

Commissioner Mau stated that another concern was that the DSS Director posted something that was illegal and he received a phone call within a few hours. He talked with the Acting County Manager the next day that he received a phone call about this and his response was that DSS had their own board and attorney and he assumed it was all being vetted through them. So there were some issues with the situation that were definitely being drawn to the surface with the communication and how things were processed.

A more recent issue that came up, was allowing the WCU students to come to the dorms. Someone asked him why they approved it. He did not know if they had the ability to approve it based on conversations he had and he let people know that. He did supply a list of questions to the Acting County Manager at that point in time just to say he had a lot of concerns and questions.

He was getting a lot of comments from folks that they did not think there was a plan for some of the things. In the email to Ms. Baker, he stated: "What's scarier, thinking there is no plan and thinking about what might happen if I get sick or a family member gets sick versus knowing there is a plan and if I do get sick or a family member does get sick, people have done their due diligence and a plan is in place." That was really related to hospital capacity and what the plan was for facilities in the county. People needed to know that, they needed to let people know everything they could, in his opinion. By not letting them know, they were scared, he could tell it in people's voices when they called him.

Hopefully, during the updates, they would get answers to some of the things he just brought up. He looked forward to hearing and seeing the data and metrics at the county level, he assumed they were being tracked by the County Department of Public Health that were similar to those that the state recommend they use. He asked for those on April 24<sup>th</sup>, but had not received anything. He would like to see that data because it was going to be important for them to make their decisions as they moved forward.

Back to the WCU student issue, because it had been a concern. He lived close to campus so he went there a lot to work out. He went by every dorm and based on what he saw, granted he was not in the buildings, he was more comfortable with the exterior of the dorms than he had been in some of the big retail places in town, so their plan appeared to be working.

**(d)** Commissioner Luker stated that he wanted to reiterate what Chairman McMahan stated about Eldon Jamison. When he received the phone call, it was a hard phone call to take as he had known Eldon his whole life. Chairman McMahan and many others in the county responded to emergencies when their beeper went off many times, day or night and he wanted all the volunteers, first responders and EMS to know that they were in his thoughts and prayers every day. His thoughts and prayers were with Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad because they were a family. He would continue to be supportive and he knew they would as well as a Board of Commissioners, in any way possible. He appreciated each and every one of them.

Also, as Commissioner Mau stated, most of the calls he received regarding the pandemic were regarding WCU students returning.

**(e)** Commissioner Mau added that he attended a couple of webinars that week. One was regarding mapping a virus and they had many experts, including an economist that was on his dissertation committee. She had a lot of good comments and it was interesting to hear. The one comment he found the most surprising was when the epidemiologist was asked about the models, specifically about the University of Washington Model, which had been used a lot, his response was that there was really no theory or science behind it. It was simply a curve fitting exercise where they were plotting data and trying to guess what the next step was based on confidence intervals. There were a lot of issues with a lot of the models that they were all being asked to rely on. It made it interesting being an elected official and trying to make decisions when they knew some of the strengths and weaknesses of the models.

**(8) COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:** Mr. Adams stated that during his time of need, he and his family appreciated the Board and staff members, friends and family helping him and his family. He was very appreciative to have a job that allowed him to get well and come back and be employed. He had been teleworking for the last couple of weeks to slowly integrate himself back into operations. He appreciated the Department Heads and Leadership in the county for their work during COVID-19.

He came in and started participating after staff and leadership had been dealing with this for about a month and he was impressed overall with how county leadership had dealt with this specifically looking at the Health Director, Emergency Management Director and the Sheriff. Also, he appreciated Ms. Baker with all that she had done stepping in. He did think it was fortunate to have someone such as her to be able to come in and provide leadership in his absence.

The primary items he had been working on the last couple of weeks was to go back to major projects and in the last two weeks he had been having budget meetings via Zoom. He and Ms. Fox had completed the meetings for the majority of the departments. They would be finishing up with the Board of Education and SCC that week. That should put them in a position to start developing a budget for the Board to consider.

He presented the County Manager's Report:

**(a) Community Services Center:** The project was 70% complete through April. The original substantial completion date in the contract was the beginning of May. The project should be 91% complete under the original contract. The original timeline anticipated the building to be complete by mid-June with a move-in date at the end of June. An additional 34 days had been added to the project timeline due to change orders. These additional days added to the contract and moved the project completion to mid-July with a potential move-in date of late July or early August.

Unfortunately, the contractor would not meet this deadline for two reasons. The contractor was already a little behind even with the 34 day extension. Also, the contractor and subcontractors were having difficulties maintaining a full staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. At that point, it was unclear when a move-in date could occur. These unanticipated delays would cause additional costs for rent, utilities and insurance.

This did create other issues. He had to hold off on ordering the furniture, which would generally take about a three month lead time. They would only hold the furniture so long before they would start charging rent. There were also other coordinating activities that he had to consider. They were fortunate with the current lease they had where they could go month to month until they could get the project finished. He would share renditions with the Board for the facility via email.

Also, he was asking the architect to start working on the design for the One-Stop Center, which was designed to be an open facility. A customer would go to an open desk area with face to face interactions with staff. At that point, he instructed the architect to start designing separation between the public and staff. He would discuss this item further with the Board at a later time.

**(b) Animal Rescue Center/Dillsboro Complex:** The architect and engineers completed construction design documents. The next phase of the process would be to send documents to estimators to revise cost projections. If new cost projections were acceptable, then the architect was ready to put together bid specifications. Once specifications were complete, then they would be ready to publicly solicit bids for the construction project. At that point they had not moved forward. He developed a good stopping point for the architect so that they could have discussions with the Board.

He noted that they had found a boiler that could be switched between natural gas and methane. With the quantities of methane coming out, they thought it would provide enough for the Green Energy operations and to heat the Animal Rescue Center, at least at night. The radiant flooring would also be done by methane from the closed landfill. That was a positive for the project.

(c) **Indoor Pool:** The Board adopted a preliminary resolution explaining the purpose of the bond issue and authorizing publication of notice of intent to file an LGC application. The county would need to complete the following to continue the process:

- The county would to advertise a notice of intent to file an LGC application. This was scheduled to occur May 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Darlene Fox, Finance Director was working on the LGC application. The application would be ready to file with the LGC at the end of May.
- The county must introduce the bond order in early June.
- The county must also schedule a public hearing to take place in early July.
- The county must adopt a bond order and formally set the ballot questions and referendum date directly after the public hearing in July.

(d) **Upcoming Meeting Schedule Discussions:** Following was a list of scheduled meetings and meetings for the upcoming budget process. He requested that the Board discuss the meetings. He requested to have the May 12<sup>th</sup> work session meeting. The primary topics would be the facilities he discussed above and to discuss the upcoming budget process.

He would normally present the recommended budget to the Board at the May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. This timeline could still be met, but it would also be nice to have an extra week prior to him presenting the recommended budget to the Board. He would request to move the May 21<sup>st</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup> meetings back a week also. They could discuss if they wanted to move the June 23<sup>rd</sup> date back also to give them more opportunity to get more sales tax data.

Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. Work Session  
Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. Regular Meeting  
Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:30 a.m. Special Meeting Budget Work Session  
Thursday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8:30 a.m. Special Meeting Budget Work Session  
Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting and Budget Public Hearing 5:50 p.m.  
Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> Budget Meeting to make Final Adjustments  
Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. Work Session and Budget Final Adjustments  
Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. Regular Meeting and Budget Adoption

Chairman McMahan stated that the work session on May 12<sup>th</sup> was an important meeting to set the stage for many things that would or would not happen over the next several months to come.

**Consensus:** *Continue with the next meeting in the same format in the Board Room A201.*

Mr. Adams stated that he wanted to start having a conversation with the Board on May 12<sup>th</sup> about county operations. As he had been meeting with the departments in the budget process, he had taken the opportunity to find out how they were operating at that time, how their employees had been doing, who was working remotely and who was not working remotely. He had been trying to educate himself over the last couple of weeks so that he could be in a position to start having management discussions about what was the appropriate timeline and process for county operations to start transitioning back.

He would not have all of the solutions and answers on May 12<sup>th</sup>, but would be in a position to start discussing and sharing with the Board some of the concepts and ideas that would evolve from his conversations with Department Heads regarding how the county would transition back into operations. That would be taking into consideration the “new normal” to keep employees safe among the public and among themselves during this era of pandemic.

(9) **INFORMAL COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:** None.

**(10) CONSENT AGENDA:**

(a) Darlene Fox, Finance Director, presented the Finance Report for March, 2020 and two Budget Ordinance Amendment for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, for approval.

Commissioner Woody stated that she attended the Zoom meeting for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and they stressed to each of them to keep track of everything because all of it would be about accountability. If they had their ducks in a row, which Ms. Fox always did, they would be able to request reimbursements.

Ms. Fox stated that they were making weekly reports to FEMA for the shelters.

(b) Tabitha Ashe, Tax Administrator, (via Zoom video conferencing) presented the Tax Collector and Refund Reports for March, 2020, for approval.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Mau moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(11) COVID-19 UPDATE:** Chairman McMahan stated that as he mentioned earlier, Todd Dillard, Emergency Management Director and Sheriff Hall would not be able to attend the meeting. Shelley Carraway, Health Director would be joining the meeting via Zoom Video Conferencing.

Ms. Carraway would provide an update on the current status of the pandemic response in the county from a health perspective as this was a health emergency, where the focus was and as they were the lead agency during the pandemic. Also, they would have a report from Ms. Baker concerning some of the county issues and an update from the Governor's 5:00 p.m. press conference. He then wanted to have a discussion with the Board about what they wanted to do locally in the county and they could move forward in these efforts.

**(a) Health Department:** Ms. Carraway stated that they were still having their daily calls with the preparedness partners such as EM, EMS, the hospitals, the Sheriff, the Chief of Police, the County Manager and the Mayors. She had a call every other day with the leadership at the hospital. She also had a weekly call with their state partners and a weekly call with the long-term care providers.

Currently, they had 20 positive cases of COVID-19 reported that were full-time residents of Jackson County and two part-time residents that were tested positive. Sadly, they did have their first death of a resident of the county. There had 905 tests performed in Jackson County, but some tests were for non-residents as well, because of the construction site outbreak.

The case count was updated every day on the Health Department website by noon. As for testing, the Health Department staff was now providing tests, but they were not the primary testing site in the county. There were plenty of providers doing testing in the county. The supply chain of testing supplies was coming through and the capacity of the labs were good, so they were getting good turnaround times. The Health Department was taking on the role of mostly testing the contacts of the identified positive cases and testing those who were uninsured or unable to pay.

At the Health Department, they had three drive-by testing events in groups of four every 15 minutes. Staff had been amazing at thinking outside of the box and working together. They did have a positive case, who was an employee at a long-term care facility. This caused them to ramp up even more and they had gone mobile. They deployed three teams at a process set up to test every resident and staff member at that facility. They successfully performed 109 tests in three hours and all of the tests came back negative. They felt very good about that and about their process.

A few things they were doing proactively for county organizations were that they sent letters with guidance to long-term care facilities early on. Also, they sent out guidance letters to businesses, hotels and the schools. They had now sent two different letters to all construction sites in the county. The first was before the outbreak requesting that workers wear face coverings even while they were in public. More recently, they sent a letter that shared more about best practices for operations such as once the project was inside, they suggested staggering subcontractors, limiting the number of workers and on-site temperatures of the employees and any other visitors.

They also worked with partners to develop signage about face coverings and staying home. They did not have a date or details, but over the weekend she learned that they were selected as one of five counties that would have a drive through testing event hosted and held at the Walmart in Sylva. This would create some positives, so they may see their numbers spike, which would create more work at the Health Department for contact tracing and contact testing. But, she believed that was the intent of the state trying to ramp up testing in general. They would be ahead of the curve and right on target with that big event with testing.

The Governor was trying very hard to get them back to some type of “new normal”. The plan included phases that happened based on meeting established metrics. In the county, the positive cases did appear much later than most counties in the state, so they did not have a lot of data. However, they were collecting the data points in the county to form their metrics to follow and help in the decisions to reopen.

Going through the metrics that the Governor had, the first one was the trajectory of COVID-like illness surveillance over 14 days. At the state, they were using the syndromic surveillance they had in place for the flu and translated that over to COVID. There were sites all across the state, but the data did not come from every county or every case of the flu and they did not have a site in Jackson County. They were giving generalizations, as they did every year with the flu, of the picture in North Carolina. Health Department staff called all of the providers in the area asking them to give them a picture of COVID-like symptoms coming into their office, even if it was not COVID. That was what the state was looking at as well. They did not have a lot of data there and were not getting a lot of reports, so they may fail on even getting that data worthy enough to look at, but they were trying.

On the trajectory of lab-confirmed cases over 14 days, she did not have a graph like the state, but the trajectory starting on April 20<sup>th</sup> when the outbreak happened, they were at three positive full-time and two positive full-time and they were now up to 20 positive full-time and two positive part-time. They could imagine the trajectory was going straight up, for that time. They also were looking at the third one from the Governor, which was the percent of tests returning positive over 14 days. Since Jackson County was later with cases, they were still on the trajectory going up. They started out at just under 2% and were at 4.5% currently.

Steve Heatherly, President and CEO of Harris Regional Hospital, had stated to her that any time the Commissioners would like him to come and speak about the hospital regarding resources and status, he would be more than happy to attend. Mr. Heatherly always provided her with any information that she asked for and the hospital had always been in good shape. They did not have a lot of resources, but they had not been overwhelmed.

As they reopened, the data points would help them see if there was suddenly a second surge so they could jump in and take action. As of that day, they were still in the upward trend, however, the steep trend was primarily due to a large event, so they had to keep that in mind in the analysis. She wanted them to be aware that they were monitoring all of these things in the status of the county and not just following the state guidelines. They could present as much or as little as they wanted on that front.

Also, on the phases, the state did give good guidance, but she was happy to share with them that Environmental Health would be a good resource in figuring out best practices in the “new normal”, especially for restaurants, schools and lodging. They were in a regulatory role, but at that time, they were there to help educate, advise and give tips on how to move forward safely. They had been working hard to develop strong relationships with these business partners and they had been reaching out to them. So, Environmental Health staff may be pulled into a different role temporarily and they may get a little behind, but at that time, they were caught up.

She wanted to respond to Commissioner Mau’s conversation about the Board of Health. They only met quarterly and missed the April meeting because of the directive to not meet with more than 10 people. They had an 11 member board and they had staff members and the public that usually attended as well. They were concerned for the health and safety of the board, but they also had legal advice that the Health Board was not allowed to meet virtually. Thus, their communications were limited to a lot of phone calls and emails. They did not have votes taken because they could not.

That week legislation was passed that would allow them to have a hybrid meeting with limited people in person as well as virtual attendance. There were parameters in the law that would show them how to do that. So, they were working on that for a meeting in May. She wanted them to know that the board had constant contact and the state continued to provide guidance. County leadership had also been involved.

Commissioner Mau stated that he was not saying that he did not think anything was going on, those were just comments made to him and he was just passing that information along about who people should listen to and who should be the first person they should go to for information related to the pandemic.

On the numbers for percent positive for the county, how would he find out how many tests were performed for people outside the county? They shared the positives, but were not sharing the negatives. Depending on how he was looking at doing the numbers, he was showing they were anywhere between 2.2% and 4.5% testing positive. That would be information that he would be interested in to see how it was for full-time residents. If they looked at that, the trend was downward. Jackson County was not quite half of what the state percentage positive was.

Ms. Carraway stated that was true and they were actually doing fairly well. She had worked on the nonresidents that day and realized that she did not have the negatives, so they would get that information. He was correct, that would give them a different picture of the rate. She could tell them that out of the 20 residents that had tested positive, 13 of those were due to the construction outbreak.

Commissioner Mau asked if the Walmart testing would be for frontline hospital workers or grocery store workers. Was there a way those folks could be prioritized for the Walmart drive up or to encourage them to be tested?

Ms. Carraway stated that she had not heard what the criteria was for the screening of who was going to get tested. However, the problem with testing the frontline worker concept was that it was just a snapshot in time of that day. It was her personal opinion that while those workers were out there and important, they would still be exposed to people consistently, so they really just needed to take extra precautions as healthcare workers did.

Commissioner Mau asked why they could not do the antibody test at the same time they did the other test. Also, in talking about the trajectory of the symptoms, he knew of a couple of locations that were doing a survey for the general public to respond.

Ms. Carraway stated she talked with Buncombe County about their symptom tracker and that was exactly what it was doing. She was pursuing it and had possible funding from the foundation. That would be an excellent move forward because it would help the Health Department track people that wanted to be tracked to tell them every day what their symptoms were to see if it would get to a level that would trigger having them be tested. That was a great approach, they just did not have the capability yet.

Commissioner Woody stated that Melissa McKnight shared with them early on and she wondered if it was still the case about how many negatives. The providers, except the Health Department were not required to give the results of negatives or count the negatives, they only reported the positives. It was hard for them to get a real picture when they had urgent care, the hospital and private providers testing and they did not need to report the negatives.

Ms. Carraway stated that they had great strides towards that. In Jackson County, they asked all of the providers to continue to fill out the People Under Investigation (PUI) Form. The state said they did not have to do that anymore, but they asked the providers to continue to do that and they were getting through most of those so that they would hopefully have a better picture of the county. There were still so many variables and they could never capture them all.

*Informational item.*



**(b) Governor's Conference:** Ms. Baker stated that at the Governor's conference at 5:00 p.m. that day, Governor Cooper and Dr. Cohen went through information regarding the state. The state did not meet all the metrics they had set forth, but came really close with three of four. They were satisfied with the trend enough that they decided to go to Phase One as of May 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.

This meant that additional retail businesses would be open, basically removing the difference between essential and non-essential businesses. The list of businesses in Executive Order 120 that included salons, gyms and restaurants for eating-in were still closed. Restaurants were open for takeout or delivery only. Other businesses that were named specifically and closed originally would remain closed.

The Governor did emphasize that the Stay at Home Order was still in effect during Phase One. Gatherings of more than ten were not permitted, although gatherings outside were now permitted with social distancing in groups of ten or less. They could now have church outside with more than ten people as long as they were social distancing. This phase would be in effect for 14 days and would go until May 22<sup>nd</sup>. That would give another 14 days to track metrics, see the data and see if they needed to remain in Phase One, go backwards or move to Phase Two.

*Informational item.*

**(c) County Update:** Ms. Baker stated that she wanted to update them on county operations since the last meeting:

Emergency Management, Health Department the Sheriff's Office: They were still having the stakeholder phone calls every morning at 9:30 a.m., which was led by Mr. Dillard. The calls included EMS, the hospital, the Sylva Police Chief and the Town of Sylva Manager. They were able to share information with everyone and decide how information was distributed at that point.

They saw the need early on for a County Public Information Officer (PIO). Quinten Ellison was with them for a week and then Kelly Donaldson came into the PIO position. He had done a good job of collecting information if they had a lot of questions and prepared a "Frequently Asked Questions" document for the public. Melissa McKnight had done a great job with getting information out on the Health Department website as well, which was updated daily.

With the PIO, they realized they did not have a central location for information. The EOC was in operation so they created a Facebook page to be a starting place where the county posted all information. Mr. Donaldson also sent the information out to media outlets and the county's sunshine list. They did recognize they wanted to work on a centralized place for information in the future. The COVID-19 pandemic had been something that no one working for the county had seen before and it had been difficult. Everyone had really come together and done a great job to pull information together to get it out.

Information Technology: IT had been busy assisting employees with teleworking, video meetings and they had now turned their attention to how they could better do the virtual meetings. They were researching different platforms to determine which ones were the best for each situation.

Economic Development: Rich Price, Economic Development Director had started an Economic Recovery Task Force, which was made up of the Chambers, TDA, SCC and WCU Small Business Centers and the towns were involved. They had met a few times already, which resulted in the idea of a centralized website. Mr. Price was overseeing that and Mr. Donaldson was helping to develop it for businesses because there was so much information coming out about businesses regarding loans and programs.

Public Works: They were continuing to do all the great things they did including ordering plexiglass. They went to several departments and discussed their needs for barriers. Some was being made specifically for the Register of Deeds and may take longer, but many of the individual one that would sit on the desks were coming in for people so that as they had more people back at work and doing more public business they could have the barrier.

Virtual Meetings: Legislation was approved on May 11<sup>th</sup> to allow boards to meet virtually. That was a problem with the Health Board due to its size, but this should help that board as well as the Board of Commissioners, if that option was something they wanted to do.

Antibody Testing: The hospital was doing antibody testing. Anyone could request the test. She thought there was still a question about how effective the test was, but it was available.

Thank you: She thanked them all for having confidence in her for the six weeks she was the Acting County Manager. Several of them called to check on her, helped her make decisions and brought questions to her attention, she appreciated that.

Commissioner Mau asked what the plan was if the hospital became overwhelmed?

Ms. Baker stated that Mr. Dillard spoke on this a few meetings ago. He had the Ramsey Center set up as a regional facility. It was actually setup as a non-COVID surge center. The non-COVID patients would move to the Ramsey Center and the COVID patients would remain at the hospital. They did have a great Emergency Operation Plan in place, which was countywide. As far as a shelter when they had positive COVID-19 cases and the person could not be at home, they did have places to cover that. They were learning as they went through this and made adjustments.

Commissioner Mau stated that he had a question for the Board that in no way reflected negatively on Mr. Adams, but he wondered about workload and who had been involved the whole time. Did it make sense to change the person in the Administrative Office in the middle of the situation? Had Mr. Adams been involved enough? They were in the middle of a crisis, did they want to change the person that had been leading the way?

Ms. Baker stated that if she could comment on that first. Mr. Adams had been very involved and they were talking constantly. Mr. Adams was experienced with this and had been on board.

Mr. Adams stated that he was able to review this in a neutral manner because he was new in the last couple of weeks. He had been participating with the stakeholders phone calls and he and Ms. Baker had been constantly communicating. At that point, he would not have come back to work if he did not feel that he was ready to take on the hours or the processes needed to continue forward. As a manager, he did not think he knew all the answers and the first thing he recognized was who had a history. One of the first conversations he and Ms. Baker had was how to divide the duties. Ms. Baker had the history, so from his perspective, he was not going to ignore the history that had taken place. He and Ms. Baker would work as partners and a team to move forward.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he had called Ms. Baker to check on her and she had done a very good job.

Commissioner Mau stated that he heard lots of good things from a lot of people about what Ms. Baker had done for the county.

*Informational item.*

**(d) Declarations:** Chairman McMahan stated that one of the final components of this was that they had all of the executive orders from the state and at the same time, they had local emergency declarations, which the county put into place that he signed and authorized. He tried to follow the same pattern that was in place that the Governor operated under as he consulted with the counsel of the state. With each one of the Emergency Declarations, he called each Commissioner to gather input and feedback to help make the best decisions for Jackson County, so that he would know what to execute and how to move forward. He thought they had done a good job as a team working through each local emergency declaration.

After hearing the Governor's 5:00 p.m. briefing and prior to that, he along with Mr. Adams, Ms. Baker and Ms. Carraway had a conference call. They talked about what this meant for the county with the Governor announcing that as of 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, they would move into Phase One. He thought it was time for them to think about taking steps locally to rescind some of the declarations they had in place. They did some things early on before the state took action that he thought was critical to take care of because of the environment and surrounding area as a tourist area. The county took actions that were not state actions to try control the spread of the virus.

After seeing some information that day and after speaking to Ms. Carraway, he felt they could rescind the local declarations that prohibited the “less than 30 day travel”. He did feel they had to keep in place a local emergency declaration so that they could keep the EOC open to give staff the flexibility to take action quickly and respond in ways that under the declaration they had the opportunity to do so. It would also give them an opportunity to issue a new declaration that would have strong suggestions and recommendations, such as social distancing and face coverings. This would be the declaration they would put in place as of Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. and rescind the prohibition of coming to Jackson County for the short term rentals.

Commissioner Mau stated that he thought that was being consistent with what had happened in surrounding counties and the Town of Highlands.

Chairman McMahan stated that Mr. Adams had been in communication with the surrounding counties and town managers and Ms. Baker had been in contact with all of the attorneys. They were trying to take a regional approach so that they were all moving in the same direction at the same time, as close as possible.

Commissioner Woody stated that she had received comments about professional organizations with guidelines for cleaning with Air B&B’s and VRBO’s. That was her concern that it was a loose network. Would they ask them formally to follow protocols for cleaning in the space between rentals?

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought that was a legitimate issue they could express. They were going to relax the prohibition for the rentals, but they were also asking them to observe social distancing and provide sanitation.

Commissioner Woody stated that she received a call from Camp Merriewood and they were meeting as a board. She heard the Governor say they had suspended all residential camps for the summer.

Ms. Baker stated that summer camps or day camps could go on under Phase One, but residential camps would not happen through the summer.

Commissioner Mau asked the press to state that people still needed to social distance.

Chairman McMahan stated that as the Governor said and he reiterated this with Ms. Carraway, if the numbers took a turn for the worse and they suddenly had a major outbreak, they may have to tighten the restrictions locally and implement measures that were different from everyone else in the region. Jackson County’s numbers had been different from surrounding counties. They had to be careful and continue monitoring as they had been doing. This would be a trial and error. They would need to be careful, watch and adjust accordingly.

***Consensus:*** *Move forward to rescind the local declaration that prohibited the “less than 30 day travel” and issue a new declaration as of 5:00 p.m. May 8<sup>th</sup> mirroring the Governor’s order.*

**(12) LIBRARY/OLD COURTHOUSE HILL PROPOSAL:** Ms. Baker stated that the Sheriff had wanted to be there to present this item, but was unable to attend. This had been a tough year for the High School Seniors. The High School wanted to do something special so they made yard signs for each senior and wanted to display them on the High School hill. The Sheriff had some concerns about the safety of that and suggested the Library hill instead. They knew this would need to be approved by the Board, but they had talked with Chad Parker, Public Works Director and he stated they could handle the request. He recommended that they be placed closer to the stairs so that the seniors could safely take a picture by their sign if they wanted.

Mr. Parker and the Town of Sylva both pointed out that on Memorial Day the flags would go up on the hill. It was her understanding that everyone agreed to do this the day after Memorial Day when the flags would come down and the senior signs could go up for two to three weeks. This was the request from the Sheriff that would require Board approval.

***Motion:*** *Commissioner Mau moved to approve the request as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion.*

**Discussion:**

Commissioner Deitz stated that he thought they needed to do something as Commissioners for the seniors maybe beyond this. This was also traumatic for the eighth grade students and he wished there was something they could do to recognize them as well.

Chairman McMahan stated that for that night, they could go ahead and approve the signs for the seniors and if there were other things they could think about over the next couple of weeks, maybe they could brainstorm options at the work session.

*Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(13) PUBLIC HEARING – REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM:** Chairman McMahan stated that normally they held public hearings prior to the start of a regular meeting, but given the fact of the way the meetings had unfolded with Zoom and not being able to have the public attend in person, they incorporated the public hearing as a portion of the regular meeting.

This was a public hearing to receive public input regarding an amendment to the Jackson County Revolving Loan Program to allow for emergency bridge loans for small businesses and to receive input regarding allocating loan funds for emergency bridge loans. There was no one present to speak publicly unless a Zoom participant wanted to provide comment.

Rich Price, Economic Development Director (via Zoom video conferencing) stated that the amendment for revisions to the Revolving Loan Program and subsequent allocation of funds for a small business bridge loan program were in front of the Board for consideration. On behalf of his office and by unanimous consent of the Jackson County Business and Industry Advisory Committee, they strongly recommended adoption of the amendment and allocation of funds as presented.

They were confident the amendment would go for a greater utilization of the funds during the economic crisis and perhaps during challenging economic conditions in the future. The amendment was specific to the intended use of the funds that would be dispersed through the loan program making a much greater immediate impact. Under the current Revolving Loan Program guidelines they would not be able to execute this loan program they were requesting. They believed that when these funds, combined with federal and state assistance, they could help buy the small businesses time until they could reopen and recover from this highly unprecedented event.

Commissioner Mau stated that on Page 9, it stated that “no loan shall be made for less than 50% of prime rate”. Were they going to go with prime or would they go with the lower end of that. Did they have to tie it down or did they want to make it more friendly to potential businesses?

Mr. Price stated what they had agreed to do, unless otherwise directed, was for Mountain Bizworks to be their partner and loan agent. They decided to keep this consistent with what Buncombe County was doing and what other counties had since initiated, which was going to be six months at 4% with no interest, it would only be accrued. That could then roll into a three year loan at 5.5% after that.

Ms. Baker stated that they could not compete with banks, so they had to be at a similar level. They could offer incentives such as the six months no payment and interest only after that.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**Motion:** *Commissioner Mau moved to close public comment. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.*

**(14) AMENDMENT TO THE REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM:** Mr. Price stated that in the COVID-19 economic condition, the amendment allowed for the Board to take action, which would make the funds available in a more expedient and broad manner.

Ms. Baker stated that this was the existing Revolving Loan Program, which they made some technical changes, but there were no substantive changes other than:

- Section 22: The Additional Provisions for COVID-19 Support Loans concerning only COVID19.
- Section 23: The Additional Provisions in Case of Other Emergencies. This allowed for other emergency situations where funds could be allocated if necessary without amending the Revolving Loan Program again.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Mau moved to approve the Amendment to the Revolving Loan Program, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(15) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FROM THE REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM FOR EMERGENCY BRIDGE LOANS:** Mr. Price stated that this was the authorization to allocate funds from the Revolving Loan Program in the amount of \$324,000.00. Upon approval, those funds would be wired to Mountain Bizworks to begin execution of the All In Jackson Fund as soon as May 7<sup>th</sup>.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Mau moved to approve the Allocation of Funds, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(16) RESOLUTION R20-07 FOR CORONAVIRUS RELIEF SMALL BUSINESS LOAN PROGRAM:** Ms. Baker stated that the resolution allocated the funds of \$324,000.00 and authorized the County Manager to sign the contract with Mountain Bizworks.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Mau moved to approve Resolution R20-07, as presented. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(17) ABC BOARD:** Ms. Baker stated that the ABC Board requested that Mr. Noland be reappointed and also be reappointed as Chair. This appointment was done in conjunction with the Town of Sylva and that board had no object to reappointing Mr. Noland. This item would be on their next agenda.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Luker moved to reappoint David Noland to another three year term on the ABC Board, term expiring June 30, 2023 and to appoint David Noland to another one year term as Chair of the ABC Board, term expiring June 30, 2021. Commissioner Mau seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(18) PLANNING BOARD:** Commissioner Woody requested to appoint Joyce Cooper for the District One appointment.

***Motion:*** Commissioner Woody moved to appoint Joyce Cooper to a two year term on the Planning Board, term expiring December 31, 2023. Commissioner Deitz seconded the Motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

**(19) SEDIMENT CONTROL APPEALS BOARD:** Carry over.

**(20) PRESS CONFERENCE:**

(a) Beth Lawrence with the Sylva Herald asked if there was a decision made regarding the emergency declarations?

Chairman McMahan stated that the instructions that were given to staff were to draft language to repeal the existing local declarations that prohibited the “less than 30 day stays” in the rental units. They would issue a new supplemental declaration on May 8<sup>th</sup> to follow the guidance of the Governor and support his Phase One effort.

(b) Holly Kays with the Smoky Mountain News stated that the declaration had limited gathering sizes to ten people, would that stay in place?

Chairman McMahan stated they would repeal everything and issue an emergency declaration to support the Governor on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he talked with several people that worked for Public Works. They were working 12-hour shifts and on the weekends and some were upset. He hoped someone would sit down and talk with them.

Ms. Baker stated that they had talked to Department Heads. Some people were able to take State of Emergency Leave and others were essential workers and were not able to. They communicated to Department Heads that this would be something that Mr. Adams would address at some point. When they knew the entire picture they would find a way to address that.

Chairman McMahan stated that he thought that would be a topic at the work session where they would discuss employees coming back, address work hours and how to deal with it.

Commissioner Deitz stated that he wanted to see them provide relief as soon as possible.

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board

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Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman